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GENDER AND AGENCY PRACTICES IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This two-year qualitative inquiry examines the everyday language practices of four couples who acquired English as a second language in the United States. The eight East European participants were highly educated in their home countries. Two of the couples were in their late forties and early fifties, and the two younger couples were in their mid-to-late twenties.

Gender and agency are the two focal issues of this project. The researcher was interested in how these two categories were discursively constructed in the learners' lived experiences. Challenging humanistic approaches to agency, which treat the individual as an independent social actor, the study offers an alternative, Bakhtinian perspective. This framework of agency emphasizes the dialogic nature of the self, and involves a creative, responsive understanding of one's socio-cultural realities.

In becoming speaking agents, the female and male participants voiced different discourses, and, in this sense, their agencies were gendered. In authoring themselves, for example, the women adopted discourses of emotions, responsibility, and formal, studial approaches to learning. However, the women's emotional discourses were not interpreted as vulnerability. Rather, they were expressions of agency.

The project illuminates how eight highly educated Eastern European immigrants author themselves in the second language through negotiating their positions in the L2. The primacy of language in this process is emphasized throughout the project. Of particular significance to this study is that the learners' agencies are embedded in everyday, seemingly mundane language practices. The negotiation of power between the self and the Other is located within discourse. Thus, the author recommends that teachers should raise their students' consciousness of how discourse positions them in the L2 social contexts. She also suggests that language researchers

should abandon the traditional view of affective characteristics (anxiety, self-esteem, attitudes) as restricted to the learner. Feelings play a key role in analyzing one's social position and in language learning, but they are not "individual." They originate in the dialogic interplay between speakers and discourses. Finally, by linking two theoretical frameworks—feminist poststructuralism and Bakhtin's view of language and subjectivity—the study also traces a trajectory for our pedagogic work in classrooms and immigrant communities.

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Last, but definitely not least, I wish to convey my deepest appreciation for the participants in this study, who opened their homes and hearts to me. Vera, Sylvia, Lydia, and Natalia, I have learned so much from you! It has been a privilege to be part of your lives.

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LEGEND OF TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS IN DATA EXCERPTS

V = Vera

A = Aleksei

S = Sylvia

B = Boris

N = Natalia

D = Dmitri

L = Lydia

P = Peter

I = Interviewer

/ indicates a pause

// indicates a longer pause

… Ellipsis indicates two possibilities: (a) unfinished utterance or (b) deleted text

bold-faced text indicates an emphasis

italicized text indicates foreign language segments

??? means that the segment is unintelligible

== indicates rapid turn taking with some overlap

: within a word, it indicates a prolonged vowel

a_b_c The underscore sign indicates a staccato-like rhythm

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

"Although the process of SLA is both a cognitive and a social process, we have tended in the past to overemphasize one or the other," claims Tarone (1997) and continues, "On the other hand, most current SLA theories overemphasize the cognitive and downplay or even ignore the fact that the second language (L2) learner learns by interacting with others in various social contexts" (p. 137). Thus, stating that few researchers are concerned with the L2 development in natural settings, Tarone urges us to consider the learner not as autonomous and singular, but embedded in a particular social milieu that shapes the learning process.

Five years after Tarone's statement, a review of the research in natural (informal) settings reveals that these studies have mostly examined the distinction between instructed and non-instructed learning and the effect of instruction on grammar development, particularly morphology (Lightbown, 1983; Lightbown, 1985; Long, 1983). The few studies interested in socio-psychological factors in natural language acquisition (Schmidt, 1983; Schumann, 1978; Shapira, 1978) focus on low-educated Latin American subjects and, unfortunately, do not take into account the social environment of the latter. Most of the recent research exploring the correlation between socio-psychological factors and L2 acquisition also uses Hispanic or Asian speakers (Hurtado, Gurin, & Peng, 1994; Schester & Bayley, 1997; Wortham, 1997). The lack of studies in this area has been noted in a recent report by the National Center for ESL Literacy Education (Johnson, 2001):

> Most of the work in SLA focuses on children, particularly those in bilingual or multilingual environments. The body of SLA research on adults focuses on

populations in post-secondary educational settings. There is little SLA research on adult language learners in non-academic settings and adult education programs.

This study is a qualitative inquiry into how well educated Eastern Europeans acquire English as a second language in in the United States, specifically in the Midwest. *The Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* (1999) shows that the number of these immigrants has significantly increased after the postcommunist era (e.g., the immigrants from Bulgaria admitted in 1989 were 265; in 1999, this number went up to 4, 172. The number of Ukrainian immigrants admitted between 1989 and 1999 was even larger). The statistics reveal that this new, post-socialist Eastern European population tends to be highly educated, unlike immigrants or refugees from Latin America and Africa, whose numbers have recently increased in the Midwest as well.

Yet, this new type of college-educated L2 learners remains under-researched. The existing research, as summarized by Hinkel (2000) addresses exclusively demographic issues. Hinkel, who writes only about Soviet immigrants, concludes that the latter "largely remain outside the mainstream of American social and political organizations and do not seek active involvement in organized activities…" (p. 365). While Hinkel is interested in demographics and doesn't focus on language learning, her statement closely resembles these made by traditional theorists in SLA (see Chapter 2). In other words, it is the immigrant who is responsible for the distance between her/himself and the second language society. In this project, however, I assume a different perspective. I foreground the use of the second language and illustrate its primacy in the complex interplay between language, agency, and social relationships. I portray the immigrant within the new socio-linguistic context and show how native speakers of English

position him/her as the Other. It is language, I would argue, which defines the relations of my participants with the L2 milieu and mediates their perceptions of culture.

Moreover, as Denzin (1989) notes, researchers have often been distanced and focused on public issues and institutional structures. Here, I have chosen to zero in on the personal, on the lived experiences of four couples. A lived experience, according to anthropologist Jackson (1989), "accommodates our shifting sense of ourselves as subjects and objects, as acting upon and being acted upon by the world, of living with and without certainty, of belonging and being estranged" (p. 2). This postmodern definition of experience captures the dynamic nature of the self in both feminist poststructuralism and Bakhtin—the two frameworks I have largely drawn on in this project. At the same time, it implies the importance of narratives as a mode of inquiry that allows us to explore the sociolinguistic and psychological dimensions of the self.

An important part of my interest in this topic lies in the concept of heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990), according to which qualitative investigators often choose a question of personal significance:

> Heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question... that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one's self and the world in which one lives... The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with... every question that matters personally there is also a social–and perhaps universal–significance (p. 15).

When I first came to this country, labeled as "spouse," I felt utterly powerless. The previously articulate woman, who had published in national periodicals in her home country, was transformed into a heavily accented, word-groping speaker. The fact that I knew how to parse a complex sentence didn't change the feeling that I was treated as a child, at best, and, at worst,

dismissed as unworthy of interaction by the legitimate speakers of English (Bourdieu, 1991). Years after that, as I was browsing through the literature in SLA, a disappointment began to build: Where was I? I couldn't locate my experience in the popular socio-psychological models. The painful process of establishing my linguistic and social self was missing in the tables of the quantitative studies I was reading.

More recently, the field of SLA has begun to delineate new research venues. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000a), for example, studied the written narratives of highly sophisticated French and American adult bilinguals of Eastern European origin. The authors studied the already published autobiographic accounts of writers such as Tsvetan Todorov (a literary critic and Bulgarian immigrant in France), Eva Hoffman (a Polish-English bilingual), and Anna Wierzbicka (a Polish-English linguist). The participants in this study were hardly fluent in the second language and were not professional language scholars. They would probably never write their autobiographical accounts. Not unlike me, they had come to the U.S. with limited knowledge of English and had struggled not only with learning a second language but also with establishing agencies in a new social context. Exploring their individual experiences through their oral narratives helps me interpret the process of establishing my own L2 persona and, hopefully, will add to the understanding of how this infrequently researched population tackles the complex task of SLA.

1.1. Guiding questions

According to Strauss and Corbin, (1990), questions in qualitative research should "give us the flexibility and freedom to explore a phenomenon in depth" (p. 37). The nature of qualitative research allows us to enter the field with a broad initial question, which, as the data collection and analysis progress, gradually becomes more focused and specific. One of the

overarching questions of this study was: How do highly educated adult Eastern European immigrants construct their agencies in the second language?

So far, research on agency in SLA is almost nonexistent. Although Piller and Pavlenko position themselves within a poststructuralist framework (2001), the two researchers adhere to the traditional humanistic definition of agency; in other words, they describe it as a result of individual actions and choices. Pavlenko and Lantolf (ibid.) assume a similar stance on L2 agencies: "People are agents in charge of their own learning, and most frequently they decide to learn their second language 'to a certain extent,' which allows them to be proficient…" (p. 162). This is not surprising considering the strong influence of humanistic researchers of agency (Taylor, 1985), who have assumed that selves are unified and independent from the social context in which they are located. In contrast, this study espouses the postmodern perspective that agencies are not autonomous. Rather, they are constructed in specific contexts and through relationships between actors/interlocutors. The participants' second language skills determined their social positions, and these, in turn, confined their opportunities to invest in L2 learning. At the same time, their social positions didn't remain immutable, but continued to fluctuate as the subjects engaged in an active dialogue with the available discourses. By building on Bakhtin's (1984) philosophy of the self and social dialogue, the study proposes an alternative, relational perspective on agency.

Another focal question of this project was related to gender. Sociolinguistic research in the first language (L1) has long recognized the importance of gender in language use (Labov, 1991; Tannen, 1991). Studies have shown that, in general, women use more prestigious linguistic forms than men of the same social group and in the same circumstances (Chambers, 1995). Reviewing the literature on gender and language, Ehrlich (1997) criticizes the traditional models

that have governed L1 sociolinguistic research. For example, the model of female linguistic superiority assumes that women surpass men when it comes to language learning because of cognitive dispositions. Ehrlich proposes that we should investigate gender not as an invariable factor, but as an aspect of the social practices of one particular community. In addition, she refers to the few ethnographic studies on gender in bilingual and multilingual settings, where "most of the contexts discussed involve the politically dominant language of a former colonial power in relation to a less prestigious […] language (e.g., Spanish in relation to Quechua in Peru)" (p. 430).

Ehlrich's review shows that, despite the interest in gender in L1, research exploring this factor in second language learning is scarce and just beginning to emerge. The existing studies have centered on the differences in learning strategies that women and men employ (Oxford, Nyikos, & Ehrman, 1988) and are typically set in a formal, classroom environment. More recently, Pavlenko, Blackledge, Piller, and Teutsch-Dwyer (2001) introduced a collection of articles on gender which explores gender identity in multilingual or bilingual settings. The articles in the volume focus on language choice, ethnicity, and intercultural negotiation of what it means to be a multi/bilingual woman. The editors adopt the assumption, suggested by current L1 gender researchers (Bergvall, Bing, & Freed, 1998), that gender is not a uniform construction. Rather, it is strongly culture-dependent, and its socio-linguistic implications vary across different communities (e.g., a Bangladeshi woman would have a restricted access to second/foreign language education because of the way women are positioned in her society). I was not so interested in socialization or cultural aspects of gender. I assume here that gender among the four Eastern European couples is rather similar to gender, as a cultural category, in Western European societies or the States. For instance, access to education—a major topic in the volume—and

English instruction was not an issue for my participants. Indeed, it was the women who tended to take formal language instruction in this project as it will become clear in Chapter Five.

My gender-related questions were: How do the men and women in this study approach second language acquisition? Are there gender distinctions in their discursive realities? This cautious formulation wasn't surprising, considering some of the latest criticism (Bergvall et al., 1998) of earlier gender research in L1 as being binary and based on false dichotomies. Some L1 researchers have even stated that there are no gender differences in the ways men and women talk (Freed & Greenwood, 1996).

Reflecting on such recent tendencies, Cameron (1998) writes that "we need theories of gender and of the language-gender interface, that are not just academic renditions of received wisdom, but are capable of challenging peoples' customary ways of thinking" (p. 49). To build such theories, however, we need to study this complex interface in its varied contexts of language use. Empirical studies using both male and female learners in SLA are still too few to help us reach any conclusions. By analyzing the everyday L2 practices of four couples, this study not only reveals how gender and language learning interact but also addresses the implications for ESL researchers and practitioners.

Harre and Langenhove (1999) use the term "new psycho-socio-linguistics" to encompass the study of discursive practices and subjectivity. It is within this theoretical space that I position myself as a researcher and this project. Accordingly, I draw on feminist poststructuralism, notably Davies (2000), and Bakhtin's (1981; 1986; 1993) view of language and the self. Thus, the study also illuminates the theoretical relationships between poststructuralism and Bakhtin's framework, and how the two could be applied to the everyday language practices of adult immigrants.

1.2. A note on the design of the following chapters

In writing this project, I have largely drawn on Bakhtin's philosophy and feminist poststructuralism. One similarity between these two models is that they both abandon the traditional continuous narrative and, instead, prefer the juxtaposition of multiple plots and voices (Peuter, 1998): "Linearity and order are disrupted as the subject is exposed from multiple perspectives, oppositional value-orientations co-exist, producing dynamic tensions which seek neither resolution nor assimilation" (p. 40). Lather (1991) describes the postmodern text as collage or pastiche, which is "a much messier form of bricolage… that moves back and forth from positions that remain skeptical of each other though perhaps not skeptical enough" (Johnson, cited in Lather, p. 10).

In tune with these theoretical perspectives, the structure of this dissertation is not linear either. Although the chapters are interconnected by the themes of language learning, gender, and agency, each one portrays a different angle of the participants' lived experiences and can be taken as a stand-alone unit. Thus, each chapter typically provides a brief background of the theory behind the issue at hand. Chapter Two (section B) outlines the two large theoretical umbrellas I am adopting for this study. Chapter Three delves into the methodology of the project and my role as a researcher. Chapter Four introduces the learners in their new contexts, illuminating how the L2 governs their social positions. The chapter also reveals the interplay between gender, power, and discourses of emotions. It argues that the emotions, associated with the loss of voice, are not what SLA scholars have called individual characteristics of the learner (Skehan, 1989), but are discursively co-produced by the interlocutors. The chapter also suggests that emotions contain the participants' kernels of agency.

Chapters Five and Six assume a more conventional approach to language learning. The former invokes L2 research on gender and learning strategies. At the same time, it intertwines this traditional framework with Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital, Peirce's (1995) notion of investment, and a poststructuralist concept of positionings. Gender and the ways it mediates reflective linguistic practices are at the core of Chapter Six. The notion of (gendered) linguistic authority here will be related to the larger concept of dialogic responsibility presented in Chapter Seven. Stemming from Bakhtin's philosophy, dialogic responsibility offers a new, ethical approach to gender in language use and links the gender-related tendencies found in the study. While Chapters Six and Seven focus on the interaction within the couples, Chapter Eight examines the dialogic relationships the participants establish within their larger social contexts. It also accentuates the role L2 plays in constructing these social relations. Chapter Nine, the last data chapter, builds on the previous ones to demonstrate how the participants develop their discursive, dialogical agencies.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1. Introduction

Strauss and Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) identify several possible reasons to refer to the literature in one's field of study. They suggest that, by providing concepts, the literature can enhance theoretical sensitivity, i.e., the ability to discern what is important in data and to assign meaning to them. It can also provide us with knowledge of existing theories or philosophical trends, which we can use to approach and interpret the data. This use of available research is particularly meaningful if one intends to extend or modify an already existing theory.

Strauss and Corbin assert that the literature can also be used as an ancillary source of data. For instance, it would be appropriate for a qualitative researcher to refer to quotations or materials published by others if they fit his/her purposes. "In fact," the authors state, "one form of qualitative research is the analysis of theoretical or philosophical statements and writing per se" (p. 52).

The literature may also be investigated to provoke questions. It is not rare for a researcher to read a study or a theoretical framework, and to find that it doesn't portray a situation or relationship adequately. In addition to forming initial queries, the literature could help generate questions during the data analysis stage. For example, one may find discrepancies between her data and findings reported previously by others. This compels the qualitative researcher to go back to the data, examine the reasons behind the discrepancies, and, possibly, unveil an important condition that has not been considered before.

Furthermore, the literature can benefit investigators by directing their theoretical samplings; namely, it can guide them to situations related to the ones they study, but that they would have overlooked otherwise. And finally, another reason for exploiting existing writings stems from the notion of supplementary validation. Already published studies in the field allow for validation of the accuracy of our own conclusions. What's more, as Strauss and Corbin point out, this enables us to describe the differences, if any, between our findings and the findings in the literature. I intend to apply all of these uses to this qualitative study.

2.2. Current Socio-Psychological Concepts in Second Language Learning: A Critique of the "Grand" Models

2.2.1. Prevalent Socio-Psychological Models in Second Language Acquisition

As previously stated, only a limited number of studies in SLA have addressed the issue of natural language learning, and they have centered on working-class, low-educated Latin American. The following is a review of two still dominant models explaining how second language acquisition is affected by socio-psychological factors.

Schumann's Acculturation theory

According to Schumann (1986), a variable called acculturation is a major causal factor in SLA. Borrowing notions from social psychology (Berry, 1997), Schumann (1976; 1978; 1986) develops an acculturation model for second language acquisition. According to it, an L2 learner can be positioned on a continuum that ranges from social and psychological distance to social and psychological proximity with speakers of the target culture. Learners' levels of L2 acquisition are exclusively dependent on the degree to which they acculturate to the host environment. In other words, there is a strong correlation between the level of acculturation and the level of second language achievement.

Two major variables underlie the discussed theory: social and psychological distances. The former is defined as pertaining to "the individual as a member of a social group which is in contact with another social group whose members speak a different language" (1978, p. 77). Social distance between groups is controlled by several factors:

1. dominance—subordination (these refer to the relations between two groups in terms of political, cultural, and economic status)
2. assimilation–acculturation–preservation (describe the possible integration patterns, where assimilation is associated with a group's giving up its identity in favor of the other culture's; preservation implies a total non-acceptance of the values of the L2 group. These two foster or hinder the process of acculturation).
3. degree of enclosure of both groups (denotes aspects of integration which influence the level of contacts between groups. This level is also affected by similarities between two cultures).

The other key variable in Schumann's model is psychological distance. Psychological distance "pertains to the individual as an individual, and involves such psychological factors as resolution of language shock, culture shock and culture stress, integrative versus instrumental motivation and ego permeability" (p. 77). Schumann argues that a learner experiences language shock when she/he has to express familiar concepts in an unfamiliar language. Language shock is mainly caused by the learner's fear of being ridiculed because of his/her imperfect L2 skills (Schumann, 1975).

Culture shock, which can result in stress, anxiety, and even depression, is another essential component of this model. According to the researcher, it hinders the L2 acquisition because, similar to language shock, it diverts energy from the second language learning.

Schumann warns that if the language and culture shocks are not overcome, the learner will position himself/herself at a psychological distance from the target culture, which will minimize contacts with L2 speakers, and thus, again, make the acquisition inefficient.

To Schumann's comments, I would add that, often, culture stress could be a result of a lost status; for example, many well-educated adult immigrants from Eastern Europe lose their middle-class status in the US. This, on the other hand, can create a double social identity–one social image within the boundaries of the target group, and another, within the boundaries of the L1 group of learners. I would hypothesize that maintaining close contacts with the L1 speakers and carriers of the L1 culture is a way of preserving self-esteem and the original (preferred) social identity.

Motivation is the third factor in psychological distance. Schumann bases his assumption on Gardner and colleagues' work (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) and suggests that, although instrumental motivation influences the L2 learning positively, an integrative motivation is the one that implies minimal psychological distance from the target language community, and thus, creates the optimal opportunity for SLA.

The final affective factor, ego permeability, lowers a learner's inhibition related to the L2 and promotes openness to the target language input. Schumann claims that successful learners would possess a high ego permeability which would enable them to give up (at least temporarily) their L1 identity. In contrast, learners with a low level of ego permeability would not be able to detach themselves from their L1 identity, and thus, would not be able to minimize the psychological distance from the target language and culture.

A classic case study, on which Schumann bases his model, is his research on Alberto, a poor and unskilled immigrant worker from Latin America (1976; 1978). The data show that the

33-year-old subject evidenced very little language development over the 10-month research process. The researcher accounts for Alberto's lack of L2 success through his social and psychological distances from the target culture. For instance, Alberto lived in a cohesive, enclosed neighborhood with other Latin American immigrants, thus minimizing his contacts with native speakers of the L2. According to a questionnaire (in Spanish), Alberto's attitudes toward Americans were positive, and he wanted to learn English so that he could communicate with them. This self-reported attitudes and motivations, however, were not supported by Alberto's actual behavior.

Schumann admits that Alberto's communication with Americans was minimal and adds, "Also, he chose to work at night as well as in the day, rather than attend English classes which were available in Cambridge" (1978, p. 97). Thus, Schumann proclaims Alberto to be at a great distance from the target language group, both socially and psychologically, and this distance was the only reason for his non-acquisition case. I question, however, the degree of choice Alberto had considering his social status. Working at night hardly seems a personal choice he made; rather, it was linked to the economic pressures many Latin American immigrants face in this country. Unfortunately, Schumann doesn't consider Alberto's socio-economic status as a variable. In a similar vein, it is not convincing that the ghetto the subject lived in was a matter of choice for him and for the other unskilled workers that inhabited it. Alberto's social position could explain the discrepancy between his self-reported desire to learn English and to engage in communication with Americans, on one hand, and his behavior, on another.

In this case, the opportunities to interact with native speakers of English and to invest in the L2 in formal ways (e.g., via taking a class) are determined not by Alberto's wishes and attitudes, but by his powerless social position, and, ostensibly, by the low socio-economic status

he held. However, instead of considering the unequal relations between the learner and the target language group, the Acculturation theory implies that if a learner like Alberto fails to acquire English, it would be only his/her fault.

Two classic studies have corroborated the assumptions of the acculturation model. Shapira ‘s (1978) was a case study of Zoila, an uneducated 25-year old female subject from Guatemala, who was acquiring English in the U.S. in naturalistic settings (i.e., without formal instruction). Similar to Alberto, Zoila demonstrated an inadequate level of L2 achievement. Drawing on Schumann’s model, Shapira proposes that Zoila’s lack of linguistic development was a result of the affective factors which were holding her back. For example, since she came to the U.S. because of need and not because of personal will, the immigrant developed negative attitudes toward her new environment and subconsciously refused to learn English. Again, the author positions the reason for non-acquisition entirely within Zoila and her attitude toward the target culture. No other factors are considered.

Meisel (1977), who studies immigrant workers in Germany reaches a similar conclusion: Contacts with Germans at work and after that, attitudes to the L2 group, and social ambitions are the main socio-psychological factors behind these subjects’ language development. For instance, he states that subjects who regularly maintained social contacts with native speakers (e.g., had German work partners or married a German) were better motivated to improve their L2.

Some counter-evidence to the acculturation model is provided by Schmidt’s (1983) study of Wes, a 33-year old Japanese immigrant in Hawaii. Due to his successful business, Wes enjoyed a high socioeconomic status both in Japan and the U.S. Moreover, being an extrovert, Wes had accumulated a number of English-speaking friends and acquaintances. Schmidt’s data revealed that Wes demonstrated low social and psychological distances from the target culture,

and his communicative competence was sufficient enough to allow him to function successfully in a variety of contexts–business and personal. Despite all these positive affective characteristics, Wes' grammatical acquisition of English remained very low over the course of the longitudinal study even with respect to the most salient English morphemes (plural, articles, past regular, auxiliary be, 3rd singular, etc.). After a comprehensive analysis of Wes' grammatical and strategic competence in English, Schmidt concluded that the acculturation model, which attributes inadequate language acquisition to solely social and psychological negative factors "is false" (p. 169). While a small social distance and positive attitudes toward the L2 group had helped Wes develop a relatively good communicative competence (i.e., he could order food at a restaurant or convey basic meaning), they could not explain his lack of grammatical acquisition.

Motivation

The most influential model of motivation in SLA has been Gardner's socio-educational model. In an earlier version of the theory, Gardner and Lambert (1972) defined the complex psychological construct of motivation in terms of two orientations–integrative and instrumental. Integrative orientation denotes a person's willingness to get to understand the second language group and to communicate with them. Learners who want to learn the L2 so that they could get a job or enhance their career in any way are said to possess instrumental orientation.

According to the more recent socio-educational model (Gardner, 1988; Gardner & Lalonde, 1985), L2 and foreign language learning consist of two underlying components–cognitive and emotional (affective). The authors, however, do not elaborate on the cognitive component, which they, following Carroll and Sapon (1959), simply define as language aptitude. Much greater emphasis is given to the affective constituent which consists of motivation and

attitude factors. Moreover, the researchers believe that affective factors, and prominently, motivation, are the principal determinants in L2 involvement.

The socio-educational model argues that motivation is constructed of three aspects: desire to learn the language, motivational intensity (or the effort applied), and attitudes toward the L2. All of these aspects need to be present for somebody to be motivated:

> Simply wanting a goal is not sufficient to qualify as motivation. Working hard is not sufficient to indicate motivation. And, enjoying the activity in and of itself does not signify motivation. A motivated individual is one who desires to achieve a goal, works hard to achieve that goal, and enjoys the activity involved (Gardner & Lalonde, 1985, p. 5).

This cardinal assumption of the model clearly positions the power and the responsibility for learning within the individual. Motivation is heavily influenced by two attitudinal constructs– integrativeness, which refers to the ways learners view other ethnic groups and the target one, in particular, and attitudes toward the learning situation. The latter entails learners' attitudes toward the specific context in which learning occurs (e.g., classroom environment, teacher, materials used, etc.).

The socio-educational model offers some explicit predictions. The first one claims that motivation should play a major role in determining who would continue foreign language study after it became optional. The second suggests that attitudinal and motivational variables determine how active a learner will be in the language classroom, and, finally, the third prediction declares that attitudinal and motivational factors are important causal variables in language acquisition.

These three hypotheses have been tested empirically. For instance, research in California (Bartley, 1970) has demonstrated that students who drop out of foreign language classes score lower on both language aptitude and language attitude tests than students who decide to stay. Gliksman (cited in Gardner & Lalonde, 1985) provides data in support of the second prediction. He studied students whom he labeled as integratively and instrumentally motivated. He found the former were not only more active in class but also more accurate than their instrumentally motivated classmates.

To test the third prediction, Gardner, Lalonde, and Moorcroft (1985) studied 170 university students and the way their language aptitude, motivation, and attitude toward French affected the L2 success. Over the course of the study, students were classified as high or low on language aptitude and high or low on integrative motivation. The research presented evidence suggesting that both language aptitude and the integrative motive could facilitate the rate of L2 learning. One wonders, however, how reliable these conclusions could be, considering that all the subjects were enrolled in an introductory psychology course (their participation is the study was a course requirement) and were not even registered in a foreign language class at the time. In other words, in this case, as in other studies using the model, students had to self-report their attitudes and motivation regarding French and the foreign language study in a quantitatively analyzed questionnaire.

In a more recent study, Kraemer (1993) tested the generalizability of the socio-educational model by taking it to a different socio-political context: She investigated 484 high-school students learning Arabic in Israel. She concluded that attitudes toward the L2 and the learning situation influenced the language outcome only indirectly through motivation. All in all, both cognitive ability, which she also assumed to be language aptitude, and affective factors

(instrumental and integrative motivation and attitudes) were predictors of language achievement. She argues, however, that the language ability factor was not linked to the affective variables of the model. On the other hand, certain social context variables–language background, parents' attitudes toward the study of Arabic, and perceptions of the Arab group–were significantly correlated to attitudes, orientations, and motivation.

Although Gardner and Lalonde purport that their model can be applied to both formal and natural environments, it is obvious from the theoretical assumptions and the research utilizing them that the socio-educational model targets primarily classroom settings. For example, the studies based on the model were all conducted in foreign language classrooms, chiefly French in bilingual socio-political contexts (Canada, the French studies in Louisiana, etc.). This model has yet to be tested in naturalistic settings, where, I believe, motivation would not be a singular determinant of L2 achievement.

2.2.2. Further critique of the models

So why are these models inadequate in describing the complexity of second language learners? As the review of these still viable theories demonstrates, they fail to account for the subject in the process of language acquisition and acculturation. Like other grand theories in sociology and psychology, they attempt to interpret a complex, socio-psychological phenomenon by building on one or two all-encompassing principles (Schumann's social and psychological distances, Gardner's motivation), thus describing a limited view of the relationships between L2 achievement and external factors. Moreover, as we saw in Schumann's case of Alberto and in Gardner's quantitative studies of classroom students, these grand theories imply that the learner is solely responsible for his/her success or the lack of it. The notion of motivation, for instance, oversimplifies the learner's subjectivity and the multiple factors s/he has to deal with. In other

words, the manifold voices of the subject, the social structures in which he/she is located and the constructive relations between them are missing.

Adopting a humanistic socio-psychological approach to the self, both theorists consider the learner in total isolation from her/his social surroundings and make her/him the sole agent in the language learning development. In addition, when examining the learner's language development, all aforementioned studies focus strictly on a syntactic-morphological level, while they ignore the level of discourse. Recent developments in psychology, however, have shown that individual agency is a much more complicated concept, and, indeed, is rarely individual. Rather, it is a product of the interactions between one's language, desires, and socio-cultural milieu. In the following section, I present two alternative approaches to language and the self—poststructuralism and Bakhtin's framework.

2.3. Post-humanist approaches to language and the self

I have worked on this study for almost three years. Even before I started formulating research questions and looking for participants, I had mused on the concepts underlying this work—not only as a scholar, but also as a learner of a second language and an Eastern European woman. The concepts shaping the core of this research are complex and slippery to define. I have found that the current state of SLA cannot account for the intricate interplay between gender, agency, and language learning, nor can it offer insight into the socio-psychological transformations my subjects have been undergoing. Thus, instead of employing a single framework, I have drawn from different theoretical anchors that helped me conceptualize my subjects' experiences. As a psycho-socio-linguist, interested into the lived realities of speaking agents, I have borrowed from and expanded on components from the poststructuralist feminist theory of language and experience and Bakhtin's notions of language and the self. Each of these

models is rather large in scope, and I do not intend to exploit them in their full complexity. Instead, I will focus on those key elements that I have found most relevant to my subjects and my research. I will be, above all, interested in the common thread underlying these models--the contention that language and discursive experiences are the constitutive forces that shape one's identity. I will also attempt to untangle the relationships between gender, agency, discourse, and experience. In addition, as I describe and analyze the data in subsequent chapters, I will continue to refer to pertinent theoretical notions and studies.

2.3.1. Subjectivity and language in feminist poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is a movement resisting neat definitions. This is not surprising, considering the large range of theories to which it has been extended, notably literary theory, psychoanalysis, and the social sciences. Poststructuralists, however, share some common perspectives on language and the self. Unlike traditional Western philosophy, which espouses the idea of a disembodied individual, governed by rational thought and personal agency, postmodern theories suggest that subjectivities are not given and autonomous. Rather, subjectivities are complex constructs that are socially embedded and represent a site of continuous power struggle. It is this critique of truth, subjectivity, and knowledge that has attracted feminist theorists to postmodern discourses. Feminists maintain that women have been systematically marginalized by traditional power relations and are perceived as the Other. I have found this concept of otherness pertinent to my own project and participants not only because of the power implications it carries, but also because of its production in language practices.

Feminist poststructuralist Weedon (1987) describes subjectivity as referring to "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (p. 32). Subjectivity, in this case coterminous

with social identity, is constructed in particular social contexts, where the individual assumes different subject positions. Unlike humanistic approaches, which accept that the individual possesses a unified and stable identity, poststructuralist theorists believe that the subject is never fixed. The self is fragmented, and, at the same time, constantly created and recreated within competing discourses. Thus, subjectivities are not only non-unitary but also "*necessarily contradictory*" [emphasis original] (Davies, 2000, p. 57). These contradictions arise as subjectivities are constructed through specific discourses, as the person is positioned in a different discourse at a certain point of time.

In poststructuralism, identity originates in everyday discursive practices. Reminiscent of language relativism (Whorf, 1956), which claimed that language determines our conceptualization processes, language in poststructuralism precedes and shapes the self. We can only come to interpret ourselves, our desires, and our losses through language. In this sense, our identities are functions of language. Identities are not the cause for the expression of voices; rather, it is through the voices that identities are created. I accentuate this feature as it will become particularly significant in a later discussion of the participants' lost voices. At the same time, the processes through which subjectivities are constructed are embedded not simply in acts of speaking and meaning-making, but also in the contexts and the relations in which the subjects are located.

What makes this model particularly noteworthy in the context of my research is its emphasis on language. Language occupies a central place in poststructuralist theories. It is not merely a reflection of reality but an active force that defines the social establishment of the self. For example, Weedon writes, "Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it

is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed" (p. 21). In a similar vein, I argue that language, and, more specifically, second language achievement is not just an expression of one's individuality, or a result of the sum of personality traits, level of motivation, or social distance. Rather, it is language that constructs the individual subjectivity (identity)[1] in ways "which are socially specific" (Weedon, p. 21). Thus, one's sense of self is interpreted through language and discursive practices.

Discourse has been a pervasive term in recent socio-psychological and language research, and its definitions have varied depending on writers' theoretical orientations. Here, I follow Harre and Langenhove's (Harre & Vangenhove, 1999) definition of discursive practices. These postmodern psychologists use the term to denote "all the ways in which people actively produce social and psychological realities" (p. 34). Discourses become the means of thinking and producing meaning. According to Weedon, they "constitute the meaning of the physical body, psychic energy, the emotions and desire as well as conscious subjectivity" (p. 109). It is through taking up (or not being able to, for that matter) a certain discourse that a subject is created.

The notion of discursive practices is closely related to positioning. As Davies (1989) writes, the acknowledgment that discourses are the force which create subject positions, and therefore subjectivity is essential for the new-psycho-socio-linguists, with whom I position myself. Davies and Harre (1999) propose the term position as an alternative to 'role', an older concept in sociology. Other postmodern psychologists have developed the term further. Moghaddam (1999) suggests the process of reflexive positioning, where people position themselves intentionally or unintentionally in a certain unfolding story (e.g., diary, autobiography, or interview). Because discursive positions are dynamic and fluid, and reveal

[1] Throughout the document, I use the terms 'identity' and 'subjectivity' interchangeably. I should point out, though, that poststructuralists and social constructionists often prefer the latter to 'identity'.

only fragments of the subject, the reflexive positions the speaker/narrator is assuming shift as well. Thus, people can simultaneously position themselves on different levels, a process Moghaddam calls “parallel positioning.”

In other types of positioning, people can situate each other in their discursive realities. Langenhove and Harre (1999) introduce interpersonal positioning, in which people can deliberately and even forcefully position other people within a discursive event. Both intrapersonal and interpersonal positioning are always shifting, re-emerging, and re-defining. This is fairly reminiscent of the social constructionist view, which emphasizes process rather than structures (Burr, 1995). Thus, in postmodern approaches to the self, the person her/himself is a process rather than a structure. So far, positioning theory has been mostly applied to studies in the areas of clinical psychology and intergroup relations.

Multiplicity is important in positioning theory. In this project, it signifies the subjects’ assumptions of different positions as they move across contexts and discursive realities. This fluidity can occur on two levels—diachronically and synchronically. For example, as I am interviewing Boris, I am not just hearing one voice. His voices are coming to me across the time and contexts—the voice of a successful vice president of a building company, the voice of the architect, Boris in his current position of a construction worker, and Boris, the proud father of two daughters and two son-in-laws. While these voices are moving across time and geographical and social locations, it is obvious that, in their hybridity, they represent the person in front of me, in the particularity of this narrative and situation.

The (dubious) possibility of agency in poststructuralism

In her book, *A Body of Writing: 1990-1999*, Davies aptly juxtaposes the concept of agency in humanistic and poststructuralist discourses. In the former, the self is coherent and

rational, capable of making choices and practicing her/his personal will. In this process, language is a "transparent tool" used to plan and achieve changes. Ratner (2000) provides a detailed critique of what he calls individualistic approaches (e.g., Bruner and Valsiner, cited in Ratner) to agency and culture. Agency, to individualist psychologists, is a personal construct, which gives a person an active role as a participant in making and remaking the culture. Thus, society is composed of individual behaviors and individual acts of personal significance.

Poststructuralists reject the image of a holistic, rational self. Instead, they forward the belief that

> One can only ever be what the various discourses make possible, and one's being shifts with the various discourses through which one is spoken into existence (Davies, p. 57).

The use of passive voice above is not accidental. It stresses an individual's inability to orchestrate her own reality. Rather, one finds oneself situated in different positions made available by discourses. Davies expounds on this view of agency by analyzing an autobiographical episode from *Lake Wobegon Days* by Keilor. The author of the book depicts how boys are being subjected, and how they take up the discourse of subjection. As several school boys are riding their bikes, a football coach, using abusive language, throws them into the discourse of homosexuality. Davies suggests that the boys, having no relation to the popular and macho football game, concede to the coach's more dominant social discourse. What is strikingly missing in this illustration is resistance. I kept going back to the passage over and over again. Could the boys have resisted taking up the homosexual discourse? How could they have expressed their resistance? Neither Keilor nor Davies provides us with satisfactory answers to

these questions. As we shall see in later chapters, however, resistance is an important aspect of agency.

While agency is not synonymous with autonomy, some feminists have recognized the need for "subjective transformation" and consciousness raising. I embrace the stance brought forth by feminist researcher Hekman (1999), who states, "Socially constructed selves are not social dupes, but agents who act and resist" (p. 21). She goes on to suggest that this aspect of identity has been often neglected. In a similar vein, Butler (1990) writes that construction is not opposed to agency; it is the scene where agency is expressed and becomes culturally intelligible. Acknowledging the centrality of discourses in the production of meanings, Biklen (1995) claims that people are not "automatons" who simply obey the rules without questioning. In contrast, they attempt to negotiate and re-negotiate meanings in their everyday activities.

The concept of agency does not liberate the self from its discursive constitution. It stems from the self's ability to resist a certain discourse and create new opportunities to establish one's voice. Agency, closely related to the concept of authority, could be defined as

> a sense of oneself as one who can go beyond the given meaning in any one discourse and forge something new, through a combination of previously unrelated discourses, through the invention of words and concepts that capture a shift in consciousness that is beginning to occur, or through imaging not what *is*, but what *might be*. (Davies, 2000 p. 67).

It is the process of this shift of consciousness, this transformation that I was searching for in my informants through their narratives. What I intend to show in this project is how these adult second language learners became speaking agents by analyzing their positions and negotiating

certain discourses. Thus, I maintain that guiding the students to analyze their discursive positions and to access available discourses should be a primary goal for ESL instructors.

Language and experience

The link between learning and experience has been an important, but implicit element in adult education. Largely, it has been taken for granted, and no critical theory of experience has been offered (Usher, 1989). Usher argues that adult educators, wishing to problematize the concept of experience, should turn to socially-constructed theories of the self and consider poststructuralists' notion of subjectivity. Postmodern approaches hinge on the relations between subjectivity and language with respect to experience. They discard the belief that experience has an inherent meaning or essence. While in humanistic terms language functions as a mirror reflecting one's experiences, to poststructuralists and postmodern psychologists, it is language and discursive practices that give meaning to one's experience and, often, the meanings can be multiple and contradictory.

Experience is at the core of the subject construction. It can validate what one already knows or can disturb this sense of knowing. Because subjects are constructed discursively, any experience is a linguistic event. In her often-cited essay, "The Evidence of Experience," Scott (1999) puts it succinctly: "Experience is a subject's history. Language is the site of history's enactment" (p. 93). Thus, when I was gathering data, I was interested in the lived experiences of my participants and the language practices that constituted them.

SLA studies espousing feminist poststructuralism

A few SLA researchers have turned to postmodern theories of social psychology. Notably, Peirce (1995) investigated how immigrant women approached the target language. Drawing on Weedon's feminist postructuralism, this researcher emphasized the importance of

individual experience within the concept of subjectivity. "Language investment" is another key concept in Peirce's poststructuralist model. Borrowing Bourdieu's notion of "cultural capital," Peirce uses the term language investment as an alternative to Gardner's motivation. She argues that the latter does not reflect the complex relations between power, identity, and language learning. Furthermore, motivation is viewed as a fixed personality trait, a property of the learner. Instead, the researcher suggests language investment, which attempts to capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world. It conceives of the language learner as having a complex social identity and multiple desires. The notion presupposes that when language learners speak, "they are not only exchanging information... but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world" (Peirce, 1995, pp. 17-18). When investing in their L2, learners also invest in their social identities which continually change "across time and space" (p. 18).

A case in point is Eva, one of Peirce's informants, who, upon going to Canada, landed a job in an Italian store. Being fluent in Italian and situated in an Italian-speaking neighborhood, Eva couldn't find opportunities to speak English. After completing an ESL course, however, she decided to get a job at an English-speaking restaurant, where she could practice English more often. In the beginning, Eva didn't feel comfortable approaching her native-speaking co-workers because of her illegitimate English; i.e., she perceived herself in an immigrant position and believed that people lawfully treated her as inferior on this account. Gradually, as Eva's communicative competence improved, she developed a perception of her own right to speak. She learned to accept her accent as part of her identity, and instead of blaming herself for not being socially received, she started to challenge the social practices of her workplace. Thus,

from the humble immigrant, Eva became a multicultural citizen with an awareness of her power to initiate and control interactions in the second language.

While Peirce claims that she is researching gender, her analysis does not illuminate gender as a factor in second language learning. Her subjects are also all female. The term *language investment* will become particularly vital as I discuss the ways male and female learners invest in L2. Peirce doesn't offer a precise definition of the term. In this study, expounding on her notion, I suggest that linguistic investment includes all ways in which the subjects *consciously* choose to improve their second language (e.g., studying formal grammar rules, reading in English, or speaking in the L2). An important aspect of this term is the participants' being purposeful about the activity.

Building on Peirce's article, McKay and Wong (1996), focused on four Chinese immigrant subjects in a high school in California, and studied how these students acquire writing skills in the L2 and, at the same time, negotiated their multiple identities. The authors assumed that these multiple identities are constructed through multiple discourses, where discourse is defined as "a set of historically grounded statements that exhibit regularities in presuppositions, thematic choices, values, etc.; that delimit what can be said about something, by whom, when, where, and how..." (p. 579). McKay and Wong also employed Peirce's "language investment", suggesting that different discourses shape the investment their informants made toward the L2.

The following types of discourses emerged in the study: colonialist/racialized discourses on immigrants, exerted through teachers and their aids; model-minority discourse related to Asians in the U.S. and expressed by both teachers and Chinese parents; Chinese cultural nationalist discourses (plural because of its multiple meanings), referring to the nature of being Chinese. The latter, the authors claimed, were essential to young immigrants and helped them

define their identities in terms of place of origin, family background, and dialect. What's more, the subjects seemed to deploy the cultural nationalist discourses to counteract the colonialist/racialized discourses on immigrants and school discourses.

McKay and Wong described school discourses–social and academic—as the proper attitudes and behaviors for a student. For example, social discourses in this context relate to peer relationships, what is socially accepted and popular. Seating arrangements, assignments, and grading compose the academic dimension of this discourse. Finally, McKay and Wong introduced gender discourses which produce female and male, homosexual and heterosexual identities in a particular culture. These discourses affect not only students but also their parents. Because in Chinese culture boys are expected to be more academically successful than girls, and girls more artistically involved than academically, the new social context pressed for modifications of these gender categories, thus constructing new gender identities.

The researchers followed the subjects through seventh and eight grades visiting their ESL classes. Their findings "confirm" (p. 603) Peirce's framework and, simultaneously, extend and refine it, according to McKay and Wong. The authors concluded that the students' specific needs, desires, and negotiation were not autonomous from the goal of L2 learning but determine their investment in the target language. While Peirce's adult subjects' multiple identities created investment-enhancing effects, McKay and Wong found the opposite. Their adolescent informants didn't increase their proficiency level between written language assessments. It is obvious, however, that Peirce's study and McKay and Wong's focused on very different contexts.

McKay and Wond expand the view of language investment, claiming that investment can be "highly selective" (p. 604) in one or a combination of the four language modalities: listening,

speaking, reading, and writing. They refute the popular beliefs that these skills are developed sequentially and that proficiency in one also reveals proficiency in another. On the contrary, McKay and Wong argue that the four skills have different values for the learners depending on their social and academic needs.

Drawing on the notion of subjectivity, LoCastro (1998) examines her own second language learning process as she focuses on the relation between language and social identity. Unlike Peirce and McKay and Wong, she limits her research to analyzing her pragmatic competence. LoCastro, who studied Japanese in Japan, poses three major questions: the role of formal instruction in Japan in pragmatic development, the influence of the social context on this development, and the role of the learner's socio-cultural identity.

LoCastro found that the formal instructional context (teaching, materials, rote learning) could not help her function socially in the academic community in which she was immersed. This may be explained by the teaching methods employed in the Japanese classroom, where, as LoCastro writes, the students were not taught the authentic version of Japanese, but Japanese as a language for foreigners. Memorization and rote learning were also emphasized as principles of language learning. LoCastro concludes that the effect of formal instruction on pragmatic competence is rather localized and should not be extended to the context of formal learning in general.

LoCastro describes her social status as that of an associate professor at a prestigious university, thus, middle to upper class. Because of her discrepant cultural background, she found the hierarchical, social status difference difficult and even embarrassing. For example, when her addressee held a higher position, s/he was free to use informal Japanese with her, but she was not

allowed to use the same stylistic level. LoCastro claims that these discrepancies impeded her ability to learn and practice L2 appropriately.

Another factor limiting her SLA was "the boundary maintenance behavior" (p. 10), which places the non-Japanese in a restricted social context, even those who were in academia. As a result, the researcher was not able to socialize outside her academic environment, where she was accepted as a professional and language teacher. LoCastro believes that this imposed distance has made it difficult to improve her pragmatic competence. Consequently, situating her multiple subjectivity (female professional and feminist) in a non-egalitarian context, LoCastro found herself in a constant struggle "against stereotypes and prejudices" (p. 12).

Siegal (1996) analyzes the role of learner subjectivity, looking at learner identity, social position, and L2 sociolinguistic competence of a white woman studying Japanese in Japan. The researcher asks how the language learner's perception of herself and views of her own second language affect sociolinguistic competence. In other words, Siegal embraces Becker's (cited in Siegal) assumption that the learner constructs self and identity through a second language. Drawing on Goffman (cited in Siegal), the author also believes that the concept of face ("the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others presume he has taken during a particular contact" (Goffman, in Siegal, p. 362)) is essential for second language learners and becomes a way of presenting their selves. In Siegal's view, L2 learners, being aware of power relationships within the social order, are not passive emulators of native speakers, but active constructors of interlanguage and an accompanying second language identity.

Siegal's case study subject is a "white professional woman in her mid-40s" situated and learning Japanese at a university in Japan. The analysis showed that Mary strove at being polite,

especially with her male, native-speaking professor. At the same time, due to imperfect pragmatic competence, she was likely to use situationally inappropriate linguistic forms. For example, she might fail to use an honorific form when required by the context. Mary's professor, however, was not offended by her pragmatic oversights because of her Western identity. (This contrasts with the experience non-Western foreign students in Japan have reported.)

This demonstrates that Mary's identity of a Western white woman helped define her second language persona as well. For example, unlike other students, when making a sociolinguistic faux pas, she wasn't corrected by her superiors. Moreover, as Siegal reports, despite Mary's sincere attempts to be respectful and feminine, she never completely understood "how polite women were in Japan" (p. 363). While Mary was deferent to her professor, she also tried to establish herself as a serious language learner and a researcher, who is on "(almost) equal standing with the professor" (p. 367). In Peirce's terms, this example illustrates the establishment of a second language persona as a site of social struggle. It is obvious that, in the construction of second language learner identities, the L2 achievement is not the only determinant. Societal position, race, class, and gender define what is considered pragmatically appropriate and what not.

Siegal's comment is interesting because it involves another type of subjectivity–not just the learner's subjectivity, but the subjectivity of the native speaker. As Mary's case has shown, native speakers do not view second language learners impartially. Social position, cultural background, race, and place of origin determine not only learners' perceptions of selves and their second languages, but also how they are perceived by others, notably by native speakers of the

L2. I argue that this interaction of perceptions creates the active and dialogic nature of second language subjectivities.

2.3.2. Dialogic approaches to language and identity

In this section, I will outline alternative approaches to language and self as I focus on my reading of Bakhtin's notions of language, dialogue and the self. Given the extensive scope of Bakhtin's philosophy, I will only consider concepts relevant to this study. At the same time, I will attempt to illuminate the parallels between Bakhtin and feminist poststructuralists and claim that Bakhtin can enrich the latter, especially when it comes to agency. While Bakhtin was writing about literary works, educators have long come to appreciate the pertinence of his framework to current socio-educational contexts and theories.

Dialogism and heteroglossia

Bakhtin stresses the interactive, relational nature of language and identity. To him, "The dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of *any* discourse" (1981, p. 279). Similar to poststructuralists' acknowledgment of the multiplicity of social discourse, Bakhtin speaks of the stratification of language:

> Language—like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives—is never unitary. It is unitary only in the abstract grammatical system or normative forms, taken in isolation from the concrete, ideological conceptualizations that fill it, and in isolation from the uninterrupted process of historical becoming that is characteristic of all living languages (p. 288).

The Russian thinker introduces the term "heteroglossia" (*raznorechie*) which highlights diverse world views, meanings and values in language. As Pollock (1993) summarizes, "Heteroglossia is

the web of dotted lines within language—dialects, sociolects, idiolects, as well as national idioms—which allows for change" (p. 233). In this framework, not unlike in poststructuralism, meaning is never fixed. The boundaries between these dialects and discourses are fluid, rather than permanent. Elements of one dialect or sociolect can cross over, and thus, force the negotiation and even creation of new meanings. Thus, language, to Bakhtin, is always plural. These languages reflect different social histories, experiences and values. In Morson and Emerson's (1990) words, "what constitutes these different languages is… extralinguistic: a specific way of conceptualizing, understanding, and evaluating the world. A complex of experiences, shared… evaluations, ideas, and attitudes "knit together" to produce a way of speaking" (p. 141). Given, when Bakhtin speaks of "heteroglossia," he is concerned with discourse of the novel. The implications of his concept, however, extend far beyond the area of literary criticism. The notion of heteroglossia ensconces a deeply democratic and political meaning, as in the philosopher's own words, it "permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 263).

I would argue that the concept of heteroglossia is particularly relevant for second language education, as "language"--a web of heterogeneous discourses-- will allow for the inclusion of speakers of multiple cultural backgrounds with their variety of accents and idiosyncrasies. "Discourses," writes Hicks (2000, p. 241), "entail accentuation; they reflect the intonations of particular persons or social groups and the special accentuation of an individual speaker or writer." To Chomsky (1965; 1986) and other formalists, interlanguage does not even enter the area of "natural" languages. To most L2 researchers, interlanguage[2] is a necessary, but awkward, nevertheless, step on the pathway to the goal—a native-like competency in the L2.

[2] Interlanguage is Selinker's (1972) term for the systematic knowledge of a second language a learner has at a given moment

What does native-like mean, anyway, and to whom? And what about older learners like the participants in this study, who realize that they will never acquire English "perfect", but have to use it? "Heteroglossia," in its multiplicity, would give interlanguage a new ideological status and a right to many second language learners to author themselves in English.

Heteroglossia is related to another popular Bakhtianian concept—dialogue—though the two are not identical. While heteroglossia stratifies and enriches meaning, "dialogue is the location of meaning" (Pollock, 1993, p. 235). According to Bakhtin (1984), our human consciousness is dialogic itself:

> Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium (p. 293).

It is through these active dialogic processes that the individual perceives his/her self and establishes her/his agency. To Bakhtin, the self is constructed in dialogue:

> Dialogue here is not the threshold to action, it is the action itself. It is not a means for revealing, for bringing to the surface the already ready-made character of a person: no, in dialogue a person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the first time that which he is… (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 252).

It would be an oversimplification to assume that dialogue involves one person speaking or writing to another. Dialogue, in a Bakhtinian sense, is a socially embedded, meaning-making process. One's voice is inevitably entangled with others. It is impossible to voice oneself without

appropriating others' words. In his theory of language, Bakhtin argues that linguistic forms have already been used in a variety of settings. The user of language has to make them his/her own, to populate them with his/her own intentions and accent. In this sense, the nature of language use is essentially dialogical. This is precisely what she means when Kristeva introduces "intertextuality" (Oliver, 1997, p. 9) and when she writes, "Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks us abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder" (Kristeva, 1991, p. 1). It is this appropriation of others' discourses and making them one's own with our individual accents, desires, and actions, which comes to denote agency.

The authoring self

In poststructuralist terms, individuals cannot author texts: They can only give voice to the existing discourses. This makes agency a rather vague possibility. In Bakhtin's work, however, we recognize what Burkitt (1998) calls "the rebirth of the author" (p. 163). Authoring is a concept closely related to agency—the notion many feminists (e.g., Heckman) and other posthumanistic researchers have found conspicuously circumvented in poststructuralism. The author, as presented in Bakhtinian thought, however, is not the "old" agent, who is removed from his/her social milieu. In contrast, the author is recast as a speaker, who employs particular sets of speech genres. What Bakhtin names "speech genres" corresponds to the term discourses in modern socio-psychological and linguistic sciences. In other words, the language user is discursively constructed as he/she actively utilizes a specific discourse. This is perhaps the main distinction between Bakhtin and poststructuralism—the possibility for the user of language to participate actively in discursive and relational networks. While in poststructuralism, discourses seem limiting as they constrain their users to certain positions, in Bakhtin discourses do not

position the individual like a puppet. Rather, as Burkitt puts it, "individuals actively use speech genres to orient themselves in their relationships and interactions" (p. 165).

Importantly, in both frameworks, the individual cannot function in isolation, and language use is meaningless without the appropriate discursive environment. In the active making of meaning, the self authors his/her world, but the self is not a free agent. S/he draws on preexisting materials like Levi-Strauss's *bricoleur* (cited in Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998, p. 170). To socio-cultural anthropologists Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain,

> agency lies in the improvisations that people create in response to particular situations, mediated by these senses and sensitivities. They opportunistically use whatever is at hand to affect their position in the cultural game in the experience of which they have formed these sets of dispositions (p. 279).

Building on Bakhtin, the authors claim that we are always involved in answering what is directed toward us and interpreting what is happening. As we give voice to our experiences and interpretations, we are authoring ourselves and the meaning of action itself. This process of authoring and establishing our identities is far from being smooth, linear, and one-directional. Rather, in Bakhtin's own words:

> This process—experimenting by turning persuasive discourse into speaking persons—becomes especially important in those cases where a struggle… has already begun, where someone is striving to liberate himself from the influence of such an image and its discourse by means of objectification… The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness is enormous. One's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will

> sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse (1981, p. 348).

Similar to poststructuralists and social constructionists, Bakhtin accentuates the processual nature of the self and his/her becoming a speaking subject. Speaking of the hero in Dostoevsky's novels, Bakhtin (1984) points out that the heroes are unfinalizable, and a person continues to grow, constituted by an ongoing, lived experience. Thus, to Bakhtin, the self is creative and dynamic, someone, who constantly re-evaluates desires, meanings, and contexts: "*Poka chelovek jiv, on jivet tem, shto eshe ne zavershen i eshe ne skazal svoego poslednego slovo*" (As long as one lives, he lives for that he is still not finalized and still hasn't said his last word) (Bakhtin, 1979, p. 68). This inextricable link between one's very existence and her/his words is essential in understanding the Bakhtinian subject. His subject is a complex socio-psychological construct that defies formulaic interpretations: "*Chelovek nikogda ne sovpadaet s samim soboi. K nemu nel'zya primenit' formulu tojdestva: A est' A"* (One never coincides with him/herself. The equation formula A is A doesn't apply to the self) (p. 69). At the same time, this complex subject is able to enact and re-create her/himself through the power of words:

> *V cheloveke vsegda est' shto-to , shto tol'ko sam on mojet otkryt' v svobodnom acte samoznaniya i slova, chto ne poddaetsya ovneshnyaushemu zaochnamu opredeleniyu*. The self always posseses something which only he/she can discover in the free act of self-consciousness and words, something that is not subject to an externalizing ready definition (1979, p. 68).

Thus, one can only author her/himself through language. The excerpt above reveals that Bakhtin's philosophy of the self is, as Gurevich (1992) puts it, *chelovekocentrichny* (person-centered), not culture-centered (p. 95). Even when he analyzes culture, Bakhtin doesn't assume

that it defines the individual as current theories in language and gender have assumed. Culture, to Bakhtin, as Gurevich explains, is an anthropological phenomenon and a consequence of a complex human subjectivity. This Bakhtinian emphasis on active awareness and the creative potential of the self are what I found unique and crucial for my own study as I later discuss how the participants' agencies and language are interwoven.

Everyday, lived experiences

What further attracted me to Bakhtin's philosophy is his emphasis on everyday experiences, which inevitably contain our voices, judgments, and moral values. In *Toward the Philosophy of the Act* (1993), Bakhtin contemplates the split between grand theoretical systems and the world of practice and experience. This resonates with feminist Smith's stance that, as researchers and theorists, we remain oblivious to daily life, how it functions and, especially, "how people are knitted into the extended social relations of a contemporary capitalist economy…" (cited in Gardiner, 2000, p. 198).

Trying to capture this dynamic and creative process of developing the self, Holland and Skinner (1997) introduce the term "lived worlds." Just as speakers populate words with their own meaning, humans figure their worlds by culturally and socially constructing them, assuming different subject positions in different contexts and at different stages of the process. Agency is an essential component of identity establishment, and, in this, Holland and Skinner claim they differ from discourse analysis theory in current psychology (e.g., Davies, Harre, and Van Langenhove). They particularly disagree with the latter's equation of identity and subject positions in discourse:

> Being subjected to such positions, being treated as though one fit such positions, *are* crucial events in the individual's development of identity, but as any developmental

> approach would argue, the individual must be recognized as having a *history-in-person*. That is, identities are developed over time in experience. They are not totally redefined at the instant one is exposed to another discourse and a different subject position (p. 198, emphasis original).

Thus, to the authors, discourse theory disregards human development. They also go on to suggest that agency is not simply an aspect of identity or vice versa, but identity, agency, and lived worlds are co-developed and interrelated in an ongoing process.

Language is a critical component in this co-development. In their later work, Holland et al. (1998) prefer to speak of "figured worlds", which are complex socially generated realms of interpretations: "A figured world is formed and re-formed in relation to everyday activities and events…" (p. 53). But at the same time, the anthropologists equate figured worlds with narratives or dramatization, implying that language is at the core of these processes. This is another significant difference between poststructuralism and the neo-Bakhtinian socio-historic view, as Holland et al. call it: By interpreting oneself through narratives, one can re-interpret or re-author herself/himself. I have found this particular value of narratives and making meaning of the self critical in my own work with the participants. By evaluating and naming the world around them, they have claimed their own transformations and have asserted their own figured worlds through language practices.

In this chapter, I have attempted to position myself as a theorist and researcher within the umbrella of two major discourses: poststructuralism and Bakhtinian socio-cultural views of language and the self. I have highlighted the major similarities and differences between the two, illustrating how they can complement and enrich each other. I argue that both SLA theories and practices can benefit from drawing on the concepts of discourse, dialogue, and heteroglossia. As

Hicks (1996b) writes, “A focus on discourse as an important semiotic tool has also begun to make a strong appearance in the field of education” (p. 103). At the same time, she recognizes that the focus on discourse is “relatively new even within that community of educators.” While some L2 researchers have turned to poststructuralist notions of identity, the Bakhtinian relational model is still a novel area to explore in our field. Thus, by grounding this work into the suggested models, I also hope to trace a trajectory for future second language investigation.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Describing qualitative research as interdisciplinary, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) compare qualitative and quantitative inquiries:

> The word *qualitative* implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured... in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry... They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (p. 4).

Considering the questions of the proposed study and complex relationships among the subjects and their environment, on one hand, and the researcher and studied phenomena, on the other, qualitative methodology seems a pertinent approach. While quantitative researchers rely on distant, one-time questionnaires and surveys, qualitative investigators explore the informant's perspective through interviews and observations over a certain period.

The type of qualitative inquiry this study on which this study draws on is known as grounded theory. Introduced by Glaser and Strauss in the 70s (cited in Strauss & Corbin, 1994) and later expanded by Strauss and Corbin (1990), this methodological approach stresses the development of theory, based on the collected and analyzed data. Suggesting a new theoretical framework is only one possibility, however. Researchers using grounded theory can also build on existing models appropriate to the study. As data accumulate and are analyzed, investigators elaborate and modify the already existing theory. Vaughan (1992) defines this process as theoretical elaboration. Vaughan also specifies that theory in this case denotes "theoretical tools

in general" (p. 175), for example, concepts or models, rather than a formal "set of interrelated propositions that are testable and explain some phenomenon" (p. 175).

Layder (1993) has expressed a similar understanding of theory in qualitative research. Distinguishing between theory testing (mostly, quantitative approaches) and theory building (mostly, qualitative), he claims that theory building is the goal in grounded theory. Grounded theory, as described by Layder, underscores the human factor in society and the subjective aspects of social life in general. Moreover, what particularly suits my study is the stress on how individuals construct their social milieus. Thus, Layder urges researchers to consider open-ended forms of theory "rather than ones that narrowly specify the relations between precisely measured variables" (p. 15).

This methodology encourages the qualitative researcher to explore the multiple voices and perspectives emerging in a study. Another advantage of using grounded theory is that it allows us to "respond to and change" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 276) as dictated by our data or the times. For instance, grounded theory investigators have been influenced by different intellectual trends–ethnomethodology, postmodernism, feminism–and, thus, have the flexibility to conceptualize data according to different modes of analysis.

While grounded theory has strongly influenced this project, I have realied on a combination of grounded theory techniques and exteranal categories provided by the theoretical frameworks. For example, I have drawn on components of feminist research methodologies, which foreground the lived experiences of women (and participants in general in my case). There are several characteristics underlying feminist research: the preference of qualitative methods, and particularly narratives, the focus on experience, and reflexivity. In addition, feminist researchers argue that research should approach the informants as actively constructing and

interpreting the realities that constitute their everyday lives (Smith, 1987). This last component has been especially significant in my own research as I have focused on how my subjects analyze their own experiences and voice them as reflective agents.

3.1. Introducing the Participants

The context for this study was a Mid-western city in the United States. The nature of my research encouraged purposeful sampling, and I knew was looking for highly educated Eastern European couples. Interestingly, I met all of my participants fortuitously. I had known one of the couples from a previous study, in which I studied the interlanguage (the systematic knowledge a learner has about the L2) development of two Eastern European women.

3.1.1. Vera and Aleksei

I had met Vera and Aleksei before I met the other three couples. Vera was one of the two participants in a smaller study. We met accidentally as I was renewing my driver's license, and Vera was getting her first American one. Waiting in line, I overheard Vera and Aleksei conversing in English. I approached them, introduced myself, and asked whether Vera would consider working with me on a study. She immediately acquiesced, and we exchanged phone numbers. Later, when I decided to work with couples in my dissertation study because of my interest in gender, I contacted the family.

Vera and Aleksei are in their early fifties. They arrived in the States in 1997 from Russia. In their hometown, Vera was a well-known TV and radio journalist, and, at an earlier point of her career, she had also worked as a Spanish language teacher. In the States, Vera was employed as a kitchen manager for the first several years. Her duties varied widely from purchasing products to managing parties and large social gatherings. In the beginning of 2001, she went into a catering business for herself. Aleksei used to be a physical education teacher and a basketball

coach in Russia. In the immigrant country, he was working as a mechanic at local factory. The couple has a twenty-something son, who is not living with them. When I first met Vera and Aleksei, they had been in the U.S. for about six months. Vera had studied little English just before she left Russia. Aleksei knew only isolated words when we met.

3.1.2. Sylvia and Boris

Sylvia and Boris, in their late 40s, are from Ukraine and arrived in the States in 1999. Sylvia has a degree in communications engineering, which she practiced in her home country. Boris is an architect. Upon arriving, Boris got a job as a construction worker to help support his family. Initially, Sylvia was unemployed. Later, she became a fitting room helper at a TJ Max store, and, currently, she is working as a clerk at a bank. Boris and Sylvia came here with their two married daughters, Natalia and Lydia, who are in their twenties, and live independently of their parents. Sylvia and Boris share an apartment with Sylvia's elderly mother, who frequently requires her daughter's attention. Boris had studied German in Ukraine and knew no English except for some words in isolation when he came to the States. Sylvia had studied some English in high school and college, but she admitted she didn't remember much.

3.1.3. Natalia and Dmitri

I first met Natalia when she was a student in my ESL class in the fall quarter of 1999. I approached her and asked whether she and her husband would participate in my study. I stressed that this would not affect her student standing in the course in any way although I should say Natalia was not concerned about that—she realized she was one of the best students in the class. (Moreover, our teacher-student relationship ended in December the same year, but she remained willing to participate in the study even after the class.) Natalia and her husband both agreed.

Later, when I found that Natalia's parents and sister were also in the States and in the

same city, I invited them to take part in my project. They were eager to accept. As Sylvia later admitted, they rarely had a chance to engage in an informal conversation in English, so they welcomed this chance to practice their ESL skills. Natalia and her husband, Dmitri, are in their mid twenties. Dmitri holds a computer science degree from a Ukrainian university, but, upon coming to the States, he decided to get another, "American" degree in the same field. Natalia was in the middle of her business studies when her family decided to leave Ukraine. In the States, she was initially a part-time, and now is a full-time student in finance. At the same time, she has worked part-time at two jobs: as an assistant in a small legal firm and a waitress in a local restaurant. Dmitri is a part-time student in computer science. He used to supplement his income as a waiter for several months after arriving in the States, but now, he is working full-time as a programmer for a computer company.

3.1.4. Lydia and Peter

Natalia's sister, Lydia, lives here with her Ukrainian husband, Peter. Lydia had just earned an engineering degree in her home country, and Peter holds a B.S. in computers. Currently, Lydia is pursuing a degree in computer science herself and is working part-time as a programmer. Her husband is employed full time by the same company. When I met the last three couples, they had all been in the U.S. for eight months. The two younger couples had studied English in college in Ukraine, but they believed their classroom learning had not been successful. Before leaving for the States, they had received some private tutoring, which they deemed more beneficial. To recapitulate, while none of the participants had had extensive formal training in English in their home countries, the level of their English skills varied when I met them. The two younger couples (Natalia and Dmitri and Peter and Lydia) demonstrated an overall higher proficiency than the two older couples.

3.2. Data generation procedures

The major data generation procedure for this study was the interview. I had interviewed Vera for my previous study in the beginning of 1998 (from January to April). I began meeting with the couples for this current project in October 1999. The interview data collection continued through June, 2001. The total number of the interviews recorded was 37 (ten with Vera and Aleksei, 12 with Sylvia and Boris, eight with Natalia and Dmitri, and seven with Lydia and Peter). The interviews were typically between one and two hours long. Each interview was tape recorded and, later, transcribed on a computer. The first interviews were semi-structured. As the data collection progressed, however, the responses took the shape of life-experience stories. For example, I would ask, "So, tell me how you've been over the last couple of weeks? What happened? Who did you speak with?" Typically, however, previous interviews provided the topics for our discussions. Often, the informants would just say, "Oh, this is what I wanted to tell you" or "Something happened, and I thought, 'Oh, I should mention this to Gergana."

I preferred these open-ended interviews because I wanted to acknowledge the participants' voices and to give them the opportunity to speak for themselves. Admittedly, in the very beginning of this research process, I did get frustrated when my interviewees casually ignored my interview guide and introduced other topics. Later, however, I learned to recognize that this act was not accidental. Rather, it was an expression of agency, in which they opted to discuss the experiences most relevant to their everyday interactions and discursive experiences. In Bakhtinian terms, I welcomed their self-revelation in "a free act of self-consciousness and discourse" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 58).

The interviews were conducted in English for several reasons. Russian is not my native language, although I understand it fairly well. However, the main reason for favoring English

was because I also wanted to collect interlanguage data in English and "hear" how the participants voice themselves in the second language. At times, my participants themselves (e.g., Sylvia and Boris) have expressed the desire to speak English with me because it helped them with their conversational skills. However, the subjects frequently switched to Russian when emotional or when not able to find the English equivalent of their meaning. (For interview excerpts, please see Appendix A.)

Franklin (1997) outlines three models of the interview process—the information extraction, shared understanding, and discourse model. In the first, as its name suggests, the researcher "extracts" ideas and feelings from the interviewee. This traditional model positions the interviewer as the interlocutor with the more active role. The second type, shared understanding, assumes the structure of an interpersonal situation, where the interviewer's characteristics are expected to influence the content of the interviewer. The third type, a discourse model, views the interview as an interaction rather than a guided monologue. Here, the power relations between the researcher and the participant are more balanced as the interview is a result of collaboration. In this mode, the researcher's role could be fairly active as s/he contributes to the construction of the interview process with comments, responses and questions that elaborate on what has been said.

In my work as a qualitative researcher, I have built on the last two models. Shared understanding was implicit from the beginning: My being a female born in Eastern Europe created an immediate link between me and the participants. This fostered my role as an "insider," somebody who comprehends their experiences and struggles. Instances of the discourse model are fairly frequent in the data as well. For example, my contributions were not only expected, but also required by the participants. Shifting the roles was not unusual, either, as the participants

might turn the interview and pose a direct question to me. In other cases, a participant would take charge of the interview process. Thus, my position and my informants' were fairly well balanced in terms of power relations.

I met with each of the couples at their homes, typically at night and after work. I strove to interview them as couples whenever possible, hoping that their interaction may lend insight into issues of gender. However, because of the families' busy schedules, I have conducted some of the interviews individually (i.e., without the respective spouse). While Sylvia and Boris and their daughters' families obviously knew each other well, I rarely encountered the families together during my interview sessions. I never tried to observe them together, because family dynamics was not the focus of this project.

Prior to the interviews, each of the participants was asked to complete two questionnaires. Questionnaire 1 (Appendix B) aimed to elicit general background information, for the collection of which I did not want to use valuable interview time. The second questionnaire (Appendix C) was reflective. Kramsch and Lam (1999) comment on the importance of writing, claiming that "textuality itself can serve as a catalyst for expressing thoughts and experiences unique to the non-native speaker... Writing can be rich, painful, and exhilarating experience that can help define the relationship of non-native writers to their native speaking environment" (p.64). It is exactly this possibility for exploring the self's feelings and reflecting on the self's daily experiences via text that prompted my decision to use a reflective questionnaire. It was shorter than the first and consisted of open-ended questions.

In addition, I have relied on some spontaneous observations (a total of 16 observation entries were documented). It is inevitable as one finds herself in somebody else's surroundings that reflective observation occurs. While observation was not the primary goal during my visits

with the four couples, it proved to be an ancillary source of data generation. The participants were aware of this possibility before the project commenced. These observations occurred mostly at the homes of the participants as I was interviewing them, attending a social gathering, or tutoring Sylvia's elderly mother.

3.3. Role negotiation and reflexivity

Like any qualitative researcher, I assumed two clearly identifiable roles–formal and informal. My oral introductions (and the much more formal written one) described me as a researcher at a major university in the Midwest who is interested in second language acquisition and its socio-psychological context. I assured the participants that their confidentiality would be protected at all times, as they were given a detailed consent form to review and sign. Although all eight subjects indicated they would not mind my using their real names, only pseudonyms are used here. I also emphasized that I was not there to judge or evaluate what they would share with me; rather, I saw myself as learning from their experiences. My tape recorder may have caused some reservation in the beginning of the data collection, but the informants soon came to accept and even anticipate the presence of the Panasonic positioned on the table between us.

The informal roles I assumed were more complicated. I had established rapport with Vera as I was working on my previous study. In the beginning, Vera accepted me as a young researcher from Eastern Europe, who needed help with her project. Often, because of our age difference, she would assume a protective attitude toward me. An example of that could be her insisting that she or her husband always see me to my car despite my numerous protests. Gradually, I believe Vera began perceiving me as a friend, somebody to talk with in English, but also somebody who understood her native language and could empathize with her. Often, during

our visits, I wouldn't even be able to ask my questions because she just wanted to engage me in conversation.

Very hospitable, in the Russian tradition, Vera always had tea on the table. Because I was visiting her and Aleksei at night, I would often encounter Vera preparing dinner. She would insist I join them, which caused discomfort on my part. Later, I would help cleaning the table and taking care of the dishes. On one occasion, in response to my vigorous protest that I had eaten already, Vera quickly filled a plastic container with the borsch that was simmering on the stove. The gesture both surprised me and touched me in a long-forgotten way. I recalled my aunt doing that when I was a child—food was a manner of expressing deep care and love. Thus, my relationship with Vera has become fairly complex as the following example, describing a meeting with Vera illustrates.

Once, as I went to Vera and Aleksei's place for our meeting, Vera told me that she was running behind her schedule and that she had to go shopping for a party the next day. I asked if I could join her, and we went shopping together. I was impressed by how efficient Vera was. She knew the isles in the stores very well and didn't waste even a second to find the products. She took her time, though, when choosing the right vegetables for her salad and commented on their quality for my benefit.

After I helped her put the groceries in the van, Vera drove to the synagogue where she worked. It was late at night, and, except for the two of us, the place was empty. Vera proudly showed me her workspace–her kitchen and cabinets full of spices, utensils and plates. Several times she repeated she liked working there. Later, Vera drove back to her apartment so I could get into my own car. As we sat in her van in front of the apartment building, I thanked Vera for letting me accompany her on her shopping trip and showing me the synagogue. I realized I

really meant it, and I had truly enjoyed her company. I was just preparing to leave town for the summer, and Vera knew that. “Let me know when you come back,” she said in Russian, “Give me a call immediately, so that I don’t worry.” I was touched. This was the genuine concern of a friend, not a subject. I realized I hadn’t thought of Vera just as a participant in my study, either. We had shared personal information. She had told me about her joys and sorrows. We have talked about our families.

“Is what am I doing wrong?” I’ve asked myself after sharing such moments of companionship in Vera’s presence? Am I violating the rules of the researcher, as I realize with a sudden shock that what I feel is sincere sadness after I wish Vera a good summer and step out of her car. Do I make my exit smoothly in the fall saying that I won’t need her to share new experiences with me any longer, that the stage of my data collection is over? Like other qualitative researchers, I know that there is no easy answer to these questions.

To all four couples, I was an understanding and sympathetic listener, somebody with whom they could share intimate impressions about American culture and their experiences. Often, our meetings contained a therapeutic overtone. The rapport between me and the informants was undoubtedly reinforced by my being able to understand their native language and by my perceived familiarity with their cultures. This role negotiation process is characteristic of qualitative research and is underlied by the concept of reflexivity. Reflexivity has come to signify the breaking of the boundaries between author and text—a rejection of grand theory and meta-narratives (Davies, 1999). An important implication of the breaking down of these boundaries is the inherent reflexivity of the research that is generated. In other words, the distinction between the author and the people who are studied becomes less pronounced.

"In its most transparent guise," Davies writes, "reflexivity expresses researchers' awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their effects upon it" (p. 7). To Marcus, (1998) "reflexivity is associated with the self-critique and personal quest, playing on the subjective, the experiential, and the idea of empathy" (p. 395). These components of reflexivity have influenced the shaping of this project. Reflexivity is also at the core of my establishing and maintaining rapport with the female participants more readily and effortlessly. It was the female informants who opened themselves to me during our conversations. They were also the ones who would more actively participate and the ones who call me if necessary. I have to admit that I felt more connected to the women involved in this study. For example, I started tutoring Charlotta, Sylvia's elderly mother, who soon became my favorite and most fervent student of English. The following vignette describes one of my first visits with Sylvia and Boris.

Vignette:

As I drive away in the narrow dark street between an imposing row of apartment buildings, my thoughts go back to the family I had just met with. Their faces, their words are part of a pattern all too familiar to me. I coolly remind myself that I, as a researcher, am not allowed to get emotional, not allowed to get too close to "the subjects."

As I enter the apartment, I see Sylvia's welcoming face, and a young couple standing in the middle of the living room. Sylvia's greeting words to me are, "Please excuse our bad apartment" and points at the worn out furniture. Then, I meet Lydia, Sylvia's older daughter and her husband, Peter. Lydia says they have to go because she has a lot of homework to do. "She takes classes at the university," her parents beam at me. At 8:00 p.m., the younger couple leave.

Sylvia shows me to a long dining table nestled between the kitchen corner and the living room. She, her husband Boris, and I sit down, and I turn my recorder on. Just

> as I have asked my first question, a door in the back of the apartment opens, and an old woman appears in the dark hallway. As she is walking toward us, a painful chord is struck within me. The small, stooped figure with short white hair and pale face resembles another one so much that I stop talking and just stare at her for a few seconds. I never got to say "Good-bye" to my grandmother, couldn't see her to her last journey, so now, at the sight of this fragile old woman, moving carefully to keep her balance, the familiar guilt bubbles up.
>
> Sylvia introduces me to "our grandmother,"— Sylvia's mother and Natalia and Lydia's grandmother. As I stumble over a question which suddenly seems artificial, the old woman is rinsing a mug at the sink, just before us, and the running water makes it difficult for me to hear. Or I tell myself it's the running water.

Clearly, my investment in this research reflects my gender and my memories as an Eastern European woman. I do not consider this as an obstacle to my analysis and interpretations. I believe my reflexivity and personal connection to the participants have enriched the credibility and trustworthiness of this study. A simple example of this would be Peter's question for me, "So how do Americans treat you? Do they treat you as an equal?"—a question which would establish not only the common background between the participants and me, but would also open a discussion on their lives as immigrants.

However, I do not wish to simplify my role in this process and provide too narrow a description. Different situations brought out a variety of selves and voices in relation to each of the respondents. For instance, to Sylvia I was a trusted listener when she was narrating a poignant experience and an advisor when helping her design her resume. I was also a fledgling researcher, turning on the tape recorder and announcing, "OK, I have a question for you." Another self reflected my being a wife when Vera genuinely inquired about my husband and

how we are managing living in two different cities. I was clearly an Eastern European woman, but at the same time, the participants perceived me as somebody who had lived in the States longer than they, and somebody who was representing, by virtue of my affiliation (a researcher in a large university), an institutional structure and its values. In retrospect, I don't think the participants in this study problematized or even attempted to analyze my different roles. They were too busy for that. As evident from the vignettes, it was I, the researcher, who struggled to negotiate and explicate my position in the process as well as the ethical consequences my choices could create.

A tangible problem I experienced during the data generation was, undoubtedly, scheduling. My participants have extremely busy lives. Vera's work hours, for example, usually stretch to 9:00 p.m. and over the weekends. Her husband, Aleksei, works overtime (from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) during the week, and, on weekends, he helps Vera in the kitchen she manages, washing dishes or cleaning after parties. Sylvia and Boris have similarly busy schedules, including English classes several times a week or Sylvia's computer class. The two younger couples handle both their university courses and a full load of daily work duties which often usurp the evening hours. Even when we were able to set an appointment for an interview, something could easily go awry. One night, for example, I arrived at Vera and Aleksei's apartment as arranged only to find them hastily preparing to leave. It turned out Vera had just gotten a call from work informing her about a flood in the kitchen. She and Aleksei, who volunteered his help, were just getting ready to go and take care of the problem. In other cases, I might get calls from the couples that some other work or family event prevented them from seeing me on a previously scheduled night. In all these situations, I understood and accepted these "glitches" not only as normal, but as the participants' privilege. I never forgot that they

were the ones who allowed me to be a part of their daily lives, and I always appreciated their willingness to remain in the study no matter how busy they were.

I tried to show my gratitude in different ways. I tutored Charlotta in English for months. Sylvia had told me her mother was getting very depressed and lonely, and I volunteered to visit the elderly woman, who had expressed her eagerness to study English. To all informants, I would bring English fiction books, grammar books, and electronic dictionaries as small gifts.

3.4. Data analysis and data management

As any qualitative researcher knows, interpretive analysis is an ongoing process that begins long before we enter the data in our computers. Thus, I was engaged in a preliminary stage of analysis even as I was speaking with the participants. The interviews and observations were transcribed in a word processor, and later, imported for analysis in *Atlas*—a software tool for qualitative data analysis. Initially, open coding was applied to the data. In other words, I was looking for patterns and basic concepts that grew out of the interviews, observations, and the reflective questionnaire. The majority of open codes were internal. They originated from the data themselves. As I was reading and re-reading my notes and the interviews, I was assigning codes to different passages looking for patterns. Gradually, the following initial list of code emerged:

acquisition new discourses
authoring
creativity
cultural differences
economical
education value
emotions
everyday English
finding voice
gender

gender: discourse features
Interactions: gender
interlanguage features
job attitude
language attitude
language attitude: Russian
language authority
language learning
language: culture
Language: power
literacy
loss of voice
meaning faciliation
metalinguistic awareness
mother
negotiation
network: Russian
networks: American
perception: self
perceptions: Americans
perceptions: Russians
positioning: others
positioning: self
reflexivity
reinventing self: creativity
resistance
self-in relation
setting
transformation
travel
typical day
values
wife

As the list illustrates, researchers cannot escape the influence of theory and theoretical approaches. Thus, some of the codes were external in the sense that they reflected the theoretical concepts in which I was anchoring this project. During subsequent stages of data analysis, axial and selective coding were used to further interpretative work. Through these procedures, codes were linked together under more general categories, and relationships among the categories began to emerge. The software program facilitated this process as it allowed me to group codes into families, attach comments or memos to both data excerpts and codes, and outline the connections between concepts.

Analysis and interpretation of data are ongoing. In this case, they began with the data generation and continued throughout the process of writing the project up. The process of analysis hasn't been smooth but rather recursive: Codes and categories were continually redefined, renamed or repositioned in terms of their relationships and importance. So how does a researcher make meaning of a mountain of qualitative data? As Doucet and Mauthner (1998) admit, although the literature on qualitative research has significantly increased in recent years, it still has not explained the concrete process of data analysis. During this stage, I was guided by my research questions, my theoretical underpinnings, and, chiefly, by the themes emerging within the data themselves.

My goal in the analysis was to give voice to the participants. I was interested in their specific lived experiences, in their lived worlds. In doing this, I heavily relied on the texts they produced or, rather, the texts we produced together. Here, I follow Holland and Skinner's (1997) (and, in general, postmodern) meaning of text where it could be any representation of my subjects' realities. This is consistent with the theoretical concepts I am employing because experience is constituted through discursive practices. In this case, I assume that the terms

discourses and texts are interchangeable. Through the production of texts, the respondents in this inquiry made sense of the linguistic and social spaces they occupied in one setting or another. Their voices didn't come to me in isolation, though. Instead, the spaces created through interviews were transactive; in other words, the participants' voices were mixed with the voices of those with whom they interacted. Thus, I was also interested in their selves-in-relation.

My voice is also audible in this transactive research space. Research analysis is subjective: The questions we pose, the patterns we are looking for in interviews, notes, and behaviors are undoubtedly influenced by our own lived experiences. From the beginning, I was interested in how the participants perceived themselves and their socio-linguistic realities. Believing that knowledge and subjectivities are contextually and discursively grounded, I was particularly concerned with their everyday language practices, for instance, who they talked to, how they perceived the interaction and themselves, how they invested in the language learning process. What illustrates the recursive nature of the analysis better is that, in the beginning of the coding, gender appeared to be just one of the themes. As I continued reading and re-reading, though, it became obvious that gender is an all-encompassing factor, which began to appear frequently as a major category with subcategories among the list of codes. Some examples are "gender: interactions" and "gender: discourse features."

3.5. Triangulation

Several types of triangulation were employed to contribute to the credibility of this project. For instance, sources were triangulated by using and comparing interview data, observation data, and written responses to the two questionnaires. To ensure I was responsibly interpreting their voices and meanings, I would often take interview transcripts with my comments to the respondents, and ask them to verify messages and confirm my analysis of them.

Another kind of triangulation I used is based in the multiple theoretical perspectives (theory/perspective triangulation) that influenced the data analysis. For example, I have drawn on two overarching theoretical umbrellas—feminist poststructuralism and Bakhtin's view of language and the self. The data analysis process involved multiple approaches as well. Doubtless, I was interested in what topics emerged in my interactions with the participants, what they cared to talk about. I was interested in their perspectives and feelings born in everyday experiences. At the same time, I was also looking at how they talked. This became especially important when I was analyzing certain discourse features and gender.

3.6. The neighborhood: an overview

All four couples live in the same neighborhood in a large Mid-western city in the U.S. The district, known as Flower Meadow, had a total of 2,309 residents in 1997, according to city records. The demographic percentage for the district is reported as follows:

- White: 45.3
- African American: 52.8
- American Indian Eskimo and Aleut: 0.1
- Asian and Pacific Islander: 0.5
- Other: 0.3
- Hispanic: 1.0.

A disclaimer announces that "due to differing perceptions of neighborhood borders and variations between census years, the population statistics listed in this window may vary slightly from those listed under 'demographics." I didn't see information on immigration percentage in this area on this web cite (the web address is withheld for privacy reasons). When I called the neighborhood's community center, they told me they didn't have any statistics on immigrants.

Flower Meadow is a racially, religiously, and culturally diverse neighborhood located within one of the central counties of the city. It is fairly close to two universities and offers quick access to the core highways of the state. More importantly to this study, the area is the home of the majority of Russian-speaking, and particularly, Russian Jewish immigrants and refugees in the city. Lydia's and Natalia's families live on the same street of Flower Meadow, just several blocks from each other. A long chain of three-story identical apartment buildings is visible on the right of the large street. They are, indeed, so similar, that no matter how often I'd visited Lydia's and Natalia's apartments, I would still confuse the entrances if not for the number signs on the buildings. Although it is rather large, the street doesn't seem particularly busy, at least not at night, when I was usually visiting the two families. There are a number of small shops, restaurants, and a hair salon in the central part of the neighborhood, but they all look rather offbeat and shabby. Conversations with my subjects have made it clear that they never attend these shops or restaurants. Instead, they go to other parts of the city. The only exception is a small Vietnamese food store, which Vera visits when she wants to cook an Asian meal for her family.

While Lydia and Peter and Natalia and Dmitry live in this more central section of the neighborhood, Sylvia's and Vera's families are located on the two opposite sides of the area. The streets leading to their apartments are narrow with uninterrupted chains of reddish apartment buildings on both sides. These apartment buildings are characteristic of the whole neighborhood. At around 7:00 or 8:00 p.m., the time I usually met with the families, the streets are quiet and very dark in the winter. In the spring, summer, and early autumn, however, they are full with the voices of kids playing in front of their buildings. African American or Russian-speaking children are the ones I have encountered as I was walking to Vera's or Sylvia's apartments. When the

weather is nice, there are usually African American residents sitting on the front porches, observing the children or just enjoying the night air. Several times, I have noticed Charlotta, Sylvia's mother, sitting on the porch by herself. Unlike in her hometown, she cannot talk with anybody on this porch. There are no other elderly people in her building. At times, one of her much younger African American neighbors would try to engage her in a friendly talk, but Charlotta wouldn't be able to maintain it, except for returning the greeting and saying she is fine. No flowers or gardens are planted around the buildings, but a succession of trees makes both Vera's and Sylvia's streets inviting when green. Generally, the numerous apartment buildings in the neighborhood house low-income or unemployed families.

Despite the flowery name, the neighborhood has had its share of social struggles. For instance, an article in the local newspaper reports that a 58-year-old Russian immigrant was attacked in 1995. A Jewish adolescent was beaten in another "ethnic attack" by African American residents. Such racial assaults in the recent past have prompted many of the Russian and, particularly, Jewish families to move out of the area. With them, according to the article, businesses and institutions also disappeared. The same article indicates that the area has had some gang problems as well. While my participants have never experienced any trouble themselves, all of them have expressed a desire to relocate at some point or another. They accept this neighborhood only as a temporary, adjustment-period home for them, till they are able to purchase their own homes.

Update (April 2002)

In the beginning of 2001, Vera and a friend of hers established their own catering company. In the end of the same year, Vera and Aleksei were able to buy their first American home—a cozy townhouse in another area of the city.

In March, 2002, I saw Sylvia and Boris. Boris had lost weight, and Sylvia told me he had developed diabetes. Because of the current economic conditions, her husband had also lost his job. The family relied on her income now. The two had uplifting news as well. Smiling happily, Sylvia told me that Lydia had graduated a few months ago, and that she and Peter had their first baby girl. The young couple had also moved to a larger apartment. Sylvia said there were no major changes in Natalia's and Dmitri's lives.

Chapter 4

POSITIONINGS IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE: GENDER, POWER, AND THE SELF

In his work on Dostoevsky, Bakhtin stresses the writer's talent to perceive not only individual voices, but also the dialogical relations among them, their dialogical interaction. Some of the voices are dominant and loud in these interactive relationships. Others are subdued and weak. Bakhtin himself acknowledges the linguistic struggle for power by rejecting the neutrality of language. His concept of the carnival, captured in Zavala's words (1990), helps illustrate the impossibility of this neutrality:

> The carnival is a linguistic market-place, the site of linguistic exchange, where speakers are constrained in their own interests. The ambivalence of the carnival representation suggest the inscription of a social economics and deploys the interests of the speakers and the listeners and how these interests are subverted as speakers and listeners exchange space (and images) (p. 83).

Zavala's allusion to language as a market for social relations closely resembles Bourdieu's (1991), who speaks of the economics of linguistic transactions where discourses or utterances are the products, and speakers are the producers. As in any market system, not all products are valued or positioned equally. Bourdieu specifies that, "The value of the utterance depends on the relation of power that is concretely established between speakers' linguistic competencies, understood both as their capacity for production and as their capacity appropriation and appreciation" (p. 67). These relations of power which imbue the linguistic market define some linguistic competencies as "legitimate, " in other words, the privileged, authorized discourses and others as "illegitimate." Thus, language serves to assign one's social position and to determine the societal perceptions of a person's worth as a whole, as Bourdieu explains:

> The sense of the value of one's linguistic products is a fundamental dimension of the sense of knowing the place which one occupies in the social space. One's original relation with different markets and the experience of the sanctions applied to one's own productions, together with the experience of the price attributed to one's own body, are doubtless some of the mediations which help to constitute that *sense of one's social worth* which governs the practical relation to different markets (shyness, confidence, etc.) and, more generally, one's whole physical posture in the social world (p. 82) [emphasis original].

Bourdieu and Bakhtin write about native speakers of a language. What do these considerations entail for learners of a second language? What is their position within this fairly contested market of values and power? How is their position determined by their second language skills?

In the context of this study, I assume that the dominant discourse is English, the second language. This chapter takes a look at how the dominant discourse positions the eight participants within their psycho-sociolinguistic realities. It illustrates how the participants lost their first language voices, how they interpreted this loss, and the role gender played in the interpretation of their L2 positions.

4.1. Caught in a discourse of silence

> Not speaking one's mother tongue. Living with resonances and reasoning that are cut off from the body's nocturnal memory, from the bittersweet slumber of childhood. Bearing within oneself like a secret vault, or like a handicapped child…Thus, between two languages, your realm is silence.
>
> Julia Kristeva (1991)

From a discursive point of view, the self is constituted through voicing him/herself within a particular context. Drawing on Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, Gagnon (1992) contends that,

"The self is composed of voices in conversations, voices that are given names and among whom there are rules for who speaks and in what order" (p. 231). To Bakhtin, dialogue, and, thus, discourse, is the most important medium through which the self becomes realized. The amalgamation between voice and self is essential to this study. The concept of voice is relatively recent in second language acquisition, and so far, it has been explored only in the context of writing (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000b). In literacy research. Giroux (1990), in resonance with poststructuralist theory, writes that, "Voice refers to the ways in which students produce meaning through the various subject positions that are available to them in the wider society" (p. 91). In Bakhtin's (1993) work, however, voice is not just a reflection of societal codes and discourses, but always contains an emotional-volitional tone (i.e., the emotions, desires, and ethics of the speaker). Here, I extend the notion of voice so that it becomes an agentive presence, the socio-psycho-linguistic space occupied by the self at a given moment of the dialogical process.

The eight participants in this research study are highly educated. They describe themselves as "intellectuals." Well-read, they are familiar not only with Russian literature, but also pride themselves on having classic Western authors (in translation). While they had all briefly studied English in college or high school, except for Boris, the subjects felt that they literally lost their voices upon coming to the U.S. To Vera, who at an earlier point of her life had worked as a Spanish language teacher, and, later, as a journalist, and whose career had exacted precise language use, the loss of voice was dramatic:

> V: Do you know / I'm a teacher / and all my life / and then I work like a journalist / and all my life / I mm / I hear my language / and after mm after say one word / I think / how I need to=how I need to say it. And now? I am / I am like in the

> kindergarten. I think that / in the kindergarten / that people mm spoke / no no spoke=speak! better than I.

Their linguistic limitations often put the participants in a disadvantaged position with tangible consequences. Vera recalled, for example, that when they rented their first apartment, they had to sign "three pieces of paper." She admitted they signed the contract without understanding "one word." In about a year, Aleksei and she decided to move out. From talking with the other neighbors, most of them Russian-speaking, they gathered that they should give the landlord a 45-day notice in advance. When informing the management, however, Vera was told that the notice should be given 60, not 45 days in advance. When Vera tried to protest, she was instructed rudely: "Read your contract!" They lost the deposit, but to Vera, what's more important, is that she lost part of her dignity in this interaction. Still frustrated about the incident, Vera was sitting in her new apartment, blaming herself for not reading the contract carefully, and especially, for not knowing anything about law or landlord/tenant relations.

Everyday interactions in the second language became a test for Sylvia, too, and a daily source of frustration. Being the main caretaker of her ill mother, she often had to go the pharmacy to fill a prescription. In the following example, Sylvia narrated one of her first L2 experiences:

> S: Pharmacist. He used to / ask me… For example / he / he doesn't agree with [the doses]. And he begins to explain me / *vot eto* (this is) not correct / but this vocabulary / is unknown for me / and I tried and tried to understand / and I think that / if I don't understand / correctly / I will not be able to tell my mother / how she has to take this medicine. *Ne hvataet / ne hvataet slovorya* (I didn't have / didn't have the words).

In another example, Natalia and Dmitri talked about their attempt to buy a TV set at the store soon after their arrival. They had to sign a form, and not understanding entirely, they put "a wrong answer" on the form. Afterwards, they discovered that, instead of $600, the price of the TV set, their credit card was charged in the amount of $1,200. Confused about the sum, they decided to go to the store and speak with the manager in person, as their phone skills were still rather low. The manager, however, didn't even listen to them, announcing, "Just call credit!" [their credit card company]. When Natalia did that, she found she couldn't explain exactly what happened. In the end, she asked a Russian-speaking acquaintance, who had lived in the States for 20 years to make the call. In this case, Natalia and Dmitri felt they lost their independence, the ability to function for themselves. At the same time, they admired their acquaintance, who in clear English and with authority required that the credit card company fix the problem.

For the two older couples, the loss of voice also resulted in an overt loss of their social standing as intellectuals. Vera, an articulate language user in her first language (L1), became a kitchen manager. During our first interview, she shared:

> I had a very, very interesting job. I liked my job. And I understand that here I cannot work as a journalist because I don't know English good. So good that I can work a journalist. I understand…

Her husband, Aleksei, who used to be a teacher and a basketball coach in a high school, became a manual worker at a factory. In an interview, he mentioned that he would like to get a "better job" one day:

> I: What do you mean by a "better job"? What job would be better?

> A: (Laughs, not happily) A-ah! This question! This question is / big problem. Is big problem / is better job. I need now / English. *Ot etogo vse zavisit* (Everything depends on it). My English / very very bad.

The lack of linguistic resources in the L2 was tightly intertwined with a loss of social identity. Language permeated all spheres of life for these people—by losing their voices, they lost their jobs and their middle-class positions in society. Familiar identities began to crumble, and they had to reinvent them. This was particularly true for the older couples. The following vignette, taken from an observation while visiting Sylvia and Boris, strongly illustrates the inseparability of one's sense of self and language:

> Sylvia, Boris and I are sitting in the dining room, just across the kitchen. It is around 8:30 p.m., and they both look tired. We are talking about Boris' current job as a construction worker. At the mention of his job, Sylvia exclaims, "Labor!" and throws her hands up in the air. This is to explain everything. I know what she means. Her husband was a building engineer in Ukraine and a vice president of company. Now, Boris is a construction worker, doing the job he had always instructed others to do.
>
> "Yes," I am saying to fill the ensuing pause, "I know this is new to you."
>
> "New?! It is not new!" Boris says that he knows this type of work very well. "Only I am used to using my mind to do it," he says in Russian this time. He jumps up, not tired any longer, and goes to the coffee table to return with a couple of carefully folded blueprints. He unfolds the complicated charts of a building. Gliding his hand across the paper, Boris says in Russian and his voice is heavy:

> "I know all that. I know my profession. The problem is I cannot explain what I know, I cannot show that I know it in English. And if I cannot show it, then, I don't really know it to the world."

In Bakhtin's philosophy, one is a subject by participating in a dialogue. One becomes a conscious self by using language and this is how we author ourselves (Ryklin, 1992). There is nothing more frightening than not being understood and answered by another. Yet, this is exactly what Boris experiences. His knowledge and professional expertise cannot be validated by another in the second language, and thus, he loses an important aspect of his identity.

4.2. Discourses of otherness

> The foreigner is the other of the family, the clan, the tribe.
>
> Julia Kristeva (1991)

The term "Other" has become increasingly popular in postmodern sociological and cultural studies (Riggins, 1997). As Riggins specifies, discourses of otherness can be used by both dominant and subordinate minorities. At the same time, in a very Bakhtinian sense, the author warns against the illusory nature of the distinction between the self and the other and suggests that the two are "so intertwined that to stop talking about 'them,' one must stop talking about 'us" (p. 6). In this section, I will examine how the participants become positioned in discourses of otherness.

4.2.1. Vera

Being the Other became a poignant feature of Vera's everyday reality. In one of our talks, she reflected on how some native speakers of English excluded her through their language practices:

V: Do you know / sometimes they stay and they are talking in their native language / and I cannot understand because they talk very very fast / and I don't know about / what they are talking / and they ask me something / I cannot answer them because I don't know about what they talk. And / they are looking / "Mm…" Do you know? *Nu / tyajelo*… (It's hard.) It's very hard. And then / I heard mm how they talk with each other / between them / about me / and I understand what [they are talking about]!

I: They talk about you in front of you?!

V: No. They say maybe / *othodyat nemnojko storonku* (they go a little bit away).

I: What do they say?

V: *Nu vot / hochesh shto-to skazat / nechevo ne znaet / ponimaesh*? (Well, she wants to say something, but doesn't know anything, do you understand?

Vera's feelings come alive in the excerpt above. Language is a powerful tool for exclusion from the discourse of the everyday by these speakers of English. These practices of exclusion challenged not only her linguistic skills, but her whole sense of self. At the same time, Vera felt torn between this new position she found assigned to her and the way she positioned herself. The contradiction is clear in the following segment, where Vera reflected on her superior education and knowledge in relation to these very people who rejected her:

V: And sometimes I feel that am a little higher / than these people. *Ne potomu-shto ya hochu sebya kakto-tam* (It's not because I want to see myself this way / *prosto ya viju* (I can just see) I see that their level is not very high. I cannot say about all the people no no no!

The contradiction arose not only from the discrepancy of how the others position her and her educational background, but also from the richness of her lived experiences. Vera, who had traveled all over the world, tried to share her knowledge about art with her new American co-workers in the following example:

> V: We were for example on one exhibition / it was a very nice exhibition. This / is / *hudojestvenoe steklo* (painted glass). It was very nice but / when I saw it / I saw in my life more interesting things / and I begin to tell these people about this / and they say me / "Oh Vera / if you have something and you can bring and show us and tell about this / do it please." And I bring to the synagogue and show / the ladies who come… / I bring some Kjel and bring some stuff from ??? and bring some stuff from ??? It's very nice and they never saw it / and / they… It's interesting for them / and I mm feel that / I am not mm kak skazat / ya ne na bolee niskom uravne chem oni. We have the same level.

Vera's awareness of her worth as a person was important because it marked the beginning of her transformation as an agent. At the same time, she realized that the practices of otherness she experienced applied not just to her and are not merely personal. She believed that they affected foreigners in general. In the excerpt below, she related her observations of how Americans treat the other Russian-speaking immigrants she worked with:

> V: *Net. Mne ne priyatno*! (No. I don't like this!) Do you know when I work in the synagogue / and we prepare so nice barmitzva / surprise parties / and the people they look on / Russian people like / like on the people for the level / *na boleem niskom uravne* (as if they were on a lower level).
>
> I: Look down? You feel they look down on you?

V: Yes.

I: How did you feel that?

V: I cannot explain in English. I can explain it in Russian. But I can feel it. *Ponimaesh kak* (do you understand how) / *kogda / vot ona est' / and brosaet==ona videt shto / ya postavila special'nie==devochki prinesli mm the cans for / garbage cans. Ona smotrit na tebe / and brosaet na pol. Vot smotrit / and brosaet na pol* (when she eats and she throws [her plastic plate]==she saw that I just put some special==the girls brought garbage cans. She is looking at you and is throwing the empty plate on the floor. Just looks and throws it.)

…

V (translation): Do you understand? Because this means that we will clean up the mess…

I: Do you think that they do that because you are Russian==

V: ==Yeah! Yeah==

I: ==Or they'd do it to anybody?

V: No! Because sometimes / the catering work in our synagogue / and I see when [American caterers] work / they never do / never! They never put it on the floor! Their napkins or sometimes the food / and / they never do it. Only when the Russian people work.

Vera's tone was pained in the passage above as she spoke about the other Russian immigrant workers there—her friends—who used to be doctors, teachers, and economists in their home countries. Her story indicated that the power relations between the foreigners, on one hand and the "legitimate" participants in this event were strongly polarized. Yet, Vera's exclaiming "No! I

don't like this!" in the beginning pointed to the tension between the dominant and subordinate discourses and suggested that she is not going to remain passive. Her resistance, an act of agency in itself, originated in the emotional response to being denied a voice.

4.2.2. Natalia and Dmitri

Byram (1994) accurately points out that, while prevalent, the issue of stereotyping foreigners has been ignored by both textbook writers and teachers. Being the Other is a prevalent theme in my conversations with the participants. Sometimes, the topic sneaks into our talk through their questions for me, as in Dmitri's: "Do Americans treat you on an equal level?" At other times, it emerges powerfully in the narratives on their experiences portraying feelings of anger and vulnerability. In the following excerpt, Natalia spoke about her arrival to the immigrant country and her astonishment at the ignorance of those who met them:

> N: Sometimes / you know / I was shocked. When (laughs nervously) when we came / we go to [names an immigration service] / and it was American people who / give us handouts. And it was like / You should uh have a shower every day. You should==
>
> D: Yes.
>
> N: Dress good / just clean. As if we were from…They think (raises her voice) / I don't know what they think about us.
>
> I: How did you feel about that?
>
> N: I was shocked!
>
> D: We should use toilet paper or something like this stuff (laughs sarcastically).

Not unlike Vera, this younger couple was caught into the contradiction between how they perceived themselves and the humiliating "Oher" position they were placed into. Yet, even as

she admitted she was shocked, Natalia fell into another contradiction: She rejected the way she was perceived as the other, but, at the same time, she excused those who have positioned her in this location by saying that they didn't know they were offensive.

Dmitri was less understanding in his reflections. About the Midwest, where they lived, he said, "Sometimes / people / I can note that / I can note that people don't like immigrants. I mean American people." His comment comes from both personal experience and those of other immigrants he knows. Once, as he was working as a server, for example, the music was playing too loud, and he didn't understand what a client was saying. He explains:

> D: I served a couple / mmm / and they asked me / about something. And I can't understand=I couldn't understand / and he told me that / please call somebody who understands English. And Natalia followed me and==
>
> N: I followed him and the man just / excuse me and called me / and he just==
>
> D: And Natalia couldn't understand==
>
> N: No no! You didn't hear it! It was too noisy because it was a band over there and / it's not that he [Dmitri] didn't understand.
>
> D: But people / I don't know people / heard our accents and / they==
>
> N: Just "Wo:w! Just nobody / nobody can speak English in this restaurant!" Just / it was… (lowers her voice).

As Dmitri said, at the moment the clients heard their foreign accents, he and Natalia not were only positioned in a lower social level by their "legitimate" interlocutors, but they were also denied the opportunity to speak.

Similarly to Vera, Dmitri and Natalia posited the issue of being a foreigner beyond the level of the personal. The couple shared their observations that, to foreigners, even when they

were educated, skilled, and had a good command of English, the immigration location service "never give you a good job. Just send you in factory, just, not a professional job, never." Dmitri's explanation was that nobody cared about the people themselves, and "it's totally business." This is one of the reasons both he and Lydia decided to get a second higher education degree, this time from an American university.

4.2.3. Lydia and Peter

In a separate interview, Lydia and Peter shared their own narratives about disempowering practices of otherness and the social implications for immigrants in general. They told me, for example, about a recently arrived Ukrainian family—a couple in their early fifties. The woman, who was highly educated, got employed in a local factory. She not only worked hard and long hours, but she also helped improve the line of production. Still, her invention never got acknowledged and even created problems for her:

> P: They work like / she works this woman works like crazy. And if the plan was like / 10 pillows / make 10 pillows for one day for 8 hours / she makes 20 and 30…
>
> I: She is trying to do a good job.
>
> P: Yeah she is trying to do a good job but / not at that place… She got this very very ??? They didn't… She saw something wrong and she mm like uh gave a suggestion to her manager / and with her suggestion they they produced more pillows and more==
>
> L: But she didn't get anything from it.
>
> P: Yes but they didn't…
>
> I: They didn't promote her or increase her salary?

> L: Never. People even start hate her because / they start to produce more pillows and they close overtime on Saturday. And she was sorry about that they closed Saturday.
>
> P: Yeah Saturday Saturday's like uh mm… one and a half times… For one hour they pay like not twice but…

Lydia and Peter's story portrays a shift of social positions similar to Vera's for the newly arrived Ukrainian family. Finding themselves amidst unfamiliar discourses—not only English as a second language, but also the discourse of being working class—rendered them powerless and without the chance to express their voice. Yet, in critically reflecting on these power shifts, the couples exhibited elements of agency in response to the changes. For example, Vera angrily claimed in the same language she felt was excluding her that she was not going to accept it. Their narratives show that all the couples were critically aware of their new surroundings, and this is a prerequisite for social agency.

4.3. The linguistic other: L2 as a source of positioning

As we saw, language is a key constituent in the practices of otherness described above. For example, Natalia's and Peter's foreign accents set off an instant power polarization and served as a premise for exclusion by the two native-speaking clients. Thus, English as the second language functioned as a regulator of power structures. That language directly determined the subjects' positions in the L2 society is evident in the experiences of all participants and in all aspects of their lives. Vera explicitly pointed to English as the most significant factor mediating her decisions and limiting her choices. She had always loved to travel, and in the States, her husband and she continued this tradition. Once, as the two had just come back from a trip to the Smoky Mountains, I expressed a desire to visit the place myself. Vera immediately offered brochures of hotels in this and other areas of the States. She said she always came back with lots

of brochures to hand out to friends. Then, I only half-jokingly suggested that she should perhaps work as a travel agent. To my suggestion, she replied that she, indeed, was a licensed tourist guide in her country, and had often worked as such during her summer vacations. She added she enjoyed it very much. However, Vera admitted she would not even consider doing this in the States because of her English. She said she knew her English is never going to be as good as her first language and added, "I don't want to do anything if I can't do it well." About her second language, Vera said, "I cannot change nothing." After a pause, she recalled a Russian proverb, which she translated roughly as "Everybody should know their place." This example is especially important. It shows that Vera was aware of how the L2 restricted her in ways she was never restricted in her native language. Moreover, she overtly expressed the realization that it was language that determined her position as an immigrant.

Natalia also found that one's language and position were directly related in her most commonplace experiences. The restaurant where she and Dmitri used to work as servers had a scheduling book for all shifts. Often, servers would request a day off as long as they gave an early warning to the manager. When Natalia and Dmitri had to do this on one occasion, they discovered that it wasn't going to be as easy as they thought. Natalia explained that the manager refused, and she felt powerless to negotiate this otherwise ordinary situation because of her position there:

> N: They cannot / they couldn't. They told me, "We have a party." Just one server told me / "I am going to have a drink mm… evening. Just I am not going to come." And he didn't worry about / ??? but / I had to worry. You know / I am not at this level / I am not at this position as the servers.
>
> I: What do you mean?

N: I mean / I have more chances to be fired.

I: Why do you think so?

N: Because sometimes I have trouble with my English (her voice is emotional). Our guests don't have a complaint about me / but / sometimes / I don't know. I feel this. I don't know why.

I: Do you have a reason to feel it?

N: It's like only / English / the only reason why I think so.

Natalia added that, while the "request book" was not a guarantee for getting the schedule one wanted, the other servers always did, while she always had a problem. As the excerpt above illustrates, she felt vulnerable because of her imperfect language skills. Unlike the other servers, she was afraid that if she spoke up she might lose her job.

Language was vital for Lydia and Peter's professional working environment as well. As this study progressed, Lydia got a part-time job as a computer programmer at the company which employs her husband. Despite their expertise in the field, the two found that they could not participate fully in the professional and informal discourses on the job. For example, when I asked them whether they could speak openly in meetings, Peter admitted that he had tried to, but "not very often." He said he was more likely to answer a question when he was directly addressed and added, "That's probably because of language." Lydia, who expressed a similar insecurity to participate in discussions, said, "I never go to discussion even if it's interesting for me. Even if, I mean, only if it's with friends… [where] nobody will blame me for my English." Lydia's linguistic vulnerability directly influenced her relationships with others at work. One of her first assignments was to develop a program using a brand new tool on the market. Part of her job was to collaborate with a native-speaking programmer, who had the same work status as she

did. Despite their equal professional status, Lydia felt uncomfortable asking questions and was intimidated by the native speaker's superiority. She thought she would appear "foolish" if she didn't understand what he said.

Although the two participants were aware that "you have to be social" to succeed at work, the L2 limitations they experienced excluded them from partaking in the informal discourses of their coworkers. Lydia, for example, said that she could not "chat":

> L: I can't… Chat means like / quick conversation when you think something quickly. And I cannot say something / funny quickly. I have to think, "What should I say?" … So / I am not chatting. I am just trying to ask and answer.

At the same time, they realized that not being able to function informally in this context could hurt one professionally as their narrative about another immigrant worker illustrated:

> P: Because mm because you have to be social. Because there are some examples with the Russian people. Uh-a one woman wouldn't like...
>
> L: She didn't like to go out==
>
> P:==She didn't like to go out with the with the Americans / because they were American speaking and she understood nothing. So she understood something but not exactly and / it was hard for her to go out with them to / *napregatsya*. *Kak napregatsya*?
>
> I: To concentrate.
>
> P: To concentrate yeah. To concentrate and speak / and ??
>
> L: She was really like unfriendly unsocial person==
>
> P: ==yeah unfriendly unsocial person and==
>
> L: finally she got fired.

P: and all her office mates uha wrote a paper / to to the management / that she is unsocial and she is not friendly.

It is obvious that Peter and Lydia are aware of their social realities and have analyzed the environment's values and power structures. Peter and Lydia clearly believed that language determined one's position of the Other and, as in this woman's situation, could override their professional qualifications.

Being the linguistic Other has disempowering implications not only in the working environment but across all structures of life. Peter and Lydia's narratives about immigrants frequently provide such examples. As the two participants were helping an older Ukrainian family to settle in, Peter took his friend to take his American driver's test. Peter believes that his friend's not being able to communicate in English immediately placed him in an unfavorable position, biasing the tester. In the following excerpt, Peter offered his account of the event:

P: Hmmm / simple situation. When I brought / when I brought our friend / to the police exam / for the driving / uhm / there were American woman and she / she's asking this / this Russian woman / she didn't understand completely.

L: She asked, "How are you?"

P: No. She asked wife / Natasha / she asked her and she / she was / answered her / she was answering for her question with very very slowly and thinking about words / and from the first / like from the first sight it was obvious that / she was never pass this exam.

I: Because she wasn't able to answer?

P: Yeah communicate.

I: What was the question? Do you remember?

> P: How are you? What's the make of the car? What's the license plate? This is formal question and / when the husband come to / came to this counter / this American woman smiled and [said], "How are you?" He didn't understand. And he answered her / like he was expecting / he was expecting the question about the make of the car. He answered her, "Honda Accord." And / this American woman / did everything to / fail his exam…
>
> I: Just on the basis of language?
>
> P: It was my opinion. It was my opinion.

Peter clarifies that English is also the reason his friend passed the test several weeks later, when he was able to understand better and to maintain some conversation. These examples from the subjects' lives across contexts ascertain that one's positioning occurs through discursive events. They also illustrate what Peter called the "other part of the living in the States," the part where one fails because one's "English was bad." This is the part where, as Dmitri explained above, even though one was educated and had good English, s/he would end up "washing monitors."

4.4. Gender and sensitivity to positioning

Feminist Kaschak (1992) introduces the concept of sensitivity in gender studies. Building on postmodernism and feminist research, she argues that, for historical reasons, women have had to remain more sensitive to their environment and, particularly, to their relations with the others. The female participants in this project consistently exhibited patterns of greater sensitivity to their positioning in the L2 context. Not only did they tend to reflect on these positioning practices more frequently, but they also attached a powerful emotional significance to the latter.

4.4.1. Vera

As illustrated in the beginning of this chapter, Vera experienced the language practices of otherness in the work environment as exclusive and humiliating. Moreoever, she overtly claimed that the native speakers treated her as "*vtorim sortum*" (a second hand) or on a lower level. Vera contrasted her experience with that of a male immigrant:

> V: He says that I need to teach them Russian. It's interesting. My sister's husband Kostya / he works on the factory… And he begins only / maybe 3 or 4 months / and he works very nice / and / in 2 months / he begin to work like a supervisor. He don't know one English word. But / he is the supervisor now. And only… and / no one / Russian worker. But / when Kostya come every morning / they cry, "*Kostya, privet*!" (Kostya, hi!) (laughs). He teach them. He teach them. And now they know / 15 Russian words. And he said, "Vera, my English is very bad. I don't know English. But / be sure / that / in 5 years / they begin to speak / only Russian (laughs). I say, "Kostya, you need study English!" He said me, "I am a supervisor! He need to learn my language."

Despite Vera's facetious tone, the disparity between how the two view position themselves through language comes across strongly. Kostya not only doesn't demonstrate the vulnerability she does, but also assumes a superior position toward the native speakers because of being their manager. Vera, on the other hand, who is also a manager in her work context, feels that she is the one who should be able to speak the L2 to others.

4.4.2. Natalia and Dmitri

Even during one of the last interviews, Natalia admitted that she still wasn't always comfortable with Americans:

I: Can you think of an example when it happened?

N: Even in the restaurant with servers / they / for example / they [refer] to some movie / I have no idea==I can't participate. I feel like / what am I doing here I can't even to people….But then / in a day or two, I feel like, it's just one topic. I can talk about anything else. But you feel uncomfortable when you…It's just not my country and my culture.

Her feelings of not belonging in the L2 milieu prompted me to ask her husband about his own sense of belongingness in this context. Dmitri's words did not share Natalia's meaning:

D: Uh… this is very unfair question / who belongs / who doesn't belong. Because nobody belongs in this country. This is country of immigrants.

Unlike Natalia, who was more likely to experience herself as the Other, Dmitri rejected this position for himself. This closely parallels Boris' statement in response to Sylvia's fear of communication in English (a separate interview): "American people / all American people / was / immigrate. Leave / a few people / now English." Thus, Dmitri and Boris aligned themselves with the native speakers of English.

These gender tendencies are obvious when the participants describe their interactions in the L2 as well. Again, Natalia and Dmitri are a case of point. In the excerpt below, I was asking Dmitri about his use of English on the job. The positions the two assumed were clearly discrepant:

I: So you have to do a lot of talking on the phone?

D: Oh yeah.

I: How's that going for you?

D: Probably ??? parts of my time.

N: Stressful…(laughs)

D: Mm no, not stressful==

N: It would be (stressful) if somebody don't understand me or if I don't understand.

D: Not stressful… It's just… you try to explain / to non-technical people / and they don't understand. This is just something ??? No offense but…

In this case, Dmitri took up the discourse of a professional—someone confident in his rights, while Natalia took up the discourse of the Other. That Dmitri asserted his rights was evident in many examples from our conversations. For instance, while Natalia emphasized she would be stressed if she were not being understood, Dmitri tended to accuse others if communication failed:

I: We were talking about [name of store] that you bought something and something was wrong and you were trying to talk to them and they didn't understand. Do you remember what you meant by it?

D: It was just qualification. That's all. Professional skills.

I: On their part? They couldn't understand you because they were not qualified?

D: Yes. Enough qualified. I think so / because // it was very young person / very young so / I don't think he was experienced in this stuff… I didn't have to explain about it / so / it's not my fault…

4.4.3. Peter and Lydia

In a different interview, Peter and Lydia's verbal exchange mirrors Natalia and Dmitri's about phone interactions in the L2. Lydia acknowledged that, if she asked somebody to repeat and she still didn't understand, she would not ask again, but would rather "Just say OK" and then try to recall what the person said. In contrast, Peter stated, "If I still don't understand, I tell them

send me the words or whatever but explain me… They must explain me. It's **their** job" [emphasis mine]. Like Dmitri, Peter feels confident in his own rights of a participant in the L2. While his misunderstanding may create inconvenience, it doesn't cause the feelings of inadequacy experienced by Natalia, Lydia, and Sylvia. These data excerpts reveal the differences in the female and male participants' interpretations of their positioning in discourse and show the women's greater sensitivity to this process.

4.5. Gender and the discourse of emotions

Analyzing Bakhtin's essay, "Toward a Philosophy of the Act," Hicks (1996b) underscores that, "In the act of being in which persons relate to objects and other participants in terms of distinction of worth, rational cognition and emotional-volitional tone are co-occurrent" (p. 107). Emotions form a fundamental part of personal experiences. To feminist scholar Lorde (1984), the dominant society (or language group, in this case) shapes not only our sense of who we are but our feelings as well. Furthermore, feelings are not simply a reaction to everyday experiences, discourses, and realities, but can serve as a guide to social analysis. Thus, emotions contain a socio-cognitive component as they involve our judgments about what actions are possible. I believe this is particularly important for the field of second language acquisition, where a dichotomy between cognitive and affective factors has been prevalent.

As foreigners move across geographic and linguistic boundaries, they cross emotional borders as well. When the participants of the study arrived in their host country, they found they were not able to participate fully in the dominant discourse of the new environment. This triggered a set of emotional responses in them, and, in particular, in the female subjects. Sylvia often spoke of her emotions during our interviews. Fear, nervousness and shame governed our conversations about her language experiences in English. The word "afraid," for instance,

appears 59 times in her narratives, and the word “nervous,” 23 times. In the following interview excerpt, for instance, Sylvia narrated her grocery shopping experience:

> S: I need to ??? plums / and I asked about it my sister and other people, but nobody could told me / exactly / uh in details. Nobody can / could could tell me about it in details. And husband and I went to [a grocery store], and there we could find out prunes. And chose / chose non-pitted and I bought two different kinds of prunes. I was afraid that / the cashier / wouldn’t understand us.
>
> I: Did you try to say something?
>
> S: Mmm…
>
> I: Did they understand?
>
> S: She understood.
>
> I: How did that make you feel?
>
> S: Nervous / nervous. I confused because / I always think that we *storonnyie* (groping for the English word) that we look like…
>
> I: Say it in Russian.
>
> S: *Smeshnie* (funny) [to the others].
>
> I: Why?
>
> S: Because I didn’t remember exactly how it’s named pruned and pronunciation approximately.

Not knowing the English word for prunes, and, thus, not being able to participate in the discourse with the grocery clerk at an equal level of power, produced a feeling of shame in Sylvia. The shame originated in her perceiving herself and her husband as the Other, thus, “funny” to the

legitimate users of discourse. Shame is an emotion that Sylvia often refers to. As she was explaining to me what happened earlier one day, her voice was broken with emotion:

> S: Today, for example, the head of [an institution] called us / and she was looking for my daughter / my older daughter Lydia. And we speak / we spoke to each other. And I told her that Anna is not available (hesitates and looks at me to confirm that her word choice is correct).
>
> I: Yes, sure.
>
> S: And then she / told me / many information. But I understood 50 %. And I… after it / I called Lydia in her office and [told] her about it. And she called back the head of [the institution]. And the head was ve:ry surprised: "Why do you call me? I just told with your mother!" It's a shame!
>
> I: You felt ashamed?
>
> S: Yes / and till now / I don't know / what I need to speak to tell my daughter.

The previously articulate engineer was not able to understand a "simple," as she perceived it phone call. Thus, Sylvia experienced shame not only for herself, but also for her family.

"Shame," to Taylor (1985) "is an emotion that the subject experiences in relation to a dimension of his existence as subject" (p. 53). He goes on to say that

> The very account of what shame means involves reference to things—like our sense of dignity, of worth, of how we are seen by others—which are essentially bound up with the life as a subject of experience (p. 54)

Postmodern feminist Bartky (1996) claims that shame in speech is a mark of powerless discourses. However, she also states, drawing on Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, that shame requires an audience (p. 227). Shame is a feeling experienced before the Other. This is strongly

reminiscent of Bakhtin's dialogical self. We need the Other to contexualize our experiences; it is through the Other that our emotions become validated. Sylvia's shame explicates her feeling of inferiority. The excerpts above point out that the loss of voice has permeated her sense of dignity and worth as a person. Thus, language is an integral part of their psychological beings and a resource molding their subjectivities.

Bartky (ibid.) writes that women are more prone to feeling shame not because shame is gender-specific, but because of their historical social location in powerlessness. I don't claim that men do not experience fear, shame, or nervousness: These feelings are universally human. However, a gender-related pattern emerged from the data when the men and women in the study discussed (or ignored, for that matter) the discourse of emotions. This pattern was especially prominent in Sylvia and Boris' interchanges. While Sylvia consistently described herself as afraid, nervous, and ashamed because of her limitations in the L2, Boris directly contradicted her emotional position. When speaking of his language practices over the week of the interview, Boris recalled that he had talked with somebody on the phone:

> B: Mm / they / one woman / who // give furniture / for / mm / new people [for a new family that arrived from Ukraine].
>
> B: I speak with mmm
>
> S (supplies the word): With her.
>
> L: With her. So...
>
> I (to B): Did you understand her?
>
> S: Not everything.
>
> B: No / no. But / everything / what / about mmm... everything about your...
>
> S: Calling.

B: Calling / we / we: / we *reshyli*.

S: Decided.

I: So you got the main idea?

B: Yeah / yeah.

S: She couldn't call mm to my daughter. And so she decided to call us / and / and I understood so / that / she says that / **nobody** / nobody answer / there / mmm / husband / didn't understand.

B: Nobody / I / listen / next to her / no listen.

I (to S): So you feel guilty if you don't understand something but you (B) don't feel guilty if you don't understand something?

S: Take it easy.

I and S: laugh.

S: I am afraid=

B: =I no feel guilty=

S: I am afraid all the time=

B: I no feel guilty. American people / all American people / was / immigrate. Leave / a few people / now / English. A few. But live here? Live? Why not for me.

S: Sighs.

B: Why / I / must / be guilty? Why?

S: He hasn't any / complexes. It seems to me / I / kak skazat' / *neudobstvo* (discomfort). *Ya prichinyau / lyudem / neudobstvo*. (I cause people discomfort)

The passage above demonstrates that Sylvia's and Boris' incongruent emotional experiences were born in everyday discursive situations. Moreover, Sylvia's comments illustrated that her

guilt originates in the dialogical process with the other interlocutor—she feared that she created discomfort for the other speaker. Boris, on the other hand, negated the emotional discourse of guilt. He didn't perceive himself as inferior because of the lack of L2 linguistic resources. To my question whether he ever felt nervous when he had to speak English, Boris replied:

> B: (Laughs). My boss / first time / very mm a lot nervous ??? *On vjilsya* (he strongly experienced that).
>
> I: Who was nervous? You or your boss?
>
> B: [his boss].
>
> I: Why?
>
> B: *Shto ya ne ponimayu*. (Because I didn't understand).

While Sylvia was painfully sensitive to the reaction she might generate in the other speaker, Boris didn't share her empathy. Following up on the same thread, the interview continued and further depicted Boris' outlook on emotions:

> I (to B): I was asking about you, whether you feel nervous some time (when having to use English).
>
> B: No. I mm I… ??? *nu ya tak ustroen. Ya ponimayu shto nervy eto bezpoleznaya trata. Nujno pitatsya ponyat'.* (Well, this is how I am constructed. I understand that to get nervous is useless. It is important to try to understand.)
>
> I: So you are trying to solve the problem?
>
> B (in confirmation): *Shto tratit' nerv?* (Why waste feelings?)

Although I have focused on selections from Boris and Sylvia's discussions on emotions and discursive practices, they were not the only ones illustrating this gender pattern. Vera, for instance, often spoke of how she felt because of the loss of voice. For instance, referring to the

quick exchanges between her English-speaking colleagues, she commented she felt like "durachka" (fool) among them, not understanding fully what they were talking about and not being able to contribute to the dialogue. Her husband, Aleksei, on the other hand, never spoke of emotions associated with the use of L2. Having lived in the States for two years at the time of this particular interview, he admitted he still failed to understand most of his co-workers. Aleksei's description of his lack of understanding was very different from Vera's:

> I: Do you use English at work?
>
> A: Sometimes. I don't understand too much workers. I don't understand / I don't understand / this language. La-la-la-la (indicates how English sounds to him). Is one mm worker / Bobby / Bob / when mm speak with me / we / he / he is very very very slow speak. Very very good. I understand. No problem! I speak with Bob / Bob understand to me.

"No problem" is how Aleksei typically described his interactions in the L2. For example, as he was telling me about his dialogue at a local mall, he commented:

> A: I was mm in / watch store / in Sunday. This is my…
>
> V: Bracelet.
>
> A: Bracelet. Is broken. I talk with mm salesman. I said, "This my bracelet broken." He is / understand to me. No problem.

Like Boris, Aleksei is concerned with the process of getting his message across and understanding what is directed to him. The two do not engage in an emotional discourse about the interaction.

From the four male participants, only Peter expressed emotions linked to his language practices. In this, he situated his feelings exclusively in the context of his job environment:

I: So how did you cope with that? What did you mean “bad English”?

P: Bad English? That I didn’t understand what / people say sometimes I didn’t understand my assignment / so / I felt uncomfortable / so. Also I felt uncomfortable when people get together / and chatting with each other. I didn’t know jokes. You know but… I went through that. Now / I feel much better.

It is evident that Peter associated the better command of English with his success on the job. In the last couple of sentences, he spoke of his ability to communicate with the others, but even in this, he was referring to his career achievement. (In a later interview, for example, he was showing an acute awareness of the need to socialize with his colleagues in order to succeed in one’s profession.)

In this chapter, I have attempted to portray positional aspects of identity within the new discourses of the participants and show how language mediates practices of otherness. My goal was to bring their individual voices alive. However, by relating their own stories to these of other immigrants, the participants demonstrated that the discussed lived experiences are rooted in a social system rather than being isolated cases. Patterns in the data also suggested that, although men could experience the loss of linguistic resources emotionally (e.g., Peter), it was the women in the study who repeatedly reflected on their fears, nervousness and humiliation. Moreover, it was the female participants who tended to be aware of the other speakers’ reaction and get psychologically involved in the dialogical process. At the same time, the critical social awareness the participants revealed and even their emotional reactions (e.g., Vera’s anger) pointed out the kernels of their emergent agencies.

Chapter 5

Language Learning and Literacy Practices: Acts of Investment in the Second Language

Bourdieu (1991) describes utterances as linguistic transactions. He writes:

> Linguistic exhange—a relation of communication between a sender and a receiver, based on enciphering and deciphering, and therefore on the implementation of a code or generative competence—is also an economic exchange which is established within a particular symbolic relation of power between a producer, endowed with a certain linguistic capital, and a consumer (or a market)… (p. 67).

If the forms of linguistic exchange carry economic value, then the learners of a language should have ways of investing in this currency. As noted in a previous chapter, Peirce (1995) speaks of investment in language learning. She borrows the term from Bourdieu's earlier work (1977), which introduces cultural capital as the knowledge that positions different groups in different social contexts. Adopting this view, Peirce states that "if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources" (p. 17). Although Peirce doesn't provide a definition for the term investment, her word "understanding" implies a conscious effort. Thus, I suggest that language investment encompassed all the conscious ways of improving one's L2 skills. These conscious learning acts represent a part of the learners' agencies. I would also argue that these agencies are not autonomous, but are shaped by the participants' new social contexts. Thus, learning a language is not an act solely dependent on the learners' intentions or motivation as mentalist models of learning have previously suggested in SLA. In this chapter, I will outline how the participants, who have all expressed the need to communicate in English, invest in the linguistic capital of the

L2. In other words, I will present the activities they employ to increase their second language skills. In doing this, I will also illuminate whether these language learning practices are gender-related and, if so, trace how the gender distinctions are expressed.

5.1. Literacy practices in the home country

First, I will first briefly sketch the subjects' literacy backgrounds. I believe that such a sketch can aid in understanding their L1 socio-cultural positions, and how their positions changed in L2. All of the subjects with the exception of Natalia, who was in her third year of college when she left Ukraine, held higher education degrees. All of them, during the interviews, brought up the books they read in their home countries. They read not only professional literature, but also read extensively for pleasure. Vera and Aleksei, for example, when speaking of their reading practices in Russia, mentioned:

> A: I like the histories book. In Russian / I / [read] too much. Very interesting.
>
> V History and military books / about uh / *kak vozpominaniya* (how do you say memoirs) / the memoirs / about the second great war / and hmm… the memoirs of the / mm / general… Jukov / Vassilevski / Rakasovski…
>
> A: *Nu eto* iz Russian mmm…(this is about)
>
> V: *generalov* (generals).
>
> A: generalov.
>
> A: DeGol / very nice book. Maybe iz Russian history… (maybe about Russian history)…
>
> V: Yeah! The old books about the old times / about the sixteen / yeah / about the fifteen sixteen century / about the tsar's family / Ivan Grozni / Boris Godunov / it's

very nice. And we read (past tense) so much books about / about Bulgaria Rumania / about Hungary / about the history of these / countries. All the European countries.

Aleksei, usually a silent participant in our English discussions, was eager to contribute to the topic above. Vera and Aleksei pointed out that they had read not only Russian authors. They knew Alexander Dumas, Conan Doyle, and Agatha Christie, among many foreign authors. (This is not surprising as all of the Western European and American classic authors have long been translated in the native languages of Eastern European countries.) Vera offered an opinion about modern American writers as well, whom she had read in Russian. For example, she noted that she "cannot read King's" (Stephen King's) books. Vera tended to compare hers and Aleksei's literacy background to that of the Americans she knew. Once, having just come back from a trip to California, where they visited Jack London's town, Vera observed with genuine puzzlement:

V: Sometimes it's strange for me. They [Americans] don't know / their writers. They don't know their composers. So strange for me! When I was in San Francisco and came back and / tell them / about Jack London / they look at me / all the time. And I show the pictures and they say, "Oh, it's very interesting but who is Jack London?"

V: I say, "It's your writer!" And in Russia / all the people know him / from the kids' time… Maybe I began my first story from / Jack London / was / what I remember / *Bely Clig* (White Fang) / yeah? / about the wolf… And then studied in school and then I read… I have at home all the books from Jack London. And they don't know who is it. And I ask them, "And Drieser / you know him?"

"Drieser?" (imitates Americans' reaction)… I begin to name / the names of the novels—Sister Carrie and American Tragedy.

I: They don't know about him?

> V: They know / they know but / their names only. It's strange for me / because I know that this is the people / who had the high (university) education. Strange! Very very strange for me.

Well aware of socio-economic variation and the literacy implications it carries in each society, Vera stressed several times that the people she was referring to were "very rich people"—doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. She contrasted them with the highly educated in her home environment, asserting that "the poorest family in Russia has the books at home… The lawyers / and the teachers / and the engineers / they have / so much books at home."

In a similar vein, Sylvia expressed a surprise that her ESL teacher did not know about Stefan Zweig or her favorite Theodore Drieser or John Steinbeck, "only Stephen King." She concluded that if an English teacher had not read these classic authors, "I guess this is very bad." These examples illustrate not only the educational background of the participants, but also their attitude toward literacy, and what it means for them to be educated, in general. All participants highly value education. Here, however, they also indicate that being well educated involves not only having knowledge in a particular professional field, but also, knowing the literature of one's country and foreign classics as well. This view underscores their alignment with the intellectual elite in the native language and culture. It also helps understand how they view themselves and the others in their new settings. For example, Vera's discursive practices in the L1 claim her an indisputable position among the highly educated. Based on these elite L1 discourses, she positions herself as an intellectual within the new socio-linguistic milieu as well. How did their new literacy practices change upon arriving in the new country and living in a new language?

5.2. Reading practices in the L2 environment

5.2.1. Reading in the native language

My conversations with the participants revealed that they preferred reading in their native language. A variety of Russian texts was made available to them by several publishing companies in the United States. Vera, for instance, regularly ordered fiction books in Russian (typically translation from English) from New York. Both couples—Vera and Aleksei, and Sylvia and Boris—talked about reading Russian newspapers, which they could buy locally. (They tended to read these newspapers more frequently in the beginning of the project.) Boris, Dmitri, and Peter all mentioned that they regularly read in Russian on the Internet. While Dmitri and Peter admitted they followed only the news and sports, Boris said that he also read fiction books published on the Internet.

The participants never indicated that this preference for reading in the first language is related to maintaining their ethnic belongingness. Indeed, even when they ordered books in Russian, they were translated from English. All the participants had library cards. All of them shared that, at some point, they attempted to read fiction in English or would love to able to read it fluently. However, it was not a pleasurable activity because of their limitations in English. Lydia, for example, said:

> L: If I had Russian books / I would read / but I don't have it.
>
> I: So you would prefer to read in Russian than English?
>
> L: Yeah.
>
> I: What did you like to read in Russian?
>
> L: I like more… *innostrannaya* literature.
>
> P (translates): Foreign.

> L: Foreign literature. For some reason / I didn't like Russian authors / like Tolstoi / Checkov / I didn't like them / I don't know why. Now / I would read them / if I had them. But I like to read Jack London / Dickens / Hemingway. I didn't read Hemingway much / but all the [other] foreign authors [I did].

In this segment, Lydia was referring to the limited time she has for reading. She, as well as the others, strongly associated reading with reading for pleasure. To my question, "Would you read them [these foreign authors] now in English?" Lydia replied, "No, because I will never feel like… *ne poluchu udovol'stvie*" (wouldn't feel pleasure) because of the many unfamiliar words she would encounter. She added, "I read books to relax." In the new country, however, Lydia was holding a job and a full load of courses at the university. Reading anything but textbooks and "technical literature" became a luxurious event in either language. Nevertheless, Lydia admitted that she occasionally read about Ukraine on the Internet in Russian. Similarly, Natalia, mentioned that she liked to read newspapers in Russian from time to time, but she didn't have time for more.

5.2.2. Reading in the second language

Their predilections for reading in the L1 notwithstanding, all participants unavoidably found they had to read in English as well. The obvious, purely pragmatic texts were utility bills, credit card statements, immigration documents, and job applications. The other types of texts differed, depending on individual needs and preferences. What also differed among the participants was the level of their reading abilities. The two younger couples quickly adjusted to the format of the new official documents (e.g., bills, immigration materials). This process was more problematic for Sylvia and Boris, and Vera and Aleksei.

Boris, for example, revealed that, in the beginning, he could not understand anything that arrived in the mail. At this initial stage, he resolved to ask "deti" (the kids) to help him with bills. In June, 2001, however, he proudly declared that he was the one now who took care of the mail at home. When I asked about his reading other texts, he admitted he didn't because it took him an inordinately long time. He also shared that he didn't have time to read in English as he was working long hours at his labor-intensive job, and when finally at home, he needed some time to relax (whenever we met for an interview at night, both Boris and Sylvia looked tired). Unlike his job in Ukraine, Boris' new job didn't require him to read anything.

Aleksei didn't have to read at work, either. When I asked if he read anything in English, he said that he read the sports section in the local paper. On another occasion, he mentioned that, at times, he used English language textbooks for Russian-speaking learners. At this statement, Vera showed up with several textbooks combining grammar instructions, short reading texts, and exercises, saying that she found them helpful. Then, she accusingly pointed to her husband and said, "But / he don't do nothing." Immediately after that, however, she added, a bit contrite:

> V: Do you know / it's very difficult to him to my mind / that he stands up / every morning / at 4 o'clock. It's very difficult when==He sleeps in the evening / but / this is a different / sleeping. When you stand up so early / and then you work / and he comes home at 6:15 p.m. And then / he has a very short time / maybe take a shower / he eat / look a little bit TV / sometimes he read the mm newspaper / and he go sleep. At 10:00 p.m. he is sleeping.

Vera was not trying to excuse her husband's not reading in English. She was just depicting Aleksei's everyday reality and a new social location that molded not only their literacy practices but also their second language investment.

Only Vera and Sylvia read fiction in English. When I once went to meet with Vera and Aleksei, I had a book for Vera—*The Glass Lake* by Mauve Binchy as I knew she liked novels about human relationships. When I gave her the book, Vera jumped to her feet and said that she had already begun to read in English. Then, she brought a paperback—a romance novel by a Linda Madle. In later interviews, however, as she got increasingly busy with her job, Vera admitted that she found the activity cumbersome because of her limited vocabulary. She was too tired to look the words up in the dictionary.

As her experience on the job grew, she began to collect and read cookbooks and food magazines in English, for example, *Cooking Light*. The culinary books in her bookcase covered different courses and menus classified by region and nationality. During one of my last visits with her and Aleksei, the cookbooks claimed two bookshelves. The rest of this bookcase and another one in her office held books in Russian with an occasional American paperback. Because of her passion for travel, Vera had also accumulated a significant number of travel guides and brochures from her trips all over the States. She shared that she liked to read them and, in fact, liked to "retell" them to her friends. At one meeting, for example, having just visited Elvis Presley's city and house, she pulled out a guide detailing the interior of the famous singer's home. While the guide was entirely in English, Vera excitedly went over the content in Russian. Her Russian version coincided with the English text in the guide.

Sylvia also read the major local newspaper. She frequently scanned them for job ads. I have also seen a book on the history of her new American town. When I asked who was reading it, she said that it was given to her by her ESL teacher. Sylvia went on to describe interesting historical facts about streets and buildings she was already familiar with. During an interview in June, 2001, Sylvia told me that she had started reading English fiction. Her choice was a book by

Agatha Christie—a favorite author of hers. She hoped that since she had read the novel in Russian once, it would be easier to do that in English. While she didn't find that to be true, Sylvia proudly said that she enjoyed reading in English and Christie's plot, although familiar, helped her go on. Sylvia commented that reading in English a book she liked helped her increase her vocabulary. Both Sylvia and Vera have a number of English textbooks, predominantly grammar and designed for Russian learners. I have also seen, however, Vera using some popular ESL books by British and American authors, written for the generic ESL learner. The books were predominantly on grammar (e.g., by Murphy or Azar).

Natalia and Dmitri, who were both studying toward their university degrees, and working after classes, said that they read exclusively for school purposes. Natalia also noted that she read American newspapers and fashion magazines. For Dmitri, his only reading genre in English consists of academic textbooks. When he was hired as a computer programmer, I asked whether he read any computer-related magazines or journals. He acknowledged he didn't know any.

Both Lydia and Peter had to read in English. Lydia, working toward her second university degree, regularly read the assigned textbooks for courses. She also mentioned that she was trying to read other "technical literature," for example, computer manuals. Both she and Peter liked to read English texts on the Internet. Although they preferred reading about international news and professional materials, they also pointed me to Internet sites in English related to American culture. Once, they even gave me a printout of a text they had discussed, "The Paradox of Our Time," which criticized the values of modern American society. Lydia also remarked that, in Ukraine, she liked to read American fashion magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and would frequently exchange issues with female friends. Shrugging, she stressed that now she did

not find this genre interesting at all. She explained that, in her home country, such American magazines were just curious novelties at the time and a link to American culture.

5.3. Language Learning Practices and Beliefs: Acts of Investing in the L2

This section of the chapter describes how the participants approach English and how they make meaning of their learning experiences. Unveiling beliefs about language learning is not merely illustrative; rather, their acts of investing in the second language are linked to attitudes toward English as well. These issues are also important for the insights they offer into whether these practices and beliefs are influenced by gender.

Reading is only one of the ways in which adults can invest in a second language. As we saw, Sylvia read to increase her L2 vocabulary. A prominent area in second language acquisition, which studies gender as a variable, has been the research on the use learning strategies. In a study on second language learning and gender, Green and Oxford (1995) use the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed earlier by Oxford to study how they relate to gender. The structure of SILL is centered on the following six learning strategies:

(1) affective strategies: used for anxiety reduction, self-encouragement, and self-reward

(2) social strategies, for example, asking questions and cooperating with native speakers

(3) metacognitive strategies such as monitoring or planning language tasks

(4) memory-related strategies, such as grouping, imagery, or rhyming

(5) general cognitive strategies (e.g., reasoning, analyzing, summarizing and practicing)

(6) compensatory strategies: used to make up for insufficient knowledge of the L2, for instance, using gestures to describe words or guessing from the context.

This is a self-scoring, paper-and-pencil survey, which, while popular in the field of SLA for measuring the use of learning strategies, has its limitations. For example, being self-scored, it

does not ensure that the answers picked up by the surveyed students truthfully reflect the strategies they actually apply to the L2. Having completed the survey myself, I found it tempting to check the strategies, which I would like to have or thought I should as a "good language learner." In this particular article, Green and Oxford surveyed 374 students at the University of Puerto Rico. Predictably, they found "significantly greater overall use of language learning strategies among more successful learner." (p. 285). They also claimed "higher overall strategy use by women than by men" (p. 285). It is the latter result that I found more relevant to my own study.

In another article, Oxford, Nyikos, and Ehrman (Oxford et al., 1988), reported on four studies, which examined sex (their term of preference) as a factor in the use of language learning strategies. Again, the studies were conducted in university settings, and were quantitative as students had to self-report filling out surveys. Oxford et al. stated that the four studies showed "a wide range of sex differences in strategy use." The female respondents showed a greater range of strategy use in both frequency and variety. Study #1, for example, indicated that women outperformed men in the use of social strategies. The second study, according to the authors, yielded indefinite findings. However, as it measured color memory and visual spatial skills, it was not of much interest to me. The third study demonstrated that females employed more of the following strategies than men: general study strategies, formal-rule related practice, input elicitation strategies. The last category refers to the conscious elicitation of input, for example, help or corrective feedback. Study # 4 echoed the claims made by the other three in the article.

The research on language strategies has been an important contribution to our understanding of SLA, particularly of its cognitive aspects. However, it has assumed the traditional psychological perspective that learners' identities are inherent, and that students

"own" the strategies as their individual characteristics. These studies have been done in a highly controlled classroom environment, where students are trained to employ language learning strategies. Moreover, they were all quantitative and used a single self-reported questionnaire. Here, I am adopting a different approach. By using the participants' narratives on learning and my observations of their practices, I am interested in how they interpret their acts of investments in the second language. While I refer to the acts of investment and the traditional strategies in the same section, I don't consider the two to be synonymous. Second language investment encompasses all "transactions" which the learners employ consciously with the purpose of enhancing their skills, but, importantly, these transactions are mediated by the participants' social realities. In the following section of the chapter, I turn to the participants' language learning activities, their beliefs about the process, and my own observations of their practices.

5.3.1. Taking ESL Courses

All participants have taken English language courses at some point or another. Sylvia and Vera have studied English in their home countries for a short period in college. Aleksei also studied English as a foreign language as a university student, but he admits he doesn't remember anything, and even then, he didn't learn much. The four younger participants all studied English in high school or college. Upon arrival in the United States, Sylvia, Vera, Boris and Aleksei started taking an ESL course offered by an immigration and refugee center. Vera continued taking courses there for a year; then, she signed up for an ESL course at a local college. Sylvia attended the ESL course for about a year. Because of his work schedule, Aleksei only stayed in the ESL class for weeks. Boris was continually taking the ESL course at the immigration institution for a year; then, he began attending another class offered by his work organization.

Lydia, Peter, and Dmitri never took ESL classes in the States. Natalia had to take two writing ESL courses before she was allowed to attend the regular freshman composition classes at the university. While I have observed Sylvia and Vera doing their English homework and have heard them talk about it, I never saw Boris using an English language textbook or write anything in English. He never mentioned doing it, either. According to himself, the only textbook he opens is the *Oxford Picture Dictionary.*

5.3.2. Investing in the structure of the L2

Sylvia actively studied grammar rules and focused her attention on linguistic details. When I asked what English texts she read, she quickly answered, "Grammar." Once, when Sylvia showed me an Agatha Christie novel she was reading, I noticed that many of the phrases and words were highlighted in yellow and underlined. I asked, "Are you highlighting new words?" and she replied:

> S: Yes / and tenses. And so far / I / unless I make out make out in grammatical form (unless she understands the grammar) / I don't continue. I want to understand.
>
> B: She like it. English grammar. She like it.
>
> S: I want I want mm Agatha Christie to / I want to know what Agatha Christie wanted to [tell]. What mean. It is very interesting expression. Very interesting.

To Sylvia, accessing meaning was tightly connected to understanding its structure. She closely attended to detail. For example, in another interview, she was telling me about a structure she saw while reading:

> S: And mmm… the day before / I saw in the text / the expression / "we know neither nor" / neither nor / and I saw [knew] only nor / without neither / and I I was

> surprised. What does it mean? And I… and dictionary / I understood that / *kak skazat* (how to say) for strong means for…
>
> I: For emphasis?
>
> S: Yes… Eto kak skazat / *tonkosti=nuanci* (nuances).

Nuances are important for Sylvia. Being used to speak "correct" Russian, she strove to achieve a similar level in her second language. This is how Sylvia described the significance of using "correct English" in her own words:

> S: [Correct English] it's important for very many aspects of my life. First of all it's dealing with other people… Who will want speak to me if I am not understood and if I don't understand other people. It sure can associate at kitchen level… But it's not quite enough for intellectual level. Unfortunately, so far I cannot read and understand the books, newspapers and TV at such [intellectual] level as I do in Russian language.

In this excerpt Sylvia clearly points to the type of language one uses that positions the speaker within a specific social group. By contrasting the "kitchen" level of English with an intellectual one, she also contrasts two different social positions—the one she sees herself positioned within the L2, and the one she used to locate herself within the L1.

Ellis (1989) classifies language learners into two broad categories: studial and experiential. The studial learner heavily relies on rules and formal instruction, while the experiential learner approaches the L2 task intuitively, through communicative experiences. In Ellis's terms, Sylvia epitomized the studial, analytical learner, and Boris, the experiential, field-dependent one. Boris was hardly concerned with structure or detail. Both agreed that he "studies English little / very little." At the same time, Sylvia claimed that Boris was better at listening on the phone than she was and explained this fact:

S: Because of reaction / reaction. I have a slow reaction / slow reaction. All the time I'm afraid to to misunderstand and… yes… If we need to discuss to find out some important problem / my husband / speaking / does it.

I: Is it because you listen better, Boris?

S: Listen / listen.

B:: I know what mmm…

S: *Ya terayus' nu kak etovo* (I get lost).

B: Sveta_must_listen_everything! Everything! I / if I had on two words / what I know / I understand what [someone] is speaking.

I: He is better at guessing.

S: Yes! *Dogodavatsya* (guessing).

I (to) B: So you are looking at the whole meaning / not the words?

S and B (at the same time): Yes.

I: That's a good thing. That's a good thing.

B: Maybe. I…

S: [He doesn't get] confused. *Ne stesnyayutsya* (he is not shy).

B: I [if I don't understand] ask. One time two time three time! I must understand what speak me. I ask two times / two three times / no problem! Sylvia / not. She mm neudobno (feels uncomfortable).

The passage reflects gender and learning preference issues. In addition to Sylvia's dependence on structure and details, the example reveals her emotional investment in the communicative process. Boris, on the other hand, is able to build on the available context, the few words he knows, to construct the meaning. Boris' attention is undivided and his approach is rather

straightforward—"get the meaning"—while, Sylvia is preoccupied not only with the task of analyzing the language input, but also with the effect she has on the other speaker. Thus, guessing is not a strategy she employs well, whereas it is her husband's strength.

Another example illustrating Boris' experiential approach to the L2 comes from a different interview:

> I (to Boris): How do you study English?
>
> B: I don't know. I don't know. My mother-in-law / and my wife / often ask me / mm why *ya* (I) this or this know.
>
> S: (trying to help with his English): *Shto*? (What?)
>
> B: *Otkuda ya to I to znayu* (how I know what I know).

Vera and Aleksei exhibit a similar pattern. Like Sylvia, Vera acknowledges attaches a high significance to the use of correct English:

> V: It is very important for me to use correct English because all my life I use correct Russian… Besides that I think that each person who respect themselves use correct language.

Thus, to Vera, one perceives herself through the language one employs; in this case, she is voicing a typical middle-class position of an educated speaker. While Aleksei had expressed the belief that knowledge of English strongly affected his chance of getting a better job, he admitted, "I think it's [using correct English] not important right now. In the future, it will be more important for me."

When I met with them, Aleksei would usually remain silent, while Vera and I talked. During one such visit, as Vera and I were conversing, Aleksei interrupted us, and the following interchange ensued:

A: Oh, when you speak “clock” / *chasu vremya* (the hour of the day) / clock clock clock (he imitates us pronouncing the word with the British vowel [ ].

V: No. Clock this is *vremya* (time). Eto watch eto *chasy* (the hour, and she points to the clock on the wall to indicate the time).

A: Da. I know I know. All time / I listen / the clock clock (pronounced in the American way).

V (she hasn’t understood what A is talking about): And I think / that you / mm… hear all the time / the people who work together with you. This is not mm good educated people. And they say==

A: (protests shaking his head)

V: No no Aleksei / no! It’s true. The same in Russia. You can remember. And when I study / I remember / our teacher said all the time: “Don’t say / never say , “What watch is it?” What time is it? Time watch and clock / it’s three different words.

A: Yeah. Ya po drugomu govoryu. (I am talking about something else).

V: O chem ty govorish? (What are you talking about?)

A: Vy govorite a clock a clock a clock (pronounced with the British vowel). And I listen all the time a clock a clock a clock (pronounced [klak]).

In this case, Vera didn’t immediately understand that Aleksei was referring to the pronunciation of the vowel of the word rather than to its use. Nevertheless, the segment illustrates Vera’s drawing on her formal training in English. Aleksei, at the same time, constructed his knowledge of the language through listening to it. Like Sylvia, Vera consulted grammar. She owned not only textbooks for Russian learners of English, but also several well known British and American grammar references (e.g., by Murphy and Azar). She used them particularly frequently

during the first two years of her stay in the States. I remember she asked me for a concise grammar book with exercises and answer sheets so that she could check her responses herself.

Natalia and Lydia both had to study grammar because of the TOEFL (Test of English as a foreign language) test they were required to take when they apply to the university. The two admit, though, that while they did study grammar, they were not quite enthusiastic about it. Natalia describes her knowledge of grammar as theoretical, rather than something she can apply to everyday language use. In the States, Natalia rarely referred to grammar guides, and used them only in conjunction with her ESL writing classes. Her husband, who didn't have to take ESL courses at the university, mentioned he didn't have time to study English grammar:

> I: Dmitry, have you ever studied English grammar?
>
> D: (sighs) Where? In the Ukraine? In the United States? Yes.
>
> Natalia: When we prepared for TOEFL / we studied grammar / but here / no.
>
> D: So / specific test / so…
>
> I: Have you tried here / after coming to the U.S.? Have you tried to open a grammar book?
>
> D: Yeah. A little bit / not very much. Not so much as / as I'd like to do it.

For one of the New Year holidays, I got small gifts for my participants—language CD ROMs and books. For Natalia and Dmitry I had chosen a concise editing guide for ESL students by Ann Raimes. As we were talking months after that, Natalia mentioned that Dmitry had read the book during the Christmas break, and now was testing her about grammar details.

Lydia studied grammar formally as she was taking her ESL classes in Ukraine. Very much like Vera and Sylvia, Lydia claimed, "I respect people speaking correct language, [and] I always admired these speaking pure Russian or Ukrainian." By "pure," she refers to the standard

version of a language, the one carrying a higher degree of social prestige. In the United States, Lydia didn't have time to study English formally or open grammar books. Her classes at the university and part-time job occupied most of her schedule. Lydia's husband, Peter, didn't have to take the TOEFL, and thus, according to Lydia, he never acquired a formal knowledge of English grammar. Peter admits, "I want to speak proper English but it's hard for me to make myself to speak it." Like Boris, Aleksei, and Dmitry, Peter's approach to the L2 is predominantly experiential and dependent on the context. In another interview, the issue of grammar emerges again, and the segment below illustrates Peter's intuitive knowing of L2 structure:

> I: You talk about grammar. So my question is: How do you improve grammar? Or when you say "grammar," can you give me some example of that?
>
> P: Grammar?
>
> I: Yeah. How do you study grammar?
>
> P: It's… it's like a feeling. I can / I can spell probably 80 % English words right. So…
>
> L: Probably yes. But grammar is not only spelling.

Lydia's interjection reflects her metalinguistic awareness: While spelling is part of the writing system of a language, it doesn't constitute its grammar. Peter, on the other hand, had difficulty conceptualizing this abstract notion and providing an example of it.

This doesn't mean that men prefer only experiential approaches to the L2, while women rely exclusively on structural knowledge. Speaking of how her English had improved over the last two years, Natalia commented, "I try to listen / what people say." This is similar to Peter's statement that he tries to listen to and imitate native speakers.

5.3.3. Using a dictionary

The use of dictionaries was another studial act of investing in the L2. All of the participants owned dictionaries—both print and electronic versions. Sylvia was the most fervent user of a dictionary among the eight participants. She would catch a bus to work, and during her 45-minute ride, she would read in English. Whenever she encountered a new word, Sylvia would type it in her electronic dictionary and would check both the definition and the pronunciation of the word (it was one of those speaking dictionaries). Sylvia said about her bus reading experiences:

> S: I have a translation / electronic [dictionary] (she shows me a small electronic dictionary). All bus is hearing! (laughing). They know that I am crazy…

Sylvia and Boris also had an electronic dictionary installed on their home computer. This was the only dictionary Boris used and only when he read the mail. The two also had several print dictionaries, which they brought with them from Ukraine.

Vera and Aleksei had several Russian-English and English-Russian dictionaries. I have seen only Vera use them, and she used them frequently during her first two years in the States.

> I: When do you use a dictionary?
>
> V: When I read, when I translate the sentences, and any time I speak with anyone, I use the dictionaries. But I bought here the Oxford dictionary, and I have Russian dictionary, and I look in one dictionary, then in the second dictionary, and I… kak skazat' sravnivayu (how to say compare)?
>
> I: Compare.
>
> V: And compare the words. But in Oxford dictionary, I know that it's a good dictionary, but I cannot find many Russian words.

I: So you are using Russian-English and English-Russian dictionary?

V: I have Russian-English and English-Russian dictionary.

According to Aleksei, he rarely used one. Natalia used a dictionary when she needed one for her university classes, while Lydia admitted that she rarely required one for her professional literature. If she or her husband didn't understand a word or expression, they preferred to ask a native speaker about its meaning rather than bother with dictionaries.

5.3.4. Asking for corrective feedback

Asking for corrective feedback is classified as one of the social strategies by Oxford. I believe that this is another studial act of investing in the L2, as it indicates one's desire to improve formal aspects of the language system (e.g., word stress or tenses). In an interview, Vera mentioned that she often asked the Americans she was working with her to correct her English errors. Sylvia had also expressed the need for somebody to correct her. She commented, though, that native speakers were not interested in that; thus, she asked me to correct her when possible. Another female informant, Lydia, also explicitly asked in the beginning of our work together that she would like me to provide language feedback for her and Peter. Assuming that, like Vera and Sylvia, she was concerned with grammar, I asked, "Do you mean grammar?" She replied, however, that she wasn't interested in that. Rather, she needed some input on the style, the expressions, and idioms she and her husband used, which comes to illustrate her higher level of English development and metalinguistic awareness.

5.3.5. Asking for input (data elicitation strategies)

Actively investing in a second language is not limited to the use of grammar guides, dictionaries, or other written language materials. Described as another social strategy by Oxford, eliciting language data from other speakers of English is another way to approach the learning

situation. Peter was a good example of a learner preferring this strategy. His wife confirmed this: "He prefers to ask." As their discourses on language learning showed, both Lydia and Peter actively employed this strategy for different aspects of English, for example, not only grammar and vocabulary, but also pronunciation:

> I: So you said that you were working on pronunciation now. How do you do that?
>
> L: Mm just in / conversation. We don't / we don't do anything at home or…
>
> I: Do you have anything like a recording or?
>
> P: We don't have the time.
>
> L: We don't have the time.
>
> I: So you are trying to improve pronunciation by listening and imitating? Is it working for you?
>
> L: Yeah.
>
> I: You said that this colleague of yours helped you make the distinction between "sneakers" and "snickers."
>
> L: I asked him.
>
> I: So that's my question, whether you asked or he volunteered information.
>
> L: (she asked). I can ask him anything / about language so… He is always ready to help.

While they didn't open a dictionary or a pronunciation textbook, the two purposely sought linguistic data. In another interview, Lydia and Peter referred to the advantages of this strategy:

> I: So you were saying that you try to remember each word [each word they hear]. So how do you do that?

P: I I try to use words. Somewhere / when I speak to somebody I try to use this word and / sometimes it's helpful sometimes it's… I forget them the other day.

L: I usually / write down the words if I / cannot guess what they / mean. What people mean. And then I write down and then I ask somebody or / I usually ask.

P: Yeah it's better to ask [than dictionary] because uh… when somebody other explaining you==

L: Yeah they can give an example.

One of the reasons Lydia and Peter preferred "to ask" is that, often, the expressions they didn't know, were not listed in the typical dictionary as they were idioms rather than single words. Still speaking of asking, Peter mentioned:

P: Sometimes (laughs)… One day we / we have like expression like "streets smart" / and I called my friend / in Columbus / and asked him what this means.

L: And he didn't know.

I: Was he Russian?

L and P: No, American.

P: No no. After that after that he recognized the word and…

Usually, the two preferred to ask colleagues or friends, with whom they felt comfortable. They had implied that most of their co-workers were typically very understanding and generous when it came to providing such linguistic data.

When Sylvia required linguistic information, she usually asked her daughters, Natalia and Lydia. Her questions were typically about grammar structures. In one of our first interviews, for instance, Sylvia commented:

S: Yesterday / I tried to find out the question about *there* / using of the English expression *there is* / *there are* / *there will be* / and especially / *can be may be might be*. *There might have been*. These are known to me / but till now / I didn't listen about them. In the evening / we discussed these questions [with my daughters].

It was not unusual for Sylvia to interrupt her sentence and ask me about a grammar structure or word during an interview as the following example shows:

S (speaking of her ailing mother): But / the doctors forbid / or forbided (to me)?

I: Forbade.

S: Forbade / almost all medicine.

As obvious from Vera's examples in previous sections, she elicited linguistic information frequently, too. During an interview, for example, she would often ask whether the grammatical structure she used (typically, a verb tense) was correct or about a vocabulary item. In the brief segments below, she was interested in the accurate forms of the verbs:

a. V: It's more than I receive. But so much friends. And every of them have / they have… Have or has? Have.

I: Have.

b. I: So you want to invest in a mutual fund?

V: I will not. But they will!

V: Won't or Will? What is correct? They won't or they will? (a grammar question for me).

I: They "will" is like they will / in the future. "They won't" –they will not.

V: No. They will! They will / buy the...

Oxford and Green (ibid.) classify all types of asking as social strategies, but I believe that asking has more functions than one. In the cases above, as the participants inquire about grammar patterns or vocabulary items, they engage actively in the learning process, and thus, invest in the SLA. Other types of asking, however, do not imply L2 investment, but serve as compensatory strategies. Boris frequently uses such a strategy when he doesn't understand the meaning of an utterance; for example, he may ask his interlocutor to repeat the same information or slow down his/her speech. I believe this to be a compensatory, rather than a purely social strategy as proposed by Oxford. While the request to repeat an utterance or to slow the speech flow down may help clarify meaning, the learner does not elicit new linguistic information. Among the participants, Boris most frequently referred to using this request. As one of the examples above indicates, he may do that "one time two times three times" till he gets the gist of the information. This doesn't mean he acquires new language forms. His main listening strategy, as explained above, is guessing: For the strategy of guessing, another compensatory strategy, he is heavily dependent on the available context.

5.3.6. Using compensatory strategies

All language learners resolved to use compensatory strategies at one point or another. Among the eight participants, Boris was the one who employed them most frequently. Guessing is a typical example of a compensatory strategy. As he explained his interactions at work, the familiarity with the construction process helped him guess the meaning of his colleagues' utterances. Boris also admited that all he needed to understand a piece of mail were several words.

All participants have had to use guessing at some point of interaction with a native speaker of English. However, I don't consider compensatory strategies to be a way of investing

in the L2 as language acquisition is not a conscious goal in these cases. Predictably enough, the more advanced the learner, the less s/he depends on compensating for the lack of language skills, and vice versa. Again, a good example is Boris, who, being the least advanced learner of the participants, relied most heavily on compensatory strategies.

5.3.7. Monitoring

Monitoring one's language production is an active engagement in the discursive situation. This metacognitive strategy requires not only the learner's intention to better her/his written or spoken discourses, but also his/her possessing sufficient metalinguistic awareness, i.e., formal knowledge about the L2. Vera and Sylvia regularly monitored their speech, and this was obvious in many interview examples. Typically, Vera monitored the use of verb tenses as in the case below:

> V: He come in [the States] seven or eight years ago. He worked in Russia in the academy… and he teach English. His life is very interesting… was… no! **Is** very interesting.

In the following example, Sylvia monitored her own use of determiners:

> S: But / but mm / my mother / put / every day / put some meals / from ??? And every day / another / other people / different people bring some meals for her.

Another participant who employed self-monitoring was Natalia. In the excerpt below, she was reflecting on her grammatical accuracy when she used English:

> N: I talk and like / I finish my sentence and I think yeah… I made a mistake. I already… I already analyzed it.

Here, Natalia was referring to her theoretical knowledge of grammar. She could analyze her own errors when she makes any, but it was still difficult for her employ the rules automatically to the discursive situation.

The following table summarizes the ways, in which the participants invested in the second language. The two categories “listening to the radio” or “watching TV” are considered investment strategies only if they are a conscious L2 activity. The table contains both interview data and responses to the reflective questionnaire.

Table 1 - Summary of learning activities

L2 investment activity	Vera	Aleksei	Sylvia	Boris	Natalia	Dmitri	Lydia	Peter
ESL class in the U.S.	about 2 years	several weeks	about 1 years	about 2 years (off and on)	2 ESL writing courses	no	no	no
Formal (rule-based) approach	studies grammar, uses translation	no indication	Studies grammar, translates to English from Russian	no indication	studied formal grammar for TOEFL in home country	Studied formal grammar for TOEFL in home country	studied formal grammar for TOEFL in home country	no indication
Eliciting linguistic input	asks for vocabulary and grammar	no indication	asks for vocabulary and grammar	no indication	asks for grammar help with her essays (cousin)	asks for help with his job writing (colleagues)	asks for help with vocabulary and pronunciation	asks for help with vocabulary and pronunciation
Requesting corrective feedback	frequently: of coworkers and researcher	no indication	frequently: of interviewer and wishes it or others	no indication	no indication	no indication	wishes feedback on style and idioms	no indication
Use of dictionary	frequently	Rarely (in the beginning of stay)	frequently	rarely (when reading mail)	Occasionally (for university classes)	only in the beginning	rarely	only during year 1 of his stay
Self-monitoring	frequently	no indication	frequently	no indication	yes	no indication	no indication	no indication
Using gestures	no indication	no indication	no indication	frequently	no indication	no indication	no indication	no indication
Watching TV	no indication	watches sports program and action movies	rarely	watches but <u>not</u> as an investment	watches different programs	watches different programs	rarely	watches different programs
Listening to English	audio books when driving	the radio when driving	no indication	A tape with the Oxford picture dictionary (only in beginning)	actively listens to native speakers for vocabulary	no indication	actively listens for vocab. and pronunciation	actively listens for vocab. and pronunciation

While Table 1 above offers a convenient summary, it should only be considered in conjunction with the descriptive narrative in this chapter. Taken together, they indicate that, overall, it was the female participants in this study who employed more acts of investment in the L2. For instance, they read a greater variety of texts in English. They engaged in more analytical and studial (or formal) language learning. For example, referring to grammar rules or formal classroom instruction was more typical of the female subjects in the project. This was particularly true of the two older women. It is interesting that only the women (three of them) used self-monitoring strategies. I consider the ability to self-monitor in the L2 significant as it also suggests a higher level of metalinguistic awareness.

Any quantitative study, however, can determine the number and frequency of second language activities in which the learners engage. For my purposes, the ways they make meaning of and how they articulate their learning process is more critical. It is particularly significant that while these acts of investing in the L2 reflect learner agencies, they are not autonomous, but a result of a dialogue with their everyday discursive realities. The participants' literacy and learning practices changed as their social positions shifted in the L2. For example, hard physical labor during the day prevented Boris from reading at night, except for functional purposes (e.g., bills). Vera's efforts to succeed in a new catering career determined what books she bought and the magazines she subscribed to. Moreover, she stopped taking the composition ESL course she attended for a while because she realized it was not related to her everyday discursive realities. As she reflected, it was more useful for a friend of hers, who was a doctor and wanted to pursue a medical career in the U.S. Vera, on the other hand, needed to acquire more kitchen-related discourse as she was considering going into a business for herself. Thus, the participants' acts of

investment in the L2 were not merely a result of personal choices or individual agencies, but were mediated by the complex changes in the L2 social environment.

Peirce (ibid.) has challenged the notion of motivation in SLA and, instead, has proposed Bourdieu's term investment. Bourdieu's economic analogy of language as a linguistic capital implies that there are ways learners could invest in it. In this chapter, building on Peirce and Bourdieu, I have suggested the concept acts of language investment, which doesn't necessarily coincide with the cognitive term learning strategies. Not all learning strategies, as classified by educational psychologists, are acts of language investment. The latter are expressions of agency, which hinge on the creative awareness that these acts of learning were, indeed, an investment in a powerful symbolic resource.

Chapter 6

REFLECTIVE LANGUAGE PRACTICES: GENDER AND LINGUISTIC AUTHORITY

The previous chapter explained that metalinguistic awareness refers to the formal knowledge one has about the structure of a language. I suggested that it was an act of L2 investment, and as such, it is not a state, but a process. Vera, Sylvia, and Natalia demonstrated that, in language production, the practice of metalinguistic awareness is expressed through self-monitoring. It also encompasses one's ability to reflect on her/his knowledge of a language. Here, I will examine the participants' metalinguistic discourses and other reflective learning practices. At the same time, I propose the term *linguistic authority* to illustrate how gender mediates these discourses within the couples.

6.1. Metalinguistic discourses

Interview data revealed that the participants engaged not only in self-monitoring, but also in metalinguistic discursive practices. Often, such discourses were initiated between the couple.

6.1.1. Vera and Aleksei

During one of our meetings, for example, the following dialogue took place between Vera and Aleksei, who were discussing their wide interests:

> V: Not only in the Socialist union / because I love ??? I studied in the university so much about Spain / and about Italy / and about Fra… France? (to Interviewer)
>
> I: Yeah France.
>
> A: French.
>
> V (to A): No / French *eto yazyk* (is the language). *Strana / eto* (the country is) France.

A (skeptical): Hmm… American peoples / all time I listen / speak "French French French." Why?

V: *Pravil'no govoryat po frantsuskii / strana Francia. Yazyk / French*. (They say, "To speak French." The country is France. The language is French.)

I: French is the adjective.

V (to A): Da, da! And France *sushtestvitel'noe*! (noun)

Vera's formal awareness of grammar far exceeded the terms adjective and noun. Once, I found Vera working on her English language homework, and we started discussing the sentences. I was curious about how she knew what structures she should use:

I: Why did you decide that you shouldn't have an article here (before 'math')?

V: Because we have only 'math;' mathematics, kak eto, subject… Yes? And here, 'Could I have a cup of coffee with cream and sugar?' *Potomushto eto neizchislimoe*, coffee (because 'coffee' is a non-countable noun). *Skol'ko coffee, ne znaem. Skol'ko moloko, ne znaem*. (How much coffee, we don't know. How much milk, we don't know.)

…

V: 'No one in the English class knew the correct answer to the instructor's question.' *Ya tak napisala potomushto reshila shto eto conkretnyi klas, konkretnyi vopros, konkretnyi prepodavatel'*. (I wrote it this way because I decided this is a specific class, specific question, and specific instructor.)

I: Where did you learn that rule?

V: I learned it here (in her ESL class). Our teacher said us that if anyone concrete, we need take the article, 'the,' not 'a' no 'an.'

It is clear that Vera consciously drew on her knowledge not simply **of** the language, but **about** the language. Moreover, she was acutely aware of her learning experiences. Vera's predisposition to reflect on the language learning process was, to a large extent, a result of her professional background. Having studied Spanish in college and taught the language later, she commented, "Because I am a teacher, and I know how, how to teach anybody to do something." Vera was keenly analytic about her approaches toward the L2. When she was telling me how she learns English best, she drew on her studies of Spanish. Combining listening, speaking, and reading activities seemed to work best for Vera as she suggested:

> V: It's the same mm in Russia / the anecdote. When I hear the anecdote / and come work at home / and I retell the anecdote to Aleksei / I remember. The same with language. And this is a method / my mm / they teach it / in the university when I studied. Our teacher was from Spain. He was a very very very old man. He's from Madrid / and he graduated the Madrid University / like… kak *lingvist* (to Interviewer)?
>
> I: Linguist.
>
> V: He is a very interesting man. Uhh he looks like Don Quixote. He was a very nice man / and this is his method. He give=uhh=he gave us a book / and he said, "Don't read it. Go to the lab / and hear it. Then / read it / and then / retell me." And each of us / received a different book and a different tape. It was a very nice method.

The excerpt demonstrates that Vera actively analyzed what worked for her as a learner. At the same time, she was critical of her ESL teachers' practices. Once, for example, Vera shared with me her frustration about the ESL course she was currently taking at a local college:

V: … I think / it's not good for me… And I cannot understand / why [the teachers] give us all the time… *sochineniya.… kak skazat'*? (how do you say 'compositions'?)

I: Compositions?

V: No.

I: Essays?

V: Essays. I write / I don't know much is this. And all the time [the teacher] said, "Oh, your essay is so-o interesting / it's very very nice." But I cannot speak! Why I need to write it?

V: And / they gave us the words / so much! / they are / unusable words. We don't use them. Why I need study them? Maybe / we need study the words / all the words / but / for the first time / the usable words.

I: Something for communication.

V: Yeah / and then / the unusable. I forget / now I forget these words / but if I translate these words in Russian / it will be like // for example / I can say *ogon*' (fire) / and [I can say] *plamya* (flame). *Nu chashe my govorim 'ogon''* (more often we say 'fire' / *my ne govorim 'plamya*' (we don't say 'plamya'). The same in English. *Ona nam dala takie slova / kogda ya govoryu s* (she gave us such words that when I speak with) Ame=with American people / they look on me with / large eyes and say, "What is it?" And I say, "Sorry, I ask you what is it." And I need prepare the sentences / fine I prepare / but sometimes I cannot understand mmm *znachenie* (the meaning).

Her academic background and journalistic career had made Vera sensitive to the use of language and the stylistic characteristics of its different registers. Being conscious of her needs as a

language learner, Vera stressed the importance of improving the ability to speak, to express her voice in her everyday discursive realities. Finally, having taken several ESL courses at different institutions, she got discouraged and continued to study by herself. This doesn't mean that she is completely negating the value of these courses. For example, she mentioned that academic writing skills might be necessary for somebody else, but not to herself. Vera realized that in her second language, she would never perform as in her native tongue: "Now I cannot do it [speak correctly]. Do you know / I think *eto nevozmojno uje* (this is already impossible)." She associated this impossibility for perfection with her age—a theoretically solid association within the field of SLA.

6.1.2. Sylvia and Boris

Elements of Sylvia's, Natalia's and Lydia's metalinguistic discourses also emerge in the data. Sylvia's reading notes, for example, contained numerous examples of different English tenses, their grammatical meaning and use. Like Vera, they also actively reflected on their language learning practices. Sylvia, for example, often initiated conversation about her daily L2 experiences, and how they encompassed all other activities of her life. Speaking of the new computer course she was taking, Sylvia said:

> S: And specially / my English mm was very difficult for me / to take my English classes / because I / I don't=I didn't understand / uhm… a lot. And / I had to / intense / so much / that I had a strong headache after every lesson.
>
> I: After every class you had a headache?
>
> S: Yes. Yes. Yes. I had to / pay attention? (asks I for the word)
>
> I: Concentrate?

> S: Concentrate / not to miss / some word some expression / and and and so far / I translated in my head / and that / I missed next / next words next expressions / and I didn't manage to understand new wor=new sentences all the time. And… yeah / it was very difficult.

At a different time, she reported on the language difficulties she had faced at work:

> S: Oh, I often mix up different words with the same mm pronunciation. And when hear I / them / and so I understand / quite different… *Ya ponimayu vse po drugomu* (I understand everything differently) because I mix up mix up.

As shown in the previous chapter, Sylvia analyzed not only her language learning experiences, but also her husband's. For example, she commented on his ability to guess better than she did and offered an explanation for this perception. It is obvious that both Vera and Sylvia had thought about language learning. In our conversations, they didn't have to pause and think back on their experiences—they already had the answers to all my questions. The two participants would not wait for me to prod them but would start sharing the language situations they encountered and their analyses.

On another occasion, Sylvia and Boris reflected on their insight into social settings and L2 acquisition. They had just come back from a trip to Florida, and on the way back, had visited a Russian-speaking couple in Philadelphia. Sylvia and Boris observed that their friends lived in a much larger Russian-speaking community, where they didn't have to use English extensively. For instance, the majority of their co-workers spoke Russian, and, in their neighborhood, the same was true of shop and Laundromat keepers. Contemplating how different these linguistic circumstances were from their own, Sylvia expressed the belief that having to use English had facilitated Boris' and her L2 learning:

S: Our friends / have to speak English only / at their work. Not more.

B: And they / is here / six year. But English mmm very very little.

S: It seems to me / we / we will learn English earlier [than them]… because / this life / will make us / to learn English.

Sylvia and Boris were cognizant that their everyday linguistic practices in English—at the store, at the laundromat, at the doctor's office—helped accelerate the process of second language acquisition. They arrived at this awareness by juxtaposing their own environment with the language milieu of their friends' and the level of language learning in the two couples. Thus, Sylvia and Boris learned to value the situations, which exposed them to communication in the L2.

6.1.3. Natalia and Dmitri

Natalia and Dmitri's interviews also revealed elements of metalinguistic discourses. In the segment below, I follow up on a previous conversation with Natalia, who had mentioned that, at time, Americans had difficulty understanding her:

I: You also said, and I think Dmitri also said that, that sometimes Americans have problems understanding you, "but not just English." There are also other things that perhaps you don't know about them. What did you mean by that?

N: Just sometimes mm the sense of / humor / it's not the same / and I don't know…Maybe he meant about / how [Dmitri] / it's not accent. You should put / subject verb / agreement you know? And if he say / [mix] them=they can't understand.

Here, Natalia began explaining her occasional problems, but she interrupted this explanation and started to account for her husband's previous statement. Thinking aloud, she rejected the

possibility of his accent as an impediment to Americans' understanding him and offered a purely grammatical cause—the different word order in English and Russian.

As all other participants, Natalia and Dmitri often initiated the topic of second language use. In the following case, as Dmirtri was reflecting on his lack of L2 fluency, Natalia jumped into his discussion of the problem to offer another interpretation:

> D: I don't use slang / because I don't know slang / and they use slang all time / and it's a problem / just / because we don't know slang…
>
> N: But / Dmitri / we can understand what they [Americans] try to say / I mean / the whole point / but we / we / sometimes we can't understand some words / but we can understand what they try to say.
>
> D: It's phrases! It's sla:ng!
>
> N: No! It's not slang Dmitri.
>
> I: Can you give me an example because it's difficult for me to understand when you say phrases. Is it idioms? Do you know what an idiom is?
>
> D: It's not / it's not…
>
> N: It's not idioms.
>
> I: Is it how they organize…?
>
> N: Yeah / how we put words in sentence / you know? I can say in Russian / any order words…
>
> D: It's different way for Russian [speakers] uhm / to say something==
>
> N: ==I can say / in Russian / "I go to school" / and I can say "School I go."
>
> I: Aah that's word order.

N: You know? And in English / I can't say / I can't say. "I go to school." That's all. The only way!

This example illustrates Natalia's awareness of syntactic features of English as she compared them to her native language, giving specific examples. This was clearly not their first discussion of English, and Natalia was perceptive of his linguistic connotations. Realizing that what he indicated was not truly slang or idioms, she clarified the meaning on both Dmitri's and my behalf.

In another excerpt, Natalia expressed her knowledge of English as she, again, actively participated in the construction of Dmitri's meaning. He had just mentioned that he had writing problems when the following dialogue took place:

I (replying to D): Writing is a problem for American students, too. It's not a natural behavior. It's a learned behavior.

D: But I have a very good / this guy / Mike / he's very good educated person so uhm he checks some grammar all time / my grammar.

I: How does he check your grammar?

N: Is it for university or something?

D: No / for… because / actually we should write / a lot of times [at his new computer job] / because… (searches for meaning)

N: What is it? Reports?

D: I cannot explain // explanation for some problems and how to solve it and other stuff / and uhm / I mean / on the first stage / first stage / he checked it a lot. Right now / maybe it's getting better I don't know.

N: Did you have a lot of mistakes?

D: It wasn't a lot of mistakes. Just was a lack of prepositions. Everywhere in my sentences. What he was doing / he was insert "a" and "an."

N: Articles!

D: Oh sorry / articles.

Again, Natalia corrected her husband's use of grammar terms as she supplied the appropriate one. At the same time, she facilitated Dmitri's reflection on his language experiences by asking clarification questions.

Natalia frequently analyzed her own everyday linguistic events as a learner. Referring to a recent hair salon visit, she commented:

N: I try to listen / what people say / and if I am… you know / I was in uh hair salon / cut my hair / and I realized that / I understood everything my hairdresser told me / everything! But / I couldn't say the same thing. It's==I don't know… It's so amazing! I almost understand everything now / but I can't say it / the same. And I try to listen / and catch words.

She also offers her own explanation for the phenomenon she describes above:

N: You know / I think that when it gets to the level about some mm important things / not like / usual stuff / but to talk about some topic / hm moral topic or ??? something / we don't have enough vocabulary to do that.

The excerpts above capture Natalia's reflexivity of how she makes sense of her language learning experiences. Like Vera and Sylvia, she didn't need time to think about it. The verb "realized" Natalia used above underlines her language critical awareness.

Although Dmitri's metalinguistic awareness was not as strongly expressed as Natalia's, he also engaged in reflective language practices as the examples above suggest. In the following passage, for instance, the couple talked about their communicative strategies:

D: Yeah. In Russian / I can explain it in very difficult / expressions / so / and in English==

N: And people will understand.

D: I guess it's / it's specific expressions and I I know it. I know ??? And in English / right now / I don't know these expressions and / so / I just…

N: Just because in English uh we have to try to speak / easy.

D: Yeah. So…

N: And it's difficult for us.

D: Simple sentence==

N: Simple sentence / very short / and as soon we had in Russian said the wrong sentence…

D: It is difficult [for] people / difficult to understand us so…

I: So you try to do that on purpose—break the sentences into shorter ones trying just to / get the meaning across.

N: Uhm… I try to do that.

I: So it's a conscious decision you are making??

D: It's / in Russian it's uh different way to / I mean to speak. Uha / we [use] a lot of long sentences and ??? but in English / right now / we can't do it ???

Natalia and Dmitri are aware of a compensatory strategy they use—the avoidance of complex grammatical forms, which results in simplification. The verbal exchange above is

interesting also because it illustrated Dmitri's reflection on the stylistic differences between Russian and English. Even though he never took a writing class, Dmitri had observed English writing, compared it to Russian, and concluded that, while formal Russian favors long sentence structures, business English uses shorter and simpler sentences. This textual conclusion is a result of his ability to engage in metalanguage analysis.

6.1.4. Lydia and Peter

As Lydia and Peter reminisced on their use of English, it became obvious that she was the one who referred to her metalinguistic knowledge more frequently:

> I: So you say that it's important for you / to speak correct English. What do you mean when you say correct English? Do you mean like grammar?
>
> L: It means every word should be on / on its place and / in the right form… yeah / I forgot how it's called. One and two… how do we call it? Part…?
>
> I: Can you give me an example?
>
> L: Yeah just the word "did, done." Yeah three forms of the forms.
>
> I: Yeah the forms.
>
> L: And you know / Peter often says like / "She have." It's not correct so / that's what I mean.

Although she doubted her knowledge, Lydia was able to articulate it using specific terms and examples. Moreover, to illustrate her meaning, she provided a phrase used by her husband, and this suggested that she monitored not only her own speech but his own as well.

Not unlike the other participants, Lydia and Peter often raised the topic of language learning. They had learned to focus on these features of their interlanguage which impeded the construction of meaning. In their case, this was pronunciation:

P: Yeah. The pronunciation is not automatically [learned] / because there a lot of words. As we learned these words from school they sounds to us / they sound similar. Completely similar. But when we try to explain to Americans something / they like…

L: They often don't understand.

P: They often don't understand and=

L: For example if we'd say, "We are going to Bally." This I understand because they have to know something about the Bally fitness center.

Interviewer: Yeah if you don't know the name…

P: No but they do.

L: They heard but / they just don't… (searches for words)

I: Associate it with it?

L: Yeah. And they are thinking, "You are going where?" Belly. They think of belly. We just pronounce it wrong.

P: Wrong way and we couldn't pronounce it now in the right way. They [say], "Ah, Bally!"

L: What did I say?! (meaning she said the same word as their American interlocutor).

P: The same. And we couldn't pick up this=

L: Sound.

P: Yeah this sound / and ???

L: Snickers and sneakers (gives another example).

I: What?

P: Snickers and sneakers.

L: Snickers like candy=

P: Snickers like candy bar and sneakers like shoe.

I: Yeah there is a difference between these vowels.

L: Right=

P: =Right.

The passage above points out that Lydia and Peter are active in analyzing the linguistic experiences in their everyday life and their own language production. They have established what specific phonetic segments create a misunderstanding in the L2 communicative event: the tense vowel /iy/ and the lax /I/, on one hand, and the front middle /ɛ/ vs. the front low /ae/, on the other. The passage, however, reveals another tendency as well. It is Lydia, who supplies the more specific information and the particular examples containing the problematic vowels. A closer reading of the dialogue above shows that Peter is echoing Lydia, elaborating on her statements, rather than initiating a new topic or providing specific examples for the topic at hand.

The descriptive section above allows us to see that, overall, the women in the study displayed elements of metalanguage awareness more often than the male participants. They were the ones who were likely to provide specific language examples to illustrate not only their own, but also their husbands' perceptions of L2 learning. A point in case is Natalia, who clarified linguistic meaning for Dmitri and me, the interviewer. Both Natalia and Lydia provided corrective feedback for their husbands when the latter used terminology inaccurately. It doesn't mean, though, that the male respondents did not engage in reflective practices. In the men's case, these practices were largely metacognitive (i.e., general analytical reflections on how they learn), whereas the women's reflections were more language-specific (e.g., they included more language-related terms and focused on specific language learning acts). This higher orientation

toward metalinguistic analysis among the female participants leads to another phenomenon in the study: It was predominantly the women who assumed the linguistic authority within the couples.

6.2. Gender and linguistic authority

Feminist language researchers associate higher language authority with men as they are the ones who traditionally hold a higher power status in our society. In this study, I prefer to use the term *linguistic authority* rather than *language authority*. The former refers to the linguistic aspects of a language, for example, grammar (morpho-syntactic features) and vocabulary. Most male participants readily conceded to their wives' linguistic expertise in English. Numerous examples from the interviews and our conversations pointed to this tendency. Some of them were directly related to the women's better metalinguistic understanding. As we saw in the previous section, for instance, women would intervene to provide terminological clarifications. In other cases, men would solicit their wives' linguistic help directly and ask for vocabulary items in the L2 or for translation from English to Russian. In other instances of such authority, the women would interrupt their spouses to correct a linguistic form. The term "authority," however, is relative. According to feminist poststructuralists, subjectivities are sites of contradictions. Thus, while the women adopted the discourse of linguistic experts within the couples, where they would interrupt their husbands and correct them, their position in relation to native speakers of English was different (Chapter Four). This shifting of positions is also consistent with Bakhtin, who viewed the self always in a relation to another.

6.2.1. Vera and Aleksei

Vera's linguistic authority over Aleksei was prominent throughout my meetings with the couple. Sometimes, as I visited with them, I would speak with one of them while the other would be otherwise occupied. Once, as I was talking with Aleksei in the dining room, and Vera was

busying herself in the adjacent kitchen, I asked him what his ideal job would be in the States. Aleksei was confused, and he didn't entirely understand my question:

I: I mean ideally? In one ideal case?

A: (laughs) Hmm… Vera / help me.

V: *Shto shto? Ya ne slyshala*. (What what? I wasn't listening.)

A: *A ty slyshai*. (Well, listen.)

In this case, Vera was summoned from the kitchen to address Aleksei's immediate difficulty with the meaning of my question. This situation was not limited to my individual conversations with Aleksei.

On another occasion, as the three of us were sitting around the table, I decided to follow up on a previously raised issue. I made it clear, however, that the question was addressed to Aleksei, and it was his answer I was anticipating:

I: Two weeks ago, I asked you about something. It was about your life in Russia. How can you describe your life in Russia?

Vera to A: *Govori*. (Speak)

A: *Ty je prishla pomogat'* (you came to help).

V: No / *ya ne pomogu*. I don't help you. I only / hear you.

These examples reflect Aleksei's tendency to rely on Vera's assistance during our meetings. In fact, he would prefer to remain silent and let Vera answer all the questions I had for both of them. He would attempt a response only if I asked him directly.

Thus, Vera was clearly the linguistic authority. Language was her domain in the family. Even when Aleksei would not request her help, she would volunteer it, as in the following case:

I (to A): So tell me about your usual day.

V (from the nearby kitchen): *Opishi tvoi*… (translates for him)==

A: *Ya ponyal ponyal ponyal*. (I understood.)

Vera's established authority came through even when Aleksei had the appropriate linguistic knowledge. For instance, as Vera was speaking, she paused and started searching for the English expression in the following segment:

V: But sometimes / do you know // *kak skazat'* (how to say) / *mne nepriatno*…

A (translates for her): I don't like it!

V: Mne ne nravitsya!

A: Mne ne nravitsya I don't like it.

V: (rejects his authority and continues searching).

Frequently, as I met with the couple, Vera would correct her husband's speech. Below, I am talking with Aleksei asking about his use of language outside the job:

I: What about when you go shopping? Do you have any problems at the store?

A: Sometimes / sometimes. I was mm in / watch store / in Sunday. This is my…(searches for the English word).

V: Bracelet.

A: Bracelet. Is broken. I talk with mm saleman. I said, "This my bracelet broken." He is / understand to me. No problem. He is repair.

V: *Pochemu* (why) "is"?

A: Why?

V: He repairs.

A: Yeah he repairs.

In this excerpt, Vera exerted her linguistic authority twice. First, she supplied the vocabulary item Aleksei had difficulty finding, and then, she provided corrective feedback for Aleksei's choice of verb form. Her linguistic authority in the second case was apparent. She didn't simply correct his error but posed a direct question to him. It was also obvious that Aleksei accepted this type of authority. Having acknowledged his wife's feedback, he repeated the sentence in its "correct" form. Please note that Vera did not necessarily supply the most accurate form in this context, which should have been "he repaired [it]." What is important for this analysis, however, is that she is the undeniable linguistic authority within the couple, and is recognized as such by Aleksei.

6.2.2. Sylvia and Boris

Sylvia and Boris' interactions also contained examples pointing at Sylvia' linguistic authority in the family. Boris had repeatedly stated that his wife spoke English better than he. Similarly to Aleksei, Boris often required Sylvia's assistance in supplying the needed word, as in the following example:

> B: My boss / give me / exercise for a job / and / *vsegda* (asks S for the English equivalent)?
>
> S: Always.
>
> B: And always / *zakonchivaet*…
>
> S: Finish / finishes.

Above, Boris solicited her help with vocabulary twice. The first time, his request was explicit as he directly asked Sylvia for the translation of "vsegda." The second time, Sylvia interpreted his inability to complete the sentence and the ensued pause as another request for assistance and she

provided the English word “finish.” Simultaneously, she exercised her metalanguage awareness and corrected herself, adding the accurate in this linguistic context verb form “finishes.”

Not unlike in Vera and Aleksei’s verbal exchanges, Sylvia provided corrective feedback for her husband. Such instances are numerous in the data:

a. Boris: And we was in / art museum.

S: We were.

B: And we were in Atlantic City. In in casino.

b. Interviewer (to B): And what about your typical day? What do you do usually [at work]

S: (helps him understand) In the work.

B: In the work? I afraim=

S: (says quickly) afraid.

B: Afraid that I cannot speak about this / English.

As obvious from (a), Boris also acknowledged his wife’s linguistic authority as he repeated the correct verb form after her correction. In (b), Sylvia helped him understand the meaning of my question, and then, she corrected his pronunciation of “afraid.” What I found interesting in this particular example is the automaticity with which she did that. It appeared to be a natural reflex on her part rather than a conscious effort. Sylvia, who had expressed a concern about her husband’s English pronunciation on other occasions, was also correcting the articulation of certain mispronounced words.

6.2.3. Lydia and Peter

Female linguistic authority was characteristic of another couple, too. The patterns observed in Vera and Aleksei's and Sylvia and Boris' interactions are applicable to Lydia and Peter. Again, Lydia was the one providing the corrective feedback for her husband as demonstrated in the following examples:

> P: … And you know / you feel yourself / it's mm how to say? There's like classes of people / and depend on this class mm depend on these classes / people speaking other language=
>
> L: Different.
>
> P: Different different language. Sorry… Different language so…
>
> …
>
> P: If if a person / my opinion / if a person so sweet / you just keep your eyes opened.
>
> L: Open.
>
> P: Open.
>
> …
>
> I (to P): Did they say anything about her?
>
> P: I can't recognize.
>
> L: Recognize? Remember.
>
> P: Remember. No.

This is similar to how Vera and Sylvia corrected their husbands' vocabulary choices. Lydia also monitored her husband's grammar. She admitted she was trying to correct him when possible.

She realized that, unlike her, Peter did not have a formal knowledge of the L2 structure, and this was how she explained the asymmetric linguistic authority between the two: “You know when you don’t know=when you don’t know the rule / it’s hard to [speak grammatically accurately].” Peter agreed with his wife and seemed appreciative of her monitoring. He noted that her linguistic advice was “helpful.” Lydia went on to elaborate:

> L: For example [Peter] / he was asking / one guy / how much somebody pay for / something. He asked, “Are they paid for your moving” for example. It wasn’t correct. He just… I corrected him/ I said / “Did they pay” He knows it should be like this but he / you know…

Peter not only recognized Lydia’s language authority but also anticipated it as he made this conspicuous in the exchange below:

> P: And American is living=American is living / I think / majority of them / are living for themselves=for theyselves. And that’s it. And people are not so hooked up. And / it’s very / I think it’s very=*shto* (what)? (looking at Lydia).
>
> L: *Nichevo* (nothing).
>
> P: *Shto-to nepravil’no* (something incorrect)?
>
> L: *Ya nichevo* (nothing).

Peter was accustomed to Lydia’s feedback, requested or not. In this case, he sensed that something in his sentence was wrong. He even attempted to correct the error in his first sentence above but was unsuccessful. His second attempt for self-monitoring and self-correction was extraneous since the form “themselves” was already accurate, and, the second time, he chose the wrong “theyselves.” Lydia refrained from intervening both times. However, being used to her language commentary, Peter expected or perhaps perceived a reaction on Lydia’s part, and he

pursued it, repeating his question twice. In other cases, Peter, very much like Boris and Aleksei, would pause when speaking, and would ask Lydia directly about the English equivalent of a word.

This chapter reveals that the female participants in this study were, unmistakably, the linguistic experts within the couples. Moreover, they were accepted as such by their respective husbands. And yet, when communicating in English with others, the women were the ones who would feel shame or fear of making mistakes. This contradiction is especially pronounced in Sylvia and Boris' case. Interestingly, I couldn't identify instances in the data that show the women asking their husbands for assistance, although they would ask me for feedback. This phenomenon, at least in the case of these adult learners, is related to the women's greater exposure to formal acquisition of English, although not necessarily in a classroom environment. As Lydia explicitly pointed out, she was the one with the formal knowledge of the rules, and this was why she could monitor and evaluate not only her language production, but also Peter's. I believe, however, that this is only a partial explanation for the striking similarities between these three couples of different ages.

In conclusion, the women's domain over linguistic resources within the couples and their explicit preference for metalinguistic discourses are important because, in voicing certain discourses, the women are also authoring themselves in the L2. The next chapter proposes a new concept in gender and language use—dialogic responsibility—which, I would argue, is intertwined with the case of female linguistic authority observed above.

Chapter 7

SECOND LANGUAGE, RESPONSIBILITY, AND GENDER

The previous two chapters presented acts of investment in the second language. They showed that there were differences in these patterns, as the women engaged in metalinguistic discourses and revealed a linguistic authority within the couples. Still, several questions remain: Why were the women monitoring not only their own speech, but also their spouses'? Why would the female participants be the ones to show a greater orientation toward grammatical accuracy? Why would they jump in so readily to clarify their husbands' meaning for me—a third party in the interaction process? Although these questions have been discussed in L1 sociolinguistics, no satisfactory or uniform answer has been accepted (Bergvall et al., 1998). In addressing these issues, I propose the new concept of dialogic responsibility. To illustrate this notion, I will describe Gilligan's concept of women's relationships and responsibility for the Other and explain why it is not adequate for language research. Then, by drawing on Bakhtian's notion of answerability, I will suggest a new discursive model.

7.1. "In a Different Voice"?

In her now classic work, *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan's interest (1983) "lies in the interaction of experience and thought, in different voices and dialogues to which they give rise, in the way we listen to ourselves and to others, in the stories we tell about our lives" (p. 2). I found her statement fairly similar to my own goal when examining the transcripts of my interactions with the participants. Throughout her book, this feminist psychologist builds the notion that men and women not only view their experiences and relations differently, but also express them in a dissimilar voice. At the same time, she refutes traditional gender stereotypes,

claiming that that these differences are not a sign of deficiency in women's ways of being. Gilligan's focus is on morality and relationships. While women define themselves through human relationships and their ability to care for others, men's psychological development is centered on individual achievement and individualization. Women's sensitivity to others is closely related to another concept—responsibility. Analyzing Alison's—a young woman participating in her study—sense of morality, Gilligan finds that the latter "is reduced to the opposition between self and other, tied in the end to dependence on others and equated with responsibility to care for them" (p. 139). Thus, the researcher contends that women's identity is based on their complex of relationships and is judged by a standard of responsibility for others. Years after she published her research, Gilligan's discussion of responsibility remains the most extensive on the topic. Her work, however, presents two major problems. First, she assumes the essentialist approach that these qualities are inherent in women simply because they are women. The second, and the more relevant to this study problem stems from Gilligan's ignoring discourse—the very location responsibility is generated for the participants in this project.

7.2. An alternative, Bakhtinian approach to responsibility

Interestingly, Bakhtin allows us to account for the phenomenon of female-dominated discursive responsibility in terms not unlike Gilligan's: "I live in a world of others' words. And my entire life is an orientation in this world, a reaction to other worlds" (1986, p. 143). Gilligan's references above to the self and the other and to dialogue convey a strong resemblance to Bakhtin's key terms. The parallels between Gilligan and Bakthin are not only lexical. Both are concerned with the notion of responsibility, and both view it in light of the moral development of the self (this is particularly true of Bakhtin's earlier essays, for example, "Philosophy of the Act"). Unlike Gilligan, Bakhtin is not interested in gender. Another significant difference is that

while Gilligan is locating responsibility within the subject, as an inherent psychological category, the Russian thinker sees answerability/responsibility emerging in the interactive spaces created by the self and others.

Bakhtin stresses the reality of the text as inter-discursive rather than independent of the language user. Meaning, like the social world in general, is not autonomous but is created in the process of **responsive** understanding. For Bakhtin, the relationship between the self and the Other is marked by the dominance given to the Other. The Russian word *otvetstvennost'* (translated either as 'answerability' or 'responsibility' in English) is born in the dialogic process, but it requires more than a verbal reply. The "answer" or "response" is infused with ethical undertones, with the unique emotional-volitional tone of the subject. Both Bakhtin's concept of answerability and Gilligan's of responsibility involve an active awareness of the Other—a necessary component of agency, as I will argue later. However, to Bakhtin, answerability is born in dialogue. In Bakhtinian terms, language **is** a metaphor for human consciousness. Language, to Bakhtin, is not to be found within individuals, but between them.

Answerability is an intricate construct that is related to other Bakhtinian concepts. It is related to dialogue because answering (or responding) entails the necessity of actions and discourses coming together. It is also related to "*vjivanie*" (the act of living, experiencing through someone else) (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 22). In *vjivanie*, one enters another's consciousness while still maintaining his/her own idenity. This is what Nielsen calls (2002) "a dialogic approach to discourse ethics," which he describes as "the relation between the responsibility of the speaker and his or her anticipation of rejoinder from the addressee in terms of a reference to an object or event" (p. 61). This discursive responsibility is what I call dialogic responsibility

here. Like answerability, it is situational and relative. It could also be addressed toward a specific addressee or toward a more abstract other.

7.3. Sylvia and Vera: "Because I feel a responsibility"

Women indicated in both implicit and explicit ways that they feel responsible for communication in the second language. Implicitly, it was demonstrated through their facilitating meaning in my interactions with their husbands. As we saw in the previous chapter, whenever their husbands had difficulty expressing themselves in English, Sylvia and Vera jumped in providing a translation. The following two examples of my interaction with Vera and Aleksei are representative:

1 I (to Aleksei): So you were saying how you felt about your job in Russia, that you
2 were like a fish in water. How do you feel about the job you have now?
3 A: Mm… like fish in water…
4 V: *Za rabota. Kak ty sebya chuvstvuesh? Udovletvoryaet or net*? (About your job.
5 How do you feel about it? Do you find it satisfactory or not?
6 A: Today…
7 V: Not today / *voobshe* (in general.)

It is clear from the excerpt that Aleksei didn't understand my question at all. Realizing this, without any prompting on Aleskei's part, Vera offered help as she translated to her husband (line 5). When she found from his reply that he still hadn't grasped the meaning of the question, she intervened again (line 6), clarifying the message. In this interaction, Vera interceded so that she could facilitate meaning for me—the interviewer, rather than for Aleksei.

My meetings with Sylvia and Boris provide numerous similar instances. The following one is typical. In it, I asked Boris a question about his job, and how he was getting used to it. After a succinct reply, I followed up with another question:

1 I: Why?
2 B*: Shto ya ne ponimayu*. I [don't] understand. Nu / but…
3 S: Step by step / he mastered [his job requirements and the language related to them].
4 B: Step by step. Today / mm / today / yesterday / three days ago / I understand /
5 everything what ??? speak for me.
6 S: What he.
7 B: What he speak for me. But he speak / he speak / when he speak for me / he speak
8 / slowly. *I / ya privyk i on privyk* (I got used and he got used to that).

Like Vera, Sylvia jumped in my unsuccessful communication with Boris (line 3) to facilitate the interaction with him. In line 5, Boris' English became unintelligible, and Sylvia added the missing subject "he" to his sentence on my behalf. Throughout my conversations with the two, Sylvia assisted Boris in a similar manner

In these examples, Sylvia felt responsible for repairing the breakdowns in my communication with Boris. Often, as we saw in the previous chapter, Boris and Victor might directly request their wives' help by asking them about a vocabulary item. More frequently, however, Sylvia and Vera would volunteer their assistance without any direct prompting from their spouses. Sylvia and Vera also felt responsible for their husbands' learning of English. Several times during our meetings, Sylvia indicated that she tried to teach her husband: "At home, we do our homework. And in our English class, we have to read. He reads wrong. In Ukraine, I tried to make him to learn. He doesn't want to." Similarly, Vera mentioned that she

had urged her husband to study English prior to their leaving the home country, but her effort was not more successful than Sylvia's.

In addition to these more implicit accounts, the women referred to their language-bound responsibilities quite overtly. For example, when discussing who tended to speak more at stores when they went shopping together, Sylvia explained:

> S: He [Boris] considers that all things I must to speak. Because I feel a responsibility.
>
> I: Responsible for what?
>
> S: For understanding. For somebody's understanding. Chuvstvuyu shto ya otvetstvena shto on ponyal (I feel that I am responsible for the other speaker's understanding).

Above, Sylvia referred to a generalized, not a concrete other (Benhabib, 1992) to whom she felt responsible. I got an identical reply from Vera when I asked Aleksei the question in the following segment:

> I (to A): When you are together shopping with Vera / who speaks with the salespeople? If you go together shopping for a gift or / if you have any questions?
>
> V (indignantly): I / who!
>
> A (laughs): Vera.
>
> V: Only I! He stay / and he think / he need do something / or no. It's better for him to stay and look. Or no / and use the cart. This is his job. My is asking / talking with salesmen and other people.

Vera felt responsible not only for language learning and communication. Taking up the discourse of a wife, she spoke of her 26-year-old family responsibility and caring for her husband in other aspects as well:

> V: We live together 26 uh years / 26 and a half. And all the time / all the time / I need / I look / what he need do / and what he need eat / and oi… And what he need dress. All the time.

It seems natural, in this context, that the sense of responsibility for her husband's health (making sure he gets nutritious food) and his image (making sure he dresses appropriately for his social status) extends to feeling responsible for the second language.

These women's sense of dialogic responsibility, however, is greater than that for the immediate family. The following interview passage reflects Sylvia's perception of language use and personal accountability:

> S: In the summer / [an immigration and refugee organization] offered me / mm to work like translator / for such mm for such patients / for such clients / old old elder mm women and men and accompany them at different clinics and / I refused. I refused because=and they offered mm good enough salary and 10 dollars in an hour. I refused because / I realized that it's very / big responsibility…
>
> I: Because of English?
>
> S: Because of English.

In a similar vein, Sylvia shared once that she felt exhausted by taking care of newly arrived relatives. Unfortunately, an elderly woman among them was hospitalized, and Sylvia was the one who had to translate for the doctors and the patient's family:

> S: And now I have many troubles / many troubles / with our relatives because mm for example / today I had to mm accompany / my old relative / to to the clinic… Our relatives / learn English bad / so they asked me / to translate. And I had to I had to go with them to / ??? hospital / and mm to accompany her and alone alone / for the test /

and very serious test / cardio / vascular… test for mm about two hours. And ultra sound heart and / it's very great / responsibility because because / I know / I understand that mm my English is / not good enough. I / I didn't quite understand English. I was afraid that I I / cannot it translate correctly / yes? And to understand correctly. And the doctors and the nurses and told me about the procedure. Yes / and asked me / to translate [for her].

I: But you did it, right?

S: Yeah (sighs deeply). Yeah / but / I didn't quite understand and / I I realized that / I can make mistake. And / besides mm // she had to sign some paper / yes / about what I don't know / yes and… But all that was over good. Yes? Nervous / nervous nervous / because I had responsibility! **Great responsibility!** When I go with my mom / to the test / I am afraid also and / yes… And here / this is mm not my mother.

Sylvia repeated the phrase "great responsibility" several times. Several times, she stated that she was afraid and nervous because she might misconstrue the unfamiliar to her medical discourse and, thus, might create problems for the other person. The relative Sylvia referred to was not a close one. Nevertheless, the level of anxiety she experienced was even greater than this for her own mother in a similar situation. The sense of language responsibility Sylvia described is born out of her sensitivity to the needs of others. In the case above, she was anxious about unwillingly affecting the state of a distant relative. In other communicative situations, she was concerned about family members. For instance, when she speaks on the phone and doesn't understand well, she is "afraid" that her "mistake" will endanger her family:

1 I: Why do you think you get nervous?

2 S: Because I am afraid that [if I] say something wrong / it will be mistake / very
3 serious mistake. And big trouble for us in the future.
4 Boris: But I think that Sylvia is not right.
5 S: Shto?
6 B: No right—ne prava.
7 S (confirms his English expression): No right

Please note how Boris' attitude differed from Sylvia's. He rendered her feeling invalid, and by doing that, he negated her sense of responsibility as well (line 4). At the same time, Sylvia ignored the message of his statement and focused on facilitating his meaning (lines 5-7). When she voiced an agreement with her husband, she didn't agree with his message. Instead, she acknowledged that his verbal communication in the L2 had been successful. In other words, even as Boris declared her feeling unnecessary and exaggerated, Sylvia was enacting her responsibility for the language situation. The feelings she refers to are part of the complex construct of dialogic responsibility. As Bakhtin (1993) explains, the emotional-volitional tone, which permeates one's consciousness is "morally valid and answerably active" (p. 36).

7.4. Natalia: meaning facilitation and cooperation

A fitting question here would be: Do women feel responsible for communication because of some female verbal superiority (see Chambers, 1995)? It seems that in Sylvia's and Vera's cases this could be a reasonable explanation. How, then, can we explain the women's efforts to facilitate meaning and cooperate in the communicative process when a male participant demonstrates a similar L2 proficiency, when the case of linguistic authority is not as clear-cut as in Sylvia's, Vera's, and Lydia's examples? My meetings with Natalia and Dmitri provide some interesting observations on this matter.

Dmitri has been, at times, a reticent participant. Often, when I addressed a question to him, he would give me one-word answers or would let Natalia reply. His case was different from Aleksei's, who frequently didn't understand my questions or didn't trust his English so he let Vera speak for both. Dmitri's level of English proficiency was not lower than Natalia's. Nevertheless, he would often appear distant and would even physically isolate himself from Natalia and me. We were typically meeting in their living room, gathering around the coffee table—Natalia and I perched on the sofa, and Dmitri sitting at his computer desk. His desk was placed along one of the walls of the living room. Dmitri would sit at the desk, only half turned toward us, his eyes fixed on the computer screen. From the beginning, I realized that if I were to get a response from him, I would have to address him directly, rather than pose a question to both of them as I frequently did with the other couples. I was interminably polite yet persistent.

Natalia quickly assumed responsibility for our interactions. She would not only clarify meaning on my behalf, but would also prod Dmitri to speak or even try to protect me from her husband's occasional sarcasm. Dmitri evidently didn't think much of our "talk" work, where he couldn't see any immediate and tangible value. Once, as we were gathered around the coffee table, each one of us in our habitual sitting positions, I decided to follow up on a previous discussion:

I: I have very few questions. I was looking at the previous interviews and found something interesting.

D: Did you find something (in a small voice)?

I: Yes, a lot.

N: (protests at his question in Russian).

I: But this is a natural question. Of course, you need to know.

7 D: It’s interesting=

8 N: I know him! I know him (looking accusingly at Dmitri)!

In this case, Natalia perceived his question (line 3) as an expression of irony and, immediately, she interceded, trying to restore the conversation to its neutrality. When I replied that I anticipated such inquires, and, indeed, thought they were predictable, Natalia interrupted Dmitri’s new attempt to “offend” me (7) by insisting that she could read his real intention. I don’t know whether Dmitri was truly sarcastic. What I find more interesting is Natalia’s reaction—her attempt to protect me, the interviewer, the other in this discursive situation, and thus, salvage not only the communication but also our relationship.

Almost from the beginning, Natalia took responsibility for her husband’s verbal contributions to our discussions and sometimes for the interview process itself. In the end of a meeting, I would typically ask the participants to acknowledge their L2 or cultural experiences in the context of the everyday. Thus, I would open an interview by a question similar to the one below:

1 I (to D): Tell me about anything interesting. Did anything interesting happen not in
2 terms of [computer] programming / but when you spoke with somebody in
3 English or Russian?
4 D: I just / I just love one guy from General Electric. Uhm / of the Russian lady / from
5 our company / is project manager / project leader for this / this particular project
6 and / he asked me to tell him a couple of Russian words / and impressed.
7 N: He wants to impress her?
8 D: He impressed her. “Privet!” (Dmitri imitates the guy who said “hi” in Russian).
9 She was surprised=

10 N: A lot of Americans / want to / to know Russian words==

11 D: She didn't expect it!=

12 N: But they always want to know bad words! Always bad words (laughs).

13 I: Oh like what?

14 N: Just bad… I don't know. Something not good…

15 N: What else Dmitri? What are you doing during the day?

In line 7, Natalia was clarifying the meaning Dmitri attempted to convey, but his syntactic structure was incorrect, and, thus, ambiguous. Immediately, Natalia jumped in by asking an appropriate clarification question, making sure that the grammatical subject and object were understandable. In line 15, Natalia assumed total control over the interview and, addressing him directly, prompted Dmitri to further elaborate on my original question (line 1). This conversational pattern occurred frequently in my interactions with the couple:

1 I (to D): We haven't seen each other for a couple of weeks so / I am just interested in
2 whether something happened / anything concerning English and American
3 culture.

4 D: Actually // I don't have any problem.

5 N: Something new? It's not a problem.

6 I (to D): Who did you talk with then?

7 N (to D): The teachers? Your professors in school?

Under this paragraph in the interview transcripts, my observer comments read, "Dear Natalia! She is really trying to help me with her reluctant husband here…" When Dmitri attempted to bring the topic to a close (line 4), Natalia again rushed to clarify—this time not his, but my meaning (5). In 7, she attempted to elicit responses from him by narrowing down the domains of

his interactions in English. In the two excerpts shown above, Natalia clearly assumed the responsibility for the interview.

That Natalia facilitated meaning in all aspects of our discourse becomes particularly evident in the following episode, a combination of observation and interview data:

> Natalia and I are sitting next to each other on the sofa. Dmitri, has taken his favorite computer chair and is speaking rather far from the tape recorder. Moreover, his voice is so soft that it's inperceptible. Having just asked him to "please speak a bit louder," I feel uncomfortable asking again and wonder how I will transcribe what he is saying. Just then, I hear Natalia saying to him:
>
> N: *Gromche govori. Ne slyshetsya nichevo*. (Speak up. We can't hear anything.)
>
> D: I can't (laughs softly).
>
> N: Well / move closer [to the coffee table]. *Zachem prishla / shto slyshaet*. (She came to listen to us.)
>
> (Sighing, Dmitri is moving closer to us.)
>
> D: I **can'**t speak loudly in the morning.

As the last example reveals, sometimes her assisting the communication process involved non-verbal factors as well (i.e., asking her husband to move closer to the two of us so we can hear him better). In accounting for her and the other women's sense of responsibility for maintaining the communication and, in Natalia's case, saving my face in the process, I have found feminist psychology more helpful than current SLA theories or sociolinguistics. In "Remapping the Moral Domain: New Images of Self in Relationship," Gilligan (1988) writes that, for the women she studies, responsibility is constructed actively in relationships. The self,

being a moral agent, not only takes the initiative to reflect on the situation but also to "respond to the perception of need." Gilligan's studies do not concern language; her main interest is morality. She points out that the moral values of caring and responsibility in relationships are, although not gender-specific, gender-related.

The findings in this chapter seem to corroborate Gilligan's argument: The women participants have taken it upon themselves to be the facilitators of meaning and collaborators in the communication process. They also engaged in explicit discourses of responsibility.This similarity doesn't mean, however, that the women's display of dialogic responsibility is caused by a heightened sensitivity to the Other (e.g., their spouses or another interlocuter) during the language interaction. One explanation stems from the similar social background of the women in Gilligan's research and this project—in both cases, the female participants, having middle-class consciousness, have been socialized into a gendered discourse of responsibility. Such an explanation would be congruent with feminist poststructuralist perspectives on gender.

On the other hand, this section does not claim that men do not respond to another. Humans, in Bakhtinian lingo, are dialogical beings. I have often asked myself whether our conversations would have been different had I been a man. I am sure the answer is positive. I am sure our conversations would have been different if I were not from Eastern European origin, or if my role had been different. We are all answerable within a particular dialogical context, and, in this case, the women felt answerable to me—another woman from an Eastern European background. It doesn't mean that the men were not answerable during our interactions. Bakhtin's answerability, however, is relative and highly context-dependent. The Russian thinker himself acknowledges that there are different degrees and different forms of responsiveness (1986). For instance, silence could also be a form of responsiveness. In Aleksei's and Boris' cases,

discursive answerability was limited by their second language skills. Dmitri's form of responsiveness was imbued by a distinct emotional volitional tone, one that was punctuated by ennui toward the specific dialogic situation. His values were more oriented toward tangible results he couldn't find in our talk. Thus, dialogic responsibility is not a purely linguistic category, but as any other concept in Bakthin is colored by ethics. Nevertheless, dialogic responsibility can have linguistic manifestations. The next section will take a look at some of the salient discourse features illustrating the phenomenon of female dialogic responsibility in this study.

7.5. Discourse Features of the (Responsible) Dialogical Self

The previous several chapters examined how the couples approached discursive situations and noted the gender-related (though, not necessarily gender-specific) categories their discourses displayed. The section above focused on the sense of dialogic responsibility, which I offered to explain why the women frequently assumed the active role during the interview in both verbal and non-verbal ways. In this section, I will present some of the discourse features illustrating the women's heightened sensitivity or, in Bakhtinian terms, answerability to the Other (e.g., their spouse, the interviewer, or a generalized other). I will specifically take a look at three features: use of apologies, the filler "you know," and the use of the pronoun "we" as opposed to "I."

While these, to some extent, have been studied by first language sociolinguists, women have offered no uniform or indisputable explanation for their prevalent use. Indeed, some authors (Freed, 1998) have argued that only according to linguistic folklore, not research, are these features more common in women's speech. I have chosen to focus on these discourse characteristics not because they have proven controversial for L1 gender researchers, but because, as I argue, the reason for their variability can be read as dialogic responsibility. Thus, this section suggests that, in language research and discourse analysis, we cannot draw only on purely linguistic terms, but should take into account what Bakhtin calls "the emotional-volitional tone" underlying a speaker's utterances. In this case, this implies both ethical and socio-psychological considerations.

7.5.1. "You know" as a conversational filler in interlanguage

Many of the linguistic fillers, like "you know" and "sort of," have been dubbed as more characteristic of women than men since Lakoff's classic work (1975). Evidence for this has been provided by variationist linguists Labov (1972; 1991), Trudgill (1974) and later by Tannen (1991; 1992). Holmes (1995) identifies several functions of the filler "you know." For example, it may appeal for sympathy, or it may serve to accentuate the mutual values, knowledge, and experiences the speakers share. In these cases, "you know" has an affective meaning. Presenting a significant amount of data from New Zealand, Holmes demonstrates that, when used as an affective marker, the filler occurs more often in female speech than male. However, the data showed that, in its referential meaning, (e.g., "You know that place around the corner?), "you know" was used more frequently by men.

Other L1 researchers have challenged the gender difference in the use of "you know" as stereotypical (Freed & Greenwood, 1996). Freed and Greenwood investigated dyadic

conversations between four female and four male pairs of friends and the use of “you know.” The authors claim that women and men in their study used this discourse feature with equal frequency and in comparable way. Please note, however, that the researchers studied homogeneous pairs. They didn’t distinguish between the affective and referential meaning of the filler, either.

All these studies have researched native speakers of English. In L2 use, there are too many complicating variables to consider, cultural differences being only one of them. (With these four highly educated European couples, however, gendered socio-cultural differences were not a significant variable.) Initially, I had not planned to look at specific discourse features. As I was repeatedly reading through the data printouts, I noticed a conspicuous difference in the use of “you know” in Natalia and Dmitri’s case. This prompted me to look for this marker in the speech of the other three couples as well.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Natalia’s and Dmitri’s levels of English development were fairly similar in terms of grammar and vocabulary (i.e., linguistic competence). Nevertheless, “you know” occurs 57 times in Natalia’s speech in its affective meaning. It occurs only four times in Dmitri’s as an affective device. Here are some excerpts from my conversations with the couples:

(a) Natalia: Just *you know* if you use some words / and you should use some ??? / for example noun and verb / and then / we can mix the words / and they can’t understand we try to say.

(b) N: They / *you know*/ they are thinking about / they are paying / big money / and they want to / have good service / but / everybody is human just / they can’t understand.

(c) N: Yeah *you know* / I just / lately I / realize that // it's not difficult for me to talk to / at the my job as secretary and the phone / with people who come in and waiting for / lawyer. And I talk to them / that's fine. And / it's not difficult to me to talk to / my clients in restaurant / and / it's more difficult to talk with other servers because something / is more important / *you know* some / such things I don't know...

(d) N: *You know* such thing? It's really / it's easy in Russian but difficult in...

(e) N: Oh! *You know* the kind of education / when you / don't have to attend classes...

(f) D: Because / the rule is like this / if I am carrying compact discs / for computer / so I should check them in a special custom department and it can take two weeks to do it. And before the uhm mm before our coming [back] to America / I just didn't have any time. So I just pack them and / *you know* / so actually he just ??? expropriate them.

(g) D: Yeah, the kids can come to the school and can be killed any moment because some crazy stupid idiot / just / can take his parents' / or her parent's gun and kill somebody in the school? This is not a crime? (laughs) What's this? I don't know. The one point. The second point / I think that / *you know* the education in the school / I mean Russia over there [is better]

In (a), (b), and (c), Natalia uses "you know" in its affective meaning. Excerpts (d) and (e) demonstrate the use of the filler as a referential. Dmitri's use of "you know" as an affective device is shown in (f), while in (e), it is referential. The couple's use of "you know" in its affective meaning parallels what Holmes has found: It occurs more frequently in the speech of

the female participant. I didn't notice any gender difference in the use of the referential "you know," as Holmes' data suggest.

My findings in the conversations with two other couples were similar. Throughout our conversations, the affective "you know" appears 69 times in Lydia's speech as opposed to its 22 occurrences in Peter's. In the case of Vera and Aleksei, I counted 34 in Vera's and zero in her husband's speech. In Vera's interlanguage, "you know" frequently appears as "do you know," but it is obvious that it serves the same affective purpose—emphasis on shared values and understanding:

(a) V: Do you know / it's very difficult to him to my mind / that he stands up / every morning / at 4 o'clock. It's very difficult when=He sleeps in the evening / but / this a different / sleeping.

(b) V: Do you know / sometimes I think that my vocabulary is so small / and I cannot explain all that I had==what I real say / or what I real... But sometimes / it's enough my vocabulary to do it.

(c) V: Because / maybe I don't understand some mm principal words / the details. I understand about what mm they talk. I understand all. But / some details / and it's very important / because / do you know / it's an example...

In my conversations with Sylvia and Boris, the affective "you know" appears only once in Sylvia's speech and has zero occurrences in Boris'.

So how can we account for this variation in the three couples? And why is Sylvia the exception of the pattern among the four female participants? The answer is not straightforward. Obviously, in relation to the use of "you know" by the female and male interlocutors, my findings are different from Freed and Greenwood's three-(homogeneous) pair study. It is the

women who employed “you know” as an affective device in their speech more frequently than their spouses. I didn’t find such a difference in their use of “you know” in its referential meaning. I suggest that it is connected to my findings about the women’s dialogic responsibility. The excerpts above showed that Natalia, Lydia, and Vera employed “you know” to emphasize the shared understanding between the interlocutors and further build harmony in the relationship with the Other. In Vera’s examples, particularly in (a), she used “you know” as an appeal to the other for sympathy. Thus, the affective “you know” is a discourse feature of dialogic relations.

This interpretation helps explain another variation—between the two younger male participants. Having the same linguistic competence and status (in the middle of the data collection, they even began working for the same computer company), it is obvious that Dmitri and Peter use the affective “you know” in a different way. It occurs more frequently in Peter’s speech than Dmitri’s. The explanation lies again in the different language responsibility the two held in the communication process. While Dmitri was clearly an unenthusiastic participant, Peter was more invested in the production of meaning and, thus, felt more responsible for it. Moreover, as the chapter “The Relational Self: Zones of Dialogical Contacts” will show later, of the two, Peter is the one who generally tends to engage in communication with strangers more readily.

However, this still does not explain the difference found between the two younger women and Vera, who were all equally involved in our conversations and responsible for meaning facilitation. Natalia and Lydia used “you know” much more often than Vera. I think this is where the second language factor comes into play. Both Natalia and Lydia are younger than Vera and have younger social circles (e.g., at the university or at their part-time work places). Their linguistic and communicative competence was also higher than Vera’s. Thus, they tended

to use fillers like “you know” more frequently. Another observation can help support this explanation. When I first met Vera, she didn’t use “you know” or her modified version “do you know” at all in her speech. In the course of this study, however, which began later, Vera was already using the filler as her pragmatic competence had increased.

Sylvia, who had not had as much opportunity as her children or Vera to be exposed to authentic English and to practice it, didn’t use “you know” (just one example). Her linguistic and communicative competencies were not high enough. She was too centered on conveying the meaning and grammar structures to be able to include emphatic fillers in her repertoire. Communicative competence could help explain why Dmitri wouldn’t use “you know” as frequently as his wife. While their linguistic competencies are rather similar, their communicative skills differed. For example, if I tried to reach Natalia on the phone, the following would be a typical exchange between Dmitri and me:

I: Hi Dmitri, this is Gergana. Can I speak with Natalia?

D: No. She is not home now.

In contrast, Natalia would follow the accepted conversational routine for a phone call. These data lead to the suggestion that the women in this study acquired conversational fillers earlier than the men. The conversational filler in this case is affective and emphasizes shared values and experiences between the interlocutors. I believe there is a connection between the faster acquisition of communicative devices by the women and their strong sensitivity to the Other.

7.5.2. Sylvia: The apologetic self

Goffman (1971) describes the term “apology” as a remedy, an element in a remedial interchange. The user of apology aims at maintaining the harmony and restoring the social equilibrium between the interlocutors. The question of who apologizes most—men or women—

have piqued L1 sociolinguists' curiosity for decades. In her book, Holmes (ibid.) presents an analysis of the distribution of apologies between men and women based on 183 interchanges occurring in natural settings. Holmes' presentation of a wide range of studies indicates that females consistently used apologies as a remedial device more frequently than men. The difference was particularly significant in the percentage of women apologizing to women (58 %) vs. eight % percent of men apologizing to other men. The difference is not so dramatic when it comes to women apologizing to men (18 %) as opposed to male speakers apologizing to female (about 17 %).

Holmes points out that the relative status or power of the apologizer has to be taken into account as well. She outlines three categories of apologies according to the status of power (p. 173): (1) Upwards: apology to a superior; (2) equal: apology to someone holding the same status or power; and (3) downwards: apology to a subordinate or person of a lower status and power. Holmes' analyses demonstrate that twice as many of the women's apologies were made upwards to those of higher status than were made downwards. Holmes also shows that men, unlike women, do not differentiate to the extent women do between those of higher and lower power. For instance, male participants give 24 % apologies in the upward direction and 20 % in the downward. Interestingly, men use fewer apologies to their equals than women. One of the male participants provided the following explanation for the last finding: "Yes, I suppose I do feel it's belittling. You don't apologize if you don't have to. No need to put yourself down unnecessarily" (Holmes, p. 175). Interestingly, Holmes found that men apologized twice as often to women than men, no matter what the woman's relative status was. Moreover, she claims that men tend to apologize more often to women they feel close to.

I had not planned to focus on apologies as a discourse feature before I noticed a pattern in Sylvia's speech: She apologized frequently. For example, as I entered their apartment, her greeting words would be, "Please excuse our bad apartment," and she would point to the worn furniture. Sylvia frequently spoke of apologizing to others. For example, while she was working as a fitting room assistant in a department store, she commented on her experience:

> S: Many times / I apologize / I'm sorry / I didn't understand. "It's good. Never mind" (This is what Americans would answer.)

In another excerpt, Sylvia reflected on her difficulty to communicate on the phone in English. Again, her lack of language skills brought guilt in her and prompted her to apologize:

> S: By phone / because I had=very often / I had to speak by phone mm / concerning the bills the checks for my mother medical appointments / hospital appointments / find out the... a lot of things! And / I didn't understand / what I was asked. And I asked my daughters / to call again / those organizations / and to find out / and to *apologize*. Every time / everything.

Sylvia's words that she feels she has to apologize "every time" and about "everything" when she communicates in the L2 provide insight into how she positions herself in relation to the native speakers of English. Her frequent apologies are enactments of both her voicing gendered discourses and her positioning in the second language milieu.

7.5.3. Natalia's responsible self: the use of "*we*"

Another discourse feature of the responsible dialogical self is Natalia's use of pronouns. During my conversations with her and Dmitri, Natalia tended to use "we" more frequently and in more contexts than her husband. In fact, while Natalia avoided the plural pronoun only in the

cases the context unequivocally excluded Dmitri, Dmitri did just the opposite. He employed "we" only when directly meaning Natalia. The excerpt below illustrates this pattern:

(a.) I: Tell me about your typical day? First you, Natalia, and then Dmitri.

N: We wake up and just... go to school / and / then I am going to downtown because it's my job. I have ??? And I am going back to my job here and ??? then I go back, do my homework.

(b.) I (to Dmitri): What about you? What's your typical day like?

D: I wake up (laughs) and, let's say, I am doing my work, usually... a lot of it. And if I have to work this day, I go to my work.

I chose this excerpt because, while I directed the same question to both, and purposefully asked them individually, first Natalia, then Dmitri, the difference in their use of pronouns is apparent. Natalia's preference for "we" contrasts with Dmitri's "I" in his answer to the very same question. He even used the same first sentence. However, he focused the information on himself. The following exchange illustrates the same pattern:

I: How do you feel now after the exam week?

D: Good.

N: Good! We can rest a little bit.

The question was not directed to either one in particular. It was one of those "small talk," warm-up questions I used to open our conversations. Dmitri's response was laconic and he didn't overtly include Natalia in how he felt after the stressful exam week, although they both had just finished it. In contrast, Natalia not only answered, "Good!" but also elaborated on its meaning, and extended it to Dmitri as well by using "we" in her second sentence.

A couple of weeks later I met again with the couple:

I: Did you have a good break?

N: It was so small. Just a week.

I: Did you enjoy it, or did you have to work during the break?

N: No we worked. But we / we went to the zoo.

I: Did you like it?

N: Dmitri wasn't. I was. I like it.

Again, my question here was not directed specifically at either of the two. It was Natalia who assumed responsibility for maintaining the small talk. Realizing that my question was for both of them, she used "we" in her answers. The last line is also a good example of how she always referred to Dmitri when answering such general questions. He seldom mentioned her when he spoke. Moreover, Natalia was supportive of her husband as the following excerpt illustrates. In it, I am addressing Dmitri, who has recently started a full-time job at a local computer company:

I: Working at a full-time job and taking courses is difficult.

D: I have a basis / so / it's not / it's not so difficult for me / it was not so difficult for me. So I don't know…

N: Oh we'll do it.

Here, as Natalia was offering encouraging support to her husband, she still used the plural pronoun "we." Natalia's and Dmitri's different use of personal pronouns exemplifies their different attitudes to the other. In Natalia's speech, "we" signals the inclusion of the other, in this case, a very familiar other. Dmitri's preference for "I" implies a different tone of identity.

I should emphasize that I do not suggest that men do not care for relationships as women do. I don't even suggest that Dmitri, by using "I" rather than "we" cares less for his relationship with

Natalia. What I want to underscore is that Natalia's and Dmitri's choices of personal pronouns illuminate an aspect of the discoursive construction of gendered identities.

In this chapter, drawing on Bakhtin, I have introduced the term dialogic responsibility to indicate that language use and ethics are tightly interwoven. It is not possible to separate the linguistic manifestations of the self from her/his emotional-volitional tone. While Gilligan is the only researcher exploring the concept of responsibility and gender, her approach does not touch on discourse. Gilligan's research on gender is often criticized for being essentialist. On the other hand, poststructuralists offer a rather fragmented view of one's subjectivity, as consisting of often incongruous selves (the wife, the professional, the language learner). Bakhtin's philosophy, however, reminds us that although humans are polyphonic, that our desires and our voices originate in a dialogue, where everything interacts with everything else.

This dialogic approach to gendered discursive practices carries implications for the field of SLA as well. For example, does the notion of dialogic responsibility mean that women would participate more actively in the second language communication? Doubtless, more studies need to be done in a variety of contexts, both classroom and natural, and with different learner populations. The following chapter, however, tries to answer this question for the eight participants in the study.

Chapter 8

THE RELATIONAL SELF: ZONES OF DIALOGICAL CONTACTS[3]

To be means to communicate dialogically.
M. Bakhtin (1984)

From a discursive point of view, "any action or activity is socially meaningful only in relation to other alternative actions or activities… The specific meaning of an action is interpretable only in relation to the set of socially relevant contexts that are constructed for the purposes of that interpretation" (Lemke, 1995, p. 104). Bakhtin (1981) expresses a similar view of discourse as a social event: Our meanings, and, thus, our selves, can be understood only against the backdrop of other people's utterances or value judgments.

Dialogism is not just a verbal exchange between two speakers, but a generalized view of the world that stresses "interaction and interconnectedness, relationality, and the permeability of both symbolic and physical boundaries" (Gardiner, 2000, p. 57). The previous chapter focused on the interaction within the couples and between the couples and the interviewer to highlight the notion of dialogic responsibility. This chapter explores how the participants interpreted their relations in the L2 with others in a larger context, in other words, who they socially related to, and how these relations were mediated by the second language.

8.1. The dialogical self: "When I communicate, I live"

Vera exemplifies the dialogical nature of the self. Even during our first interview, she expressed the impossibility for her to "stay at home." Her desire to work, to be with people, to

[3] The term "dialogical contact" is borrowed from Bakhtin's "From the prehistory of novelistic discourse" in *Dialogical Imagination*

feel actively engaged in her surroundings demonstrated that she validated her very existence through interacting with others:

> V: *Kogda ya obshayus'* (When I communicate with others, I live, *ya jivy*. When I cannot communicate, *ya naverno umru* (I will probably die). *Eto prosto cherta haractera i eto mamina vospitanie* (This is simply my personality, and it is also the effect of my mom's bringing up).

Vera traces this inveterate need to be with others back to her childhood and her parents' home. Speaking fondly of this time, she recalled that her mother, who held two university degrees, was socially invested herself and used to "help all the people." Their house was always full of guests, and somebody who needed her mother's aid lived in the house all the time. Vera says that she grew accustomed to being surrounded by people who came and went away. When her mother died, Vera explains, the tradition remained alive. Vera and Aleksei kept this tradition all their lives in Russia. The two frequently entertained close friends in their apartment or the "dacha" (small house outside the city), where they used to share intellectual conversations. This is why Vera enjoyed working as a journalist: This career allowed her to meet and interact with a number of people from different backgrounds on a daily basis. Initially, when they arrived in the States, Vera says their new home seemed too quiet, "When Aleksei and I stay at home alone, we don't know what we need to do, why is… Why is so quiet in our apartment?" She shared that when they arrived in the States, she was afraid they wouldn't be able to make new friends. This fear turned out to be unjustified. Realizing she could not stay at home, Vera got a job as a kitchen manager. While this was very different from her previous occupation, three years after she had started her employment, I was listening to a woman, confident not only in her new professional skills, but also in her social environment:

> V: Now I receive satisfaction / from my job / and I will not change it. It's nice and many people call for me / and many Russian people now call / and they say, "Oh we'll do the wedding [party] or graduation…

Vera bases this satisfaction on the interaction with different people and establishes her identity on her experiences and communication with others.

This stresses the primacy of dialogical relations in Vera's establishment of a social identity. As we saw in Chapter Four, Vera felt linguistically deprived, and this impeded her daily interactions. She also found she lacked the social circle of friends she had in her home country. Gradually, however, mainly through work, Vera began to meet Americans and to recreate her social connections, this time in a new language. Speaking about how she perceived herself and Americans, Vera explained:

> Because I have many friends / and some people who come / for example to our synagogue / they are very friendly / and mm I can talk with them about their kids / about my country / about their rights in the country here. Sometimes we can talk about mm politic / and sometimes about the sports and… and I know that mm now / I can feel that I am / I am like American people. When I go for example to / some parties / American parties / no one Russian people / and I don't feel that I am / alone here. *Kak skazat innostrannka* (how do you say foreigner)? I don't feel that I am foreigner / because / all the people talk with me / and I can talk with them…

Being able to relate to others and to take part in their conversations gives Vera a sense of belonging and a renewed authorship of her voice.

These dialogical relations are only possible for Vera when she could share someone else's values. When Vera and her husband lost their original social positions, they also lost their

networks of highly educated friends and colleagues—teachers, doctors, and economists. Reflecting on their attempts to socialize with Americans, Vera recalled a case when they were invited to visit Aleksei's supervisor at the factory. While Vera repeated several times that "he [the supervisor] is a good man, and his girlfriend is a good woman too" she found the visit generally lacking. She noted that they didn't have any interests in common although they talked for three hours. In retrospect, she said, "We spent together maybe three hours / and when I come home / I think / that we was together / maybe three weeks. It's very very difficult."

In contrast, Vera spoke with enthusiasm about a new friend, who shared her professional interests:

> Some people is very interesting and now I have one friend / she is a journalist / and her name is Rose / and she is my age / and she is very nice… We talk with her about all / about the job and about the different journalist job in Russia / and here in America / and about many things and she is… when she talk with me / I not feel that we are from different countries from different cultures.

As Vera suggests, she builds her relations with others on the sameness they share. Common interests helped erase the linguistic borders she initially perceived. While in the beginning Vera was reluctant to speak English for fear of being grammatically incorrect, she discovered her need to communicate with others was stronger than her worries. "Maybe," she said, still speaking of her journalist friend, "My English is not so fine but the people understand what we are talking / and I understand him. Maybe I don't understand all the words / but I understand / the sense / about what we talk." Thus, shared lived experiences were at the core of Vera's relations with others. It was through dialogical relations with others, with people who shared her interests and values, that she found and established her voice in the second language. When I asked why it

was so important for her to study and improve English, Vera looked surprised that I would even ask such a question. She replied without a pause:

> Because I cannot live when I cannot speak… *Yazyk eto jizn'* (Language is life). And I need to study, and I will work, and I will take relations with another people, I need to understand them and I need to speak.

In this short, but powerful passage, by equating the role of L2 skills with life itself, Vera provides a strikingly Bakhtinian definition of language; in other words, the ability to communicate with others forms the basis for humanity itself.

Vera was not the only one construing her identity through communicating with others. Lydia and Sylvia also found satisfaction in their work as they interacted with people. For example, during an interview, Lydia admitted that she enjoyed her previous job as an office assistant because she was able to chat with an American colleague, who knew Russian. It is interesting that Lydia related her job satisfaction to her previous unqualified position. Although her new employment as computer programmer was more intellectually and financially rewarding, Lydia still missed the workplace where she was able to connect with a woman of her own age.

As Sylvia was looking for a job, she was suggested several possibilities. One of them, an immediate opening, was a house-cleaning position. Sylvia, declined, because she realized she wouldn't have the opportunity to speak with anybody. Instead, she chose to accept an offer in the retail business because, as she put it, "It's interesting to communicate with… to socialize, yes." This was her first job in the States, and Sylvia felt shy in the new place where she had to speak English. Her voice was full of energy, however, and her tired eyes were bright as she narrated the following story to me:

S: And one day mm interesting / *sluchai*?

I: Case, situation.

S: Case case situation happened. One / one lady / tried on many dresses / many dresses / more than ten. One cart bring / then second cart=many / many. And she asked me to to to help her… (shows zipping a dress).

I: To zip her up?

S: To zip her up / and then / [she asked me to advise her about] one dress / how it / how it suits / or how it fits her / because she didn't like / *kak skazat* / *voratnik* (how do you say neckline)?

I: The neckline.

S: Something / and I showed her / she could / *raztegnut* (stretch) / and then / the dress / kak skazat / *smotritsya* / look looks better. And she / she was very glad. And she became to ask me about mm about… I was very surprised that she mm was / she understood me / she understood me / and I understood her / understood her. And she was from England! Yes. And she told me / about that she mm many years / lived in France / before USA / and she was very interested / how / how I feel / I feel life in USA / and about my difficulties… And / and then / she told that / for European / men it's very difficult to live / in USA. And she / *obnyala* (hugged me)! She understood / how / it's very difficult for me / and European women… And I was very glad / that anybody understood me.

Sylvia clearly identified with this European woman. Responsive understanding is a key notion in Bakhtin's work. The verb "understand" is central in Sylvia's narration above. For

instance, in just one sentence (lines 13-14), to emphasize the meaning of their mutual understanding and shared experiences, Sylvia repeated “understood” four times.

Peter and Lydia also based relationships in shared experiences when they recalled the circle of friends they maintained back in Ukraine:

L: I think that / they became friends because you had so much in common==

P: We had so much in common and we==

L: You’ve been through many stuff like==

P: Many events.

L: Yeah / and here / people don’t have so much / so many things to do together.

P: We tried each other / a lot of times and / in the ??? good friends / bad friends. Not bad friends but…

I: Yeah people who couldn’t become your friends.

“Trying” each other in different shared situations is the ultimate test for a dialogic relation, when one has to interpret someone else’s meaning or action and answer adequately. When Peter and Lydia speak about such “tried” relationships, both refer to the friends they had in the home country. In response to my question, “What about now? Do you have any American friends?” they look at each for a moment, and then Lydia says that this is their *bol’naya tema* (painful topic).

8.2. “Bol’naya tema”: Social relations in the second language

Language is the means for creating dialogical relations. As native speakers of a language, we tend to take this for granted. When one is a second language learner, dialogue takes on a whole other dimension. The communicative act becomes not just a meeting point for different cultural discourses or dialects as often discussed in L1 research, but for different linguistic

systems as well. Lydia and Peter found that language was the very component that structured and restrained their social experiences in the new L2 environment. This young, educated and professionally successful couple told me they found it difficult to create connections as meaningful as they made in Ukraine. While they mentioned they had made several friends in their new country, Lydia quickly clarified that they would probably never become like the friends they used to have. When I asked why she felt this way, she replied:

> L: When I have to think what to say to person / and how to get it / he is not a friend. As long as I have to care of my words and what I am saying and what I am thinking and what I am doing / this is not a friend.

In a very Bakhtinian sense, Lydia positions the very possibility for a relationship with others within language. She explicitly points to her L2 as a "limitation," which she experiences when she cannot "communicate freely":

> L: And / I cannot / joke / I cannot… If I even want to say something / I have to think of it first / how to say it in English. And it's not / time already / it's already…
>
> P: Gone. The situation is already gone.
>
> L: Yeah. And so / it's limitation. And making friends is also a matter of communication. The more you communicate with people / the more interest you / figure out / common things.

Lydia's statement strongly parallels Natalia and Dmitri's in a separate interview, who shared that they had difficulty making American friends because Americans were not interested in people, who cannot speak "at the same level" as they do. The level they referred to in this case is related to their L2 abilities. Natalia and Dmitri are well educated. They could maintain an abstract conversation in their own language. Natalia told me, for example, that, when asked about the

political situation in Ukraine, she found she could only reply in a couple of English sentences, while she would not have had any difficulty explaining this in Russian. The second language constrains Natalia's everyday social relations to the extent she admitted feeling lonely:

> I: When I asked you / to describe / how your life in the States would be / if you spoke English like an American / you said / "I wouldn't feel lonely." Do you feel lonely now because of the language?
>
> N: I mean / it's not that I am feeling lonely / because / because I don't have anybody. But I / I can't say everything I want / if I ??? with somebody / I want to talk with Americans about something. I don't know why but / but something stopped me. I don't know why. I can't say anything / you know / and that feels just / I can't say anything. I don't know English at all. And I say, "I don't speak English." That's all.

Even when Natalia wanted to speak to Americans, the lack of confidence in her L2 skills constrained her to a zone of silence.

Boris' experiences reverberated Natalia and Dmitri's statement that if one could not maintain a conversation at the same level with the other, he/she was not "interesting." He even used the same adjective as they did:

> B (translation): Americans are different / very different. My colleagues and I / when we are together / they / when there are two of us / or three / we communicate somehow / with words / with gestures / we have / **some** communication. But for example my superiors mmm / I am not interesting to them / and I cannot even blame them. I am **just** not interesting to them. This is all. Because they / when I speak / they don't understand what I say. I need to say the same thing two three times / they have to guess / because of my pronunciation. It's not interesting for them with me.

> Well / about work / out of necessity [we can communicate] / but beyond that… It is my fault / it is not their fault.

8.3. Culture as a dialogic construction

The relationship between culture and second language learning has been rather one-sided. In traditional discourses on culture (e.g. Schumann, ibid.), cultural differences directly affect the process of language learning. Thus, similarly to the structuralist approach to language, such models of culture focus on differences. In it, culture appears to be external from language and even the subject. This is particularly noticeable in discussions on language and culture in the classroom, where culture has to be transmitted to the students. Bakhtin, on the other hand, offers the insight that culture is dialogically constructed through discourse. To Bakhtin, no experience is possible outside language. Our meanings can be only understood against the backdrop of other people's utterances. Moreover, to Bakhtin, culture is never a constant. It is a process occurring in the continous exchange of verbal forms, in which existing forms are appropriated (Tihanov, 2000). Thus, culture is not to be found within an individual, but on the border between selves and their experiences.

Boris and Natalia indicated that not being able to communicate fluently in the L2 strongly shaped their perspectives of American culture (in separate interviews). For instance, Boris stated that Americans were "different." Yet, he admitted that because of language, he had not even had the opportunity to get to know them. As Natalia reflected on her experiences, she also shared that initially she perceived Americans as different. However, as she continued to improve her English, she realized that the difference was only created by a lack of communication:

> N: Like when I came here / I just felt / I don't know American people [are] not like Russian people / they / think another way / they ??? another way / everything is

different / and / I didn't like them. But / the more I / met them / the more I understand that they are the same / absolutely.

I: Same like you are?

D: Uhm.

N: Everybody is / definitely different but / they have the same feelings / the same thoughts / just everybody is / just human!

I: Yeah, we are the same human beings.

D (agrees): Uhm. The same interests...

N: It's just because / when I came I couldn't / communicate / that's why I felt / like...

…

N: Like // some ??? when I work / we have uh Moroccan? Just guy from Morocco / in restaurant and I ask him if he is going to stay here / and he told me "No, I'm going back to Morocco / because I don't like uh American / and I don't like to / live here / I don't have American friends... I told him / "You know I thought the same way / when I came here because I couldn't find a friend / I couldn't communicate / I couldn't speak to / people / and / obviously it seems like / they don't care and something / I don't know / and I told him that / just / when you speak English enough to / talk to them / to show them that / you are the same person==Because maybe Americans see different people in me too. That I am / I don't know... But now it's easier for me.

I should stress here that neither Natalia and Dmitri or Lydia and Peter came to the States without any knowledge of English. They studied the language in high school and college, and also had a tutor in their home country. Yet, they powerfully experienced that the lack of fluency restrained

their social interactions and, as Natalia points out, distanced them from the native speakers. These young couples' reflections pose a disheartening question for L2 practitioners: What are the chances, then, for other, less educated immigrants who don't have these two couples' training in English and professional skills to establish a meaningful new life in the L2 society? This section suggests that it is language practices that mold the participants' social relationships and their perceptions of the L2 culture.

8.4. The (engendered) dialogical self

In the previous chapter, I suggested that the female participants were the ones who assumed the responsibility for communication within the couples. They appeared more attuned to the Other as they embraced discourses of responsibility more readily than their spouses. In accounting for that, I drew on Bakhtin's notion of answerability. I stated that it was not only the content or the form of language that mattered, but it was also the speakers' emotional-volitional accents (a complex of emotions, desires, and values) which infused their discursive relations. The participants' narratives and my observations suggest that this gendered distinction applied not only to the interview interaction, but also to their larger dialogical zones of contact.

8.4.1. Vera and Aleksei

Vera and Aleksei present a case in point. Once, for example, as Vera was working later than expected, and I was interviewing Aleksei in their apartment, the phone rang. Aleksei answered it. It was for Vera. Replacing the receiver, her husband said, "Vera, Vera… It's always Vera!" He meant all the calls were for her. I asked, "Do they call for you?" He shook his head, "No." Later there was another call, again for his wife. These were not isolated cases. Frequently, during my meetings with the couple, our talk was interrupted by phone calls, usually for Vera.

On the few occasions the call was for Aleksei, the callers were telemarketers. Vera was laughing when she said to me:

> Today / when I come home / maybe a little people call me // and I think maybe / ten people more need call. They know that in this time / maybe I don't at home. They don't know. Only my relatives know. But at 9:00 / and 9:30 [P.M.] / they begin to call. Every day the same.

The calls are both in Russian and English, made by friends, relatives, or colleagues.

Phone calls were not the only indication that Vera was the more actively involved in developing relationships. The scope of her dialogical contacts was larger than Aleksei's. According to Aleksei himself, his only interactions in English took place at work, and were fairly limited in topic:

> A: I speak in English / in English / mm with my mmm / with my [co]-workers / on the job. Is mm maybe / three or four / workers with uh I spoked. Bob / Mark / Mark II / and Jennifer.
>
> I: What do you talk about?
>
> A: *O chem* (About what)? We spoke mm about / about sports / maybe / maybe 70 percent.
>
> I: How often do you speak with them? Like how many hours a week?
>
> A: Week… Maybe one day I spoke / maybe / maybe one hour. All time I work work work.

When I asked Aleksei if he took lunch sometimes with a co-worker, he said this was not a typical pattern for his workplace, and people tended to eat lunch by themselves. Outside the work environment, Aleksei didn't socialize with co-workers. Like Vera, he had indicated that their

backgrounds were too different. Transplanted to a lower-working class environment, Aleksei admitted that he didn't always understand his new co-workers' behavior. For example, he didn't share their habit of going to bars after work and realized that this limited his opportunities to interact with his colleagues. In this particular case, Aleksei's lack of dialogical relationship was imposed by the disparity in educational and social background, rather than being an individual decision. However, as we saw in chapter five, Aleksei's new social position was brought on by language, or rather, by his inadequate skills in English, which didn't let him work as a teacher. Thus, ultimately, language restrained the development of Aleksei's social contacts as well.

Outside his work, Aleksei had not formed any contacts in English. Vera, on the other hand, often spoke of meeting people under a variety of circumstances. Her zones of dialogical contacts at work were extensive. Over the years Vera had been in the States, the number of her clients—both Russian and American--calling her to organize a social event had increased. Vera had also made friends outside her job. She told me, for example, that she had struck up a conversation with an American woman at her hair salon, and the two talked about their families. She also mentioned that she had a friend, who was a medical worker, and whom she met at the workplace. Vera and Aleksei and the medical worker's family started seeing each other on weekends and developed a long-lasting relationship. This example is important not only because it illustrates Vera's need to relate to others, but also because it indicates a pattern in this couple's social relations: It is Vera, who met and introduced Aleksei to their new friends.

8.4.2. Natalia and Dmitri

Being college students and holding jobs places communication in English at the core of their everyday lives for Natalia and Dmitri. When they first arrived in the States, for example, they became servers in one of the more expensive restaurants in the city. Similar to Sylvia, who

indicated that she preferred a job where she could communicate in the L2, Natalia and Dmitri admitted that they decided to work in a restaurant because of the opportunity to interact in English. It was a conscious decision in the effort to improve their second language skills quickly. The two, however, placed a different value on the primacy of interacting in the L2 as the following excerpt illuminates:

> I: OK, both of you said that when I asked please list everything that helps you learn English and both of you said that you got a job where you have to speak only English. When you were looking for a job, did you do that on purpose? Did you select a job for that purpose, or did it just happen?
>
> N: No, not only English was a purpose.
>
> D: Two reasons.
>
> N: Two reasons / yeah. It was English and=
>
> D: It was flexible schedule. For **me** / it was flexible schedule for my school. And second reason / it was money / and third reason / it was English.

In this excerpt, the opportunity to interact in English on the job assumed a tertiary position for Dmitri—coming after his priorities for schedule and money considerations. Natalia, however, mentioned English as the first reason. Dmitri strongly emphasized the personal pronoun “me” above, by which he discursively distanced himself from the others.

8.4.3. Lydia and Peter

Vera and Aleksei’s and Natalia and Dmitri’s cases show that the women were more actively involved in creating social relations. Lydia and Peter’s narratives, however, seemed to suggest just the opposite when it came to everyday interactions:

I: Can you approach strangers and talk with them / like if you were at the store or / can you ask questions? If you go to the store / who asks questions?

L: He [Peter].

I: He does. How come?

L: Not because / my English / because I don't like to ask…

P: I like to talk to people.

It is evident from both Lydia's and Peter's reflections that he likes to "talk with people." About his colleagues, Peter says:

P: They need me. They need me. I usually there were a cubicle / I usually talk to them / like I climb through the cubicle and / now they told me that / nobody now climbs through the cubicle and watch us and talk to us. It's very boring atmosphere (laughs)…

L: He is / wonderful==I don't know. I never met such a person / v etom otnosheniem (in this sense) / kak / everybody likes him everybody! And he is talking to anybody!

I: Even in English?

L: Yeah even in English even in our own language. I cannot do that.

Unlike Lydia and Natalia, who explicitly pointed out that the second language limited their opportunities for communication and the two might even avoid it, Peter didn't reveal such reservations. In fact, according to Lydia, it was her husband who tried to push her and her parents to use as much English as possible when they arrived:

1 L: He'd cry on everyone, "Why don't you speak English? Speak! Speak!"

2 I: Who was saying that?

3 P: I was crying to everybody.

L: My mom and dad / and Lydia / and everyone?

I: So you would just ask people / just to practice? (to P)

L: Yeah.

P: Yes.

I: So you would go to the store / to ??? / and try to speak with the clerks and assistants?

P: I tried to practice.

I: Was that a successful kind of practice? Did they understand you and?

P: No not all the time but / I [tried].

L: The third time or fourth time...

P: I ??? do that because it's their job. It's their job to speak to me / to explain me / in simple words / even if I am foreigner / they never / they never refused to talk to me / because it's their job. It was like / taking taking classes / for free (laughs).

I: Why did you think it was so important for you to practice?

P: To find a job==

L: ==Because / you cannot live without language.

It appears initially that Peter's investment in developing relations with L2 speakers is more prominent than Lydia's. True dialogism, however, involves answerability. Lines 13-16 indicate that Peter's motivation to speak is one-directional, and it doesn't include perception of or even care for the others (e.g., store clerks). To my question in line 18, Lydia and Peter responded simultaneously, but their answers indicated different values and tones. While Peter singled out getting a job as the ultimate goal for improving his communication in L2, Lydia positioned English on a much larger scale and identified

language with life itself. This is highly reminiscent of Vera's statement, "*Yazuk eto jizn*" (Language is life) cited above.

The example above of Lydia and Peter is strikingly similar to Sylvia and Boris' in terms of how they relate to others through language. In the excerpt below, Sylvia discusses her relationships with a native-speaking superior in her most recent position as a clerk at a bank:

> S (in a slow, contemplative tone): I see that my manager (sighs) mm repeat repeat! more and more / but I see that he mm he begins to / nervous and… I already thought that I need to: to suggest him / to write me but I am afraid… I am afraid.

The excerpt illustrates that Sylvia was concerned about the other person's—her manager—reaction to her, the inconvenience she believed she imposed on him. This comes as a salient contrast to her husband's perception of an identical situation:

> B: Sometimes / if I don't understand / she=they said me / one time two times three times. I don't understand. They said, "Come! I show you." OK! No problem… "What do you want? What do you mean?" (He imitates his co-workers when they don't understand him.)

In contrast to Sylvia, Boris laughed in the example above as he was imitating his co-workers when they don't understand him. This doesn't mean that Boris didn't care or wasn't responsive to the situation. His reaction may be related to resisting his powerless identity in the L2, and laughter, as the next chapter explains, could function as a form of resistance.

This chapter has served several purposes. It attempted to illustrate how Bakhtin's notion of dialogism operates among second language learners, and how the participants,

particularly the female ones, constructed their selves through relating to the others. It showed how they built these relations on shared experiences. At the same time, the chapter emphasized the primacy of the second language in developing relational identities. It indicated that, in this case, the lack of L2 fluency not only limited their subjects' dialogical possibilities but also influenced their perceptions of values and culture. Finally, the chapter pointed out that a gender distinction was observed in the way the participants interpreted and developed social contacts in the second language. Vera's, Sylvia's and Natalia's examples depicted that they invested more actively in the development and maintenance of social relationships.

So far, studies on second language learning have followed paradigms of traditional psychology, viewing the learner as an individual and self-contained entity. The literature speaks of learners who possess attitudes or motivation, as if the learner could somehow will an ideal situation for L2 acquisition if only s/he had the right disposition. This chapter, however, illuminated that the self is not an independent agent in the investment of language. Bakhtin's notion of utterance entails two necessary components: addressivity (i.e., each utterance is addressed to someone) and answerability (the reaction or response to the utterance). A discursive situation is constructed dialogically by the participants: One's utterance anticipates and predetermines the other's response to it. Thus, a learner's agency is always dialogical. The following chapter will outline a framework for agency in the L2 and, building on Bakhtin, will illustrate how the eight participants creatively (re)authored their voices.

Chapter 9

Acts of Agency: Authoring the Self in a Second Language

Previous chapters showed how the participants were positioned in their second language social realities. In Bakhtin's dialectical epistemology, however, social space is never complete or finalized, nor is a subject's position seen as fixed. Rather, it changes through social interaction. Power relations are not fixed themselves as social positions are constantly contested in discourse. In this chapter, I turn to the concept of agency, as outlined in "Theoretical Perspectives: Post-Humanistic Approaches to Language and the Self." I discuss how the participants contested their voices in the second language and, thus, authored their selves. According to Holquist (1986), authorship is an essential part of the social structure of language. The process of becoming an author requires not only language skills but is also intertwined with one's understanding of values. It is through this process that we become conscious agents.

At the same time, taking up a Bakhtinian view of social action, I emphasize the importance of the everyday experience. I argue that it is the everyday that "constitutes the central ground upon which our judgments and actions… are exercised" (Gardiner, 2000, p. 43). Bakhtin views the self as both dynamic and creative in his/her attempt to give meaning to one's life. In this vein, Gardiner speaks about reauthoring—the ongoing process in which we actively engage with our social realities and alter the lived situations—thus opening ourselves to transformation and further development.

Language is an inherent part of agency. Building on Bakhtin's notion of authoring, Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner and Cain (1998) assert that, "In authoring the world, in putting words to the world that addresses her, the 'I' draws upon the languages, the

dialects, the words of others to which she has been exposed" (p. 170). Thus, agency is dialogical and creative in this model as it involves the improvisations that people create in response to specific events. It was these creative responses to discursive realities that built the participants' reinvented agencies.

9.1. Creativity in (re)authoring the self

According to Bakhtin, "The better a person understands the degree to which he is externally determined… the closer to home he comes to understanding and exercising his real freedom" (1986, p. 139). This statement accentuates the role of consciousness in the understanding of the self as a social being and as mediated through language practices. Similarly, feminists, and feminist poststructuralists in particular, have underscored consciousness raising as the necessary prerequisite for a subjective and social transformation (Gavey, 1997). I believe that the participants' ability to analyze their contexts and to interpret their new socio-linguistic worlds establishes the foundation for agency.

Throughout their narratives, the subjects demonstrated the tendency to reflect on their lived experiences. As we saw in previous chapters, they were aware of the role of language has in affecting their social positions and relationships. For instance, Vera commented on how the lack of L2 skills didn't allow her to practice certain professions, and Lydia and Peter generalized that it was language that determined an immigrant's place in society. In the previous chapter, I claimed that this awareness was a requirement in transforming the self from a voiceless object to a speaking subject. Critical reflexivity is important in poststructuralism and feminist theory.

Bakhtin, however, takes the concept of awareness to a different level. He calls the process of monitoring and interpreting our worlds responsive understanding. Unlike passive understanding, which to Bakhtin is "no understanding at all" (1981, p. 281), responsive understanding is an active process. In the philosopher's own words, the latter "establishes a series of complex relationships, consonances and dissonances with the word and enriches it with new elements" (p. 282). Thus, active understanding is both dialogical and creative. To Bakhtin, creativity is not an abstract entity but is found in the everyday world and is born out of necessity. It is always a response to a specific problem in a specific life situation. To capture this dynamic and dialogic nature of creativity, Bakhtin introduces the term "creative necessity" or "the necessity of creativity" (in Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 414). In this section, I will address how the subjects reauthored their selves by responding creatively to their socio-linguistic contexts.

The processes through which the eight participants struggled to find and establish their voices were hardly linear. The development of their voices was problematized by the lack of linguistic resources. Nevertheless, they became speaking subjects, discovered and recreated themselves through their migrant experiences. In the search for a voice, they had to orient themselves among different circumstances. For example, the two older couples took ESL courses. They realized they had to build new careers for themselves. Vera, who had never touched a computer in Russia, took a computer course at a local college. Sylvia made a decision that she needed to improve her English skills to be able to get a "better" job, if not an engineering one. Thus, she deliberately set out to look for a job that would allow her to communicate in English. Dmitri and Lydia, who already had higher education degrees from their home countries (in Computer Science and Engineering, respectively) elected to obtain a second, American college degree while they were working to support

themselves. These orientations were not random. Rather, they were active responses to a changing reality and involved dynamic interaction with their social environment. In poststructuralist terms, they negotiated the discourses available to them.

9.1.1. Vera's creative experience

This fifty-something-year old immigrant's experience epitomizes Bakhtinian everyday creativity and responsive understanding. Even before she arrived in the new country, Vera realized that she would never work as a journalist again. She never thought she could work as a kitchen manager in the beginning. During our first interview, for example, only a couple of months after her coming to the States, Vera says:

> V: The name of my job is kitchen manager. *Eto nemnojko smeshno* (this is a little funny) because I never think… I never thought in Russia that I can work as a kitchen manager.

Gradually, however, she acquired so much expertise about organizing a social event, managing food and workers, that, by the end of this study, she was able to establish a catering business for herself. Vera discovered that she could relocate her verbal creativity through planning and creating meals. Two years after our first interviews, she reflects on her new career:

> V: Do you know / I like cooking… And I like nu / vydumala shto-to (well I created something).
>
> I: Create something.
>
> V: Yeah / and I create something new. For example / I like / I have meat / and I think / all that meat / to prepare the meat so traditional / no! Maybe I'll mix this and this and this / and ??? what can be. And I bought so much cooking books / and magazines / and / when I go to some friends or relatives and I see /

> a new recipe / I wrote in my book all the time. And I create my new meal… Do you know it's like / *process sozidaniya* (a process of creation).

Thus, Vera reauthored herself in a new discourse. It is obvious that she didn't lose her creativity. Instead, she oriented this creative energy into a new field. In her present career, instead of words, she uses food ingredients. As illustrated in "The Relational Self: Zones of Dialogical Contact," Vera's satisfaction in her job also derived from meeting with other people—the very same reason she used to enjoy working as a journalist. This aspect of Vera's reinventing herself emphasizes the dialogical nature of becoming an agent: The self is possible only in relation to another.

9.1.2. Negotiating discourses: Sylvia' s experience

Dialogue is a complex human activity, which "involves the constant redefinition of its participants, develops and creates numerous potentials 'in' each of them 'separately' and between them 'interactively''(Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 52). In locating their positions in the new language and culture, all participants had to negotiate the available contexts. Sylvia's case is especially elucidatory in this sense. Like Vera, she realized she couldn't practice engineering in the immigrant country. Instead, she took courses in computers, hoping that this knowledge would help her get a more challenging job than a fitting room helper. She shared her intent to apply for a business assistant's position in a bank office with me. As we were discussing her job search and resume, however, she surprised me by stating that she wanted to downplay her professional skills and education:

> S: Resume. Very difficult. It's very diplomatic / because / I was explained==very strange! I was explained that I / don't have to show to / to show my education / because / when they saw my application / my resume / with my university degree / with my work experience / they / they begin to

> afraid… They don't understand why / the people / with education / try to get a job in low position.

"They," a third person pronoun implying detachment from the speaker, are the privileged speakers of the dominant English language. Sylvia found that she had to negotiate her identity of a qualified engineer because of her lack of adequate language skills. As a result, she consciously decided to abandon her professional engineering discourse and to take up the discourse of a "technician."

9.2. Appropriating new discourses

Experience is a discursive event. As the excerpts above illustrate, it is through their daily interactions with others that the participants develop their personal agencies. This discursive construction of the self is inextricably linked to the acquisition of new discourses. In Bakhtin's framework, "Agency entails the ability to take the words of others and accent them in one's unique way" (Hicks, 2000, p. 240). Thus, the participants' development of L2 agency involved the appropriation of others' discourses. When Sylvia took her job as a fitting room helper at a TJ Max store, she found herself surrounded by people who not only spoke a different language, but also used it in a very specific way:

> S: Other merchandisers often mm to come / come to fitting room and take out / out clothes / for different department / and… in the floor. They named / the whole / whole department store floor. I didn't know this name / I didn't understand "the floor." And there / they hang out in other departments all the day… And repeat it / always.

Encountering this unfamiliar professional discourse of the department store, Sylvia began to exercise her agency through language. For instance, overcoming her natural shyness

with native speakers of English, she purposely experimented with the new vocabulary and phrases as she involved customers in small talk:

> S: Interesting moment. I didn't know / how to say / when / they return after trying on [a clothing item] / I need to ask them / "Do you keep / these goods?" / or / "Do you take?" / or / "It suits? It fits?" I didn't know. I tried all of them.

Sylvia recognizes that this active approach to language acquisition resulted in her increased vocabulary and the ability to speak with customers more confidently. Phrases like "it's cute" and "too tight," which were not part of her professional discourse or L1 system before, entered Sylvia's reauthored voice.

Sylvia herself reflected on the significance of acquiring new professional discourses in the States rather than just English as a second language. For example, she clearly related the acquisition of new knowledge to her success as an immigrant as the excerpt below illustrates:

> S: Maybe to / get experience a lot experience in English language / the first. In the / professional skills… But I hope / that / I would be able to / to learn / English / because I have / basic English / in Ukraine. Mm I wasn't afraid of this. I was scared / more mmm getting professional skills / especially / computer skills.

To gain such professional skills Sylvia decided to take computer classes. When we talked about her experiences in these classes, Sylvia emphasized that the content itself wasn't so difficult for her as the new discourse she encountered. Sylvia found studying about computers in English so hard that she often left the classroom with a severe headache. It wasn't just computer terminology that was new to her, but the discourse of the American classroom as well. For example, before she began the course, she didn't even know the

term “syllabus” or wasn’t familiar with multiple-choice tests which are not common in European universities. Despite the difficulties, however, Sylvia persisted. She shared that she felt “ashamed” because she didn’t always understand what the teacher said in class, but nevertheless, she frequently stayed after that or visited her professor’s office hours for clarification. Several weeks after her computer course started, Sylvia’s face was beaming across the table at me. She told me that she got “81 score” on her last test, “**Eighty-one**! I did it!”

Claiming a voice in the L2 was related to acquiring a new professional discourse for the other participants as well. As we saw in the previous section, Vera took up the discourse of a kitchen manager and, subsequently, independent caterer. For Vera, this process entailed acquiring this market’s jargon in English. Despite her access to cookbooks and food magazines in Russian, Vera subscribed to American magazines such as *Cooking Light* and invested in English-language cookbooks. Thus, Vera, whose philosophy in life has always been “Do something if you can only do it well,” attempted to increase not only her new professional skills, but also her vocabulary so she can effectively communicate with American customers. As her expertise at the job grew, Vera realized she would like to establish her own catering business. Because she was never in business in Russia, she decided to take a course at a local college. This way, as she was acquiring English, Vera was also learning about business and business terminology. For example, about the term “payroll,” which they had recently discussed in class, Vera said, “The payroll for me is… new. I never do payroll in Russia. I never do payroll never in my life.” In this case, it was true of both the practice of payroll and the second language word *payroll*—an illustration of how Vera acquired the two simultaneously.

9.3. Discourses of accomplishment and values

Embedding studies of discourse in a Bakhtinian framework, Hicks (1996a) writes that "language used socially, or *discourse*, is also laden with the values, beliefs, and intentions of its users" (p. 5, emphasis original). That all the participants highly valued education and the development of professional skills was evident not only in their actions but also in their discourses of success. Charlotta, Sylvia's elderly mother, would proudly speak of the two university degrees she had earned in Ukraine—one in economics and one later in music. Long after I had stopped being Natalia's English teacher, Charlotta would ask me in her careful English, "And how is Natalia doing in school?"

When Sylvia and Boris spoke of their children in the States, they indicated a strong link between education and social position. As the example below shows, English mediates these two factors:

> S: First / in the university / second / in the job / if looking for a job / and / for example / they'll need to have interview… And how mmm what their image / how they can explain about their self is very important. If they cannot understand / interviewer / interviewer yes?
>
> I: Yeah.
>
> S: It would be very bad. And // and / even mm for example / they will want to have some friends / American friends. With their / mm / rather not bad enough / but not very well English / is very difficult / to communicate. If they can / if they want to talk / different / different questions / different aspects / so they will not be able. And so / they'll be not interesting [to Americans].
>
> I: So you said that their image would be better if they spoke English better?

S: Image / image. The higher / their English level / the easier to / for them to have / to have the mm *sredu kak skazat* (how do you say social environment)?

I: Environment.

S: Environment. Intellectual environment. Yes / yes.

Sylvia's statement echoes Natalia's in the previous chapter about the importance of English in creating dialogical relationships. Both considered it the most significant factor in establishing oneself as a social agent.

Unlike the two older couples, who had to acquire new professional skills and discourses, Natalia, Dmitri, Lydia and Peter didn't experience a dramatic career shift. Natalia, for example, who had studied several years toward a business degree in Ukraine, continued to take courses in business administration. Dmitri and Lydia started taking computer courses in the States in hopes of becoming more marketable. Peter, who already had a master's degree from Ukraine, was employed as a programmer. Thus, the four young people chose to author themselves through professional discourses, which, in their cases, included education. When Dmitri was offered a full-time job as a computer programmer, he had to make an important decision: Should he take the job, which would slow down his studies, or should he keep his less demanding job as a server but have more time for classes? Dmitri's reasoning in this case illustrates his awareness of what society values:

D: I can take / evening classes / and… I just need to take 56 credit hours / like if I take 9 credit hours / a quarter / so I'll get degree / I don't know / in 2 years / and / but / at the same time / I will get 2 years experience / so… I will have both of them / experience and diploma.

In the excerpt above, Dmitri appears confident in his skills and their marketability. He says he feels he has a “future” exactly because of his education and skills as a computer programmer. He has chosen to author himself through his technical competence.

The participants’ discourses about others are also informative in what they consider successful immigrant experiences. As we were talking about successful immigrants, for example, Lydia and Peter gave me an example of a person they knew and who was respected by the community:

> P: And you are usually looking at these Russian people who doing something who get an education who get a new job / you look to this people with a great respect / especially if they are at about 40. We had our neighbor uhm Jana. Then she==
>
> L: She is not working she is like 50.
>
> P: Yeah I am talking about under 40. She is 50. She / she earned a great respect. She she went to college==
>
> I: Here?
>
> P: Yeah here. She went to college==
>
> L: She used to work like==
>
> P: Janitor help person. In the day / she is working like janitor person==
>
> L: For 2 years.
>
> P: For two years in a hotel / and then the college at night / and was like a baby sitter or / and she got / she got her English / at their good level==
>
> L: And finally she got a job==

P:==Yeah as build build as construction estimator. So she did this before and she like / put a name in front of her / that she wanted to be construction estimator here and she got this job in two year==in a year and a half / actually.

Lydia and Peter's discourses about others reflect a belief held by their larger immigrant community: Education and hard work are what makes someone respected and successful. Once again, English is the common thread underlying all possibilities for success.

9.4. Forms of resistance in the L2

In Bakhtinian terms, the participants in this study were "creatively stylizing and experimenting with another's discourse" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 347). In the L2, they did that by shifting careers and acquiring professional discourses valued by society. This experimental process, to Bakhtin, is especially important in cases where people are struggling to become speaking subjects and to reject another's objectification. Similarly, poststructuralists Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine (1998) address the issue of resistance and claim that even when we can speak of dominance and inequality in power relations, resistance is always present. Previous chapters described how the participants felt objectified as the linguistic other and the foreigner. This section will zero in on how they claimed their voices by challenging the power relations between the native speakers and themselves.

9.4.1. Talking back: defying monologic discourses

As several authors have noted (Morson, 1986; Morson & Emerson, 1990), Bakhtin uses "dialogue" in two different senses. In the first sense, dialogue, as described in chapter 2, is a "description of all language" (Morson, 1986, p. 83), and all language activities are dialogical. The second, more narrow sense of "dialogue," however, presupposes

"monologue" as its anthithesis. While Bakhtin speaks of the novel, monologic discourses have come to represent authoritarian voices, voices imposing themselves on others. It is in latter sense that I use the term "monologic discourse" in this particular section.

When Vera was describing Americans' conceited attitude toward herself and her Russian-speaking coworkers (Chapter Four), she wasn't merely complaining. Even as she was describing the situation, Vera resisted emotionally and her words were taking on a defiant note:

> V (translation): If you had only seen this arrogance! I couldn't say this about everybody; it won't be true. But it happens! You can sense it, and you immediately feel, you, know, at this moment, you feel confronted. You want to do something about!

Vera didn't remain passive when confronted. Despite the initial hurt, she resisted the subject positions she was placed into by the native speakers of English. For example, she shared with me that a co-worker for whose son she had organized a particularly successful party, was ignoring her just because she was a foreigner. The woman wouldn't even return her greetings in the hallway after the event. Vera told me that for weeks she tried to undestand what happened, and why the other person changed her attitude so dramatically. From frustration, Vera's emotion changed to indignation, and then, to the desire to speak up. She confronted this person and voiced her anger in front of all her colleagues:

> Vera: … and every year we go in December / in Irish pub / and we stay together… And / last year / on this party / they are sitting in front of each other. And she said, "Oh, Vera, hi!" I say, "I am sorry, Judy. I won't say hi. She said, "What is the matter?" I say, "What is the matter? It's very

> strange that you will say me hi. I don't know why. You think you are more intelligent? I don't think it." And all the people / they are quiet / and look on me…
>
> I: Were they Russians or Americans?
>
> V: Only Americans! I only one Russian.

In this case, having felt put down by somebody whom Vera perceived less educated than herself, she decided to break the social code and stand up for herself.

As a caterer, Vera began meeting more clients. In one case, she was telling me about a new American client in the priciest neighborhood in the city. The client, a wealthy (and tipsy at the time) lawyer, attempted a conversation with Vera, who was working in the kitchen. His words, however, triggered a powerful emotion in her:

> V: And he was / this man / he was in Russia / in Moscow and St. Petersburg… And he said, "Oh it's something beautiful but / the people are not friendly." I say, "No / it cannot be! The people / the people cannot be not friendly. Maybe the people who you see on the mm street they don't know you." I say, "Excuse me??? (Vera doesn't sound apologetic at all). When you talk with me / you say, 'Hi Vera.' And it's **not** from your heart. This is **automatically**. That's it! The Russian people don't do it. Never… If they know you / they are very friendly." I cannot say / the whole people / but the same here!

Vera not only rejected the client' stereotype of her people, but she also challenged him directly when he continued:

> V: [And then] he said, "OK OK but they drink many times in the day." [I said to him]… "What are you doing now? You talk with me and you drink drink drink." He said me, "Ah it's true. But I have a party today." But why drink

> now? Drink when your / guests come. And / when the party / when the party finished / he cannot say no one word (Vera imitates his slurred speech and laughs). And we worked [another time] at this house and the same! Two days the same (meaning he was drunk both times)!

Thus, Vera broke her client's monologic discourse, which he handed down to her from a superior social position. Reflecting upon her newly found voice of resistance, she concluded:

> You know what? Before I was shy and didn't speak. Now, I speak up about everything. **About everything**! Otherwise, everyone takes advantage of you. And they think if you are foreigners, then not people. I think not. This is not going to be!

Vera—her voice strong in this passage—has found a sense of herself and is not afraid to express it. In other words, she is willing to author her intentions, her emotions, and desires in the second language.

Aleksei, who usually doesn't communicate much with his coworkers except about sports, didn't feel apprehensive of using English when he had to take a stance. He told me, in his halting manner, about a case where he witnessed a fire accident at work. One of the workers blamed a "young Russian boy" for the fire, while Aleksei believed there was a problem with the tube in one of the machines. Fortunately, no one was hurt. Aleksei narrates the story below:

> A: After [the accident] maybe mm one minute / was nothing. Maybe after 20 or 25 minutes / was break nothing. Mm / too much *pepel'* (ash) go outside / and is this one / American guy, "Wa! Is Russian boy! Is your fault in the fire!" I listen… I listen listen. After [that] I said, "You work here too / here. Your

> fault too." "No!" [I said] "Why not? You work / here?" "Yes." "Your fault?" Maybe four five / workers / help me. [The other man stopped talking.] Only smoke and smoke and smoke. Why? Is this Russian young boy? Is this not fault. Is this very very old / vacuum axis.

This example shows that when he felt compelled, Aleksei was not afraid to speak up and assert his voice in the L2.

9.4.2. Refusing to take up a discourse

In a previous chapter, Natalia mentioned that hers and Dmitri's positions as servers were particularly vulnerable because of their being foreigners and non-native speakers of English. She shared that, while it wasn't a problem for their American coworkers to revise the schedule, the manager always refused her request when needed. This had been a source of frustration for Natalia for some time. As we were sitting in their living room, she updated me on an event at work:

> N: Just again / with our manager… If I want to have a day off / they don't give me it / and if somebody else want / to have a day off / [the manager] give. I was mad / and I don't know why why it happens.
>
> I: Did you approach him? Did you talk with him?
>
> N: I asked him / "Why don't you put this person this day? You ask them / but you don't ask me. Why?
>
> I: What did he say?
>
> N: He said, "OK just find me another person / that's all. I didn't continue this conversation. But / I was very disappointed / you know… It's not right (sighs).
>
> I: Did you try to explain to him?

> N: I think / I **don't have** to explain to him / everything. Anybody else don't explain / they just request it. And he give them.

Unlike Vera and Aleksei, Natalia exercised her agency by electing not to speak. She realized that her explanation in this case would mark her as deviant from the norm, and Natalia consciously refused to take up this position by remaining silent.

9.4.3. Resistance as laughter and irony

In Bakhtin's books, *Rabelais and His World* (1968) and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984), the concept of the medieval carnival appears as a metaphor for renewal, as a joyful force that could shift social structures and disturb hierarchies. Thus, as Gardiner (1993) analyzes, "a critical aspect of carnival is its critical function, the refusal to acquiesce in the legitimacy of the present social system" (p. 35). Resistance can be realized through laughter as well, as Natalia and Dmitri illustrate in the excerpts below. As they were working in the restaurant, they encountered a variety of customers. In some cases, their English-speaking clients overtly positioned them as the Other based on their foreign accents. While Natalia and Dmitri were critically analytical of such situations, the resistance they offered sometimes was expressed through laughter:

> D: It depends on person / with whom you / speak. Because / some people / I don't know some people / don't have any / any education and mm they can't / they don't know anything about / about world / mm about different countries about different cultures. They know about [their own state] and that's it. And they can accept just people who are like / very similar to these people / and if you are not same...
>
> I: So you have to be like them. They don't like differences?

D: Absolutely. They don't like even even / south accent (American Southern accent) / **American** accent!

N: I think it doesn't matter for them that I have an accent / but / if I can't say what I want / it's important. It doesn't matter if I / just say differently.

D: People [tell us] you have charm accent.

N: Yeah, "don't lose it."

Both: (Laugh).

In another example, as we were talking about the people in the Midwest, and how they always asked where we were from, Dmitri jokingly suggested we tell them we were from Mars. I asked whether he had given anybody this answer. He said he hadn't, but today he told somebody he was a KGB agent in an attempt to shock the person.

All of the participants have commented at one point or another on the lack of Americans' interest in other cultures. When their customers at the restaurant, for example, attempted to show some interest in Natalia and Dmitri, their questions were often perfunctory:

N: The things that we talk about / where I am from / because people are very interesting. Very interesting in / just country / and / usually / people ask Dmitri just... What did they ask you? (to D) What kilometers from Moscow to Kiev...

D: Oh, yeah. This is their favorite question. Favorite American question: What is the distance between Moscow and Caspian Sea (laughs).

I: What do you say?

D: They try to show me their knowledge about Russia, maybe. I don't know. I don't know the distance between Moscow and Caspian Sea. So my answer is one thousand six hundred / and six kilometers.

These examples indicate that resistance to accept the position of a socio-linguistic Other can also be exerted through laughter and sarcasm.

9.5. Second language and transformation

Over the study, the participants began to establish their voices. This transformation—a subtle shift of consciousness—was firmly embedded in the acquisition of the second language. When they spoke about the changes they underwent during their stay in the U.S., all informants invariably pointed to English as the main factor. For instance, a year after Sylvia arrived in the U.S., she mentioned some newly-arrived relatives from Ukraine, and how frustrated they felt in the beginning:

I: Now that you look at them and / do you remember how you came here? Do you feel that you've changed?

S: Yes. Yes…Yeah I felt I felt changing. I / myself / realized / that in late ??? maybe / after a year of living here / I felt that I begin to understand better / better. I thought myself / more / *uverenny*?

I: Confident.

S: Confident. Confident… What I didn't understand earlier / I begin to understand now. It's definitely mm… I became to understand better / by phone… Now I'm afraid *menshe* (less) to speak by phone and mm I feel myself confident. Specially / when I have to mm / make appointment / to explain a doctor.

This is only one of the examples, in which, as a source of her newly found confidence, Sylvia indicated her improved competence in the second language. When Boris, her husband, reflected on the changes he had undergone since his arrival in the States, like Sylvia, he located the main transformation in language use. Comparing his first days as an immigrant to how he feels a year later, Boris commented:

> B (translation): A big difference. And again, I attribute all to language because for me— not only for me, for everybody—this is the most important. When I came here, I couldn't even ask about anything in the store. I couldn't understand anything. Today I am not afraid. I go to all places I have to. I am trying to understand. I am not saying that I understand everything and that people always understand me, but I can explain. This is already possible for me, and this is a lot.

This transformation was rooted in language practices for the two younger couples as well. Lydia, for instance, remarked that she had noticed an increased confidence in her husband as his English improved:

> L: Yeah yeah / he perceive life like / if somebody ask him to call somewhere or to do something… and he thinks / it's so simple…
>
> I (to Peter): So you've become more confident… Do you feel this confidence?
>
> P: Yes. Sure. You know it's like mm / like mm / like last half a year / I couldn't tell you / I couldn't speak really fluent. I couldn't / sometimes I couldn't tell you my thoughts / what am I doing / what am I thinking about. But / to call to somewhere and=
>
> L: To find out something.
>
> P: To find out something and / it's not a big deal [any longer].

It is of particular importance to this study that, when considering the transformations they had gone through, the participants didn't mention formal or official events. Instead, all of them pointed to seemingly mundane, everyday discursive experiences in the L2.

This chapter has offered an approach to agency framed into Bakhtin's understanding of voice and subjectivity. Bakhtin's perspectives on agency allow us to view the learner neither as as an independent of the social surroundings actor (as is traditional humanistic discourses) nor as a fragmented subject positioned by different institutional structures (as in poststructuralism). Each individual has her/his own social and historical location and a unique emotional-volitional tone. To Bakhtin, discourses do not automatically position individuals; rather, individuals actively use speech genres to orient themselves in relationships and interactions. This model of agency is both dialogical and creative for it lies in particular people's creative responses to particular situations at a particular time.

Chapter 10

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

While interrelated, the chapters in this project have presented different aspects of second language use in natural settings. Each chapter, fairly self-contained, offered not only the major findings, but also included analyses and discussion with some implications for the field of applied linguistics. Thus, although I don't feel the need for a separate analytical chapter, I summarize the major themes and findings in this reflective section.

10.1. Gender and second language use

One of the guiding questions of this research was whether the male and female participants in the study approached the L2 differently. Elaborating on Norton's (1995) notion of investment, I was asking if men and women invested in the L2 language in distinctive ways. The following major findings emerged from my analyses of the data:

10.1.1. Investment in the L2

The interviews, observations, and written notes demonstrated that the men and women in this study invested in different discourses in the L2. Two major aspects of this investment appeared: emotional and learner-strategic.

Gender and discourses of emotions

Chapter Four described that men and women interpreted and experienced the loss of voice in a dissimilar manner. For the women in this project, the loss of voice had an emotional significance that wasn't present in the men's discourses on this topic. As we saw, for Sylvia, a discourse of silence was also tightly linked with the discourse of shame. Even as she was uttering, however, "I feel guilty" for not being able to participate in the conversation with a native speaker of English on an equal par, her husband's words, "I no

feel guilty," overlapped her statement. Boris based his argument in the fact that there were many immigrants in this country; indeed, this is a country of immigrants. (It is interesting that Dmitri uses almost the same words in a similar context: in the context of his positioning in this society.) Segments from other chapters revealed a similar pattern: It was invariably the female participants who invested emotionally in the second language use to a distinctively greater degree than their spouses. The women exhibited greater sensitivity toward their positions in the L2 as well, while the men tended to take a rather pragmatic approach. In other words, the men's discourses invoked a more job-related, functional focus than an emotional one.

While the female participants also reflected on the importance of the L2 for their careers, they explicitly pointed to the feelings of inadequacy, shame, or even anger the unequal power relations generated. These emotions were a direct response to particular discursive situations, and, at the same time, contained the kernels of resistance and agency. Nervousness and shame may have prompted Sylvia to apologize, but, these feelings also prompted her to invest in the structural properties of the L2. In Vera's case, feelings of humiliation and anger empowered her to speak up. The male participants, particularly Boris and Dmitri, in a sharp contrast to their wives, tended to assume a more carnivalesque attitude toward their L2 positions. In other words, they used laughter and sarcasm—in Dmitri's case, toward the Other, and in Boris', toward himself.

Discourses on learning practices

If language, as Bourdieu argues (1991) is capital, then there must be specific ways a second language learner can invest in it. Previously, L2 researchers have talked about learning strategies. Here, as Chapter One, I assume the larger perspective that all conscious actions a learner takes toward the goal of improving her/his L2 competency could be

considered acts of investment. Chapter Five demonstrated that the men and women in this study revealed tendencies for different acts of investment. The women, for example, exhibited a greater attention to linguistic detail and grammar.

This was expressed not only through the materials (e.g., textbooks, magazines, fiction), but also in **how** they read. Sylvia, for instance, when reading a novel, was also purposely focusing on unfamiliar grammatical structures. The women also tended to use more grammar books than the men in the study. The women's preference for grammatical accuracy was displayed discursively in the interview data, where they monitored their L2 production more frequently than their husbands. Discursively, this preference was also displayed by the women's requests for corrective feedback. They explicitly pointed out that accuracy was important to them. While Aleksei wrote that being grammatically correct was not important to him at that moment, Vera stressed just the opposite, claiming that everybody who respects him/herself would use "correct language." To Sylvia, the form of language was important not only for functional purposes, but also from an aesthetic standpoint: "I cannot enjoy profoundity of thought, the beauty of the phrase, its style, the replies and many others." Like Aleksei, Boris mentioned that accuracy wasn't a priority for him. Although Peter stated that grammar accuracy would be essential for his professional advancement, he didn't actually study grammar books. Dmitri, when working as a programmer, asked his American colleagues to correct his emails.

The women, particularly Sylvia and Vera, used more studial approaches to the L2, whereas the men relied more on experiential. Overall, the female participants in this study employed a wider range of L2 investment activities (including, in traditional terms, learning strategies). These findings could be related to the participants' contexts of language use. Boris' job as a construction worker and Aleksei's as a mechanic didn't exact

precise grammar skills. On the other hand, Aleksei had explicitly stated in an interview that he would like one day to work as a teacher, and that, for this, he needed to improve his English competence.

10.1.2. Linguistic authority within the couples

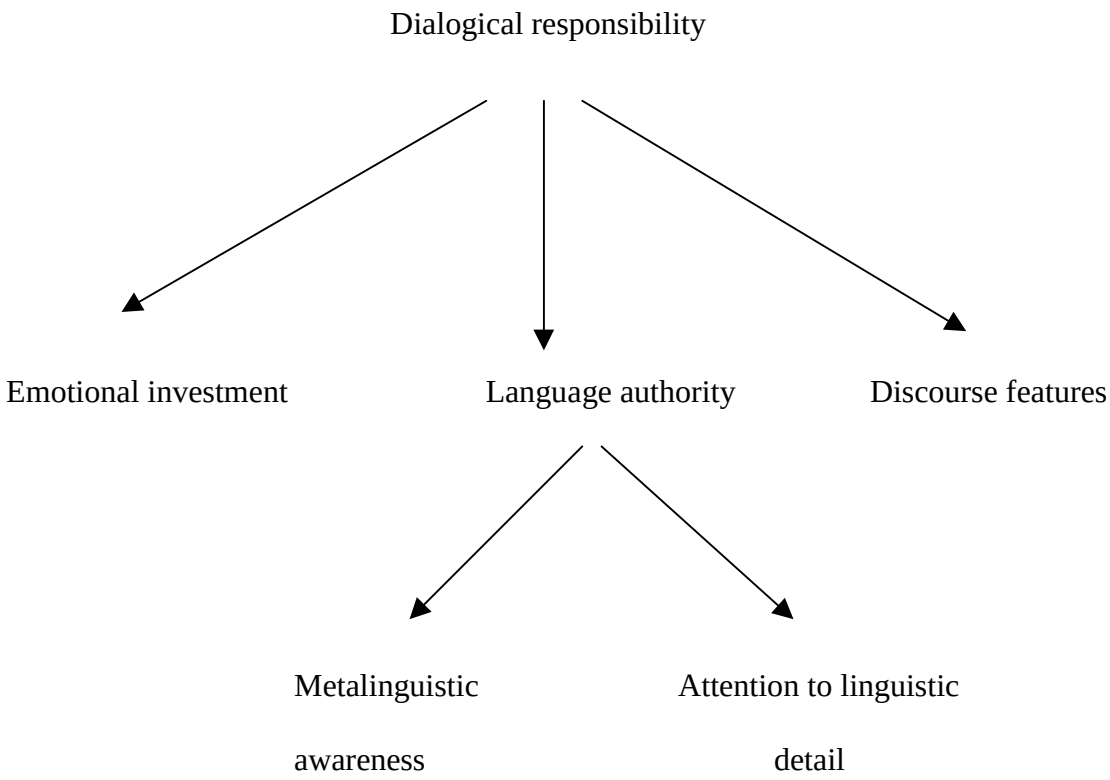
This linguistic authority was manifested in two main ways. The women corrected their spouses' English and translated from Russian for them. The linguistic authority was also linked to the female participants' greater metalinguistic awareness of the L2. For example, they used more metalinguistic terms and more language-specific examples to illustrate processes of L2 learning (see Chapter Six).

10.1.3. Dialogic responsibility and gender

The notion of responsibility and gender has not been vastly explored. Feminist psychologist Gilligan (1983) is perhaps the only one who touches on the issue of responsibility and its gender implications, but she embeds it in a larger, moral perspective. Language responsibility was not something I was even interested in when I began this two-year project, but the women's discourses of responsibility emerged strongly as my interactions with the couples progressed. The female participants revealed a distinct responsibility for communication not only during the interviews but also in their narratives about others. During the interviews, they assumed the responsibility for clarifying meaning and assisting their husbands when the latter experienced linguistic limitations. Natalia's example, however, illustrated that the answerability in interaction is not just a linguistic or cognitive feature, but involved ethical and emotional dimensions. To Bakhtin, every act is marked by *otvestvennost'*, and in Russian, this term implies responsibility and moral values.

10.1.4. Linking dialogical responsibility, emotional investment, and linguistic authority

Feminist researchers have bemoaned Bakhtin's ignoring gender issues in language (Pollock, 1993). Here, building on his notion of answerability/responsibility, I argue that the greater emotional investment and linguistic authority both stem from the sense of dialogical responsibility the women displayed throughout the project. For instance, it was her being attuned to the needs of the interlocutor that made Sylvia highly sensitive to her English skills. Whether speaking on the phone with a native speaker or with her manager in person, this participant revealed that her emotions of guilt and shame were related to the inconvenience she believed she was imposing on the other. Bakhtin himself makes the connection between *otvestvennost*' and guilt by stating, "But answerability entails guilt" (1990). Thus, I suggest the following relationship among these gender-related categories:



The women's dialogic responsibility resulted in a greater emotional investment and sensitivity toward social positions. It also triggered their stronger metalinguistic awareness and attention to linguistic detail (e.g., employing formal, studial approaches to studying the L2). I have merged these two categories into the tangible linguistic authority the women have displayed. The dialogic responsibility was reflected in the use of certain markers the women used more frequently than the men, for instance, the use of the pronoun "we," the use of the affective conversational filler "you know" and the use of apologies. It is possible that markers like "you know" signal the women's more advanced communicative skills, which, in turn, could be traced to their ways of expressing dialogic responsibility/answerability to the other.

Authoring through gendered discourses

I should emphasize that the categories above may be gender-related, but they are not gender-specific. Gender, as an act of identity, is always located within a particular socio-cultural setting. In their L1 environments, these highly educated women were brought up with a middle-class consciousness. Their discursive acts of authoring within the L2 reflected these socio-cultural tendencies. In becoming speaking agents, the female and male participants adopted different discourses, and, in this sense, their agencies were gendered. The women, for example, authored themselves through discourses of emotions, metalinguistic discourses (which allowed them a linguistic authority within the couples), and discourses of dialogic responsibilities. While both men and women (e.g., Vera and Natalia) engaged in carnivalesque discourses, the male participants adopted these more frequently as an act of authoring.

10.2. L2 learning and agency in social realities

Another important guiding question in the beginning of this study concerned the role of the L2 in the learners' socio-cultural experiences, and how they became agents in the new linguistic milieu. Several issues emerged.

10.2.1. The salience of language

All the chapters in this project have focused on the pervasiveness of language in the participants' everyday lives. It was language that determined their social positions in the immigrant country. By losing their language skills, the two older couples lost the status of intelligentsia, which they assumed in their home countries. While the two younger couples didn't experience such a dramatic career shift, they still felt profoundly that they were positioned as the Other. They were more vulnerable both at the store and at work. Furthermore, the data showed how language molded their social relationships and even beliefs about the new culture. Natalia, for example, stated that she perceived the L2 culture foreign only because she couldn't understand English completely in the beginning, and missed nuances about people's relationships. When explaining their restricted social contacts in English, Lydia unequivocally pointed to the second language as the main cause for this limitation. Boris equated L2 skills with the essence of his identity, claiming that if he could not express himself with words, the world wouldn't care who he was. Thus, language shaped all spheres of the participants' socio-cultural realities and mediated their immigrant subjectivities.

10.2.2. The role of reflexivity and social awareness in agency

However, the participants were not passive objects. Both feminists and Bakhtin underscore the importance of reflexivity in establishing oneself as a subject. Lather (1991), for example, asserts that "reflexive practice is privileged as the site where we can learn

how to turn critical thought into emancipatory action" (p. 13). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Bakhtin stresses the significance of understanding one's surroundings. As the participants in this study have illustrated throughout the chapters, they engaged in ongoing reflective practices, in which they analyzed their social positions and contemplated creative, responsive acts. Their immigrant trajectories were not straightforward and predictable. Instead, the analyses of their concrete situations more often led to negotiating available contexts and discourses, and these negotiations constituted an essential aspect of their agencies.

10.2.3. (re)Authoring the self: co-development of agency and the L2

An important aspect of this project was the elucidation that agency and language were tightly interwoven. We saw, for instance, that the participants' acquisition of the L2 coincided with the acquisition of new professional discourses. These new discourses in the L2 allowed them to (re)author themselves in the new language and culture. Specific acts of agency included talking back in the L2 as a form a resistance (Vera, Aleksei, Lydia) or refusing to take up a discourse imposed on them (Natalia). Yet, resistance was only one aspect of agency. The participants also illuminated Bakhtin's concept of creativity. Drawing on pre-existing experiences and cultural resources (e.g., educational background and values of accomplishment and success), they used the latter to recreate their own voices in the new linguistic landscapes. For instance, Sylvia used her technical background to advance her career, but chose to downplay her education so she could get a clerk's position at the bank. Lydia built on her engineering background but decided to reauthor herself by earning a related degree in Computer Science. Vera brilliantly displayed her creativity as she transferred her mastery of words in the L1 to inventing new meals for her clients.

This study showed that agency is strongly articulated by for recently arrived immigrants. Only recently, has the term ‘agency’ begun to appear in SLA literature. Piller and Pavlenko (2001), for example, have embraced the traditional definition of agency: “individual decisions and actions—in the process of L2 learning and use” (p. 29). This portrays the learner as an independent and self-contained actor in the L2 social settings. However, Bakhtin allows us to take an alternative approach to agency in the second language—one involving an active, responsive understanding of lived experiences and creativity in negotiating the everyday. Thus, agency is not individual, nor is it linear course, but a winding path marked by the dialogical relations with one’s social contexts and the others in them. It is exactly through the dialogical relations between diverse voices that one authors her/his socio-linguistic space.

Chapter 11

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this qualitative project, I have attempted to show how eight highly educated Eastern European immigrants approach a second language and reauthor themselves in an interplay of discourses. I have demonstrated that, while they are being spoken into existence by others, they can also speak themselves, and thus, create new social positions. The findings have shown that the second language skills and agency co-develop and are mutually dependent for the participants. Moreover, the acquisition of English as a second language coincides with their appropriating new professional discourses. While the participants are not independent actors, they are not merely puppets occupying the next available subject position as poststructuralists have implied, either. Rather, they are conscious players in a concrete psycho-socio-linguistic world who respond creatively to their surroundings. All this signals that agency, although so far neglected, is an important construct in studying immigrants' second language and acculturation processes.

Central to this study is the assumption that the development of second language voices and agency are embedded in *everyday* language practices. In the construction of social realities, the study illustrated that language and power relations form an inextricable nexus. Therefore, language learning cannot be neutral, either. It is our role to understand that these power interactions inevitably imbue our classroom practices as well. No matter what the content of our courses is, language use cannot be separated from other social and political aspects. These concepts, which are not foreign to second language researchers, have often been presented in light of larger, institutional contexts. However, these eight participants' cases suggest that power relations are not necessarily heralded by political

speeches. More often, in everyday life, they are rooted in the subtlety of our routine language experiences. The participants' narratives illustrate how language produces power relations in everyday-life contexts, and this is where we should strive to develop our learners' critical awareness of language use. Thus, by situating pedagogy within a critical discourse of language and power, ESL teachers should focus on creating not only *knowing subjects* but *reflective agents* as well.

Consequently, second language researchers should attempt to bridge the gap existing between the classroom and local communities. It is no accident that sociolinguists have recently preferred to speak of communities of practice (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999) where communities of practice reflect not just ways of talking, but also beliefs, values, and power relations. The analysis of a community of practice could be performed either at a macro- or micro-level. This particular study has employed the latter. I believe that studying language learning within the practices of a community at either level marks the direction our research efforts should take. The question of how language users become critically aware of the ways they are socially positioned in language and by language should become an integral part of our pedagogical practices.

The study has also suggested that language researchers should abandon the traditional dichotomy between emotional-valuational and cognitive factors. Feelings have a key role in the active analysis of one's social position, and, as the participants demonstrated, emotions were implicated with resistance and agency. As Bakhtin asserts, discourses always contain emotional-volitional tones—complex composites of feelings, desires, and moral values. Moreover, to Bakhtin (1994), it is not possible to separate one's consciousness from the emotional: "*Emotsial'no-volevoi ton—neotuemlemy moment postupka, daje samoi abstractnoi mysli*" (the emotional-volitional tone is inseparable from

the moment of the act, even the moment of the most abstract thought) (p. 35). If we are to understand the development of second language voices, we must acknowledge and further explore this aspect of adults' L2 acquisition.

So far, second language research has embraced the traditional paradigm that emotions (e.g., anxiety) and other affective characteristics (e.g., introversion, attitudes)) of the learner are "individual" (Skehan, 1989). The very term "individual differences" in second language research suggests that emotions are essentially restricted to the learner. As this study has illustrated, however, emotions are produced discursively within the dialogical zones between the self and others. Jane Miller notes in her "Forward" to Deborah Hicks' book, *Reading Lives: Working Class Children and Literacy Learning* (2002), "language is not simply a communicative tool; it is imbued with, drenched by, the particular relations and feelings that children experience as they learn language." The stories of the participants show that this is true of adult language learners as well. It is important, as feminist philosopher Boler (1999) urges, for us to recognize that emotions, just like discourses, are a site of social struggle, and could become a political terrain.

The findings of this study have indicated that gender is a powerful aspect of second language acquisition. It affected the language learning practices of the participants and the discourses through which they constructed their positions in the L2 society. This is significant because it shows that gender, as a factor in adult second language acquisition, goes far beyond the level of discourse features or learning strategies the learners employ. The studies on gender in L2 are just emerging, and clearly, more research is needed in this area to determine the implications for English language teaching. Some implications have already become apparent. Poststructuralist Davies (2000), for example, claims that women are "nonagents" (p. 59). The female participants in this study, however, clearly illustrated

that women could be agents even when they were foreigners and non-native speakers of the dominant language. Their acts, the very experiences they chose for their narratives, the lexical items they selected (e.g., Sylvia's *I decided*) indicate an active engagement with the L2 society. Thus, the women's agencies are no less powerful than those of the male participants'. The emotions in Vera's narrative excerpts or Natalia's defiant silence are not signs of vulnerability but expressions of social power.

The study also suggested that the female participants tended to pay more attention to linguistic details and to look for linguistic clues in the learning process. A new, Bakhtinian perspective to gender linked these to the notion of dialogic responsibility rather than to earlier assumptions (e.g., female linguistic superiority). The notion of dialogic responsibility differs from essentialist approaches to gender and language because it is embedded in a particular discursive situation and depends on the specific relationships between the interlocutors. Further investigation, however, is needed in different contexts and across different socio-cultural populations to research such patterns. Although gender researchers in SLA have readily embraced frameworks designed for native speakers, few studies with adult L2 learners have been conducted to arrive at any conclusions.

This study disclosed how highly educated learners of English approached the second language and recreated their agencies in the new society. It showed that social identity is not a fixed category. It is a discursive continuum along which the subjects' positions shifted dramatically, particularly for the two older couples, when they arrived in the immigrant country. Their L2 positions didn't remain constant, but continued to change as the participants acquired and contested new discourses. What they constructed were not entirely new identities; rather, they were able to build on pre-existing experiences and knowledge, and, thus, in an intricate dialogue with new contexts, were able to reauthor

themselves. More research needs to explore to what extent the L1 social background influences the development of L2 voices and agencies. One question, stemming from the study, could be directed at teacher trainers and ESL instructors: What can we do to tap into the rich life and educational experiences of the increasing Eastern European population in our classrooms?

Finally, by linking the frameworks of poststructuralism and Bakhtin's view of language, I hope not only to trace a theoretical trajectory, but also to suggest a path for our pedagogic work in classrooms and immigrant communities, where we should promote the development of creative agents. Bakhtin's concepts of active understanding, human consciousness, answerability, and dialogism offer a new lens for the research in SLA. By linking these categories, we can see that many social and psychological phenomena, for example, culture, individual differences, and attitudes are constructed through interactive discursive practices. "In consequence," write Shotter and Billig (1998), "our languaged-activities, and thereby our psyches, are marked by a detailed complexity and inherent two-sidedness which is overlooked by traditional structural linguistics and psychology" (p. 17). Thus, an essential implication of this project is that Bakhtin's active philosophy of the self can help us interpret second language "lived worlds" (Holland & Skinner, 1997, p. 196) in their relational intricacies, and, in turn, can lead to altering these social realities.

APPENDIX A

Interview Excerpt: Meeting with Lydia and Peter

Q: I was looking at the questionnaire (2), so today, I wanted us to talk about that.

Q: You say that it's important for you / to speak correct English. What do you mean when you say correct English? Do you mean like grammar... ?

L: It means every word should be on / on its place and / in the right form... yeah / I forgot how it's called. One and two... how do we call it? Part...

Q: Can you give me an example?

L: Yeah just the word *did done*. Yeah three forms of verb.

Q: Yeah the forms.

L: And you know / Peter often says like / "She have." It's not correct so / that's what I mean.

Q: The agreement.

L: And... ne pomnyu.

Q: Say it in Russian.

L: suglosevaniya vremen.

Q: Agreement. So that's also important?

L: Yeah / sequences of tenses. That's also important. And also / of course I should use more / you know sophisticated words.

Q: In everyday language?

L: Even in everyday / show your level of education==I think so...

Q: Was that the same for you in Russian?

L: (exclaims) Yes! Uneducated people / they speak like plain language / nothing special / but if you / got higher education / you speak a little / you know / literate or...

L: Although American doesn't / doesn't think / this way. Americans don't think...

Q: How do you know that?

L: I think so / cause they never correct us / they never / they just don't care. But if I care / Russian people speaking you know / broken Russian / you know nepravil'no / I consider them / you know / like lower.

L: If you a language carrier... can I say that?

Q: carrier?

L: You have native language / you have to speak / you know / pure language. That means pure culture.

Q: So if you are a native speaker, you should speak correctly.

L: Correctly, yeah.

Q: So it's difficult, then, to separate culture from language? The two go together?

L: Yes. For me yes.

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire 1

Please complete the following questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers; just state your opinion. Be assured that no one else, except the researcher, will ever see you answers or your names. If you don't have enough space to write your answer, please use the back of these pages. If you do not understand any word of the questionnaire, please feel free to consult a dictionary or a friend. If you have questions about anything, you may also contact Gergana Vitanova at 481-1073.

THANK YOU! I greatly appreciate your help!

1. Name _____
2. When did you arrive in the United States?

3. What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

4. Where did you get your education?

5. Did you study English in your home country? How long and where?

6. Did you have any friends or relatives in [name of the U.S. city] before you came here? How many?

7. How often do you go to the movies in [name of city]? Please circle the correct answer.

   once a week once a month once in 2-3 months once a year never

8. How often do you eat at restaurants in [name of city]?

   once a week once a month once in 2-3 months once a year never

9. What kind of job did you have in your home country?

10. What jobs have you held in [name of city] since you came here?

11. Do you work at the moment? If yes, where?

12. Please explain what kind of job you would like to have here?

13. How often do you have to speak English at work? Please circle the correct answer.

    all the time frequently sometimes not at all

14. Have you taken any English as a second language classes in [name of city]? If yes, where and what exactly?

15. Have you taken any other classes (for example, business, computers, or others) in the States so far? Please explain what and where?

16. Do you read in English any of the following? Please circle all that apply:

    a. fiction books

    b. newspapers or magazines

    c. textbooks (please

       specify_____)

    d. anything else

       (specify_____)

17. Do you write in English? Please explain how often and what.

APPENDIX C

Reflective Questionnaire

Dear Participant, please answer the following questions as truthfully as you can. Also, please remember that no one will judge or evaluate your opinion. In case you have any questions, you can contact me at 481-1073. THANK YOU!

1. How important is it for you to use CORRECT English? Please explain why.

2. How do you learn languages best?

3. Please list everything you do that helps you learn English.

4. How do you think Americans behave toward you when you communicate with them?

5. Please describe what your life in the United States would be if you were a native speaker of English?

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