

The Impetus for This Paper: Developments in Foreign Language Education

In the United States, Foreign Language (FL) education is still very much hostage to a view of language and culture that privileges the nation-state and its national native speakers. While there are currently calls for more imagination/creativity/language play and for more collaborative learning, these calls have not put into question the ultimate goal, which is to approximate the (nationally conceived) native speaker and to discuss and interpret the canonical works of the native speakers' national literatures. The teaching of culture in American FL education is still conceived of as an initiation into national characteristics or representations promoted by nation-states such as Germany or France – an assimilationist process akin to the assimilation we expect of immigrants to the U.S. Since 9/11, our government has been interested in promoting the teaching of foreign languages in order to distinguish friend from foe within an international community of nation-states. The notion of “cultural difference” might very well, as Hinrich Seeba remarks, “form the core of the humanities” at American universities, but this does not mean that American FL education teaches cultural difference, for example, between the worldviews of Germans now living in Germany, Germans naturalized as Americans, Germans living in France and Jewish Germans now living in Israel. It teaches about Turks living in Germany, but it does not explore the difference between them and Turks living in Turkey, American Turks, and French Turks. For American learners of German, native speakers of German are still seen as inhabiting a German-speaking national territory and sharing a single national language and a single, monolithic view of history—an imagined speech community inherited from the 19th century. As Adelheid Hu recently pointed out:

The pervasive idea in foreign language education, that cultures are homogeneous, more or less monolingual, collective entities that can be objectively described and contrasted with one another, was based on the idea of the nation state. It is no longer appropriate for current societies and especially for the young generation. Internationalization, migrations and the global networks provided by electronic media have transformed many learner biographies into multilingual and multicultural biographies in a constant process of dislocation and relocation. (134. My translation)

In Europe, thanks to the Common European Framework for Language Learning and Teaching developed by the Council of Europe and adopted by the Departments of Education in most European countries, we see two trends: 1) initiatives to teach linguistic awareness and linguistic relativity at the very early stages of elementary school education (Candelier); and 2) initiatives to develop *plurilingual citizens of Europe*, whose linguistic and cultural competences are more than the sum of their languages, and who construct for themselves a third place at the intersection of several identities and subjectivities through language. These latter initiatives, which we see sprouting up in France (through an international France-Berkeley fund project), Germany (Christ, Hu), Italy (Levy), Denmark and Norway, are part of a larger initiative to create a European “*sprachenfreundliches Umfeld*” or “*transnationale Öffentlichkeit*” (Brigitte Busch 2003). For the moment, this is, to be sure, a Eurocentric project, but, because it is trying to supersede national barriers without relinquishing national specificities, it should be of interest to American FL educators trying to forge a multilingual citizenry that can function in a globalized world.

In both cases, there is a dual pull in FL education. In the U.S. there is a tendency towards nationalistic orientation, in Europe there is a tendency towards intercultural orientation: both under the heavy influence of the teaching of English for global, communicative purposes. In order to escape the domination of the global market and the tyranny of the national community, several researchers have turned to language memoirs as a potential source of insight into the process of second language acquisition and use.

Language Memoirs as a Potential Source of Insight

With the increasing mobility and migration around the world, accounts of cross-linguistic experiences of voluntary or involuntary exiles, expatriates, immigrants, and minority populations have become a fashionable genre in popular publishing. These autobiographical, fictitious or authentic narratives that thematize the experience of language learners or of multilingual individuals who live several languages in their daily lives, have been called “language memoirs.” Alice Kaplan, who coined the term in 1994, extends it to people “who learn to speak a new dialect, a language of upward mobility, a language of power or expressivity within the native language” (59). Illustrious ancestors are Nabokov’s *Speak Memory*, Sartre’s *Les Mots* [*The Words: The Autobiography of Jean-Paul Sartre*], or Nathalie Sarraute’s *Enfance* [*Childhood*]. More recent representatives are Andrei Makine’s *Le testament français* [*Dreams of my Russian Summers*], Nancy Huston’s *Nord perdu* [*The Lost North*], Eva Hoffman’s *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*, Alice Kaplan’s *French Lessons: A Memoir*, Richard Rodriguez’ *Hunger for Memory: An Autobiography*, Ariel Dorfman’s *Looking North Heading South* or Derrida’s *Le monolinguisme de l’autre* [*Monolingualism of the Other*]. All are written in the first person, they are retrospective accounts of or reflections on events lived in childhood, adolescence or young adulthood. Their authors occupy complex authorial/narratorial subject positions (Hoffman) because they narrate in one language what was often experienced in another (see Susan Suleiman 1996). They give coherence to events lived in a fragmented manner, as seen from the perspective of someone who is now in full command of the language, but remembers how it was when they were not.

These memoirs have become acceptable data for second language acquisition (SLA) research. Yet, since in SLA research they have been read primarily by social scientists, they have only revealed facts and events that are taken at face value and placed alongside data from sociolinguistic or ethnographic interviews. And yet, these memoirs are written by accomplished writers, masters of the word and of the ways words shape our memories and our subjectivities. Some of these writers are voluntary or involuntary exiles and expatriates: like Derrida, they were forced to learn the colonial language and to forget their own; like Canetti and Hoffman they were pressured to learn the dominant language and disuse their own. Many, like Hoffman and Tawada, are immigrants to the country whose language they have learned and learned to love enough to make a name for themselves in that language. Their immigrant status, combined with their excellent mastery of the national language, has made them attractive to publishers and to a readership inclined towards identity studies. These memoirs are often written several decades after the events recounted, once the author has acquired a name as a novelist (Canetti), a literary critic (Kaplan), or a philosopher (Derrida) and a professional name and a professional relation to language and writing. I would like to argue that their life stories must be read, not as true reports, but as the *truthful experiences of multilingual subjects* attempting to express in their adopted language or, in a mix of languages, things they could not say in their native language alone.

A word about the phrase “the multilingual experience” is in order here. I will not be talking about the sociolinguistic experience of living in environments where several linguistic codes or national languages are in everyday use in various contexts. Nor will I be talking about the linguistic feats of plurilingual individuals or polyglots who master, to varying degrees, more than one language and who use these languages or even code-switch between them in different situations with different interlocutors. The writers we will be examining are not only *proficient in* many languages, but they *live* these languages with a particular intensity, because they are associated with events and emotions that they have experienced in those languages. They are able to express these experiences in ways that remind many of their readers of the close link between semiotic code and affective reality.

As a way of demonstrating how language memoirs work their particular logic, I examine here four language memoirs: two straightforward linear narratives of language learning (Canetti 1977, Hoffman 1989), and two reflective accounts of multiple language use (Brooke-Rose 1968, Tawada 2000). A fundamental theme that runs through all of them is the paradox of the multilingual experience.

1. Language Learning Experiences

1.1 The Implanted Mother Tongue: Elias Canetti

In *The Tongue Set Free: Remembrance of a European Childhood* [*Die gerettete Zunge. Geschichte einer Jugend*] (1977), Elias Canetti, a Jewish-Ladino writer of Bulgarian origin born in 1905, recounts how he was taught German by his mother at age 8, after his father died prematurely of a heart attack. The mother, intent on keeping up the use of German, which had been her language of intimacy with Elias’ father, proceeds to teach her son the German language. Canetti describes the terrifying daily ordeal of being subjected to his mother’s exclusively oral-aural method of German instruction, her pitiless demands for perfect repetition of isolated sentences, and her constant verbal abuse. He survives this draconian treatment only because, contravening his mother’s orders, he manages to get the maid to give him a textbook to read. It is only through the written word that he finally manages to progress in his mastery of the language.

So, in a very short time, she forced me to achieve something beyond the strength of any child, and the fact that she succeeded determined the deeper nature of my German; *it was a belated mother tongue, implanted in true pain [es war eine spät und unter wahrhaftigen Schmerzen eingepflanzte Muttersprache]*. The pain was not all, it was promptly followed by a period of happiness, and that tied me indissolubly to that language. It must have fed my propensity for writing at an early moment. (Canetti 1979: 70. Emphasis added.)

Canetti’s striking oxymoron of an “implanted mother tongue” is able to capture the paradox of language as both nature and nurture, as a source of both happiness and pain. The drastic condensation of the metaphor “mother tongue as implant” expresses with poetic clarity his ambivalent feelings vis-a-vis this “mother” tongue—a tongue “set free” as he chose to title his memoirs. Canetti’s metaphor “an implanted mother tongue” blends the cultural space of grafts, implants and artificial inseminations with the natural realm of mother tongues and other native inheritances. But it does that through a narrative craft that transcends the self as usually

envisaged by psychological or sociological theories of the self. It is a narratorial self intent on creating itself through language.

Canetti, who grew up to receive the 1981 Nobel prize for literature as a German author, describes how all of the events he experienced in his childhood in other languages prior to learning German from his mother were stored in his memory as German events and are remembered in this painfully “implanted mother tongue.” The fairytales told in Bulgarian by the maids, the songs sung in Armenian by the woodcutter, the Ladino Spanish spoken to him by his parents and his family were all overwritten, he says, by the German symbolic system.

Of the fairy tales I heard, only the ones about werewolves and vampires have lodged in my memory. Perhaps no other kinds were told [. . .] Every detail of them is present to my mind, but not in the language I heard them in. I heard them *in Bulgarian [auf Bulgarisch]*, but *I know them as German [ich kenne sie deutsch]*; this mysterious transposition is perhaps the oddest thing that I have to tell about my youth [. . .] All events of those early years were in Spanish or Bulgarian. It wasn't until much later that most of them *were translated into German within me [haben sich mir ins Deutsche übersetzt]*. Only especially dramatic events, murder and manslaughter so to speak, and the worst terrors *have been retained in me [sind mir geblieben]* in their Spanish wording, and very precisely and indestructibly at that. Everything else, that is most things, and especially anything Bulgarian, like the fairy tales, *I carry around as German [trage ich deutsch im Kopf]*. (Canetti 1977:15. Emphases added. My translation)

The switch from “in Bulgarian” [*auf Bulgarisch*] in line 3 to “into German” [*ins Deutsche*] in line 6 to “as German” [*deutsch*] in the last line indexes a progressive germanification of the narrator as subject. But it also signifies a switch from a code of speech (*auf Deutsch, ins Deutsche*) to a mode of being, expressed by an attribute (*deutsch*) that one could translate as “german-ly.” This switch occurs without his doing, as we can see from the abundance of reflexive passives and static verbs in this passage (*haben sich mir ins Deutsche übersetzt, ich kenne sie deutsch, sind mir geblieben, trage ich deutsch*), as if his body was unconsciously switching symbolic orders.

Canetti the writer was literally reborn in/into/as German. This rebirth is a total reunification, on the symbolic plane, with a Germanness that was itself symbolic of the love between his two parents. His love for German literature becomes easily understandable, in Kristeva's terms, as the urge to recapture the semiotic in the symbolic order of poetic language. In fact, this obsessive return to the semiotic becomes a source of distress for his mother when she visits him in Zurich in 1921 and finds him immersed in his beloved German literature and oblivious to the world around him. She calls him arrogant and a parasite, urges him to go to Germany, and states:

“You think it's enough to *read* about something in order to know what it's like. But it's not enough. Reality is something else. Reality is everything. Anybody who tries to avoid reality doesn't deserve to live.” [. . .] Each of her words lashed me like a whip, I sensed that she was being unjust to me and I sensed how right she was. (Canetti 1977: 264-65)

Further on, Canetti states:

I was smitten with letters and words [*ich war den Buchstaben und den Worten verfallen*], and if that was arrogance, then she had stubbornly raised me in that way. Now she was suddenly carrying on about ‘reality’, by which she meant everything that I hadn’t as yet experienced and couldn’t know anything about. (Canetti 1977: 266)

And concludes:

The only perfectly happy years, the paradise in Zurich, were over. Perhaps I would have remained happy if she hadn’t torn me away. But it is true that I experienced different things from the ones I knew in Paradise. It is true that I, like the earliest man, came into being only by an expulsion from Paradise [*Es ist wahr, daß ich, wie der früheste Mensch, durch die Vertreibung aus dem Paradies erst entstand*]. (Canetti 1977: 268)

We should note that Canetti’s narrative not only maps the meaning of his birth as a professional writer onto the meaning of his birth into the German language, thus giving extra poetic meaning to the “given culture” of his multilingualism. He maps his multilingualism itself onto the larger myth of the fall and the expulsion from Paradise—a metaphor that we find in Eva Hoffman’s memoir as well.

1.2 The Siamese Twin “You”: Eva Hoffman

Eva Hoffman’s *Lost in Translation* (1989) recounts the author’s childhood in Poland, her emigration with her family to Canada when she was 13, and her subsequent life in North America. The book is divided into three parts: Paradise, Exile, and the New World.

The first passage I want to examine is taken from the second part entitled “Exile.” Eva Hoffman and her family have just arrived in Vancouver from Krakow and the 13-year old is learning English. For her 14th birthday, a Canadian friend gives her a diary, in which she chooses to write down her thoughts in English. She discovers that this diary is slowly creating multiple selves for her, which I will note in the following passage through the inserted numbers:

The diary is an earnest attempt to create a part of my (1) persona that I (2) imagine I (1) would have grown into in Polish. In the solitude of this most private act, I (2) write, in my public language, in order to update what might have been my other self (1). The diary is about me (1) and not about me (1) at all...I (2) learn English through writing, and, in turn, writing gives me (2) a written self (3). Refracted through the double distance of English and writing, this self—my English self—becomes oddly objective; more than anything, it perceives...For a while, this impersonal self, this cultural negative capability, becomes the truest thing about me. When I (2) write, I (3) have a real existence that is proper to the activity of writing—an existence that takes place midway between me (1, 2) and the sphere of artifice, art, pure language. This language is beginning to invent another me (3). However, I (2) discover something odd. It seems that when I (2) write (or, for that matter, think) in English, I am unable to use the word “I.” I do not go as far as the schizophrenic “she”—but I (3) am driven, as by a compulsion, to the double, the Siamese-twin “you.” (Hoffman 1989: 121 (4))

These four selves can be described as follows:

- (1) Eva, the child growing up in Krakow, speaking Polish.
- (2) Eva, the 14 year-old author of the diary, writing in English in Canada
- (3) Eva, the narrator of the diary, the written self
- (4) Eva Hoffman, the 42 year-old author of *Lost in Translation*

After several years in the New World and in her second year of graduate studies at Harvard, the Polish narrator is sitting with an American friend, Tom, in a Cambridge cafe. Hoffman listens to one of his stories, what she calls “one of his solos, his riff—that all-American form, the shape that language takes when it’s not held down by codes of class, or rules of mannerliness, or a common repertory of inherited phrases” (218). She describes the interaction as follows:

I listen breathlessly as Tom talks, catching his every syncopation, every stress, every maverick rush over a mental hurdle. Then, as I try to respond with equal spontaneity, I reach frantically for the requisite tone, the requisite accent. A Texas drawl crosses a New England clip, a groovy half-sentence competes with an elegantly satirical comment. I want to speak some kind of American, but which kind to hit? “Gee,” I say, “what a trip, in every sense of the word.”

Tom is perfectly satisfied with this response. I sound natural enough, I sound like anybody else. But I can’t bear the artifice, and for a moment, I clutch. My throat tightens. Paralysis threatens. Speechlessness used to be one of the common symptoms of classic hysteria. I feel as though in me, hysteria is brought on by tongue-tied speechlessness. (219)

This passage captures multiple aspects of the multilingual experience. Perceptually, Hoffman’s English-speaking self has all of her senses attuned to the syncopations, the different stresses and speeds of Tom’s voice. On the interactional plane, she tries to match the tune of her voice with Tom’s tune, then, remembering a former Texas lover we were told about earlier (187), she tries to mix his drawl with her own Harvard clip, ending up with the groovy “Gee, what a trip” of a young Texan male, followed by the satirical “in every sense of the word” spoken by the sophisticated New England female she feels she has become. But her Polish self watches herself do and think all of these things and stalls (“clutches”), horrified and ashamed at her own ability to usurp so perfectly the language of the native speaker. The narrator of this autobiography, Hoffman makes sense of the whole event in light of her ultimate “speechlessness and hysteria.”

Hoffman’s memoir is neither the transcript of a psychoanalytic session, nor data collected by a psycholinguist. It is a literary creation, produced by the *narratorial self* of a Polish speaker writing in English for an anglophone audience. Psycholinguistic theories fall short of this crucial dimension of the multilingual self. This self has exquisite control over the cadence of her sentences, masters the art of epigram, and shows the reader that she has read Freud on hysteria, thus anticipating the time when she will inform her reader that she has undergone psychoanalysis (261). It is a self that is highly conscious of her art and of her ability to combine narrated events (Texas lover, Tom’s friendship, psychoanalysis) to evoke in the reader the very same emotions of pleasure and distress that she, as an author, experienced at the time. Moreover the narrative, framed here as a memoir in three parts -- “I. Paradise”, “II. Exile”, “III. The New World”—yields transcendental truths of mythic proportions. It echoes other myths of paradises lost and

regained, promised lands, betrayals and new beginnings. Hoffman's memoir would have never gained the success it had if it did not resonate deeply with the mythic unconscious of immigrants and language learners who identify with her adventures and are ultimately buoyed by them.

So, let's return to the narrator's description of the scene. Here, the autobiographical Eva, in perfect command of English, gives her friend Tom a perfectly appropriate response—what more does she want? Like Sartre in *The Words*, she knows that she is putting on an act and this causes a feeling of nausea or, being a woman, of hysteria. As the object of psycholinguistic research, the author Eva Hoffman might have conceded that the physical symptoms of taut throat muscles, paralysis, and speechlessness are brought on by the psychosomatic illness called hysteria. But as a narrator, who depends on speech for her well-being and her sense of self, she constructs speechlessness itself as *the cause* for the feelings of hysteria she experiences. This hysteria has to do precisely with the feelings of transgression, usurpation and betrayal that sometimes accompany the use of someone else's language and "passing" for a native speaker (Piller 2002; see chapter 8).

What we find, in Canetti as in Hoffman, is an invitation to re-enact the multilingual experience on the symbolic plane, and thereby give it a meaning that antedates the communicative and the intercultural experiences that FL instruction usually emphasizes. It can yield insights into the somatic, emotional and cognitive dimensions of the acquisition and use of foreign symbolic systems.

2. Reflections on Multiple Language Use

The other two language memoirs that I wish to examine are not accounts of, but rather reflections on what it means to not just use but to live various languages at any given time.

2.1 The Lov/neliness of the Go-Between: Brooke Rose

The Swiss/British writer Christine Brooke-Rose was born in Geneva to a half Swiss, half American mother and a British father, and brought up first in Brussels, then in Britain. She was bilingual, in both French and German, with French as her dominant language. During the war she was assigned by the British to decrypt German messages once Enigma Code had been broken. She married a Polish poet, studied and taught first in London for 20 years, then in Paris for another 20, and is now retired and living in the south of France.

(The) Her experimental novel *Between* (1968) is a non-linear narrative that thematizes linguistic translation and border crossing. It recounts the multilingual and multicultural displacements of an unnamed female protagonist who travels through Europe to serve as a simultaneous French-to-German interpreter at various conventions, conferences, and congresses. The novel is a collage of dialogues in various languages, reported thoughts and prior voices, descriptions of various locales and anonymous acolytes. The opening and the closing paragraphs capture the circular structure of the novel. Brooke-Rose's novel begins:

Between the enormous wings the body of the plane stretches its one hundred and twenty seats of so in threes on either side towards the distant brain way up, behind the dark blue curtain and again beyond no doubt a little door. In some countries the women would segregate still to the left of the aisle, the men less numerous to the right. But all in all and

civilization considered the chromosomes sit quietly mixed among the hundred and twenty seats or so that stretch like ribs as if inside a giant centipede. Or else, inside the whale, who knows, thee hours, three days of maybe hell. Between doing and not doing the body floats. (1)

It ends 180 pages later with the following passage, in which the protagonist experiences/remembers/imagines/recounts (we don't always know which) one of her many interpreting jobs in Avignon and blends different kinds of traveling—between languages, places, cultures, people—into a physical metaphor of suspended time:

But all in all and civilization considered the chromosomes lie quietly mixed among the hundred million others or so that multiply in geometrical progression while nobody does anything at all.

So that the hum of voices echoes loud in the Palais des Papes as the mayor speaks into a microphone bidding everyone welcome to this ancient city of Avignon, the acoustics of the stone palace carrying the words unheard into the high ceiling as the members of the Congress on Tradition and Innovation unless perhaps The Role of the Writer in the Modern World burble on almost excluding the introduction of Dame Janet McThingummy and Madame Helene Chose-Truc as well as Monsieur le maire's speech on hands across the frontiers over floating stomachs that move about and shshsh! Que cherchez-vous madame? A travers la cour. Au fond a droite. Ah, la sortie? A gauche madame. Oui il fait bon dehors, une belle soiree, comme toujours ici. Vous avez senti le froid dans ces murs de pierre? Or else inside the whale and out in simultaneous wonder. Und haben Sie noch einen Wunsch? Madame desire encore quelque chose? No, nothing at all, just personal effects. Between the enormous wings the body floats. (Brooke-Rose 180-81)

These two passages are typical of the novel's echoic, circular style, where voices mesh and float into one another without any particular attribution or sense of ownership, and where the highly reflexive use of language creates its own pleasurable and poignant context. The protagonist's dizzying shuttle between languages, countries, conferences, lovers, is reflected in the myriad linguistic code-switchings the narrator engages in throughout the novel between Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, within a matrix of English.

One question that recurs at regular intervals throughout the book is the crucial question of the identity and loyalty of the multilingual protagonist. The female interlocutor raises that question in dialogue with Siegfried, her German lover and fellow interpreter, who responds with a quote from Goethe's poem *Erlkoenig*:

Ideas? We merely translate other people's ideas, not to mention platitudes, si-mul-ta-ment. No one requires us to have any of our own. We live between ideas, nicht wahr, Siegfried?

- Du liebes Kind, komm, geh' mit mir. Gar schöne Spiele spiel' ich mit dir.
- We have played those games before mein Lieb
- Why don't you marry me?
- You know why. (Brooke-Rose 9)

In this de-centered narrative without attributions of utterances or actions, the narrator disappears behind the language itself, that becomes a “schönes Spiel” - a dazzling language game without an owner. Indeed, one could say that the book is a variation on “the lov/neliness of the alone standing woman” (Suleiman 1995), itself a translation of the “alleinstehende Frau” and a metaphor for the language game that takes place in Brooke-Rose’s *Between*.

What we have here is “dis-membered” language, a “re-membrance,” a memoir without a narrator (an author), although it is the work of the well-known author Christine Brooke-Rose and contains many autobiographical elements. The conscious avoidance of personal pronouns throughout, the utterances that are disembodied and unattributed, the morphing sentences that start somewhere and end somewhere else, the deliberately self-enclosed world of linguistic signs without any affective resonances, all serve to enact a language game of absence that is as lovely as it is lonely. It forms a counterpoint to the personal, meaning-laden multilingual adventure recounted by Canetti and Hoffman.

2. 2 The Conceptual Blend: Yoko Tawada

Equally reflexive are the short fragments collected in *Talisman* (1996) and *Übersetzungen* [Translations] (2002) by the Japanese-German writer Yoko Tawada. In *Überseetzungen*, Tawada writes in German about her stay at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2001. She has just tried to reach a German colleague, Kurt:

Kurt was not in his office. I spoke into his answering machine. Technological progress has made human voices more and more independent [unabhängig] of human bodies. One can leave voices, copy them, record them, duplicate them, color them, estrange, accelerate or reverse them. But can a voice really exist independently [unabhängig] from a body? I noticed that the word ‘unabhängig’ does not sound as euphoric as the word ‘independent’. How do the Americans manage to serve this word with such conviction? Are you given a secret recipe on Independence Day? (Tawada 2002: 100. My translation.)

The fact that this native speaker of Japanese writes in German about an experience she had in an English-speaking environment gives her the distance necessary to reflect on her attitude towards both the German and the English word for “independence” and to give us glimpses of her multilingual imagination at work. She maps the German word *unabhängig* onto technological prowess in the age of mechanical reproduction (Benjamin 1968), and the American English word *independent* onto the euphoria of the American Revolution. For the non-native speaker of either German or English these two terms seem strangely non-equivalent, although the dictionary gives one as the faithful translation of the other. From *Unabhängigkeit* as mechanical event, to *independence* as revolutionary euphoria, the multilingual imagination jumps to *Independence* as a major American democratic value and *Independence Day* as *the* national holiday, featured here, slightly tongue-in-cheek, as a culinary dish, i.e., as food that has to pass through the mouth, like words. Not every foreigner would be able to put these imaginary constructions into words as elegantly as Tawada does, but her narrative gives us a glimpse of the metaphoric mappings that happen all the time under the surface of seemingly straightforward vocabulary acquisition.

Let us go back to Tawada’s question: “How do the Americans manage to serve this word with such conviction?” One could represent German *unabhängig* and American-English

independent as two mental spaces blended together by the bilingual narrator. The dictionary definitions of the two words focus on two different aspects of the concept “independence.” American dictionaries stress the freedom from any external constraint and control; they focus on self-governance and the liberation of man from any subjugation by others. The connotation of the English word is political. It is a *freedom from*. By contrast, German dictionaries stress the development of the individual from the “dependent” child to the mature grown-up, the access to *Volljährigkeit* [full age], *Mündigkeit* (etymology: *-mund* as in *Vormund*, “he who has the power to protect others”). The German synonym “*mündig*” echoes Kant’s definition of “Enlightenment” as “Die Befreiung des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit” [the liberation of man from his self-inflicted dependency]. It underscores the natural process of personal growth into a state of increasing maturity and rationality. From financial independence to social power and responsibility, the connotations of the German word *Unabhängigkeit* are distinctly moral, not so much a *freedom from*, as a *freedom to*. In the blend, the German and American voices mesh uneasily, dependent as they are on the bodies in which each has been socialized and acculturated (“Can a voice really exist independently from a body?” Tawada asks). As Tawada learns English, she tries to imbue the German moral (rational, mature) notion of independence with American political/ideological euphoria and conviction, but as a Japanese, she keeps clear of both through a distanced irony conveyed through gastronomical metaphors (“How do the Americans manage to serve this word...? Are you given a secret recipe on Independence Day?”).

The following chart lays out the differences and the overlap:

German-English conceptual blending

Am.-Engl. <i>independent</i>	Ger. <i>unabhängig</i>
Not subject to control by other	financially autonomous
Self-governing	socially emancipated
Free from subjection	of age, mature (syn. <i>mündig</i>)
Exempt from external control or support	Etym. <i>-mund</i> : who has the power to protect others

Blend

Personal & social
self-sufficiency
emancipation
as moral, legal and
political categories
Irony

This blend is, as Fauconnier and Turner remark, only “the tip of the iceberg” (2002: 17). Emergent structures arise in the blend, which are not copied directly from any input space. For example, blending might provide new *compositional* relations, such as the relation of the moral and the political, or of evolution and revolution. It might be *completed* by elements that were not explicitly in the original spaces, such as 18th century German Enlightenment and the 1776 American Revolution. We can also, as Fauconnier and Turner put it, “run the blend” so that it provides *elaboration* of one or the other of its aspects, for example discuss the third place of the

Japanese learner of German and English, the current tensions between the European and the American concepts of democracy, cosmopolitanism and globalization, and the uneasy blend of *freedom from* and *responsibility to* in capitalistic democracies. Composition, completion, and elaboration lead to emergent structures in the blend, thus forging “integration networks” and blended spaces with which foreign language learners try to make sense of a foreign reality as expressed through its language.

3. Implications for a Post-National, Post-Cultural Language Pedagogy

In her 1994 article “On Language Memoir”, Alice Kaplan remarked that research on second language acquisition—from linguistics, sociology, education—yields “methods and statistics and the occasional anecdote, but nothing, really, about what is going on inside the head of the person who suddenly finds herself passionately engaged in new sounds and a new voice (59).” She argued that this cannot be found in SLA theory but in fiction. The inclusion of fictional data as evidence of SLA raises the fundamental issue of the relation between methods of inquiry in the social sciences and in the humanities. In the last 30 years, the teaching of foreign languages has gained scientific and methodological legitimation through its affiliation with the social sciences, not with the humanities. And yet, it is clear that teaching national languages in a global era requires looking beyond what the social sciences have to offer.

The field of FL education reflects the larger debates going on in the Humanities in light of post-colonial reconfigurations of the nation-state and global economic migrations. Under the term *communicative language teaching* we find attempts to supersede national standard languages and cultures and to focus on the here and now demands of situational tasks that bring together isolated individuals to solve these common tasks through the use of a common language. Under the term *intercultural learning* (see Edmondson & House 1998, Hu 2000) we find efforts to link communicative competence with given national and regional cultures and histories. Proponents of communicative language teaching believe that we learn one another’s languages in order to conduct maximally effective information exchanges. Proponents of intercultural learning strive for a deeper understanding and empathy between nations. In the first case the individual risks disappearing behind the task, while in the second the individual risks disappearing behind the nation. As an antidote, a study of language memoirs can help recover the subjective, symbolic dimensions of language study.

SLA theory has focused mainly on two kinds of knowledge in language acquisition: *knowing that* (facts about the language) and *knowing how to* (language performance). The narratorial self brings into focus the indispensable role of private memory and imagination in language learning: *remembering how* (past experiences and emotions) and *imagining what if* (future scenarios for action). Language memoirs bring back into public discussion the poetic dimension of language—a dimension that is likely to better prepare learners to resist the (communicative) pressures of the market and the (cultural) seduction of national communities. What they model are narrators who have assumed their own diversity.

I would like to end with two quotes from Amin Maalouf ‘s *Identités meurtrières* [*Murderous identities*] (1998) that address precisely this inner diversity of the multilingual citizen of the future:

Isn't it the sign of our times that it has made all people so to speak into migrants and minorities? We are all forced to live in a universe that hardly resembles our land of origin. We all must learn other languages, other discourses, other codes, and we all have the impression that our identity, as we imagined it since our childhood, is threatened. (47)

And further on, the text says:

We are not dealing with a handful of marginal people, they number in thousands, in millions and their number will not stop growing. "Border" individuals by birth or by accident or by choice, they can weigh in on events and tip the scales one way or the other. Those among them who will be able to fully assume their own diversity will serve as 'relays' between several communities, several cultures and will serve as a kind of 'cement' within their own communities. By contrast, those who cannot assume their own diversity will sometimes become among the most virulent killers in the name of a unitary identity, persecuting those who represent that part of themselves they would like others to forget. A self hate of which we have seen numerous examples throughout History. (Maalouf 1998: 46. My translation)

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