

Multilingualism and Gender¹

Kimie Takahashi, Macquarie University, Australia

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, questions regarding multilingualism and gender have taken on increasing importance from both scholarly points of view and society at large. Globalisation has opened up greater opportunities for people to come into contact, whether face-to-face or via electronic media, and with this has come new linguistic challenges that often intersect gender inequalities. The global economy offers an ever-expanding array of services and products in which women in particular bear the brunt of international labour market disparities. Against this backdrop, scholars from a variety of fields are increasingly situating their inquiries within multilingual and second language contexts as a way to examine the complex and diverse experiences of gendered ideologies. This chapter offers an account of these developments.

I begin by reviewing the expansion of the field of language and gender into multilingual and second language contexts, particularly focusing on the paradigm shift towards a poststructuralist approach. I then examine the intersection of multilingualism and gender in two key transnational contexts: the global politics of reproductive labour and cross-linguistic intimate relations. My inquiries in these two sites are inspired by the recent work by Piller and Pavlenko (2009); I explore the ways in which gendered identities are (re)produced in multilingual contexts, and how ideologies of language and gender embody social order and inequalities across the terrain of globalisation.

TRACING THE DEVELOPMENT

What we know today about multilingualism, gender and their interrelationship has been learned through vibrant debates and research that have taken place over the last four decades. The study of language and gender initially emerged as a field of inquiry in the 1970s amid the rising feminist political movement concerning gender inequalities in the West. In the early period, Lakoff (1975)

¹ I am indebted to Emily Farrell for her support and valuable comments throughout the writing process. I would also like to thank Ingrid Piller for her thorough review of the earlier draft. I have also benefited from discussions on the topic of the chapter with Vera Tetteh, Jie Zhang, Emi Otsuji, Huamei Han and Ryuko Kubota, as well as editing support from Louisa O’Kelly and Brie Willoughby-Knox. All mistakes are my own.

and Thorne and Henley (1975) laid the groundwork for gender research on linguistic practices; the role of gender in multilingual and second language learning contexts was also considered “a promising area of inquiry” in the same period (Pavlenko & Piller, 2001, p. 18). Pavlenko and Piller (2001) note, however, that the study of multilingualism, second language learning and gender did not gain a strong currency until Burton, Dyson and Ardener’s *Bilingual Women* (1994) sparked a renewed interest. Since then the field has grown significantly, as shown by the increasing volume of research that takes multilingual and second language learning contexts as sites of inquiry. Today, the study of gender, multilingualism and second language learning is a lively field, with an ever-expanding body of monographs (Goldstein, 1996; Lan, 2006; Norton, 2000; Okita, 2002; Piller, 2002; Takahashi, forthcoming), edited volumes (Burton, 1994; McElhinny, 2007; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Okita, 2002; Pavlenko, Blackledge, Piller, & Teutsch-Dwyer, 2001; Piller, 2002; Takahashi, forthcoming), and review articles (Besnier, 2007; Davis & Skilton-Silvester, 2004; Ehrlich, 1997; Gordon, 2008; Nelson, 2006; Pavlenko & Piller, 2001, 2008; Piller & Pavlenko, 2001, 2007, 2009; Piller & Takahashi, in press; Takahashi, 2009). The continuing growth of the field has also entailed the ‘postmodern turn’ of the 1990s, or the theoretical shift towards the *diversity* framework (Cameron, 1985; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Pavlenko, 2008), marking a move away from the earlier *deficiency*, *dominance* and *difference* frameworks.

Both the *deficiency* and *dominance* frameworks sought to explore unequal power relations between men and women by taking their linguistic differences as the starting point of investigations. Based on Lakoff’s (1975) work on language and women’s place, the *deficiency* framework considered women as “inferior language users” (Piller & Pavlenko, 2004), linking their subordinate position in society with the negative aspects of women’s language use, such as hedges, hypercorrect grammar and pronunciation, tag questions, and (super) polite forms. In the mid 1970s, the *dominance* framework suggested that gender inequalities resulted from male domination and female oppression in social interaction: men exerted power over women by interrupting and overlapping women’s speech, for example. In the study of bilingualism and language learning, both approaches proposed that as an oppressed group of “inferior language users”, women were less bi/multilingual than men. In the 1980s, the *difference* framework emerged as a popular alternative to the earlier models, due largely to Tannen’s (1990) *You Just Don’t Understand*. The *difference* framework explained that men and women communicate differently because they follow gender-specific and gender-appropriate interactional styles

acquired through socialisation since childhood. A communication breakdown between men and women was thus considered the result of 'misunderstanding' the intention of the other sex. Unlike the former approaches, the *difference* approach produced a number of studies, particularly in the field of Second Language Acquisition, suggesting that women were superior language learners (e.g. Ellis, 1994; Oxford, 1993).

In the 1990s, feminist linguists began challenging these frameworks. The earlier models were criticised as inadequate and in many cases, "damaging to emancipatory practices" (Davis & Skilton-Silvester, 2004, p. 383). According to Piller and Pavlenko (2004, p. 58), the main critiques of the earlier approaches centred on:

their essentialist assumptions about 'men' and 'women' as homogeneous categories, ... lack of attention to the role of context and power relations, and ... insensitivity to ethnic, racial, social, and cultural diversity that mediates gendered behaviours, performance, and outcomes.

Although scholars acknowledge the contributions of earlier models, they have increasingly adopted a new framework that focuses on diversity of gendered identities and linguistic practices (Cameron, 1985; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Pavlenko, 2008), and reconceptualised 'language' and 'gender' as well as the interrelationship between them.

The *diversity* framework, advocated by Cameron (1985), largely draws on feminist poststructuralist approaches to language and gender. Rejecting the notion of language as a set of disembodied structures, the framework considers language as a site of identity construction and negotiation, a source of power (Weedon, 1997), and a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991). As Heller (2007a, p. 2) articulates, language is increasingly approached as "a set of resources which circulate in unequal ways in social networks and discursive spaces, and whose meaning and value are socially constructed within the constraints of social organisational processes, under specific historical conditions". One important implication of this view is the acknowledgement that not all forms of bi/multilingualism are equally valued (Piller & Pavlenko, 2007); the processes by which certain languages or accents, hence the combination of them, become valorised or devalued has social, historical, political and gendered underpinnings. Access to linguistic resources as well as the ability to transform linguistic capital into other forms of capital are considered as mediated by a host of social and economic factors, most importantly for this paper, gender.

In the *diversity* framework, gender is no longer seen as something that men and women ‘are’ or ‘have’. Instead, feminist linguists consider gender as a product of social doing – something people ‘do’ and ‘perform’ in and through talk or other discursive means (Butler, 1990) as a process of constructing their consciousness and negotiating their being in everyday life in and across various communities of practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992). Gender thus becomes “a system of social relations and discursive practices” (Pavlenko & Piller, 2001, p. 23). This view considers performing gender as mediated by situated ideologies of gender and language, or circulating ideas and beliefs about the normative practice of being men or masculine and women or feminine, which vary across time and the social, cultural and political landscape. The locus of inquiry is thus no longer on women and men as two separate groups and how they differ linguistically; it has shifted to the *diversity* of gendered identities and discursive practices in context, ideologies that inform beliefs about what is normative (e.g. heterosexuality, monolingualism) and the discursive processes through which people take up, resist, blend or reshape these ideologies (Piller & Pavlenko, 2004).

This line of inquiry is consistent with the notion of intersectionality (Valentine, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 2007), which considers it “impossible to separate out gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained” (Butler, 1990, p. 3). Thus, in order to understand the (re)production of power, social order and change, the *diversity* framework pays close attention to the ways in which gender intersects with other discursive categorisations, such as race, ethnicity, age, nationality, sexuality, religion and socioeconomic status (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Heller, 2007b). In addition, the unit of analysis within the framework focuses not on men and women’s language per se, but on activity – what, how and why individuals desire or are (un)able to do with language in a specific context and time (Pavlenko, 2008). Researchers associated with the *diversity* framework thus tend to adopt a context-specific approach to data collection (e.g. ethnographic approaches, including participant-observation and interviews) and analytic techniques (e.g. discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis; (see Pavlenko, 2008 for issues in research design within the diversity framework).

Another important aspect of the *diversity* framework that has expanded the field over the last decade is its increasing concern with global processes, broadly termed as globalisation and transnationalism (Besnier, 2007; Block & Cameron, 2002; Heller, 2003; McElhinny, 2007; Piller & Pavlenko, 2007, 2009; Piller & Takahashi, in press). Globalisation has generally been conceived as consisting of ‘flows’ (Appadurai, 1990) or movements of people, capital, goods, communication,

images and desires in an increasingly 'borderless' world. Transnationalism emphasises, however, that nation states continue to exercise their power over these flows, dynamically controlling the accumulation and transfer of various forms of capital across, between and beyond national boundaries (Constable, 2003; Ong, 1999). Recent literature has increasingly addressed the ways in which transnational processes and ideologies of language and gender intersect with gendered identities and practices, including the commodification of multilingual language work in the new global economy (Heller, 2003), the global care chain of migrant reproductive workers (Piller & Pavlenko, 2007, 2009), the language education market (Kinging, 2008b; Piller & Takahashi, 2006), and bilingual couplehood and family (Okita, 2002; Piller, 2002).

Adopting the *diversity* framework, the rest of the chapter examines the ways in which multilingualism and gender intersect in transnational spaces. Piller and Pavlenko (2007, p. 16) have highlighted that economic production and social reproduction are "the key areas where gender is produced and reproduced" and that they have undergone tremendous changes in conjunction with recent global processes. In keeping with their argument and following Piller and Takahashi (in press), I focus on two transnational spaces in which the political economy of language and transnational identity serve to produce gendered opportunities and challenges: the global politics of reproductive labour and cross-linguistic intimate relations.

THE GLOBAL POLITICS OF REPRODUCTIVE LABOUR

This section examines linguistic challenges and gender inequalities that are embodied in the feminisation of international migration. Traditional research on migration often assumed men to be economic migrants and women to be 'associational', following their male spouse and reproducing the family, and hence irrelevant to the labour market (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003, p. 5; see also Kofman & Raghuram, 2006). As Lan (2008) points out, this approach no longer captures the complex reality of contemporary international migration and the globalised labour market. An increasing number of women move in search of work abroad, often as a sole migrant either with or without legal documents (Anderson, 1997; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003a). These women on the move are united under the rhetoric that often heralds globalisation as a marker of women's increased social and economic mobility. However, recent feminist scholarship has highlighted that migrant women's trajectories are profoundly shaped by "a structural relationship of inequality

based on class, race, gender and (nation-based) citizenship” (Parreñas, 2001, p. 73). At the same time it is only recently that language has received systematic attention as a key factor that intersects this relationship of inequality (Heller, 2003; McElhinny, 2007; Piller & Pavlenko, 2007, 2009; Piller & Takahashi, in press). This section foregrounds language as an overarching issue in the global politics of reproductive labour and the everyday experience of reproductive migrant workers.

Reproductive migrant workers

Reproductive work (work and care necessary to sustain and reproduce the family) has traditionally been the responsibility of female family members. As many women in the First World began pursuing paid work outside the home, men have not picked up their share of domestic work; thus reproductive work has increasingly been outsourced or become the domain of migrant women’s work, in particular the work of migrant women of colour (Piller & Takahashi, in press). Furthermore, the expansion of tourism, leisure and aesthetic industries has also enlarged the demand for women migrant workers in low wage, low status occupations such as cleaners, nail beauticians, masseuses and sex workers. As Hondagneu-Sotelo (2007, p. 3) rightly points out, without migrant women’s labour in many affluent global cities, an array of products and services that are widely available today at an affordable price would simply disappear. The lifestyle many citizens of the First World enjoy today relies on the low wage and physically- and emotionally-intensive labour provided by migrant women from the Third World (Anderson, 1997; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003b).

A growing body of literature on migrant reproductive workers suggest that their experiences are profoundly embedded in linguistic and communicative inequalities. For instance, in her ethnography of Latino nannies and housecleaners in the US, Hondagneu-Sotelo (2007, p. 3) reports that the ability to speak English, race and cultural background are especially important criteria for determining the prestige and amount of labour entailed by the jobs available to migrant women. The researcher notes that in the US, where the ‘English Only’ campaign and racial discrimination continue to intensify, many employers believe that they could acquire more status or employees who speak better English “if they employ a white, fair-haired nanny, who may hail from Iowa or Australia” (pp. 100-101). In fact, English speaking white nannies from Australia and the UK dominate the high-end jobs, serving wealthy families as nannies without housecleaning duties.

Midrange jobs that combine the work of nannies *and* housecleaners, often in well-to-do families, are dominated by young, documented Latino women who speak English relatively well. The low-end jobs which often involve the most strenuous, exploitative form of employment, namely live-in jobs (with salary as low as \$100 a week), tend to employ Latino women who lack English fluency, experience, and authorised documents.

Yet, some employers prefer non-English speaking Latino women for a number of reasons (see also Piller & Pavlenko, 2007, 2009). First, these women cost significantly less than English speaking white nannies, a commodity value that in itself reproduces their inferiority. Second, their lack of English proficiency and limited social access outside the Latino community assure employers that these women will not be able to reveal the intimate details of the employers' private lives to other English speakers of the same class. And third, their linguistic deficiency and racial inferiority allow the employers to exclude them, treat them as inferior *Other* and humiliate them as illiterate during 'blowups' (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007, p. 114). According to Hondagneu-Sotelo (2007, p. 3), employment agencies feel that employers who 'switch' from a Latino woman to an English speaking white nanny need to be 're-educated' and 'monitored' – they can not treat the white nanny with the same disregard they had shown their Latina employee. The researcher observes that “[I]n this racial hierarchy, only employers of white nannies require any monitoring” (p. 103).

As Piller and Pavlenko (2009) point out, lack of proficiency in the majority language *per se* does not always disadvantage migrant women. Rather, the issue pertains to the political economy of languages in the host country that these women can or cannot speak or are seen to be able or unable to speak. In some cases, limited proficiency may not be a disadvantage, particularly if they speak a language of significant symbolic status, i.e. English. For example, Filipina reproductive workers are highly sought after because of their fluency in English and relatively high education compared to migrant women from other South East Asian countries (Piller & Pavlenko, 2009). Their ability to speak English not only renders them more competitive in the global market, but also operates as symbolic capital with which they could negotiate identity and power relations with their employers, as demonstrated in Lan's (2003, 2006) study on Filipina maids in Taiwan.

Lan (2003, 2006) found that in Taiwan, where the boom for English language learning has intensified, English speaking Filipina maids have become a status marker for newly rich Taiwanese. Many of Lan's participants, college-educated women with professional work experience in the Philippines, faced relentless subordination by their employers. But they engaged in resistance in a

number of ways that drew on their superior English-speaking identity. For instance, they ridiculed the way their employers gave directions in limited English, as in this example: “divorce [divide] the chicken and pry [fry] it when oil is dancing [boiling]” (p. 173). They also deliberately followed ‘wrong’ instructions; when one employer ordered her maid to “*throw* some letters (put letters in the mailbox), the maid dutifully dumped them in the garbage” (italic original Lan, 2006, p. 173). They regularly joked about the employers’ poor English or “funny” accents with their fellow Filipina friends on their rare days off (see also Constable, 1997). The sense of empowerment that Lan’s participants felt is well-captured in one maid’s comment – “They have more money, but we can speak better English than most of them” (Lan, 2003, p. 13).

Jokes and ridicule may momentarily empower them, but Lan (2006) notes that these exchanges were conducted ‘backstage’ among their trusted fellow countrywomen. To avoid the risk of losing their jobs, these maids mostly interacted with their employers on the basis of “the script of deferential performance, while cautiously exercising linguistic resistance in disguise” (Lan, 2006, p. 173). The researcher also observed that the popularity of Indonesian maids was on the rise. They are perceived as more ‘docile’, due in large part to their limited linguistic means (both in English and Chinese) of negotiating their subordinate position. As Lan (2003) notes, the backstage exchanges of jokes and the ascent of Indonesian maids demonstrates how “language becomes a means of symbolic domination to consolidate the employer’s authority and silence the migrant workers” (p. 156).

It is misleading to suggest that all domestic migrant workers are simply victims. Many take pride, for instance, in making much needed economic contributions to their families back home (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003b). The fact remains, however, that work that takes place behind closed doors in a stranger’s home in a foreign country renders domestic migrant women highly vulnerable. Many thus opt out of a domestic setting and choose instead institutional sites such as cleaning companies and hotels. The expanding service industry, however, also thrives on migrant women’s linguistic and social disadvantages, as illustrated by Alcorso (2003).

In her study on migrant workers in two 4-star hotels in Australia, Alcorso (2003) found that ‘back-of-the house’ work, namely the housekeeping work, was dominated by middle-aged migrant women from non-English speaking countries (NESC). Within the hotels, housekeeping was widely acknowledged as “the hardest place to work” (p. 25) with low wages, an elevated risk of occupational injuries and job cuts in time of economic downturn. The housekeeping women were

considered “loyal” (p. 24) by the managers because most had been working at the hotels for a long time, even without being promoted to a less strenuous or higher paying position. As Masterman-Smith and Pocock (2008) point out, opportunities of such promotion are really rare in hotel housekeeping – it’s a ‘dead-end’ low-paid job/industry. Hotel managers justified the concentration and entrapment of NESC migrant women in housekeeping by insistence that their accented English would be difficult to understand and thus inconvenience hotel guests who are “not expected to perform labour of active listening” (p. 29).

However, the author found this puzzling because some of the ‘front-of-house’ jobs (e.g. banquets in a hotel) did not necessitate fluent English, many housekeepers were English speaking Filipino women and, and while expressing a lack of confidence, most of her housekeeping participants did possess effective communication skills in English. There was also no staff assistance in improving their English, in contrast to the availability of other forms of job training. As Piller and Takahashi (forthcoming, in press) suggest, discrimination based on language proficiency and accent can often substitute for racial, ethnic and gender discrimination, particularly in societies that see themselves as non-racist or post-racist (Hill, 2008). The housekeeping migrant women’s ability to transform their linguistic capital into economic and social gains is largely limited by employers’ desire that NESC migrant women remain linguistically unconfident, lest they disrupt traditional ethnic and gendered divisions of work that serve the service industry well (see also Adib & Guerrier, 2003).

De-skilling of Skilled Migrant Women

It is by no means only unskilled reproductive workers who face linguistic challenges. Despite their professional qualifications and expertise, skilled migrant women are also subject to de-skilling and discrimination in the host countries (see Piller in this volume). Literature on the most recent wave of skilled migrant women, overseas-qualified nurses, increasingly highlights that language proficiency and race are both public and hidden sites where control and discrimination are exercised (Kingma, 2007; Kofman & Raghuram, 2006; Lan, 2008; Yeates, 2009).

In her study on the career paths of migrant nurses in Australia, Howthorne (2001) found that linguistic and racial discrimination were undisputable. She reports the “doubt and penury” experienced by migrant nurses from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), as opposed to the “instancy of professional acceptance” for those from English speaking backgrounds (ESB),

particularly from the UK (p. 219). Although both NESB and ESB migrant nurses found professional employment after obtaining the qualifications' recognition, there was significant labour market segmentation over time: NESB nurses were much less likely than ESB nurses to have advanced beyond the baseline registered nursing employment and gained access to managerial or supervisory positions. The employment of NESB nurses, particularly from Eastern Europe and non-Commonwealth Asia, was most concentrated in public hospitals and nursing homes – the latter a sector uniformly stigmatised as well as increasingly redefined as for “foreign labour”. Many NESB nurses reported “hidden and clear discrimination as well as outright racism by Anglo-Saxon nurses” (p. 225); one Filipino nurse explained the discrimination was targeted at “only my colour and the way I pronounced words (so) that you are always laughed at, degraded” (p. 225), while an Indonesian nurse considered her nursing skills to be compromised by exclusion from teams. Comments such as those above starkly contrasted “NESB nurses’ pride in their skills, and their intense sense of advantage in terms of linguistic and cross-cultural experience” (p. 225).

Discrimination based on linguistic proficiency is a means of control over the flow of foreign nurses and care workers employed by many receiving countries, as the case of Japan further demonstrates. Japan’s aging population and the growing number of young Japanese shunning ‘3D’ jobs (dirty, dangerous and demanding) has created an increasing demand for foreign nurses and eldercare workers. In response, the Japanese government has recently started to recruit nurses and caregivers from Indonesia and the Philippines. The conditions imposed by Japanese officials include the requirement that Indonesian and Filipino nurses attend six months of language training as well as pass the Japanese national exam within two to four years of their arrival. They will face repatriation if they fail the exam. This scheme is considered as fraught with inequality and the language requirement is seen as “insurmountable” (The Japan Times, 2009). Many of these women will face immediate downward occupation mobility from qualified nurses to nurse assistants. They also must prepare for the difficult exam while engaged in on-the-job training. This unrealistic language requirement is part and parcel of the mounting opposition from the Japanese Nursing Association and their nurse members who see foreign nurses as ‘substandard’ and a threat to their own job security (The Japan Times, 2009).

I end this section with a story of Kurdish nurse Fatima Ansari from Kingma’s (2007) study on migrant nurses. Fatima was born to her Kurdish parents in the Middle East. She pursued a nursing career, but once qualified, her ethnic background made it difficult to secure employment and she

experienced discrimination from her colleagues once she found a job. Disillusioned with career prospects there, Fatima moved to Sweden where her sister was already working. The employment agency she consulted assured her that she would have no problem finding a job, her 'only' obstacle was language. She enrolled in an intensive course to learn a totally unfamiliar language, Swedish. Before becoming a fully qualified nurse, Fatima faced more challenges, of course, as she had to pass an exam on health regulations in Sweden, and had to work as a nursing assistant. Although she often feels lonely and understands that she is a 'foreigner' in Sweden, she considers herself 'very lucky' and feels safe among her new colleagues. Her next aspiration is to move to Africa and work in humanitarian aid.

Multilingualism is profoundly embodied in Fatima's labour migration trajectory in that the hard-earned proficiency in the new language allowed her to finally build her career as a nurse. Unlike the foreign nurses in Australia discussed above, Fatima feels included by her colleagues, even with her new identity as a "second language user" of Swedish and as a "foreign" nurse. The contrast between Fatima's story in Sweden and the cases of Australia and Japan reminds us that only by examining the situated practices and ideologies of language, gender, race and class in both sending and receiving countries, can we fully understand the intersection of the global politics of reproductive labour and the concerns, inequalities, aspirations and successes that embody the everyday experience of migrant women.

MULTILINGUALISM AND INTIMATE RELATIONS

In addition to reproductive labour as discussed in the last section, another key site where gendered identities and multilingualism powerfully intersect and where ideologies of gender and language are produced and reproduced is cross-linguistic intimacy. Following Constable (2009), I consider intimate relations as "social relationships that are physically and emotionally close, personal, sexually intimate, private, caring, or loving" (p. 50). Intimate gendered encounters that take place across linguistic or national borders are not at all a new phenomenon (Piller, 2002). At the same time, the recent globalisation has opened up greater spaces in which people from different backgrounds are able or bound to encounter romantic and sexual experiences – whether wanted or unwanted (Piller, 2007). As Willies and Murphy-Shigematsu (2008) point out, this can happen to individuals even if they are not themselves on the move; there are countless stories of romantic or

sexual encounters between ‘mobile’ individuals and ‘locals’, whether in the context of migration, tourism, study overseas or online communication. Although Gal’s (1978) pioneering work on young women’s conflated desire for the German language and German speaking romantic partners in the bilingual Austrian-Hungarian peasant community of Oberwart was not taken up in the following decades (Pavlenko & Piller, 2001), the link between the political economy of language, gender and intimate encounters has recently received increasing research attention from researchers from a variety of fields (Bailey, 2002; Kinginger, 2008b; Piller, 2002, 2008; Takahashi, forthcoming, in press). This section reviews recent studies that illuminate this link and its multifaceted implications. I will focus on language education as a site of inquiry, particularly language study overseas and language learning materials.

Language desire

‘誰だって何者かになれる!’ [You can be who you want to be!]; ‘なぜニューヨークは夢にきくのか? なりたい自分になるための留学’ [Why is New York good for dreams? Studying overseas enables me to become who I want to be]. Headlines on study overseas programs such as these commonly appear in women’s magazines and other media texts in Japan (Piller & Takahashi, 2006). English study overseas and language tourism – two key services in the multimillion dollar language education and tourism industries – are constantly pitched as a glamorous means of reinventing one’s womanhood. English language learning (ELL) is presented as a ‘weapon’ for Japanese women to cope with or move away from chauvinistic Japan, towards a more modern Western world of gender equality and ‘white Prince Charmings’ (Kelsky, 2001). That the discourse of language study overseas in Japan is clearly gendered is neither unique to this country, nor a new phenomenon (Gore, 2005; Kelsky, 2001). As Kinginger (2008b) reports, the study overseas programs are also a gendered enterprise in the US and elsewhere. Since the 1990s, empirical studies unanimously point to the complex, gendered nature of desire for such activities and its impact on participants’ experience in the destination countries (Freed, 1995; Kelsky, 2001; Kinginger, 2004, 2008a, 2009; Kobayashi, 2007).

One notion of gendered desire associated with language study overseas that has recently been offered is *language desire*. Originated in Piller (2002) and expanded in Piller and Takahashi’s (2006; Takahashi, forthcoming) research, language desire refers to a bundle of desires – desire for identity transformation, for a mastery of a desired language, and/or for friendship/romance with a speaker of the desired language – all of which intersect with each other. The notion seeks to

explore the dialectic relationship between public discourses and subjective agency in shaping individuals' private desires and how these desires mediate approaches to learning and using the desired language. Central to this understanding of desire is the conception of power on two fronts. Following Foucault (1980), Piller and Takahashi (2006) argue that "the workings of power include the inculcation of desires that lead individuals to modify their own bodies and personalities" (p. 61). As the studies below demonstrate, language desire may thus work against the individuals, particularly if the expected outcomes are not met (Lukes, 1974). Second, adopting the intersectional approach (Butler, 1990), power is approached as multidirectional, (re)produced at the intersection of gender, language, race, sexuality and other discursively constituted identities.

One of the early inquiries that demonstrated the interrelationship of gender and multilingualism in producing intimate encounters in a study abroad context comes from Polanyi (1995). In her study of American students on a study abroad program in Russia, Polanyi found that gender powerfully mediated the students' interactional opportunities in a way that advantaged American men over women. The men achieved linguistic gains from socialising with and romancing Russian women, while American women were often subjected to unwanted sexual attention or harassment by Russian men, resulting in reluctance to interact with Russians and little linguistic gain when tested upon return. Along with others (Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsburg, 1995), Polanyi's (1995) work sparked widespread attention to the gender bias in foreign language education and language testing in the US which often disadvantaged women, and inspired subsequent research into the relationship between gender and qualities of learning experience in the study abroad contexts (Ehrlich, 2001; Kinginger, 2004; Talburt & Stewart, 1999).

In a series of recent publications, Kinginger (2004, 2006, 2008b, 2009) has significantly extended this area of inquiry by illuminating the intersection of public discourses and private desires in shaping American sojourners' gendered experience in France. Noting that study abroad has long been a gendered tradition in the US (Gore, 2005), Kinginger (2008b) reports that the enduring popularity of France as a destination among American young women embodies the perpetual media image of French women as the ultimate models of "playfully anachronistic femininity" (p. 91) and the 'promised' effect of French femininity as an enhanced magnetism to men, which Kinginger (2006) calls the *Sabrina Syndrome*. Similar to Polanyi's (1995) findings above, American male participants benefited from numerous interactional opportunities in French, due largely to their ability to position themselves as deserving of others' attention and as men of gender

equity and heroism. In contrast, while some women, who managed to adopt the French discourse of fashion and femininity, gained access to a local community of French speakers (Kinging, 2004), others developed aversion, particularly towards the representation of sexuality and the performance of gender relations in public space. One participant, Deirdre, concluded that French women were 'snotty' (Kinging, 2008b, p. 96) and that the French people in general had no respect for women, resulting in feelings of national superiority (of American over French women), little contact with French native speakers and diminished interest in learning or keeping up French beyond this study abroad program.

An ethnography of Japanese sojourners in Australia conducted by Piller and Takahashi (2006; Takahashi, forthcoming) adds an important dimension of race to the intersection of multilingualism and gender in the study abroad contexts (see also Talburt & Stewart, 1999). Growing up in a country where media often glorify all things Western (Kelsky, 2001), Japanese women in this study developed *akogare* or desire for the West, particularly for celebrities such as Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt, in their youth (for the author's personal experience, see Takahashi, in press). Following their adolescent dreams, they all arrived in Australia with the desire to find 'a new self', and under the assumption that they would achieve an instant mastery of English through unlimited access to native speakers. However, they soon found their assumption unfounded – they often felt rejected by native speakers of English, who, in their view, had little patience for Asians, seen as 'second class citizens'. One participant became disenchanted with her Asian identity: Yoko felt depressed every time she saw herself in the mirror and found that she had not transformed into a white woman.

It was in this context where an English-speaking romantic partner emerged as the most promising access point to the English-speaking world. The women first and foremost pursued white native English-speaking men as romantic partners, the ultimate object of Japanese women's desire, perpetually linking and reproducing the symbolic ownership of English and race {Takahashi, in press #1568}. However, in Sydney's romantic market which partly sees Japanese women as desired oriental *Others*, some could construct themselves as deserving of men's time and attention, to the extent that often allowed them to accept, control or reject certain types of romantically charged encounters on their own terms. Unlike the American men in Russia or France, however, Japanese men in their study had little access to local, Australian white women as romantic partners or linguistic resources. Located within the widely circulating international image of Japanese men as

sexist, ugly and narrow-minded (Kelsky, 2001), they are often excluded and remain invisible in one interactional space; the romantic interracial market.

Gendering and sexualising language education

As the studies above demonstrate, sojourners bring with them pre-arrival expectations and assumptions, which, if they are not met, can lead to confusion, depression and/or loss of investment in learning and using the desired language. This makes it urgent to address the question of how such expectations are formed, and for that matter, why they are so remote from the reality many sojourners frequently face. One approach that has produced useful insights is the investigation into the images of study abroad and cross-cultural communication that language learners have access to, i.e. language learning materials. These are often saturated with the representation of language learners as warmly welcomed by accommodating native speakers of the target language. It rarely engages with how learners' gender, sexual or racial backgrounds may intersect with those of their interlocutors to structure interactional opportunities or create social and linguistic challenges, as reported by Shardakova and Pavlenko (2004).

Analysing identity options of 'imagined' learners and interlocutors in two Russian textbooks, the researchers report that the main characters in both textbooks were white heterosexual middle-class college-educated men, with a professional interest in Russian. Jim, the main character in *Nachalo*, is represented as a confident speaker of Russian, who experiences no miscommunication or limit to social interactional opportunities throughout his stay in Russia. His value as an American man is hailed by his friends, who admire his cooking skills, and by the mother of his girlfriend, who considers American husbands an 'achievement' for Russian women. The researchers argue that by the choice of 'a typical American man', i.e. a heterosexual white man, as the main character, the textbook authors fail to address difficult encounters faced by women from diverse backgrounds and students from minority groups, leaving them with insufficient linguistic resources to defend themselves in unwanted sexual encounters. In terms of the construction of gendered identities for Russian interlocutors, Russian women are constantly portrayed as dependent on men, who are in turn depicted as disrespectful to women, treating them as sexual objects. The researchers argue that this depiction of female interlocutors draws on and perpetuates the cultural stereotypes of

Russian women produced by American media that portrays them as sexually available to foreign men and as pursuers of an ideal for American men seeking traditional wives (Pavlenko, 2002).

The textbooks analysed by Shardakova and Pavlenko (2004) first and foremost serve educational purposes in an institutional context. When we turn to learning aids that adopt a more specific or commercial purpose, i.e. to establish and conduct a romantic relationship in a foreign/second language, we find ideologies of gender and race and the political economy of language and sexuality even more profoundly at play. According to Piller and Pavlenko (2009), English for Relationship Purposes (ERP) is the latest addition to the ever-expanding spectrum of English of Specific Purposes (ESP). ERP materials include vocabulary, phrases and communicative routines deemed useful for the purpose of conducting romantic and sexual relationships with foreigners. Some may find such materials necessary, and beneficial for all parties involved (Webb, 2007). However, upon closer inspection, the commercial discourse of ERP emerges as a site where cultural, racial and sexual stereotypes are (re)produced, propagating existing unequal gender relations. These materials largely target non-English-speaking women as consumers, and constructs English-speaking Western men as the object of desire, as reported in the contexts of Germany (Piller, 2008; Piller & Pavlenko, 2007), Russia (Kubota, 2008) and Japan (Piller & Takahashi, 2006, in press). Across these different geographical locations, the notion that the ERP discourse relies on, and reproduces, remains the same: “romance and sex with foreign men are a key to success in English language learning and vice versa” (Piller & Takahashi, in press). This point has been demonstrated in the critical discourse analysis of an ERP textbook, *Roppongi English*, by Piller and Takahashi (in press; Takahashi, forthcoming).

Set in the transnational space of Roppongi in Tokyo, *Roppongi English* (Johnson, 2006) is a comic-style ERP textbook with two heterosexual couples, Tomoko and Kevin, and Naomi and Tony. Tomoko is a shy Japanese university student, whose English improves through romance with Kevin, a university-educated white American man who teaches English in Japan. Naomi is a cool bilingual woman, who grew up in California and pairs off with Tony, a divorced, African American ex-navy DJ. The two women’s sexual identities are dichotomised with Tomoko being feminine (e.g. “Be gentle with me”, p. 65), and Naomi being sexually aggressive (e.g. “Harder, faster, deeper!”, p. 87). Kevin is depicted as a handsome, caring gentleman who is attentive to Tomoko’s emotional and sexual needs. In contrast, Tony is presented as an “asshole” (p. 124), who is a culturally unsophisticated sexual pervert. In the section on ‘Fighting’, for instance, both men are caught cheating. While Kevin

sweetly apologies (“I can’t live without you”, p. 115), Tony loses his temper, calling Naomi “You bitch” (p. 125). As a nice girl, Tomoko eventually forgives Kevin and resurrects their relationship, but Naomi threatens to call the police when Tony tries to smooth things over through the blunt offer of sex. Piller and Takahashi (in press) argue that despite the prevailing hypermodern image of Roppongi, *Roppongi English* propagates a traditional discourse of interracial relationships: it valorises traditional Japanese femininity and white masculinity as the norm, and assigns low levels of morality to hybrid/bilingual Japanese womanhood and black sexuality, respectively and in combination.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined developments in research on multilingualism and gender and explored the role of gender in multilingual contexts within two key transnational spaces: the global politics of reproductive labour and cross-linguistic intimacy. The review of ethnographic findings reveals that the trajectories of reproductive migrant workers embody the global economy and its inequalities, in both the sending and receiving countries. For migrant women who depart from their impoverished homes to work in the First World, while multilingualism may afford them access to mobility and employment, it often becomes a discursive means of control for employers and nation states to govern their workers as inferior others. In addition, I have highlighted language education as a key site where ideologies of language, gender and intercultural intimacy are (re)produced. Unlike the traditional view of motivation as an individual attribute, the notion of language desire captures the dialectic relationship between powerful market interests and private desire, and explains how hegemonic notions of masculinity and femininity are produced. Language desire thus becomes a discursive site where hierarchies of identities and languages as well as normative conceptions of intimate relations are established and played out in context.

These inquiries make it clear that gender inequalities are profoundly embedded in the hierarchy of other aspects of identity, particularly race, ethnicity and class, as seen in the case of reproductive migrant women and Japanese language sojourners in Australia. As Pavlenko (2008) has argued, in many contexts gender inequalities are “exacerbated and sometimes even eclipsed by disparities created by class and race” (p. 172). At the same time, discrimination based on language has increasingly become a convenient substitute for racial and gender discrimination on the terrain

of transnationalism (Piller & Takahashi, in press). Future research needs to explore how ideologies of multilingualism and gender operate as such in a variety of contexts by asking whose interests are served and disserved, and how people exert agency to negotiate these challenges and opportunities opened up by global processes. The study of multilingualism and gender can then make more explicit the role of the intersection between structural forces and agency in shaping people's everyday lives.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Kimie Takahashi is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Adult Migrant English Program Research Center in the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Her research interests include the interrelationship between bilingualism, second language learning and gender, particularly in the contexts of study overseas, migration and employment. She is currently involved in a multi-site ethnography of the role of multilingualism and language learning in tourism between Australia and Japan (funded by Macquarie University and directed by Ingrid Piller). Her work has appeared in edited volumes and she is currently completing her first book manuscript, entitled *Language Desire: Gender, Sexuality and Second Language Learning* (Multilingual Matters). With Ingrid Piller, Kimie is a co-founder of a non-profit portal, *Language on the Move*, dedicated to the issue of language in multicultural and transnational contexts: www.languageonthemove.org.

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