Contents

     Trade in the 21st Century   111
     Anna M. Agathangelou and Kyle D. Killian

     Cyberspatial (Re)Presentations and Seductions: The Internet as
     Contested Border of Social Relations and Governance   112

     The Internet: Borderless Site of the Neoliberal "Free Market"?   113

     Disruptions of Worlds and Intimacies: Technologies of Social Relations   118

     Crossings and Intimacies: International Dating and Electronic Exchanges   121

     Seductions and Simulations: Borders, Bodies, and Other Sites of
     Contestation?   122

     International Coupling and International Border Crossings as
     Contradictions   136

     Conclusion   137

     Notes   138

     References   140

SECTION III   Particular Cultural Combinations

8.   Russian–American Marriages: Cultures and Conflicts   145
     Lynn Visson

     Historical Background   145

     American Men Seek Russian Brides   146

     American Men and Russian Women   151

     Disappointments and Disasters   153

     American Husbands and Russian Wives   155

     Russian Husbands and American Wives   157

     Different Types of Couples   158

     Causes of Conflict   160

     Friends and Family   160

     References   162

9.   Constructions of Difference Among Latino/Latina Immigrant and
     Non-Hispanic White Couples   165
     Roxana Llerena-Quinn and Gonzalo Bacigalupe

     Marrying a Latino or Latina in the United States   166

     Latinos in the United States: Who Are They?   167

Contents   ix

Contents   xi

4

"I Always Wanted to Marry a Cowboy"
Bilingual Couples, Language, and Desire

Ingrid Piller

This chapter investigates various forms of desire that are intermeshed with the desire for another language, a phenomenon I described as "language desire" in Piller (2002a). In particular, I am concerned with two distinct forms of desire—romantic desire for a partner from a different language background than one's own native language and, once such a relationship has been established, a desire to raise one's children bilingually. Unrelated as these two forms of desire may seem at first glance, they are often inextricably linked in the lives of linguistic border crossers by marriage. I will draw on data from the semiprivate conversations of English- and German-speaking bilingual couples, as well as the representations of bilingual couples in the media. Such public discourses are often drawn upon in private discourses and help to structure desire.

The corpus of semiprivate conversations is described in detail in Piller (2002a). To summarize briefly: 36 bilingual couples, with one partner a native speaker of English and the other a native speaker of German, agreed to tape themselves in a conversation. The conversations are based on an open-ended questionnaire that partners administered to each other. Participants self-selected; i.e., they responded to recruitment advertisements. The German-speaking partners are natives of Germany and Austria; the English-speaking partners are natives of Australia, Ireland, South Africa, the U.K., and the United States. At the time of data collection (1997–1998) participating couples resided in Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, the U.K., and the United States. The international distribution of the participants results from the fact that they responded to ads placed mainly on the Internet (but also in local and regional publications). The conversations range in length from a few minutes to 2 hours and

53

constitute a corpus of just under 19 hours in total. I consider the conversations semiprivate because, although they are between partners without anyone else present, the tape recorder leads to a situation where an audience, often imagined as the researcher by the participants, is virtually present. However, as the researcher was not present in actual fact, I have not met most of the participants, and I had no chance to ask follow-up questions during the conversations. Therefore, some interesting points remain unexplored. My knowledge about the participants comes mostly from what they say about themselves in the conversations, a background questionnaire I asked them to fill out, and, in a few cases, further interactions I had with the participants (usually one partner only, rather than both). Those interactions included E-mail discussions and face-to-face interactions.

The chapter is structured as follows: I first outline the relationship between bilingualism and romantic desire, before I explore the concept of "language desire" in some more detail. I then describe how a bilingual relationship can serve as a way into a second-language community. Thus, desire for a partner who speaks another language may also be related to a desire for greater interactional opportunities in that language. In the next section, I then move on to discuss the desire for bilingualism in one's children. In the concluding section, I outline implications for couple therapy.

Bilingualism and Romantic Desire

Theories of language and desire have long been explored in the psychoanalytic tradition. However, as Cameron and Kulick (2003a) point out, "It is notable that theorists engaged in debating the nature of desire and its linguistic instantiation seldom refer to any empirical research that examines how desire is actually conveyed through language in social life" (p. 93). Consequently, these researchers argue that the study of language and desire needs to move beyond theories of "inner states" to investigations of the ways in which a variety of desires are discursively accomplished (see also Cameron & Kulick, 2003b). Unlike in psychoanalysis where desire is always seen from a developmental perspective and as an internal phenomenon that is not amenable to direct observation, discursive psychologists argue that desire is instantiated in language. Cameron and Kulick (2003a, 2003b) conceive of desire in a fashion similar to Foucault's understanding of power; i.e., as circulating in specific social spaces. Structures of desire are constitutive of the ways in which desire is enacted in the

microdomain. Such an understanding of the relationship between language and desire is similar to the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia (e.g., Bakhtin, 1929/1981, 1952/1986). Bakhtin and his collaborators use the concept of heteroglossia to model the interrelationship between the macrolevel of ideologies and the microlevel of conversation. For them, language use in the microdomain cannot be understood without reference to larger discourses. In this view, individuals' desires and expressions thereof are structured by the discourses of desire and the values, beliefs, and practices circulating in a given social context.

As an example, take the comment "I always wanted to marry a cowboy," from which this chapter takes its title. It was made by Natalie,[1] a 35-year-old German woman married to an American man, as she was trying to explain her relationship to the German and American cultures. On one level this comment can be read as an individual expression of romantic desire. However, at the same time it is an instantiation of macrodiscourses in which the United States is represented stereotypically as the "Wild West" and American men as cowboys. Based on the information I have about Steven (see the description of my data above), Natalie's U.S.-born partner of 11 years, he seems quite removed from the description "cowboy": he is college educated, holds a humanities degree, and works in a skilled trade in an arts-related business. Thus, describing him as a cowboy clearly draws on discourses outside of their relationship. Indeed, evidence for the stereotypical representation of the United States as the frontier society of the 19th century West abounds. The entertainment industry has produced its own genre of the "Western" where cowboys with their rugged masculinity, their self-reliance, and clear sense of right and wrong figure as heroes. The advertising industry's "Marlboro Man" and his countless clones are further instantiations of the same myth. The statement "I always wanted to marry a cowboy" is almost a literal translation of the title (and refrain) of a German pop song from the 1960s entitled "Ich will nen Cowboy zum Mann" (I want to marry a cowboy). The song was sung by a young female artist and it topped the charts in Germany in 1963 (http://www.schulla.com/covergalerie/DATEN/G/GITTE/Gitte.htm; last accessed on February 25, 2004). Incidentally, 1963 is the year that Natalie was born. The song's refrain explains the attraction of a cowboy as follows: "Dabei kommt's mir gar nicht auf das Schießen an, denn ich weiß, das so ein Cowboy küssen kann" (I don't care about the shooting because I know that a cowboy knows how to kiss). By contrast, Natalie's attraction to a cowboy is associated with his relationship to English:

Au: Please add to refs/please reference in text per APA style?

> Like, I just said this jokingly but even as a kid I always wanted to marry a cow-
> boy. I always liked America, and the idea of America, and having married you
> was NOT AT ALL coincidental, like you just happened to be American. [...] I
> like English. . @ I studied English. I've always liked English. Everything that
> has to do with English. Old English, Middle English, American English, British
> English.[2]

One could almost substitute the pop song's explanation for a cowboy's desirability ("a cowboy knows how to kiss") with the explanation "a cowboy knows how to speak English." There are numerous participants who profess such a desire for a second language and explain that it was the pursuit of that desire, usually through studying abroad, that led them into contact with their current partner. For instance, Maren, another German-born participant, who now lives in the U.K., states "I came over because I liked England. I loved English. I love British culture. I wanted to live here." Steven, Natalie's husband, provides another example. Although Natalie and Steven met in the United States, prior to their first meeting he had spent extended periods in Germany, where they now live, in order to study the language:

> I used to love- I used to love German. I mean I studied it, but I don't know now
> since I really don't have much to do with the language other than using it daily
> as a tool just to communicate, and to- . yeah. just go about my business I guess
> erm, cause I'm not really all that interested any more. I'm not really particularly
> interested in German literature anymore. I think. I hardly ever read anything
> in German any more.

In yet another example, a clear link between desire for a second language and romantic desire is established. This example comes from a letter that a German woman married to a Briton wrote to me when she learned about my research interest:

> I have to say that I have been attracted to the English-speaking culture from my
> earliest childhood, and I listened to BFBS [British Forces Broadcasting Service
> - IP] all afternoon. I loved the chants of the soccer fans and the fact that "love"
> was such an easy word for these people. Later I chose English as a Leistungskurs
> [specialization for the high school diploma - IP] and after I graduated from high
> school I went over to England as an au pair for a year. I majored in English for
> my translating and interpreting degree at X-University, and during my studies I
> spent another year in England as an assistant teacher. I can't imagine a life with-
> out English and without the English culture. I would have moved to England
> after I graduated if I had not met my husband, who substitutes England for me
> here, so to speak. [...]

A range of desires are enmeshed in these examples. To begin with, there is the desire to master another language. Second, there is the desire to become a member of the community of speakers of that language. The road to such membership is envisaged via romantic involvement with a native-speaking partner in the cases under discussion. Third, there is a romantic desire for a type of masculinity (or femininity) that is stereo-typically associated with another language. I will first discuss the latter, before I move on to a discussion of the desire for mastering a second language and its relationship to the desire for joining the community of its speakers through marriage.

Language Desire

The larger societal discourses that structure these desires must by necessity be language and culture specific, as discussed for the cowboy example above. Unsurprisingly, there are many more expressions of desire for English, English-speaking partners, and English-speaking communities found in my data than the other way round. This is not a German-specific phenomenon, as evidence from around the world testifies to the use of English in the media to connote desirability (see Piller, 2003, for an over-view). In the face of the hegemonic status of English in ever-expanding areas of the globe, desire for languages other than English—be it from English- or non-English-speaking societies—is less likely to emerge. Steven, quoted above, is one of the few Americans in my data to express such a desire for a language other than English, namely German. Later in the conversation, he explains that his love of the German language stems partly from his heritage, as he is the son of German immigrants. Kate, another American participant, lives with her German-born husband in the United States. The couple speak German with each other, and in this quote Kate explains how good it feels to speak German to her partner:

> [...] haben wir uns dann beide gefreut, dass wir Deutsch sprechen konnten, und unsere Beziehung fing eigentlich an aus Kaffeetrinken und Sprechen, und so war das- das Sprechen ganz wichtig fuer uns. und wenn wir ein ernstes Gespraech haben, dann muessen wir das eigentlich auf Deutsch haben, sonst laeuft es nicht richtig, und fuehlt sich nicht richtig an. ([...] we were both happy then that we could speak German, and our relationship started with drinking coffee and speaking, and so speaking was- was very important to us. and whenever we are having a serious conversation, it really needs to be in German. otherwise it doesn't go well, and it doesn't feel right. [...])

While my research concentrated on English and German, the work of others suggests that the foreign language most likely to connote desirability in the United States is French. Evidence from advertising texts explicitly links "love" and "French," as in the slogan "Because you love French accents" (Lippi-Green, 1997). Similarly, Hollywood movies regularly feature love affairs set in France and/or involving a French partner. A recent example is the movie *French Kiss* (1995), a romantic comedy, in which an [Au: Please add to refs?] American woman transfers her love from her unfaithful American fiancé to a "a sexy, mysterious Frenchman" (http://movieweb.com/movies/film. php?1865; last accessed on February 26, 2004). Discourses such as these [Au: Please add to refs/cite in text per APA style?] sustain the desire to learn French and to study in France that Kinginger (2004) describes in her longitudinal work with Alice, a young disadvantaged American woman who overcomes much personal hardship to pursue a university education in French. This is how Alice describes the France of her dreams: "Before I went umm it's always been kinda like Oz, it was like the fairytale land like you know like Wonderland" (Kinginger, 2004, p. 227).

In the American context, languages other than French are relatively rarely linked to desirability. Indeed, as Lippi-Green (1997) points out, foreign languages and English accented by a foreign language background are, more often than not, likely to evoke negative reactions, particularly if it is "linked to skin that isn't white, or signals a third-world homeland" (p. 238). An exception to this pattern that links French to desirability—if a foreign language is linked to desirability at all—comes from the farcical [Au: Please add to refs/please cite in text per APA style?] comedy *A Fish Called Wanda* (1988). The main female character, Wanda Gershwitz, an American in London, lusts after men who speak foreign languages. For her, hearing her lovers speak Italian or Russian—or rather "pretend-Italian" and "pretend-Russian"—leads to almost instantaneous sexual arousal.

A Bilingual Relationship as a "Way In"

Mastering a second language can be described as consisting of two components: learning the language in terms of its lexical and grammatical properties and getting access to social interactions in the language (Norton, 2000). Evidence from a diversity of contexts shows that the latter can be as difficult as the former (e.g., Kouritzin, 2000; Miller, 2003; Norton, 2000). Consequently, it does not come as a surprise that forming

a romantic relationship is often seen as a convenient way in. As calculating as this statement may sound, in most cases it is unlikely that a range of desires—for mastering a language, for a way into the community of its speakers, attraction to a particularly person, lust, etc.—can be clearly separated. A number of participants describe how their relationship has opened doors for them in terms of language learning and, particularly, access to using the language in interactions with native speakers. Claire, for instance, an American who lives with her German-born husband in California, describes how she has helped to improve his English:

> Actually you speak much better than you did erm seven or eight years ago. You still have some accent, but you actually have very good control over it. Getting on with some slang and stuff. And I don't have- like when we were first married, there were a lot of times you asked me like what does this mean and what does that mean. And I had to explain a lot of stuff. Now I don't have to do that ever anymore. It's pretty unusual for you to ask me about- but the other day you asked me something and I couldn't figure out what you mean. And I was out of practice, I was like, oh I can't do this anymore. I used to be able to be really—just like that I could come up with erm definitions. I used to practice all the time.

In another example, Corinna, a German-born woman, describes how her marriage provided her with instantaneous access to an extended American family and American friends when she moved to the United States:

> wir haben uns in Deutschland kennengelernt und am Anfang auschlie- auschliesslich Deutsch mitnander gesprochen. und nachdem wir dann gehei- ratet haben und in die USA gezogen sind, haben wir eigentlich mehr und mehr Englisch gesprochen, weil wir auch mit der englischsprachigen Familie dort zusammen waren. erm, unsere Freunde waren alle englischsprachig. (We met in Germany and in the beginning we only spoke German with each other. And then after we got married and moved to the USA, we really spoke more and more English, simply because we were with the English-speaking family there. All our friends were English-speaking too.)

For these participants, language learning, language use, and a bilingual marriage are one package. The same was found in other studies of linguistic intermarriage as well. In her interviews with migrant women to the United States, Espín (1999), for instance, found that many of her interviewees felt that learning English and becoming romantically involved with an American partner somehow belonged together. Again, it is important to explore how these individual experiences are structured by larger societal discourses.

A romantic relationship is not, however, a universally available avenue to success for aspiring second-language learners. Pavlenko (2001), for instance, cites a study that found that female Asian immigrants and international students in the United States had a much greater chance of forming relationships with American men than their male compatriots had of forming relationships with American women. Similarly, in an ongoing ethnographic research project with ESL users in Sydney, Australia, who consider themselves to be either successful or unsuccessful second-language learners, all those who considered themselves successful were romantically involved, or talked of their desire to be romantically involved, with an Australian partner (Piller, 2004). However, romantic relationships were avenues to linguistic success only for European participants, Asian women, and a Chinese gay man. By contrast, heterosexual Asian men and Muslim women (there is no male Muslim participant) did not report romantic relationships or desires, dovetailing with discourses in the host society, which sees itself as largely European. Relationships between Australians and Europeans are viewed as unremarkable while dominant cultural stereotypes cast Eastern European and Asian women as exotic and desirable. Others portray Asian men as undesirable sexual partners for Australian women and largely view Muslims as outside the pale of romantic interest. Indeed, while the relationship between globalization as a form of contemporary imperialism and sexual relationships remains to be explored, the evidence from comparable international relations of dominance such as colonialism and slavery suggests that sexual relationships are closely tied to political, social, economic, and military domination (Hyam, 1990; Nancy, 1983). In English studies, the concept of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) has been much discussed in recent years. It refers to the global spread of English during the 20th century and the active roles institutions such as the British Council, British, and American publishing houses, and missionaries have played in this spread. Those active roles tend to be hidden, and English as a global language is naturalized, viewed as neutral and beneficial (Pennycook, 2001). One is tempted to speculate that if sexual relationships are indeed part and parcel of all relationships of dominance (as argued by the above-mentioned authors in relation to colonialism and slavery), then it is likely that the linguistic dominance of English is producing its own concomitant sexual relationships: bilingual couples constituted of a native and nonnative speaker of English.

There is clear evidence that the desire for English as the global language, iconic of the West and modernity, is intermeshed with a desire for a romantic and sexual relationship with a speaker of that language

(Takahaski, 2006). Drawing on promotional materials of private language schools in Japan, this researcher argues that many language schools promote English to Japanese women by playing on their *akogare* (desire) for Western men and suggesting that learning English might make romantic dreams come true (see Piller & Takahshi, 2006, for a detailed discussion). There is ample evidence in Takahashi's ethnographic work with Japanese women studying and living in Sydney, Australia, that the larger societal discourses of *akogare* for Western men, as a way into the community of English speakers, become an important part of the ways in which these women approach both romantic and sexual relationships on the one hand and learning English on the other. Likewise, a Japanese participant in my ethnographic project with ESL users in Sydney (see above), a young woman in her early 30s, describes in an interview how she began to be interested in studying English after she had graduated from high school:

> Top Gun, I- I when I first saw it I absolutely fell in love with Tom Cruise and I had a lot of articles about him and I- I you know you have this fantasy about you know […] I saw the movie during the high school years, but never really erm came to me as an incentive to do something you know oh er to- to study English but I had nothing to do so I was kind of working part-time and I just fooled around with a group of friends who were no good, you know, false society. And erm er I said to my parents that erm I wanted to study English erm because that's an important sort of tool to have. But really what I wanted to do was learn English so that I could write a letter to Tom Cruise? or- or go to America and- and do something to get to know- […] marry Tom Cruise or people who looked like Tom Cruise. And so he was- I mean it sounds ridiculous, but he was the biggest ins- in- ins- er in- inspiration for me to study English. I wanted to be like people who could talk to- to Tom Cruise or people who looked like Tom Cruise erm […]

Entering a couple relationship with a speaker of the world's most powerful language is attractive not only to Japanese women but also to German men, as is evidenced in the following extract. This one comes from Martin, a German man in his 30s, who is married to an American-born woman. They live in Germany, and Martin discusses the reactions of his coworkers, as well as family and friends, to the fact that he is married to an American:

> I can hear, I don't know how I see it, it's of like- with friends or co-workers, when they hear that you are American, or that I am married to an American, I can hear and see this like- this little like surprise and coolness about it. I don't know what's cool about it. [...] I don't know, I just met you because you are you and not because you are from the States. But for some people it's kind of that

mystique thing, or cool having someone from the States. They think it's great, or whatever. @ you are laughing. It's like, I could even hear my dad sometimes, when he was saying, oh actually he's married to an American. I don't know. He definitely would see it different. I think if I would be married to a girl from Kenya or from Turkey or from you know what I mean? It's kind of like, I don't know what the States has but it never has any negative influence […]

A Desire to Raise Bilingual Children

Couplehood is often seen as a transitional stage on the way to starting a family (Fitzpatrick & Caughlin, 2002). In this section, I ask how language desire gets transformed once a bilingual relationship has been established. My data that language desire remains a powerful theme in the partici-pants' lives. However, at the family stage, i.e., when the couple are raising (young) children or are planning to have children, language desire takes on a new form. It becomes a desire for their children to be bilingual, very often for them to be perfectly bilingual. Natalie and Steven, for instance, have this to say about their childrearing practices (they have two young children):

> *Steven:* […] to give them the advantage of- of having- . of being able to speak two languages, and erm and- well since they have both citizenships and might possibly choose to live either here or- or- or there erm. they sh- should be able to function in both places equally well. I [think-
> *Natalie:* [yeah and it's- it's pretty obvious also that erm-
> *Steven:* Yeah it's well [that's-
> *Natalie:* [living in Germany and having an English-speaking, one English-speaking parent. English as being a world language and erm stuff. The decision is very easy to say our kids should by all means have as much of that as possible.

All the participating couples expressed an unambiguous and strong commitment to the bilingual education of their children (see also Piller, 2001a, 2002a). This desire is rooted in a range of reasons. First, there is the functional argument that it is useful to be able to speak two languages and, particularly, for English to be one of these languages (as expressed by Natalie and Steven). However, given that at least one partner in all the couples interviewed, and in many cases both, are bilinguals them-selves, there must be other reasons as well. Above, I argued that language desire as romantic desire can be seen as a desire to find a way into the second-language community, to become one of them. However, the strong emphasis on bilingual acquisition from birth for the children points to the

fact that the parents do not see their project as complete. Even as highly advanced and proficient second-language users, they still grapple with their legitimacy as speakers of that language. Consequently, their dreams are for their children to be fully legitimate speakers of both. A pervasive ideology of native speakership engenders the belief that only speakers who learned a language from birth are legitimate speakers of that language (Davies, 2003; Kramsch, 1997). Despite the fact that applied linguists and second-language teachers have argued against the native speaker myth for years (e.g., Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999, Cook, 1999; Liu, 1999, Piller, 20001b; Rampton, 1990), advanced second-language users oftentimes continue to feel like impostors, who are putting on a passing act (Piller, 2002b). Unsurprisingly, they desire for their children to be double "the real thing." The metaphor of giving them "the best of both worlds" comes up frequently. An American woman, who lives with her German husband and their 2-year-old daughter in Germany, for instance, says: "You know, hopefully Katja will get the best of both worlds from it." *It* refers to her bilingual relationship, and also their efforts to raise the child bilingually.

The hope to raise children who are native speakers twice over is reinforced by the assumption that native speakers are better language teachers than nonnative speakers. This assumption leads to a fear in some parents that they might teach their children errors if they use a language other than their native one with them. As far as second-language learning is concerned, the applied linguists and educators cited above have made it abundantly clear that being a native speaker alone does not turn one into a good teacher of that language, and teaching skills, empathy, or bilingual ability may be of more use in the language classroom. As far as childhood bilingualism is concerned, the argument for parents to use their native language with their children persists. Tokuhama-Espinosa (2003a), for instance, an educational counselor, exhorts parents as follows: "Mom, speak only your native language; Dad, do the same."

While raising children is a daunting process for anyone, fear of doing the wrong thing linguistically—teaching language errors to one's own children—and the desire to do the right thing linguistically—raising one's children bilingually—may make childrearing even more daunting for bilingual couples. Indeed, it emerges from my data that the parents of small children or couples who are as yet only planning to have children are full of the highest hopes for their children's bilingualism. By contrast, the parents of older children often exhibit a palpable sense of linguistic failure. This sense of failure is most eloquently expressed in Fries (1998),

the memoir of an American woman who followed her French husband to France and tried to raise her two children to become English-French bilinguals:

> As time passed I felt a deep sense of grief. I realized that throughout the years I had always considered my daughter's bilingualism as the most precious gift that I was giving her, and that an exceptional grade in English on the baccalauréat would be the official sanction of that endeavor. As it turned out, there was no recognition, no applause. [The daughter had scored 13/20 on her English test – IP]. […] Ultimately, English became one more thing that was less important to my children than to me. (pp. 136–137, 140)

There is no doubt that the human language faculty is multilingual and that children can acquire two or more languages from birth and routinely do so in many different contexts around the world (Meisel, 2004). However, that does not mean that a bilingual is a monolingual twice over. Rather, multilinguals use their various languages in different contexts, with different people, for different purposes, and are usually good at doing some things in one of their languages and others in another. Very often, children who have been bilingual from birth develop a much wider repertoire in the language in which schooling takes place (e.g., Cummins, 2003; Mills, 2004). Or they may have a much stronger grip on their mother's language than on their father's language because—even if both use their first language with their children all the time—in most families, particularly those that follow a traditional "male breadwinner" model, children tend to spend much more time with their mothers. Unsurprisingly, the mother's language is often stronger than the father's language, particularly if the mother's language is also the community language (Boyd, 1998).

The widespread desire among bilingual couples to raise their children bilingually represents a most welcome change away from earlier beliefs that bilingualism might be harmful to a child's normal development (see Romaine, 1995, for an overview). This shift is supported by my own and others' data (Cunningham-Andersson & Andersson, 1999; Harding & Riley, 1986; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2003b) and is reflected by the growth of publications, such as the *Bilingual Family Newsletter*, that seek to encourage and aid bilingual couples in their efforts. However, at the same time it is unsettling that the old beliefs have been supplanted by new ones that often seem to lead to unachievable desires. The "deep sense of grief" described by Fries above may also lead parents to recriminate each other for their perceived failure to raise perfect bilinguals. An example comes from the conversation of Gerda and Dennis, a German-British couple:

Dennis: As a bilingual couple which language do we usually speak together?
Gerda: That's a sad question.
Dennis: A sad question? no, I think it's a wonderful question. [@@
Gerda: [@@ It's from your point of view.
Dennis: and the answer is [of course-
Gerda: [@English.@
Dennis: English. But you know why this is?
Gerda: erm
Dennis: the reas- reason for that?
Gerda: Yes, but the reason doesn't apply anymore.
Dennis: Yeah the original reason is, that you would be at home all the time speaking German. With the children. So it's only fair that we should speak English together to balance it. However, @things turned out a bit differently from what we expected.@
Gerda: And if I remember rightly, we spoke English most of the time when we used to living in Germany, [or?
Dennis: [no.=
Gerda: =yes!=
Dennis: =das stimmt nicht. (that's not true.)
[...]
Dennis: [...] Has your language use changed in the course of your relationship?
Gerda: Yes.
Dennis: Yes. It's become even more English.
Gerda: Yes, and that's just because you are too lazy to speak any German.
Dennis: And it's also because of Julian's school where English is the language.
Gerda: Which is not true because this boy de- decided not to speak any German anymore when he was three.
Dennis: Yê:s[3] that's true. But then why did that happen?
Gerda: Yeah. I don't know.
Dennis: We don't know the answer to that, do we?

Throughout the conversation, Gerda expresses her sense of disappointment at her family's language situation, particularly her children's choice of English. She implicitly and explicitly blames her partner for that situation and rebuffs various conciliatory moves on his part, as in the excerpt above.

Not only may parents turn against each other if their dreams of raising bilingual children do not match the reality of their children's linguistic repertoire, but there is also evidence of persistent self-recriminations and a sense of failure. Okita (2002) notes that there is a widespread assumption that raising children bilingually in bilingual families is easy and that the advice literature for bilingual couples is often permeated by the assumption "that not raising children bilingually in mixed marriages is in a sense a failure for parents" (p. 52). Using the life history method, this researcher interviewed 28 bilingual families in the UK, with a Japanese-speaking mother and a British father. Okita found that bilingual education was

hard work that was placed squarely on the shoulders of the mothers as the minority parent. It was work they had to undertake simultaneously with other pressing demands in their lives, including the multiple tasks of childrearing, establishing social networks in the UK, fitting in with their husbands and extended family, and coping with a sense of isolation as immigrant women. This hard work was—like other (emotional) work in the family—not perceived and valued as work by the research participants and significant others in their lives; hence, the title of Okita's book *Invisible Work*. Acknowledging this invisible work stands in stark contract to statements about the supposed ease of early childhood bilingual acquisition that permeate the advice literature, as in the following example: "Raising children bilingually in a monolingual community requires minimal effort but maximum commitment" (Bérubé, 1998). Most disturbingly, Okita (2002) demonstrates that advice and recommendations to bilingual families that exhort them to raise their children bilingually without the recognition of the demands this places on the minority mother "lead to disempowerment, intensified pressure, guilt and personal trauma" (p. 230).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to show that individuals who enter a bilingual relationship are oftentimes guided by multifaceted but interlinked desires. I have therefore termed these desires *language desire*: the desire to master another language; romantic and sexual desire for a partner who is a native speaker of a particular language; a desire for access to interactional partners in the target language; a desire for one's children to become fluent bilinguals; and a desire to be legitimate members of both language communities. These desires of individuals are structured by the discourses and ideologies available in a specific larger societal context: here I have focused on stereotypical representations of another country and its people; on the dominance of English as a global language; on persistent myths about native speaker status; on ideas about the frequency of perfect or balanced bilingualism; and finally on the supposed ease of raising perfectly bilingual children.

Counseling for bilingual couples has (hopefully) come a long way since psychoanalysts asserted that partners "can't love each other in their language," the title of a psychoanalytic case report, "I Can't Love You in Your Language" (Prado de Oliveira, 1988). In Piller (2002a) I argued that such

a view of bilingual partners as essentially incapable of loving each other is symptomatic of a larger ideology that sees monolingual and monocultural couples as the norm and bilingual couples as inherently problematic. I hope to have shown that any problems such couples might have are not a result of their bilingualism per se. I believe that any helping professional working with bilingual couples should carefully consider whether the issues they are dealing with are in any way related to the fact that the partners were raised in different linguistic and national contexts. If there is a class of problems that is specific to bilingual couples, these may be issues rooted in beliefs and desires that the larger society makes available.

Notes

1. All the names of the participants are pseudonyms.
2. See transcription conventions at the end of the chapter.
3. Rising-falling intonation and lengthening on the vowel.

Au: Please provide vol # for Prado de Oliveira ref?

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Appendix: Transcription Conventions

Intonation and Tone Units

,	clause final intonation ("more to come")
.	clause final falling intonation (no space after the unit ends)
!	clause final high-fall
?	clause final rising intonation

Words and Pauses

.	short pause; i.e., less than half a second (preceded and followed by a space)
-	truncation; i.e., incomplete word or utterance
CAPS	emphatic stress (in keeping with standard orthography, I have capitalized "I" throughout, and the first letter of German nouns; these are not to be taken to indicate stress)

Paralanguage

@	laughter (one @ per syllable; e.g., @@@ = "hahaha")

Conversational Organization

[	beginning of overlap
=	one utterance latches on to another

Analytic Intervention

[…]	omission

Translation

italics	translations of speech that was originally in German are in italics