



**The Sociolinguistics of
Foreign-Language
Classrooms:
Contributions of the
Native, the Near-native,
and the Non-native
Speaker**



Carl Blyth

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Contributions of the Native, the Near-native, and the Non-native Speaker**

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Identity, Deficiency, and First Language Use in Foreign Language Education



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"Mit jeder Sprache, die du kannst, bist du ein Mensch mehr."

'For every language that you know, you are one more person.'

(Hungarian proverb; cited in Vorderwülbecke and Vorderwülbecke 1995, p. 1)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide theoretical argumentation and concrete pedagogical suggestions for legitimizing and capitalizing on first and/or multiple language use in foreign language education (e.g., Auerbach 1993; Blyth 1995). In recent years, a number of researchers in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) have argued that foreign language study, whether instructed or uninstructed, is intimately bound to issues of learner identity formation, contestation, and transitioning (e.g., Belz 1997; Kramsch 2000b; Lam 2000; Norton 2000; Pavlenko 1998, 2001; Pavlenko et al. 2001; see Belz 2002a, pp. 16–19 for a summary of work on identity in applied linguistics). For the purposes of this chapter, I follow Ivanic (1998, p. 11) and use the term *identity* to mean those dynamic, fluid and complex processes by means of which "individuals align themselves with groups, communities and/or sets of interests, values, beliefs and practices." In step with a significant body of scholarship in sociolinguistics (e.g., Auer 1998; Blom and Gumperz 1972; Gumperz 1982; Myers-Scotton 1993), I assume that the use of a particular *linguistic code* (language, dialect or register) can represent a particular identity; thus, the use of more than one language may function as the *representation* of multiple speaker identities (see Belz

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2002a, p. 32, 2002b, p. 62; Kramsch forthcoming; see also Ivanic 1998; Wortham 2001). As a corollary, one might argue, then, that the denial of the use of a certain language could be interpreted as a truncation of one's linguistic identity and therefore represent a form of symbolic violence to the self (see Derrida 1998; Lansburgh 1982, 1990).

The recognition of multiple identities in foreign language learning may entail the use of more than one language, including the first language or L1 in the language classroom. L1 use in the sense intended here, however, does not imply a de-emphasis on second language (L2) competence or the sanctioning of a linguistic free-for-all in the language classroom; instead, it pedagogically translates into didacticized examination and judicious use of the languages available in the learners' linguistic repertoire at some points in the course of L2 instruction. It focuses, in particular, on the inter-illumination of the emerging L2 and the pre-existing L1(s) from the perspective of the learner—not only in a grammatical or discursive sense, but also with regard to the *representational* qualities (Widdowson 1992, pp. 16–25) of these languages for particular learners in particular socio-historical milieus (e.g., Hoffmann 1989; Lansburgh 1982; Makine 1997; Ogulnick 2000; Rodriguez 1983). This classroom recognition and legitimation of multiple language use is situated globally within the framework of a worldwide multilingual reality, and it is aimed at L2 linguistic development alongside the development of intercultural competence and critical awareness of self and other, the goals of foreign language study according to a number of scholars (e.g., Byram 1997; Kramsch 1993a and b).

By now we are becoming increasingly more aware of the quotidian linguistic realities described by linguist John Edwards (p. 2) in his 1994 book, *Multilingualism*:

A Bombay spice merchant has, as his maternal variety, a Kathiawari dialect of Gujarati, but at work he most often uses Kacchi. In the marketplace he speaks Marathi and, at the railway station, Hindustani. On internal air flights English is used, and he may watch English-language films at the cinema. He reads a Gujarati newspaper written in a dialect more standard than his own.

Bi- or multilingualism, Edwards (*ibid.*) notes, may also be a fact of life in seemingly monolingual societies: “You might live in the United States, where English has *de facto* status, and yet your life in a heterogeneous city like New York may require frequent switching between English and Spanish.” In many parts of the world, this multilingual reality is richly represented in foreign language classrooms both collectively and individually. Sociolinguist Suzanne Romaine (1995, p. 1) soberly reminds us, however, that it would be “odd” to encounter an

academic book with the title 'Monolingualism', although it is this state of affairs, in contrast to bi- or multilingualism, which appears to be the marked case worldwide.

One problem with the recognition and legitimation of the worldwide norm of multilingualism in the practices of the foreign language classroom lies in the monolingual bias that underpins the fields of SLA, FLT, and theoretical linguistics in general (Belz 2002b, pp. 60–62; V. Cook 1992, p. 577; Kramsch 2000a; Romaine 1995, p. 1). Much of the scholarly narrative in these fields has been peopled with a persistent, if pallid, character, namely, the *deficient communicator*. In an influential article in *The Modern Language Journal*, linguists Alan Firth and Johannes Wagner (1997, p. 285) argue that the unquestioned status of some fundamental concepts in SLA, e.g. the 'native speaker' and the 'learner', contribute to "an analytic mindset that elevates an idealized 'native' speaker above a stereotypicalized 'nonnative', while viewing the latter as a deficient communicator, limited by an underdeveloped communicative competence" (see also Bley-Vroman 1989, p. 43; Byram 1997, p. 21; Harder 1980; Kramsch 1996, 1997, 1998). As we shall see below, one of the major faults of the learner as deficient communicator is his or her use of the L1. Indeed, L1 use in foreign language study has appeared in the scholarly narratives of SLA and FLT as the greatest crime of the learner, a sin to be avoided at all costs (e.g., V. Cook 1999, p. 201; Kramsch 1997, p. 360). But, as Thorne (2000) reminds us, theoretical mindsets and narratives, like literary and personal ones (e.g., McAdams 1996), are historically situated *constructs* that are influenced by a host of socio-cultural factors including power relationships, institutional politics, economic interests, and individual life histories and experiences. Perhaps we could "shake up our ideas about L2 learning" (V. Cook 1992, p. 579), the 'deficiencies' of L2 learners, and their allegedly illicit use of L1, if the fields of SLA and FLT were predicated on the assumption of multilingualism, i.e., if we were to take as our starting point multilingual societies such as Cameroon (V. Cook 1992, p. 579; Kramsch 1993a, pp. 254–5) instead of monolingual myths and fictions (Belz 2002b; Bokamba 1994).

This premise forms the fundamental question of the present chapter: How would L1 use and/or multiple language use in the foreign language classroom be characterized in the scholarly narrative of SLA and FLT if the learner were understood as *multicompetent* instead of as *deficient*? V. Cook (1991) maintains that it is inaccurate to characterize the language learner only in terms of his or her L2 knowledge; instead, one must consider that the learner has intricate knowledge of an L1 and that this knowledge necessarily interfaces with his or her developing knowledge of the L2: "The term multicompetence implies

that at some level the sum of the language knowledge in the mind is relevant . . . Language teaching is concerned with developing an L2 in a mind that already contains an L1" (V. Cook 1999, pp. 190–91; see also Kecskes 1998).

In the remainder of this chapter, I critically examine the pervasive association of L1 and/or multiple language use in foreign language learning with language learner deficiency. First, I exemplify the linguistic construction of the learner as a deficient communicator in a segment of the received narratives of SLA and FLT. Next, I discuss the most prevalent views on L1 use (and multiple language use) in SLA and FLT research. Then I examine the perspectives of EFL/ESL professionals on L1 use and illustrate how some language teachers link this practice to learner deficiency. In the following section, I analyze *multilingual learner utterances* or MLUs (Belz 2002a, p. 60), i.e. stretches of learner discourse that contain both L1(s) and L2(s), and relate them to advanced L2 competence and learner identity. These data were produced by third-year learners of German in response to their classroom engagement with bi- or multilingual literary texts (e.g., Ackermann 1984; Brooke-Rose 1968; Gómez-Peña 1993; Koller 1991; Schami 1992; Schütte 1987). Do these learner texts, in their admittance of the otherwise banned L1 (McGroarty 1998, pp. 613–15), echo the pervasive scholarly portrayal of the learner as a deficient communicator, struggling, but failing, to reach an idealized L2 linguistic norm? In a final section, I present concrete pedagogical suggestions based on Lansburgh (1977) for working with bi- and multilingual literary texts in the foreign language classroom.

The Deficient Communicator

Representations in the Scholarly Narrative

Research in the fields of SLA and FLT has been dominated primarily by a 'modernist' aesthetic. At its core, this aesthetic incorporates the fundamental components of *modern rational thought* as conceptualized in the European Enlightenment: (1) the existence of an objective, unitary, rule-governed reality; and (2) the application of a mechanistic, reductionist, and rule-based methodology for elucidating that reality (see also Kinginger 1998). In mainstream varieties of SLA and FLT, the grammatical competence of an L2 native speaker forms the objective and rule-governed reality in question. The acquisition of this competence comprises both the object of investigation of scholars and the goal of the language learner. Since the learner is measured against the objective and unitary grammatical competence of an L2 native speaker, he or she is necessarily an inherently deficient communicator.

The second component of the ‘modernist’ aesthetic is reflected in mainstream SLA and FLT in several ways. First, the view that L2 competence is amenable to reductionist explication is mirrored in the application of componential structural analysis (in contrast to investigations of context-sensitive use) as a means of elucidating the L2 system. Scholarly investigations of language learning and the language learner are pervaded by statistical analyses,¹ binary characterizations of the learner (e.g., [\pm motivated]), and discussions of validity, predictability, reliability, and generalizability (e.g., Ellis 1994; Kramsch 2000a; Mitchell and Myles 1998; VanPatten 1999). The ‘modernist’ aesthetic is reflected in language pedagogy by an emphasis on the incremental presentation of L2 grammar rules, the importance of L2 input (Krashen 1985), and the banishment of L1 use due to its alleged detrimental effects on L2 acquisition. In such frameworks, language learning becomes a serious business, frequently undertaken for utilitarian purposes (e.g., G. Cook 2000, pp. 157–160), where a premium is placed on L2 grammatical accuracy.

The ‘modernist’ aesthetic, along with other factors, has fostered the ascendancy of the deficient communicator mindset in the scholarly narrative of SLA and FLT. One example of the linguistic manifestation of this mindset is found in the following excerpt from Rosamund Mitchell and Florence Myles’ (pp. 12–13) popular 1998 textbook, *Second Language Learning Theories*:

Few, if any, adult learners ever come to blend indistinguishably with the community of target language [L2] ‘native speakers’; most remain noticeably deviant in their pronunciation, and many continue to make grammar mistakes and to search for words, even when well motivated to learn, after years of study, residence and/or work in contact with the target language. Second language learning, then, is typified by *incomplete success*; the claimed systematic evolution of our underlying interlanguage rules toward the target language system seems doomed, most often, never to integrate completely with its goal.” (italics in the original)

First, the nonnative-native dichotomy is established with the referring expressions “adult learners” and “native speakers”. Both categories appear to be largely monolithic. To illustrate, “most” learners do not pronounce the foreign language well, “many” learners make grammar mistakes, and learners “never” reach their target language goals completely. The ‘native speaker’ appears to be a unitary concept as well, since no mention is made of internal diversity within the community of native speakers, e.g., dialect or register variation (Singh 1998). Through the collocation of such lexical items as “deviant”, “mistakes”,

“incomplete success”, and “doomed”, the learner is characterized in terms of his or her failures and problems (e.g., Richards 1974; Firth and Wagner 1997, pp. 288–9). The ‘inherently flawed’ nature of the learner is underscored further with the qualification that even “well motivated” learners fail to adequately approximate the L2 norm. Alternative explanations of learner discourse such as creativity, play, and linguistic resourcefulness do not seem to be entertained thoroughly when the entire enterprise of second language learning is typified as an “incomplete success.” Finally, this depiction of language learning appears to offer an etic perspective on the learning process. The learner is described primarily from the viewpoint of the analyst; his or her voice does not seem to be present noticeably in this characterization.

L1 Use in the Deficient Communicator Narrative

Although some of these ‘modernist’ precepts have eroded in the face of communicative (e.g., Savignon 1997) and sociocultural (e.g., Lantolf 2000) approaches to language learning and teaching, one element of the ‘modernist’ cannon appears to be firmly in place: the taboo on L1 use (see V. Cook 2001, p. 404). L1 use represents a taboo because it is thought to impede the learner’s linear and incremental progress toward the rule-governed attainment of the idealized L2 norm.

In sociolinguistics, multiple language use or *code-switching* typically is regarded as the “conscious discourse strategy” of multilingual speakers (Nwoye 1993, p. 365). Much of the sociolinguistic research on this phenomenon has revolved around the delineation of functional taxonomies. SLA investigators appear to draw on this work when they borrow the term ‘code-switching’ to refer to multiple language use in the language classroom and when they present similar taxonomies of L1 use in classroom contexts (e.g., Eldridge 1996; Hird 1996; Hancock 1997; Legenhausen 1991; Macaro 2001; Polio and Duff 1994; Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie 2002; Woodall 2002). Commonly, they find that learners and instructors use L1 in the L2 classroom in order to aid comprehension, collaborate during group work, or when doing administrative classroom business or explaining grammar. The deficient communicator mindset, however, accounts for a different appraisal of these multilingual behaviors in SLA and FLT. Here, learners are not employing “conscious discourse strategies”; instead, they are hindered by lexical ‘deficit’ and ‘underdeveloped’ communicative competence. Since learners are measured against the yardstick of the idealized L2 norm, L1 use is viewed as anomalous in nature and in need of eradication. Hancock (1997, p. 233), for instance, suggests that “when learners select the L1 by default, there is a good chance that

awareness-raising activities will persuade learners to use the target language instead" (see also Burnett 1998).

While other SLA studies of multiple language use appear to recognize that this phenomenon may be a purposeful communicative action, they nevertheless seem to conclude that the limit of its usefulness lies in the ways in which it can serve the acquisition of the L2. Many do not adequately consider alternative functions of L1 use and/or multiple language use in the foreign language classroom. Furthermore, these studies do not suggest concrete pedagogical plans for working effectively with multiple languages, including the L1, in the language classroom. To illustrate, Eldridge (1996, p. 310) concludes that learner "code-switching is a strategy that yields short-term benefits to the foreign language learner, but with a risk of hampering long-term acquisition" (see also Antón and DiCamilla 1998; Swain and Lapkin 2000; Turnbull 2001; Turnbull and Arnett 2002). Further, Giauque and Ely (1990), who advocate a 'code-switching' methodology in beginning-level foreign language learning, do so only on the assumption that the methodology will result in increased L2 use. Ramp-ton (1995, p. 289) summarizes the sociolinguistic and SLA views on MLUs in the following way: "With code-switching research, language mixing is generally construed as . . . a skillful and appropriate strategy. With SLA, it is generally interpreted as error and a lack of competence" (see also V. Cook 1999, p. 193).

One recent exception to this view of the L1 in FLT has been V. Cook (2001) who proposes that foreign language educators should "open a door that has been firmly shut in language teaching for over 100 years, namely the systematic use of the first language...in the classroom." V. Cook (2001, pp. 413–17) makes suggestions, based, in part, on Polio and Duff's (1994) taxonomy of L1 use in six American classrooms, for ways in which both teachers and learners might use the L1 positively in the L2 classroom. For example, teachers might use L1 to convey meaning, explain grammar, check comprehension or to maintain disciplinary order. Students might use L1 positively in translating or organizing group work. Thus, V. Cook's discussion does not appear to add anything new to the ways in which we might understand and capitalize on L1 use in the classroom. What he does, instead, is call upon researchers and practitioners to *change their evaluative stance* toward known classroom functions of L1 use. Furthermore, in his view, L1 use does not appear to be qualified. In other words, he seems to assume, along with previous researchers, that L1 use functions solely in the attainment of predetermined learning objectives.

In this chapter, I suggest that in addition to more ostentatiously 'utilitarian' forms, L1 and/or multiple language use may surface in playful, affective, or creative modalities. Far from being merely frivolous, these forms of L1 use may prove to be utilitarian in nature as well. The difference is that they might function to validate and/or mediate aspects of foreign language learning that the profession is only beginning to address, namely, issues of learner identity. In short, L1 and/or multiple language use may provide insight into the ways in which multicompetent language users inhabit and relate to a pluralistic, multilingual world. In this light, as I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, the ban on L1 use may be of much more dire consequence than its allegedly detrimental effects on L2 acquisition; instead, it may be a matter of identity denial. Playful, affective, and creative uses of L1 and other languages are highlighted in this chapter.

L1 Use from the Perspective of Language Teaching Professionals

Given the dominant views on L1 use, it is not surprising, then, that "virtually all language teaching methods . . . have insisted that teaching techniques should not rely on the L1" (V. Cook 1999, p. 201; see also Duff and Polio 1990, p. 160; Zephir and Chirol 1993). The tenacity of the ban on L1 use among foreign language teaching professionals was clarified colorfully in a 2001 exchange on the 10,000-member TESL-L listserv, an electronic discussion list for teachers of English to speakers of other languages. In these exchanges, these foreign language teachers explicitly link L1 use to the allegedly deficient nature of the learner. The strand in question began with a contribution from an EFL teacher in the Czech Republic who related that a Hungarian colleague posts the following sign in her classroom and points to it when she wants to discourage student L1 use: "This is an English-speaking zone." The objective of the email was to elicit additional classroom techniques for discouraging the learner's use of the L1. The overwhelming consensus of the approximately 40 posts to this strand was that L1 use should be avoided because it is detrimental to L2 learning. Several absolutists advocated a complete ban on L1 use in L2 learning. These participants cited methodological, economic, moral, and research-based reasons to support their opinions: e.g., 'language teachers are paid to teach the L2, so they should teach it'; 'multiple language use or 'code-switching' indicates a lack of proficiency in both the L1 and the L2 and may point toward a failed educational system'; 'L1 use indicates that the teacher has failed in his or her duty'; and 'some people pay a lot of money to have their L1s banned in programs like Berlitz, so L1 should be avoided'.

Most list members seemed to feel that very limited use of the L1 was acceptable in some cases; beyond that, however, the L1 should be actively discouraged. These participants gave the following reasons for their opinions: 'you can't mime 'although'; 'L1 facilitates classroom management in a monolingual environment'; and 'L1 use emotionally supports learners with very low proficiency levels who have been in the country only a short time'. Despite their recognition of the efficacy of L1 use in a number of circumstances, this group characterized L1 use as: a 'distraction'; 'addictive'; a 'crutch', not a tool; a 'temptation'; and, most notably, 'the easy way out'. Some contributors cited Krashen's (1985) theory of comprehensible input as the reasoning behind their insistence on maximal L2 use. The most vociferous *advocate* of L1 use summarized his stance in the following way: "I do think the use of L1 should be limited, if used at all, but don't see it as automatically detrimental." Notably, only one e-mailer gave a reason for L1 use that was related to non-accuracy-oriented issues: "Sometimes it's just fun to play with languages."

Approximately one year after these exchanges took place, the 'L1 avoidance strand' was picked up again on TESL-L. At that time, an ESL teacher shared with the list that a tried and true method to "break the habit of whispering in L1" in the classroom was to make the "offenders" take a taste of a particularly disgusting food. These professional discussions on TESL-L appear to provide vivid validation of V. Cook's (2001, p. 405) contention that the avoidance of L1 is a "core belief" in language teaching and is "probably held in some form by the majority of the teaching profession."

The Multicompetent Language User

In this section, I paint a picture of the language learner as a multicompetent language user who carefully and consciously uses multiple linguistic codes not necessarily for reasons of deficiency and failure, but rather to play, represent, experiment, create, juxtapose, learn, and grow. Recently, a number of L2 researchers has argued that language play mediates L2 development (Belz 2002a, in preparation; G. Cook 2000; Lantolf, 1997; Tarone 2000). Therefore, the playful aspects of multiple language use may be particularly beneficial in the foreign language classroom. It is important to point out that the excerpts presented here do not constitute the 'best' or most 'interesting' cases; instead, they are representative of the data set as a whole (see Belz 2002a, 2002b for additional data from this same study).

Data and Method

The data are taken from a three-semester research project conducted at a large West Coast institution in 1996–97; it was designed initially to explore the nature of learner language choice from grammatical, functional, and affective perspectives. Thirty-one learners of German in three different sections of the same third-year course were asked to write as homework a 300–500-word multilingual text in L2 German and any other language(s) they might know. The topic and genre were left open. An emergent goal of the study became to examine whether or not the learners reacted as deficient communicators when the institutionalized ban on L1 use in the classroom at this particular institution was lifted. Would they primarily use their L1 as ‘the easy way out’ in circumstances where they did not know how to express something in their L2? Following the essay assignment, learners participated on a voluntary basis in open-ended interviews with the author during which they recalled their motivations for language choice at particular points in their experimental texts. In each case, learners were not questioned about specific language switches in their texts, rather they were allowed to comment freely on those choices that were most salient to them. In addition, certain learners (i.e., volunteers) provided excerpts from learning journals and completed surveys. Finally, four hours of classroom discourse were recorded in each of the three sections and transcribed in their entirety along with the interviews. The data examined here are drawn primarily from the experimental texts.

Multiple Language Use and Representations of Identity

For her experimental text, YOSHIE,² a 19-year-old Japanese and English-speaking student of German, chooses to write a nostalgic letter to her friend, ELSA, about the time they spent together at John F. Kennedy School, an American high-school in Berlin. In her letter, YOSHIE, now attending university in the U.S., positively reminisces about her high-school experiences and friends:

Example 1

Amerika ist gross und freundlich, aber ich vermissee immer noch Berlin. Ich vermissee die schöne Stadt, Ku’damm, und besonders meine ganze Freunde von J.F.K.S. Kenglich vermissee ich auch. Nur auf dem Gymnasium kann man Englisch und Deutsch vermischen.

[YOSHIETXT3 lines: 37–39]³

America is big and friendly, but I still miss Berlin. I miss the beautiful city, the Ku’damm, and especially all my friends at J.F.K.S. I also

miss Kenglisch. High-school is the only place where you can mix English and German

In this excerpt, YOSHIE states that she not only misses the city of Berlin, but also a certain language practice that she and her friends engaged in while in high-school, namely, extensive mixing of English and German (see also Doran 2001; Rampton 1995, for multiple language use among European youth in France and Britain, respectively). The perceptual saliency and importance of this practice to YOSHIE is reflected in its lexicalization in the form of *Kenglisch*, a triply hybridized language name (Belz 2002a, pp. 23–28), which unites the media of expression, English and *Deutsch* or German, and the location of its use, John F. Kennedy School. This linguistic sign, through its visual inter-penetration of two linguistic codes, may serve as a *textual icon* (Belz 2002a, p. 32) for the hybrid nature of YOSHIE's linguistic identity. In the next excerpt, YOSHIE exemplifies *Kenglisch*, particularly in lines 3 and 10, and explains the role that it played in shaping her identity.

Example 2

- ¹ Usually, I would end the letter here, but I wanna tell you some-
- ² thing...Bisher haben wir unsere Freundschaft behalten, und wir sind
- ³ immer noch close, aber wir haben uns schon ein ganzes Jahr...nicht
- ⁴ mehr gesehen. [*Until now we've maintained our friendship and we're*
- ⁵ *still close, but we haven't seen each other for a year already.*] I just
- ⁶ hope that we can still remain close friends, although we are starting to
- ⁷ walk different paths of life. The J.F.K.S. memories are ones that I'll
- ⁸ treasure forever. We all share the experience of living in Berlin, the
- ⁹ capital of Germany. Wir sahen, wie West Berlin und Ost Berlin vere-
- ¹⁰ inigt wurden. Wir "sharen" eine unique Vergangenheit und sind sehr
- ¹¹ lucky. Nicht viele Leute können so viele Sprachen sprechen, lesen,
- ¹² schreiben, und verstehen. [*We saw how West Berlin and East Berlin*
- ¹³ *were re-united. We share a unique past and are very lucky. Not many*
- ¹⁴ *people can speak, read, write, and understand so many languages.*] I
- ¹⁵ hope we can use our language skills, our exposure to so many cultures,
- ¹⁶ and our internationality to benefit all of society.

[YOSHIE TXT3 lines: 47–57]

For YOSHIE, the hybridized language name *Kenglisch* is not only symbolic of happy and pleasurable times that she spent with close friends in high-school, but it also represents the crucial identity development and transitioning that she experienced in that particular period of her life in that particular community of practice. Her exposure to and proficiency in multiple languages helped form her "unique past" and

shaped her “unique” perspective. YOSHIE views her “internationality” and her multicompetent language abilities, manifested sometimes as language mixing, not as a ‘problem’ or ‘deficiency,’ but as a potential “benefit” to “all of society”. It is difficult to gauge whether or not the use of L1 in this text was detrimental to YOSHIE’s L2 development; it seems clear, however, that the assignment of the multilingual text opened up for YOSHIE a sanctioned classroom space in which her multilingual reality was validated and in which she could present and reflect upon its consequences and meanings from her perspective.

Multiple Language Use, Play, Polysemy, and Iconicity

YEN is an 18-year-old learner of German who speaks both English and Cantonese natively. At the time she wrote her experimental text, she was a freshman majoring in Mass Communications and minoring in German and Asian-American Studies. YEN’s essay is a brilliant linguistic representation of what Kramsch (1993a, pp. 233–57) refers to as the “third place.” In effect, the third place refers to that critical vantage point from which one can appraise and critically juxtapose both L1 and L2 as well as C[ulture]1 and C2 (see also Agar 1994, p. 243). This critical distance is afforded through the process of foreign language learning and can be described, to a certain extent, as learning to see one’s own language/culture through foreign eyes (e.g., Furstenberg, Levet, English, and Maillet 2001, p. 58; see also Byram 1997). As such, Kramsch’s third place is intimately tied to learner identity and the ways in which foreign language learning can mediate identity transitioning, i.e. realignments with new and various views, beliefs, values and practices. The third place, however, does not simply represent the viewpoint of an outsider on the L1, rather this ‘outside’ vantage point is tempered by intimate and extensive knowledge of and experiences in the native language and culture (which are not on the table when L1 is banned in the classroom). The topic of YEN’s experimental text is her (imagined) experiences with two German particles: *doch* and *bitte* (see Möllering 2001; Weydt 1983).

Example 3

- 1 Doch ist ein einfaches Wort, only four letters long, aber schon lang
- 2 genug. Einmal war ich mit einem Freund in einer intensiven Debatte.
- 3 Yes! No! Yes! No! YES! NO! DOCH!
- 4 “What did you say?” asked my friend.
- 5 Ummm....doch. Wie konnte ich erklären, dass mein Gehirn manchmal
- 6 einen Streich mit mir spielt, my brain played tricks on me?
- 7 Doch, wiederholte ich mich.
- 8 “What? Did you say dog?”
- 9 Ja, ich konnte sowas vorstellen – ein deutscher Tourist in Amerika

10 sieht einen Hund an - "Ach, vat ein sweet doch!"
 11 I burst into laughter. Mein armer Freund hat nur dort ganz verwirrt
 12 gestanden. To not complicate things erklärte ich mit drei Wörtern: it
 13 means yes. In German, auf deutsch. And just left it at that.

14 Aber doch hat endlosen Bedeutungen. Um praktisch zu sein, ist
 15 doch ein Wort, das eine bestimmte Betonung gibt. It adds emphasis.
 16 Deshalb soll man doch als DOCH schreiben — in capital letters.
 17 Natürlich wurde es besser, wenn man DOCH!!!! schreibt —with excla-
 18 mation marks. Es ist ein ganz starkes Wort und much more effective
 19 than das englische Wort "yes." Yesssssssss!!! klingt komisch, like a
 20 snake. Und man kann "yesssssssssss..." für eine Ewigkeit sagen. Aber
 21 doch ist DOCH!!! Es gibt ein bestimmtes Ende.

[YENTXT lines 5-84]

1 *Doch is a simple word, only four letters long, but long enough. Once*
 2 *I was engaged in an intensive debate with a [male] friend.*
 3 *Yes! No! Yes! No! YES! NO! DOCH!*
 4 *"What did you say?" asked my friend.*
 5 *Ummm...doch. How could I explain that my brain sometimes plays a*
 6 *trick on me, my brain played tricks on me?*
 7 *Doch, I repeated.*
 8 *"What? Did you say dog?"*
 9 *Yeah, I could imagine something like that - a German tourist in Amer-*
 10 *ica looks at a dog -*
 11 *"Ach, vat ein sweet doch!"*
 12 *I burst into laughter. My poor friend just stood there really confused.*
 13 *To not complicate things I explained in three words: it means yes. In*
 14 *German, in German. And just left it at that.*

15 *But doch has endless meanings. In order to be practical, doch is*
 16 *a word that expresses emphasis. It adds emphasis. Therefore one*
 17 *should write doch as DOCH—in capital letters. Naturally, it would be*
 18 *better if one wrote DOCH!!!!—with exclamation marks. It's a really*
 19 *strong word and much more effective than the English word "yes."*
 20 *Yesssssssss!!! sounds funny, like a snake. And one can say*
 21 *"yesssssssssss..." for an eternity. But doch is DOCH!!! There is a*
 22 *definitive end.*

Throughout her text, YEN shifts between a variety of perspectives or subject positions, which are demarcated by the extent and type of L2 knowledge that the speaker/thinker of a particular phrase has at his or her disposal. In lines 1 and 2, YEN presents the L1 + L2 perspective that her learning of German affords her on the German modal particle *doch*. From an L1 English perspective, this is a 'simple word' in



comparison to the many other lengthy nominal compounds that she must have encountered in her study of German. The phrase “aber schon lang genug”, however, indicates the overlay of an L2 perspective and points to YEN’s knowledge of the socio-pragmatic ambiguity of this particle. It is important to note that the addition of the L2 perspective is accompanied iconically by a concomitant code-switch from L1 English to L2 German. In line 3, YEN shifts perspective to narrate a past conversation and thus provides the linguistic data which fuel her metalinguistic reflections on the polysemy of *doch*. In an English conversation with a non-German-speaking friend, YEN lets slip a German *doch*, which is not understood by her interlocutor. Line 4 represents this monolingual speaker’s perspective with respect to YEN’s *doch*. In lines 5 and 6, YEN takes up position in her third place and considers how to explain the emission of the unexpected *doch* to a monolingual English speaker. Her elongated *umm* may be a textual index for her realization that, in contradistinction to her conversational partner, she possesses a unique vantage point that is not easily accessible to him and which has been shaped by her L2 learning. Narration of a past conversation is given again in lines 7 and 8. The L1-only perspective of YEN’s monolingual friend is concretized in his inaccurate rendering of German *doch* as English *dog*. At line 9, YEN shifts again into the mental space of her multilingual reality and considers how an L1 speaker potentially could mistake *doch* for *dog*. She is imagining the L2 world through the eyes of a monolingual English speaker; she, in contrast, is a *multicompetent* speaker of L1 English. Line 10 represents a radical, imagined shift to the perspective of an L1 German speaker who mistakenly pronounces English *dog* as German *doch*. In other words, at line 10 YEN mentally flip-flops the L1 English perspective on German *doch* to an L1 German perspective on English *dog*. Her laughter in line 11 can only be understood as a consequence of her ability to occupy multiple linguistic subject positions, i.e. as a result of her multicompetence. Her monolingual friend, in sharp contrast, cannot laugh at these multilingual, metalingual musings; he can only stand there, confused and uncertain. Thus, YEN’s ability to perceive this communicational breakdown as a source of multilingual language play is an example of the type of advanced linguistic actions that a multicompetent conceptualization of the language learner might reveal and ultimately legitimize. In contrast to her laughter, which is based on this new conceptualization, YEN’s watered-down explanation of *doch* to her friend in lines 12 and 13 reflects what she must assume to be his ‘modernist’ understanding of foreign languages, i.e. a one-to-one unitary and objective correspondence between L1 and L2 forms.

But this is not YEN's understanding as her remaining metalingual reflections in lines 14-21 show. In lines 14 and 15, she relates that *doch* doesn't really have a specific semantic content; instead, it has a qualifying function: it adds emphasis to other semantic content. As a result, it is polysemous and can even have antonymous meanings, e.g. it can mean both *yes* and *no*. In order to iconically reflect the qualifying function of *doch*, YEN suggests that it should be represented in capital letters followed by exclamation points in the written medium. This suggestion indicates the very visceral and locally relevant ways in which many language learners initially experience the stuff of foreign code (e.g., Belz 2002b, pp. 68-73; Hill and Mannheim 1992; Rampton 1999). Finally, YEN contrasts the meaning of her use of DOCH! (affirmation) in line 3 with the English symbol used to express this same meaning, i.e. *yes*. From her critical, multicompetent perspective, she appears to prefer German *doch* as opposed to English *yes* to express this meaning. This preference may be based on her locally relevant perception of the palatal fricative [ç] as shorter and more abrupt and, therefore, more decisive in contrast to the longer and thus more tentative alveolar fricative [s]. YEN's interpretation of the phonetic articulation of [s] as provisional is expressed in writing through her repetition of the grapheme <s> and her comparison of the locally-produced icon *Yesssssssss!!!* with a tricky, slippery snake (see Jakobson and Waugh 1987, p. 182).

What is crucial in this example is the fact that YEN's ability to construct metalingual jokes, to reflect on the polysemy of *doch*, and to seamlessly inter-relate semantics, phonetics, and graphemics is made possible by her knowledge of more than one language. In this case, YEN's L1 use does not impede her L2 acquisition as would be predicted in the deficient communicator mindset; indeed, it allows her to express a playful and imaginative type of *advanced* proficiency that is rarely, if ever, discussed in mainstream, utilitarian-oriented foreign language study or SLA research (see G. Cook 2000, pp. 157-160).

In example 4 below, YEN's use of L1 English affords her the opportunity to exhibit extensive socio-pragmatic competence in regard to an L2 *rich point*. Agar (1994, pp. 99-100) uses the term 'rich point' to refer to those pieces of discourse such as particular words, phrases, or communicative patterns, which indicate that two different conceptual systems, i.e. two "languacultures", have come into contact. In German, one finds a linguistic bifurcation of the second person pronoun of address into the 'more formal' *Sie* and the 'more informal' *du*. Agar (1994, pp. 18-19) takes this so-called *du/Sie* dichotomy and the lack of corresponding forms in the pronominal system of English as his showcase example of a rich point (see also Lansburgh 1977, p. 7).

According to Agar (1994, p. 100), rich points are frequently difficult to understand and hard for language learners to use appropriately because they are highly context-dependent (Belz and Kinginger forthcoming). In the case of *du* and *Sie*, Delisle (1986, pp. 6 and 13) points out that even native speakers have difficulty navigating the complexity of this distinction. The German word *bitte*, which is only sometimes roughly translated as *please*, forms an analogous example of a German-English rich point. In the following excerpt, YEN is able to illuminate the complexity of this languacultural chasm through her sophisticated use of *both* English and German in her experimental text.

Example 4

- 1 Ein anderes all-purpose Wort ist bitte. Nicht bitter sondern bit-tah.
- 2 Ein normales englisches Gespräch mit den Gebrauch des Wortes
- 3 "bitte":
- 4 A: Give me a cup of coffee bitte!
- 5 B: Bitte don't spill the coffee on yourself.
- 6 A: Wie bitte?
- 7 B: Bitte schön. Shall I leave it on the table?
- 8 A: Aber bitte! Thanks.
- 9 B: Bitte sehr.
- 10 A: spills the coffee.
- 11 A: Bitte hand me a napkin!
- 12 B: Bitte schön. Na, bitte! I knew you would spill your coffee
- 13 A: Wie bitte?

[YENTXT lines: 133-168]

- 1 *Another all-purpose word is bitte. Not bitter but bit-tah. A normal English conversation with the use of the word "bitte":*
- 2 *A: Give me a cup of coffee please!*
- 3 *B: Please don't spill the coffee on yourself.*
- 4 *A: Excuse me? [signals lack of comprehension]*
- 5 *B: Here you go. Shall I leave it on the table?*
- 6 *A: Yes! Thanks.*
- 7 *B: You're welcome.*
- 8 *A: spills the coffee.*
- 9 *A: Please hand me a napkin.*
- 10 *B: Here you are. Oh dear! I knew you would spill our coffee.*
- 11 *A: Excuse me? [signals lack of comprehension]*

In line 1, YEN indicates that she is aware of the rampant polysemy of *bitte* by her use of the English word 'all-purpose'. In the next sentence, she imagines how a monolingual speaker of English might perceive the word to be pronounced when she asserts that *bitte* is not pronounced

like *bitter*. In lines 2-3, YEN announces that she will now illustrate the polysemy of German *bitte* by using it in an ordinary *English* conversation. This strategy is noteworthy since it reveals that the juxtaposition of L1 and L2 may serve the development (or consolidation) of socio-pragmatic ambiguity rather than indicating the failure of a deficient L2 communicator. In lines 4 and 5, YEN illustrates the use of *bitte* when it means *please* in a polite request. The idiomatic expression in line 6 signals A's inability to interpret B's utterance in line 5. He has either misunderstood or not heard what B has said. The use of *bitte schön* in lines 7 and 12 represents a salient cultural rich point between German and English. Typically, this phrase is used in German when a host or hostess offers a guest some form of refreshment, indicating that the guest should take it. The English equivalent of *bitte* under these circumstances is either silence or 'here you go' or 'here you are'. Lansburgh (1977, p. 21) parodies this languacultural rupture when a character in his novel, a German-speaking learner of English, utters an inappropriate 'please' as she offers her guest the sugar bowl: "Es hat keinen Sinn, einer freundlich gestimmten Anfängerin das "bitte" zu nehmen, auch wenn's auf englisch in diesem Fall nicht "please" heißt, sondern gar nichts."⁵ The *bitte* in line 8 can be interpreted as an affirmation of B's question in line 7. *Bitte sehr* in line 9 is a ritual response to *thanks* in line 8; it usually occurs as the second half of the German adjacency pair *Danke schön/bitte sehr* 'thank you/you're welcome.' In line 11, *bitte* functions as a request. The first *bitte* in line 12 again represents the situation where one conversational partner hands the other something, in this case a napkin. The second *bitte* in line 12 is a reproachful interjection reflecting B's displeasure at the spilled coffee. In line 13, *bitte* once again signals lack of comprehension. This proficient display of L2 pragmatic competence is clarified for the L1 monolingual speaker by inserting *bitte* at the relevant points in an *English* conversation. YEN's switches into L1 English are not the mark of a deficient L2 communicator; instead they serve as a *clarifying semantic framework* in which the socio-pragmatic ambiguity of German *bitte* is disambiguated.

On a questionnaire that YEN completed after writing her experimental essay, she comments that multilingual texts reveal "how languages can be manipulated and intertwined to create an amusing and understandable story. [They illustrate] the complexity of languages and emphasize the relationships between different languages with both similarities and differences." On this same instrument YEN clearly indicates that she was not operating as a deficient communicator in terms of language choice when constructing her experimental text: "I never realized how difficult it is to write multilingual texts, even when using only two languages. You need to think carefully



about where to place every word and how to incorporate tools like code-switching.”

Multiple Language Use, Discourse Particles, and Ritual

In her multilingual text, DEBI, a 32-year-old L1 English speaker, showcases a segment of her second language that is characterized by its ritualistic quality: the German discourse particle *also*.

Example 5

- 1 Also ist ein Wort, that I'd really love to use in English, but niemand
- 2 versteht mich, wenn ich's nutzte. I suppose I could explain it to my
- 3 friends, "Ja, also." No I don't mean also as in in addition to, nee, das
- 4 wäre's nicht. Ich meine, tja, einfach "Also." Und es gibt noch ein paar
- 5 Worte auf Deutsch, die ich immer ab und zu benutzen will (which is a
- 6 nice little construction I like, übrigens, immer ab und zu, also, now
- 7 and then, wenn ich mich nicht irre).⁵

[DEBITXT lines 7–35]

- 1 *Also is a word that I'd really love to use in English but no one would*
- 2 *understand me if I were to use it. I suppose I could explain it to my*
- 3 *friends, "Ja, also." No I don't mean also as in 'in addition to', no that's*
- 4 *not it. I mean, hmmm, simply "Also." And there are a few other words*
- 5 *in German that I'd like to use now and then (which is a nice little con-*
- 6 *struction I like, by the way, immer ab und zu, also, now and then, if*
- 7 *I'm not mistaken).*

This discourse particle typically functions as a place-holder in oral conversation, a hesitation marker that fends off any interruption while the speaker thinks of the next thing to say (Fischer 2000). The ability to appropriately use this distinctively German conversational ritual, one which carries enormous symbolic significance as a cultural icon, would afford the learner considerable symbolic cultural capital (see Bourdieu 1991). DEBI repeatedly exhibits this skill throughout her text. For example, when DEBI code-switches at "Ja. also" in line 3 of example 5 above, she correctly uses the particle in this place-holder function within her own metalingual commentary on the meaning of *also*. Her text, however, does not seem to be a celebration of her development of the native-like competence required for the appropriate ritualistic deployment of this particle; indeed, DEBI appears to subvert this eminently native-like ritual in two distinct regards.

First, she undermines the conventionalized use of this linguistic cultural icon for humorous effect. Consider line 6 in example 5 above where DEBI again uses *also* as a conventionalized focal particle, this time in metalingual commentary about the attractiveness of

another phrase: *ab und zu*. Her text acquires a quality of humorous transgression, which lies in the way that she skillfully and correctly uses the particle in precisely those segments of her discourse where, at the explicit level of proposition, she is providing metacommentary on the code itself.

Secondly, DEBI re-semiotizes *also*, i.e. she assigns new meaning to the conventionalized pragmatic value of this particle in that she foregrounds the acoustic palpability of the linguistic sign by imbuing it with her own localized meanings (Belz 2002b, p. 64). Consider example (6) below:

Example 6

Ich meine, I think, die Bedeutung lebt in der Zunge, im Mund, how can I explain this? The meaning of also lies in the way that the tongue reaches up for the roof of the mouth und dann bleibt's da, und die Bedeutung liegt darin, wie lange man die Zunge daroben lässt. Es ist ein besonderer Ton, Allllso, im Vergleich mit Also.

[DEBITXT lines 121–138]

I mean, I think, the meaning lives in the tongue, in the mouth, how can I explain this? The meaning of also lies in the way that the tongue reaches up for the roof of the mouth and then it stays there and the meaning resides in how long you leave your tongue up there. It's a certain tone, alllllso, as compared to also.

For DEBI, the meaning of *also* no longer lies in its conventional function as a discourse particle for conversational management, but rather in the learner-controlled variability of its physical articulation, e.g. the length of time that the tongue remains at the roof of the mouth in the production of the phoneme /l/. Visually, this variability is iconically portrayed by DEBI's reduplication of the letter <l> on the page. DEBI's attraction to this sign is predicated on her repudiation of its conventionalized function in favor of her own idiosyncratic semantic interpretation of its physical articulation, i.e. by her re-design (Kress 2000) of its meaning. Her ability to control the length of time the tongue remains at the roof of the mouth becomes a measure of her power to shape and respond to the whole interpersonal context of the conversation. On the whole, DEBI's use of multiple languages, including L1, in instructed SLA does not appear to characterize her as a deficient communicator; instead, her juxtaposition of L1 and L2 appears to facilitate her metalingual reflections on both L1 and L2, her humorous textual deployment of a German discourse particle, and her re-semioticization of an L2 sign. These abilities to re-deploy, re-semiotize, re-assign and

re-design segments of foreign code against a backdrop of L1 meanings illustrates the ways in which foreign language learning may afford learner identity transitioning and how those transitionings may be represented linguistically.

Pedagogical Suggestions for Working with Multilingual Literary Texts in the Foreign Language Classroom

The recommendations in this section are based on the first 101 lines of the 252-page German-English novel *Dear Doosie: Eine Liebesgeschichte in Briefen* by Werner Lansburgh (1977, pp. 7–9). This excerpt and an English translation,⁶ are given in the appendix. I suggest that the reader take a moment to familiarize him- or herself with this text at this point since the suggestions in the following subsections assume a good knowledge of it.

Dear Doosie, a German bestseller, is the first novel in Lansburgh's bilingual trilogy (see also Fendt and Kemeny 2001). It takes the form of an epistolary love story between the first person narrator and an imagined addressee, *Doosie*. Lansburgh explicitly positions the narrator as a non-native teacher of English who offers his German-speaking language student and would-be lover, *Doosie*, bilingual foreign language instruction throughout the novel. Lansburgh the author led the tragic life of an exiled German Jew who, by virtue of his forced wanderings, learned four second languages in immigration (see Lansburgh 1990). The languacultural odyssey of his life story constitutes the backdrop of the *Doosie* trilogy and this, in combination with the bilingual nature of the text itself, provides the learner a rich site for the examination of (a) the linguistic and affective inter-illumination of German and English; and (b) the textual representation of the relationship between language learning in immigration, identity transitioning, and language choice (see Belz, 2001, 2002c for further discussion of Lansburgh).

The excerpt in question lends itself well to a 2–3 week unit on multilingualism, language and ideology, and language and culture in the intermediate to advanced German-language classroom. Students are first challenged to consider the concepts of multilingualism and monolingualism in general and to explore their own multicompetent abilities as well as those of their peers. Next, they are introduced to several basic linguistic concepts, including linguistic criticism (Fowler 1996), and encouraged to use these in their analysis of cultural fault lines (Kramsch 1993a), i.e. languacultural ruptures, in *Dear Doosie*. In

particular, students are shown how ideology and culture are embedded in linguistic and visual codes and are enabled to interpret texts based on linguistic features. Finally, students are encouraged to produce their own multilingual texts as a means of: (a) increasing their metalinguistic awareness of both L1 and L2 (Py 1996); (b) increasing and solidifying their L2 competencies; (c) validating their own multicompetent faculties; (d) encouraging L2 language play, a mediator of L2 development (Belz in preparation; G. Cook 2000; Lantolf 1997); (e) exploring the affective and representational qualities of the languages they know (Widdowson 1992); and (f) reviewing aspects of L2 grammar. Due to space considerations only a selection of possible activities are reported here.

Multiple Language Use and the Development of Meta-Linguistic Awareness

In an initial activity, students are asked to read the text at home and to list their reactions to it. A plenary discussion of these reactions may serve as a launching pad for the presentation of content regarding the phenomena of multilingualism and code-switching. For some students, this may lead to a greater appreciation of their own linguistic abilities. Next, students are asked to underline words in the text that are ambiguous with respect to language. For example, is the word *Doosie* English or German? Lansburgh constructs this name by linking together the German second person pronouns of address, *du* and *Sie*. However, he uses the English orthographic convention <oo> to represent the high rounded back vowel [u] written as <u> in the German word *du*. Furthermore, the German capitalization convention for the word *Sie* is subverted to the English capitalization convention for word internal morphemes. Therefore, in some senses, the name belongs to the English code and in others, to the German code. In a socio-pragmatic sense, however, the word belongs to neither language because the social distinction maintained by *du* and *Sie* in German finds neither linguistic nor matching social expression in English because German speakers make a paradigmatic choice between the two forms; they are not employed in syntagm as they are in the word *Doosie*. The examination of the inter-penetration of English and German in the word *Doosie* may promote a more intensive examination of the inter-penetration of English and German in the lives of the learners and an exploration of the criteria that demarcate a linguistic code, e.g. orthography, phonology, or socio-pragmatics and conventional usage. Additionally, this activity may lead to a much-needed explication of the socio-pragmatic ambiguity of address form use in German (e.g.,

Stevenson 1997), an important area of communicative competence that is typically not treated in its entirety in the German-language classroom (see Delisle, 1986).

Other possible candidates for analysis in this activity are: (a) *mit diesem Doosie* (lines 29-30); (b) *Du-Sie* (line 34); (c) *mit diesem whether-weather* (lines 14-15); (d) *aufdrängen-impose will* (line 89); and (e) *zur midnight sun* (line 50). In the case of (d), students must consider if *will* represents the German modal verb, the English future auxiliary, or the English noun. For (e), students must discuss whether or not *midnight sun* is a loan word or a code-switch and whether or not it is the article or the noun that determines linguistic membership, among other things.

Multiple Language Use and Language Functions

In the form of a mini-lecture, students are introduced to Jakobson's (1960) six functions of language. These are: (1) referential; (2) emotive; (3) conative; (4) phatic; (5) metalingual; and (6) poetic. The referential function of language is realized when an utterance refers to a state of affairs in the real world. The emotive function is expressive in nature and conveys the speaker's attitude toward his or her topic. A speaker uses language conatively when he or she focuses on the addressee. Jakobson (1960, p. 355) explains that the conative function "finds its purest grammatical expression in the vocative or imperative..." Language functions phatically when it is used to establish, prolong or terminate communication. Examples include greetings (*hello*) or exclamations (*hey!*). Language is used metalingually when the topic of conversation is the linguistic code itself (e.g., *How do you spell 'utterance'?*). The poetic function of language refers to the situation where language is used reflexively to draw attention to itself. It is often characterized as language for the sake of language and can be seen in playful and pleasurable vocalizations, poetry, and nursery rhymes, among other things. Jakobson (1960, p. 356) cautions, however, that "[a]ny attempt to reduce the sphere of poetic function to poetry or to confine poetry to poetic function would be a delusive oversimplification. Poetic function is not the sole function of verbal art but only its dominant, determining function . . . [t]his function, by promoting the palpability of signs, deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects."

In a subsequent group work activity, students are asked to find segments in the *Doosie* text that illustrate these various functions. For example, the phrase "Sir Reginald, den damaligen Botschafter in Stockholm" in lines 42-3 represents the referential function. The conative function is seen in lines 8-9 when the narrator asks *Doosie* to

translate the German conjunction *ob* into English. The phatic function is illustrated in line 34 with the vocative phrase *liebe Doosie*. The metalingual function is well represented in the *Doosie* text. For example, the narrator explicitly thematizes language in lines 10–11: “Nicht *if*, sondern *whether*, ausgesprochen wie *weather*, Wetter.” It should be noted in this case that multiple language use serves as a means of inter-codal illumination and draws the learner’s attention to both the similarities and the differences between *ob*, *if*, *whether*, *weather*, and *Wetter*. This process may ultimately function to aid L2 development.

To a certain degree, the entire *Doosie* excerpt provided in the appendix represents the poetic function of language because of the self-reflexive nature of the text. Although the author ostensibly is engaged in the activity of letter writing, presumably in order to communicate some type of message to the addressee, this goal is side-tracked when he stops in line 3 to reflect on his use of *Doosie* in the opening line of his letter. The rest of the excerpt is a result of this textual reflexivity.

This exercise can expand learners’ conceptualization of the purposes of linguistic interaction in general and foreign language learning in particular. They may come to realize that certain utterances are multifunctional in nature, which will enhance textual interpretation, and they may be enabled to employ strategies of functional polysemy in their own writing.

Multiple Language Use, Anaphora, and Linguistic Criticism

In its essence, linguistic criticism is concerned with linking textual interpretations to linguistic features (Fowler 1996). In the case of *Dear Doosie*, learners sometimes remark that the text is confusing, yet somehow cohesive. This reaction can be supported with linguistic evidence by revealing the ways in which Lansburgh switches at the levels of (a) code; (b) grammatical category (e.g., noun, verb, conjunction, etc); and (c) language function in a single sequence of anaphoric reference and substitution. The goals of this activity are (a) to introduce particular linguistic concepts to the learners, e.g. anaphora, lexical substitution, cohesion, and linguistic criticism; (b) to model for them a close linguistic reading of a text; (c) to increase their awareness of the ways in which texts can be constructed purposefully; and (d) to enable them to perform similar analyses on other texts.

In the form of a mini-lecture, students are introduced to the concepts of anaphoric reference, lexical substitution, and grammatical category. They are then asked to function as co-investigators along with their instructor as they attempt to apply these concepts to an

excerpt from the *Doosie* text. In particular, they are asked to pay attention to the role that multiple language use plays in grounding their interpretations of this text.

The sequence of anaphoric reference in question begins in line 6 and is headed by the German conjunction *ob* or whether. This word is first used referentially as part of the *Doosie* text itself. In line 8, *ob* is repeated as a quote of the phrase “ob ich Du oder Sie” in which it first occurs. In line 9, *ob* is used metalinguistically when it becomes the topic of discussion in the author’s softened imperative to the addressee. In this shift from code to metacode, *ob* has also changed grammatical category from conjunction to noun. Its next occurrence in the sequence is the addressee’s ellipped answer to the question posed in lines 8–9 by the narrator: “Könnten Sie mir bitte einmal ganz schnell dieses “ob” übersetzen?” The requested task implies a code-switch, but the code as well as the actual answer is left unspecified. The inclusion of this ‘textual hole’ underscores for the learner the importance of paying attention to what is left unsaid in the process of textual analysis.

With the metalinguistic use of *if* in line 10, there is an explicit code switch into English. The next member of the *ob*-sequence, *whether* in line 10, remains at the level of metacode as the narrator’s answer to his own question—perhaps a repetition of *Doosie*’s ellipped translation of *ob* between lines 9 and 10. *Weather* in line 11 at the level of metacode in the English language switches grammatical category from conjunction to noun and takes its place in the *ob*-sequence by virtue of homonymy or phonetic mimicry to *whether*. *Wetter* in line 11 is an apposition to *weather* and represents a code-switch to German while maintaining the grammatical category of noun. *Womit* maintains the German code, grammatically, however, it is a conflated prepositional phrase with a pronominal object. It is both anaphoric and cataphoric by referring back to *Wetter* as the full noun object of the preposition and forward to *Wettergespräch*, also the object of the preposition by means of substitution. In terms of language function, there is a switch from metalingual to referential with *Wettergespräch* or ‘small talk about the weather’ in lines 12 and 13. The latter notion is semantically piggybacked onto the textual occurrence of *Wetter* and draws upon the author’s and the reader’s shared background knowledge of prior texts that small talk about the weather is a common way of striking up a conversation with an unknown party. This is the context of the *Doosie* text although the content has actually not occurred. In other words, the narrator and his addressee have not talked about ‘the weather’ but rather about *ob*.⁷ It is this complicated, yet sophisticated method of constant switching at the levels of code, grammatical category, and

language function within a single sequence of anaphoric reference and substitution that accounts for the learners' reaction that the text is confusing yet somehow cohesive. An application of the tools of linguistic criticism has brought to light the precise nature of that textual cohesion.

Multiple Language Use and the Promotion of Textual Analysis.

As a group work activity, students are asked to discuss the gender of the *Doosie* character. After gathering initial impressions, they are asked to provide linguistic evidence for their decisions. This process promotes a close reading of the text and attention to grammatical detail.

The gender and number of the fictional *Doosie*-character is linguistically revealed in piecemeal fashion. First, the vocative phrase *liebe Doosie* in line 34 is a direct address to the individual(s) who bear(s) this label. The *Doosie* character seems to be explicitly gendered in light of the feminine adjective ending on *liebe*; however, this ending could also indicate a plural in this particular construction, both male and female or either sex exclusively and, indeed, this ambiguity is borne out in line 38 where *Doosie* is substituted with *Leser* and not *Leserin* 'female reader'. *Leser* could refer to either an individual male reader (which contradicts the individual female interpretation of *liebe*) or many readers either male, female or both. This conundrum is not resolved until line 87 when the narrator states: "Nun weiß ich aber Ihren Vornamen nicht, Doosie". The masculine singular accusative ending on *Ihren* unequivocally reveals *Doosie* to be one person and, in retrospect, the adjective ending on *liebe* in 34 can be interpreted as a feminine rather than a plural. Thus, the *Doosie*-character is an individual female. Further evidence for the singularity of this position comes in line 68 with *wir beide*, a first person dual, meant to include an addressor and an addressee. In this activity, learners are provided with another example of the use of linguistic criticism as a method of textual interpretation. Students might also consider the gender of the first-person narrator. In this activity, the following points will be relevant: (a) *Schreiber* (line 39); (b) *letzterer* (line 49); (c) *secretary* (line 49); and (d) *dieses W* (line 92). It is interesting to observe that the author's switch at 'secretary' in line 49 obfuscates the gender of the narrator for a time.

Multiple Language Use and Linguistic Creativity

As a final activity in this unit, learners are asked to write their own multilingual texts as homework. In addition, they are asked to keep a

log of why they chose a certain language at a specific point in their texts and to make enough copies of their texts for each member of the class. In the next session, learners pass out copies of their texts (which may contain non-Roman characters), perform their texts for their peers, and explain their language choices at particular points. As we have seen in examples (1)–(6) above, learners do not necessarily use L1 as ‘the easy way out’ in this activity; in fact, as reported in Belz (2002b, p. 78), they do so in only three of the 71 code-switches that they commented on during interviews. Thus, this activity, by *requiring* the use of L1, cannot necessarily be seen as an exercise in impeding L2 development. First, we have seen, in the case of YOSHIE, that multiple language use in the form of the experimental essay validates her own multilingual reality. The essay provides a sanctioned space in which she can explore this reality in the institutionalized context of the language classroom under the guidance of an instructor. Furthermore, YOSHIE explicitly links multiple language use to aspects of her compound and complex identity. Next, YEN clearly illustrates the ways in which multiple language use in the classroom can enhance the dynamic negotiation of a third place, a vantage point from which to critically examine the languages and identities at her disposal. More than this, however, multiple language use affords her the opportunity to compare and evaluate her multicompetent mode of being with that of her (imagined) monocompetent interlocutor. I would speculate that she opts for multicompetence. Finally, DEBI shows us how the multilingual considerations afforded by the multilingual essay assignment allow her to carefully consider the affective qualities of particular words and phrases in both L1 and L2 and therefore to choose how she will express herself in which language at which time. This freedom to re-semiotize the foreign as well as native code(s), to use all linguistic resources available to design (Kress 2000) how one’s self is portrayed in text, indeed, to play with one’s linguistic identity, is unavailable in the language classroom where L1(s) (and other codes) are banned.

Conclusion

The language learners in this study use their multicompetence to pursue advanced levels of L2 competence that are not normally able to explore in the traditional correctness-oriented classroom. In so doing, these learners are able to occupy third places from which they could both play with and reflect on multiple linguistic identities. The sophistication of these learners’ linguistic juxtapositions goes far beyond their ability to merely conform to standardized forms of grammar. In their self-conscious, playful and quixotic uses of language, they seem to be closer to the style of experimental multilingual novels (e.g.,

Brooke-Rose 1968) and multilingual verbal performance art (e.g., Gómez-Peña 1993). One should be cautious, however, in celebrating these students' multilingual linguistic actions. Much more ethnographic research is needed to ascertain what kinds of learners are likely to engage in what kinds of multilingual actions and whether the ability to play with language in this way is a quality that is equally distributed among learners (see Belz in preparation).

The experimental assignment reported here may be viewed by many foreign language professionals as quite heterodox practice, as the discussion on TESL-L exemplifies. Although recent SLA research has shown the benefits that could be gained by judicious use of L1 in the language classroom (e.g., Antón and DiCamilla 1998; V. Cook 2001), this use has been limited primarily to the ways in which it can aid the acquisition of L2 forms. It has not been studied robustly within a multilingual framework (see, however, Belz 2002a and b). Among foreign language teachers, code-mixing is stigmatized, especially in communicative language pedagogy. Although these students' texts refer to social encounters in socially bound settings, the students themselves cross social and linguistic boundaries with an impunity that might not be possible in the real world of national standard languages and their gate-keepers: schools, publishers, and academia (see Doran 2001; Rampton 1995), although I would argue that these restrictions break down to an extent in computer-mediated communication (see Herring 2002).

On the other hand, the data in this study precisely call into question a narrow definition of the language learner as a deficient L2 user in pursuit of a standard native speaker ideal and suggest instead a new 'construct-to-think-with' (Turtle 1997, pp. 47–9): *the multicompetent language user*. To varying degrees, these learners were engaged in processes of meaning creation, identity transitioning, and metalinguistic play that were enhanced, indeed, made possible by their multicompetence. The pleasure evinced by the authors of these multilingual texts seems to be indicative of a deeper aspect of second language learning, that has been underestimated until now. Namely, the linguistic juxtapositions we find in these texts are a source of pleasure because they are a source of distinction.

The multilingual text is a showcase example of the liminal nature (Rampton 1995, p. 292) of the postmodern world and of the foreign language learner, who, unlike most native speakers, is acutely attuned to the physicality and materiality of style: the sound of visual shapes and the shape of sounds, the polysemy of modal particles, and the increased semiotic resources offered by the new code (Belz 2002b, pp. 68–73). For learners of a foreign language, experimenting with this



new code might not be a question of which culture they will ultimately adopt, nor which native speaker they will strive to become, but how they will choose to inhabit a new multilingual mode of being. Communication in cross-cultural settings may entail less the adherence to conventionalized forms of a fixed national standard than the ability to manipulate both conventional and unconventional structures with an enhanced awareness of their semiotic potential. It is hoped that the activities suggested in the final section will provide foreign language teaching professionals with a template for capitalizing on the multi-competent realities in their language classrooms.

Appendix⁶

1 Mostly about a Name

Mostly about a Name

2 Dear Doosie,

Dear Doosie,

3 warum ich Sie Doosie nenne, fragen Sie? Well, my dear,

why am I calling you Doosie, you ask? Well, my dear,

4 don't you understand German - verstehen Sie denn

don't you understand German – don't you understand

5 kein Deutsch? I am calling you Doosie, weil ich noch

German? I am calling you Doosie because I

6 nicht recht weiß, ob ich Du oder Sie zu Ihnen sagen soll.

don't yet really know yet if I should say you or you to you.

7 Deshalb. That's why.

That's why. That's why.

8 "... ob ich Du oder Sie ..." Könnten Sie mir bitte

"...if I [should say] you or you..." Could you please

9 einmal ganz schnell dieses "ob" übersetzen?

quickly translate this "ob" for me?

10 Gut! (bzw.:) Schlecht! Nicht *if*, sondern *whether*, aus-

Good! (or:) Bad! Not if, but whether,

11 gesprochen wie *weather*, Wetter. Womit wir unsere Un-

pronounced like weather, weather. With which we

12 terhaltung sehr englisch angefangen haben, mit Wetter-

began our conversation in a very English manner, with

13 geschwätz.

small talk about the weather.

14 Verzeihung, sorry. Ich bin mit diesem *whether*-

Sorry, sorry. With this whether-

15 *weather* eigentlich recht unenglisch gewesen: I have

weather I have actually become quite un-English: I have

16 made a pun, ein Wortspiel. So etwas mag im Deutschen

made a pun, a play-on-words. In German, something like that may

17 vielleicht angängig sein, permissible, bisweilen sogar lu-

perhaps be permissible, permissible, maybe even

- 18 stig, amusing. In England aber findet man es zumeist
amusing, amusing. In England, however, one usually finds it
 19 unerträglich, unbearable. Sollten Ihnen einmal Wort-
unbearable, unbearable. If you should be
 20 witzeleien wie die meinen auf englisch serviert werden,
served up puns like mine in English,
 21 dann bitte verziehen Sie den Mund, sagen Sie blasiert:
then please screw up your mouth, say in a blasé way:
 22 “that’s a pun”,
“that’s a pun”
 23 und Sie werden den Leuten, sofern Ihnen daran liegt,
and you will [impress] people, provided that you set store by
 24 ob Ihres ureingeborenen Englisch imponieren – you
because of your thoroughly native English - you
 25 will impress people. Ja, *impress* , “imponieren”, sagen
will impress people. Yes, impress, “impress”,
 26 Sie bloß nicht *impose* , was “aufbürden” bedeutet,
please don’t say impose, which means “impose”,
 27 “aufdringlich sein”.
“to be an imposition”.
 28 “What an imposition”, könnten Sie zum Beispiel sa-
“What an imposition”, you could say, for example,
 29 gen, “was für eine Aufdringlichkeit, mir gleich mit die-
“what an imposition to burden me right away with this
 30 sem *Doosie* ins Haus zu fallen.”
Doosie.”
 31 Did you say so? Yes or no?
Did you say so? Yes or no?
 32 Danke. Very sweet of you.
Thank you. Very sweet of you.
 33 To summarize, zusammenfassend: Ich nenne Sie Doo-
To summarize, to summarize: I am calling you Doosie,
 34 sie, liebe Doosie, weil eben auf weiteres Du-Sie. Das
dear Doosie, because until further notice you-you. The
 35 englische “you” kann, wie Sie wissen, beides bedeuten,
English “you” can mean both, as you know,
 36 je nach Intimitätslage, hilft uns aber im Augenblick
each according to the degree of intimacy, however, at the moment it won’t get
us
 37 überhaupt nicht weiter, it won’t get us anywhere. Wie
anywhere at all, it won’t get us anywhere. How
 38 viel weiß ich von Ihnen als Leser, und wieviel wis-
much do I know about you as the reader, and how much
 39 sen Sie von mir als Schreiber? Nothing. Etwas elegan-
do you know about me as the author? Nothing. Somewhat more
 40 ter: Nothing at all. Noch eleganter, wirkliches Englisch:
elegant: Nothing at all. Even more elegant, true English:



- 41 Little or nothing.
Little or nothing.
- 42 That reminds me. Das erinnert mich an Sir Reginald,
That reminds me. That reminds me of Sir Reginald,
- 43 den damaligen Botschafter in Stockholm. "Sir" kann
the then ambassador in Stockholm. "Sir" can,
- 44 übrigens, um hier aus Diskretionsgründen die Nation
by the way, in order to leave the nation discretely unspecified,
- 45 offenlassen, auch ein amerikanischer Vorname sein
also be an American first name
- 46 wie etwa "Duke" (Ellington), "Count" (Basie) usw.
for example, "Duke" (Ellington), "Count" (Basie) etc.
- 47 Anyway:
Anyway:
- 48 Wir reisten einmal zu dritt, Sir Reginald, Lady ***
*The three of us were traveling together, Sir Reginald, Lady****
- 49 (seine Frau) und ich, letzterer als eine Art secretary,
(his wife) and I, the latter as a type of secretary,
- 50 nach Nordnordschweden, zur midnight sun. Eine Se-
to the northernmost part of Sweden, to the midnight sun. An
- 51 henswürdigkeit, da die Sonne da oben zu faul ist, auf-
attraction, since up there the sun is too lazy,
- 52 bzw. unterzugehen, too lazy to rise and set. Und da nun
to rise and set, too lazy to rise and set. Now since
- 53 während dieser Mitternachtssonnenreise der gute Sir
during this journey to the midnight sun the good Sir
- 54 Reginald beim Sprechen nie sein Gegenüber ansah - er
Reginald never looked at the person he was talking to - he
- 55 war ja schließlich Diplomat -, wußte ich nie, ob sein
was, after all, a diplomat -, I never knew if his
- 56 "you" (z.B. "you had better go to bed now") mir oder
"you" (e.g., "you had better go to bed now")
- 57 seiner Frau galt, die sich überdies nach ein paar Tagen
was intended for me or his wife, who, after a few days
- 58 als seine Geliebte, his mistress, entpuppte: Wie die
turned out to be his mistress, his mistress: Like the
- 59 Sonne dort oben, standen beide schließlich überhaupt
sun up there both of them, in the end,
- 60 nicht mehr auf.
didn't get up any more.
- 61 Lektion I: "Mistress" ist Geliebte; aber wenn brutal
Lesson I: "Mistress" is Mistress: but when brutally
- 62 zu "Mrs" zusammengehauen und entsprechend schlud-
hacked down to "Mrs" and
- 63 rig ausgesprochen: Ehefrau.
pronounced in a correspondingly slapdash way: wife.

64 No, Doosie, "you" won't get us anywhere. Am lieb-
No, Doosie, "you" won't get us anywhere. Preferably -
65 sten - preferably, I'd prefer to, I'd rather, besser: I'd
- preferably, I'd prefer to, I'd rather, better: I'd
66 love to -, am allerliebsten würde ich Brüderschaft
love to -, most of all I would love to
67 mit Ihnen trinken. Aber sosehr Sie auch your fascina-
toast you. But as much as you would also like to
68 ting arm um den meinen schlingen und wir beide, both
wrap your fascinating arm around mine and both of us, both
69 of us, dabei ein Weinglas zu balancieren versuchen,
of us, would attempt to balance a wine glass,
70 so wäre eine solche Leibesübung zwar an sich auch auf
such a physical exercise would be in and of itself
71 englisch möglich, it would be possible as such, physically,
possible in English, it would be possible as such, physically,
72 aber sprachlich käme dabei kaum etwas heraus,
but linguistically little or nothing would come of it, little or
73 *nothing, d.h. überhaupt nichts.*
nothing, i.e. nothing at all.
74 Sie wissen es sicher schon selber: "Brüderschaft",
You probably know it yourself already: "Brotherhood",
75 fraternity, brotherhood, sisterhood etc., das alles ist im
fraternity, brotherhood, sisterhood etc., all of that is
76 Englischen untrinkbar, simply undrinkable. Und wie
undrinkable in English, simply undrinkable. And as
77 Sie sicher gleichfalls wissen, as you probably know as
you probably know as well, as you probably know as
78 well, geht Brüderschaft wie so vieles andere in England
well, fraternity, like so many other things in England,
79 sehr diskret vor sich - such things happen very quietly,
happens very discretely - such things happen very quietly,
80 discretely and informally.
discretely and informally.
81 Etwa so: Man sagt "you" zueinander, bis plötzlich
Something like this: One says "you" to one another, until suddenly
82 der eine den anderen ganz lässig, fast unmerklich -
the one casually [addresses] the other, almost imperceptibly -
83 *casually - mit dem Vornamen anredet, with his or her*
casually - by his or her Christian name, with his or her
84 Christian name - oder auch, vielleicht etwas amerika-
Christian name - or also, perhaps somewhat more Ameri-
85 nischer, aber deshalb keineswegs schlechter: with his or
-can, but in no way worse: with his or
86 her first name or given name.
her first name or given name.

- 87 Nun weiß ich aber Ihren Vornamen nicht, Doosie, I
Now, I really don't know your first name, Doosie, I
 88 have not the slightest idea. Weshalb ich Ihnen auch, to
have not the slightest idea. Which is why I will not, to
 89 be fair, den meinen nicht aufdrängen-impose will; Sie
be fair, impose-impose mine on you; You
 90 könnten mich etwa - das wäre übrigens sehr englisch –
could [address] me – by the way, that would be very English -
 91 nur mit dem Anfangsbuchstaben meines Vornamens
simply with the initial of my first name,
 92 anreden, with my initial, W. Dieses W dann aber bitte
with my initial, W. But then please [pronounce] this W
 93 meinem englischen Paß zu liebe englisch aussprechen:
in English for the love of my British passport:
 94 “double you”, doppelt Du-Sie.
“double you”, double you-you.
 95 Ein Vorschlag, Doosie, a suggestion: Wir überlassen
A suggestion, Doosie, a suggestion: We shall leave
 96 Einzelheiten wie Namen, Aussehen, Alter und Zivil-
details such as name, appearance, age, and marital
 97 stand, derzeitigen Wohnort und dergleichen unserer bei-
status, current address and the like to our
 98 derseitigen Phantasie –
respective imaginations -
 99 - nein, nicht “fantasy”, das klingt gekünstelt, auch
- no, not “fantasy”, that sounds too artificial,
 100 Langenscheidts “fancy” klappt hier nicht. Imagination,
Langenscheidt's “fancy” also doesn't work here. Imagination,
 101 please.
please.

Notes

1. For example, Woodall (2002) presents a statistical analysis of L1 use in L2 writing that reinforces the deficiency view of L1 use by L2 learners.
2. All student names are reported as pseudonyms.
3. All data are reported in their original format. L2 mistakes are not corrected. Translations of the German are my own. The data were stored and coded in Ethnograph v5.04, a software program for qualitative data analysis. The document names and line numbers given here refer to the storage configurations in that program.
4. ‘It doesn’t make any sense to deprive the well-intentioned beginner of her ‘bitte’, even if one doesn’t say ‘please’ in English in this case, but rather nothing at all.’
5. Examples 5 and 6 were originally published in Kramsch (1997, pp. 364–65) with my permission. This article is reprinted in the present volume as chapter 9.

6. The interlinear translation of Lansburgh (1977, pp. 7-9) in the appendix is my own. The translation of a multilingual text presents considerable difficulties not the least of which is the fact that the bilingual nature of the text is integral to its overall meaning; thus, a translation represents, in effect, an act of destruction. Most damaged in the translation of this excerpt are the numerous puns and plays-on-words which are made possible only by the use of two languages—in particular, the interlingual play with the initial W., its English pronunciation, the homophony of the letter's pronunciation with the English word 'you', and the two equivalents of English 'you' (e.g., 'du' and 'Sie' and thus *Doosie*) in German (lines 92–4). It should be clear that this play is enabled, not hindered, by the inter-illumination of German and English. In other words, in order for this text to work at all, one must reject the deficiency view of L1 use in L2 discourse. Despite these difficulties with translation, I present an approximation of the original text, as suggested by the editor, in order to convey its general meaning to the reader who does not speak German. I have tried as much as possible to provide an interlinear gloss, however, this attempt is exacerbated by the marked differences between German and English syntax. For example, in some cases it was necessary to place a verb (or other part of speech) in a particular line, although the verb did not occur in this line in Lansburgh's original text (e.g., lines 90–2). In other instances, I used non-standard English syntax in order to preserve the interlinear quality of the given translation (e.g., lines 52–4). The fact that Lansburgh frequently code-switches in order to repeat a phrase in the other language is evident throughout the text (e.g., lines 4–5, 7, 14, 36–7, 39–41). In my opinion, such switches reflect the intended didactic nature of the text, similar in a way to code-switching methods in place in bilingual education (e.g., Giauque and Ely 1990; Jacobson, 1990), but also serve as a source of distinction for Lansburgh's *autobiographical self* (Ivanic, 1998, pp. 24–5) in that they index the fact that his development in L2 is so advanced that he can readily provide (multiple) L1/L2 equivalents for even the most evasive L2/L1 turns of phrase.
7. Landsburgh's (1977) play with the polysemy and multifunctionality of *ob* intensifies in line 24. Here he uses it as a preposition requiring the genitive case, a few lines after he has provided a linguistic lecturette on its meaning and function as a conjunction.

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