FROM IDENTITY OF LANGUAGE TO LANGUAGE OF IDENTITY

Adrian Aycan Corum

Sabanci University, Turkey

aycanc@su.sabanciuniv.edu

How much one masters a language is related to the ability to think intensively and create ideas in that language. After mastering a second language, it becomes clear that each language has its own way of thinking, and its own identity. This identity can facilitate the learning process: cognitive depth increases the affective depth with awareness of learning a new way of thinking, and affective depth in turn increases the cognitive depth with emotional satisfaction, thus creating an infinite positive loop effect. To give an example about different ways of thinking, languages have varied sentence structures with relative discipline and flexibility, which reflects our thinking and behaviors. Another example would be phrases, anonymous products of communities that are constructed as a result of a very long history, representing different ways of thinking. Related to phrases and contrary to binary thinking in many languages for example in Japanese in addition to "yes" and "no", there is a word called "mu" for "Your question cannot be answered because it depends on incorrect assumptions", which enables the person to give this meaning in just two letters.

Up to this point the difference between languages has been emphasized. However, it is an important fact that language identities have similarities as they have divergences. Each pair of languages has different ratios of these two, and this ratio varies from combinations of languages to combinations since an inclusion of a new language to a group of languages creates additional intersections and divergences, thus expanding the boundaries of the mind. For example, translations of books are hard to do if the two languages are quite divergent, and relatively easy if they are similar.

Widespread language learning in the world can be modeled by extending the ideas above. In this model, which I call "the illusion of separation" there is a well-known language that the person knows how to think intensively *in*. However, in this model, another language is learned completely separately from this language (only with grammar etc.), and the person is

not aware of the intersection. It's only after the learning process that the person realizes this intersection which was not used during the process as a tool.

The above model may be a bridge to build a strategy of how a foreign language should be learned. Again, the person knows the same well-known language, however this time the intersection point is used to surround and learn the other language. Also, this type of language learning would be beneficial because even if the person stops learning the language, the remaining parts will be preserved by their connections with the well-built language which had been learned very intensively. Moreover, this new model can be enlarged to have more than one well-known language, enabling the person to use each of these languages to surround the other language and learn it much more easily.

To relate these to my experiences, I was born in Germany and I have dual citizenship. I came to Turkey when I was four years old and I forgot German because of some emotional reasons. Then, I used the illusion of separation model to try to learn German again in my late middle school and through my high school years; however I was not very successful. Afterwards, I applied the second model and used English and Turkish to surround German, and it was very beneficial since the parts I had learned remained fresh and complete even though I had been able to study for a short period of time because of the intensity of my undergraduate schedule. Additionally, as a separate experience, each time I go to Germany I wonder how my emotions and character will be affected because of my two identities. As this is mentioned, the language of identity can be discussed as an agent forming both our character and emotions.

Language of identity has two subsections: roles and reasons. In the roles part, the language forms and develops some emotions and aspects of character. When this process is complete, its mission turns into expressing the same feelings and sides. The first possible reason for these roles is one's personal past. Just like a song that takes you back when you hear it after a long time, the emotions that originate from personal reasons during learning a language may be embedded in that language and character. As a second and the most crucial point, the explanation can be the structure of language itself, which tends to direct people towards some emotions and sides of character more than others, thus forming the language of identity.

As human-beings, we mainly consist of three things: Way of thinking, character and emotions. In the beginning, identity of language was related to way of thinking, and then character was included since both are directly associated. Afterwards, identity of language proved to be covering character and emotions. This makes it possible to move from identity of

language to language of identity, encapsulating thinking, character and emotions. Therefore, in the end, it turns out that language is what we are.