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Interview by Lucia Haladjian, 2015.

1. How did you come to be bilingual and what was that like?.

I became fully bilingual after migrating to Canada permanently. My early schooling was done partially in English and since we used to vacation in Puerto Vallarta –a little touristic town--, I've always felt confident when dealing with English. Probably the high cultural penetration of pop music, TV and films had to do with it as well. However, it wasn't until not long ago that I considered myself bilingual. That happened until I felt comfortable researching and working in academia.

2. What is your connection to your languages and cultures? Is there one you identify with more – which one – why?.

Absolutely not. I thought it was like that indeed (to identify with a particular nationality), but not really. I don't identify completely with Mexican culture, neither with Canadian. I guess I will be a wanderer between cultures for the rest of my life. My agency in terms of cultural belonging is constantly changing, and I guess will forever be like that. With the fact of becoming a migrant also comes the fact that our identity will be in constant fluxus.

3. Over time, how has your use of each language changed? Which language do you use depending on which environment you are in and whom you are speaking with?.

Since moving to Canada -I must say- English comes as easy as Spanish for example. At home with my wife we speak Spanish, however, I find myself constantly translating myself from Spanish to English and viceversa. When speaking with family over the phone or when I'm in Mexico, I speak very basic Spanish. I guess I can say I've been losing some of it, for example, Spanish idioms and localisms. I interact with Anglophones in a daily basis and as a result of that I feel more comfortable with that language. Even when sometimes I need to mentally translate, that act of translation is becoming less common over time. It just comes naturally. In the academic environment, English is definitely my predominant language. I must sadly say that Spanish is slowly fading away.

4. Do different relationships (family, friendships, romantic partnerships, etc.) feel different depending on which language you are speaking?.

Absolutely. For example, a strange phenomenon happens when speaking with old friends from Mexico. It is as if the person speaking is myself as the person I was 20 years ago, when I was living in Mexico (in my early--mid 20's). It's as if language and identity fixates to that age when you felt most comfortable with. As I speak English now with co--workers and Anglophones friends it feels as if my contemporary self is communicating.

5. Do you sometimes prefer speaking in one language more than the other? Why? Which emotions do you find you are able to express better in either language?.

I have to say English has become my 'most comfortable language' to use. I've been giving interviews in Spanish and I also had the opportunity of writing a paper on Spanish. I had to drop it and do it in English instead. The interviews in Spanish have been a little awkward. I guess that the language I speak with family is the language of love and emotions (Spanish), meanwhile English has become the language of rationality and everyday activities. It really doesn't matter how often I speak Spanish, it is just fading away. I see people speaking Spanish in the street or the market -so fluently- and it makes me wonder the reason why my Spanish is becoming obsolete.

6. Do you feel you have somewhat of a different personality for each language-- or separate identities on some level? If yes, why do you think that is? How would you describe those different personalities?.

I have recently experienced the feeling that, indeed, when speaking different languages is almost as if different 'personas' are emerging through. I didn't plan it to happen, it just did. Because of my job I had to speak and give interviews in Spanish and it is when I realized that is almost as if a different person is speaking. Only happens when meeting new Spanish people. When I'm around old friends and family, my language feels natural, however, when conversing with new Spanish acquaintances, somehow it feels almost unnatural. It is a very surreal experience. To realize that not only the act of communicating orally, but also, that very thing that gets communicated, can be the same and different at the same time. I wouldn't describe my persona in different languages as different personalities.

7. Have there ever been certain things which you are able to express in only one language and not the other?.

I experienced that when arriving to Canada around 2004-. Since then, my ability to communicate both, feeling and thoughts, have dramatically increased. But yes, there was a moment when I was stuck with Spanish thoughts only. I developed a strange habit, which is to immediately recognize and collect new expressive and communicative situations, idioms, and then compare them to its Spanish counterpart. This transaction is very fast, probably no longer than a minute. I rapidly absorb and integrate those new idioms to my persona, ready to use when needed. It is almost as if collecting coins from a video game. You know you are going to need them at some moment, you just don't know when.

8. Are there certain memories which can only be recalled with one language? For example, if you have a memory of being young and speaking one language, is it hard to try to explain this memory or remember the specific emotions in the other language?.

Absolutely. All my past in Mexico replays in my memory in Spanish. As weird as it may sound, my Mexican life happens in Spanish, in my mind, and it is difficult to translate to other language. Recently, as I was writing a short bio for my website I encountered that situation. At the end, I had to drop it. Was almost impossible to translate feelings, sounds, and atmospheres into English. It is as if my past life in Mexico stayed in a little capsule.

9. Do you ever feel like language has limited you? That you weren't able to always say what you wanted to – that you weren't always able to fully express yourself?.

Yes, but that happens only when I must to express complex ideas, mostly academic and intellectual. I came to realize that my syntax, both oral and mental, have the structure of the Spanish language, which is very fluid; whereas in English, thoughts need to be expressed very straightforward, almost dry. I struggle a lot when communicating complex ideas, as I need to translate them into a very linear manner, as I'm doing it right now with this interview, for example.

10. In the book 'Lives In Translation: Bilingual Writers on Identity and Creativity', Nancy Houston writes, "A person who decides, voluntarily, as an adult, unconstrained by outside circumstances, to leave her native land and adopt a hitherto unfamiliar language and culture must face the fact that for the rest of her life she will be involved in theatre, imitation, make-believe". How do you feel about this? What makes your experience similar/ dissimilar?.

I agree completely. This 'make-believe' is a primordial part of our learning process as immigrants, not only with language but also of socialization and identity construction. We turn ourselves into infants once again, learning language, attitudes and social conventions by imitation. Beyond this act of imitation, there is I think, another act of make-believe, which is the construction of our new identity. As foreigners we were granted the opportunity of a new start, a fresh beginning. I'm sure there are many levels of this make-believe, in each and one of us.

11. What do you consider your language to be today? What language do you consider to be most familiar/ feel most at "home"?

That's a good question. I really don't know. Once you have changed your place of residency there is always the uncertainty, the possibility of doing it again. The first displacement comes also the sudden recognition that it could happen again, and with that, also comes the issue of language. As an immigrant I lost my home, my language and my identity, never to be recovered again. I guess I will never feel fully at home again, not even in Mexico. Home and language will forever remain as a struggle in my life. My language today? I feel comfortable with all of them. I don't recognize myself or identify with them anymore.