Feeling Languages: "A Diaspora of Selves" Among Bi- and Multi-lingual Students at the University of Colorado Boulder

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Feeling Languages: “A Diaspora of Selves” Among Bi- and Multi-lingual Students at the University of Colorado Boulder

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8 April 2019

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The quote in the title comes from my interview with Yousef (L1-Arabic, L2-English, L3-French, L4-Spanish, L5-Farsi). The full quote is:

I’m half Western and half Middle Eastern. I’m much more of a collectivist in Arabic, whereas in English it’s way easier to express hyper-individualism. There are ideas and identities in different cultures that are inexplicable in different languages. Superficial meanings might translate, but deeper meanings won’t, and this has absolutely caused conflict. As a writer and someone with a peculiar hand of cards when it comes to identity, I’m conscious that I have a multitude of selves. It’s like a diaspora of selves.
1.0 – Introduction

Languages help us communicate, but in this thesis I argue that languages are also imbued with feelings that affect speakers’ expression of self. Ali sits across the table from me and confidently proclaims: “I definitely feel like a completely different person when I speak my different languages. In Arabic, I have a different personality, a different character.” Ali’s experience reflects the main idea behind what is known as linguistic relativity: different languages motivate different worldviews that may influence speakers’ thoughts and behaviors (Gumperz & Levinson, 1991, p. 614). This perspective is sometimes called the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (hereafter SWH), named after linguistic anthropologists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. And yet, there is something more in Ali’s above quotation. Like most of the individuals interviewed for this thesis, Ali feels differently when speaking different languages. Therefore, this thesis extends the SWH to account for sensorial attachments that polyglots experience when they switch languages.

Many scholars split the SWH into two parts, a “weak” and “strong” version called linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism, respectively. Linguistic relativity, the “weak” version, hypothesizes that languages influence human cognition, whereas linguistic determinism, the “strong” version, hypothesizes that languages determine human cognition, and thus sensory experiences of the world (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 13). Today, linguistic determinism has been rejected in academia while linguistic relativity has become a pillar in the field of anthropological linguistics (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 15). While not without its critics, scholars such as Lera Boroditsky, Jean-Marc Dewaele, Aneta Pavlenko, and Katarzyna Ożańska-Ponikwia have investigated linguistic relativism from different disciplines, using different methodical approaches. Their findings suggest that language does indeed draw our attention to the world in particularized ways, which I will argue facilitate certain kinds of emotive responses.
In this thesis, I build upon the interdisciplinary research of the above scholars, focusing on the role of context in shaping language ideologies and speakers’ feelings. Recent literature shows that bi- and multi-linguals often do feel different in different languages (Pavlenko, 2014; Dewaele, 2016; Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2013; Chen & Bond, 2010; Veltkamp et al., 2013). To explore this claim, I interviewed 60 bi- and multi-lingual students at the University of Colorado Boulder to investigate if, how, and why the individuals may feel differently when speaking in different languages. I hypothesize: if someone is bi- or multi-lingual, then they will feel different when speaking their different languages, potentially presenting different personas. The purpose of this study is to investigate if, how, and why languages – and feelings about languages – may cause participants to feel or present themselves in a way that they would not have had they been monolingual. I emphasize the role of both ideology and place when conducting this study because speech acts are always embedded in the norms and ideologies of their context (Steiner, 1972, p. 28). Language ideologies, in short, are speakers’ normative beliefs about languages and language behaviors (Irvine, 2016; Hall & Nilep, 2015, p. 605). These language ideologies often get projected onto users of the language; as Grosjean notes, “Attitudes towards languages often reflect attitudes towards the users of those languages,” and these language ideologies “can have profound effects on the psychology of individuals and on their use of language” (1982, p. 120, p. 118). Because languages are always emplaced in contexts and these contexts come with normative ideologies (Irvine, 2016), I argue that the context in which a speaker acquires and uses a language – and the language ideologies that come along with the context – will affect how a speaker feels when using the language, thus affecting the expression of self – one’s persona.

1.1 – Personal statement of intent

This thesis was born out of a genuine interest in people and languages. Inspiration for the topic came when I was living in Barcelona the summer of 2017, interning for “Accem,” a non-profit
non-governmental organization dedicated to improving the lives of refugees and asylum-seekers in Spain. The Accem office is an extremely multilingual and multicultural environment. All of the Accem employees spoke at least three languages – Catalan, Spanish, and English – and most spoke four or five. Every day, I interacted with refugees and asylum-seekers from around the world. My role as intern was to either put together pages of legal documents or to go on excursions with the refugees. I much preferred the excursions. On these days, I would help Accem’s “usuarios” adjust to life in Barcelona. Some days I would show usuarios how to use the metro, other days I would help them communicate with a dentist who only spoke Spanish. For me, these interactions were invaluable. With Venezuelan refugees, I would speak Spanish. With Syrian refugees, I would speak English. With refugees from Guinea, I would attempt to speak French. Over time, I noticed that while I felt confident with my Spanish proficiency, I did not quite feel the same as I did when I spoke English. It became an intangible obsession.

One day, I asked my co-workers whether they too felt different when they spoke in different languages; most said yes! I was not alone, but I still wanted to know how and why this was happening. When I started the research process for this thesis in September 2018, I wanted to figure out everything. Having no training in psychology or linguistics, armed with a Google search of “The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis,” I sought to map out the inner-workings of the multilingual brain and report on how it affects people’s experience of the world and themselves. I spoke to anyone and everyone I could, but the more research I did, the more I realized how immensely overwhelming my interest was.

This thesis simply cannot detail all of the factors that cause speakers to feel different when they use different languages; nor can it detail topics such as human cognition, personality, or identity. The scope must be narrowed. While I touch on as much as I can, my main argument is
that language context of acquisition (CoA), context of use (CoU), and language ideologies are all interrelated, powerful factors which shape how bi- and multi-linguals feel when they use a language. These language-induced feelings – confidence, comfort, enjoyment, ability to express emotions, humor, academic-ness, formality, and authenticity – culminate in a persona – an expression of self – that feels authentic or inauthentic, in varying degrees, to the speaker’s identity. I cannot claim to know everything about this topic, but in my countless of hours of research, writing, and fascinating conversations with bi- and multi-lingual students at the University of Colorado, Boulder, I find that languages are much more than communicative tools and feelings are much more than simple sensations.

1.3 – Brief Outline

The next section, “Past Scholarship” provides academic background for the ideas I develop throughout the thesis. Following that, “Methods” describes the procedures used in the study and highlights some of the participants’ demographic information. Afterwards, “Results” goes into some of the specifics of my findings. “Language-Induced Feelings” acts as a continuation of “Results,” laying out each of the eight language-induced feelings and the ten main feeling-inducing influences. A full list of these feelings and influences is available in the appendix. Finally, “Conclusion” argues that while languages influence people in nuanced and personal ways, when one speaks a language, the feelings they experience manifest as a persona that feels authentic, or not, to who they are. Influenced primarily by context and ideology, a speaker’s feelings when using a language are powerful forces in the maintenance, expression, and understanding of self. At the end of the “Conclusion” section, I contemplate some implications of this thesis and propose some questions and directions for future research.
2.0 – Past Scholarship

The capacity for complex spoken language sets Homo sapiens apart from other primates (Jackendoff, 2006). In the 9th century, King Charlemagne of the Holy Roman Empire famously proclaimed, “to have another language is to possess another soul” (Boroditsky, 2018). While Charlemagne’s words remain an insightful sentiment, the notion that different languages bring about different worldviews did not gain an academic dimension until the late 18th century with the work of Prussian academic Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767 – 1835). Drawing from Romantic period thinkers such as Johann Gottfried von Herder and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 2), Humboldt wrote this passage:

Each language draws a circle around the people to whom it adheres… The learning of a foreign language should therefore mean the gaining of a new standpoint of one’s worldview, and it does this in fact to a considerable degree, because each language contains the entire conceptual web and mental images of a part of humanity. If it is not purely felt as such, the reason is only that one so frequently projects one’s own worldview, in fact one’s own speech habits, onto a foreign language. (Humboldt, cited in Pavlenko, 2014, p. 3)

For this, Humboldt is often cited as the forefather of the SWH (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 2). His ideas went on to inspire a generation of linguistic relativity-inclined psychologists, linguists, and anthropologists in the 20th century. Franz Boas (1858 – 1942), the revolutionary anthropologist who redefined anthropology and laid out its four modern subdivisions, was one such academic:

The categories of language compel us to see the world arranged in certain definite conceptual groups which, on account of our lack of knowledge of linguistic processes, are taken as objective categories, and which, therefore, impose themselves upon the form of our own thoughts. (Boas, 1920 in Pavlenko, 2014, p. 8)

Boas saw languages as unique systems that teach about human cultures and cognitions. He emphasized studying the constraints languages put on us as a result of their obligatory categories – those things that language must encode (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 8). To Boas, the language one uses
will affect how they interpret and experience the reality available to all of us – bound, of course, by the language’s obligatory categories.

While teaching at Columbia University, Boas inspired one of his students, Edward Sapir (1884 – 1939), to further his ideas on language (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 8). In 1929, Sapir published *The status of linguistics as a science* which proposed:

*The network of cultural patterns of a civilization is indexed in the language which expresses that civilization… Language is a guide to social reality… The ‘real world’ is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality… We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretations. (p. 209)*

Furthering the development of linguistic relativism, Sapir stressed the importance of studying language as a “symbolic guide to culture”: by studying a group’s language practices, we can learn about their culture and society (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 9). Sapir also argues against a simple, biological understanding of language (Sapir, 1929, p. 214). In an earlier work, Sapir said:

*To pass from one language to another is psychologically parallel to passing from one geometrical system of reference to another. The environing world which is referred to is the same for either language… But the formal method of approach to the expressed item of experience, as to the given point of space, is so different that the resulting feeling of orientation can be the same neither in the two languages nor in the two frames of reference. (Sapir, 1924 in Pavlenko, 2014, p. 9)*

According to Sapir, an English speaker and an Arabic speaker, for example, may experience the same thing, but their languages will encode different ways of understanding and expressing it. By 1931, Sapir’s work earned him a professorship at Yale, where he would meet Benjamin Lee Whorf (Carroll, 1956, p. 16). Whorf (1897 – 1941) studied under Sapir at Yale. Like Sapir, he too believed that languages bring with them unique ways of seeing the world:
We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages… the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds – and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds… users of markedly different grammars are pointed by their grammars towards different types of observations and different evaluations of externally similar acts of observation, and hence are not equivalent as observers but must arrive at somewhat different views of the world. (Whorf, 1940 in Pavlenko, 2014, p. 10)

Contemporary scholarship on the SWH would naturally lead one to believe that the hypothesis is the work of Sapir and Whorf, but in fact, Sapir and Whorf never set out their observations as a ‘hypothesis’ that could be proven, nor did they propose its “strong” and “weak” versions. The term “Sapir-Whorf hypothesis” was first utilized by anthropologist Harry Hoijer to argue “that language functions, not simply as a device for reporting experience, but also, and more significantly, as a way of defining experience for its speakers” (Hoijer, 1954, p. 93). Later in 1954, cognitive scholars Roger Brown and Eric Lenneberg redefined the SWH for generations to come, splitting it into two easily digestible “strong” and “weak” hypotheses (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 13).

Academics latched on to critiquing the obviously absurd notion of linguistic determinism, giving linguistic relativity and the SWH a bad name by proxy. Guy Deutscher, author of *Through the language glass: why the world looks different in other languages*, blames subsequent attacks on linguistic relativity on this mishandling:

> While the link between language, culture, and cognition seems perfectly kosher in theory, in practice the mere whiff of the subject today makes most linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists recoil because the topic carries with it a baggage of intellectual history which is so disgraceful that the mere suspicion of association with it can immediately brand anyone a fraud. (2010, p. 21)

In the 1950s, an alternate wave of thought emerged in linguistics which overtook the field for most of the 20th century: universalism. Popularized by Noam Chomsky, linguistic universalism holds that all languages share certain aspects of an underlying “Universal Grammar” (hereafter UG), innate in human cognitions (Bisan, 2002). This UG sets boundaries for the possible amount
of grammatical variation within and between languages (Cook, 1985). Chomsky came to this conclusion based on a “poverty of the stimulus” argument: all children learn their first language (L1) around the same age without being formally taught its grammar rules; thus, there must be an innate UG in all minds which facilitates language acquisition (Cook, 1985). These “biolinguistic” assumptions of universalism – namely that thought shapes language and not the other way around, run contrary to linguistic relativism (Beek, 2012, p. 24; Chomsky, 2005). For years to come, the fields of linguistics and cognitive psychology were overtaken by the notion that minds and languages are more similar than different, largely abandoning linguistic relativity and its offshoots.

This is not to say that linguistic universalism and relativism cannot be reconciled (Evans & Levinson, 2009). Fundamentally, they have different focuses: universalists focus on the cognitive similarities between languages, whereas relativists focus on the culture-driven differences and how those influence experience (Greenberg, 1963). To illustrate, linguist George Steiner in a 1972 work, “Whorf, Chomsky and the Student of Literature,” wrote the following:

Each language constructs its own “thought world” made up of “the microcosm which each man carries about within himself, by which he measures and understands what he can of the macrocosm.” There is no “universal objective reality,” only an aggregate of “segmentations” made by different language-cultures. This does not mean that there are not rudimentary universal neuro-physiological apprehensions of time, space, identity and sequence common to the human species. But these universals ramify and take on local specification as soon as the infant enters the world of his particular speech. (Steiner, 1972, p. 20; quotes in body of text are Whorf’s words)

Steiner’s passage asserts that cognitive universals and differences exist side-by-side in humans.

We are all born into the world with similar linguistic features and capabilities, but as we grow, life trajectories and the languages we learn differentiate us, influencing how we think, feel, and ultimately who we become (Joseph, 2004).
Languages do not exist in a vacuum. Beyond simple tools of communication, languages symbolize group identity and carry ideological assumptions about the national, cultural, or ethnic groups they represent (Grosjean, 1982, p. 117). By proxy, these assumptions get projected onto members of a language group (Grosjean, 1982, p. 117). As Hall and Nilep argue in “Code-Switching, Identity, and Globalization,” modern nation-states often promote a certain language and/or way of speaking above others, using monolingualism as “an ideological apparition” which helps to empower native speakers of the language and disenfranchise foreigners (2015, p. 611). In this way, we can see that “language choice as an ideologically motivated and historically situated response to the state’s prioritization of certain language varieties over others” (Hall & Nilep, 2015, p. 603). Even though the US does not have an official language, English is granted hegemonic prestige while other “minority languages” are neglected and marginalized in efforts to consolidate US national identity, effectively limiting who is recognized as a ‘true’ American (Wiley, 2014).

Place plays an important role in the shape and use of language; that is, languages are always *emplaced* in contexts that influence their use (Steiner, 1972, p. 28). Although cognitive linguists may try to study languages independent of social context, linguistic anthropologists argue that separating languages from the people who speak them or the places they are spoken divorces languages from the extremely influential social meanings they carry. This thesis is written in line with a linguistic anthropology perspective which holds that languages are emplaced and embodied by their speakers.

### 2.1 – Critiques – Languages Do Not Affect Us

In 2014, Columbia linguist John McWhorter wrote *The Language Hoax: Why the World Looks the Same in Any Language*, a spin on Guy Deutscher’s 2010 work, *Through the language glass: why the world looks different in other languages*. McWhorter’s main point throughout the book is that
Whorfians are wrong to claim that distinct languages cause their speakers to see the world in distinct ways. As a universalist, he writes, “Language is a lens indeed, but upon humanity much more than upon humanities” (p. xx). However, McWhorter’s book is full of inconsistencies (Webster, 2015). First, it does not distinguish between linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism. Second, over and over it acknowledges, and at times praises, the validity of a new round of experimental psycholinguistic research known as Neo-Whorfian studies while arguing against linguistic determinism, a dead hypothesis which no modern linguist – Neo-Whorfian or otherwise – supports. For example, McWhorter praises Lera Boroditsky, cognitive linguist, for her 2007 study which showed that Russian speakers, with an obligatory distinction in their language between light-blue (“goluboy”) and dark-blue (“siniy”) – are faster to distinguish between light and dark shades of blue than English speakers, who only have one mandatory term, “blue” (Boroditsky, et al. 2007). McWhorter calls Boroditsky’s study a “neat Neo-Whorfian experiment,” saying that: “This shows, in a really ingenious way, that having different terms for light blue and dark blue makes people differentiate those colors more quickly than people whose languages has a single term for blue” (2014, p. 8). McWhorter’s critique, along with academics like Steven Pinker (2007), is that these results do not ‘prove’ that English speakers and Russian speakers have totally different worldviews. However, the argument now advanced by advocates of linguistic relativity is better expressed by Boroditsky in the following Economist excerpt:

While language is a central part of cognition, there is nothing magical about how language shapes thought. Languages shape our thinking in the same ways that going to medical school or learning to fly a plane also build expertise and transform what we can do. Different languages encourage different kinds of cognitive expertise in their speakers, and as a result, speakers of different languages end up thinking differently. (G.L., 2010)

Linguistic relativity began to regain favor in academia in the 1990s when relativists, among them Neo-Whorfians, began to re-investigate the links between language and perception (Gumperz
& Levinson, 1991). These scholars – Boroditsky, Dewaele, Pavlenko, and Ożańska-Ponikwia, among others – are reinvigorating the study of linguistic relativism, adopting a standpoint between relativity and universalism. They acknowledge that there are proven universals in human cognition while asserting that semantic and pragmatic differences between languages are also undeniable. These differences cause speakers of different languages to experience the world in unique ways, at least while they are speaking (Gumperz & Levinson, 1991, p. 615; Slobin 1996).

2.2 – Language & Identity

Identity, simply stated, is who you are (Joseph, 2004, p. 1), but constructing an identity is no simple task. On the inside, one has an ‘authentic’ identity which they feel is their ‘true’ self (Joseph, 2004, p. 8). However, as Joseph notes in Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious, “There are as many versions of ‘you’ as there are people whose mental space you inhabit… your own version of you is the real you, and yet no one but you can know that version. Each person can only proceed as if their version of you is real for them” (2004, p. 8, italics from original). The relationship between language and identity is dynamic. As Adrienne (L1-English, L2-Mandarin, L3-Spanish), told me in our interview, “I use language so actively to express all of the identities that I have – African-American, Native-American, queer woman, whatever – turning them off for certain people or turning them on for certain situations.” This highlights the importance of ‘persona,’ – “the self that one projects in everyday interactions” (Joseph, 2004, p. 9). As psychologist Carl Jung wrote, “the persona is that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is.” A source dedicated to Jung explains, “Persona is the public image of someone. The original word persona means mask. Persona is therefore a result of social adaptation that plays an important role in dealing with peers” (What Is Persona?, 2018).
Throughout the thesis, I argue that the use of a foreign language can bring about feelings in a speaker that culminate in a language-activated expression of self – a language-activated persona.

In the 2005 piece, “Identity and interaction: a sociocultural linguistic approach,” Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall theorize identity as “the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices;” that is, identities are not stagnant nor simple psychological states (p. 585). Individuals continuously construct their identities over their lifetimes and across interactions as they negotiate who they are in relation to the world (p. 585). Research participant Chris (L1-English, L2-Spanish, L3-German, L4-Urdu, L5-Hindi) explained: “You can’t have a personal identity without an external reference point. I can’t say whether I feel different in different languages without talking to someone else, but talking to them is also going to influence how I feel.” In Bucholtz and Hall’s sociocultural linguistic approach, the one I adhere to in this thesis, identity is defined as “the social positioning of the self and other” to highlight that identities are always constructed in relation to other identities which are “constituted through social action, and especially through language” (2005, p. 586, p. 588). This brings up the concept of indexicality, which is the “mechanism whereby identity is constituted” because it allows for the derivation of meaning from arbitrary language (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 594). As it applies to identity, “indexicality relies heavily upon ideological structures, for associations between language and identity are rooted in cultural beliefs and values – that is, ideologies – about the sorts of speakers who (can or should) produce particular sorts of language” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 594). I dive deeper into the importance of ideology in the “Language & Emotion” section. Until then, it is vital to note that identities are always created in social context: “Because identity is inherently relational, it will always be partial, produced through contextually situated and ideologically informed configurations of self and other” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 605). Furthermore, I suggest that because “entire linguistic systems such as languages and dialects may also be indexically tied
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to identity categories” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 597), languages and dialects can produce
different feelings in their speakers. The purpose of taking this sociocultural linguistic stance is to
highlight the dynamic nature of language, identity, and the indexical associations that follow.

2.3 – Language & Cognition

In a 1997 publication, Stephen Levinson, psycholinguist, argues that speakers’ directional skills
are shaped by the “frames of spatial reference” available in their native language (p. 98). Frames of
spatial reference are “coordinate systems used to compute and specify the location of objects with
respect to other objects;” they help people understand where things are (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 115).
An absolute frame relies on cardinal directions for subjective orientation, an intrinsic frame uses
objects for orientation, like landmarks, and a relative frame focuses on the relative position of the
individual (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 115). In Levinson’s studies of Guugu Yimithirr (GY) speakers in
Australia, he reports that GY speakers only use an absolute frame. The GY language lacks
equivalents for English words like “left,” “right,” “in front,” and “behind”; instead, they always
say things are “north,” “east,” “south,” or “west” (Levinson, 1997, p. 98). In consequence, GY
speakers are much better at orienting themselves in the bush than English speakers. To conclude
the article, Levinson writes that “Whorfian effects may in fact be demonstrable in the spatial
domain” (1997, p. 98).

In a continuation of Levinson’s work, Pavlenko, a specialist in second language
acquisition, found that the growing influence of English on Australian aboriginal groups makes it
so young GY speakers “have abandoned the absolute frame of spatial reference and embraced the
relative frame, encoded in their dominant language English” (2014, p. 125). One’s native language
affects their conceptualization of reality, but it does not determine their understanding of the
world. When languages meet in the mind, “cognitive restructuring” takes place, giving bi- and multi-linguals access to new vocabulary and grammar options, expanding the number of avenues available for the perception and expression of experience, including but not limited to new frames of spatial reference (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 168).

In a 2001 study, Boroditsky conducted experiments showing that English speakers and Mandarin speakers conceptualize time in different ways: when talking about temporal events, English speakers did so on a horizontal axis and Mandarin speakers did so on a vertical axis (Boroditsky, 2001). The later in life the L1-Mandarin, L2-English bilinguals learned English, the more likely they were to exhibit a “vertical bias” (Boroditsky, 2001, p. 14). Thus, linguistic differences can reflect cognitive differences in the conceptualization of time. Boroditsky is careful to distinguish her findings from linguistic determinism, concluding that while “language is a powerful tool in shaping thought... [it] does not entirely determine one's thinking in the strong Whorfian sense” (2001).

In 2012, Aneta Pavlenko conducted study similar to Boroditsky’s 2007 Russian/English blue test in which she asked L1-Russian, L2-English speakers and L1-English, L2-Russian speakers to describe paintings with various shades of blue. Of course, native English speakers *can* distinguish between light and dark blue, but their language does not require them to. Pavlenko found that Russian-English bilinguals “encoded the light blue/dark blue contrast significantly less frequently than Russian monolinguals – instead, they favored a single term, *goluboy*, even in contexts that required *siniy*” (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 62). This shows the cognitive influence of English as an L2: it simplifies the way Russian speakers think about blue. The obligatory categories of a language affect speakers’ conceptualization of colors, but speaking a language does not *determine* the colors one can understand or express (Boroditsky, et al., 2007).
Dan Slobin, writing from the perspective of contemporary psycholinguistics, emphasizes the importance of studying the dynamic interaction between thinking and speaking, opposed to the static categories of language and thought that have been discussed by past Whorfians (1996). The purpose of this conceptual shift is to highlight that while people are speaking, they are thinking in a language, and this constrains speakers to the grammatical categories available in that language: “Whatever else language may do in human thought and action, it surely directs us to attend – while speaking – to the dimensions of experience that are enshrined in grammatical categories” (1996, p. 71, bold from original). The shift also reflects the dynamic nature of human interaction and experience; “thinking for speaking is not a Whorfian straitjacket” (Slobin, 1996, p. 86). To test this point, Slobin had preschool, nine-year-old, and adult English, Spanish, German and Hebrew speakers describe images from a children’s book. The participants described the images in ways reflecting the grammatical constraints of their language (Slobin, 1996, p. 83). People can understand and express things outside of their language’s grammar constraints, but they will only naturally note those things that are available to them in their language (1996, p. 76). The grammar of one’s native language acts as a framework for the things they can and cannot naturally express, guiding their attention towards or away from certain expressions (Slobin, 1996, p. 89). Slobin concludes the paper:

We can only talk and understand one another in terms of a particular language. The language or languages we learn in childhood are not neutral coding systems of an objective reality. Rather, each one is a subjective orientation to the world of human experience, and this orientation affects the ways in which we think while we are speaking” (1996, p. 91, bold from original).

2.4 – Language & Feeling

Studies of the relationship between language and thought teach us that languages can and do influence people in unique ways. Now, I will present past research on the relationship between
language and feeling to preface the work of this thesis. From here on, I will be weaving in my own interview and survey data with the outside research I present. Qualitative data comes from the 60 interviews I conducted with bi- and multi-lingual students at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and quantitative data comes from the 55 survey responses garnered on my “Language & Feelings” Google Forms survey. A detailed explanation of my methodology can be found on page 33.

Feelings are not inconsequential sensations but forces that shape personas and identities. As Joseph writes, “There is a widespread tendency to locate who one is – one’s subjective self – in one’s individual feelings” (2004, p. 17). Further, as Chris noted in our interview, “We require language to describe how we feel,” and our everyday feelings help define who we are.

A major guiding influence for the present study is Pavlenko and Dewaele’s Bilingual Emotion Questionnaire (BEQ). As an online survey open from 2001-2003, the BEQ garnered 1,039 valid responses from bi- and multi-linguals all over the world (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 198). The survey first gathered demographic information about respondents, then it asked questions about their feelings and emotions in the languages they speak. Answers were given on a five-point Likert-type scale (Dewaele and Wilson, 2010). One crucial question asked, “Do you feel like a different person sometimes when you use your different languages?” Pavlenko and Dewaele found that 65% responded “Yes,” 26% responded “No,” and 6% responded with an ambiguous, “no but…” answer (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 198). A major finding of the BEQ was that speakers’ L1s felt most authentic to them, with authenticity decreasing from the L2 to L3 and so on (Dewaele, 2016, p. 94). Also, the order of language acquisition, language dominance, context, and age of acquisition affected participants’ “language emotionality ratings” (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 292). Here, participants’ dominant language was the one that they preferred to use for emotional expression. Most felt that their L1 provided them the most emotionality; from the L2-LX, emotionality ratings declined: “L1 taboo and swearwords were rated as significantly more emotional and nearly half of
the respondents judged the sentence ‘I love you’ to have greater emotional weight in the L1” (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 292). Hereafter, ‘LX’ means any one of participants’ languages, where “X” stands for either 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 – first language, second language, third language, fourth language, or fifth language. Interestingly, those who learned their L2 early in life were more likely to describe their L2 as emotional, often preferring, for instance, to express anger in the L2 (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 293).

Using the BEQ as a template, Rosemary Wilson created a “Feelings Questionnaire” in 2008 that was given to a group of online French students, for which “in theory, contact with a foreign language was separate from direct contact with the target culture and social contact with other learners, thus isolating the effect of language alone” (Dewaele and Wilson, 2010, p. 112). For the first part of the questionnaire, students filled out an OCEAN personality test, a method of determining a person’s Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Then they answered 29 questions, five-point Likert-style like the BEQ, to further investigate findings from the BEQ. Wilson found that her participants often felt most outgoing in a foreign language and change their body language and voice pitch with spoken language (Dewaele & Nakano, 2013, p. 110). Wilson also found that females and participants with higher emotional intelligence levels report feeling different more often (Dewaele & Nakano, 2013, p. 110), suggesting that innate personality traits can affect self-perception of difference.

In a 2013 publication aptly titled, “Multilinguals Perceptions of Feeling Different When Switching Languages,” Dewaele & Nakano tested 106 adult multilinguals to see whether they feel more or less logical, serious, emotional, fake, or different, in their L1 vs. L2, L2 vs. L3, or L3 vs. L4. Overall, compared to their L1, participants reported feeling less logical, less serious, less emotional, more fake and more different in their L2, L3, and L4 (Dewaele & Nakano, 2013, p. 110).
Both self-reported proficiency and age of acquisition were found to be predictors for participants’ feelings; gender, age, and education level were found to be unrelated to participants’ feelings (Dewaele & Nakano, 2013, p. 116). On page 30 I present my findings on the influence of sex. In sum, “learning a language is not just about learning words and grammar, but also about taking on a new role and knowing how to behave according to how that role is defined” (Dewaele & Nakano, 2013, p. 109).

In continuation of his 2013 study, Dewaele published, “Why do so many bi- and multilinguals feel different when switching languages?” in 2016. For this, Dewaele analyzed BEQ data from 1,005 bi- and multi-linguals. Although participants often noted in interviews that feelings of authenticity felt related to their proficiency level in the language, context of acquisition, and frequency of use, Dewaele finds no significant statistical relationship between these variables and feelings of difference (2016, p. 101). Dewaele acknowledges that this is contrary to his and Nakano’s 2013 findings and suggests, following Grosjean (2012), that feelings of difference arising from a change in context may be due to just that – the context – and not differences innate in the languages. Dewaele concludes that while bi- and multi-lingual speakers often do feel different in different languages, they “do not always know” why this occurs (2016, p. 104).

2.5 – Language & Personality

In my interviews, more than 75% of participants told me that they feel their personality changes with the languages they speak. I hypothesize this is a consequence of both linguistic and cultural factors. Stephanie (L1-English, L2-Japanese), for example, says, “Because my second language is so drastically different than my native language and culture my personality shifts in order to accommodate the social expectations per the country of origin.” I believe this statement in the Veltkamp article, “Is personality modulated by language?” introduces the topic well: “It has long
been observed that different languages carry different emotional tones, and multilinguals behave and feel differently when speaking one language versus another” (Veltkamp et al, 2012, p. 497).

In a 2012 study, applied linguist Ożańska-Ponikwia asks, “What has personality and emotional intelligence to do with ‘feeling different’ while using a foreign language?” Personality is here understood to be stable once an individual reaches adulthood. She cites prior research (Dewaele and Van Oudenhoven, 2009; Koven, 2001; Ramirez-Esparza et al., 2006) to build a basis for the hypothesis that polyglots who report feeling different in different languages do so because of certain personality traits and higher levels of what they call ‘emotional intelligence’ (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2012, p. 219). To test the hypothesis, Ożańska-Ponikwia administered an OCEAN personality test and a Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire to 102 Polish-English bilinguals (2012, p. 217). It was found that participants who received higher Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Openness to experience scores reported feeling different in their L2 more often than introverted participants (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2012, p. 228).

With regards to emotional intelligence, Ożańska-Ponikwia found a positive correlation between feeling different in foreign languages and emotion expression, empathy, social awareness, emotion perception, emotion management, emotionality, and sociability (2012, p. 230). This suggests that people who are more open, cooperative, and friendly in their social lives are more likely to seek out learning a foreign language, and once they have learned the foreign language, these individuals are more likely to notice cognitive, behavioral, or emotional changes that accompany the new language (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2012, p. 230). In accordance with Chen and Bond (2010), Ożańska-Ponikwia argues that bilinguals’ different languages do not bring out totally different personalities, but when they switch languages, they change their behavior in accordance with the language’s linguistic and cultural norms (2012, p. 231). It is difficult to isolate variables
to determine whether personality changes accompanying a change in language are due to differences in the languages themselves or due to cultural associations, but the changes are undeniable (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2012, p. 222).

In their study of Chinese-English bilinguals in Hong Kong, “Two Languages, Two Personalities? Examining Language Effects on the Expression of Personality in a Bilingual Context,” Sylvia Chen and Michael Bond test the cultural accommodation hypothesis, which argues:

Language activates bilinguals’ perception of differences in cultural norms, which then guide their behavior and affect the expression of their personality… The press to make culturally congruent responses in a cooperative interpersonal exchange then motivates the bilingual to accommodate his or her expressions to the interlocutor’s cultural norms, personality, values, and beliefs. (2010, p. 1515)

Chen and Bond’s study validated the cultural accommodation hypothesis. The bilinguals embodied the socio-cultural stereotypes associated with the language they were speaking (Chen and Bond, 2010, p. 1524). Since participants believed Extraversion and Openness to experience to be Western traits, emblems of Western “individualistic” culture, when speaking English, participants were perceived to have these personality traits. When speaking Cantonese, participants were perceived to be more honest, humble and friendly, traits typically associated with “collectivist” Chinese culture (Chen and Bond, 2010, p. 1524). The authors also note the relevance of “communication accommodation theory”: depending on their goals of interaction, speakers will code-switch to accommodate for the way their interlocutor speaks. For example, if the speaker wants to be understood, then they may switch to the interlocutor’s language (Chen and Bond, 2010, p. 1526). These findings support Koven’s (2001) notion of “cultural frame switching” which suggests that inner personality does not change with language, but the presentation of “cultural selves” does (p. 98).
To test whether specific languages carry with them certain personality traits, Veltkamp, Recio, Jacobs, and Conrad tested German and Spanish-speaking late bilinguals (those who learn their L2 in adulthood) for personality traits using the OCEAN test (2012). One exam was given in German to L2 German-speakers and another was given in Spanish to L2 Spanish-speakers (Veltkamp, et al., 2012, p. 496). The authors found evidence to support the idea of cultural frame shifts: “regardless of individuals’ first language, both groups scored higher on Extraversion and Neuroticism when Spanish was the test language.” When German was the test language, in contrast, Agreeability was rated higher (Veltkamp, et al., 2012, p. 495). For the speakers in the study, Extraversion and Neuroticism was associated with Spanish-speaking culture whereas Agreeability was associated with German culture (p. 496). Even if individuals do not feel that personality changes with language, learning a second language can be “a means to provide them with a new culturally framed and language-modulated persona” (Veltkamp, et al., 2012, p. 498).

At the end of the paper, the authors state:

“Our data demonstrating consistent cultural frame shifts in personality display for late second-languages learners—regardless of which is their first language or cultural background—suggest that learning a second language always implies the automatic representation of new cultural frames associated with this language. These in turn provide the individual with a new range of perceiving and displaying his or her own personality.” (Veltkamp, et al., 2012, p. 502)

The notion that foreign languages can unlock “a new culturally framed and language-modulated persona” is a fundamental argument to the development of this thesis.

2.6 – Language & Emotion

There is some evidence that all humans share a set of basic emotions. This view presumes that basic emotions transcend both language and culture (Wilce, 2014). However, linguistic anthropologists are skeptical about this universal understanding of emotions. To them, language is
a “cultural resource and a tool for carrying out social action” and thus cannot be meaningfully separated from its context of use (Wilce, 2014, p. 78). Further, the functions of emotions in social interactions are much more intriguing to linguistic anthropologists than is the debate over the existence of a universal set of basic emotions (Wilce, 2014, p. 79). Emotions are not simply inner phenomena waiting to be outwardly expressed, they are “embedded in interaction and public performance;” emotions are emplaced and embodied in contexts (Wilce, 2014, p. 84). Since linguistic interactions convey and induce feelings, speakers’ language use affects emotions and emotions affect language use (Wilce, 2014, p. 79).

For example, speaking one’s mother tongue may bring about feelings of confidence, while speaking “oppressed languages” may bring about feelings of shame; if a speaker is feeling uncomfortable, a switch to their first language may make them feel more confident (Wilce, 2014, p. 82). These feelings are often created or amplified by language ideologies (Irvine, 2016). Maria, (L1-Spanish, L2-English), grew up in Ecuador with her American dad and Ecuadorian mom. As she explained to me in our interview, even though the Quichua culture and language is very present in Ecuador, “There is zero to very little representation of indigenous people in politics… Quichua is being lost because parents aren’t teaching their kids. They believe their kids won’t be successful in the language.” Spanish is Ecuador’s official language. Nation-states often use official language[s] to consolidate national identity around a privileged group which speaks that language (Joseph, 2004, p. 123). In Ecuador, the Spanish language is privileged in political and economic spheres (Maria). It is the language of upward socio-economic mobility, thus granted ideological power over minority languages like Quichua.

As a “compound” bilingual who grew up speaking both Spanish and English in the home since birth, Maria can express emotions in either language, but the contexts in which she uses the
languages makes her prefer English in certain contexts and Spanish in other contexts (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 18). When I asked Maria which language she prefers to use for emotional expression, she told me:

I think it depends on the context. I feel more confident expressing joy and anger in Spanish, but I express frustration in English. When I get really frustrated, I’ll cuss in English… in a casual conversation or being loving, I speak in Spanish, but when I speak about more serious things or about school, it’s usually in English.

Maria’s statement highlights the vital importance of context. Because she attended English-speaking schools in Ecuador, using English in academic situations and Spanish in social situations, English became her preferred means of expressing “more serious things.”

Languages also carry with them sensory experiences (Wilce, 2014). For interview participant Maggie (L1-English, L2-German, L3-Spanish), speaking Spanish brings about sensory experiences which she associates with Spanish culture:

Spanish is like the sexiest language in the world. Even if I’m not able to complete full sentences, just having that feeling of the language in my mouth is very beautiful, relaxed and easy, and those are qualities that people identify with the culture: very laid-back, warm, happy. Language and culture are like one in the same! When you’re a learner, you associate things because to understand the language you have to understand the culture and vice versa. Even if it’s just an intellectual pursuit at first, it evolves into this very interesting, sensorial experience. With the sensorial you have subjective emotions, like how do you feel about spicy food, hot weather, or the ocean?

Here we can see that Maggie’s feelings about the Spanish language are at least partially shaped by her ideological belief that Spanish is “the sexiest language in the world” (Wilce, 2014, p. 84; for more see Ochs, 2012; Gal, 2013; Harkness, 2015). This ideological belief is necessarily a product of the American context: “Language ideologies are inherently plural: because they are positioned, there is always another position – another perspective from which the world of discursive practice is discursively viewed” (Irvine, 2016). Maria’s following quote illustrates this point:
At home, ‘gringas’ are very much sexualized… I’m objectified in that way because I have light skin. On the other hand, in the USA, there’s the opposite where all the Latinas are exotic, hot, sexy, and must also be good at salsa. I’m like no, I’m just myself, don’t objectify me. I think my biggest struggle has been trying to merge my two nationalities and the ideologies that come along with them.

Language ideologies in America are different than language ideologies elsewhere in the world – in this case, Latin America. Whether it’s being cat-called on the street or sitting in a classroom, “Even the most mundane of everyday conversations are impinged upon by ideological and material constructs that produce relations of power” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 607).

Finally, the multimodal dynamic between language and emotion affects how individuals construct and maintain identities (Wilce, 2014, p. 82). Maria’s two languages – complete with their national, cultural, ideological, and emotional associations – absolutely contribute to who she is:

I kinda belong in both places [Ecuador and America] but I don’t belong in either… It’s one thing to be an American woman, it’s one thing to be an Ecuadorian woman, but it’s something else entirely to be both. I think that being bilingual this way is something that culturally is just starting to come to light.

So, are emotions universal or do they vary speaker to speaker? I argue they are both. In a review of Ożańska-Ponikwia’s Emotions from a bilingual point of view, Alessandra Panicacci writes, “individuals are equipped with a universal set of emotions culture-specifically shaped so to create an ultimately unique collection” (2014, p. 728). All of us may have the capacity to feel emotions like happiness and sadness, but to stop there with a universal claim would be to omit the power of context. The understanding and expression of emotions varies from place to place.

2.7 – Areas Where This Thesis Sides with Past Research

In accordance with Dewaele and Pavlenko’s BEQ findings, my data shows that the majority of survey respondents, 81.8% (n = 45), said that “yes” they do feel different in different languages.
Six participants gave in-between answers, saying they “sometimes” or “mildly” feel different in different languages. This means that 92.73% of participants, \( n = 51 \), do feel different in some degree when using different languages. Only four participants said “no” they do not feel different on the survey. Of the five participants who did not fill out the survey, only one, Alex (L1-Catalan, L2-Spanish, L3-English), told me that they do not feel different at all in different languages. Alex told me that he feels like exactly the same person when using all three of his languages.

In their analysis of the BEQ results, Dewaele and Pavlenko found that participants who acquired another language at a young age (typically below five years old), were much more likely to report being able to effectively express emotions in the language, likely because they have grown up with the language so it may feel like an authentic part of their identity (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 293). Participants in this study support the above claim. For example, Zakariya (L1-English, L2-Arabic) and his sister Rana (L1-English, L2-Arabic, L3-French) were born and raised in Boulder, primarily using Arabic in the household and English in other spheres of life. Zakariya says, “When I’m really emotional, I’ll switch to Arabic,” and Rana told me, “When I’m really angry I’ll switch to Arabic.” For both people, Arabic was learned at a young age and is now used for emotional expression in certain contexts.

Even though I did not administer personality tests, when asked on the survey, “Do you feel your personality changes in different languages?” 72.7% of participants \( n = 40 \) responded “yes,”
five participants responded with in-between answers like “maybe” or “not because of the language, but because of the social/cultural setting,” and ten answered “no.”

This is supportive of Veltkamp et al’s (2012) findings that languages modulate personality.

In her 2008 study, Wilson reports that her participants feel their body language changes with spoken language. In this study, 67.3% of participants (n = 37) report that their body language changes in different languages, providing support for Wilson’s finding.

Wilson (2008) also found that voice pitch changes when speakers change languages. I cannot say this is true all the time, but Stephanie supports this claim: “In Japanese, I raise my voice higher because that’s how girls speak in Japan. The more formal you get, the higher your voice will get.” Here, a simple change of voice pitch highlights a cultural frame shift. When speaking Japanese, Stephanie conforms to Japanese cultural norms.

2.8 – Areas Where This Thesis Runs Contrary to Past Research
Wilson (2008) reports that females in her study were more likely to notice and report feeling different in different languages than men. Ożańska-Ponikwia’s 2015 work, “Are women more emotionally skilled when it comes to expression of emotions in the foreign language?” refutes Wilson’s finding: “the results of the t-test show that both males and females declare similar frequency of expressing emotions in their L2” (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2015, p. 529). Dewaele and Nakano (2013) side with Ożańska-Ponikwia, finding that gender is not related to feelings of difference in a language (p. 116). The results of my analysis also refute Wilson’s hypothesis that women report feeling more different in their foreign languages than men.

Twenty-nine women and twenty-six men responded to my “Language & Feelings” survey. To test whether the women reported feeling more different than the men in the study, a MANOVA test was run which compared female responses to these seven questions for their L1 and L2 with male responses to the same seven questions for their L1 and L2:

1) How confident do you feel in your LX?
2) How comfortable do you feel in your LX?
3) How much do you enjoy your LX?
4) How well do you feel you can you express emotions in your LX?
5) How well do you feel you can you express humor in your LX?
6) How academic do you feel in your LX?
7) How different (from your "true self") do you feel in your LX?

For both males and females, I used L1 responses to each of the above questions as a baseline and calculated the change in responses to the same questions for their L2 responses. Then, a MANOVA test compared female L1-L2 response changes to male L1-L2 response changes. The MANOVA test found that the change in answers given by women was not significantly different than the change in answers given by men, overall, when responding to these seven questions ($p = .6$), potentially invalidating Wilson’s hypothesis. To further test whether females gave significantly different answers than males to any one of the above questions, individual ANOVA tests were run.
The results of these ANOVA tests were consistent with overall MANOVA findings: females do not feel significantly more or less confident \((p = .79)\), comfortable \((p = .28)\), enjoyment \((p = .73)\), able to express emotions \((p = .55)\), funny \((p = .19)\), academic \((p = .38)\), or different from their true selves \((p = .38)\), than men. For my data set, I find that sex cannot be considered a predictor for feelings in a language.

Another area where the results of this study contradict prior literature is with regards to the effects of self-reported proficiency levels on feelings of difference. Although Dewaele and Nakano (2013) found that participants’ self-reported proficiency levels were predictors for their feelings of difference in LXs, Dewaele (2016) found that self-reported proficiency levels were not significantly related to feelings of difference.

To test for the effects of self-reported proficiency on feelings of difference in my data set, I first ran a MANOVA test to see how participants’ self-reported L1 proficiency levels affected their responses to the eight language-induced feelings questions. The extremely small \(p\) values for L1 \((p = 2.122e-09, \text{ AKA } p = .00000002122)\) and L2 \((p = 5.544e-13, \text{ AKA } p = .00000000000544)\) tell that language proficiency does generally affect how participants feel in a language.

To investigate how proficiency levels affected individual feelings, ANOVA tests were run to compare self-reported L1 and L2 proficiency scores to scores for each of the eight language-induced feelings. It was found that L1 proficiency was a significant predictor for participants’ feelings of confidence \((p = 1.326e-05)\), comfort \((p = 9.807e-12)\), enjoyment \((p = .0002232)\), humor \((p = 1.934e-05)\), academic-ness \((p = .002859)\), and difference from true selves \((p = 7.741e-06)\) in the L1. L1 proficiency is not a significant predictor for participant’s ability to express emotions \((p = .2252)\) or feelings of authenticity \((p = .5475)\) in the L1.
In contrast, participants’ L2 self-reported proficiency scores were found to be significant predictors for all eight feelings in the L2: confidence (p = 1.55e-06), comfort (p = 7.766e-11), enjoyment (p = 2.2e-16), ability to express emotions (p = .03739), humor (p = 1.478e-09), academic-ness (p = 8.247e-07), difference from true self (p = 1.378e-07), and authenticity (p = .01386).

The discrepancy between L1 ability to express emotions and authenticity p values and L2 ability to express emotions and authenticity p values tells that the ability to express emotions and feel authentic in one’s L1 is likely not influenced by proficiency level, but the ability to express emotions and feel authentic in one’s L2 is likely influenced by proficiency level.

2.9 – Narrowing scope

Above I have weighed-in on some of the areas where my research supports – and refutes – findings from past studies. Henceforth, after I present my methodology in the following section, I provide and discuss results of this thesis, consistently arguing that the context in which a speaker learns and uses a language – along with the associated language ideologies – are the strongest forces that affect how the speaker feels when using the language. The feelings they experience when using a language culminate in a total language experience that the speaker expresses through a persona. For example, Julienne told me in our interview, “Learning a language means learning a new way of expressing yourself. When I speak Spanish, I feel more confident.” Different languages can activate different personas.
3.0 – Methods

I collected data for this thesis by interviewing and surveying 60 bi- and multi-lingual CU Boulder students from a variety of linguistic, cultural, and national backgrounds. The requirements for participation in the study were: 1) participant speaks two or more languages, and 2) participant is a CU Boulder student. The data-collection process was split into two parts: an initial face-to-face interview lasting about an hour, then an online Google Forms survey, “Language & Feelings” that participants filled out on their own time.

To recruit participants, I reached out to multilingual peers and CU Boulder clubs, asking if they would be willing to talk with me about feeling different, or not, in the different languages they speak. Specifically, I stated: “My research is seeking to investigate how multilingual speakers feel that their identity and/or their expression of their identity changes when they speak in different languages.” Once participants volunteered to speak with me, we set up an interview in a CU Boulder location, generally Norlin Library. The purpose of the interview was to get to know the participant: what languages they speak, when they learned them, how proficient they are in them, and if they do feel different in them, how and why? I voice-recorded the interviews using a password-protected iPhone app and took notes on my laptop.

After I conducted and transcribed all 60 in-person interviews, I identified commonalities and wrote a Google Forms survey, “Language & Feelings.” The questions on the “Language & Feelings” survey were explicitly written to investigate trends that came up in the interviews. All participants received the same survey and the same questions were asked for each of participants’ languages. Its purpose was to quantify subjective feelings in a standardized way, allowing me to further assess trends and identify statistically significant relationships. It garnered 55 responses. To determine significant relationships, MANOVA and ANOVA statistical tests were run. The
specifics of these tests on gender, proficiency, and multiculturalism can be found in the corresponding sections on pages 30, 31 and 39. The full list of survey questions can be found in the appendix. Some questions necessitated “yes” or “no” responses. Other questions concerning participants’ LXs used a five-point, Likert-style scale in which a value of “1” means “not at all” and a value of “5” means “extremely.”

Every participant signed a consent form approved by the IRB acknowledging their participation in the study. Some opted for the use of pseudonyms. To respect their anonymity, I have changed their names and omitted personally identifiable information from the thesis.

Some possible limitations to the study should be acknowledged. Since participants were recruited on a voluntary basis, I suspect the research attracted a disproportionate number of individuals who do feel different in their different languages. Further, participants may have exaggerated or diminished the degree to which they feel different in different languages. The interviews did not all last the same amount of time. The “Language & Feelings” survey garnered 55 responses to L1 and L2 questions, but only 26 responses to L3 questions, eight responses to L4 questions, and two responses to L5 questions, despite the fact that many more participants told me in interviews that they speak three, four, or five languages. I suspect this is because participants got bored with the survey and did not want to fill out all its sections.

3.1 – Demographics

All 60 participants live in the Denver/Boulder area, attend the University of Colorado, Boulder, and speak English. Eleven participants are graduate students and 49 are undergraduates. Coincidentally, there were 30 female and 30 male participants. Overall, the participants represent 20 nationalities and speak 33 different languages. The nationalities represented are: American, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Danish, Norwegian, Kuwaiti, Mexican, Bolivian, Ecuadorian, Spanish,
Nepalese, Malaysian, Russian, Costa Rican, Iraqi, Brazilian, German, Egyptian, and Peruvian.

There are 60 English-speakers, 39 Spanish-speakers, 15 French-speakers, 10 German-speakers, 10 Mandarin-speakers, 10 Arabic-speakers, seven Japanese-speakers, six Hindi-speakers, four Italian-speakers, four Portuguese-speakers, three Catalan-speakers, two Malay-speakers, two Russian-speakers, two Vietnamese-speakers, two Korean-speakers, and two Tamil-speakers. The following languages and dialects only have one speaker: Norwegian, Malayalam, Nepali, Nanjing, Cantonese, Manchurian, Polish, Urdu, Tigringa, Indonesian, Danish, Marathi, Gujarati, Bavarian, Telugu, Romanian, and American Sign Language.
4.0 – Results

By analyzing interview trends and survey responses, I find that participants report that languages affect their feelings of: 1) confidence, 2) comfort, 3) enjoyment, 4) emotional expression, 5) humor, 6) academic-ness, 7) formality, and 8) authenticity. Feelings tied to languages are not limited to these categories, but these language-induced feelings were the ones that consistently surfaced in participants’ interviews.

I elevate authenticity to a higher status than the rest of the language-induced feelings. This is because one’s ability to feel authentic in a language is the result of feelings 1-7 and authenticity is directly related to identity. For example, if someone is normally outgoing, meaning they have an outgoing personality as part of their ‘true’ identity, but they feel unconfident in their L2, meaning they have a relatively shy L2 persona, then they will likely not feel authentic in their L2. As Dyllan’s (L1-English, L2-Japanese, L3-French) statement exemplifies, “The foreign languages I speak are always going to be foreign to me. No matter how proficient I become, they’re always going to be separate from me in some meaningful way.” While this is often the case, one’s true identity is not always associated with their L1. Identity is extremely personal and can only be defined by individuals themselves. With that being said, as I show in the “Coherence Systems” section, regardless of how a polyglot defines their identity, the languages they speak are necessarily differential means of expression; if a speaker feels true to their identity in their L3, for example, this is because the feelings they experience when using their L3 culminate in an authentic-feeling L3-persona. Although authenticity in this sense is a feeling, I will continue to privilege it above the other language-induced feelings.

Furthermore, the feelings one experiences when using a language are determined by a plethora of factors, but there are ten principal influences that I find affect how participants feel
when using a language: 1) context of acquisition and context of use, 2) ideological associations, 3) proficiency level, 4) accent level, 5) group belonging, 6) frequency of use, 7) perceived translatability, 8) age and order of acquisition, 9) the intended purpose of the language, and 10) perceived vocabulary or grammar constraints. Participants’ feelings in a language are not determined by one of these linguistic feeling-inducing influences, but by a user-specific combination. These ten influences will be highlighted throughout the following sections with participants’ quotes and survey responses, but the remainder of the thesis must be narrowed to what I find to be participants’ most common and compelling reasons for feeling different in a language: where and when they learned the language, where and when they use the language, and their associated ideological beliefs. These are points one and two from the above list.

4.1 – Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>L1 55 responses</th>
<th>L2 55 responses</th>
<th>L3 26 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How proficient do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How confident do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How comfortable do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you enjoy your LX?</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well do you feel you can express emotions in your LX?</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well do you feel you can express humor in your LX?</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How academic do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How authentic to your identity do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How different (from your &quot;true self&quot;) do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Values are out of five. A score of five represents “extremely,” and a score of one represents “not at all.” L4 and L5 are not included because they only garnered eight and two responses, respectively. *
The above table shows that participants’ feelings of proficiency, confidence, comfort, enjoyment, emotional expression, humor, academic-ness, and authenticity, on average, decrease from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L3. The same trend holds on the flip side for feelings of difference: participants feel the least different from their true selves in their L1 and the most different from their true selves in their L3, with L2 in the middle. For reference, Table 1 and the data breakdown for each of these questions is in the appendix. It should be noted that the above values are averages; not all participants’ feelings follow these trends and these outliers will be discussed later. Nonetheless, these feelings culminate in a persona that the speaker feels is authentic or inauthentic (in varying degrees) to their identity. To illustrate, since sense of humor is a part of identity, the inability to express humor in a language can make a person feel inhibited. As Zakariya says, “Who I am cannot be expressed through just Arabic. Humor is a big part of my essence, and so if I can’t express that through Arabic, then a lot of my essence is not expressed.” In the following section I propose and test a hypothesis about the influence of a multicultural upbringing on language-induced feelings.

4.2 – The Effects of Multiculturalism on Language-Induced Feelings

As I was conducting interviews, I noticed that many participants brought up the relationship between language and culture without being asked. Adrienne, for example, told me: “Language in my mind is so closely connected to culture. I very much see language as a potential window into culture and identity.” Julienne said that “we learn culture through language,” and Dyllan brought up that “language affects culture and culture affects language.” I decided to pay attention to cultural effects on participants’ feelings and I noticed a pattern: participants who learned a second language in the home tended to come from multicultural households, whereas those who learned a second language in the classroom tended to come from non-multicultural households. Further, participants who learned their L2 in the home tended to feel more comfortable or humorous in the
language, while participants who learned their L2 in a classroom tended to feel more academic or formal in the language. In this sense, I am treating multiculturalism as a proxy for language context of acquisition and use. For example, Mussie (L1-Tigringa, L2-English) grew up in a multicultural Ethiopian/American household in Colorado. Although his parents did speak some English to him as a child, Mussie mostly learned English in school; Tigringa was the language primarily spoken in the home. Therefore, he told me, “In English I’m way more academic because I’ve always had to write papers and such in English. I can write in Tigringa, but I’m slow.”

I propose a hypothesis: when comparing L2 survey responses to L1 survey responses, non-multicultural participants will feel more different than multicultural participants because the presence of cultural ties to a language likely means the language was learned and used in the home since birth, and growing up with a language can make it feel like an authentic part of one’s identity (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 293). Further, because the non-multicultural individuals will have likely learned their L2 in a classroom environment, I predict that the L2 will feel more distant from their true self.

To test this hypothesis, I turned to my survey data. On the “Language & Feelings” survey, I asked, “You’re multilingual. Do you consider yourself to be multicultural?” and 39 participants responded “yes,” 14 participants responded “no,” and two participants responded with uncertain answers that were discarded for statistical analysis.

You're multilingual. Do you consider yourself to be multicultural?

55 responses

- 70.9% Yes
- 25.5% No
- 0.7% I feel like I know enough about my L2 and L3 languages’ cultures to understand, but I don’t practice many of those cultural norms. I’m just aware of them and their meaning.
- 0.7% It’s complicated.
The first step of statistical analysis sought to determine whether the multicultural participants feel significantly different, overall, than non-multicultural participants. A MANOVA test determined the answer to be yes, \( p = .018 \). Then, I wanted to know how different multicultural participants’ responses were from non-multicultural responses to each of the following questions:

1) How confident do you feel in your LX?
2) How comfortable do you feel in your LX?
3) How much do you enjoy your LX?
4) How well do you feel you can express emotions in your LX?
5) How well do you feel you can express humor in your LX?
6) How academic do you feel in your LX?
7) How different (from your "true self") do you feel in your LX?

To test this, individual ANOVA tests were run to compare the difference between multicultural participants’ L1 and L2 responses to the difference between non-multicultural participants’ L1 and L2 responses to these seven questions. Here, L1 scores are used as a baseline for comparison with L2 scores.

The results show that the most significant feeling of difference was humor, \( p = .003 \). After running more tests to determine the direction of influence, it was determined that multicultural participants reported feeling, on average, feel .4 units funnier in their L1 than their L2. Non-multicultural participants reported feeling, on average, 1.7 units funnier in their L1 than their L2. Units correspond with the five-point scale used in the survey. This means that non-multicultural participants find it more difficult, on average, to express humor in their L2 than multicultural participants. This may be because L2 classrooms typically do not emphasize humor. Interestingly, there were eight participants who felt funnier in their L2 than their L1.

The other significant feeling of difference was confidence, \( p = .024 \). While this lies well-under the traditional .05 \( p \) value threshold used to determine significance, it should be noted that the number of tests run render a \( p \) value of .024 plausibly significant. After running tests to
determine the direction of influence, it was determined that multicultural participants reported feeling, on average, .4 units more confident in their L1 than their L2. Non-multicultural participants reported feeling, on average, 1.2 units more confident in their L1 than their L2. This means that non-multicultural participants feel, on average, less confident in their L2 than multicultural participants. This may be because the typical multicultural participant has been speaking their second language for their whole life. Interestingly, there were also eight participants who reported feeling more confident in their L2 than their L1.

Six out of the eight participants who reported feeling more confident in their L2 than their L1 were the same participants who reported feeling funnier in their L2 than their L1. All six of these participants grew up in multicultural households and learned English as a second language. Now, since they live in the US and attend university in Boulder, Colorado, English is their dominant language and the language that makes them feel most confident and humorous.

Individual ANOVA tests showed that multicultural participants’ responses to survey questions about the remaining five feelings – comfort (p = .22), enjoyment (p = .25), emotional expression (p = .097), academic-ness (p = .31), and difference from true self (p = .25) – are not significantly different from non-multicultural participants’ survey responses.

In sum, multicultural participants report feeling, on average, significantly more humorous and confident in their L2 than non-multicultural participants, perhaps facilitating their authentic expression of identity in the L2. I cannot definitively claim that this is due to the context in which participants acquired and use their second language, but my qualitative data leads me to hypothesize that this is the case. As Gillian (L1-German, L2-English, L3-Italian) explained to me:

While not as emotional, I do feel like I can be more humorous in German than Italian because I have always spoken German with my family and humor has always been a big
element of communication between my parents and I… [In Italian] my humor is very limited, and I think this is because I learned Italian in school.

Further studies should control for language CoA and CoU to test my hypothesis.

4.3 – Coherence Systems: Reconciling Identity and Language-Activated Personas

In her book, The Bilingual Mind, Pavlenko writes about four “coherence systems” that bi- and multi-linguals utilize to make sense of the relationship between who they are and the languages they speak (2014, p. 198). These coherence systems operate as unconscious cognitive phenomena and help polyglots justify and understand their feelings when speaking a language, perhaps out of a desire to maintain a coherent identity in the face of language effects. The purpose of this section is to preface the following “Language-Induced Feelings” section, situating participants’ experiences within a framework for understanding how and why their feelings in a language relate to their identities.

The first bi- and multi-lingual coherence system is “one language – one personality” and it “adopts a non-agentive view of the speaker, links individual selves to languages, and suggests, in a lay version of the linguistic relativity hypothesis, that we are also spoken by the languages we speak” (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 198). These are the people who feel that switching to a LX means switching to a completely different personality or identity. This first coherence system provides the most support for linguistic relativism. These participants expressed that languages affect how authentic they feel, to the point that they feel totally different in one language versus another. As Stephanie, an American classroom-Japanese learner, said in our interview:

Learning my second language altered my personality and identity so much that I can't say I feel 100% authentic as an English-speaking American anymore. Any language will change who you are because all languages are formed by history and culture, so that will affect how you speak and how you act when you speak the language. You’re shifting the way your brain works in order to process it. So, you’re altering yourself. I change my
personality based on how I think others will perceive me in a place. Therefore changing how I express myself.

Throughout our interview Stephanie stressed her disconnect from American culture. Although no one in her family speaks Japanese, she said, “In Japanese, I’m more comfortable because I definitely identify more with the Japanese mentality, with the way of thinking.” With the Japanese language, Stephanie has unlocked a persona that feels more authentic to her identity. However, she will never be Japanese, and she will never feel American; this has caused strife.

The second coherence system is the “in-between system” and it “acknowledges the different selves but splits the difference in the middle, creating a position at the intersection of different worlds” (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 199). For many polyglots, it is not one language or another which defines their identity, but the aggregate of all their languages and the things that come along with them. These participants feel their authentic identity is somewhere “in-between” the different linguistic personas they experience. In my data, there is a noticeable difference between those who report that they outwardly express themselves differently in different languages, 74.5% (n = 41), and those who report that they inwardly perceive themselves differently: 49.1% (n = 27). Even if polyglots feel their true, inner, self – their identity – does not change with language, they often feel that their expression of self – their persona – changes with language (Veltkamp, et al., 2012).

For example, Rikke (L1-Norwegian, L2-English), a Norwegian foreign exchange student, described a differentiation between her Norwegian self, “Rikke” and her American self, “Rica” in which Rikke and Rica are not separate personalities or identities, but two different personas:
I’ve always liked myself better as American Rica than Norwegian Rikke. It’s not like I have two different personalities, I feel as though my identity is completely tied to me being Norwegian, but there is something special about being Norwegian in the States. I was really shy back in Norway. I didn’t really feel like I fit in. Then I came to the US and it was just really cool, and my English got a lot better. I just like how confident I am when I speak English, so I feel cooler. I’ve always felt that when I speak English, I like myself better.

This quote shows that Rikke associates the English language with her positive experiences in the United States. In our interview, she told me that although her identity is “completely tied” to being Norwegian, when she is living in the US, her “English self” feels “much more authentic” because she feels more “comfortable and confident” in America. Rikke’s positive associations with the American context in which she uses English cause her to feel more comfortable and confident in English; these feelings manifest as an English persona that allows her to express her identity in a way that feels authentic to who she is. Rikke also has a Norwegian persona that is more “shy.” Both personas coexist underneath the umbrella of her true self.

The third coherence system, “language of the self,” “posits that only one of the languages, most commonly the L1, is ‘the language of true self’, while other languages function as masks or Jungian personae” (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 199, italics from original). For example, August’s L1-English is the language which they feel lets them express their true self because of their high proficiency level and because they believe English to be a “completely gender-neutral language.” August is gender non-conforming. Opposed to their L2-Spanish, English does not have gendered nouns, and this allows them a greater degree of flexibility. August explained:

In English I can express my gender identity however I want, stress-free, and do not necessarily have to settle for one side of the gender binary. I feel like I cannot fully express my identity in Spanish. Due to Spanish’s inherent grammatical gender, it is difficult to be ‘authentic’ about my loose attachment to gender and preference for gender neutral language that reflects the neutrality of my personal gender identity.
Here, August demonstrates a "language of the self" coherence system. Their L1 allows for the most authentic expression of their identity while their L2 carries a semi-forced persona. As Bucholtz and Hall note, the use of gendered language can bring about powerful feelings in a speaker that act as agents in their construction and perception of a coherent identity (2005, p. 590). Although most speakers report feeling most authentic in their L1, one’s “language of the self” does not have to be their L1. Gillian says, “I do not feel my 'true self' in languages other than English” because English is her most proficient and most frequently used language, having lived in the US since she was four years old.

Finally, the “language – independent self” coherence system “posits a unitary self, independent of language and projected differently through different languages” (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 199). The speaker feels they have one true identity, irrespective of language. Different languages are simply various means of expressing this unitary identity. This statement by Alondra G. (L1-Spanish, L2-English, L3-Portuguese) illustrates this coherence system:

I have the same values and the same morals, I’m the same person, but I do portray myself differently depending on where I am, the language I’m speaking. I do feel like I’m the same person, but what I let other people see about me changes depending on who I’m with and what language I’m speaking. I didn’t really notice that until I moved to Boulder.

Regardless of whether she’s speaking Spanish, English, or Portuguese, Alondra feels like “the same person.” However, she says that she changes what other people see about her depending on the setting and language because each of her languages evokes different feelings and is necessarily a different means of expression. Alondra feels that her identity is unaffected by language use. Different languages simply bring out different personas.
5.0 – Language-Induced Feelings

The following seven sections correspond with seven language-induced feelings: confidence, comfort, enjoyment, emotional expression, humor, academic-ness, and formality. Following these sections is the “Authenticity” section. As previously stated, while authenticity is a language-induced feeling, I distinguish it from the other seven feelings because I view a speakers’ perceived degree of authenticity in a language as the culmination of the entire experience of speaking a language. The purpose of these sections is to highlight the power of language context of acquisition, context of use, and associated language ideologies. These feeling-inducing factors strongly affect how participants feel when using a language, and these feelings culminate in a language-persona that feels more or less authentic to the speaker’s identity. It is no exaggeration to say that how one feels about a language will likely be how they feel in the language. While I cannot detail the other eight feeling-inducing factors – proficiency level, accent level, frequency of language use, age and order of language acquisition, perceived language translatability, intended purpose of the language, perceived language vocabulary or grammar constraints, and group belonging – I do touch on them throughout the following sections, using participants’ quotes and survey responses to illustrate their influences.

5.1 – Confidence

Confidence refers to the degree to which speakers feel confident when using a language. A crucial predictor of how confident a speaker will feel in a language is the context in which they acquire and use the language. Those who acquire and/or use a language in an informal environment, like the home, tend to feel confident when using that language. For those who acquire and/or use a language in a formal, academic environment, feelings of confidence vary; it seems that classroom learners who achieve a higher proficiency level, those with little-to-no accent, and those who
frequently use the language outside of the classroom feel more confident when using that language. Deedee (L1-Vietnamese, L2-English, L3-Spanish), for example, told me that she only feels confident using her L3-Spanish in an academic setting because she acquired Spanish in the classroom and has only ever utilized it in that environment.

As Table 1 shows, participants, on average, feel most confident in their L1. However, Gillian feels most confident in her L2 English. Even though she was born in Germany, she has lived in the United States for most of her life, consistently speaking English.

Accent level also affects how confident participants feel when using a language. Speakers with a strong accent tend to feel less confident when using a language. Speakers with little-to-no accent tend to feel more confident when using a language. Shane (L1- Malayalam, L2-English, L3-Tamil, L4-French, L5-Spanish, L6-Arabic, L7-Portuguese, L8-Italian) even went as far as to say:

Confidence is linearly correlated with the accent of the language. If I were to speak to anyone who has French descent in French, I wouldn’t feel confident. I don’t care if I mix up my words, but if I don’t have the accent, I would feel so much less confident. The accent is required so that you feel like you belong. I did a three-year project on multilingualism, and that was one of the strongest things we found.

Lastly, participant’s ideological beliefs about the language they speak affect how confident they feel when using the language. Max (L1-Mandarin, L2-Nanjing, L3-Manchurian, L4-English, L5-Spanish) grew up in Nanjing, China. In our interview, he told me about the Chinese government’s promotion of Mandarin, “the standard dialect” and official language of the country. Even though Max feels most comfortable speaking the Nanjing dialect, Mandarin makes him feel powerful and confident. Here he explains:

If I speak Mandarin perfectly, I feel very authoritative. I was the head of propaganda in elementary school, doing the announcements and such, and it feels very powerful. People who can speak the best, the closest to the standard dialect, are generally given certain
duties, and people around you automatically kinda respect you a little more… To speak Mandarin perfectly is basically saying that you are the best Han you can be.

This passage shows the ideological power of Mandarin in China, arguably similar to the ideological power of English in the United States.

5.2 – *Comfort*

Comfort refers to how comfortable speakers feel when using a language. The context in which a language is learned and used heavily affect participants’ feelings of comfort. Ash primarily speaks his L1, Gujarati, with his family, so he feels it has a “comforting factor.” Interestingly, Deedee also primarily speaks her L1, Vietnamese, with her family, but it is not her most comfortable language. For Deedee, her belief that Vietnamese is “an ugly language,” means that she only feels comfortable speaking Vietnamese at home or at the CU Vietnamese Student Association. Overall, she feels the most comfortable in English because she has lived in Colorado her whole life:

I've assimilated more to American culture as I've grown up, so I've lost much of my Vietnamese culture. I don't really connect much to the Vietnamese identity anymore - it only comes out at home.

The fact that Deedee grew up using English in the home means that she only feels comfortable using it in that context.

Accent level also affects participants’ feelings of comfort. Max first learned English from an Australian tutor, giving him an Australian accent when he spoke English. Going to middle school in Texas for eight months, even though his proficiency level was up-to-par, his Australian accent made him feel uncomfortable. By the time he moved to Seattle for high school, Max decided to hire an accent coach: “I wanted to have the so-called “good accent” which meant the European accent. In order to minimize conflicts, I would minimize my accent.” For Max, it is not
the English language which makes him “a little bit self-conscious,” but the accent. In America, the English language and the American accent are ideologically powerful.

Whether meaning in one language can be accurately translated to another language is a contentious topic (Reynolds, 2016). Some say anything in one language must be able to be translated to another language, others say meaning is subjective, altered in the act of translation (Reynolds 2016). Either way, speakers’ feelings and actions are shaped by what they believe to be true. When it comes to feelings of difference in a language, what really matters is not the academic consensus, but whether speakers feel translation is possible. In Translation: A Very Short Introduction, Reynolds writes, “Translation errors, or mere differences, don’t matter much in themselves. Their effects depend on how they are interpreted and used… every translation includes an element of personal interpretation” (2016, p. 65, p. 79). If one feels that meaning cannot be accurately translated from one of their languages to another, this can cause them to feel uncomfortable:

For both Tamil and Telugu, I am 75% confident. There are some words that don't translate directly from English, so sometimes I have a hard time translating what that word is in Tamil and Telugu. I am comfortable talking to most of my family members in these languages, but when I struggle coming up with that word that doesn't translate, it gives me an uncomfortable feeling. (Anushka: L1-Telugu and Tamil, L2-English, L3-Hindi, L4-Spanish)

Finally, one’s ideological beliefs about a language affect how comfortable they feel in it. Connor (L1-English, L2-Spanish) says he feels comfortable speaking his L2-Spanish because he feels “it is kind of a relaxing language.” Connor associates the Spanish language with a laid-back Spanish culture.
5.3 – Enjoyment

Enjoyment refers to the degree to which participants like using a language. Because languages are experienced by their speakers, some participants report enjoying one language more than another. Juan Carlos (L1-Spanish, L2-English, L3-Bahasa Indonesia) proclaims, “I LOVE LOVE LOVE speaking English! It seriously improves the possibilities there are in life for all aspects!” In this case, his love of English derives from his belief that it will provide him with opportunities for upward socio-economic mobility. Hall and Nilep (2015) use the term “symbolic domination” to describe the phenomenon that speakers of languages promoted by the nation-state enjoy “symbolic capital” which grants them privilege in society (p. 605). Because of English’s status as a symbolically dominant language in the United States, many immigrants idolize the language, potentially valuing it more than their native language (Hall & Nilep, 2015, p. 605). On a literal level, speaking English is a requirement for admission to the University of Colorado, Boulder, and almost all jobs in the area require employees to speak English. Via its ideological prestige and standardized global use, the English language holds privileged status in America. This has spread globally, making English a “lingua franca” (Reynolds, 2016, p. 89). By proxy, English-speakers are often privileged in academic and career spheres.

Other participants do not feel as strongly about English. Adrienne expresses a complicated relationship with English. She acknowledges that it makes her feel “free” because it is her native language, but its history as “the language of the colonizer” causes her strife as a person of African American and Native American heritage:

There’s like a tension between loving the language and knowing that it has come at the cost of losing other languages which I never got the opportunity to learn or love. There’s a sense of something being taken from me. I never got the choice to learn a single word of the indigenous languages or the west African languages that I descend from. I’ll never know those languages. There’s a sacrifice for English, for English culture.
To Adrienne, English is not just a communicative tool, but a relic of America’s exploitative past.

Instead of deriving enjoyment from their outright proficiency level, participants tend to enjoy using a language when they feel that their proficiency level is increasing. Lauren (L1-English, L2-French, L3-Arabic), despite rating herself at a “2” proficiency level in Arabic and feeling “not at all” confident in the language, “extremely” enjoys Arabic, saying: “It’s a beautiful language, I just need to work on it.”

Interestingly, a language’s formality level can also influence how much speakers enjoy the language. Othman (L1-English, L2-Malay, L3-French, L4-Bahasa Indonesia, L5-Japanese, L6-Latin) says, “I love speaking colloquial Malay, but I don’t speak formal Malay because anyone who can speak that can also speak English and English feels more precise.” Here, language informality and ideology operate in tandem to produce feelings of enjoyment; in our interview, Othman told me that he enjoys colloquial Malay because it is a language he grew up speaking in Malaysia, and he enjoys English because it holds prestigious status in his home country: “In Malaysia, English is a form of education. The rich and powerful speak English to each other. The English language can literally gain you access into spaces.”

Participants who belong to a national, religious, or ethnic group associated with a language tend to enjoy using it. This seems to also be intertwined with language CoA and CoU. As Ali (L1-Arabic, L2-English) says, “When I speak Arabic, I feel a very deep sense of nostalgia because I grew up in Egypt. I feel relaxed and sometimes at home when I’m speaking with someone in Arabic. It’s just the language that I mainly grew up with and a lot of good memories are associated with using it.” Shane says that speaking his Indian languages makes him “happy” no matter where he is in the world because they make him feel “attached to [his] roots.”
Finally, foreign languages can be fun! Whether a language allows you to travel to new places, meet new friends, or connect with family, they facilitate new experiences and new expressions of self. When Julienne (L1-English, L2-German, L3-Spanish) finds out that someone else speaks Spanish, she will switch to Spanish because, as she told me, “It’s just fun to speak! Speaking another language is a way of connecting and I love meeting new people and cultures.”

5.4 – Emotional Expression

Whether it be anger, sadness, or joy, on average, participants feel they are most able to express emotions in their L1 (see Table 1). Pavlenko reports, “Case studies of bi- and multilinguals in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis show that the switch to the L1 may facilitate recollection of early memories… and rekindle emotions experienced at the time of remembered events” (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 194). Madden (L1-English, L2-French) feels “extremely” able to express emotions in English because English is the tool she was taught to use to express herself.

Having personal connections with a language also seems to make facilitate emotional expression. As Margaux (L1-English, L2-French, L3-Spanish) explains: “Having close friendships in Costa Rica gave me the chance to express more personal emotions than I would in normal conversation with acquaintances. I learned from my friends expressing their emotions to me and eventually I caught on and am able to express myself more authentically too.”

Language ideologies are very powerful forces. Interestingly, even though Magdalena enjoys her L1 Bavarian the most, she feels like she can best express her emotions in standard German. In Germany, there are 16 states, each with their own dialect, but schools require students to learn standard German, reinforcing its ideological prestige (Magdalena). Juan Carlos told me that he expresses emotions best in Spanish not simply because it is his L1, but also because “Latinos have a lot of emotions, and Spanish is a romantic language.”
Finally, if a speaker finds that a language has vocabulary or grammar constraints, that will affect how well they can express emotions; Mussie explained:

I feel there are better ways to express emotions in Tigringa than in English. I think it’s the language limitations. Sometimes there are things that make so much sense in Tigringa, but in English… have you ever felt like there’s something in your head or your heart that you wanna say but no matter what way you explain it you didn’t explain it properly? That’s how English can feel. You can describe ‘missing’ as a feeling in Tigringa, but not in English. You can say ‘I miss somebody’ as an action, but not as a state of being, like ‘I am in missing now’ or ‘I have a missing.’ In Tigringa we can do that.

5.5 – Humor

Laughter is a universal language and humor is an important part of identity. As Nitin (L1-English, L2-Hindi, L3-Spanish) says, “Humor is a big way for me to express myself, enjoy myself and deal with emotions.” However, the expression and comprehension of humor can be constrained by language. Humor refers to the degree to which participants feel funny in a language. As Table 1 shows, most participants feel that they can best express humor in their L1.

However, participants do not always feel funniest in their first language. Even though Anushka has a high level of proficiency in her first languages, Tamil and Telugu, she feels that her “humor is not that great” because she lives in Denver and thus does not know the “humorous trends of society within the Indian culture.” Context of acquisition and use plays a big role in the expression of humor. Melissa (L1-Spanish, L2-English), says that while she can make jokes in Spanish, she doesn’t feel very comedic in the language because she only uses it to communicate with her family.

Ideological beliefs also affect the expression of humor in a language. Josh (L1-English, L2-Spanish, L3-Russian, L4-French) says that it is really hard for him to be funny in Russian because
he believes it to be a harsh language. In America, Russian is often stereotyped as an aggressive language.

Many participants feel that humor in one language does not translate to another language, often because the contexts in which they learned and use languages come with ideological beliefs. Max likes to do stand-up comedy. Even though English is not his most proficient language, Max will only do stand-up in English:

English humor doesn’t translate to Mandarin at all. I can do an open mic here and kill. I think it’s because a lot of my humor is based on the cultural differences and a lot of that doesn’t translate to Chinese. If I’m doing it in Chinese, it sounds like I’m a genuinely angry man. I think it’s because I encountered a lot of comedy through English. I feel way funnier in English.

On a literal level, anything said in Chinese can be said in English (Reynolds, 2016). However, this statement shows that perceived translatability is the stronger influence on speakers’ feelings.

5.6 – Academic-ness

Academic-ness refers to how much speakers feel they excel in academic contexts in a language. Many participants say that their proficiency level affects their academic-ness. Rikke is a Norwegian national, but she has been going to school in the US for the past six years. In result, Rikke says, “My academic language is much more developed and proficient in English since my higher education has been in English. I am not as confident writing academically in Norwegian.”

Language context of acquisition and use are common reasons participants cite for feeling more or less academic in a language. Gillian told me, “While I can communicate [in German], I don’t feel adequate and academic because I have never taken it formally in school… Since I learned Italian in an academic setting, I feel confident in my grammar and spelling.” Growing up using Vietnamese at home and English in school, Deedee says that English makes her feel the
most “academic and independent.” An academic feeling in English may also be reinforced by the fact that participants are CU Boulder students who learn in English-speaking classrooms and do school work in English.

Language ideologies also seriously affect speakers’ academic-ness. As Bucholtz and Hall write, “ideologies permeate ordinary interactions in a variety of contexts” (2005, p. 604). Because English is the world’s lingua franca, participants tend to associate English with academia, regardless of whether it is their L1 or L3. Shane reported:

English has merged and ‘overtaken’ portions of academia in my language [Malayalam] that I am unable to even say words such as 'science'. Schools in my home village [in India] even utilize the English forms of such in-depth words where it's making my language more or less 'endangered'.

Magdalena is a graduate student studying mathematics. She believes that in the academic world, English is “better” because “It’s just the standard language.” Her bachelor’s thesis in Germany was in English, because she “thought it was more appropriate.”

5.7 – Formality

Formality refers to the degree to which speakers feel formal or informal in a language. Unlike English, some languages have grammar rules which dictate that the speaker must modify verb forms to address their interlocutor with a certain degree of formality. Japanese, for example, is a language that requires speakers to modify verbs depending on a situation’s degree of formality.

Here Dyllan explains:

You can make a verb more and more polite depending on the form you use. Japanese is very easy to express how you feel in a situation and cue your speaking partner in on what you want from the interaction. Because there are ending particles, it makes it easy to present the context for your information, or what you need to do from the expression. Because there are social structures encoded in the language, I kinda just have to be polite, even though it’s not necessarily how I’d like to talk.
When Dyllan speaks English, he feels “less concerned with being polite” because the language does not force him to choose a grammatical level of formality. In Vietnamese, Deedee told me,

There are a lot of formalities. You refer to yourself in the third person: by your name or position in the family. When I speak Vietnamese, I feel more submissive because I associate it with a daughter role. I use a lot of formalities with my parents to show respect, but it would be weird to speak Vietnamese to my siblings. To my younger siblings it would seem condescending or bossy, and with my older brother, it would just be weird.

However, a language’s grammar is not the only thing that influences speaker’s feelings of formality. Context plays a huge role. When I asked Shane, “Do you think the fact that you learned French in class contributes to the formality of it?” he was quick to respond, “Yes!” Luis V. (L1-Spanish, L2-English) says that he feels much more professional in English because he learned it in the classroom and mastered it when he was older, opposed to Spanish which he learned at home and mastered at a younger age:

The language connects to my environment. When I speak English in Bolivia, all of a sudden, I feel like I’m in America again, whereas when I speak in Spanish here, all of a sudden, I feel like I’m back in Bolivia. I relate them strongly to where I learned them. A good example is one time I was playing volleyball with a bunch of Latinos here in Boulder, and we all just spoke in Spanish for everything, and for a good minute I forgot I was here. Then I realized, ‘oh, there’s a McDonald’s right next to us.’ I really felt I was in a whole different world, a different country, because of the language I was speaking.

Finally, a speaker’s ideological beliefs about a language influence how formal they feel in the language. Shane’s belief that “respect is a very significant thing in Middle Eastern and Indian cultures” means that he exclusively uses formal terms when he uses Malayalam, Tamil and Arabic: “I would never ever swear, never even use sarcasm, but in English, I use sarcasm all the time. The culture comes with the language.”
5.8 – Authenticity

A person’s authentic identity is who they feel they truly are. These feelings of confidence, comfort, enjoyment, emotional expression, humor, academic-ness and formality influence how authentic a speaker feels in a language, and these feelings are primarily determined by language CoA, CoU, and ideologies. If someone normally perceives themselves to be an outgoing person but their low proficiency level, for example, in their L2 causes them to feel shy when using the language, they will not feel as authentic in their L2 because their L2 “shy” persona does not match their inner “outgoing” identity. An inner identity is highly subjective and personal; it can only be truly understood by the individual. However, a persona is innately expression-based. As the “Coherence Systems” section demonstrated, some polyglots feel their identity is tied to a language, whereas others feel that their identity is independent of language. Regardless, when one speaks a language, the feelings they experience manifest as a language-activated persona that feels true, or not, to who they are.

This phenomenon happens in varying degrees. That is, language-activated personas are not dichotomously authentic or inauthentic. As Stephanie said, “I feel very close to my identity when speaking Japanese, but because Japanese lacks the use of sarcasm and certain parts of my humor, it is not completely authentic.” Although Stephanie loves Japanese and it is “very close” to her authentic identity, her feeling that her sense of humor cannot be expressed in Japanese means that it feels partially, but not totally, authentic.

Similarly, Alondra K. (L1-Spanish, L2-English) feels most authentic in a mix of her languages. She strongly identifies as bilingual and bicultural, so it is not either Spanish or English that defines who she is, but both. Alondra explained that this is due to her Chilean-American
nationality and, as she said, “This complex influence of different environments, cultures, and ways of being and expressing myself that have raised me to be who I am.” Alondra continued:

The two languages together are deeply interconnected to my growth as individual over the years, as they have given life to my expression and therefore my character – to who I am now in this moment. When I am not immersed in both languages or cultures, I feel disconnected from myself because I feel limited to one angle of who I am. Recently I visited Costa Rica with my family from Chile, and it took me about two weeks to feel comfortable within my Latin identity again. And by comfortable, I mean natural, or **authentic**. I have found that if I try to express myself in Spanish as I do when I speak English, its feels inauthentic and limiting to who I am. This goes both ways. In order to express myself authentically in both languages, I have to be willing to let go of one language's identity so that I am better able to adopt the individuality of another language. Only then can I integrate the two. When I care for my Spanish I feel like my true self, because then I feel balanced in both.

This passage highlights a few important points. To start, being bi- or multi-lingual is a dynamic and defining experience as a whole. Individual languages are also defining elements of one’s identity. Next, the languages one speaks become associated with the contexts in which they were acquired and used, causing speakers to feel certain ways about them, helping form language ideologies. Crucially, these feelings about a language transfer to feelings when using the language, and vice versa. The overall experience of expressing oneself in a language – a language-activated persona – ends up feeling more or less authentic to one’s identity depending upon its relative level of difference from one’s ‘true’ identity. How authentic a speaker feels in a language directly relates to how much they feel it is a reflection (or not) of their true self.
6.0 – Conclusion

Of the 60 bi- and multi-lingual students that I interviewed at the University of Colorado, Boulder, 49 (81.67%) decisively expressed that they feel different when using different languages. Six more gave in-between explanations for a total of 55 participants (91.67%) that feel different to some degree when speaking different languages. Since languages are always emplaced in ideological contexts (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) and experiences are unique, participants had unique justifications for these feelings; some report feeling like an entirely different person when using different languages, falling under a “one – language, one – personality” coherence system, others report feeling like their languages are simply differential means of expressing their one true self, falling under a “language – independent self” coherence system. As Maria said, “I don't feel any less myself when I speak in English. It is just a different part of myself.”

Regardless of how speakers rationalize the relationship between their identity and the languages they speak, languages are disparate means of expression. On a semantic level, the exact same thing can be said in Spanish and English, for example, but on a literal level, the two expressions will be distinct. Thus, languages – and the feelings and ideologies that come along with languages – affect speakers’ expression of self: “In the same way that we carry different personas, or social masks, we might also adopt new selves through new languages” (Veltkamp, et al., 2012, p. 497). When one speaks a language, they adopt a persona that evokes feelings associated with the context in which they acquired and use the language. Deedee explicitly noted this phenomenon in our interview:

I associate English with my education and career, so when I speak English, I’m more connected with that persona. In Spanish my speech is very limited to academics because I learned and use it in the classroom, so I take on more of a student persona when I speak it.
The relative amount of difference one feels between their language-activated persona and their ‘true’ identity defines how authentic they feel when using the language.

As briefly mentioned on page 42, I believe further studies should control for language context of acquisition and context of use to test how these variables affect speakers’ feelings when using their languages. I envision this being done by comparing a group of polyglots that acquired and primarily use their L2 or L3 in a classroom to a group of polyglots that acquired and primarily use their L2 or L3 in the home. Specifically, one should compare how they feel when using these languages, looking for similarities and differences in their language-induced feelings and/or language-activated personas. A straightforward way to do this would be to use a survey like the one used in this study. A study like this would advance understanding of the relationship between language, context and feelings. Conclusions could also potentially be drawn about the role of ideology in this process.

Now, what are the implications of all of this? First off, we see the power of languages to affect people in profound ways. Repeatedly I have shown that languages are much more than communicative tools. This data could prove valuable to those interested in the range of being that bi- and multi-linguals experience. As Alondra said:

Language shapes our character, the way we express ourselves. When I speak, I am expressing who I am, and this simultaneously shapes who I am. I associate differently with others (and even myself) when I speak Spanish versus English. So, when I speak with words in a language that carry different meanings and are used alternatively to express different thoughts or feelings, I am expanding my range of being.
Language influences our feelings and our feelings influence our language. Language’s ability to influence how authentic a person feels can also affect many other aspects of their lives – social skills, career opportunities, and life satisfaction – to name a few.

Language-learners and multilinguals themselves may benefit from this thesis. In America, multilingualism was largely thought to be a handicap before the 1960s, but researchers have now discovered many benefits to speaking multiple languages (Nacamulli, 2015). In a TED-Ed publication, Mia Nacamulli proclaims that bi- and multi-lingual brains tend to have a higher density of grey matter, containing more neurons and synapses than monolingual brains. Being multilingual may also strengthen the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex that helps with “executive function, problem solving, switching between tasks, and focusing while filtering out irrelevant information” (Nacamulli, 2015). This increase in brain activity has been linked to the delaying of diseases like Alzheimer’s and dementia by up to five years (Nacamulli, 2015).

On a deeper level, as Isabella notes about her L3, speaking multiple languages may also be an avenue to self-discovery: “I feel like if I knew Japanese better, I would know myself better.” For those polyglots whose language-activated personas cause them strife or identity crises, this study may help them understand that feeling multiple selves is a natural phenomenon. Bi- and multi-linguals can and often do experience different language-activated personas while still maintaining a coherent identity. The acknowledgement of these personas may help polyglots reconcile the differences they feel, potentially contributing to their life satisfaction. In a similar way, teachers of languages, whether they be parents or professors, may also benefit from the findings of this study.

In the local context, Boulder, Colorado, is renowned, and occasionally mocked, for its liberal and outdoorsy populace (Hickcox 2007). When asked to list a few of Boulder’s defining
characteristics in our interview, Jonah (L1-English, L2- Korean, L3- Mandarin) said, “environmentally friendly, outdoor oriented, healthy, beautiful, and liberal.” So, on the surface, one may think of Boulder as a liberal oasis – open to people of all kinds. However, almost every person I spoke to about Boulder was reluctant to extend its liberal values to a total embrace of multiculturalism or multilingualism. As Gillian explained, “While it is positive that it is so beautiful and many citizens are educated, the lack of diversity definitely makes it feel like a bubble.” This ‘bubble’ is infamous around the Front Range. As Chris said:

The predominantly white culture of Boulder causes friction. If you are inside the bubble, then it's a highly inclusive place; if you're outside then it's not. I wouldn't go so far as to say they condemn multiculturalism or multilingualism, but they certainly do not celebrate it. Tolerance is the best word for Boulder, not inclusion.

Mussie is a graduate student studying civil engineering. The intense coursework means that he spends many long nights in the engineering center. As he told me in our interview:

I’ve been ID’ed by Boulder police officers walking through the engineering building at night that don’t ID anyone else in the room except for me. It’s awkward. You can feel like you don’t belong. They’re not saying straight-up, don’t be involved with us. Nothing is explicit, everything is implied. There are implied boundaries. Boulder has this name of such an inclusive, liberal, like forward-moving place that it’s hard to even bring those things up because it’s assumed that everything is good.

Alondra also expressed a similar sentiment:

Boulder talks a lot of talk, but doesn't do nearly enough of the walking. Boulder prides itself on its inclusivity of various cultures and backgrounds, but a lot of it feels like a
superficial mask. Boulder has a fascination with multiculturalism and multilingualism, but it feels like more of a fascination than an embracement. The amount of times I am told I look exotic or "Amazonian" is a bit extreme. I sometimes refrain from telling new people I meet that I was partially raised in Chile, not because people dismiss or judge me for it, but rather because suddenly I become a sparkly, foreign gem to them, and it makes me feel like I am separate, like I don't belong here, even though I was born in the US.

In Boulder, this cultural homogeneity extends to linguistic homogeneity. Nitin noted:

I think Boulder does a better job promoting multiculturalism than other parts of the country. However, I don’t know how deep this sentiment runs. I still see systematically divided parts of campus; meaning, people who stick to those who speak their same native language. English is still the language of power here, and I do not see that changing.

Madden told me outright, “Boulder is not linguistically inclusive, people really only speak English here.” Deedee qualified her statement by saying:

I think Boulder tries to be inclusive, but at the end of the day, it's not. I feel like multilingualism is considered "cool," but is condemned in public because everyone is expected to speak English. Even if someone is extremely intelligent (like a professor), if s/he has an accent or limited knowledge of English, they're usually mocked.

If multilingual students in a place like Boulder do not feel welcomed or supported, then serious work needs to be done throughout America. I cannot claim to know how to solve this systemic issue, but this thesis process has taught me that there are many potent and immediate benefits to speaking multiple languages. For example, Spanish national Albert told me that he feels that people in Boulder are open-minded, but “receiving an education and speaking just in English
clearly narrows your horizons to that point of view.” Thus, a solution to Boulder’s troubles may be the genuine promotion of language-learning so that more people make the leap from mono- to bi-lingualism. If, as I argue in this thesis, languages are imbued with feelings that influence a speaker’s range of being, then speaking multiple languages may force one out of Boulder’s ‘bubble.’

In a nationwide extension, my greatest hope is that this project will contribute to the message that speaking multiple languages is not something to be ashamed of, but an enriching and valuable experience. Nowadays, America is extremely socio-politically polarized. The current president ran on a mono-lingual platform that denigrated languages, and speakers of languages, other than English. Just last week a bumper-sticker screamed at me, “Speak English, you’re in America!” This linguistic prejudice is small-minded, divisive, and frankly mistaken. There is no official language of the United States; it is a country founded upon diversity. English does hold ideological prestige in America, but as with all ideologies, this prestige is not natural. It is the product of deliberate decisions over time by those in power. Although I am still fascinated by the phenomenon of feeling different in different languages, this research process has made my obsession a bit more tangible.
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Appendix

This includes Table 1, a list of the eight language-induced feelings and ten feeling-inducing linguistic factors, and participants’ responses to the “Language & Feelings” Google Forms survey. While the survey got 55 responses overall, L3 questions garnered 26 responses, L4 questions garnered eight responses, and L5 questions garnered two responses. Thus, the validity of the data past L3 is questionable and was omitted for statistical analyses. As noted in methods, during the interviews, more participants told me that they speak three, four, or five languages than the survey reflects. I hypothesize that less participants filled out the L3, L4, and L5 questions on the survey than those who told me they speak three, four, or five languages because they got bored.

Table 1: Average responses to survey questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L1 55 responses</th>
<th>L2 55 responses</th>
<th>L3 26 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How proficient do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How confident do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How comfortable do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you enjoy your LX?</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well do you feel you can express emotions in your LX?</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well do you feel you can express humor in your LX?</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How academic do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How authentic to your identity do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How different (from your &quot;true self&quot;) do you feel in your LX?</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Values are out of five. A score of five represents “extremely,” and a score of one represents “not at all.” L4 and L5 are not included because they only garnered eight and two responses, respectively.*
Language-induced feelings

1) Confidence
2) Comfort
3) Enjoyment
4) Emotional expression
5) Humor
6) Academic-ness
7) Formality
8) Authenticity

Linguistic feeling-inducing influences

1) Context of acquisition and context of use
2) Ideological associations
3) Proficiency level
4) Accent level
5) Group belonging
6) Frequency of use
7) Perceived translatability
8) Age and order of acquisition
9) Intended purpose of the language
10) Perceived vocabulary or grammar constraints
Survey Questions (View)

After every question, there were spaces for participants to “Provide a description for why you answered the way you did above.”

* = mandatory question

1) *To what degree is being multilingual part of your identity?
2) *You’re multilingual. Do you consider yourself to be multicultural?
3) *Do you feel your personality changes in different languages?
4) *Do you feel your body language changes in different languages?
5) *What is your first language? (The language you learned first) (L1)
6) *How proficient do you feel in your L1?
7) *How many years have you taken formal lessons in your L1? (Examples of formal lessons are: classes, tutoring sessions)
8) *How many years have you practiced your L1 informally? (Examples of informal learning practices are: speaking with family, friends or peers, using apps like Duolingo, watching media in the language, reading in the language, listening to music in the language)
9) *How authentic to your identity do you feel in your L1?
10) *How confident do you feel in your L1?
11) *How comfortable do you feel in your L1?
12) *How much do you enjoy your L1?
13) *How well do you feel you can express emotions in your L1?
14) *How well do you feel you can express humor in your L1?
15) *How academic do you feel in your L1?
16) *How different (from your "true self") do you feel in your L1?
17) Repeat questions 5-16 for L2.
18) Repeat questions 5-16 for L3.
19) Repeat questions 5-16 for L4.
20) Repeat questions 5-16 for L5.
21) *Based on how you answered previous questions, do you feel different in different languages?
22) *Do you feel that you (outwardly) express yourself differently in different languages?
23) *Do you feel that you (inwardly) perceive yourself differently in different languages?
24) Describe the culture of Boulder; what are some of its defining characteristics? Do you see them as positives or negatives? Further, is Boulder a culturally inclusive or exclusive place? Is Boulder a linguistically inclusive or exclusive place? That is, do you feel Boulder celebrates or condemns multiculturalism? Does Boulder celebrate or condemn multilingualism? Both? Neither? There is no right or wrong answer to this question. I am simply interested in your interpretation of Boulder’s culture. If you can, tie in how language influences Boulder’s culture.
25) Is there anything else you think Chloe should know about your relationships to the languages you speak? Nuances between them? Feel free to input anything below.
Data Sheets

Confidence:

How confident do you feel in your L1?
55 responses

How confident do you feel in your L2?
55 responses

How confident do you feel in your L3?
26 responses

How confident do you feel in your L4?
8 responses

How confident do you feel in your L5?
2 responses
Comfort:
How comfortable do you feel in your L1?
55 responses

How comfortable do you feel in your L2?
55 responses

How comfortable do you feel in your L3?
26 responses

How comfortable do you feel in your L4?
8 responses

How comfortable do you feel in your L5?
2 responses
Enjoyment:

How much do you enjoy your L1?
55 responses

How much do you enjoy your L2?
55 responses

How much do you enjoy your L3?
26 responses

How much do you enjoy your L4?
8 responses

How much do you enjoy your L5?
2 responses
Emotional expression:

How well do you feel you can express emotions in your L1?

51 responses

How well do you feel you can express emotions in your L2?

55 responses

How well do you feel you can express emotions in your L3?

26 responses

How well do you feel you can express emotions in your L4?

8 responses

How well do you feel you can express emotions in your L5?

2 responses
Humor:

How well do you feel you can express humor in your L1?
55 responses

How well do you feel you can express humor in your L2?
55 responses

How well do you feel you can express humor in your L3?
26 responses

How well do you feel you can express humor in your L4?
8 responses

How well do you feel you can express humor in your L5?
2 responses
Academic-ness:

How academic do you feel in your L1?

How academic do you feel in your L2?

How academic do you feel in your L3?

How academic do you feel in your L4?

How academic do you feel in your L5?
Authenticity:

How authentic to your identity do you feel in your L1?

55 responses

How authentic to your identity do you feel in your L2?

55 responses

How authentic to your identity do you feel in your L3?

26 responses

How authentic to your identity do you feel in your L4?

8 responses

How authentic to your identity do you feel you are in your L5?

2 responses
Difference from “true self:”

How different (from your “true self”) do you feel in your L1?

55 responses

How different (from your “true self”) do you feel in your L2?

55 responses

How different (from your “true self”) do you feel in your L3?

25 responses

How different (from your “true self”) do you feel in your L4?

8 responses

How different (from your “true self”) do you feel in your L5?

2 responses
Proficiency:

How proficient do you feel you are in your L1?

55 responses

How proficient do you feel you are in your L2?

55 responses

How proficient do you feel you are in your L3?

26 responses

How proficient do you feel you are in your L4?

8 responses

*This question for L5 was accidentally omitted*
Pie charts:

**You're multilingual. Do you consider yourself to be multicultural?**

55 responses

- Yes: 70.9%
- No: 25.5%
- I feel like I know enough about my L2 and L3 languages' cultures to understand, but I don't practice many of those cultural norms. I'm just aware of them and their meaning.
- It's complicated: 3.6%

**Do you feel your personality changes in different languages?**

55 responses

- Yes: 72.7%
- No: 18.2%
- Not because of the language, but because of the social/cultural setting: 9%
- Sort of: 1.8%
- Sometimes not much: 0.9%
- Maybe: 0.9%
- See below: 0.9%

**Do you feel your body language changes in different languages?**

55 responses

- Yes: 67.3%
- No: 23.6%
- I am not sure: 5.5%
- I do not think that my body language has been changed much: 1%
- Unsure: 0.9%
- Not sure: 0.9%
- Sometimes, depends on the situation and people involved: 0.9%
Do you feel that you (inwardly) perceive yourself differently in different languages?
55 responses

Do you feel that you (outwardly) express yourself differently in different languages?
55 responses

Based on how you answered previous questions, do you feel different in different languages?
55 responses