Am I Bilingual?: Perceptions and Benefits of Receptive Bilingualism in Undergraduate Students and their Communities

by

Roma Jay Sarathi

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Abstract

Building on previous research that counters the widespread negative social standpoint on receptive bilingualism, this thesis seeks to fill the gap in social understanding around current research on bilingualism. It further addresses the benefits of receptive bilingualism and the enormous population of heritage language speakers who fit into the category of receptive bilinguals. I conduct and report on interviews with ten receptively bilingual undergraduate students in the United States. This study utilizes an interdisciplinary approach from linguistics, anthropology, and sociology, to enrich scholarly understanding of bilingualism and address and prevent shortcomings brought about by previous research in a single discipline. The ten interviewees are categorized into the types of receptive bilinguals posited by Sherkina-Leiber (2020), and I analyze each interview to draw conclusions that span four themes: the self-analysis of each interviewee's confidence in their own fluency, the interviewees' opinions on their own fluencies, the benefits of receptive bilingualism as listed by the interviewees, and, finally, the perceptions of each language community on each of the interviewees' fluencies. The conclusions varied based on the receptive language of the interviewees, the relationship between interviewee and community, and the race of the interviewee, but major benefits of receptive bilingualism arose from every interview.

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1. Introduction

Bilingualism and multilingualism are not new topics of scholarly study by any means. Bilingualism is studied very prominently in fields like psychology, neuroscience, and linguistics, especially looking at the development of children or infants. Scholarly research has spanned varying points of focus, for example, the different methods and quality of bilingual education or the benefits of bilingualism in the brain (Beaudrie, 2009; Ramirez, N. F., & Kuhl, P., 2017). Over the years, and throughout multiple disciplines, the scholarly opinion on bilingualism has shifted from negative to positive. Receptive bilingualism, however, is a subsection of bilingualism that has started to gain some interest in the academic world but has yet to be explored to its fullest. It is seen in individuals who have learned or are learning two or more languages with few opportunities to speak or sign one of those languages, but are able to understand almost all of said language. These individuals would consider themselves completely bilingual/multilingual in said language if not for their limited ability to speak, read, and/or write (California Department of Social Services, 2023).

One of the most up-to-date definitions of receptive bilingualism is "a mode of multilingual communication in which interactants employ a language and/or a language variety different from their partners and still understand each other without the help of any additional lingua franca" (Rehbein, ten Thije and Verschik, 2012, p. 248). Community public opinion of receptive bilingualism is often negative, as seen in social media primarily by native speakers in immigrant communities, and this follows older, though limited, scholarly opinion on receptive bilingualism, no matter if in the fields of neuroscience or education (Diebold, 1961; Friedlander, 1970; Hijadetumadre [@hijadetumadre]). Recent research, though, has begun to focus on testing receptive bilinguals in their receptive skills, understanding their motivations and background in their receptive languages, and categorizing the various subtypes of receptive bilinguals that exist (Beaudrie, 2009; Nicoladis & Mimovic, 2020; Shekina-Lieber, 2020).

This study joins previous research in countering the widespread negative social standpoint on receptive bilingualism that solely receptive understanding of a language is not useful and does not entitle individuals to use the label "bilingual." This thesis also fills the gap in social understanding around current research on bilingualism, the benefits of receptive bilingualism, and the enormous population of heritage language speakers who fit into this category. The current study also uses an interdisciplinary approach, by combination of linguistics, anthropology, and sociology, to enrich scholarly understanding of bilingualism and address and prevent shortcomings brought about by the previous approaches in a single discipline like neuroscience or education. What is more, out of the existing literature within the broader field of bilingualism, previous studies like Friedlander (1970) or Beaudrie (2009) either focus on a particular age group to research, most often children or infants, or have no age distinction at all. Additionally, interviews with receptive bilinguals have not been a major primary data point in prior scholarly research. Through the usage of one-on-one interviews to investigate the benefits, social or otherwise, and perceptions of receptive bilingualism for

undergraduate college students in the US, this study further ascertains the validity of receptive bilingualism as a form of bilingualism, as Sherkina-Lieber (2020) posits.

2. Background

2.1 Existing Literature on Bilingualism

As early as 1962, and likely earlier, scholars have observed and documented the effects of childhood bilingualism as seen in families of immigrants to the United States, although earlier studies like Jensen (1962) tend to push the narrative that the knowledge and usage of a second language impedes development in the United States. Jensen in particular makes a case against youth bilingualism by citing "emotional instability", "handicaps in intellectual development", "disorders in rhythm" when speaking, among other potential issues that may arise for a developing bilingual. Jensen (1962) looks at the phonetic differences between a variety of languages such as Norwegian or Spanish, and compares them to English, emphasizing the ways in which speakers of non-English languages will have difficulties producing certain sounds in American English. The author uses the phrase "retardation in educational progress," a very outdated manner of explaining the act of deceleration in the neuroscientific and psychological fields (p. 135). It can be assumed that the specific fear and general negative perspective on foreign immigration to the United States during Jensen's time gave way to these anti-bilingual views, and therefore to this paper's urging against childhood bilingualism.

However, such fields like neuroscience or linguistics have, in recent years, expanded their views of bilingualism to recognize the positive effects of knowing an additional language in the United States. Especially in childhood, scholars like Byrd (2012) assure that, "being bilingual seems to accelerate complex cognitive processing. While this advantage appears less marked during the peak of cognitive ability (young adulthood), underlying changes in cognitive abilities and neurological structure carry forward into older adulthood, slowing the cognitive decline" (p. 28). There appears to be neurological evidence for the benefits of bilingualism in early development as well as young adulthood. The amount of these kinds of studies has only increased in recent years, exploring varying effects of bilingualism in distinct communities in the United States, immigrant or not (Barac, R., & Bialystok, E., 2012; Ramirez, N. F., & Kuhl, P., 2017; Tarighat, S., Rashtchi, M., & Khoii, R., 2019).

2.2 Existing Literature on Receptive Bilingualism

Similarly to bilingualism as an overarching concept, receptive bilingualism has been terminologically recognized since the 1960s, an example of which being Diebold's work exploring "incipient bilingualism" in indigenous communities in Mexico. Diebold (1961) uses Indigenous Mexican groups' Spanish bilingualism as a case study for what the author calls "subordinate bilingualism," a seemingly outdated term for incipient bilingualism and receptive

bilingualism. He explains the changes in language use due to interacting cultures and languages, "language contact", primarily due to colonialism, and primarily focusing on the case study of the Huave community. One section of Diebold's work explains an attempt to measure the amount of Huave coordinate bilinguals, meaning "complete" bilingualism, and incipient bilinguals to the monolinguals in their community, and a second section describes the author's attempt to sample 10 households in the Huave area to test their receptive bilingualism through knowledge of Spanish phrases. It is clear that Diebold, and likely others in the research field during this time, considered receptive bilingualism of Spanish to be an "incomplete" or "subordinate" form of bilingualism.

Only nine years later, in 1970, Friedlander published scholarly work on "Receptive Language Development in Infancy: Issues and Problems." The source first expands on previous studies that test auditory processing, vowel discrimination, and "complex psychological functions" (e.g. heart rate, response decrement) done on infants. Friedlander describes one particular study that allows 33 infants to play with a toy called PLAYTEST in their respective cribs or homes. This toy

> "consists of a pair of large response switches the child can operate at will, a loudspeaker, an electrical control and response recording unit, and a stereo tape player with a pre-programed selection of two-channel audio tapes...Whenever the baby operates either switch he automatically makes a record of the frequency and duration of his responses, and simultaneously he turns on one channel or the other of the audio tape"(p. 15).

Discussion of the results of these tests showed that "the babies did not uniformly prefer their own mothers' natural voice," which Friedlander used to develop upon understanding infants' language development and psychological differences between reception and production (p. 16-21). He questions if there should be a focus on the neurological lens for language development as well as language reception, using both the knowledge of the prior neuroscientific work done by scholars like Diebold as well as Chomsky's theoretic work on a universal grammar to delve into potential problems of infant language development (Friedlander, 1970, p. 27; Chomsky, 1965). As Friedlander discusses the issues with output-input correlation and perception of infants, his only mention of bilingualism in regards to receptive language development is that he is "not aware of any phenomena of visual perceptual development [seen in neuroscientific scholarly work] that indicate such extreme plasticity of potential perceptual competence" (p. 29-33). This study demonstrates the need for a varied lens to view bilingualism and language reception, as the topic of bilingualism (receptive or not) was and is so frequently and widely studied in neurological departments, leaving room for growth in anthropological and sociological studies. Additionally, Friedlander develops previous study of infants and language development, leaving room for studies on older children and young adults who may be continuing the language development process, though at a different level than an infant.

2.3 Existing Literature on Community Perception of Receptive Bilingualism

Receptive bilingualism as a concept is not only understudied but also looked down upon by certain communities or individual community members. It has been observed that many individuals in the Spanish-speaking or Hispanic community, in particular, have publicly criticized receptive bilinguals with the terminology "no sabo kid," a term which is used to describe "those who are part of a Latinx culture but have never learned the language or who don't pass as a native speaker" (Gallegos, p. 156). A specific post to the Instagram account @hijadetumadre, a Latina pride account with 352,000 followers that frequently demonstrates its pride for the Latine community and particularly being a Latina woman, was made to comfort "no sabo" kids. The post reads: "Idk who needs to hear this but….being a No Sabo kid is okay." Many of the comments under this post show community members lashing out against this idea, as well as "no sabo" kids replying to these community members to ask about their linguistic beliefs. One user comments, "I kindly disagree with this sentiment. Taking pride in being a no sabo, is really rejecting a huge part of your culture. No sabo kids don't even care to want to learn to speak Spanish" while another user attempts to engage with her opinion by replying, "can I ask where you got that idea? I know a lot of kids who grew up not speaking Spanish who definitely cared they just weren't taught (including myself)". The first user responds, "it's the stigma of the "no sabo" it's going up to someone bc you think they look like you and you speak to them in Spanish and they just respond with no sabo. I completely understand gentrification and wanting to Americanize however no sabo does not have a positive connotation" (Hija de Tu Madre [@hijadetumadre]). Though not all "no sabo" kids may consider themselves receptive bilinguals, it is clear that there is some resistance in this community to receptive bilingualism and that their heritage and culture is very much tied to their language ability.

Additional studies like Beaudrie (2009), however, have shown that "receptive bilinguals…highly value their Hispanic heritage," even as they struggle to produce the language with extended family members (p. 94). The author specifically mentions "future Spanish language recovery and maintenance" as a goal for which these receptive bilinguals should adhere to, as well as citing the language classroom as "an essential tool to be able to reverse these tendencies [referring to their lack of pride for their individual Spanish dialects]. It has the potential to provide a nurturing environment where students can gain confidence not only in their language skills but also in the value of their own linguistic variety" (p. 100-101). It appears that Beaudrie considers receptive bilingualism as an incomplete form of bilingualism, which requires reparation through outside means.

Even communities that do acknowledge or support receptive bilingualism seem to be having issues with recognizing the "dominant" and "subordinate" language for receptive bilinguals. Nicoladis and Mimovic (2020) test parents and their bilingual children to see which of their children's languages they believe their children are more confident in producing, comparing it to their children's actual results. The results of two tests with Mandarin-English-speaking and French-English-speaking children revealed that "parents' classifications of their children's dominance corresponded well to their relative vocabulary

scores only for very Mandarin dominant children (in Study 1) and very French dominant children (in Study 2),” meaning that parents had very low validity in classifying the nature of their children’s bilingualism (for more “balanced” bilinguals) based on a single question (p. 2300). This raises the questions of who can classify a bilingual, how they should go about classifying them, as well as a criticism of the community’s surface-level understanding of the bilingualism of an individual.

2.4 Sherkina-Lieber (2020)’s Categorization of Receptive Bilinguals

Shekina-Lieber (2020) begins answering the question of classification by proposing her own “classification of RBs [receptive bilinguals] into three major types, based on the existence and nature of an acquisition process, because these factors bear on linguistic knowledge underlying comprehension” (p. 414). As shown in Figure 1, the types of receptive bilingualism that she has classified are MIL (mutually intelligible language) RBs, L2 (second language) RBs, and HL (heritage language) RBs. MIL refers “to the RB type with inherent receptive knowledge[...who] did not experience any sort of an acquisition process of the target language, and rely only on the base language” (p. 415). An example of such a receptive bilingual would be a fluent speaker of Tamil who understands Malayalam as their receptive language. They use the knowledge from their base language (Tamil) in order to understand and communicate in their receptive language, using concepts like cognates and similar sentence structures to aid them, oftentimes utilizing “RB mode” (p. 418). This mode “makes use of the production-comprehension asymmetry, allowing to produce speech in a better-known language in order to optimize communication,” and for MIL RBs in particular, the user of this mode “assesses the hearer’s understanding and adjusts speech to increase the likelihood of being understood correctly” by adapting certain lexical or morphological utterances and rephrasing speech” (p. 418-419). Shekina-Lieber (2020) concludes that MIL RBs must obtain “a certain level of contrastive awareness” between their base language and their receptive language in order to produce speech.

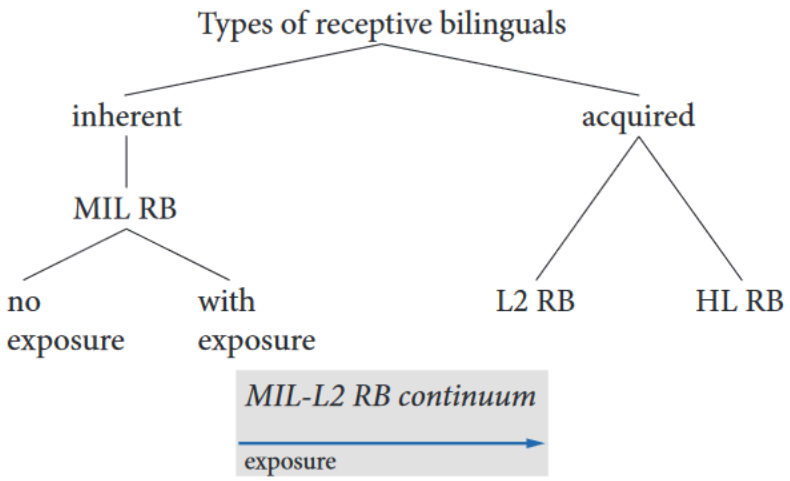


Figure 1. Classification of receptive bilinguals

L2 RBs, defined as any individual who "acquired receptive skills in an L2 that is not necessarily mutually intelligible with any languages they already know," have difficulties communicating most frequently due to lack of lexical knowledge to say what they mean, and Sherkina-Lieber posits that "insufficient exposure, instruction, or motivation to learn more" along with L2 attrition are the most common debilitating factors for this type of receptive bilingual (p. 421). The final type of RB, HL RB, relies primarily on the acquired linguistic knowledge that they began learning from birth, and is most commonly seen in immigrant families as well as indigenous communities speaking an endangered language, as the exposure to the language of the family is constantly in conflict with the exposure to the majority language (p. 422). The author explains that very often "when low-proficiency HSs have to produce speech, it is slow, with frequent long pauses (reflecting effortful lexical retrieval and syntactic building), syntactic errors, and failures to recall a word…In Sherkina-Lieber (2011), the lowest proficiency HL RBs produced one (morphologically simple) word at a time, and were unable to combine words into sentences" (p. 423).

Sherkina-Lieber goes on to name some of the specific linguistic differences (such as phonology, lexicon, morphology and syntax) that the three types of receptive bilinguals face according to previous research using her categorization. She also mentions the motivations of receptive bilinguals to understand heritage speakers and their cultures. The table below (Figure 2) serves to show the differences and similarities between each type of RB that Sherkina-Lieber categorizes.

	MIL RB (Without exposure)	**MIL RB (With exposure)**	**L2 RB**	**HL RB**
Mutual intelligibility	Necessary	Necessary	Not necessary	Not necessary

w/stronger language				
Acquisition process	None	Contrastive awareness learning	L2 acquisition	L1 or 2L1 acquisition + subtractive bilingualism
Exposure	None	Variable; after acquisition of at least one other language	After age 4 (Child L2) or after age 8-10 (adult L2)	Since birth, but much lower amount than to another language
Phonological knowledge	From base language	From base language, plus patterns of correspondence	L2 phonology	L1 phonology (possibly with attrition effects)
Lexical knowledge	None, matching cognates to lexicon of base language	Non-cognates, unusual cognates, false cognates	Limited lexicon, receptive > productive	Limited lexicon, receptive > productive
Grammatical knowledge	From base language	From base language, plus patterns of correspondence	Missing parts; Unstable parts; Some transfer from L1	Missing parts; Unstable parts; Some transfer from dominant language
Transfer	In all areas	In all areas	In morphosyntax and phonology	In morphosyntax (possibly in phonology)
Typical motivation	variable	variable	variable	Cultural importance, part of identity
Adaptation in RB mode	Active adaptation	Active adaptation	Active adaptation	No adaptation as speakers; may or may not receive adapted input

Figure 2. Comparison of the three types of receptive bilinguals created by Sherkina-Lieber (2020)

The classification of receptive bilinguals that Sherkina-Lieber (2020) presents is vital as it can be described as a recognition of receptive bilinguals as a subsect of bilinguals. However, even as Sherkina-Lieber's categorization is useful to fill a gap in the field of receptive bilingualism, it focuses much more heavily on the parts of fluency with which the receptive bilinguals lack. There still remains a gap in the social understanding of receptive bilingualism, and more particularly, the benefits that may be associated with receptive bilingualism, as seen through both the type of study that follows the conclusions of Diebold (1961) as well as more pro-bilingualism studies like Sherkina-Lieber (2020).

3. Methods of Research

Using methods from my own previous linguistic anthropological research as a foundation, I created a set of interview questions related to communities and individuals' perceptions of receptive bilingualism in their own life as well as on a broader scale. As I encountered further research in the field of bilingualism and noticed distinct components of my interviewee's bilingualism, I considered the ways in which I categorized them within the term of "receptive bilinguals." Sherkina-Lieber's creation of a chart of categories within the label of receptive bilingualism leads me to believe that the term itself is very fluid.

Several months after receiving IRB approval in June of 2024, I collected my data through online Zoom interviews throughout ~3 weeks in October of 2024. I interviewed undergraduate students who had previously filled out an online outreach form that I had sent to the Linguistics department listserv, had posted around Swarthmore campus, and uploaded to my primary social media account. These students identified themselves under the label of a receptive bilingual following the definition of receptive bilingualism given by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) as well as the definition given by Sherkina-Lieber (2020). Appendix A displays this outreach form and the questions I asked of the interested potential interviewees. After receiving eight responses on this survey, I reached out to seven of these individuals (the eighth response was a younger sibling of an undergraduate student who was still in high school and therefore did not qualify for this study) to schedule interviews. Out of these seven, five undergraduate students responded to my outreach. Two more undergraduate students who had not completed the initial outreach form contacted me separately and consented to be interviewed, one in-person on Haverford's campus and another over Zoom. After conducting these primary interviews, I contacted some of the individuals who had responded to my social media outreach. I was able to conduct three more interviews, two over Zoom, and one in-person on Bryn Mawr's campus. I interviewed 10 undergraduate students in total.

Each individual interview with a student lasted approximately 20 minutes and I recorded each interview with a transcribing application Aiko, saved the file to my phone, and saved the transcription created by the application to a separate document. I began each session by informing the participant of the precautions I would take to keep their information private and asked them for their consent to record this interview. The full informed consent that I read out to

them can be found in Appendix C. After receiving their informed consent, I asked them the questions listed in Appendix B as a baseline for the interview, deviating slightly from the preset questions to ask for more detail, to help clarify terms or questions, or to ask about certain aspects of their speech that I wanted the interviewee to expand upon. When asking about their confidence levels of speaking, reading, writing, and listening/comprehending, if the interviewees gave me more than one number for a specific confidence level, I used the average of the two numbers that they gave me. Additionally, when referring to my own questions and comments that I said during the interview as a part of the transcript, I transcribed an "R:" before my speech to the interviewee.

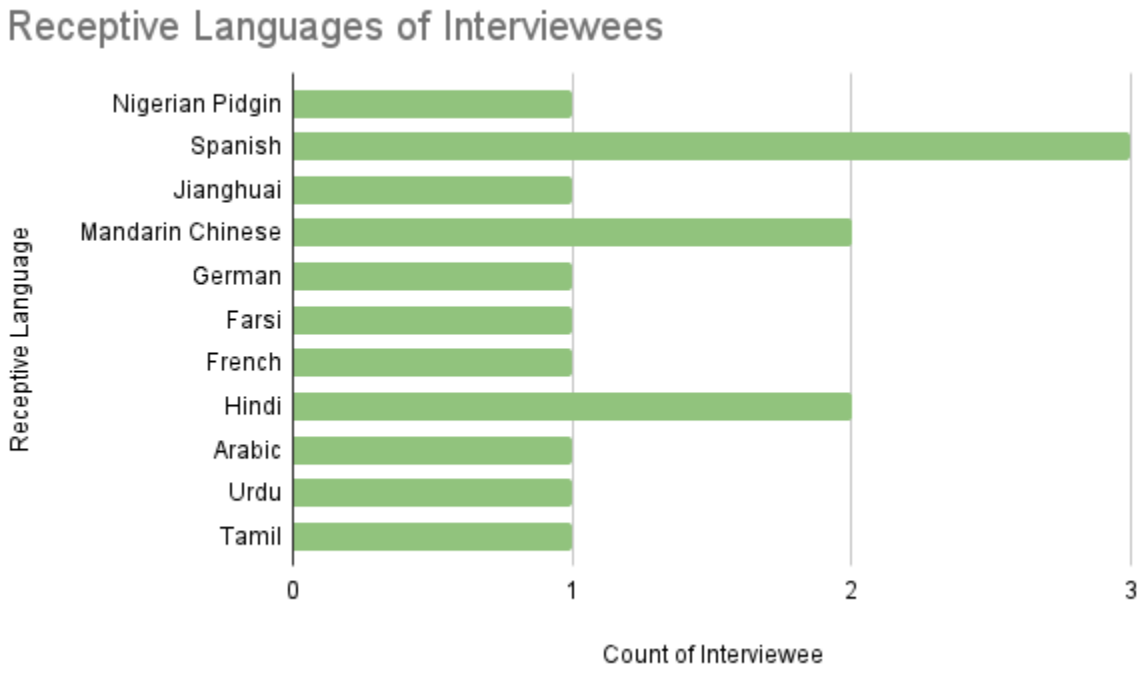
4. Results

Interviewee Name	**Year**	**Receptive Language**	**Immigration in relation to RB**	**Speaking Confidence**	**Reading Confidence**	**Writing Confidence**	**Listening and Comprehending Confidence**
A	3rd	Nigerian Pidgin	2nd Gen	3	4	1	5
A	3rd	Spanish	n/a	2.5	4	3	3
B	4th	Jianghuai Mandarin Chinese	n/a	2	5	5	4
C	2nd	Mandarin Chinese	2nd Gen	3.5	1.5	1.5	3.25
D	1st	German	n/a	3.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
E	1st	Farsi	2nd Gen	2.5	1	1	3.5
F	4th	French	2nd Gen	2.5	1.5	1	3.5
G	2nd	Spanish	n/a	3	2	3	4
H	3rd	Spanish	n/a	3.5	3.5	3.5	4

H	3rd	Hindi	2nd Gen	2	2	1.5	3.5
J	4th	Arabic	n/a	1	4	1	1
J	4th	Urdu	n/a	2	1	1	3
J	4th	Hindi	n/a	3	1	1	4
K	4th	Mandarin Chinese	n/a	3.5	2	1.5	3
K	4th	Tamil	[1]Expat	2.5	1	1	4

Figure 3. Table of interviewee demographics, language production confidences, and RB categorization

Figure 3 displays all of the major statistics and information regarding each of the 10 interviews that I held with receptive bilingual undergraduate students. The range of languages that participants were receptively bilingual in does not appear to fall under any one family or group of languages.



[1] Interviewee prefers to be referred to as an expat, but for the purposes of this study, expat and 1st generation immigrant are synonymous.

Figure 4. Receptive language and count of interviewees

Figure 4 provides an overview of each of the languages that were discussed in my interview and the count of interviewees that were receptive to each language. In order to properly understand each interviewees' relationship to their receptive language, in the next sections, I give an overview of each participant's background and summarize their answers to my interview questions (found in Appendix A). Each individual is referred to by they/them pronouns in an attempt to mask their gender for research and anonymity purposes.

4.1 A - Pidgin and Spanish

Interviewee A is a 3rd year private liberal arts student studying cognitive science and neuroscience. They are Black and Nigerian-American, considering themselves a second-generation immigrant. They are receptive to Nigerian Pidgin, having learned it due to their parents' immigration from Nigeria. They mentioned that Pidgin "pulls from a lot of different languages, it pulls from my English, it pulls from Portuguese, because, like, those are kind of, like, the people that, you know, came to, like, came to, like, the area, like, where, like, Nigeria is now called now during…colonization." They then labeled their confidence levels for production of Pidgin, putting their speaking confidence at a 3 out of 5, their reading confidence at a 4 out of 5, their writing confidence at a 1 out of 5, and their listening confidence at a 5 out of 5. When asked about the community that they experience their receptive language with, they replied, "my parents and like the older folks in my family and just like [the] community, they used a lot of Pidgin," further expanding on their parents later on:

> ...they knew English growing up in Nigeria along with Igbo and Yoruba, so when they came here, and especially my parents being from two different tribes, they kind of didn't feel it necessary to teach me or my brother, Igbo or Yoruba or anything like that, and so we grew up in an English speaking household for the most part, and I would grow up like hearing my dad and hearing my mom speak Igbo and Yoruba, but I never picked up on it, because, like, they would never talk to me in Igbo and Yoruba, so it'd be like, on the phone, or like, the friends from home, and so I never, like, really picked it up, but they would speak to us in Pidgin, which was like an English Creole, and so, like, that's what I was able to pick up.

When asked about their communities' opinion on receptive bilingualism of Pidgin, A was quick to mention that Nigerians, or more specifically those from their parents' generation, consider Pidgin as a "lower form of English" and not an actual language. They say "it's not proper, or it's not like, you know, how you're supposed to be speaking," additionally recalling an anecdote with a community member that showcased this mindset:

> ...I remember specifically this instance where, like, I was at church and one of the aunties, you know, came and was like, oh, like, do you hear like Igbo? Like you hear Yoruba, which is like, do you, like, understand it or do you speak it? And I was like, no,

> but I understand Pidgin and she was like, but Pidgin isn't really, you know, and I was like, no, like it is, it has its own system and everything.

However, when asked about the benefits of being receptive to Pidgin, they mentioned the connection it brought them to their family and extended community. They said that their parents have a positive view of their fluency as knowing Pidgin makes it easier for them to communicate together, though A responds in English. They compared it to AAVE, African-American Vernacular English, or Black English, as they considered it also "just a very casual, quick way of speaking with people that, like, you're very, like, closely related to." A also brings up how the connection they feel with their family also extends to others in the diaspora.

> …For diasporic Nigerians here, Pidgin is kind of the language that's used to, like, maintain that connection from home because they can only use Pidgin here with other Nigerians, they can't use that with everybody. And so, if one of my parents is, like, out and about and they meet another Nigerian, it's like without even saying anything, they just switched to Pidgin because it's like, oh, like we're from the same place, even though it might be from different tribes, we're from the same place…So I think it's beautiful.

Interviewee A feels more connected not only to other diaspora individuals, but also Nigerian culture as they were born in the United States and have yet to have the chance to visit Nigeria. They describe Pidgin as "that one strong link that I have, like the music, the culture, the sayings, the stories".

Interviewee A does also consider themselves different in comparison to a "full bilingual", and a little inferior to those who can respond in Pidgin, feeling that "[bilinguals] have a little bit more cultural access than I might have." Nevertheless, they believe that being receptive does give one access to the culture of the language, and would not be upset if their child or a child of a close friend was also receptive bilingual. They do, however, touch on the idea that if their child was receptive bilingual in Pidgin, being able to understand the language might encourage or make it easier for their child to learn to speak it in the future.

Interviewee A is also receptively bilingual in Spanish, through a combination of taking Spanish classes, being from Houston, and having many Hispanic friends. They discussed their confidence levels in producing Spanish by labeling their speaking abilities at a 2.5 out of 5, their reading abilities at a 4 out of 5, and both their writing and listening and comprehension abilities at a 3 out of 5. They were able to learn Spanish as it is taught in a school-setting at the same time as their friends would teach them "common phrases [and] inside jokes" outside of class. According to A, they have noticed benefits of their receptive bilingualism in how it helped them strengthen their bonds with the Hispanic and Latino community in their school and in Houston overall.

4.2 B - Jianghuai Mandarin Chinese

B is a 4th year international student studying linguistics at a private liberal arts school. They are Chinese, moving from China to the US for their undergraduate degree. They are fluent in Mandarin Chinese but are receptively bilingual in a variety of Mandarin Chinese, Lower Yangtze Mandarin or Jianghuai Mandarin Chinese, that is not mutually intelligible with standard Mandarin Chinese. They label their confidence in speaking Mandarin at a 2 out of 5, their confidence in reading at a 5 out of 5, their confidence in writing a 5 out of 5, and their confidence in listening and comprehending at a 4 out of 5. They did not learn this language from any immigration to the US, but through their mother and their mother's family. They mention:

> I can feel very comfortable when I speak this variety to my mom's sisters like my aunts or my grandparents because they will encourage me to do that, but when I talk to my mom I just have concerns about the weird accents[2] and whether she's going to, like, accept my speech like that.

The community that they primarily experience this language with is their grandparents and the people from their mother's hometown, however, they imply that they experience community with speakers of this language "only if I am living, like, near a place that doesn't seem to be mine…". When asked if their family has an opinion on their knowledge or fluency of the language, they responded that their extended family does not discourage them to speak Jianghuai Mandarin Chinese, however their mother worried that they would be discriminated against for having an accent in Standard Mandarin. This worry stems from when B's mother was discriminated against for her accent in Standard Mandarin when she moved from her hometown to where B and their immediate family currently live in China. B goes on to say that this variety of Mandarin is associated with low-income or uneducated individuals, another reason that their mother sought to prevent B from having her same accent. However, B assured that their aunts and grandparents have a positive opinion on their receptive bilingualism and knowledge of the language.

Though they state point-blank that they do not have many positive opinions about receptive bilingualism, they do affirm, "I think, like, I still think, like, receptive bilingualism is still better than, like, not knowing, like, any bit of [the language]," and show regret for not being "fully" bilingual." They compare themselves to friends with Hispanic heritage who do not speak Spanish fluently, saying "like I could have been better in this language but my parents didn't give me enough, like, opportunities, like giving me enough chances to improve [it]." When asked their opinion on if their child or a child of a close friend was raised receptively bilingual, they responded:

> I feel like I won't, like, blame them for not speaking my, like,- their language fluently because it is not chosen by them. I just, like, like, like I would just do whatever I can do to help them, like, get the immersion environment so they can probably, like, improve their, like, proficiency.

[2] Speaker is referring to their own accent

Though they do not show animosity towards the hypothetical receptive bilingual, B shows their preference for the child to use their receptive knowledge as a first step to becoming "completely" bilingual, or have more confidence in their production skills of the receptive language.

4.3 C - Mandarin Chinese

C is a 2nd year student studying neuroscience, computer science, philosophy, and English at a private liberal arts school. They are second-generation Chinese-American and believe they are receptively bilingual in Mandarin Chinese. Their parents were born on mainland China but moved to the United States for graduate school, and though speaking with them from a young age was C's first experience with the language, they also took Chinese classes up until the end of middle school or the start of high school. While in these classes, they recalled that they were not very dedicated to learning Chinese or doing the homework for the class, however, they seemed to have some confidence with the language:

> I'm pretty confident, like, conversationally but if I had to, like, get a job or, like, go to school I don't think I'd be as confident so, like, within, like, [what] I have, uh, I'm confident within, like, a limited range vocabulary.

When asked about speaking confidence in Mandarin, they ranked themselves a 4 when talking to family members and a 3 if they were to be speaking in China or in a more professional and high-stakes setting. Then, when asked about their listening and comprehending confidence, they specifically put themselves at a 4.25 for casual and conversational speech and a 2.25 for formal speaking. On average, this puts their speaking confidence at a 3.5 and their listening confidence at a 3.25, which makes the difference in their confidence levels in their receptive language 0.25.

When asked about the community that they experienced Mandarin with, they mentioned their family, specifically noting that they were quite fluent when they were younger but have since gotten worse from coming to college. Their accent in Mandarin in particular, they said, has gotten less natural or more American. A general opinion that they get from their family on their fluency is that they wish C spoke more, but "at least [they] could speak it, so, better than nothing." Another opinion they noticed from non-family members and Chinese individuals who they meet in passing while in China is surprise at how well they speak.

One key point that might have influenced this high confidence level in speaking Mandarin is that C was used to producing the language from a young age. They mention:

> I also I feel like it would also be a lot worse if my parents' English was better because they- they very rarely speak in English and I don't want them to because they're not great at English and so it's much easier to understand them when they're not speaking in English, then on the flip side I tend to reply in English even when they- because it's more efficient communication that way and so I've been trying to, like, practice not speaking English more…

When asked if they considered themselves different from "full" bilinguals they were unsure, and pointed out that they did not know many bilinguals who were "really balanced" in both of their languages. They observed that "usually they [bilinguals] have one that they're better at and for me that's English and for some people that's not English but… and there's like different degrees of how balanced [bilinguals can be.]" These quotes display a solidarity with bilinguals as a group, but an unsureness to how receptive bilingualism fits into the larger definition of bilinguals, or where the line between receptive bilingual and "full" bilingual is drawn.

In regards to having or knowing receptively bilingual children, C reacted positively at the idea of a child having exposure to different "positive things," implying that language is one of them. They added that it is "always helpful to know more languages, and… especially in, like, young children when they're, like, most, like, capable of learning…" In general, they found it difficult to name benefits of receptive bilingualism that were not also applicable to bilingualism as a whole, though they echoed the sentiment of their parents that they "think it's better than, like, not speaking a language." However, in the end, they maintained that being "fully" bilingual would be better than only being receptively bilingual in their language, though they recognized that it takes "more time and effort and skill."

4.4 D - German

D is a 1st year student prospectively studying biology and linguistics at a private liberal arts school. They are white and Asian-American, half Filipino, and they consider themselves a second-generation immigrant as their mom immigrated to the United States from the Philippines. They are receptively bilingual in German, which is unrelated to their mother's immigration. In regards to their confidence in producing German, D labels themselves a 3.5 out of 5 for speaking, a 4.5 out of 5 for reading, a 4.5 out of 5 for writing, and a 4.5 out of 5 for listening and comprehending. The primary community that they experienced the language with were the students and teachers at their "German Saturday language school" during high school. They did not grow up with German as a child, but they were frequently interacting with students who had grown up with German from a young age. They also studied it "pretty intensively," and this might contribute to the positive opinion that fluent German speakers have of their German. D attests, "People say that my accent is good and that I can speak fluently, but I think though my writing and comprehension are much better than my speaking…I haven't heard anything overall negative, but I mean like, I still make mistakes." Being exposed to German in a school setting, the opinions they most often received on their fluency were targeted to aid their improvement in using the language.

However, this summer, they received a positive opinion from a fluent German, they recount:

> They did [have an opinion], but I think it was really biased. It was like, I have a family friend actually that we visited, who visited us for like a few days, they were German native German speakers …And they said that I, my German was good, but I think they

> were also just trying to be nice too. Because I couldn't tell, like, if it's, like, it was a real judgment or not.

But this did not seem to be an isolated opinion on individuals who are receptively bilingual in German, as far as D could tell. They say generally that:

> I think [Germans] have a really positive opinion about it because, like, based on what I've heard, like they don't really, they- whenever they see that someone is trying to learn language, they get really excited about it. So even if you don't have that high of a level, they still, like, compliment you on it and, like, be happy that you're trying to learn it. Because usually it's like there's a lot of times the expectation [is] that…the German person just speaks English. So like if they meet someone who actually is trying, then they do get happy about it like they're pretty excited about that. So I think it's overall pretty positive.

When asked about the benefits of receptive bilingualism, D asked to clarify if I meant "benefits over bilingualism," and when I agreed, they said they "couldn't think of anything over full bilingualism." However, when they attempted to expand on their thinking, they acknowledged that being "fully" bilingual would be better, immersing oneself in another culture and "taking off the burden of [the other person] having to speak" in one's language are major benefits.

When asked about if they felt different from a "full bilingual", they agreed wholeheartedly and attributed it to their lack of confidence speaking as opposed to their confidence identifying grammar rules, a concept that heritage language speakers often have little to no practice with. They also responded positively to the idea of their child or a child they knew closely growing up receptively bilingual, saying:

> I feel like I'd be really happy about that because I, yeah, I feel like just learning another language, having a deep exposure to it is always really, like, nice. And it gives, like, the child, like, access to more things, like to more opportunities and just also just introduces them to like, what does it mean to, like, speak another language and then, like, maybe they can, like, have more empathy also towards other people who are learning. So I think yeah, I think it's really great.

4.5 E - Farsi

E is a 1st year at a public research university, prospectively studying computer science and applied math. They are second-generation Persian-American, and they know Farsi receptively due to the immigration of and current residence of their family from Iran. When asked about their ability to produce the language, they labeled themselves a 2.5 out of 5 for speaking, a 1 out of 5 for reading, a 1 out of 5 for writing, and a 3.5 out of 5 for listening and comprehending. The community that they mainly experience Farsi with is their family, up until college, when they joined the Persian Student Union. Their family, their parents in particular, seem to be content with E's fluency, though they said that:

> They'd, like, rather have me be better at it…Because, like,…since I'm able to have, like, a full conversation with anyone, it's, like, good and I…reached their standard sort of. And it was always, like, kind of an expectation to be able to speak, like, pretty fluently.

E admitted that they learned Farsi before they learned English, however, they "dropped off" of Farsi after learning more English. Their parents and older family members cared about their partial loss of the language, however, their older family members seemed to try to get them to learn more than immediate family members. E expressed the frustration that older generations of their family "expected" them to know their family's language, and that, now that they feel as though they have improved in speaking the language compared to when they were younger, their older family members are supportive of their fluency. They say in particular, "But I don't know, like, now they [my older family members] sort of treat me as someone that's fully, like, bilingual."

In regards to the benefits of receptive bilingualism, they mentioned that "it's just nice knowing another language just like at heart and also because like I didn't really have to mentally think about learning it that much," referring to the ease with which the receptive language was learned as a heritage speaker. They recall that their mother tried to get them to learn Farsi with an app on their phone, but that that method of learning did not help the language stick with them. They do consider themselves different from someone who is "fully" bilingual in the idea that their vocabulary is more limited, however, they find themselves thinking in more than one of their languages, whether that be through translation from Farsi to English or direct encoding of Farsi in their vocabulary. When asked about receptive bilingualism in future children or children of their sibling, they said:

> That'd be cool. I don't think I'd really care. But it would be cool just because, like, I felt like it was cool as much as, like, a kid you know being able to, like, speak another language [that] pretty much no one else could.

4.6 F - French

F is a 4th year student studying environmental science and Spanish at a private liberal arts school. They are white, but are not completely sure if they would consider themselves a second-generation immigrant as their mother immigrated to the United States from France. When asked to rate their ability to produce French, they labeled their speaking abilities at a 2.5 out of 5, their reading abilities at a 1.5 out of 5, their writing abilities at a 1 out of 5, and their listening and comprehending abilities at a 3.5 out of 5. Their mother and their family members who live in France are the main community that they experience French with, and the opinion that F has received for most of their life from their extended family is positive. They shared:

> They generally think that I'm- that they flatter me a lot and say I'm really good at it because, like, we can understand each other fairly well, like, for the most part and

> because, compared to my sister who knows, like, nothing, I like can still get by so they say, they say that I'm- they have a positive reflection of my understanding of French.

The general opinion about receptive bilingualism of French, however, according to F, has to do with how the French view American tourists. They brought up how many French individuals in France know English, and will switch to speaking English if they detect that someone has a lower confidence in speaking French as opposed to English.

They do consider themselves different from "full" bilinguals, mentioning a friend of theirs who also grew up with a French mother, and ended up getting a job in France. F shared that they did not feel as though they had enough language knowledge to do that, especially considering vocabulary or varying French accents, comparing the Parisian French of their grandmother vs. the Tunisan French of family friends. When asked about if how they would feel if their child or a child of their sibling grew up receptively bilingual, F responded:

> I would feel good about that because it means you still put in a lot- I feel like you still have to put in a lot of effort to, like, you know, even get to that level if you're not, like, obviously, like, immersed in the language, like, you still have to, like, do a lot of speaking of the language around the child, so I would feel like that's still, like, an accomplishment…

Among the benefits of receptive bilingualism, they mentioned firstly that "it can be fun" getting to eavesdrop on a conversation in French, or reveal that they understand French in a situation where no one would have guessed this. They added that "the benefit is being able to, like, engage in, like, any- any way you know," saying that their abilities to have conversations in a "lower capacity" and "engage with media in a limited way" are still beneficial to them. They ended their thoughts by saying that they feel like receptive bilingualism is very confidence-based, specifically noting:

> I think that you have, you have to have a certain, like, assurance in yourself that, like, you- you know the words and, like, just trying it when you're trying to, like, speak because, like, you *do* know the words because you can understand them.

4.7 G - Spanish

G is a 2nd year student studying marketing and real estate at a private research university. They are white and do not classify themselves as a first, second, or third-generation immigrant. Their receptive bilingualism in Spanish, though unrelated to immigration of them or their family, comes partially from living in a Spanish-speaking country for a few years at a young age. They rated their production of Spanish within the following levels: speaking at a 3 out of 5, reading at a 2 out of 5, writing at a 3 out of 5, and listening and comprehending at a 4 out of 5. The community they hear Spanish in the most ranges from their sister, their Spanish classes, and their friends. They clarified that the conversations with their Spanish-speaking friends are in a mixture of Spanish and English, but they assured me that they were able to understand everything that

was “going on” during the conversation. When asked the opinion of their friends on their fluency, they responded that their friends, as well as other Spanish-speakers, do not expect them to be able to understand any Spanish just by looking at them. Specifically, they shared:

> It's not something I bring up all the time, so people, like you, not everyone knows that I even, like, lived in a Spanish-speaking country and speak, at least understand, a proficient amount of Spanish, so I don't think it's, like, a surprising, I don't think it's, like, a well-known thing, which makes it a little surprising, but I don't think they think of it as like “[they don’t] know enough Spanish.” I think it's like “[they know] more than we thought [they] would.”

In fact, as they expanded on their opinion of their friends, they highlighted the importance of the way that they approached the topic of knowing Spanish. They said:

> Like I think had I, had I approached it with a, with a confidence of “just talk to me in Spanish, like I'm good,” and then been like shaky with talking back, they might have been like, “alright, well this [person] like doesn't really know what [they’re] doing,” but taking it as like, “I'm like decent,” but like I'm not gonna like say I'm anything [close to] native at it. It's almost like, they're, they're much more, like, appreciative of, like, the little stuff that I know than like a negative [view on my receptive bilingualism].

When asked the opinion of their sister on their receptive bilingualism, they expressed that they believed their sister did not think that G knew any Spanish at all. After asking for more details, they admitted:

> I think she definitely thinks I should know more than I do because I think, I think she did a better job of keeping [Spanish] after we moved back [to the US] and obviously age was a factor because she was oldest and she, like, knew- she was able to, like, remember it more. But I think she definitely, I think, I mean,...she sent me, like, a voice message in Spanish and wanted to see if I understood it. So, I don't know. I don't know if she thought I was gonna understand it, but I did.

Other opinions that they heard about their fluency included a teacher from their school and old friends they still kept in touch with who they met while living abroad. Their teacher was teaching their sister at the time, and was curious as to why G did not attempt to keep the same level of Spanish that they had obtained while living abroad, as their sister had through this teachers’ tutoring. Their old friends, however, merely expressed an interest in if G was still keeping up with Spanish, as opposed to their fluency overall. These opinions were, as G put it, “nothing, like, impactful. It’s mostly just like joking around, stuff like that.”

When asked about a more general opinion of the Spanish-speaking community, they explained that they thought the community is supportive of receptive bilinguals who are “working towards, like, being more bilingual and being able to speak fluently with [fluent speakers],” though they recognize that there are varying levels to receptiveness. They specifically share the thought that fluent speakers appreciate when receptive bilinguals make an attempt to communicate in the receptive language partly due to having less opportunities to

speak Spanish at a university in the United States where the classes are mainly taught in English. G finished their thought by saying, "so whenever, whenever I *can* chime in and stuff like that, [my friends], they're more, they're more appreciative than, than annoyed that I'm not chiming in the whole time."

On a similar note, G mentioned the comfort that heritage and fluent speakers of Spanish feel when speaking Spanish. They brought in an apt metaphor for comfort, saying:

> Like, I definitely feel like closer to [my friends] than, than I would if I didn't speak any Spanish just because it gives you that like, that like level of comfort with them because I think, I think that …it's the concept or the idea of like, as soon as [my friend is] talking Spanish to somebody, he feels like a better connection than talking English to somebody because it feels like… he's putting an effort to like, to like learn more of like my culture…he gives an example of like, you feel more at home in your house than like when you visit somebody and like speaking Spanish is his way of like being in like his house and like, like him [being] comfortable…

Another benefit of receptive bilingualism that G mentions is broadening one's worldview to include new ranges of people and cultures. This is also their response to how they would feel if their child or their sister's child was receptively bilingual. They view it positively, even though it is "better than nothing." They state:

> I think it's, I think it's good. I mean, obviously language is a very important aspect of, like, the world and …it's one of the main things that separates people and, like, hinders people from, like, meeting other people, meeting new cultures, stuff like that. So I think being able to understand what people are saying and, like,…feeling like the people…can talk to me and I'm actually listening rather than just, like, they're just saying stuff. So I think that being receptively bilingual is, like, it is a, it's better than, it's better than nothing is why.

4.8 H - Hindi and Spanish

H is a 3rd year student at a private liberal arts college studying English literature, studies of women, gender and sexuality, and archives. They are white and Asian, and would say that they are a second-generation immigrant as their mother immigrated from Libya, but was born in India. They are receptively bilingual in Hindi, and the community that they most experience the language with is their mother and their extended family from India. They have, however, taken Hindi classes on top of this heritage exposure. They labeled their confidence level in producing Hindi by rating their speaking skills at a 2 out of 5, their reading skills at a 2 out of 5, their writing skills at a 1.5 out of 5, and their listening and comprehending skills at a 3.5 out of 5. When asked the opinion of their extended family on their fluency, they responded:

> I would say they're always, like, so, like, positively surprised when my mom is like, "oh, they can, like, understand, like, a lot of what you're saying and, like, can respond." But that is definitely because I'm like, I was raised in the U.S. and you know, like I'm not

> fully Indian…It's like, "oh, you know Hindi?" …and then they'll say a sentence and I'm like, "yes, I know what that means."

They brought up that this positive opinion has been told to them by extended family since childhood, however, it has gotten more positive after taking Hindi classes. Then when asked if they feel like their family's opinion is the general opinion of the Hindi-speaking community, they noted that the only other Hindi-speakers they have interacted with are South Asian professors at their college or peers in the South Asian Student Association.

> From my professors and my peers, it's usually like they ask me if I know Hindi and I say like, "oh, I can understand it and I can speak a little bit." And then, like, from peers, I've heard them go like, "oh yeah, I've heard that, like, a lot from people on campus," cause a lot of the students in the South Asian Student Association are international students. So for them, it's like a first language, or like, it's not a first language but, like, they know a lot of people who, like, they are fluent in it. And so usually it's like, "oh yeah, like, that tracks because like you grew up in the U.S. and you didn't have, like, as much exposure to it"…I would say, like, they weren't really surprised but they didn't really seem to have, like, a necessarily negative or positive opinion.

In regards to receptive bilingualism as a concept and their communities' perception of it, H uses the phrase "loss of culture," especially as Hindi, among other less commonly spoken languages in the United States, is not often taught in schools as a second language. When asked about benefits of receptive bilingualism, however, H said, "It definitely has its funny moments," though they found it difficult to come up with advantages separate from "just being bilingual." Some of these advantages included being able to understand a fluent speaker in the company of those who had no knowledge of Hindi, or to have a language to use with one group but not others in the same space. With this, H additionally mentions frustrations in their own capabilities to use their receptive language, frustrations that imply that they wish to become more fluent in Hindi. These frustrations tie into the way their race and ethnicity are wrongly perceived by others.

To the question of how they would feel if their child or a child of a close friend or sibling grew up receptively bilingual, they shared:

> I mean, any sharing of language, I am thrilled at. I think that monolingualism is really, really limiting. And to know any other language, even a little bit, is like such an important thing to have in your life. So I wouldn't be upset if a kid was, like, receptively bilingual and not bilingual. I think I would be more thrilled that they're not monolingual.

H is also receptively bilingual in Spanish, as they have been learning it for a collective 13 years. They labeled their confidence in speaking, reading, and writing Spanish at a 3.5 out of 5, while their confidence in listening and comprehending Spanish was labeled at a 4 out of 5. The main community they hear Spanish in is in their language classes, however, when they are in their home state of California, they are much more surrounded by Spanish and have frequent interactions with Spanish in their daily life. In Spanish classes, the opinions others have on H's fluency are purposeful to aid their learning, as is natural in a classroom setting. While in

California, monolingual Spanish speakers occasionally rely on them to translate in public settings, one benefit that H shares. However, they also mentioned an increased frustration with their current fluency in Spanish, even more so compared to their frustration with their fluency in Hindi, and they said, “I have been learning it for so long and I feel like I should be able to speak it a lot better than I do. And read it a lot better than I do.”

4.9 J - Hindi, Urdu, and Arabic

J is a 3rd year international student studying neuroscience and creative writing at a private liberal arts college. They are South Asian and Bengali, though not an immigrant to the United States. They shared that they are receptively bilingual in three languages, Hindi, Urdu, and Arabic. They labeled their ability to speak Hindi at a 3 out of 5, their abilities to read and write Hindi at a 1 out of 5, and their ability to listen and comprehend Hindi at a 4 out of 5. They learned Hindi from watching TV shows in the language with their mother from a young age, however, the community that they currently experience this language with is their friends from school. One thing to note, though, is that they do not use Hindi necessarily as much as they use Urdu. They label their ability to speak Urdu at a 2 out of 5, their abilities to read and write Urdu at a 1 out of 5, and their ability to listen and comprehend Urdu at a 3 out of 5. These languages are mutually intelligible, and within the community that J experiences Urdu with, a few friends from Pakistan, they use their knowledge of Hindi to aid them to speak this mutually intelligible language with others.

When asked about their friends’ opinion on their fluency in Hindi, J says that they think their friends think their Hindi is fluent. They disagreed, and quipped, “I think I'm just, I'm just really good at pretending I am in one of those TV shows.” When asked about their mother’s opinion on their fluency, they expressed that their mother had no opinion. I probed for more details, asking specifically about whether they think their non-American background has anything to do with their mother’s lack of opinion. They agreed, saying:

> I think so because, um, like back home, everyone would understand Hindi because we all grew up watching Hindi TV shows and serials. So everyone, like, back home would understand Hindi and they would also understand some bit of Urdu. And even if not fluent, they would also be able to speak somewhat in Hindi. And it's pretty common back home.

They then compared this to the response of their friends, who were all surprised to learn that they had learned Hindi and Urdu.

For Arabic, on the other hand, J learned this language as a part of practicing Islam. They labeled their speaking, writing, and listening and comprehending skills at a 1 out of 5, while their reading skills were labeled at a 4 out of 5. They do not have a community that they use it with now, as they only were required to learn how to read when they were studying the Quran. They took Arabic classes their first two semesters at college, but when asked about how their parents or religious community felt about J’s fluency in Arabic, they confidently stated, “I think I clearly

told [my parents] that I learned nothing [of] Arabic in my first year of college." Their understanding of how Hindi-speaking and Urdu-speaking communities perceive receptive bilingualism seemed to be limited, as well. They brought up the immigration of their uncle to the United States and how that affected the dialect of Bangla he had retained, however, this was related to J's first and most fluent language, not their receptive languages.

J then named benefits of receptive bilingualism, such as being able to communicate with more people, understand more, as well as surprise their friends. They do consider themselves different from someone "fully" bilingual due to their inability to "grasp the entire nuance of that language." They specifically state that, "there are some specific things that…are just so interconnected with [their] culture and because I just don't speak that language, I'll never know." When asked how they would feel if their child or a child of a close friend or sibling grew up receptively bilingual, J shared that they do not have an opinion, "unless it's like it's something that [their child] didn't want or it's something that's negatively affecting them."

4.10 K - Tamil and Mandarin Chinese

K is a 4th year international student studying the growth and structure of cities in a private liberal arts school. They used the terms South Asian and brown Asian to describe themselves, though they preferred to use the term "expat" to label their immigration status to Hong Kong and from India where they were born. They are receptively bilingual in Mandarin Chinese and Tamil, a South Indian language. They learned Mandarin in school, from eighth grade through senior year, and then continued their study in the first two years of their undergraduate career. When asked about their confidence levels with the language, they rated their speaking at a 3.5 out of 5, their reading confidence at a 2 out of 5, their writing confidence a 1.5 out of 5, and their listening and comprehending confidence at 3 out of 5. The community that they mainly use this language with at this time are the Chinese international students that they meet. They clarify:

> I think that on a personal level when I, sort of, introduce myself, I always say I'm originally from India but I live in Hong Kong because I think that there is a lot of, again, political identity associated with calling yourself a Hong Konger that me when I'm an expat over there who doesn't speak Cantonese I don't feel fair calling myself a part of that culture, and so I think that sometimes when it comes to, sort of, validating that identity or like my- the importance of that part of my life to people who are from China or from that region, like, speaking Mandarin Chinese is a good way of bonding with them, um…and I think that sometimes people back in Hong Kong, as well, who I mean are from the mainland, Chinese also becomes a language, if they speak it, with them.

When asked about how these communities of Chinese international students in the US and mainlanders living in Hong Kong feel about their fluency, they shared that there is a "positive perception" of their knowledge of the language. They note specifically that their background as a non-native speaker who is also not ethnically Chinese influences this perception. They mention

that they have noticed this positive perception and appreciation from native Chinese speakers for as long as they have been learning Chinese. They attribute this appreciation and their ease with which they began to learn Chinese to the fact that it is the fifth language that they have learned in their life so far.

They were then asked if they felt like this positive opinion matches the opinion of any other fluent speakers of the language, whether they be from videos on the internet or others who have commented on receptive bilingualism of Mandarin Chinese in person. They shared that the first thing that comes to mind is "the videos of like you know white guys going to Chinese restaurants and, like, speaking fluent Mandarin" who are frequently appreciated by Chinese staff members, additionally noting that K also compares their own receptive bilingual abilities to these individuals. On occasion, they said, some of the "white guys" from these videos had a noticeably non-native accent, but other times they, too, were surprised and appreciative of their fluency. When asked about how they feel that native speakers of Mandarin Chinese feel about receptive bilingualism as a concept, or about receptively bilingual individuals as opposed to "fully" bilingual individuals, they brought up a relationship between ethnicity of the speaker and perception of their speech, saying:

> I think it depends on the person's ethnicity, for sure, like I know that when it comes to people who are American-born Chinese for example, like, there's definitely a different standard of judgment applied to them where if they like- I know that when it comes to my friends who are from Hong Kong, like if- like if there's a girl that they know who's from Hong Kong but she grew up in the US for a long time [and] she doesn't speak Cantonese or, like, you know, she doesn't know how to read or write, that becomes like a negative in the way that they judge her…

In regards to their second receptive language, Tamil, though K grew up in Mumbai, a region of India where the Tamil language is not predominantly spoken, they were able to hear the language often from family members. These family members make up the community that they experience Tamil with the most. K then rated their confidence levels producing the language, giving themselves a 2.5 out of 5 for speaking, a 1 out of 5 for reading, a 1 out of 5 for writing, and a 4 out of 5 for listening and comprehending.

When asked the opinion of their family on their knowledge of Tamil, they shared, "I think that there's a lot of, actually, pride and happiness from my parents and my mom's parents and I think both my grandparents on both sides," and then proceeded to explain their language journey. They explained that they were not fluent in Tamil when they were younger but, after moving to Hong Kong, they said:

> I think languages' relation to placemaking once again came in, where I ended up sort of in this desire to maybe subconsciously ground myself more in my culture [and] ended up picking up Tamil but again not with, like, conscious effort, not through classes, but I think it just sort of- there was a switch that flipped in my head…[but] yeah I think that [my family has] always been encouraging in the sense of, like, even when I was not a great Tamil speaker it was never like "oh my gosh, like, you're awful, like, why don't you

> learn to speak Tamil"- if anything it would sort of be brought up as like, you know, a bit of a nagging sense of longing from a grandparent like "oh, like, I wish that, you know, you could speak to me so that we could really talk," but never in, like, a "you are inadequate for not knowing the language" [way].

They repeated that their parents gave them and their younger brother "positive reinforcement" by correcting their grammar or small errors, saying that "even if [my brother] makes mistakes and things like that he's still trying and learning…" They went on to say that their parents additionally make sure that K is not being too hard on their brother, saying things like "no no no… don't say that to him, like, it's okay, he's figuring things out…just let him find his feet first."

When asked about how they believe the wider Tamil community thinks of receptive bilingualism in the language overall, K did not have much to say that was directly related to their Indian Tamil, however, mentioned the negative perception Indians who speak Tamil have on the Sri Lankan Tamil variation. They compared this negative perception to the lack of opinion Indian Tamil speakers have on the Singaporean Tamil variety. Besides these larger observations on community, when asked about the benefits of receptive bilingualism, K states:

> …the word coming to mind is like ephemeral placemaking…um, because I feel like usually placemaking as a concept is a lot to do with, you know, very physical manifestations of culture and food or dress or architecture or religion, things like that, but I feel like language is one of those things that, you know, you speak and matter[s] to somebody and even if you can't necessarily really write or read, like, [you] prove that you are truly bilingual even if you're only able to convey receptive bilingualism to somebody, there's still enough from that interaction to provide that sense of comfort and placemaking.

They then went into a personal anecdote of how they managed to translate between a Chinese woman who did not speak Italian and a cashier who only spoke Italian, as they were in Italy. They aided the woman in checking out at the grocery store using their receptive skills in Mandarin Chinese and limited Italian speaking skills, and the woman was grateful for their help, conveying her thanks and a "sort of small sense of familiarity and community building that receptive bilingualism creates" outside of the country a language is most commonly heard.

In regards to their opinion on if their child or a child of a close friend or sibling grew up receptively bilingual, they shared:

> I mean I wouldn't necessarily judge them, I think it to me [it] would actually depend on the circumstance, I think that if it was a similar situation to mine, um, if it was, for example, my child, like, being in school, I know that with my parents, like, to date they'll still have these moments where we're outside and, like, something interesting seems to be happening and it's going on in Mandarin, they're like "why can't you understand," like, "why can't you translate," like, "tell us what's going on," like, that's not where I'm at right now so I feel like I wonder if I would project that same sort of desire onto my children sometimes but I would like to believe that I wouldn't negatively judge them for it, I think it's sort of everybody is just where they're at.

They do consider themselves different from "full" bilinguals, as well, simply stating that their reading and writing skills are not as up to par as someone who is bilingual. They add that conveying "higher-order ideas" is another attribute of a "full" bilingual that they themselves do not possess. They shared:

> ["Full" bilingualism] allows you to engage with the culture I think at a much deeper level, like, I think that especially with Chinese culture there's so much high art and poetry that is written that I don't have access to and therefore there's a lot of cultural nuance that I will never understand in the same way that somebody who is truly bilingual in Mandarin would have- would understand, and so yeah, I do think that there's a very significant difference that sort of cuts me off from accessing as much of the culture as I would like to one day.

5. Discussion

After examining the answers the participants gave to each question, and keeping in mind their statistics from Figure 3, I found four main categories of conclusions to be made from the results of the interviews. The first is the successful categorization of each of the interviewees of this study into each of the RB types named by Sherkina-Lieber (2020), providing evidence for each categorization. The second touches on the variability among interviewees' self-analysis of their own receptive bilingualism, analyzing whether or not they fit under the label "receptive" or whether they would be considered simply "bilingual." The third examines each interviewee's perception of their fluency in their receptive language and uplifts any benefits they believe receptive bilingualism offers. Finally, I delve into the perceptions that native speakers of the receptive language of the interviewees have on the interviewees' fluencies, which are revealed to be a range of perceptions in accordance with the interviewees' language, familiarity with their community, and even race.

5.1 Categorization of RBs

First, after collecting and analyzing the data, I attempted to classify each of my participants under the three types of receptive bilinguals created by Sherkina-Lieber (2020). As more than one interviewee told me that they were receptive in multiple languages, as seen in Figure 3 under the "Receptive language" column, and after hearing about each individual's relationship to each receptive language, I was able to label them with a specific RB category for each language. On the following page is an updated Figure 3 that now includes the labels of RB categories that I assigned each interviewee.

Name	Year	Receptive Language	Immigration in relation to RB	SC	RC	WC	LCC	RB Type
A	3rd	Nigerian Pidgin	2nd Gen	3	4	1	5	HL
A	3rd	Spanish	n/a	2.5	4	3	3	L2
B	4th	Jianghuai Mandarin Chinese	n/a	2	5	5	4	HL
C	2nd	Mandarin Chinese	2nd Gen	3.5	1.5	1.5	3.25	HL
D	1st	German	n/a	3.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	L2
E	1st	Farsi	2nd Gen	2.5	1	1	3.5	HL
F	4th	French	2nd Gen	2.5	1.5	1	3.5	HL
G	2nd	Spanish	n/a	3	2	3	4	L2
H	3rd	Spanish	n/a	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	L2
H	3rd	Hindi	2nd Gen	2	2	1.5	3.5	HL
J	4th	Arabic	n/a	1	4	1	1	L2
J	4th	Urdu	n/a	2	1	1	3	MIL
J	4th	Hindi	n/a	3	1	1	4	L2
K	4th	Mandarin Chinese	n/a	3.5	2	1.5	3	L2
K	4th	Tamil	[3]Expat	2.5	1	1	4	HL

Figure 5. Updated Figure 3 table with RB Type column. SC = Speaking Confidence, RC = Reading Confidence, WC = Writing Confidence, and LCC = Listening and Comprehending Confidence.

[3] Interviewee prefers to be referred to as an expat, but for the purposes of this study, expat and 1st generation immigrant are synonymous.

In total, I labeled 7 HL (Heritage Language) relationships, 7 L2 (Second Language) relationships, and 1 MIL (Mutually Intelligible Language) relationship.

HL RB interviewees noted most often that they learned their languages through interaction with their fluent family members, whether that be grandparents or immediate family members, and this follows the definition created by Sherkina-Lieber (2020). These included interviewees A with Pidgin, B with Jianghuai Mandarin Chinese, C with Mandarin Chinese, E with Farsi, F with French, H with Hindi, and K with Tamil, primarily identified under this category because they named the main community members they experience this language with as their family members. These family members range from immediate family (such as parents or siblings) to, in cases like F, grandparents. According to Figure 2, out of the attributes labeled by Sherkina-Leiber (2020) that are found in HL receptive bilinguals, the exposure to the receptive language since birth, limited lexical knowledge, unstable and missing grammar, L1 phonology (possibly with attrition effects) and motivation in relation to identity and cultural importance of the receptive language are all brought up by interviewees A, B, C, E, F, H, and K, though not every interviewee experiences all of these attributes together.

L2 RB interviewees, A with Spanish, D with German, G with Spanish, H with Spanish, J with Hindi and Urdu, and K with Mandarin Chinese, specifically noted an L2 acquisition process in regards to their receptive language, whether that be through classes in school, or self-study outside of the classroom. As seen in their interviews, their motivations varied, as do their histories with and time commitments to the language, but they also exhibit, as posited by Sherkina-Lieber (2020), limited lexical knowledge, unstable and missing grammar, L2 phonology, and an exposure after age 4 for child L2s or after age 8-10 for adult L2s.

The singular interviewee with an MIL relationship to their receptive bilingualism identified within this study was J with Urdu. Their stronger language was Hindi, which is mutually intelligible with Urdu and was used as their base language for interactions with Urdu-speakers. In accordance with Sherkina-Lieber's categorization, the interview proved their acquisition of Urdu to be none, their exposure of Urdu also none, their lexical knowledge consisting of matching cognates from the base language, their grammatical knowledge stemming from the base language, and their transfer of knowledge from the base to the receptive language to be seen in all relevant linguistic areas (morphosyntax and phonology primarily).

However, it is important to note that some of the data collected in regards to the self-analysis of the interviewee's confidence in the production of the receptive language (specifically for interviewees C and K) may not reflect receptive bilingualism as opposed to "full" bilingualism, and this will be touched upon in the following section.

5.2 RBs' Self- Analysis of Confidence Levels

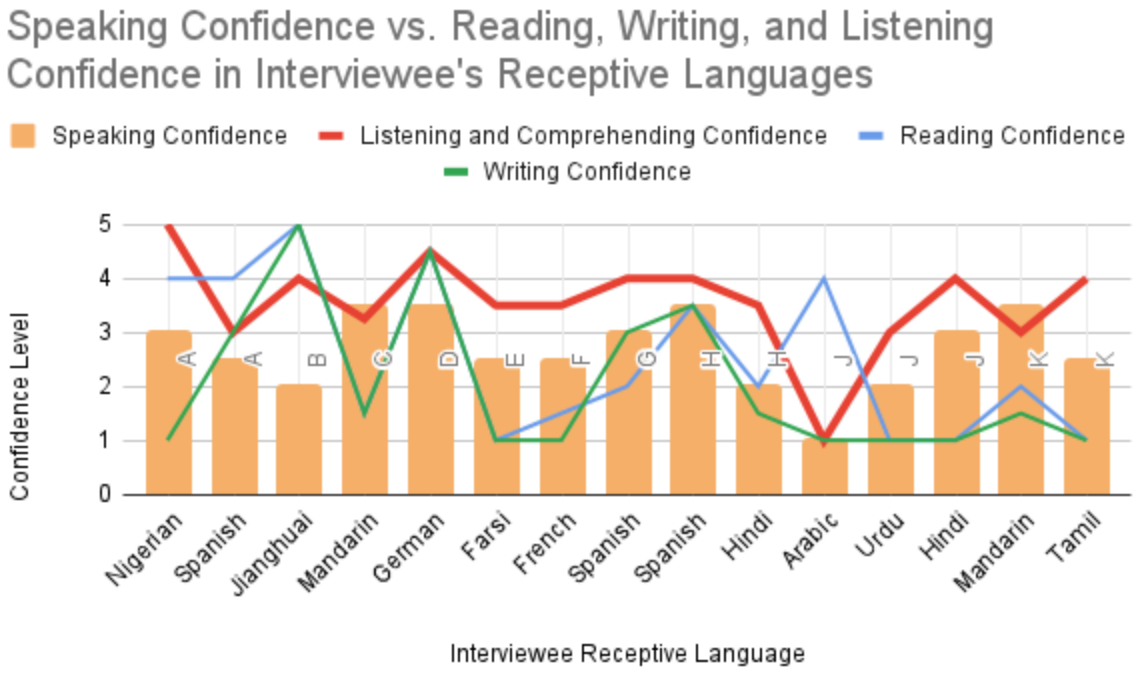


Figure 6. All interviewees' confidence levels in speaking vs. reading, writing, and listening in their receptive languages

As previously discussed, each interviewee was asked to rank their confidence level out of five in their ability to speak, read, write, as well as listen and comprehend their receptive language. Though all interviewees believed that they were receptive bilingual with their languages as they answered their questions, with a majority of them answering that they did consider themselves different from "full" bilinguals, there do seem to be some discrepancies within the data. Considering the definition of receptive bilingual to encompass a greater understanding of a language than verbal production of the language, Figure 6 highlights some interviewees who considered their speaking ability to be equal to or greater than their listening ability. These interviewees are C and K.

Firstly, as seen in Figures 5 and 6, the 0.25 difference in confidence of speaking and listening of C is much less drastic from other interviewees that I had spoken with, and reveals that their speaking confidence is higher than their listening confidence. In this way, one could lean away from considering them a receptive bilingual, solely looking at the statistics of their confidence levels. However, they seemed to exhibit some other attributes that Sherkina-Leiber (2020) connected to receptive bilinguals, specifically regarding their motivation and some missing lexical knowledge when speaking or hearing more formal or complicated topics. In one instance brought up in C's interview when discussing if they felt as though they were almost "fully" bilingual, they shared:

> I'm bad at coming up with words because I'm used to, like, mixing, like code-switching a lot when I speak Mandarin, and so when I'm forced to speak only Mandarin, like, it's hard. I, like, hesitate a lot because I can't think of the word right away.
>
> R: Yeah, but you, like, get there eventually?
>
> C: Yeah, well, usually… Sometimes I need a little [help]… but once I get reminded, like, yeah.

It could be argued that this section of their interview, in combination with their confidence levels leaning towards a higher confidence in speaking than listening, presents them as a "full" bilingual, as they are sure that they "get there eventually" with their lexicon in their receptive language. Whereas, other receptive bilinguals may have even more limited lexicons. On the contrary, their faltering when it comes to production of the lexicon may even prove their receptive bilingualism, as they anecdotally seem stronger in listening than in speaking, and their code-switching brings up the morphosyntax transferring that Sherkina-Leiber (2020) attributes for HL RBs.

In regards to K, their speaking confidence level in comparison to their listening and comprehending confidence level in Mandarin Chinese can also be argued as a non-receptive bilingual relationship. They rated their speaking confidence as a 3.5 out of 5 while they rated their listening and comprehending confidence as a 3. Anecdotally, they seem to primarily be in, at current, situations in which they only have to listen and comprehend the language. However, they shared that they practice their speaking abilities with international students at their college, and have taken Mandarin Chinese classes for multiple years. Not only did they attribute their high retainment of Mandarin Chinese to it being their fifth language that they have learned, but after rating their confidence levels listening and comprehending the language, they responded:

> Just, like, speed sometimes can be a difficulty when listening to people, but I can- what happens is, usually people will, like, speak and then I might not understand the full sentence but I'll get enough of the words inside that I can, can actually figure out what's going on.
>
> R: Right. Okay. That makes sense. I feel like it's kind of equal, your speaking and listening abilities.
>
> K: Yeah. I would say so.

I proposed that their speaking and listening levels were equal, which stemmed from my recollection of the numerical ratings that they had given me at the beginning of the interview, as well as their explanation of how they learned Mandarin Chinese in school. They agreed with my proposal, which could be evidence towards the idea that they are not, in fact, receptively bilingual. However, they do seem to exhibit some of the attributes of an L2 receptive bilingual, such as limited lexicon, missing and unstable grammar, L2 acquisition and phonology, and exposure to the language after ages 8-10. It seems as though the environment in which they

learned Mandarin Chinese allows them to blur the line between "full" bilingual and receptive bilingual.

Interviewee J also labeled themselves as a receptive bilingual with the language Arabic, though their confidence level in reading the language is far higher than than their confidence level in writing, speaking, or listening and comprehending the language. Additionally, their speaking and comprehending confidence levels were both labeled as 1 out of 5, showing an equal ability to speak and understand Arabic. According to Sherkina-Leiber (2020)'s definition of a receptive bilingual, J's relationship to Arabic does not appear to be that of a receptive bilingual as their ability to process the spoken language is not stronger than their ability to produce it. They would not be able to use their knowledge of this language and still understand a native Arabic speaker without the help of an additional lingua franca.

5.3 Perceptions of Interviewees on their own Receptive Bilingualism

The following sections will touch on the major conclusions drawn based on interviewees' perceptions of their own receptive bilingualism, including their opinions on their own fluency as well as their perceived benefits of receptive bilingualism.

5.3.1 Opinions on their Fluency

Out of the 7 HL receptive bilinguals interviewed, 4 (A, B, C, and H) stated that they wished they were "better" at, or were actively making choices to "get better" at, their receptive language. It can be assumed that "getting better" alludes to becoming more balanced at producing the language or becoming more like their perception of a "full" bilingual. Following Beaudrie (2009), as there is a connection between language and culture, there is also a relationship between HL receptive bilinguals and desire to maintain closeness to their culture through language-maintenance. Two of the remaining interviewees I categorized as HL receptive bilinguals, E and K, seemed to be satisfied with or proud of their current ability to produce their receptive language. They shared that their confidence level in speaking their receptive language used to be much less, but after time and effort to learn and practice, it has gone up to a level that they are content with. This is not necessarily reflected in the confidence levels that I prompted them for at the beginning of each interview, however, it alludes that these confidence levels are now higher than they would be if not for the work that they put into learning and practicing the language on their own. F was the only HL receptive bilingual to not seem to have any opinion on their current knowledge besides acknowledging that it was not as good as someone who is "fully" bilingual. With F being an outlier, there appears to be a connection between heritage connection to a language and the receptive bilingual's desire to improve their production in their receptive language, as supported by Beaudrie (2009).

Out of the 7 L2 receptive bilingual relationships addressed, only 2 (A and H) mentioned outright that they wished they were "better" or more close to "full" bilingualism in their L2

receptive languages. Notably, their shared L2 receptive language is Spanish, which they had been exposed to for many years through a combination of learning in a language classroom and learning it from community members. As both A and H also have HL receptive languages, it can be seen that their confidence levels with Spanish are also much more evenly spread as opposed to the language that they learned through their family.

Other L2 receptive bilinguals, D, G, J, and K, do not seem to have any strong opinion about moving towards "full" bilingualism. G, in particular, when asked if they consider themselves different from those who are fully bilingual, responded "I mean, like, in a way, yeah...but not in like, not like a bad way, just in like, like, just, it's a little bit fair." This implied that they understood that they would not be considered a "full" bilingual as they lacked a complete grasp on comprehending and producing the language, but were satisfied with their knowledge. Even when referencing their involvement in mixed Spanish-English conversations, they appeared to be grateful for the Spanish knowledge that they did have as it aided them in participating and following along in these conversations.

Interviewee J, who has both an L2 and MIL RB relationship with two separate languages, seemed entirely nonchalant about their knowledge of their receptively bilingual languages. When asked if they felt like their nonchalance has to do with coming from an international background, they agreed, saying:

> I think [it's more natural to know many languages] because, um, like back home, everyone would understand Hindi because we all grew up watching Hindi TV shows and serials. So everyone, like, back home would understand Hindi and they would also understand some bit of Urdu. And even if not fluent, they would also be able to speak somewhat in Hindi. And it's pretty common back home.

They also did not seem to have an opinion on moving towards "full" bilingualism. They did consider themselves different from someone who is "fully" bilingual and added:

> Yeah, [because] I will not understand, I'll not be able to, like, grasp the entire nuance of that language. There are some specific things that they like, that are just so interconnected with the culture and because I just don't speak that language, I'll never know.

5.3.2 Benefits of Receptive Bilingualism

When asked if there were benefits of receptive bilingualism, almost every interviewee acknowledged that these benefits existed. Interviewees A, E, F, G, H, J, and K specifically cited one benefit as the connection it gave them to their family members and community. Interviewee A, for instance, mentioned that because they had never been to Nigeria, their receptive knowledge of Nigerian Pidgin was what brought them close to their community and culture. Interviewee K echoes this connection between language and community, and mentions the phrase "ephemeral placemaking." This is an archeological idea that they have connected to bilingualism, combining the concepts of ephemeral art with placemaking. Placemaking "is a philosophy and an iterative, collaborative process for creating public spaces that people love and

feel connected to" (Placemaking.Education). The term ephemeral placemaking as K uses it could refer to an abstract making of place and identity that only lasts for the moment in which they have the receptive language experience.

Interviewee K, in bringing up an anecdote about a time where they were able to translate for a Chinese woman in public, described the positive feeling of placemaking as creating a connection between themselves and this stranger in that singular moment. They mentioned placemaking again as they discussed how they leaned back into their heritage receptive language Tamil as they moved out of India. They wanted to be able to recognize their identity in a foreign place, and using and experiencing more Tamil helped them create this "place" with their family in a foreign environment. These anecdotes frame receptive knowledge of a language as a type of power that allows one to stay grounded in their identity and their community even in spaces where they believe they are alone.

Interviewees C, D, though, found it difficult to name benefits of receptive bilingualism that were separate benefits that came with bilingualism as a whole. D even noted:

> I feel like full bilingualism probably would always just be, like, better because you're, like, because you're just completely, like, knowledgeable of the language. Um, yeah, I feel like it's just, like, all the benefits are the same benefits as being bilingual, like being able to, like, immerse yourself in another culture, like, understand someone, like, take off the burden of them having [sic] speaking. But it's, like, that's a big one for me, I feel like.

Although they begin their explanation supporting the idea that "full" bilingualism is better than receptive bilingualism, they mention specifically that one of the benefits of receptive bilingualism is taking off "the burden" of the other person from having to speak in a language that they may not be as fluent in. This follows "RB mode" and the definition of receptive bilingualism as put forth by Sherkina-Leiber (2020), the usage of a separate medium that allows for communication between two speakers whose primary language is not the same. The interviewees are aware that they use their receptive abilities with a language to make it easier for communication to occur between community members and themselves, no matter if they consider themselves a part of or related to the language community or not.

Interviewee B previously said that they had no positive opinions about receptive bilingualism, however, they did assure that it was "better than nothing," a sentiment that was echoed by family members of C, as well as other interviewees (like F) or their communities. Though this idea displays another preference for "full" bilingualism over receptive bilingualism, it shows that many RBs place value on whatever little knowledge that they, or any RB, has on their receptive language.

More than one interviewee, whether HL, L2, or MIL, also brought up one benefit of receptive bilingualism as exposure to new cultures and people. Interviewees C, G, H, and K seem to be appreciative of their receptive abilities as it related to the opportunities it has opened up for them to visit new places and interact with new people. Interviewee G, in particular, seemed the most passionate and grateful for these opportunities, stating, "I do think that it's, like, beneficial because it just, it opens up another, another range of people that you can, you can talk

to, you can interact with, you can like, experience, like, things with…" They believe that language barriers are a major hindrance of connection between individuals, and this showed their gratitude for their receptive knowledge of Spanish and the way in which it allowed them to see the world differently.

One final benefit of receptive bilingualism that multiple interviewees mentioned is joy. Interviewees A, E, F, G, J, K all alluded to or directly named "fun" or community bonding as one of the benefits of their receptive abilities. Collectively, these interviewees (of more than one RB categorization) not only experienced joy when using or hearing their receptive bilingualism with family members, but also with friends or strangers. J, in particular, said:

> I think it's really fun. I can surprise my friends, my friend who I didn't think knew I could understand Hindi was saying something and then I, and I responded to her and she was really shocked the first time. So, that was really fun.

Not only was joy brought up in the usage of an interviewee's receptive skills, but it was also mentioned as it related to knowledge of the history and culture surrounding the language. Interviewee A introduced an anecdote, saying:

> I think the slang is very funny. Um, I can give like one quick anecdote. So… calling someone, like, a "dundee" is, like, calling them, like, dumb or something. And it comes from soccer, football is very popular in Nigeria and it comes from, like, I think, this soccer team and everyone, you know, bet all their money on the other soccer team winning and it was Dundee. I think that, like, one or lost or something. And now it's just become this, like, Pidgin colloquial term for, like, just being an idiot, you know. And so I would hear that and I'm like, what does that come from? You know, and it's like, calling someone, like, a "dundee" is, like, a reference to, like, the soccer team, you know, it's like, that doesn't exist in English, you know, here…So I think Pidgin is kind of, like, that one strong link that I have [to my culture], like, the music, the culture, the slang, the stories.

Interviewee A gleefully shared this anecdote and demonstrated their genuine love and enthusiasm for their receptive language as well as its accompanying background. They carry this enthusiasm and interest with them as they continue to hear and interact with this language in their community.

5.4 Perceptions of the Community on Receptive Bilingualism

The perceptions of receptive bilinguals' own fluencies from their communities varied depending on the community, the familiarity between community members and the interviewee, and the receptive language. Interviewee A mentioned that Nigerians from their parents' generation considered Pidgin as a "lower form of English" and not an actual language, therefore not acknowledging receptive bilingualism of Pidgin in any individual. They brought in a memory of a Nigerian community member from their church who asked them if they spoke Igbo, and when A said that they did not, but did understand Pidgin, the community member insisted that

Pidgin "wasn't really" a language. This may be related to the history of Pidgin as a combination of colonizer languages and native languages, and may display not only this community member's opinion on what makes a language, but also a preference for Standard English (West African Pidgin English, 1975). Additionally, there is the aspect of A's receptiveness that is related to their HL relationship with Pidgin, and perhaps the community member's relationship to or perception of A as a youth in the community member's own culture has influenced how strong they feel about the culture and identity that A should be embodying.

Interviewee G also brought in an example of their community and a lack of acknowledgement of their bilingualism, receptive or otherwise. They mentioned that their sister, who has retained and maintained her Spanish from living abroad in her childhood, did not believe that G had retained any knowledge of Spanish, and had attempted to send G a voice message in Spanish as a test of their receptive abilities. G said specifically that they did understand the message, and this can be tied back to the work of Nicoladis & Mimovic (2022), whose research showed that families, particularly parents, of bilingual children had no true idea of their bilingual skills. According to G, their sister upholds her opinion that G should be "better" at Spanish than they are currently, however, this opinion is combated by G's Hispanic friends who have been appreciative of the limited Spanish that they know and contribute to conversations.

Another community opinion, mentioned in reference to many interviewees such as B, C, F, and H is that their receptive abilities are "better than nothing." This kind of opinion seems to show support for each interviewee's current state of bilingualism, though, in cases like C's, it may be influenced by their higher confidence level in speaking their receptive language in comparison to other interviewees. In B's case, there was an active effort made by their primary community link (their mother) to not teach B to produce their receptive language due to negative social attributions of that variation of Chinese. But even regardless of this effort, B stated that their grandparents and aunts have a positive opinion on their fluency. F, similarly, says of their family:

> …They flatter me a lot and say I'm really good at it because, like, we can understand each other fairly well, like, for the most part and because, compared to my sister who knows like nothing, I, like, can still get by, so they say- they say that I'm- they have a positive reflection of my understanding of French.

Earlier, they had added that they think their family would "think it could be cool if I was more bilingual" but F's final opinion is that they believe that their family is definitely appreciative of their limited understanding of French. Interviewee H also experienced appreciation for their fluency of Hindi, though their family and community members first expressed doubt or surprise that they could understand Hindi at all. This seemed to be related to their upbringing in the United States and assimilation to American culture, as opposed to a lack of effort on their own part to learn Hindi. Some international students from H's college who understand Hindi fluently, on hearing that H only knew Hindi receptively, said that it "made sense," and this seemed to come from their perception of second-generation Indian-Americans as "Americanized," alluding

to monolingualism or a full grasp of English as the norm in the United States (Davis & Moore, 2014; Leeman, 2004).

Interviewee D similarly recounted a moment of community appreciation towards their receptive bilingualism when they were able to use their limited German skills with a friend of their family and native speaker of German. This individual, also German by nationality, reacted positively to D's usage of their receptive language, and D reflected that this interaction might have been "biased" as they were unsure of if there was hidden judgement that their family friend was not revealing to them out of kindness and familiarity. As their relationship to German is an L2 relationship, it could be said that the community perception of D's fluency is not as harsh as it reflects positively on them as they "chose" to learn and keep up with German, as opposed to an HL relationship where it is assumed that the receptive bilingual had all the tools to become bilingual but could not for whatever reason (Hija de Tu Madre [@hijadetumadre]; Beaudrie, 2009).

Interviewee E, however, noticed a change in how their community perceives their receptive bilingualism over time. They stated that their family is much more supportive of their knowledge of Farsi now as opposed to when they were younger with a lesser confidence level in producing the language. Many members of their community previously urged them to practice using Farsi more, whether with those same community members or using language apps. Later, after E took the time to practice producing Farsi, E noted that their older family members treat them as "fully" bilingual, and this positive community perception could have influenced E's outward confidence in how they attempt to speak their receptive language. Interviewee K also shared a similar trajectory of their fluency over time, saying that they also had gotten more confident in producing Tamil as of recent years, causing their parents, and K themselves, to be content with their current bilingualism. They noted that their community even anticipates this same trajectory for K's younger brother, scolding K when they try to overcorrect their younger brother's Tamil and assuring K that their brother will become confident in his production skills in his own time, just as K did. This assumes that K's younger brother will become more "fully" bilingual over time, and also provides an example of how native speakers of Tamil view receptive bilinguals who have put in effort to produce the language, as opposed to remaining in their current state of receptive bilingualism.

It is also important to note that the race of an individual is related to the perception of a language community on said receptive bilingual. Evidence for this relation is seen in G and K's interviews as they explicitly state their distance from the assumed or perceived race of the language community. G first mentioned that, just by looking at them, it is not obviously known that they understand or know Spanish. This makes it surprising to others when they learn that G is able to understand what was said in Spanish around them, and even join into a Spanish conversation when they can. They are then seen positively for the limited amount that they know, and G says themselves that their friends are appreciative of what little Spanish they can offer to a conversation. Most importantly, as a white person, they are not expected to know any language

but English, as knowing Spanish racializes them (Cobas and Feagin, 2008; Davis & Moore, 2014; Hill, 2009).

K additionally makes a connection between race and how others perceived them in regards to their receptive bilingualism in Mandarin Chinese. They state that they attribute the positive opinion on their fluency that they receive from ethnically-Chinese native speakers of the language to their own non-Chinese ethnicity. K then compares this to the perception that they have seen of their friends from Hong Kong who grew up in the United States and no longer speak or have never spoken Cantonese. K noted that, for these individuals, not knowing how to read or write also supports the community's negative perception of their language ability. With this in mind, K recognizes that, as ethnically South Asian, their race leads native Chinese speakers to be more pleasantly surprised with their limited fluency, as opposed to their second-generation Chinese or Hong Kong-born friends.

Interviewee J brought in a final and varied perspective as an international student, and was able to bring up the neutral perception of multilingualism in their home country. They explained that it is very common to see others from "back home" end up fluent in or receptive in Hindi from watching Hindi TV shows as J did growing up. Whereas, in the United States, as monolingualism and whiteness are the norm, J's receptive or fluent knowledge of at least three languages is seen as an impressive feat (Feagin, 2009; Franceschini, 2011; Leeman, 2004). This could serve as an explanation for why their mother did not have any particular opinion on their receptive bilingualism in Hindi and Urdu. However, J's friend from school who was pleasantly surprised and enthusiastic about their understanding of Hindi and Urdu may have reflected a different opinion that stems from the difference in how multilingualism takes shape in different international settings (Leeman, 2004).

5.5 Limitations

There are a few variables that impede the clarity and accuracy of the previously outlined results, as well as the discussion of these results. Firstly, a convenience bias can be found in the unintentional focus on private liberal arts students. I, as the interviewer, attend a private liberal arts school and my advertising methods reached a majority of other private liberal arts school students, thus skewing the representation of different types of undergraduate schools. This led to an overrepresentation of students from Bryn Mawr and related schools, leading to underrepresentation of public institutions. Additionally, there could be some recall bias as interviewees were asked to recall their experiences with receptive bilingualism. Some interviewees might have been overestimating or underestimating their skills when rating their confidence levels for production and reception of their language(s). This is a risk of the qualitative method of studying receptive bilingualism presented in this research, and there is still room for more quantitative research on this topic building on this study and studies like Beaudrie (2009) to mitigate this type of bias.

6. Concluding Remarks

This research reveals that although community opinion on receptive bilingualism differs, individual receptive bilinguals are, on the whole, appreciative of their abilities in their receptive language. No matter if their abilities are limited or nonexistent over several areas of production like reading, writing, and speaking, undergraduate receptive bilinguals, while separating themselves from "full" bilinguals, acknowledge benefits of their receptive bilingualism. These benefits overlap or are indistinguishable from the benefits that "full" bilinguals enjoy, and this demonstrates the fluidity and binary-less form that bilingualism takes. Bilingualism is a continuous variable, depending on each individual's experiences, upbringings, and education, and must be studied with its fluidity in full focus. Receptive bilingualism has an additional fluid element to it, even within the broader umbrella of bilingualism, and this research proves the existing need for scholarly work dedicated to understanding and uplifting the stories and data behind receptive bilinguals' struggles and lived experiences.

Some areas to consider that this paper did not attempt to explore include the definition of "full bilingualism" and if this is a definable term at all. Additionally, the methods of testing bilinguals for either full bilingualism or receptive bilingualism, even expanding on previous literature by Sherkina Lieber (2020), may prove difficult at a broader scale. It may be necessary to individually test within the categories posed by Sherkina-Lieber (2020), for example, testing solely HL receptive bilinguals to answer one line of inquiry in one's research. Also, within this literature, one might ask if there should be separate types of receptive bilinguals based on the level of one's capacity to produce the language, or if there are major distinctions between receptive bilinguals who learned their receptive language at home versus those who have learned it in a classroom setting. These two lines of inquiry may even relate to one another through a connection between production of a receptive bilingual and the environment in which they learned the language. Furthermore, other social attributes like socioeconomic status, gender, or sexuality were not asked of the participants in this study, leaving out potential conclusions between these attributes and the already existing categorization of receptive bilinguals. There is still much to be discovered within the area of receptive bilingualism, especially as it is seen in the United States.

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Appendix A. Outreach Google form

Willing to be interviewed for a senior thesis?

Receptive bilingualism is seen in individuals who have learned/are learning two languages but have limited abilities producing (speaking, reading, and/or writing) one of those languages, though are able to understand almost all of said language. These individuals would consider themselves completely bilingual in said language if not for these limited abilities of production (California Department of Social Services, 2023). You may have learned this language at home from family members, in a foreign country that you grew up in, on your own as self-study, or in language classes. If you feel that this describes you, please fill out the form below!

Interviews will last **about 20 minutes** and can be in person or over Zoom!

After reading the definition in the description of this form, do you feel that you are receptively bilingual?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe/Unsure

Are you a Tri-Co student (attend Bryn Mawr, Haverford, or Swarthmore)?

- ☐ Yes, I go to Bryn Mawr
- ☐ Yes, I go to Haverford
- ☐ Yes, I go to Swarthmore
- ☐ No

If no, what university/college do you attend? Are you a younger/older sibling of a Tri-co student?

_____

Enter your email and/or phone number below to coordinate meeting times for this interview within the next week or two! Thank you so much!!

_____

Appendix B. Interview Questions

1. Would you be able to give me your class year and major (and minors if you have them)?
1. And would you be able to tell me your race and/or ethnicity?
2. Would you say you're a first-generation, second-generation, or third-generation immigrant? If so, which and from where did you or your family immigrate?
3. What language(s) would you say you know, in the sense that you would call yourself bilingual/multilingual or receptively bilingual/multilingual in these languages?
4. Do you speak or understand a language other than English because of the immigration of yourself or anyone in your family?
5. Are there any other languages you think that you are receptively bilingual/multilingual in that you learned not through family or immigration?
6. Out of the languages that you named, how confident are you in speaking these languages on a scale from 1-5, 1 meaning not confident at all and 5 meaning extremely confident?
7. How confident are you in reading this language from 1-5?
8. How confident are you in writing this language from 1-5?
9. How confident are you in listening and comprehending this language from 1-5?
10. Do you feel like you have a community that you experience this language with?
11. How does your family/individuals who are fluent in the language you are receptively bilingual/multilingual in feel about your knowledge of the language? Do they have a positive or negative or nuanced opinion about your fluency?
12. How long have you known about this opinion of theirs? Has it affected your development/childhood?
13. Does this opinion match the opinion of anyone else who is fluent in this language? For example, your family's friends or even strangers from the internet commenting on a video about this language.
14. How do you think people in your community or those who are fluent in this language feel about receptive bilingualism as a concept? How do they feel about individuals who are receptively bilingual as opposed to "fully bilingual"?
15. Do you think receptive bilingualism has its own benefits? Do you have any personal experiences you would like to share that go along with your opinion?
16. Do you consider yourself different from those who are "fully bilingual"? How so and why?
17. How would you feel if your child or a child of a close friend or sibling grew up receptively bilingual?
18. Is there anything else you have to say about receptive bilingualism in your own life or as a general concept that you were not able to share in any of the previous questions?

Appendix C. Informed Consent

"For the purposes of this research, I will need to record our interview. These recordings will be used to make transcripts which will be the main data source for my research. The recordings will not be shared publicly in any audio format. Physical recording devices will be locked up in my possession, and digital files will be protected on my personal devices. I will be the only one with access to these files. These files will also be deleted immediately after transcription. You will not be personally identified in my research by your name, though I will be asking you various questions about your background and demographics. Anything that you do not wish to share that I have asked for in regards to any question does not have to be shared and can also be stricken from the interview at any point during recording or transcription. In the case I make specific references to something that you said, a pseudonym will be used. Anything said that is identifiable information (names of people, locations, courses you've taken, your work schedule, etc.) will not be used for examples in my thesis.

You will also have the chance to review the recordings and transcripts yourself. If you request it, I will send them to you as digital files, and you may listen to or read through them and request certain information be removed from the record or not used as a specific example in my research. I want to make it clear that if at any time, you say something that you no longer want to be included in my transcripts or possibly used as an example, that request will be honored without question.

If at any point, including right now, you feel uncomfortable being recorded, or anything else related to my involvement or my research, you may decide to not participate/stop participating in this research. If you decide to stop participating, there will be absolutely no penalty or effect to you. Please feel free to reach out to me via my email (rsarathi@brynmawr.edu) if you have any questions or concerns about the research or your participation."