



# Bachelor Thesis

## Linguistics

### **Heritage Languages, Heart, and Home: Examining Language Ideologies in Postcolonial India**

Keerthana Sridharan Vaidehi  
6498701

**Supervisor:**  
Gaetano Fiorin  
Linguistics  
Utrecht University

Spring 2020

**ABSTRACT:**

In this paper, I examine the connection between heritage language acquisition and English language acquisition among young Indian adults currently living outside of India, insofar as it pertains to cultural, linguistic, and personal identity. Additionally, I delve into the postcolonial implications of a colonial language maintaining a status of high prestige in India, a country with over 120 attested languages. To begin, I discuss existing language ideologies in India, briefly outlining the extent of British colonial rule and its impact on language planning and policy in present-day India. I then explore the established literature on the topics of heritage languages, diaspora studies, and sociolinguistic research in former colonies. Based on this literature review, I conduct a qualitative research study consisting of semi-structured interviews with six young Indian adults. The transcription of these interviews serves as a corpus for my data analysis. Drawing on the work of Teun van Dijk (1993), I perform a critical discourse analysis of these interviews in an effort to glean insights into dominant ideological positions on the prestige of the English language in India. Furthermore, I explore the effects of postcoloniality on cultural and personal belonging, perceived heritage language proficiency, and social stratification as markers of identity. Postcolonial studies, heritage language studies, and diaspora studies are all incorporated in the discussion of my results, bringing forth the question of what it means to be a heritage language speaker--and, indeed, an English language speaker--in present-day India.

## Heritage Languages, Heart, and Home: Examining Language Ideologies in Postcolonial India

*“A deeper understanding of present language problems in India demands revisiting colonial policies and politics...contemporary language issues [have] their roots in the colonial period.”*

- Papia Sengupta, *Language as Identity in Colonial India*, 2018

### INTRODUCTION

Language has the power to inform, shape, and even erase identity. It is an indicator of culture, caste, religion, socioeconomic status, and education level; all identity markers. The relationship between identity and language is irrevocably linked to the idea of social mobility and success; the languages we speak affect the ways in which we are perceived and the opportunities we are exposed to, thereby influencing our positioning in society at large.

Officially, there are 23 languages of record in India, including English (Trines, 2018). In reality, the actual number of languages spoken on the subcontinent exceeds 120 (Census of India, 2011, Table C-16). Currently, the Indian government mandates educational instruction in English, Hindi, and a relevant mother tongue (*Three Language Formula*, Government of India, 1968). There have been attempts to promote Hindi, a Northern language, as a tool for universal communication within India, particularly through efforts to tie Hindi (and its linguistic predecessor, Sanskrit) to the majority religion of Hinduism, as well as the Brahmin caste (Sengupta, 2018). However, these efforts have not historically been met well, with some attempts even leading to threats of South Indian secession (Sengupta, 2018). South Indians symbolically rejected Hindi as a majority language, with many claiming that this rejection was a rebellion against “the Brahmin will to control others through religion and caste” (Sengupta, 2018, p. 109). English thereby fills the gap of a lingua franca.

English was introduced to the Indian subcontinent by means of British colonial rule and has remained a language of high prestige<sup>1</sup> since India gained independence in 1947 (Sengupta, 2018). British rule spanned 190 years, during which many governmental policies were put into place in order to ensure the dominance of British language, culture, and politics within colonial Indian society (Sengupta, 2018). A keystone of British colonialism in India was educational reform, with English-instruction universities being built in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras--all major cities at the time (Sengupta, 2018).

The Three Language Formula, or TLF, is a policy that was implemented in India in 1968, declaring that children in schools were required to learn three languages: Hindi, English, and a regional language or their mother tongue<sup>2</sup> (*Three Language Formula*, Government of India,

---

<sup>1</sup> A high-prestige language is defined as a language whose speech carries with it increased social status and power (Van Herk, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> This wording is specified in the case that a child’s mother tongue is different from the dominant regional language in a state.

1968). However, many schools in India have since circumvented the need to teach minority languages due to the circumstances under which language teachers can be employed; one teacher is hired for every 40 students that wish to pursue their mother tongue, and most parents opt for the state's regional language rather than encouraging students to develop their mother tongues, since fluency in state regional languages is more likely to be economically rewarding (Sengupta, 2018, p. x). This leads to minority languages becoming "extinct," since minority communities, especially those from a low socioeconomic background, encourage children to pursue fluency in dominant languages to then guarantee them "better opportunities" (Sengupta, 2018, p. x). Furthermore, private schools in India tend to a) function as English-medium institutions and b) offer alternative options for the third language choice, such as French, German, or Spanish (Pednekar, 2017). These options carry with them the potential to pursue an international career, marking them as high prestige languages at the cost of heritage languages<sup>3</sup>. Enrollment in private schools has been increasing rapidly since 2009, and more and more low-income families are choosing to send their children to English-medium institutions over regional-language government schools in the hopes of securing better employment in the future (Rao, 2013, p. 274). Bhattacharjea, Wadhwa, and Banerji (2011) discuss the fact that while it has been proved extensively that educating children in a language other than the language spoken at home inhibits learning, the notion that English-medium instruction is inherently "better" than regional or minority language instruction persists (p. 68). Partly as a consequence to this attitude, the majority of higher education in India is conducted in English (Trines, 2018).

In this thesis, I offer an examination of the position of English as a high-prestige language in Indian society and how it interacts with Indian heritage languages. This examination necessarily contains a postcolonial analysis, as several postcolonial scholars have illustrated the ways in which British colonial policies have affected how India functions and are continuing to do so even today (see Sengupta, 2018; Loomba, 1998). Language cannot be depoliticized; under colonial rule, India underwent a linguistic transformation whose effects are potentially still being felt by its current generation of heritage language speakers. The adoption of English as an official language of India has undoubtedly influenced the ways in which heritage languages are prioritized in relation to English; in this thesis, I plan to investigate the degree to which this reprioritization has influenced English and heritage language speakers in India. My research will thus consist of a sociolinguistic inquiry into English and heritage language speakers in India alongside a postcolonial examination of language ideologies in India, from colonial rule to today.

As a diasporic Indian and heritage language speaker myself, my experience of English and my heritage language(s) is different from those Indian heritage language speakers who have been raised on the Indian subcontinent and thereby have potentially had exposure to their heritage languages outside of the home. Therefore, in order to explore English and heritage

---

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I will use the term "heritage language" as defined by Montrul (2015) as "minority languages co-existing with majority languages, including immigrant languages, national minority languages, and aboriginal languages" (p. 15). This term has variously been called "endangered language" (De Swaan, 2004) and "language(s) for identification" (House, 2003), among others.

language attitudes, I will speak with Indian young adults who identify as fluent in English and proficient in at least one Indian heritage language. Ultimately, my goal is to address the question: **To what degree do current Indian heritage language speakers feel connected or disconnected from their cultural identity as a result of their language proficiencies both in English and their heritage languages?**

Through this exploration, I aim to gain insights into dominant ideological positions on English and heritage languages in India, the effects of colonial rule on current Indian language planning and policy, and issues of social stratification as they relate to language proficiency.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Field

There is a wide range of literature relating to heritage language acquisition (hereafter HLA), English as a prestige language, and cultural identity. Heritage languages themselves are a highly researched topic within the field of sociolinguistics. Guadalupe Valdes (2000), a seminal scholar within the field, defines a heritage speaker as “a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage language, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language” (p. 1). Valdes’s definition is quite limiting, as it does not account for heritage speakers in countries where the majority language is not necessarily English, and furthermore, it lacks a sociopolitical context within which most heritage language dynamics function. As Montrul (2015) establishes, the categories of heritage language and heritage speaker are highly dependent on context; for example, Spanish is a majority language in Spain, as well as in Spanish-speaking Latin America, but it carries the label of heritage language within the United States. Heritage speakers more often than not belong to diasporic, immigrant, or Indigenous populations, and this racialized, sociopolitical context cannot be removed from a linguistic analysis of heritage speakers (Montrul, 2015). Existing in sociopolitically minority classifications is what leads to the prioritization of “majority languages”--English in the US and the UK, Putonghua Mandarin in China, and Dutch in the Netherlands--over heritage languages, since majority languages are linked to cultural acceptance and assimilation as well as greater socioeconomic opportunities (Montrul, 2015).

Polinsky and Kagan (2007) acknowledge this sociopolitical dimension in their discussion of heritage language education within the United States, where English holds a majority language position. They discuss the fact of heritage speakers becoming “frustrated” with their HLA process as a result of language attrition, coining the term “heritage language frustration” (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007, p. 5). They also bring up how heritage languages gradually stop being spoken in immigrant and diasporic households in favor of the majority language, and, briefly, offer methods for improving pedagogy within the States and elsewhere to better accommodate the needs of heritage speakers (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). It is my goal to apply the heritage language framework to my participants, positioning English as the majority language and any

and all Indian languages spoken by my participants as heritage languages. I would also like to explore whether the phenomenon of heritage language frustration occurs among my participants. As discussed in my introduction, I also plan to introduce a postcolonial viewpoint when applying this framework, as heritage speakers within former colonies--where the colonial language becomes a majority language--experience HLA in a markedly different way than immigrant or diasporic speakers. This difference is explored in depth by Kharchenko (2017), who argues that the teaching of English, especially in former colonies, must be viewed as a “direct product of colonialism” (p. 3). She brings into question the preconceived notions that English language teachers often have when instructing children they perceive to be “foreign”, othering their home languages, cultures, and classifying them as “deficient and in need of correction” (p. 6). It is my intent to observe whether these preconceived notions are present and internalized within Indian heritage speakers, and if they have themselves experienced the effects of these notions when acquiring English both in the classroom and at home.

William Labov, in his seminal study (Labov, 1997), explores the connection between rhoticity and social stratification in department stores within New York, establishing that language is connected to sociocultural concepts of class and wealth, but most importantly, prestige. Labov argues that social status is the product of social evaluation, which implies that “the normal workings of society have produced systematic differences between certain institutions or people,” and that these differences “have been ranked in status or prestige by general agreement.” (1997, p. 169). Linguistic variation is one such difference. Whereas Labov studies rhotic microelements as prestige markers, this paper will take a more macro approach. I will be looking at linguistic variation across languages, using them to gain insights into how languages in India are given status and why.

My own research examines heritage languages and their low-prestige status in India in relation to English language dominance. De Swaan (2004) challenges the common belief that what he calls “endangered languages” need to be protected and promoted in communities where they are dying out; he posits that the more languages are spoken, the faster English will ‘take over’ as the dominant language of operation, and that immigrant languages are more often than not ill-equipped for contemporary use (p. 567). Citing Peter Ladefoged (1992), De Swaan brings up the fact that often, when heritage languages are abandoned by their speakers in favor of a dominant one, it is due to “logically” sound reasoning on the part of the speakers; a speech community may realize that they cannot be a part of ‘modern’ society without assimilating and thereby giving up the use of their language (2004, p. 569). Whether said speech community is making the wisest decision “for the language”, De Swaan argues, is not up to linguists to pronounce (2004, p. 569). Furthermore, he claims that linguistic diversity can in fact seclude communities, and that if several culturally diverse groups spoke one language, there would be more space for multiculturalism than if the promotion of individual languages was successful and these communities continued to exist in isolation from one another. If we are to view languages as “endangered species”, our best bet is to leave their environments “undisturbed,” he says (De Swaan, 2004, p. 571). Speaking out against the claim that heritage languages should be

taught in schools, De Swaan asserts that immigrant families would rather learn the national language than “forever float about in the wash water of their native language.” (2004, p. 572). Falling prey to the pitfall of a teleological view--that movement towards a national language is inherently progressive, and indeed that continuing to learn one’s heritage language in a classroom setting is regressive--De Swaan appears to address English as a dominant language without attending to its sociocultural reception in places where it does not occupy a position of neutrality. There is no room in De Swaan’s factual analysis for postcolonial nuance and any effort on the part of sociolinguists to reduce the gap between immigrant and nonimmigrant children in the classroom is only treated as a way to “breed resentment” between the two groups (2004, p. 572-573). Diasporic populations, he reasons, “obviously” seek to learn the language used in the workplace, which is the national language, and so there is no reason to force children to learn a language they will “never use” outside of the home (De Swaan, 2004, p. 573). Crucially, De Swaan’s analysis fails to consider the possibility of a multilingual workplace. In fact, functional multilingual communities, which have always existed and continue to exist, are altogether ignored within De Swaan’s work.

As this thesis looks at the connection between language and identity in a cultural context, it is useful to begin with a working definition of cultural identity. Stuart Hall (1990), in his work on cultural identity and diaspora, posits two possible definitions. The first, he says, is the notion of “one shared culture,” access to which is determined by a shared ancestry and history (Hall, 1990, p. 223). The second definition, however, is perhaps more relevant to this paper, as it concerns cultural identity “as a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’”, framing it as something mutable rather than a static set of parameters (Hall, 1990, p. 225). Cultural identities, through this lens, are entities that “undergo constant transformation,” serving as a way for us to determine “the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (Hall, 1990, p. 225). In this paper, I seek to determine the degree to which cultural identity is “transforming” in contemporary India, and in what ways linguistic proficiency is contributing to this change, if at all. As Hall’s work concerns cultural identity through postcolonial and diasporic lenses, I am also interested in exploring how colonial and postcolonial thought influence participants’ notions of cultural identity and their connection to it.

## **Topic**

Jean Mills (2008) looks at how language and identity intersect in a diasporic context with a longitudinal study of British mothers who all have Pakistani heritage. Through recorded semi-structured interviews conducted over the course of two years, Mills discusses notions of community and cultural belonging as being linked to heritage language proficiency, and presents the prominent societal belief that the English language is a “crucial means of engagement” with the wider community in the UK (Mills, 2008, p. 253). In presenting this view, Mills also questions it and the sociocultural implications of such a statement with regards to the diasporic community in the UK (Mills, 2008). She also brings in published statements from the home office and press in the UK that perpetuate beliefs and statements that she believes to be culturally

insensitive and ignorant of the immigrant experience (Mills, 2008). Ultimately, she posits that these beliefs are what push her subject demographic to prioritize English language acquisition over that of Urdu, Punjabi, and/or Mirpuri (Mills, 2008). The majority of her participants express regret and remorse for not having pushed themselves and their children to pursue their heritage languages to greater proficiency (Mills, 2008). My work will engage with Mills' insofar as both studies are concerned with the role of diasporic identity and sociocultural belonging within HLA. As my participants live in India, I will be exploring whether or not this prioritization of English over heritage languages, as well as these reported feelings of regret regarding a lack of heritage language proficiency, are consistent in their home communities.

Contrary to the position that I will adopt in this thesis, House (2003) argues that the role of English as a lingua franca is not in fact a threat to global linguistic diversity. In fact she goes on to claim that it is reductive to see the rising prominence of English speakers as a cause of dwindling heritage language speakers; instead, she suggests that there be a division between spoken languages--languages for communication, such as English, and languages for identification, here heritage languages. House supports this claim by using three research projects conducted at Hamburg University surrounding English's interactions with other languages, its effect on education and instruction in "international" degree programs, and its impact on what she refers to as "discourse norms" in other languages (House, 2003, p. 556). The view of English as a lingua franca is crucial to House's argument; instead of "one-sidedly attacking" the English language, she posits, we should instead look to the ways in which English lends itself to global distribution and acquisition, examining features such as variability, negotiability, and "openness to integration" (House, 2003, p. 557). House, like De Swaan, seems to view English as a lingua franca without addressing the sociocultural impact of its colonial context in certain regions.

Hoffman (1989), looking at the relationship between language use and "second culture acquisition," among Iranian immigrants in the United States, makes the claim that the role of language is instrumental in "acculturation," which she defines as the "learning of a second culture" (p. 120). There are three roles of language within the Iranian immigrant community in the States that Hoffman puts forth: first, a way to facilitate "cultural reidentification" with their Iranian heritage; second, a way to represent "Iranian attitudes towards American culture;" and third, a way to ease the process of culture acquisition (1989, p. 121). This first aim is of the most relevance to this paper, as it deals with the notion of an "obscured [Iranian] cultural heritage," and I am interested in seeing whether or not my participants find familiarity with this notion (Hoffman, 1989, p. 120). Hoffman first explores past attitudes towards Farsi and English use among Iranian communities both in Iran and in the U.S., emphasizing a "strong value attached to proficiency in a foreign tongue" and citing English and French as being seen as especially impressive (1989, p. 122). The tendency of immigrant families to speak English, especially in public, was motivated in the past by a desire to not be seen as 'other' or visibly 'foreign', prompting Iranian families to even address each other in English, both in public and at home (Hoffman, 1989, p. 122). She compares this to current views on the subject, after the Iranian

Revolution of 1978, and how the desire to reconnect with one's culture is a common sentiment among the Iranian-American and Iranian immigrant communities (Hoffman, 1989, p. 122). This culture is reclaimed in part through a "greater emphasis" on speaking Farsi at home and in Persian language schools (Hoffman, 1989, p. 120). Like Mills, Hoffman writes that multiple participants within her research expressed regret at not having instructed their children in Farsi from birth, acknowledging English as "more prestigious" but mourning their children's lost connection to Iranian culture (1989, p. 122). Cultural attitudes towards the use of English and Farsi are changing, as Hoffman makes clear; now, modernism and prestige are associated not with American culture and assimilation to it, but with "becoming and remaining "true" to one's own cultural character and heritage" (1989, p. 123). In my paper, I would like to explore how current cultural attitudes towards English and heritage language use are changing in India, and what concepts such as "modernism" and "prestige" are associated with.

### **Approach**

In order to comprehensively gain insights into dominant ideological positions regarding English in India, I will adopt a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. This approach was pioneered by Teun van Dijk, whose work on the principles of critical discourse analysis forms a series of guidelines for the approach carried out in my paper. This paper concerns dominant ideological positions on language acquisition; Van Dijk defines ideologies as "the fundamental social cognitions that reflect the basic aims, interests, and values of groups" (1993, p. 258). CDA, Van Dijk explains, differs from other forms of discourse analysis in that it requires analysts to take an "explicitly sociopolitical stance", heavily involves a multidisciplinary approach, and "makes necessary a discussion of relationships between text and culture, talk and society" (1993, p. 252-3). The focus of CDA is its attention to power relations, and the ways in which social inequality can influence discourse, hence the "critical" lens (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 253). Van Dijk acknowledges that while a work of CDA is measured by its relevance and its "contribution to change", academic contributions to societal change may be marginal; there is, however, no shortage of issues regarding oppression and inequality that academics should nonetheless bring their attention to (1993, p. 253). He also clearly establishes that any and all attempts to "remove oneself from partisanship" while performing CDA--attempts usually carried out by white male scholars, he clarifies--in fact do the opposite, reproducing and perpetuating the power relations that lead to social inequality (1993, p. 254). Power is about control, and control is something that is "exercised over the action and cognition of a population" (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 254). Control over cognition is essentially control over discourse; instruments of this kind of control are often far more subtle than expected, manifesting in "everyday forms of text and talk that are normalized" in the minds of those not in power (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 254). One of the goals of CDA, then, is to focus on what Van Dijk refers to as "power abuse", insofar as it influences the minds of those being dominated in such a way that they allow and accept dominance, i.e. hegemony (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 255).

## **METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

Six interviews, each of approximately forty-five minutes in length, were conducted for the purposes of this paper. All the interviewees are Indian citizens aged 19-22 who were raised in India and have attended an English-medium high school. The interviews were semi-structured, based off of a list of predetermined questions while allowing for participants to expand upon their answers and delve into different aspects of how their language proficiencies affect their lives (see Appendix A for a full list of initial questions). The interviews ranged in length from 34 to 47 minutes.

After all six interviews were transcribed, forming a corpus of data, CDA was performed on the transcriptions in line with van Dijk's methods. The analysis conducted sought to examine the degree to which language ideologies, cultural identity, and social stratification in India are still affected by the consequences of British colonial rule and its language policy. The sociopolitical stance taken with respect to this text is one that critically examines the "neutral" position that the English language holds as a lingua franca, both globally and specifically to India.

## **DATA**

For the purposes of data analysis and discussion, I will present excerpts from these interviews and discuss their relevance to the central themes--language ideologies, cultural identity, and social stratification--explored within this research, and thereby gain insights into the research question.

## Participants

Six participants, aged 19-22, were interviewed for this paper. The participants have been anonymized, but preliminary demographic information for each participant is listed below.

	Age	City of Residence	Heritage Languages	Fluency (1-10) <sup>4</sup>	Socioeconomic Class <sup>5</sup>
<b>A</b>	19	Bangalore	Kannada Hindi Tamil	5 8 5	Upper middle class
<b>B</b>	19	Coimbatore	Tamil Hindi	6 4	Upper middle class
<b>C</b>	22	Bangalore	Kannada Hindi Tamil	6 5 2	Upper class
<b>D</b>	21	Bangalore	Hindi Punjabi	-- <sup>6</sup>	Upper middle class
<b>E</b>	19	Bangalore	Hindi Kannada Tamil	7 5 3	Middle class
<b>F</b>	20	Bangalore	Hindi Kannada Sindhi Tamil	--	Upper middle class

*Fig 1. Participant Demographics*

As seen in Fig. 1, all six participants live in Southern India. For this reason, insights gained from this data will be focused on the influence of English and heritage language proficiencies on cultural identity within South India.

## English language ideologies

Participants were questioned about the place of the English language within Indian society, and what connotations it carries with it. Several participants identified a societal

<sup>4</sup> Participants were asked to rate their fluency in their languages on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being “not at all fluent” and 10 being “completely fluent”.

<sup>5</sup> Participants were asked the question “How would you label the socioeconomic class you belong to?”

<sup>6</sup> Participants D and F declined to quantify their fluency on this scale, but both stated that they felt most fluent in Hindi.

“consciousness” in India that places English in an ideologically superior position, with some suggesting explicitly that proficiency in English is necessary to be perceived as intelligent:

“In my community, there’s this very strong idea that intelligence is proportionate to your knowledge of English. So, if your English is bad, it means that you’re not an intelligent person, or, you don’t have a good status in society.” (B)

“You definitely see that people in India regard people who speak English in higher regard. But that’s so untrue in every other part of the world.” (A)

“I was doing an internship in a school in Dharwad, in rural Dharwad, and they kind of talk mostly Kannada, but they said, “Oh, my God, you speak good English, will you teach English” kind of thing...I think it’s just this consciousness. Like everyone is realizing that it’s such an important language in some senses.” (E)

“[It’s perceived as] superior, for sure. Like if you can speak good English it’s like “wow”, like “wow, you speak good English!”” (D)

“Everyone I know and speak to, like, everyone wants to speak English. And...sometimes almost, like, people judge you on how smart you are, based on how good your English is.” (F)

Many explicitly linked this to their education, and the ways in which languages were prioritized during school:

“All my classes were in English, and then we’d have Hindi class, and Kannada class. And even then, they’d kind of speak English.” (A)

“I think most schools in India, like, the good ones, are in English...” (D)

“My extended family especially, like, I know a lot of them didn’t go to English medium schools....they feel like...a sense of inferiority around me.” (B)

“I think most of, like, the good schools in Bangalore are in English. (*Is that specific to Bangalore?*) Um, not really. I think in most, like, big cities like Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, or Calcutta--I don't know, usually everyone I know has studied in, in English.” (F)

“If we spoke in Tamil [at school], like, points would go down, like if someone caught us speaking in Tamil or Hindi or whatever regional language, like, they would reduce points from our houses, and like...that is so unfair. That is so unfair to impose that on little kids, you know?” (B)

One participant was able to define “good English”, distinguishing it as different from the usage of English words in Hindi or another heritage language:

(*You said that people are seen as better for speaking good English--what is “good English”?*)

“Like...not Hindi intertwined in the middle, like not Hinglish, just good English for grammatical, not like, not even using fancy words, but like better language, I think.” (D)

All six participants stated that there was no conscious decision on the part of their parents to send them to an English-instruction school; this was simply stated as “normal,” or “obvious,” since “the good schools” were generally English-instruction. There was also mention of this cultural belief being perpetuated by participants' parents, encouraging them to pursue English to proficiency, rather than heritage languages. This prioritization was not made explicit, but rather implied in the home environments of the participants. All 6 participants said they primarily used English to communicate with their parents, with varying levels of occasional heritage language use within the home. All six participants affirmed that they were more likely to employ heritage languages in conversation with domestic workers than with their parents or siblings. The general societal belief of English as “superior” was said to have been held by most participants' parents:

”My parents were also constantly...telling me that I really needed to speak in English, and I needed to make my English better....everyone is constantly expecting me to speak in English, my grandparents, my parents, my cousins, friends, everyone...expects me to.” (B)

“Of course, [my parents] wanted me to be fluent in English...It's the language that people speak the most, right? The most useful if I

want to come here and study, if I wanna go anywhere, do anything.”  
(D)

“Parents put them in the school because they want them to learn it, but the kids don’t have a choice, like. There is no...autonomy...at least that’s what it felt like. It felt like I was being smothered by all of these expectations.” (B)

“At least for me, at home...everyone, just speaks English and that’s kind of the norm.” (F)

Participants’ individual feelings about *their* English, however, did not subscribe to these connotations of superiority. In fact, several stated that they do not think about English in their day to day lives, seeing it instead as the “default”:

“When I think about language, and needing to acquire language, English never comes up because I feel like that’s just my default...it’s weird. I don’t even think about English that much...it’s just kind of like, yeah, this is the language that I’ve grown up speaking.” (C)

“I don’t know what I consider my first language, with Hindi and English, but I will say English...and I don’t know how I feel about changing that because I like thinking in English, you know? And I don’t know, just like, like I said, the books that I read, the people that I meet, the TV shows that I watch, the music I listen to, is all in English.” (D)

“I don’t know if I would consider my proficiency in English a part of my identity. I don’t know...I do kind of, end up reflecting on...my proficiency, but it’s a very kind of, passing phenomenon...I don’t really think about it outside of those instances.” (E)

“English was always like, the language I was like, okay, this is the most important, I guess...It was so normal. I didn’t really think like, where did it really come from?” (F)

All 6 participants identified English as their first language. When asked whether they perceive English as a “colonizer language,” most participants expressed a sense of detachment from the English that was brought over by British rule and the English that is spoken in India

today. Five out of six participants affirmed that they have no negative associations with their own English, and identified with English as a language that they feel belongs to them:

*(Do you think of English as a colonizer language?)*

“Yes, but I also think of it as my language...I feel like at home English is a language that is now a language that...is just like an Indian language. And we have, you know, we have our slang in English and we have our...dialects, even, in English, and I think we learn English not as having learnt a British way of speaking English or an American way of speaking English in school, we just learn English the way an Indian would speak English.” (C)

“No. *(Why not?)* Because that’s not how it was to me. *(How was it to you?)* Just the language I knew.” (A)

“Um, I haven’t totally thought about it. Like I said, I’m very aware that we all...like most Indians speak English. Like, of course, the colonization plays a role into it. But I don’t attach negative feelings to it, no, I wouldn’t say so. I attach negative feelings to everything else that happened, but not with the language.” (D)

“I don’t--I don’t feel bad that I speak English well, but I think I see them as independent, like, you can speak a language well and still not like the fact that it’s the dominant language.” (E)

“Now? I...now, yeah. But um, it’s not like, the active like, you know, we got this language from like, a colonizer like, why are we using it? Which is still, like, a relevant question, I guess, but it’s more like, I’m aware of that now...I think I just never thought about it like that. Because it was so normal. I didn’t really think like, where did it really come from? Like, I didn’t really question that, like, you know, my grandparents didn’t speak English when they were growing up, that, you know, and yeah, they do as well now...And like, it wasn’t necessarily, like, the norm two generations ago.” (F)

However, one participant agreed that it was a colonizer language, and expressed resentment at the fact that she speaks English. The participant claimed that she would “never” associate English with her own identity, and reported extremely negative associations with

English and colonialism. She also mentioned the impossibility for Indians to distance themselves from English, because it is now “embedded” in the Indian consciousness:

*(Do you think of English as a colonizer language?)*

“Oh. 100%!! Fucking...I really hate the whole power dynamic that has prevailed...it’s definitely a colonizer language. I wish...I wish my country didn’t think that they owed it to the world to speak English, they really don’t...it’s just so embedded into our society...We don’t know the difference between what’s ours and what’s theirs anymore, it’s become one. And we believe...I believe, everyone believes that it’s all ours. And I don’t--especially because as...a community, we haven’t been good with documenting things. There’s not a lot of space through which we can retrace our steps. And find out, and say...okay, this is what we’re gonna leave out, because this was never ours.” (B)

For all participants, English was deemed “useful” as a tool of communication between regions in India, where there is no universally understood or spoken language across state borders. As a result, all six participants said that they primarily used English to communicate with friends in India, in order to not exclude friends and interlocutors from different regions:

“Not to be...rude, but North Indians will refuse to learn Tamil no matter how long they’ve lived in Tamil Nadu for, so, that’s just...they’re like third-generation families that lived in Tamil Nadu, and they still don’t speak Tamil...so yeah, just English.” (B)

“Definitely when it comes to...probably communication between different states, it’s an equalizer, in some sense. It provides a medium by which everyone can communicate without one side imposing their language on the other.” (E)

In order to gain insights into participants’ internal language hierarchies, participants were given two “yes”/“no” scenarios. In the first, they would be allowed to pursue their heritage languages to fluency, with a guarantee that their proficiency in English would stay the same. In the second, they would be allowed to pursue their heritage languages to fluency, without the guarantee that their proficiency in English would stay the same. In the first scenario, all six participants said yes. In the second, four out of six said no, with all four citing that their English proficiency was too important to them. One participant who said yes to both scenarios suggested that many of her peers would not do the same:

“I think there's a kind of fear of losing English. I think a lot of Indian kids, this specific demographic of Indian kids raised in English instruction schools, are very protective of their English. So that's kind of, a motivator.” (F)

As a means to explore the legitimacy of House's (2003) framework, participants were asked whether they agreed with the statement: “English is a language for communication, heritage languages are languages for identity<sup>7</sup>.” The majority of participants firmly disagreed with House's classification:

“I feel like both, for me, are languages for identity. I think...it would make sense if English felt like something I had acquired later and didn't feel like mine. But if I think about like, my languages, English is definitely one of them. So... yeah, I don't see that much of a distinction in the way I think about them.” (C)

“I think heritage languages are very much a language of communication. In day to day life...definitely in India, if you travel around the country, English is probably not the language you hear spoken on the road or the way you would talk to a auto driver or to a, you know, go to a grocery store or something like that.” (E)

“I mean, I don't know, not necessarily. Communication with who?...Because like, English is a language for communication, I guess, with like my colleagues and in some cases with like, the rest of the world even. Um, but like, communicating with like, for example, like, like the taxi driver or like, shopkeeper or like, the people who work in like, my house, or like, like businesses, like, um, not everyone speaks English, so then I wouldn't be able to communicate with them if I didn't speak other languages...I would say both are means of communication, because that's just language.” (F)

### **Heritage language ideologies**

Heritage language ideologies conceptually refer to dominant societal beliefs held regarding heritage languages, which, for the purposes of this paper, variously include Hindi,

---

<sup>7</sup> This statement is a paraphrasing of House's (2003) framework regarding heritage languages and English as a lingua franca.

Kannada, Tamil, Sindhi, and Punjabi. All six participants, in accordance with TLF, were instructed in English, Hindi, and one regional language. Participants D and F identified as “of North Indian origin,” and identified with Hindi as a heritage language. All other participants identified as “of South Indian origin,” and did not identify with Hindi as a heritage language. South Indian participants described Hindi as a language that has been “imposed” upon South India, and some had negative associations with the language as a result:

“I just refused to practice... Hindi because I just...hate it...for so many different reasons! [laughs] I hate it, so I just did not ever pick up on Hindi, but obviously I can read Hindi, I can write Hindi, I can understand Hindi--I won't speak it. Like, sometimes just to get on people's nerves and sometimes....most times just to get on people's nerves, just as a “fuck you” you know?” (B)

“And also, I've had so many arguments with my aunt about people being like, “Oh, Hindi's a universal language,” I'm like, “fuck off!” (*You don't think Hindi's a universal language?*) No. I mean, I think it's like, okay, it could be a good language to use. I just think it just makes me mad when...North Indians are like, “this is your language,” I'm like, “no...no it's not.” Like I can accept that a lot of you speak it, so maybe it would be nice for us to, but like, don't come and tell me it's “my language,” like I definitely feel more connected to Kannada or Tamil.” (C)

“I don't think it's fair. I mean, it's a very arbitrary...decision. And I mean, I think it's purely because like, they have more seats in parliament or something like that. It's very strange that there should be, because even within South India, there are different lands. And yet, I don't think there is that kind of imposition between one state to another that you should speak our language...simply because of that kind of vast cultural divide just across the state boundaries. So yeah, it's very...it's strange and arbitrary that the North should impose Hindi on the South.” (E)

All four South Indian participants self-reported a higher level of fluency in Hindi than in their heritage languages. They credited this to having been instructed in Hindi as a secondary language, and their own heritage languages as tertiary languages, whose courses were less than satisfactory, and only taught up to a certain point:

“Tamil was my third language, so I only finished, like, kindergarten level of reading and writing in Tamil, and I stopped when I was in, like, 6th grade.” (B)

“I didn’t learn enough of [Kannada] to be proficient in it...but I learned how to read and write.” (A)

“They would have made us go further with Kannada except the...Cambridge Board didn’t have Kannada, they had Hindi, so we had to take Hindi [laughs]...I also had a shit Kannada teacher...that added to it [laughs].” (C)

“Well, because our board was Cambridge...we never took, no one ever took Kannada exams in my high school up till 10th. But everyone learned Kannada until 8th.” (E)

One North Indian participant also discussed how her tertiary language, Kannada, was not taught adequately in school, which lessened her interest in acquiring the language:

“I don't think it was like, taught very well, like it wasn't taught like, okay, like, here's language you have to learn, let's teach you stuff that's like, useful in like, everyday interaction. It was more like, here's the language you have to learn, like they teach you like, the alphabet, which is again, like, you have to learn a whole new like, alphabet after learning like two already. I was like, “okay, do I really want another one? I don't know.” And then they like, give you like, a textbook with like, stories about like crocodiles and shit and I'm like, how is this ever gonna help me in my real life? And like, you know, the questions were all based on like, the stories that you had to study.” (F)

Another North Indian participant admitted that she chose to take French as her third language, saying that the decision was “stupid of me, but I wasn't thinking, you know, as a child, so no, like, we it wasn't, like compulsory for us to pick like, the regional language, I guess if you could get your way around it.” (D)

Participant B also expressed a similar degree of expectation from her parents to be proficient in Hindi as with English, saying that she was not allowed to choose Tamil as her secondary language (which forced her to learn it at the tertiary level), because “my parents were like no, you’re gonna do Hindi, because...all of India expects you to speak it, so....we want you to do Hindi” (B). Another participant also mentioned that “if you travel anywhere in India,

[Hindi is] like, kind of a base language,” stating that as his motivation for prioritizing Hindi higher than Kannada or Tamil (A). Participant E also brought up the double standard regarding languages in the North and the South, saying that there is an expectation for people in the North to speak Hindi, but no such expectation in the South regarding Kannada or Tamil:

“When you go to the North, you will find, I mean, people will start talking to you in Hindi, and assume that you kind of, understand, and I think it's difficult and I, I'm sure it's difficult for a North Indian also to come and try and learn a completely different language system. But given that, like, there is no other middle ground, I think it's fair. I mean, the like--living in Bangalore, you kind of see, because Bangalore has I mean, it's, an IT hub, so there's a lot of North Indians who kind of come in and settle there, to the point where auto drivers kind of immediately start talking to you in Hindi when you sit down in an auto when you have to kind of speak to them in Kannada, and they realize, you know, that they can speak in Kannada. So definitely, it's strange going around Bangalore that Hindi is such a dominant language, because I mean, yeah, it's in the South, so theoretically it shouldn't be so. So I think it's fair that especially if someone is coming to settle in the South that we expect them to try and pick up the language, but that isn't the reality of what happens.” (E)

Participants, when asked about their language prioritization in childhood, all mentioned the ways in which the idea of “usefulness” contributed to their internal language hierarchies. Heritage languages that were not the dominant language in the participants' home cities (Tamil, Punjabi, and Sindhi) were deemed “less useful” and thereby deprioritized:

“English is just gonna, I don't know, it's what will connect me to like the...like, make everything like, connect me to bigger things, I guess yeah, like, that's what English would do. But Punjabi wouldn't because also, like, such few people speak it, right? Like, even if it's spoken like nobody's speaking like, authentic Punjabi, it's like, mixed with--I don't know, it's mixed with other languages.” (D)

“It felt normal [to prioritize English] when I was...younger than...school. And then it was just normal. It was normal. But then I got exposed, to like, other aspects, and like, friends and stuff, and then it was normal but it was also, like, ‘oh’. Some of my friends’

parents obviously just spoke Kannada, but they also spoke English but like, their ‘language of instruction’ would be in Kannada.” (A)

“Definitely after coming to Bangalore, I had to prioritize--well, I don’t know if I had to, but I ended up kind of becoming quite comfortable in Kannada and Hindi because I was in a class but, Tamil...I didn't know if I didn't have the time or I didn't kind of find the opportunity to pursue it...in terms of which language it made more sense to know fluently, it was probably Kannada.” (E)

“[Sindhi is] also not a very like, I guess useful language. And it's, there's no like, you know, like to speak Bengali there's like, Bengal there's no like region for Indians to like, live in a place where people around you would speak Sindhi because that doesn't exist. Like, Sindhi’s in Pakistan.” (F)

When questioned about the process of HLA in the home, several participants said their parents were not as invested in passing on heritage languages as they were in ensuring English proficiency. This greatly influenced participants’ own prioritization of their languages:

I think growing up, like, I never like, actively wanted to learn Sindhi at all. I also don't think like, my parents actively tried to, like, teach it to me.” (F)

“It’s constantly, like, “improve your pronunciations, improve the way you speak English”, it’s never “improve the way you speak Tamil.”” (B)

“Well, Kannada my parents taught me. I think Kannada was the first language they taught me, because they knew that English would kind of take over, even just because of them. Um, so I think for the first like 2-3 years, I only spoke Kannada, but then...they were like, “shit, she needs to learn something else.” And then English, that kind of came in.” (C)

Participants were also asked whether or not they thought heritage languages are disappearing or dying out, in response to which most participants affirmed that “smaller” minority languages, such as tribal and coastal heritage languages with fewer speakers, are in danger. However, participants generally said they did not think “state languages” and “majority languages,”--here Hindi, Tamil, and Kannada--are at risk:

*(Do you think heritage languages are disappearing or dying out?)*

No. At least, not mine...Cause with like, more nationalism, I think a lot of people are very proud of the languages they speak now. Which is good. And that's why I don't think that the two languages that I know...three languages that I know...[are dying]...some smaller, more niche languages, like, Konkani or something, are probably, maybe decreasing in number. (A)

[pause] It depends. I think the major languages are probably okay for now. I mean with this whole nationalism resurfacing, I don't think Hindi's at risk [laughs]. But definitely like smaller Asian languages and tribal languages. Which is sad. But I think about like, if I were, you know, from a small minority group, and I wanted to learn to, you know, maybe a bigger regional language, like English or Hindi, and someone was like, "No, you gotta speak your language because we need to preserve it". I'd be like, "fuck you!" [laughs]. Like, I don't know how to think about that, because I don't think I have the right to be like, they need to stay, right, but I think that some of them are definitely at risk. (C)

Yeah. Like it's just kind of sad that...see none of my cousins also...like we all, everybody understands Punjabi, nobody's gonna learn it, nobody's gonna make the effort. I mean, not even like--speaking is still okay. I think it's more like the writing bit, and like the reading bit that...will disappear. And that is kind of sad because my children aren't gonna speak Punjabi even, because I'm not going to speak to them in Punjabi, yeah. (D)

I mean, not like the state languages. But dialects probably. (E)

I think it's like, quite subjective. Because I think like, for example, like Bengali I think, everyone I know that's Bengali like, speaks Bengali. I think with quite a few languages, like, most people do speak English and the other language, but I think with maybe languages where there's just like smaller populations of people who speak those languages to an extent yeah. (F)

One participant, however, expressed extreme certainty that Tamil is in fact disappearing, despite having 68 million speakers in India (Census data 2011 SOURCE).

Oh, for sure. Like, I can already tell with my generation, like, most of my friends that do speak Tamil, like...they don't really speak Tamil anymore because...they migrate, within India, outside of India. Wherever they go there isn't an importance, and...with Modi in power, I fear that...[Tamil] is gonna disappear. Whether we like it or not, it is going to disappear unless we do s--unless we start doing something now...Like, nobody's going to know what Tamil is in like, two generations. It's going to be one of those...lost tribal languages, that...people didn't...people are--you know how there's like, really sad articles about how the leader of a clan or a tribe dies and they were the only--the last person who knew how to speak a language? Like, that's going to be Tamil, for sure. If we don't realize how we're fucking up, big time. (B)

### **Cultural Identity**

Participants were asked about their language proficiencies in relation to their sense of cultural belonging and identity. All six participants affirmed that their languages were part of their identity, to varying degrees:

English is a part of my identity and Kannada and Hindi--okay, not Hindi so much, but Kannada and Tamil are things that I'm like, "okay, this should be a part of my identity." [laughs]. You know? Like, "let me hold onto this." (C)

"Yeah, I guess it distinguishes you. It's, yeah. Especially here. Like, because it's, you use English to communicate with people. But then what makes you different is that you speak different languages, and that gives you a different identity." (A)

"It's always nice to say...that I am from..such and such part of the world, and this is the language I speak, because it almost makes me ...different and gives me this unique identity...[English is] not a part of my identity, but speaking Tamil definitely is." (B)

Some participants expressed that they frequently felt they were perceived as "less Indian," in part due to their lack of proficiency in their heritage languages:

“I feel like that also really feeds into my feeling of not being...not feeling like I can...assert my identity as Indian. Because if someone's like, “yeah, well, you wouldn't understand my experience, you wouldn't understand the experience of the majority of Indians,” I can't say no, because I'm like, “Yeah, okay, fair enough”. And if someone would pull out the language card, and be like, “you don't even think in any of our languages,” like, okay, yeah.” (C)

“I think...I am perceived as, um, less Indian, and they would say, *yenna vellakaari maathiri Tamizh pesare?* Which roughly translates to, um, “why do you talk like a white girl?” So, yeah, people do perceive me as less Indian when I...struggle sometimes, getting my sentences right, or getting certain pronunciations right, in Tamil.” (B)

When questioned about how their heritage languages relate to family relationships, the majority of participants held the belief that heritage language proficiency is useful for connecting with family. Participants who were not proficient in their heritage languages cited feelings of detachment and a lack of connection with their extended family:

“[I speak Tamil] only with my grandma and my extended family, really, and like, I don't even see them that often, like, I go home maybe once or twice a year, and...that's it. And even when I do speak in Tamil, like, I feel myself forgetting words, or like, making grammatical errors, or making pronunciation errors, so just to...prevent myself from facing some sort of humiliation or something, I just immediately switch to English cause it's the easier option, almost.” (B)

“It's not even close family members [who speak Kannada], and like, in my head it's like, [laughs] kind of, it's quite mean, but like they're the ones where, I kind of feel like, okay, fine, I can't really communicate with them. And then...it kind of feels like a superficial relationship.” (C)

Similarly, participants who were somewhat proficient in a heritage language cited that speaking and understanding their heritage language(s) allowed them to feel connected with their family members:

“With Hindi, when I speak it to my family we have, like these inside jokes and you know, like, things you can...bond about, things you can, like, just sometimes express in like a certain language better? So like say if my mom is talking about, like, I don't know, drama at home with like, the helpers or whatever, I just feel better expressed in Hindi, or like, I don't know. It's just--there's this certain, like, connection that you have, I don't know how to put it in no words...” (D)

“I think at least for me at home, it happens quite often that like, even when like, everyone's speaking English, like, randomly, like, people will be speaking in Sindhi. So if I didn't understand it, I feel like I would feel, like, left out in that like conversation, I wouldn't be able to, like, laugh at the jokes or you know? Like, just, I wouldn't be, like, 100% part of like, the, the environment and the fun.” (F)

In order to gauge participants' similarities to diasporic heritage language learners, participants were asked if they sympathized with a fictional heritage language learner's experience from Polinsky & Kagan's (2007) work on heritage languages (the passage can be read in its entirety in SECTION). The learner in question, a Korean-American, could not read or write in Korean, and had trouble connecting with his extended family and his culture as a result of his lack of proficiency (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). While most participants responded by saying that their command of Hindi and Kannada--majority languages for the region--allowed them to remain on a level cultural playing field with “a majority of Indians”, some also expressed sympathy for the fictional character's lack of proficiency:

“No but I also don't--I can write. Read and write in Hindi and Kannada. And, um, although I'm like, kinda--cause I grew up in India. It's not like I...lived somewhere else all my life. So for me, like, speaking these languages is, more normal...than it is a burden.” (A)

“I think I could get around India--probably not everywhere, but to a decent extent, with my knowledge of language. But I do wish I knew Tamil better. And I can--I was trying to learn to read and write, and I can kind of read now because I've asked my grandmother to teach me. Um...but...yeah, probably I would have liked my level of comfort with Tamil to have been higher. And so

to that extent, I sympathize with him, but from what you read out about American kids, I don't--I wouldn't say I'm that kind of...removed from my native language or culture.” (E)

“I could speak to my grandparents in Hindi or Sindhi if I wanted to...But yeah, I guess, then you're not really exposed to like, um, the language that maybe, like, your family is more comfortable with.” (F)

The majority of participants mentioned that growing up in India, where their heritage languages are spoken, stopped them from relating to the learner's feelings of alienation. However, one participant expressed that she felt like she sympathized “completely” with the diasporic learner's experience, saying that she was upset because “the difference is...that he's lived in America his entire life, so...it's almost like an excuse to not have learned Korean, but...I don't have that excuse, like, I lived in India, I grew up in India, like...I literally have no excuse to have not learned [Tamil], except for, that's what my school imposed on me or my parents imposed on me. So. Yeah. [laughs] I just think it's shittier, for me.” (B)

Participants were asked whether they ever associate their language proficiencies with feelings of detachment or disconnect from their cultures. In response, participants stated that they had different ways in which they felt connected to Indian culture and heritage, despite their lack of proficiency:

“I do feel Tamil in other ways, and South Indian in other ways, despite the fact that I don't speak Tamil, because of food, or festivals, or I mean any number of other things, but definitely language contributes.” (E)

*(Would you consider yourself multicultural even if you only spoke English?)* “Yeah. Because I've experienced cultures from Kerala to Tamil Nadu to Punjab to Gujarat and Rajasthan. You can't pick and choose which aspects of each culture you absorb.” (A)

“I don't really feel disconnected from my heritage or my culture, because I feel like...in like, in this, I don't know, time period, anything that I wanna read, or watch, or whatever, is mostly translated into English...so even if I can't read Tamil itself, I can get the content that I need to in English, so I don't really feel like there's a disconnect.” (B)

“I mean, I understand it. Like Punjabi, overall, like movies, music, and everything.” (D)

“Personally, I don't feel that like, that there's only one connect, that like, language is the only connect to my heritage.” (F)

Despite admitting to a lack of proficiency in her heritage language of Punjabi, one participant expressed feelings of resentment towards Indians who don't speak their heritage languages, even qualifying them as “less Indian”:

“I would feel less Indian for sure. I can't take like, NRIs seriously, that don't speak Hindi or anything like that. (*Can you tell me what NRI stands for?*) Non-residential Indian. Just Indians that like, don't live in India, right? And like, they're like, say first or second generation, like born somewhere in another country, but they do...I think, like have, like, strong roots. Like they do have a connection with it. But I don't know if they have...I don't know. I just feel like language is so important in like, everything, like how...I don't know, it's just the way you get from point A to point B, so like, how are you going to do that? If you don't speak the language? So I consider them a little less Indian.” (D)

All six participants brought up a recent desire to pursue their heritage languages to fluency, with several stating their motivation as wanting to feel more connected to their identities as Indians. Many credited this desire to going back home after leaving India and realizing that their heritage language proficiency had decreased, while others mentioned meeting multilingual people from other parts of the world as a motivating factor:

“I think every time I go home there's this renewed sense of “I need to fix this” because I realize how much...like, I think--I think being here I don't realize that it's actually kind of a part of my life, and then I go back and I'm like, well yeah, like it is. Not even just for my identity but just you know, talking--I think it hit me the most when it was like, talking to the people who, like work at home, and who literally like, raised me and then I'm like, “I don't know what to say with you?”...I think I think the moments that I realized that I did want to start prioritizing Hindi and Kannada, were when I realized that that's what was kind of holding me back from being able to talk to a lot of people.” (C)

“Because I was in India, like, speaking Hindi was just like, you know, speaking Hindi, like, I think after coming over here, and like meeting people all around the world and like, you know, people being proud about where they come from and, like, this not generalized--well, it’s kind of a generalization, but a lot of Indians, like aren’t proud, to be Indian to show that they’re Indian, but I’m like, “Fuck that!”, you know, like, you have to be--like, it’s an I feel like it’s an important part of me. So like, I’ll speak the language, I’ll wear my clothes, I’ll eat my Indian food, you know, that kind of thing for sure. So yeah, that’s also the reason why I feel like I’ve started speaking Hindi more, because I do want to--it is a part of me, you know, it is a big part of me. So why am I not using it more in my life?” (D)

“Now that I have left India, you realize how many languages people learn. How deep-rooted their language proficiency is, where their language has been their first language, and they’ve had to learn English, and I’ve realized that I haven’t had that.” (A)

“I talked about it with my grandmother over the weekend, because I [laughs] wrote her a postcard, she really doesn’t know that Google Translate is a thing. So I wrote her a postcard, and I typed out an entire thing onto Google Translate, and I wrote everything in Tamil, and I sent it to her, and she was like...over the moon, so happy, and like, she called me and she was like “oh my god, I’m so proud of you” but at the same time, like, I felt it in my heart, you know? Like. Oh, fuck, like, I don’t realize how much it really impacts her and her life and what she expects of me. Um...but, I did tell her, I was like, “oh, I just looked it up on the internet” and she was like...[laughs] “that sucks”, like “You really should learn to,” and I was like, “yeah, I will.”” (B)

“I think now like I really like I actively want to learn more Sindhi. I don't want to forget Hindi...and Sindhi, just like, I think, I don't know, I think it's like a dying language...I think it's quite nice to learn...I started learning a bit more Sindhi for my grandma now and like, she really likes it. Like, she feels really like, happy.” (F)

Many brought up obstacles to their HLA process, namely issues with attaining fluency while having very few opportunities to have interactions in their heritage languages:

“I can speak it fluently, but...only with a certain group of people, because I know...if I try talking to my uncles and my aunts in Tamil, like, I tend to be disrespectful, especially because we’re Gounders, like, we’re known...to speak SO respectfully, and like, add the -ng -ng -ng to everything, like, [laughs] I just don’t have the habit, at all, because my grandma and dad don’t care. They’re like “okay, whatever.” But the moment--the moment I start talking to my uncles and aunts, then my grandma and aunt are like, “what the fuck, like, be more respectful”, like “they’re never gonna talk to you again just because you’re so disrespectful,” and I’m like, “aaah I’m sorry,” like, I feel like I have to be extra careful when I speak to them, which like, disrupts the free flow of conversation, you know? And I don’t like that.” (B)

“I want to make sure that I have a very kind of, hold on to them. I don't want to lose them. Which is why like when I. Like I’m made fun of for my Tamil because it's not...it’s far from perfect, but I insist on talking to the house help in Tamil even though [laughs] she tells me to talk to her in Kannada, because my Kannada’s probably better because I don't want to lose the Tamil, and I would like to try.” (E)

Several participants expressed feelings of regret and shame at not having prioritized their heritage languages or at their lack of proficiency:

“I kinda regret not growing up with the language, like, being taught and spoken around me all the time. At least one.” (A)

“100%, one of the biggest regrets of my life is to not be able to read and write [in Tamil].” (B)

“I regret it. Because I lived in Bangalore all my life and I barely speak Kannada, which is kind of shameful. Yeah.” (D)

“I think about it very often, very...I mean. I’m ashamed of the fact that I don’t speak Tamil well enough.” (E)

## **Social Stratification**

Participants were asked about how language proficiency in India is perceived in relation to socioeconomic class and social stratification. One prominent idea that emerged across all six interviews is the idea that English speakers are associated with higher socioeconomic standing.

“Well, the reason I’m probably in this socioeconomic class is probably because my parents went to university, and the reason they went to university was probably because their parents belonged to that socioeconomic class, and they learnt English, to kind of get to that socioeconomic class, or like, ‘get to’, but like, educate themselves, and get like, do academia or whatever they do, and, yeah.....in India you realize that the upper middle class or the upper class speak English...but then you can tell that someone isn’t that educated or, of a lower socioeconomic class if they don’t speak English.” (A)

“Oh, for sure, 100%. It’s very directly proportional, to like, the class that you belong to, like, that’s what my family keeps telling me...It’s just because I’m from a certain class of society, everyone is constantly expecting me to speak in English, my grandparents, my parents, my cousins, friends, everyone...expects me to. If I didn’t...I know there’s some people in my school that belong to...an upper middle class family, but they’re considered “new money” just because their English isn’t perfect, and I’m like...that’s fucked up. Like, that person has much better...conversation, much better arguments to add to a conversation than you do, so I think they’re smarter than you [laughs], but it’s sad that you can’t see that. Like, I don’t agree with it, but in the sense that’s, that’s a norm, like I don’t agree with the norm, but it is the norm. Like, the higher up you are in...the socioeconomic hierarchy, the better your English is supposed to be.” (B)

“Oh, 100%. (*Why is that?*) Well, if you go..to like schools in India, like not the, like super amazing schools, there they also prioritize, say, speaking their regional language, so if they’re explaining something in English then they’ll explain like the concept in Kannada or Hindi or whatever language that they speak. Also, maybe because their family doesn’t speak, um...English at home, they’re not exposed, you know, to like, um... I don’t know, TV

shows, movies and that stuff, as much as I was, things like that, for sure, I think play into it. Yeah.” (D)

“It's strange because probably, in, in most labor in India in most forms of work, it's not the dominant language. But if you aspire to a certain level of wealth or something you kind of need some level of English or Hindi, like.” (E)

“I think generally people from like, the same, like socioeconomic circles, like, people who go to like, my high school...they usually speak, like, better English than people from, like, lower socioeconomic classes...if you want like a really good job, then you have to speak English because that's the only way you can reach like, other, other countries other... other people, other opportunities. Yeah. I guess if it's if you work in, like a really big company in India, you still would want to interact with other companies. You, I guess, want like, clientele from like other countries in the world as well. Um...I think that's where like, also English plays a role. And I think just in general, like, I think it's quite a norm at companies as well that like, you have to speak English to like, have one of like, the higher ranking positions. So yeah.” (F)

Certain participants said that this association of English fluency with higher socioeconomic standing also applied to Hindi, and that the two were interchangeable in terms of how people are perceived in their home states:

“Yeah...I think, I don't know, if...I think you can kind of tell what someone's socioeconomic background is and then you can kind of, extrapolate, well, they must've had a “good” education and so either they speak good Hindi or they speak good English.” (E)

“I think a lot of people in Karnataka just assume that if you're dressed a particular way, or you're like, at some places in the city, like in Bangalore at least, that you either speak Hindi or speak English...” (C)

One participant even claimed that her tendency to speak Hindi instead of Kannada in Bangalore is one of the ways in which she was frequently assumed to be fluent in English, suggesting that fluency in one merits fluency in the other:

“...because if you're supposed to be from like, like a home that's like, middle class or upper class then I guess by the way you dress or the way...say, the way I'd speak Hindi, or like, not speak in Kannada. They're able to tell by that.” (D)

Participants were then questioned about their own language proficiency and how it relates to their socioeconomic standing, and potentially their future careers. However, three out of six participants, who all expressed a desire to return to India for employment<sup>8</sup>, said their own lack of heritage language proficiency and increased comfort with English over heritage language was a “barrier” to their futures, specifically in relation to their career plans. Heritage language proficiency, participants reported, is key to pursuing a career in India, while English is not necessarily so:

“Well, seeing as I want to join politics and really, I mean, I don't think it's key in India that you speak English unless you want to go abroad or something like that, and you're working abroad, I think you can definitely survive in Indian politics without proficiency in English. And I'd probably rather be proficient at three different Indian languages than kind of one, English, and somewhat in three languages. Given my career kind of, path.” (E)

“I feel like at this point, my being more comfortable with English is like the biggest barrier I see to working in that kind of field when I go back, which is why I'm already thinking like if I want to do that and I want to do my Master's as well, somewhere in Europe, then I'm going to have to do some serious like, language courses when I go back home. Just because already, like, just my cultural background makes me feel like such an outsider in so many places, and then not being as comfortable with the language, always being like, “shit, how do I, do I say something, do I not say something?” which would be a huge barrier if I was actually working in a place where...the majority of people spoke something else.” (C)

“I think that some options are becoming non-accessible because I don't speak Tamil so fluently. Because... I've worked with this NGO for as long as I can remember, maybe from the time I was

---

<sup>8</sup> The other three participants expressed that they would not actively pursue a career in India, and so felt that fluency in their heritage languages would not necessarily be useful to their futures.

11...or 10 years old? So...I'm there once a week at least and when I'm there for break I'm doing internships with them, but it's so sad because I can't communicate effectively, because I know at some point I'd love to work with them, I'd love to work at the ashram, but, like, I just--my Tamil is...just not good enough." (B)

"I think if you're, like, doing academia, then it is a requirement. But if you're in business, or industry, or...politics, even, it's not necessarily a requirement." (A)

Many participants made connections between English's association with high socioeconomic standing and its colonial roots, saying that the prestige that English has is a holdover from colonialism:

"[English prestige] has been perpetuated by colonization. Cause the people who were able to afford the education, during--afford *good* education, went to schools where English was taught. And those who weren't, or couldn't, didn't--either didn't go to schools at all, or went to schools where that wasn't a thing." (A)

"I don't think Indians would've taken the initiative to really learn English if they never came to India. No, that would not have happened. Also, they like...made so many babies with Indian women, and, uh, then all of these Anglo-Indian schools popped up all over India, and they positioned themselves in a position of superiority, compared to non-biracial kids, because they still had a certain whiteness to them, and again, they told the rest of India, even after the British left, they told the rest of India you need to learn English in order to be...superior." (B)

"Okay, well, so [laughs] my grand--well, my mom's side of the family, her dad's side of the family is kind of, like, related to the Mysore, royal family. So they obviously had a lot of contact with the British, just like in administration and everything. So they ended up learning English, working with them. So that I'm pretty sure that has something to do with like, previous generations being comfortable with English and then that carried down...at least my mom's family. I'm not sure if it's like our current social economic class...I think it's more like historical status to a generation." (C)

All six participants acknowledged that their socioeconomic class was closely related to their proficiency in English, but all asserted that their heritage language proficiency was unrelated; all participants knew or had known people of the same socioeconomic class with much higher heritage language proficiencies.

## **DISCUSSION**

In analyzing the results of these interviews, much has come to light regarding the ways in which language proficiency affects the personal and cultural identity of the participants. Namely, participants seem to experience a host of complex emotions when discussing these topics, and yet there seems to have been very little thought given to them prior to the interviews. Many participants experience English fluency, proficiency, and comfort as the default, and have not had the desire nor the time to critically examine why English takes a central position in their lives. Similarly, many participants experience a sense of disconnect from their heritage languages, but have not had the opportunity to pursue these to fluency prior to migration. All participants feel some degree of detachment from their cultures, and all feel that their language proficiencies affect and are affected by their socioeconomic class. Five prominent trends can be observed when looking at this data, which will be expanded upon below.

### **The role of Hindi**

The first trend within the data concerns the role of Hindi within Indian cultural identity, for the participants specifically and on a more general level. Participants for whom Hindi is a culturally relevant language report both higher rates of fluency and a stronger connection to culture than those for whom Hindi is simply a language learnt in school. This distinction, it is important to note, is present within the data even though Hindi is not the state language of Karnataka, where both native Hindi participants live and were raised. This, alongside the sentiment reported by Participants B and E that Hindi speakers “never” learn Southern state languages, suggests that Hindi occupies a position of dominance in India regardless of region. Furthermore, participants made explicit, unprompted connections between Hindi and higher socioeconomic standing, suggesting that Hindi speakers are assumed to be of a higher socioeconomic class and providing motivation for heritage speakers to pursue Hindi over heritage languages. Hindi speakers are not societally pressured to choose between Hindi and English in order to be perceived as smarter or more well-off, or to gain access to greater and more rewarding socioeconomic opportunities. Effectively, this means that Hindi does not function as a heritage language within India; it is a dominant language. This, of course, means that speakers for whom Hindi has cultural relevance are more easily able to maintain connections to their cultures and extended family members, which is consistent within the data. However, this also means that among speakers for whom Hindi does not have cultural relevance, Hindi contributes to speakers’ difficulties in acquiring their heritage languages. All four South Indian participants were only able to learn their heritage language as a tertiary option during their

schooling, and many reported that their heritage language courses in school did not adequately prepare them for proficiency, whereas their Hindi courses led to a much higher rate of fluency. Hindi was chosen by all six participants as their secondary language in school, in large part due to its perception as a universal language regardless of region. This suggests that Hindi occupies the position of an oppressive dominant language for South Indian speakers, who forego their HLA in favor of pursuing Hindi to fluency or near-fluency. However, these speakers often have negative associations with Hindi, in some cases even refusing to speak Hindi despite being able to read, write, and understand it. From this we can understand that Hindi holds a very specific ideological position among South Indian heritage speakers. While most speakers do not have negative or colonial associations with English, South Indian speakers have pointedly negative associations with Hindi, seeing it as an oppressive, imposing language. Many participants explicitly connected this to India's current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, whose government is, they reported, contributing to a rise in extremist nationalism. Hindi is allegedly being presented as a potential lingua franca for all of India, without consideration for the repercussions this may have on languages already being deprioritized in the light of English language dominance. Hindi thereby presents a significant obstacle to South Indian heritage speakers attempting to connect to their cultural identity, perhaps as much or even more so than English.

### **Education and LPP**

The second trend observable within the data is that education, as well as language planning and policy, have a significant effect on speakers' internal language hierarchies. All six participants affirmed that the Three Language Formula was followed to some extent during their education. However, it was made clear that the third language, which for five out of six participants was a heritage language, was not taught to the same proficiency levels as the other two languages. Furthermore, while Hindi, the secondary language for all six participants, was taught up until graduation, tertiary languages were "dropped" after a certain time period, mainly at the discretion of the relevant exam board. The quality of tertiary language courses was also criticized by participants; those who took courses in Kannada commented at the juvenile and rudimentary nature of the course content, that did not allow students to pick up conversational dialogue, which they would need to navigate their home city of Bangalore.

It is important to note that De Swaan's (2004) belief that speakers would rather not learn their heritage languages in school does not hold true, as all six participants expressed a strong desire to pursue their heritage languages during their education. The notion that heritage languages should not be taught in schools was a sentiment that none of the participants held. The sole participant who opted to take a French course as her tertiary language explicitly expressed feelings of regret at not choosing a heritage language.

However, De Swaan's teleological viewpoint does come into play regarding educational language planning and policy; participants brought up the fact that it was not compulsory for students to choose a regional language as their third language, saying that any "alternative" languages that were on offer--such as, indeed, French or German--were available if students

were not interested in pursuing another Indian language. The metric of “usefulness” comes into play at this juncture, as many students are asked to choose between regional languages like Kannada and Tamil, and foreign languages such as German, Spanish, and French. The latter option is arguably more appealing, especially to students who wish to leave India for higher education; a language like French and German has more “use” outside of India than a region-specific language like Kannada. This is, perhaps, an unavoidable consequence of modern education, as usefulness defines pedagogical decisions across all disciplines. However, in combination with societally dominant language ideologies, educational language hierarchies can severely inhibit speakers’ HLA simply through lack of exposure. All six participants also expressed how “normal” it was to attend an English-instruction school in “big cities” and within their socioeconomic circles. This normativity contributes to the rendering of English as an invisible default; if it is seen as the norm for “good” schools to be English-instruction schools, children will be encouraged and motivated to prioritize English in their day-to-day lives in order to reach sufficient levels of fluency to attend “good” schools, internalizing this language hierarchy from a young age. This is seen in the participants’ own internal language hierarchies, wherein English is at the highest level of fluency for all six participants. Participants also discussed instances wherein they were punished for speaking their heritage languages “out of turn”, that is, outside of a specific language class where the language was permitted. This enforces the idea that heritage languages are only suitable for communication in specific environments, and English, in comparison, is universally applicable.

### **Colonization (and its influences)**

The third trend relates to colonialism and its explicit and implicit effects on speakers’ language acquisition processes. Explicitly speaking, participants did not associate the dominance of English with colonialism, despite being aware of the fact that English came to India by way of British rule. While all six participants had negative feelings regarding colonialism, they separated these feelings from English as a language, reporting that there is a general sense that English has “become” an Indian language, removed from its colonial history. Participants were able to clearly delineate the process of English becoming a dominant language over generations, but harbored no resentment or guilt towards their own English proficiency. A prominent source of guilt stemmed from a lack of heritage language proficiency, which participants also did not associate with colonialism. However, when observing public perceptions of English and heritage languages within the data, there are clear links to a colonial mindset within the so-called public “consciousness,” which still implicitly affects speakers’ language acquisition processes. The association of English with high socioeconomic standing are holdovers from colonial rule, when British and Anglo-Indian administratives would be seen as “high class” members of society, and the colonial “mission” was to create a generation that was to be “Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, moral and intellect” (Macaulay, 1835, as cited in Sengupta, 2018, p. 28). When adopting a postcolonial lens, we can see current dominant language ideologies in India as an incarnation of these perspectives, where the English language itself has become “high class,” and

heritage languages are deprioritized due to a lack of “usefulness” outside of India. Kharchenko’s (1989) claim of English language instruction as a direct tool of colonialism is made clear here, as speakers who are entirely unfamiliar with English are, by and large, unable to access higher tiers of socioeconomic status, whereas there is no corresponding inverse effect regarding speakers who are entirely unfamiliar with heritage languages.

Furthermore, the explicit link between English proficiency and intelligence carries extremely loaded connotations, stemming from the creation of English-instruction universities in major Indian cities during colonial rule (Sengupta, 2018). As a key element of colonialism, British educational reform vastly influenced dominant ideologies around intellectual wealth. We can see that these ideologies continue to make themselves known in many ways: in the equivocation of “good” education with English-language education, in the association of grammatically correct English with intelligence, and, inversely, the condemnation of “Hinglish” as “impure” or “not good English”. The last sentiment in particular aligns itself distinctly with Kharchenko’s (1989) notion of non-English languages being othered and seen as “deficient”, as well as British colonial thought that it seeks to purge the “savage” heritage language from the “civilized” dominant language (p. 6). And yet, within the data, we see this sentiment perpetuated by Indian citizens years after colonial rule.

### **Multilingualism and the English threat**

This data offers several insights into claims made by sociolinguistic scholars on the “rightful” place of heritage languages, and how we should think about English language dominance in relation to endangered or minority languages.

Contrary to what De Swaan claims, the data collected in this research suggests that linguistic diversity does not, in fact, seclude communities of heritage speakers. Five out of six participants live in Bangalore, a city where Hindi, Kannada, English, and Tamil, four mutually unintelligible languages, coexist in various capacities. All six participants identify as multicultural to some degree, due to having lived in Bangalore and experienced several cultures and languages, regardless of proficiency levels. Furthermore, participants do not perceive their attachment to their heritage languages as “floating” in the “backwater” of their native languages; rather, all six participants are invested in reclaiming their heritage languages, potentially to fluency, and regret their inability to do so during the course of their education (De Swaan, 2004, pg. 572). Furthermore, some participants explicitly desire to pursue these languages due to the need to be multilingual within the workplace, also directly contradicting De Swaan; in fact, we see one participant explicitly frame her comfort with English as a “barrier” to her ability to advance in the workplace. We see therefore that, at least within an Indian context, De Swaan’s viewpoint holds little to no validity, as heritage speakers’ actual perspectives on their languages differ greatly from his own.

We see a great difference as well between the data and House’s (2003) imagining of English as a lingua franca. Participants dismissed her proposed framework of English as a language for communication as reductive in an Indian context, as heritage languages are used as

a means to communicate throughout India, and the assumption that English can be spoken in any circumstances is incorrect and disrespectful. Furthermore, all six participants affirm that heritage languages are “dying out,” citing English language dominance as a partial reason for this. House’s insistence that English be seen as a neutral language, and that we stop “one-sidedly attacking” it, ignores the very means by which English entered India, and the history behind its high-prestige status, which is clearly colonially motivated (2003, p. 557). We can conclude that House’s claim, that English does not pose a threat to heritage languages and multilingualism, does not apply within the context of this research paper.

### **The culture question**

Lastly, the data shows us that cultural identity is not necessarily linked to heritage language proficiency. We can see that participants quantified their connection to their culture through whether or not they can access various forms of media, namely TV shows, movies, and music. Participants claimed they felt connected to their culture despite not necessarily speaking their heritage languages, as a base level of comprehension allows speakers to understand and thereby participate in these aspects of culture, albeit passively. Multiple participants also mentioned food as a connection to culture, an aspect which does not involve language in any capacity. These examples show that speakers are able to use elements such as food and media as a conduit to cultural identity without needing to experience heritage language frustration, suggesting that Indian heritage speakers experience their languages differently than Polinsky and Kagan’s (2007) diasporic heritage speakers. The assumption that a heritage speaker needs only to be “fluent enough” or “proficient enough” to experience and connect with their culture allows for fluency parameters to be reset. That is, speakers do not necessarily feel a need to reconnect with their cultures as a result of their language proficiencies, as speakers are able to connect to their cultures in more accessible ways that do not require complete fluency in a heritage language; this prevents the HLA objective from necessarily being complete acquisition, as speakers are rewarded with cultural breadcrumbs at any level of proficiency. What is consistent throughout the data is that no participants feel a sense of *urgency* regarding their heritage language proficiency, as none are explicitly barred from accessing and identifying with their cultures. Only those participants who are committed to pursuing a career in India, and thereby regularly interacting with heritage speakers, are actively interested in pursuing their heritage languages to fluency at the earliest possible opportunity. This means that Indian cultural identity is not strictly attached to heritage language proficiency, which in turn means that Indian cultural identity is distinct from the diasporic cultural identities discussed within the literature review. We can perhaps attribute this partially to the fact that this study concerns mainland speakers, rather than diasporic ones; these speakers did not grow up acquiring language while geographically isolated from their culture or their heritage. We can also connect this to Hall’s (1990) definition of culture as ever-evolving; these speakers’ understanding of culture is quite removed from the “traditional” notion of “one true culture” (p. 223). Cultural identity, to these speakers, is instead a concept that is mutable, adaptable, and far more accessible than its predecessor, allowing

Indian heritage speakers to be connected to their cultures regardless of proficiency. With multiple cultural footholds to choose from, speakers are not emotionally distressed or troubled regarding their lack of fluent heritage language proficiency. While all six participants expressed a desire to pursue their heritage languages to fluency at some point in the future, they are not in the same ideological position as diasporic populations who feel their cultures slipping away from them.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, current Indian heritage language speakers do not necessarily associate their connection to cultural identity with their language proficiencies, in either English or their heritage languages. We are witnessing the formation of new frameworks for understanding one's identity in relation to one's culture, perhaps even removed from the idea of language altogether. While Indian heritage speakers may yet identify with their heritage languages, the pressure to be fluent, when present, does not stem from a desire to connect more thoroughly with one's culture. We can, however, observe a pressure to be and remain fluent in English across all six participants of this study, and this pressure is reported by participants as widespread within the English-speaking Indian consciousness.

It is important to note that the scope of this research project is not representative of the entire Indian heritage speaker community. Further research is crucial in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding about how heritage languages function in relation to Indian cultural identity, across all socioeconomic and regional backgrounds. However, this study offers preliminary insights into the process of HLA for many Indian heritage speakers, and brings to light a discussion regarding the ways in which colonial rule continues to shape how we think about language today. It has been over seventy years since India gained independence, and yet colonial ideals continue to affect social stratification, educational policy, language ideologies, and speakers' own experiences of language acquisition. Speakers are unable to escape these effects, even within their own homes, and thereby internalize and further perpetuate the idea that heritage languages are inherently lesser in all environments. Above all else, it is telling that all six participants within this study almost exclusively speak English in their homes, meaning that parents feel the need for their children to be fluent in English so strongly that they forego HLA in favor of English. Heritage languages, then, are delegated solely to be the medium for communication with domestic workers, auto drivers, street vendors, and almost never with members of the same socioeconomic class as the speakers themselves. In this process, English becomes a class marker, codified through the quality and purity of the English spoken, and "good English" becomes something all speakers aspire to in order to be more widely respected, regarded, and understood.

It is crucial that we do not render English's position of dominance in former colonies invisible or default, and that we critically examine our reasons for the continued societal prioritization of the English language over native heritage languages. Lastly, now more than ever, it is imperative that we make an impassioned effort to protect heritage languages, in former

and current colonies and worldwide. The diminution of a language to its purported “usefulness” is reductive, outdated, and harmful to global communities fighting to keep their languages afloat. As scholars, we must be cognizant of the fact that we have the power to bring these issues to light, question societal biases, and serve faithfully, as life rafts for language itself.

**REFERENCES**

- Census of India. (2011). Language: India, States and Union Territories. [Table C-16]. Retrieved from [https://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/C-16\\_25062018\\_NEW.pdf](https://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/C-16_25062018_NEW.pdf)
- De Swaan, A. (2004). Endangered languages, Sociolinguistics, and Linguistic Sentimentalism. *European Review* 12(4): 567-580. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798704000481>
- Hall, S. (1990) Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (pp. 222-237). Lawrence & Wishart, London.
- Hoffman, D. (1989). Language and Culture Acquisition among Iranians in the United States. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 20(2), 118-132.
- House, J. (2003). English as a lingua franca: a threat to multilingualism? *Journal of sociolinguistics* 7(4): 556-578. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2003.00242.x>
- Kharchenko, N. (2017) Heritage languages in English-dominated contexts: Creating barriers or opportunities? *Journal of Academic Perspectives*, 2017(1): 1-20.
- Labov, W. (1997). The Social Stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores. In N. Coupland & A. Jaworski (Eds), *Sociolinguistics: Modern Linguistics Series* (pp. 168-178). Palgrave, London.
- Mills, J. (2005). Connecting Communities: Identity, Language, and Diaspora. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 8(4): 253-274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050508668610>
- Montrul, S. (2015). Heritage languages and heritage speakers. In *The Acquisition of Heritage Languages* (pp. 13-40). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139030502.002>
- Polinsky, Maria, and Olga Kagan. 2007. Heritage languages in the wild and in the classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 1(5): 368-395. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-818X.2007.00022.x>
- Pednekar, P. (2017, Feb 22). *3-language formula: Mumbai schools worried about dropping French, Spanish, German*. Hindustan Times. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/3-language-formula-mumbai-schools-worried-about-dropping-french-spanish-german/story-9Gb9DyfxhsPyCXVQjhV4ul.html>
- "Three Language Formula". 1968. Government Of India Ministry Of Human Resource Development, Department Of Education. Archived from the original on 22 February

2012.

Trines, S. (2018). *Education in India*. World Education News & Reviews.

<https://wenr.wes.org/2018/09/education-in-india/print/>

Valdes, G. (2000). Introduction. In A. Sandstedt (Ed), *Spanish for Native Speakers, Volume I. AATSP Professional Development Series Handbook for Teachers K-16* (pp. 1-20). Harcourt College, New York.

Van Dijk, T. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2): 249

283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>

Van Herk, G. (2012). *What is sociolinguistics?* (Ser. Linguistics in the world). Wiley-Blackwell.

## APPENDIX A: List of Questions

### Section 1: Background

- Name?
- Age?
- Languages Spoken?
- What is the language you are most fluent in?
- What is the language you are least fluent in?
- How did you acquire your mother tongue/heritage language?
- Was there a reason behind you or your parents choosing an English-instruction high school? If so, what was it?
- Was there a reason behind your choice to leave India for higher education? Do you think this option would be accessible to you if you didn't speak English?
- What would you like to pursue as a career? Do you think this career path would be accessible to you if you didn't speak English?
- What language do you speak with your parents? With friends? At college?

### Section 2: Statements

*“Jim, who is planning to go to law school, has many talents: he is a member of the debate club, and editor-in-chief of the school newspaper; he plays the flute, holds numerous winning titles in wrestling, has been on the dean’s honor list since his freshman year...[h]e is an all-American, well-rounded guy. Jim has a dark secret, though: he has not really spoken to his grandparents since he was five, he cannot write to them, and he cannot sign his name.*

*Jim’s grandparents speak no English. Jim’s birth name is Cho Dong-In. Jim is a Korean American who can barely speak in Korean...about a third of incoming college students in early twenty-first century America are like Jim (Brecht and Ingold 1998). They “speak American” and their knowledge of the language they were exposed to from birth can range from limited to non-existent. Thirty years ago these people were called semi-speakers (Dorian 1981), and they have also been called incomplete acquirers (Montrul 2002, Polinsky 2006), unbalanced, dominant, or pseudo-bilinguals (Baker and Jones 1998), early bilinguals (Kim et al. 2006), or speakers of “kitchen language \_\_\_\_” (fill in the blank).” (From Polinsky & Kagan, 2007)*

- Do you sympathize with Jim’s experience? Do you experience your heritage language(s) in the same way?
- *“Dominant languages open doors into society, heritage languages open doors into family.”* Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- *“English is a language for communication, heritage languages are languages for identity.”* Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- India’s Three Language Formula or TLF, implemented in 1968, dictates that school-going children must learn three languages: Hindi, English, and a regional language or

their mother tongue. Do you think this was followed during your education? Were you taught Hindi, English, and a regional language?

### Section 3: Further Questions

- Given the chance to pursue your heritage language to fluency, with a guarantee that your English proficiency would stay the same, would you take it?
- Given the chance to pursue your heritage language to fluency, *without* a guarantee that your English proficiency would stay the same, would you take it?
- How would you label the socioeconomic class that you belong to? In your opinion, is your language proficiency at all affected by your socioeconomic class?
- Concurrently, is your socioeconomic class at all affected by your language proficiency?
- How do you think you prioritized the different languages you speak growing up? How do you prioritize them now?
- Do you consider yourself multicultural? How do the languages you speak affect your answer?
- Do you think of English as a ‘colonizer’ language? Why or why not?
- Do you think that heritage languages are ‘disappearing’ or ‘dying out’? Why or why not?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience acquiring heritage languages?