

Language & Power: Speakers and Listeners

Exploring the Immigrant Communication Journey Through Student Interviews

Professor Gail August
CUNY/Hostos - NYC
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**16th International and Interdisciplinary Conference on
Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice (ALAPP)**

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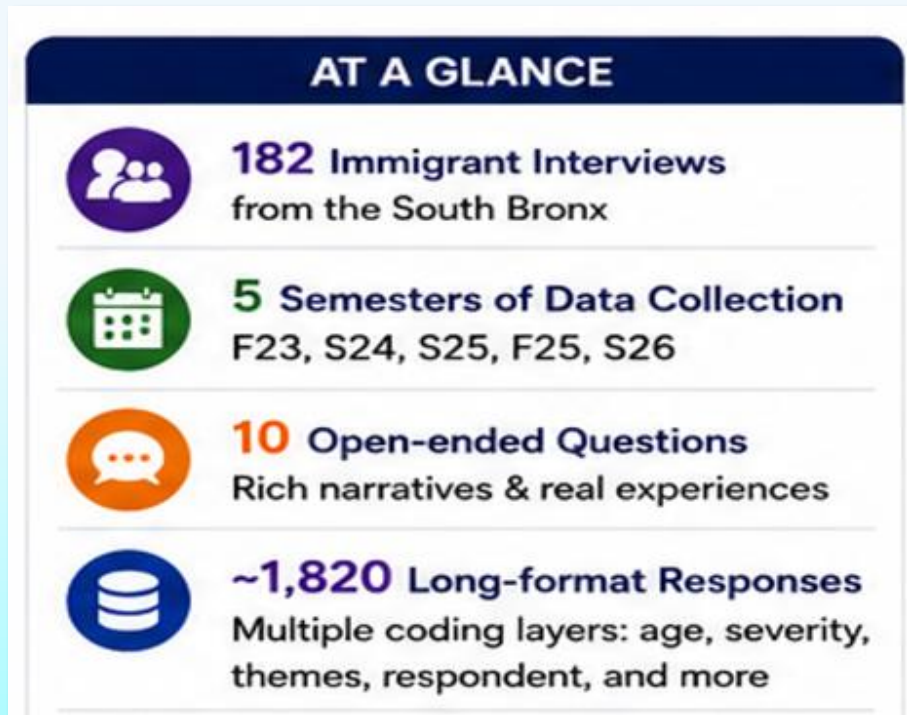
This talk will focus on the **speaker listener dyad**, where the speaker uses a 2nd language and has a non-native accent.

- I will look at how the power is distributed and how we might look at ways to equalize this power
- My interest in this topic blossomed from my own **teaching and experiences with second language students** who have written about their own difficult circumstances
- Their writing sometimes includes **painful communication encounters** described by older immigrant members of their family



182 interviews • 5 semesters • 30+ languages • South Bronx community voices

Professor Gail August • CUNY / Hostos Community College - NYC • Brooklyn 2026



This presentation analyzes an **Action Research study** with student directed interviews, taking place over several years.

- **Each student interviewed 3 immigrant adults**, asking the same question about situations provoked by their non-native accent.
- The results are **powerful in their consistency** and specific details.
- When I share the results, **bilingual students are inevitably shocked** to learn that others have similar experiences.
- **Monolingual students are also shocked** to learn that normal people have been treated so poorly.

High-Impact Voices

Communication barriers can become identity barriers.

HIGH IMPACT (H) – 15 QUOTES

#	QUOTE (Real voice)	AGE GROUP	RESPONDENT CATEGORY
1	"I called to make an appointment and they hung up because they couldn't understand me."	Adult	Immediate Family
2	"At work, customers made fun of my accent and I had to repeat myself constantly."	Adult	Coworkers / Manager
3	"People acted like I wasn't smart because of my accent."	Adolescent (13–21)	Friends / Peers
4	"I felt I had to prove myself more than others."	Adult	Community Member
5	"On the phone they asked to speak to someone else."	Adult	Customer / Stranger
6	"Someone yelled at me to speak English—even though I already was."	Adult	Customer / Stranger
7	"I felt ignored in meetings until someone repeated my idea."	Adult	Coworkers / Manager

HIGH IMPACT (H) – 15 QUOTES

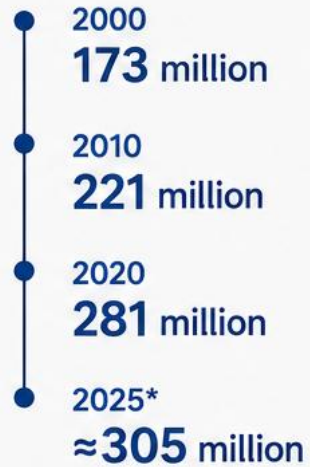
#	QUOTE (Real voice)	AGE GROUP	RESPONDENT CATEGORY
8	"People focused more on how I said things than what I said."	Adult	Interviewer / Evaluator
9	"I stopped raising my hand because I was embarrassed."	Adolescent (13–21)	Teachers / Instructors
10	"People laughed before understanding me."	Child Learner (0–12)	Schoolmates / Peers
11	"I stayed quiet so I wouldn't have to face reactions."	Adolescent (13–21)	Friends / Peers
12	"I worried my accent would affect my future career."	Adult	Self
13	"I felt different everywhere I went."	Adult	Community Member
14	"I felt like I didn't belong here."	Adolescent (13–21)	Self
15	"I felt invisible until someone actually listened."	Adult	Community Member

Immigration and Language Contact

The Global Context for This Study



GLOBAL GROWTH OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS



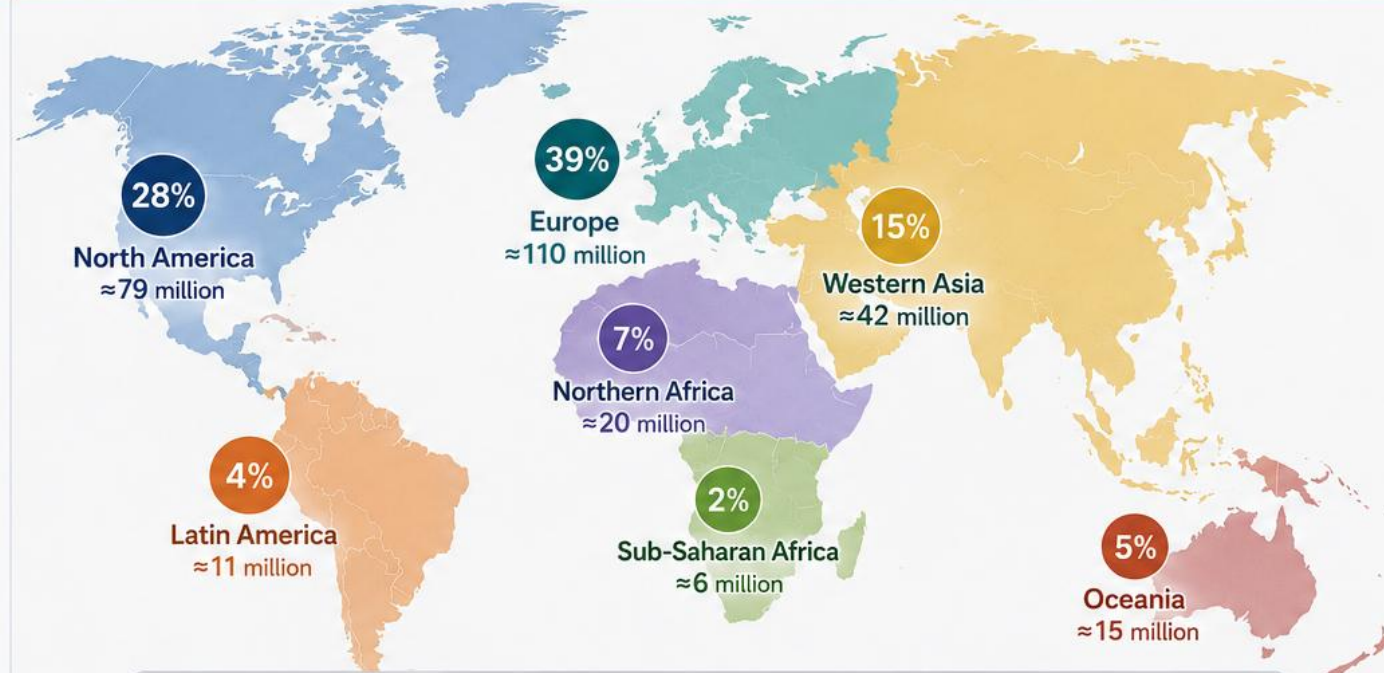
2025 is a UN estimate.



≈3.8%

of the world's population now lives outside their country of birth.

WHERE INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS LIVE (2020)



30+ LANGUAGES

represented in the Hostos study

Our community speaks many languages.
Every voice adds to our story.



Migration creates connections. Connections create conversations.
Conversations reveal how accents, identities, and power shape everyday life.

Source: United Nations, International Organization for Migration (2020, 2024)

*2025 is a UN estimate

Why This Project?



I teach at one of the colleges of the City University of NY, an educational institution which has many **immigrants or children of immigrants**. My college, Hostos, is one of the CUNY campuses and is located in the South Bronx. We cater to a very poor student population. Rap music, with its own language and power dynamics, originated just blocks from my college.

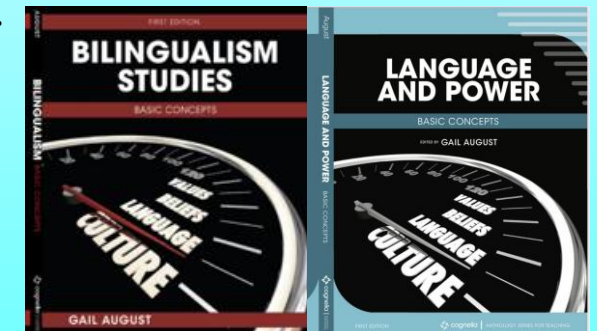
The Students

- Hostos serves a **multilingual immigrant community**
- Many students are immigrants or children of immigrants
- Located in the poorest zip code in the US

My Perspective

- **Applied critical linguistics** – sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, history, education, and communication
- **Language and Power** has been a central focus of my teaching and research

To support that goal, I have taught courses and written books both on ***Bilingualism*** and ***Language and Power***.



Background from Linguistics and Biology



Second Language speakers

- Anybody learning a new language in adulthood is very likely to have a non-native accent
- Non-native accents cross all borders and are found in all speakers of new languages
- These accents occur regardless of Intelligence or motivation to assimilate into the new linguistic culture
- Accents result from transfer from the sound system of the first language
- They are more prominent with older speakers

The Listener

- Accented speech (2nd language accent) is harder to process and absorbs more cognitive effort

Evolutionary factors—The Speaker as an Outsider

- Just as nature endows us with the ability to learn languages as a baby, it also endows us with a distrust of outsiders and strangers
- Babies and young children prefer to accept a toy from a person who speaks their own language or dialect and may reject a toy from a speaker with a second language accent
- This auditory preference over-rides visual impressions, such as race

Impacts

- Speakers with accents are considered less intelligent and less trustful
- These speakers are also less likely to be hired or promoted
- This is also a power issue. If the 2nd language speaker has prestige and power, the problems diminish

It seems that my students, the speakers, don't really know this information. They think they are the problem. And the listeners don't know this either. They also think the speakers are the problem.

Additional Language and Power Considerations



Insider / Outsider Attitudes

“Research shows listeners sometimes perceive accents differently based on assumptions about a speaker's identity—even when hearing the same voice.”- *Fridlander*

“Accent discrimination may be the last back door to discrimination.” – *Lippy/Green*

“Outsiders are people who look, talk, or believe differently from the dominant group.”-*August*

Political Attitudes

- Connection with xenophobia, which fluctuates depending on the political atmosphere and the economic situation
- A non-native accent identifies a speaker as an Outsider

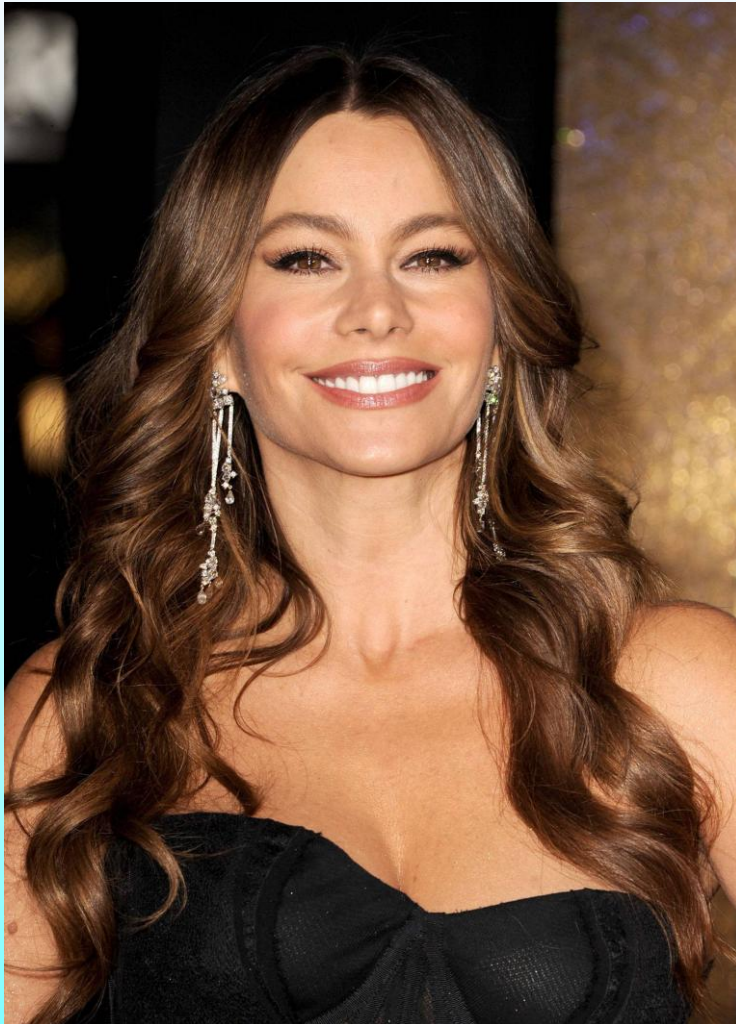
Nationalistic attitudes

- In the US, speaking English is regarded as a symbol of nationalism and patriotism

Linguistic Attitudes

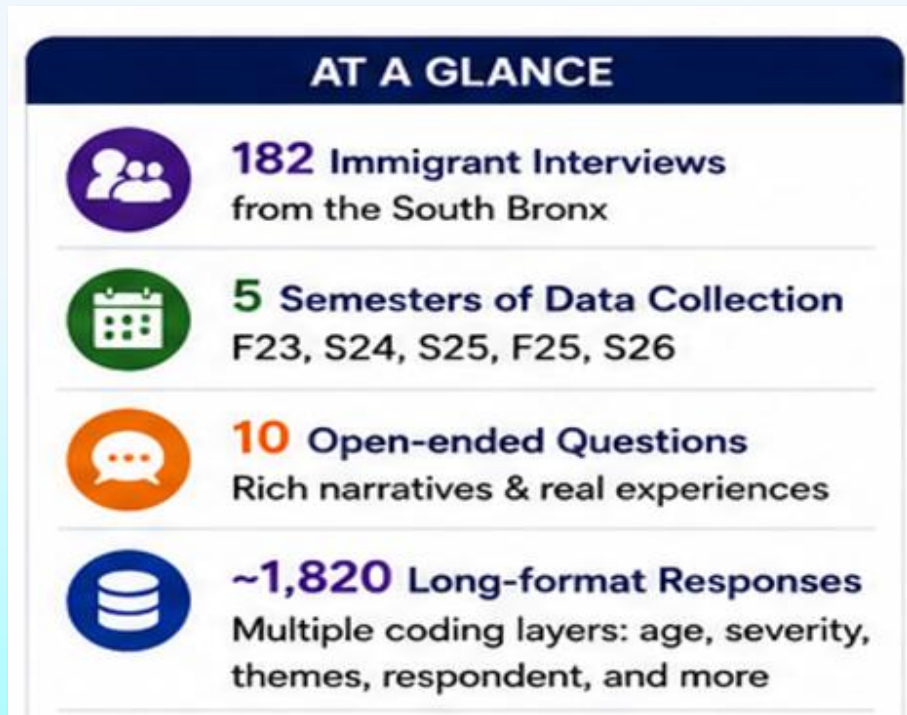
- If the US regarded English as more of a ***Lingua Franca***, a tool for communication, perhaps we have a better speaker-listener dyad
- Effective communication is negotiated communication

From Theory to Community Voices



Before we look at the study slides, I'd like to throw in a favorite quote from Sofia Vergara, the Colombian actress in the American TV series Modern Family. She is frequently attacked for her mispronunciations, which are exaggerated for the development of her character. Her response:

“You know, I'm very smart in Spanish”.



This presentation analyzes an **Action Research study** with student directed interviews, taking place over several years.

- **Each student interviewed 3 immigrant adults**, asking the same question about situations provoked by their non-native accent.
- The results are **powerful in their consistency** and specific details.
- When I share the results, **bilingual students are inevitably shocked** to learn that others have similar experiences.
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Building the Student Interview Database

A community-based communication corpus built through student interviews.



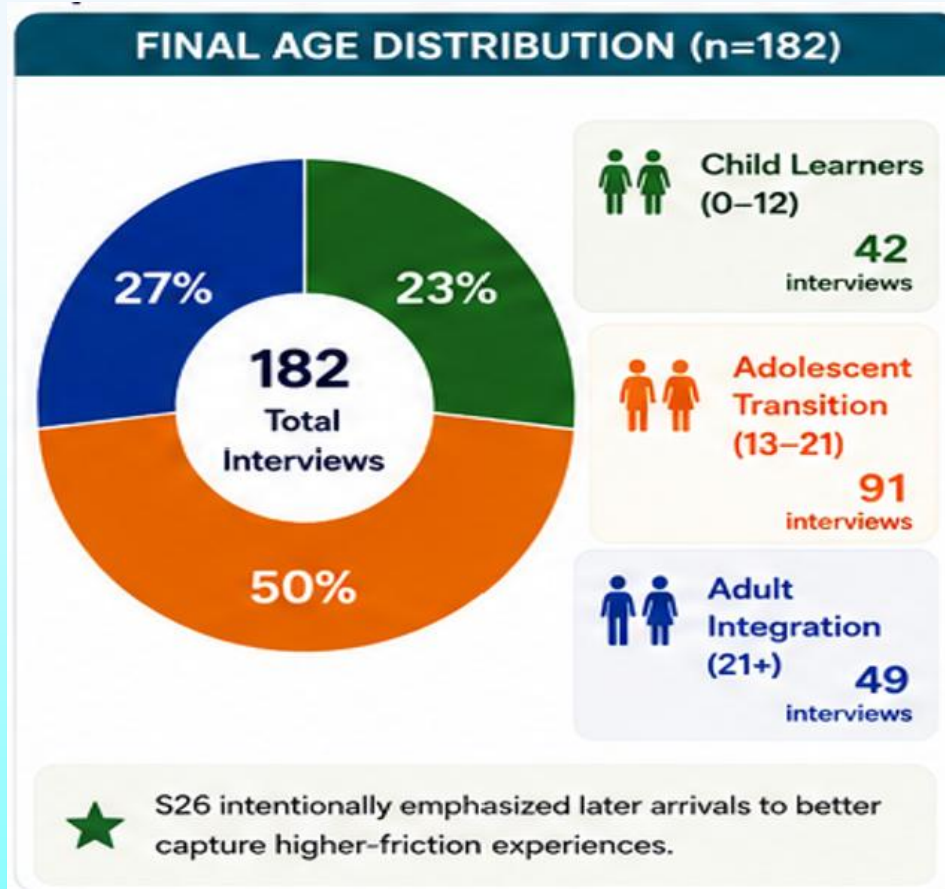
Across five semesters, students collected 182 interviews using ten identical open-ended questions, generating more than 1,800 narrative responses. What began as a classroom research activity evolved into an analysis of community language experiences.

- Five semesters of data collection
- 182 interviews
- More than 1,800 narrative responses
- Multiple respondent categories
- Coding by age, severity, themes, and domains

TAKEAWAY

A large community-based consistent set of interviews can reveal patterns while preserving individual voices.

Who Are We Hearing?



The interviews intentionally captures participants who arrived at different stages of life. Experiences often differ substantially between childhood arrivals, adolescent arrivals, and adult arrivals.

- **Child** learners: ages 0–12
- **Adolescent** arrivals: ages 13–21
- **Adult** arrivals: ages 21+
- More than 30 languages represented

TAKEAWAY

Different arrival ages and language backgrounds shape how respondents experience communication.

The Speaker–Listener Dyad

THE SPEAKER–LISTENER DYAD IN ACTION

Top Emerging Themes Across the Corpus

	Desire for Understanding & Patience	66%
	Discrimination & Being Judged	60%
	Phone Communication Barriers	58%
	Workplace Vulnerability	55%
	Educational Confidence & Participation	52%
	Identity, Pride & Bilingual Strength	61%



These themes cut across ages, languages, and respondent categories.

- Desire for understanding and patience
- Discrimination and judgment
- Phone communication barriers
- Workplace vulnerability
- Educational participation and confidence
- Identity and bilingual strength – expressed by some respondents

TAKEAWAY

“Accents reveal not only how we speak, but how we listen” – Valerie Fridland – Why We Talk Funny

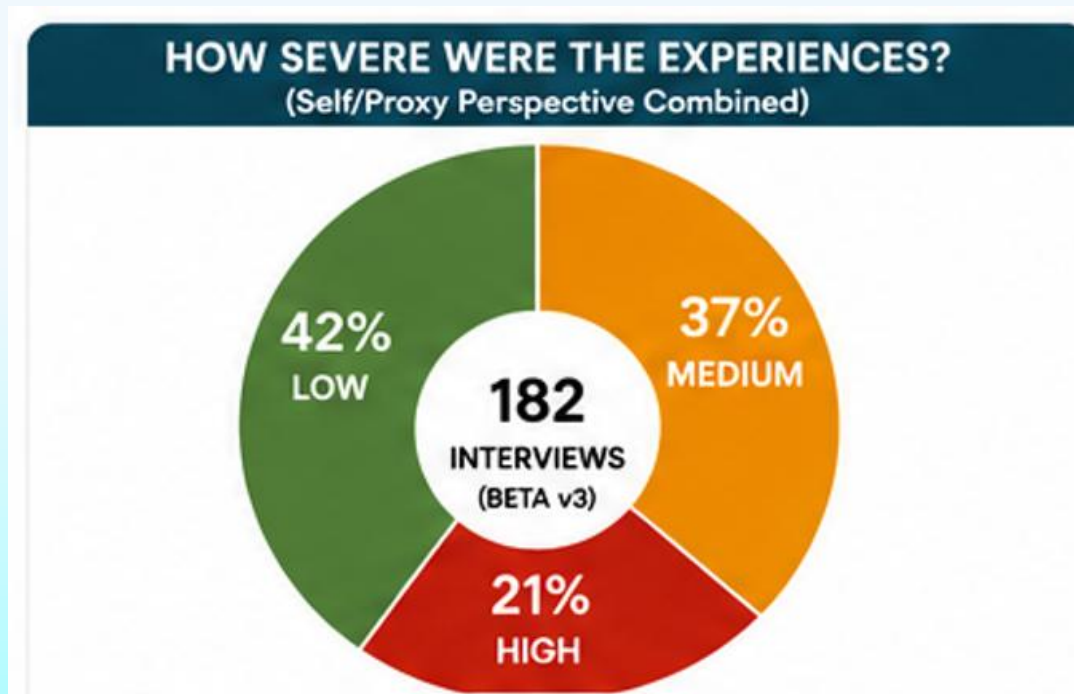
A Multilingual Community



The South Bronx reflects extraordinary linguistic diversity. While Spanish is the largest language group represented, the study captures experiences across more than thirty language communities.

- Spanish is the largest language group
- Haitian Creole, Arabic, Bengali, English varieties, and many others appear
- Some language information is unknown or not reported
- Shared themes emerge across language communities

How Severe Were the Experiences?



Each of the 1,820 responses from the 182 interviews were coded using a low, medium, or high impact scale to determine the severity of the experiences. Samples are shown below (including AoA), with additional representative ones shown later in the presentation. Overall, high-impact experiences are not the majority, but they are far from rare.

High (H): “I stopped raising my hand because I was embarrassed” Adolescent (AoA 13-21)

Medium (M): “People didn’t understand me, so I explained things more slowly” Adult (AoA 22+)

Low (L): “I see my accent as part of who I am” Child Learner (AoA 0-12)

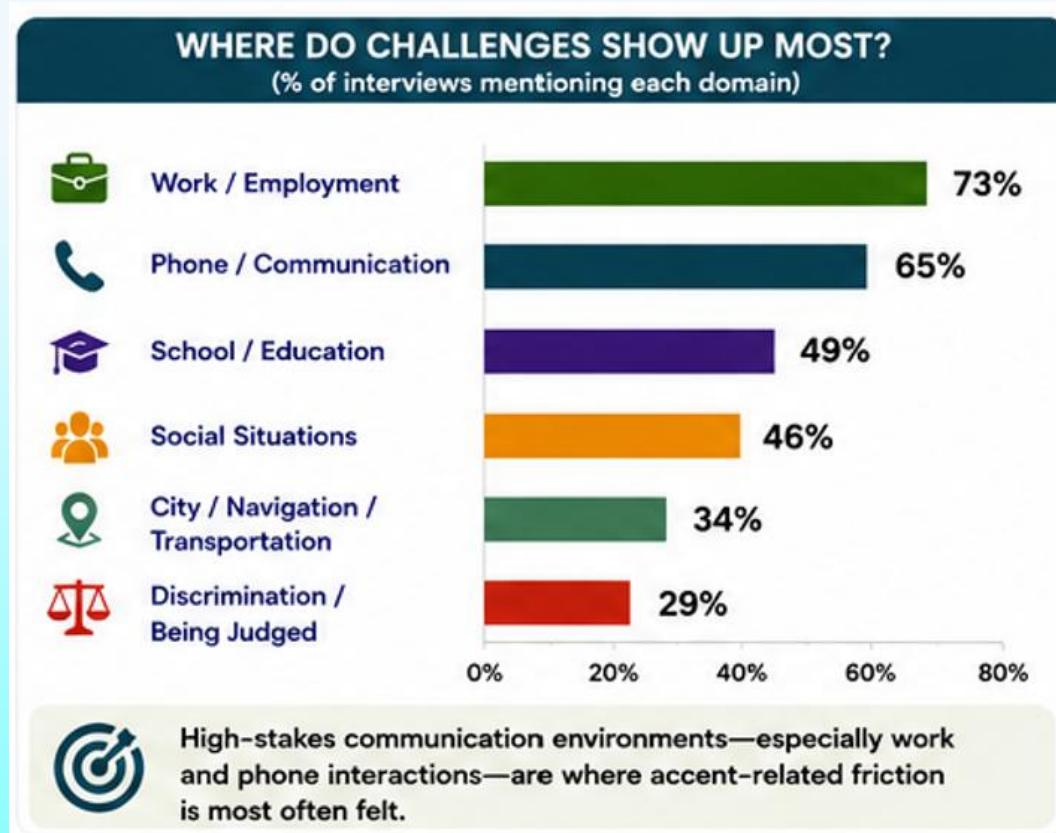
IMPACT LEVELS *(Interpretive Guide)*

High (H): Significant negative impact on confidence, opportunities, or daily life.

Medium (M): Noticeable challenges requiring extra effort or adjustment.

Low (L): Minimal impact; generally manageable experiences.

Most Important Challenges



Work and employment

- Work is essential to the survival of immigrants and their families
- Work is high stakes situation

Phone communication

- Surprise result given translation technical advances
- Phone communication hindered by lack of ability to negotiate through gestures
- Phone calls often connected to work

School and education

- Bullying
- Students lose confidence in their abilities
- Students remain outsiders, do not participate in social situations
- Students do not speak in class
- Responsibility of educators?

TAKEAWAY

Economic survival and self-respect

Age of Arrival Matters (AoA)

AGE AT ARRIVAL AND SEVERITY OVER TIME

(Self/Proxy Perspective Combined)

		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	% High (Change)
0–12 years (Child Learners)					
	2023 (n=28)	68%	29%	4%	4%
	2024 (n=15)	67%	27%	6%	6% (↑2)
	2025 (n=31)	63%	33%	4%	4% (–)
	2026 Spring (n=18)	61%	33%	6%	6% (↑2)
12–21 years (Adolescent Transition)					
	2023 (n=24)	46%	37%	17%	17%
	2024 (n=8)	38%	38%	24%	24% (↑7)
	2025 (n=23)	40%	39%	21%	21% (↓3)
	2026 Spring (n=16)	36%	40%	24%	24% (↑3)
21+ years (Adult Integration)					
	2023 (n=18)	17%	39%	44%	44%
	2024 (n=14)	21%	36%	43%	43% (↓1)
	2025 (n=21)	20%	37%	43%	43% (–)
	2026 Spring (n=6)	17%	33%	50%	50% (↑7)



Children (0–12) remain the least impacted across all periods.
Adults (21+) consistently experience the highest severity.

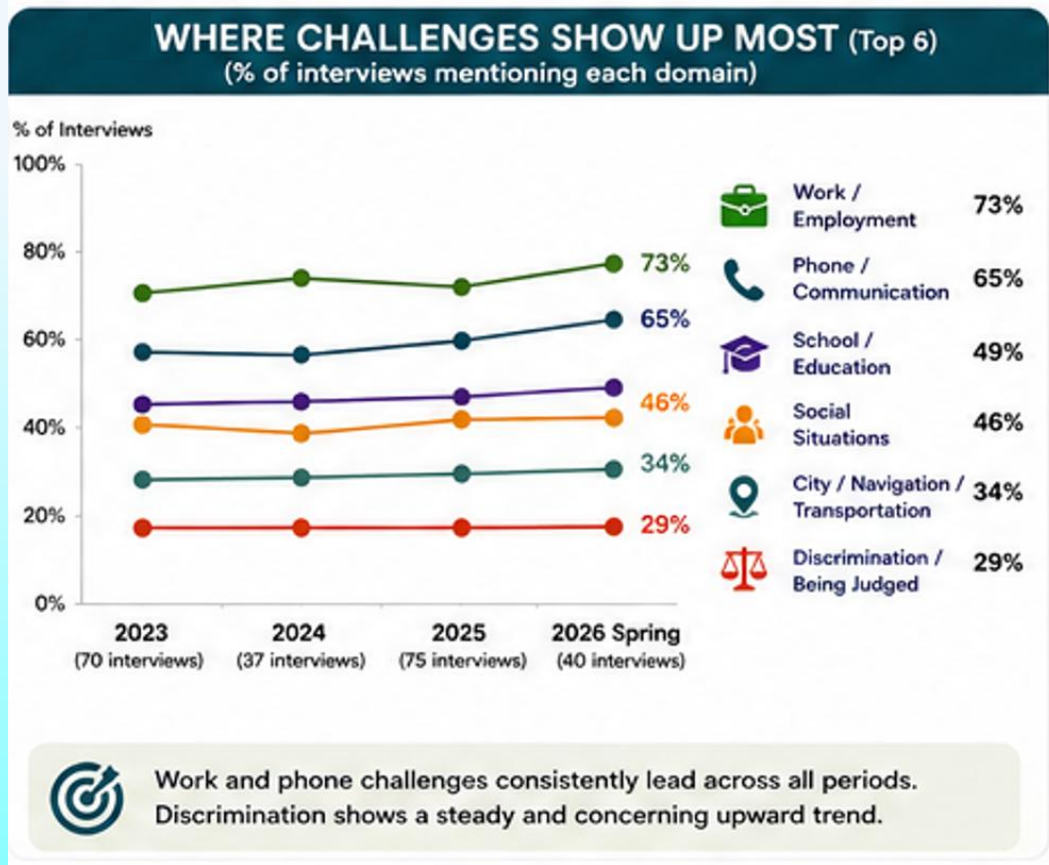
Experiences vary substantially depending on when individuals entered English-speaking environments.

- Childhood arrivals consistently are more likely to report lower-severity experiences.
- Adolescent arrivals also consistently have a mix of low and high stress experiences
- Adult arrivals consistently report the greatest concentration of high-impact experiences

TAKEAWAY

Arrival age is one of the clearest patterns in the Student Interview Database.

Recent Challenges Are More Significant – Why?



Several domains show noticeable growth over time. These changes may reflect evolving respondent mix, changing social conditions, or greater willingness to name particular challenges.

- Work and employment
- Phone communication
- Discrimination and judgment
- School and education
- Social situations

TAKEAWAY

Trend patterns point to areas requiring deeper follow-up and interpretation.

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11	"I stayed quiet so I wouldn't have to face reactions."	Adolescent (13–21)	Friends / Peers
12	"I worried my accent would affect my future career."	Adult	Self
13	"I felt different everywhere I went."	Adult	Community Member
14	"I felt like I didn't belong here."	Adolescent (13–21)	Self
15	"I felt invisible until someone actually listened."	Adult	Community Member

Medium-Impact Voices

Everyday friction requires everyday adaptation.

MEDIUM IMPACT (M) – 10 QUOTES			
#	QUOTE (Real voice)	AGE GROUP	RESPONDENT CATEGORY
1	"People didn't understand me, so I explained things more slowly."	Adult	Immediate Family
2	"Phone conversations were hardest—there were no visual cues."	Adult	Customer / Stranger
3	"Sometimes I had to repeat myself several times."	Adolescent (13–21)	Friends / Peers
4	"It takes extra effort to make sure people understand."	Adult	Coworkers / Manager
5	"People ask me where I'm 'really' from."	Adult	Customer / Stranger

MEDIUM IMPACT (M) – 10 QUOTES			
#	QUOTE (Real voice)	AGE GROUP	RESPONDENT CATEGORY
6	"Some people tried helping, but it still slowed things down."	Adult	Friends / Peers
7	"I think about my accent more in professional situations."	Adult	Self
8	"I felt nervous speaking in front of groups."	Adolescent (13–21)	Teachers / Instructors
9	"People assumed I understood less than I did."	Adult	Immediate Family
10	"I felt uncomfortable asking strangers for directions."	Adult	Customer / Stranger

Low-Impact Voices

Difference can also be a source of strength. The story includes resilience and pride, not only difficulty.



LOW IMPACT (L) – 10 QUOTES			
#	QUOTE (Real voice)	AGE GROUP	RESPONDENT CATEGORY
1	"I see my accent as part of who I am."	 Child Learner (0–12)	 Schoolmates / Peers
2	"I'm proud of my accent now."	 Adult	 Self
3	"My accent makes me unique."	 Adolescent (13–21)	 Friends / Peers
4	"I focus on communicating clearly—not sounding perfect."	 Adult	 Self
5	"I have an accent, but it hasn't stopped me."	 Adult	 Self
6	"People appreciate my accent; it's part of me."	 Adult	 Immediate Family
7	"I've learned that my accent is not a weakness."	 Adolescent (13–21)	 Self
8	"I love speaking my language and English too."	 Child Learner (0–12)	 Friends / Peers
9	"My culture is a gift, and my accent carries it."	 Adult	 Self
10	"I've grown more confident the longer I've been here."	 Adult	 Self



Key Findings

From accent to identity, opportunity, and belonging.

TOP LINE TAKEAWAYS



Accent perception influences opportunity and treatment.



Compassionate listeners make a powerful difference in confidence and success.



Schools shape confidence, participation, and academic pathways.



Workplace vulnerability is real—accents can affect hiring, evaluation, and advancement.



Age at arrival matters: younger arrivals adapt differently than adolescents and adults.

POWER OF REAL VOICES

“

People focused more on how I said things than what I said.”

– College Student

“

I work hard, but my accent makes me prove myself more.”

– Community Member

“

I just wish people knew that we all have something valuable to say.

– High School Student

“

Now I’m proud of my accent. It’s part of who I am.

– Young Adult

”



From challenge to resilience to pride—these are journeys of strength.

Closing



Closing Quotes

“Research suggests that greater exposure to different accents improves comprehension and reduces communication barriers.”

“Language is never only about communication. It is also about access, status, and inclusion.”

“Language helps shape how we see other people. The corpus isn't simply measuring communication. It is measuring social positioning.”

“Language is more than communication. It influences identity, status, belonging, and power.”

Professor Gail August
CUNY / Hostos Community College
Applied Linguistics Study - Student Interviewers
Language & Power: Speakers and Listeners
Lisbon 2026

Appendix

Language & Power: Speakers and Listeners

Exploring the Immigrant Communication Journey Through Student Interviews



The 10 Interview Questions

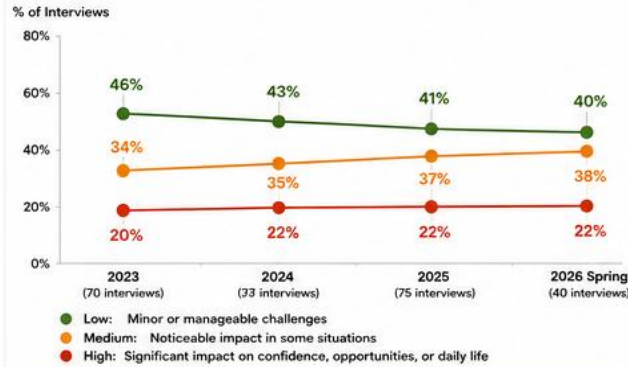
Name / Relationship to Interviewer: _____

Country of origin: _____

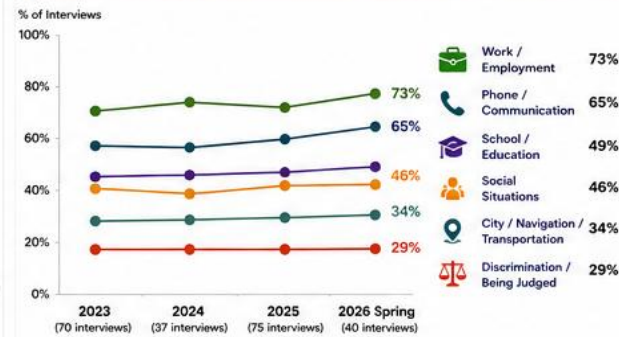
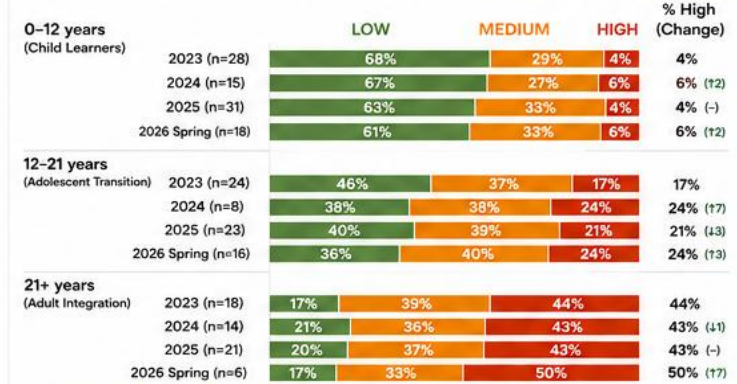
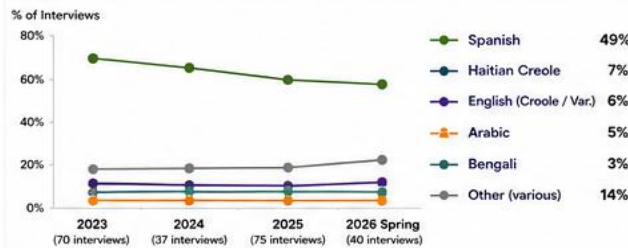
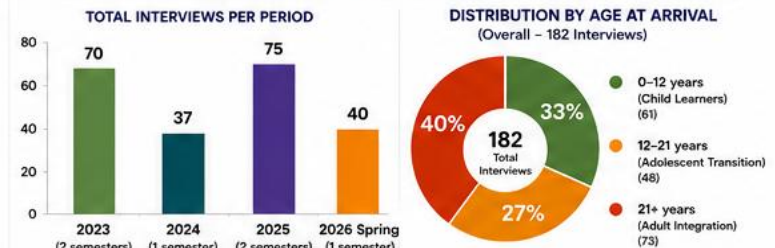
Dominant language spoken: _____

1. How old were you when you arrived in the United States?
2. In general, what problems did your accent cause for you?
3. Did your accent cause any problems in school (elementary school, high school, or college)?
4. Did your accent cause any problems with other students or friends (for example, teasing or bullying)?
5. Did your accent cause any problems at work?
6. Did your accent cause any problems getting around the city?
7. Did your accent cause any problems using the telephone?
8. Can you describe a situation in which you were treated badly because of your accent?
9. How did your accent affect your self-esteem, educational goals, and future career opportunities?
10. How do you feel about your accent now?

Hostos Bilingualism Classes - Applied Linguistics Special Assignment - Fall 2023 through Spring 2026

**182**
Total Interviews
Across 5 Semesters**10**
Core Questions
per InterviewReal stories.
Real impact.
Human connection.Trends show how immigrant experiences of language and power evolve across time and context.
All findings are preliminary and pre-final (pre-purple).**1. SEVERITY OF EXPERIENCES OVER TIME**
(Self/Proxy Perspective Combined)

Severity levels have remained relatively stable, with a slight rise in medium and sustained high-impact experiences in later periods.

2. WHERE CHALLENGES SHOW UP MOST (Top 6)
(% of interviews mentioning each domain)Work and phone challenges consistently lead across all periods.
Discrimination shows a steady and concerning upward trend.**3. AGE AT ARRIVAL AND SEVERITY OVER TIME**
(Self/Proxy Perspective Combined)Children (0-12) remain the least impacted across all periods.
Adults (21+) consistently experience the highest severity.**4. LANGUAGE DIVERSITY OVER TIME** (Top 6 Languages)
(% of interviews)Spanish remains the dominant language across all semesters.
Other languages together represent a growing diversity of voices.**5. KEY THEMES THAT ARE GROWING**
(Increase in % of interviews from 2023 to 2026 Spring)Work, phone, and discrimination challenges are rising.
Identity and understanding remain powerful sources of strength.**6. BY THE NUMBERS: INTERVIEWS OVER TIME**
Total Interviews and DistributionOur corpus continues to broaden in depth, diversity, and impact.
Later periods reflect intentional efforts to elevate adult immigrant voices.**KEY TAKEAWAY**Core patterns are consistent:
Work and phone challenges lead, and adults face the greatest severity.

High-impact experiences remain persistent, with discrimination showing gradual increase.



Younger arrivals are more resilient, while adult arrivals encounter stronger and more complex communication barriers.



Listening, understanding, and inclusive spaces matter more than ever.



Diversity of languages and stories grows our collective strength.



These findings will continue to be refined as we complete a final review of all interviews and coding.

“ Behind every accent is a story, a journey, and a human being. — Students of the South Bronx

Bilingualism Studies: Basic Concepts

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AAVE
Diglossia

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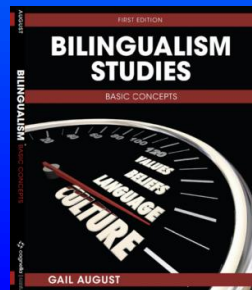
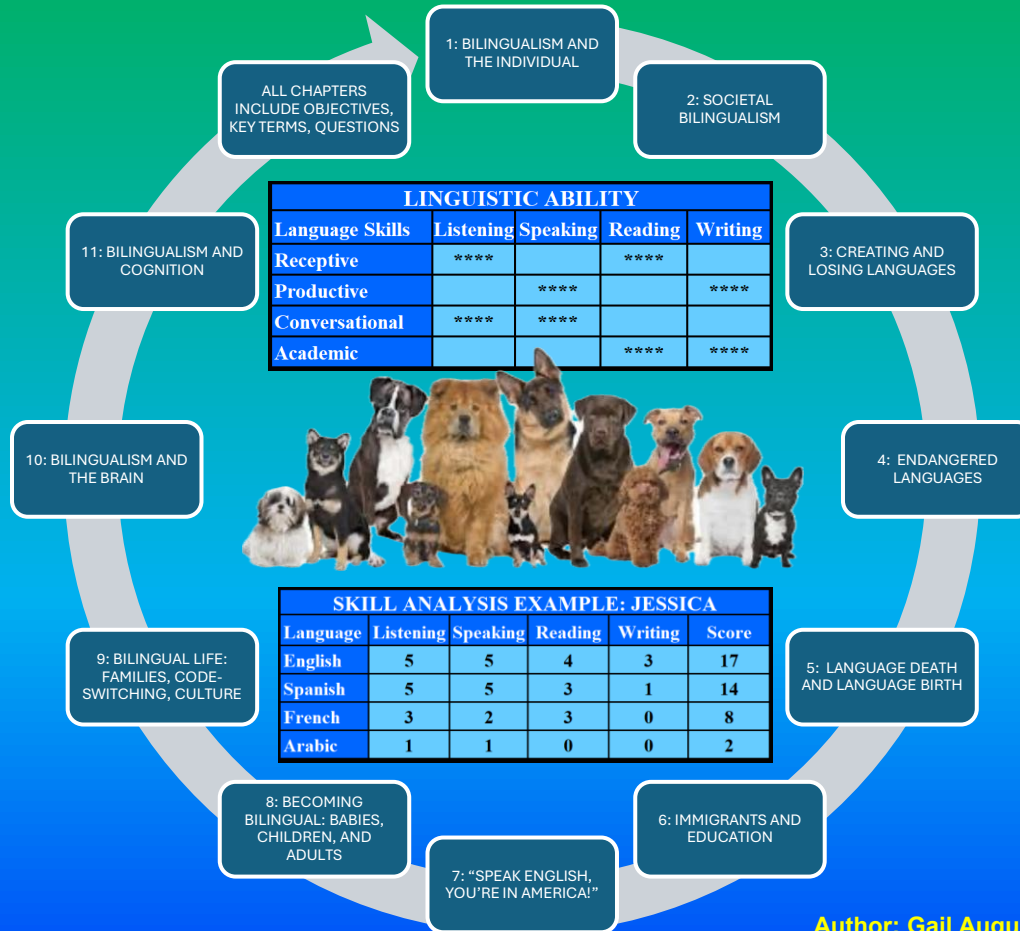
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Babies, Children, Adults, Elderly
Brain studies: Childhood Advantages;
Executive Control; Dementia Research

CONCLUSION



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Bilingualism Studies: Basic Concepts, 2026

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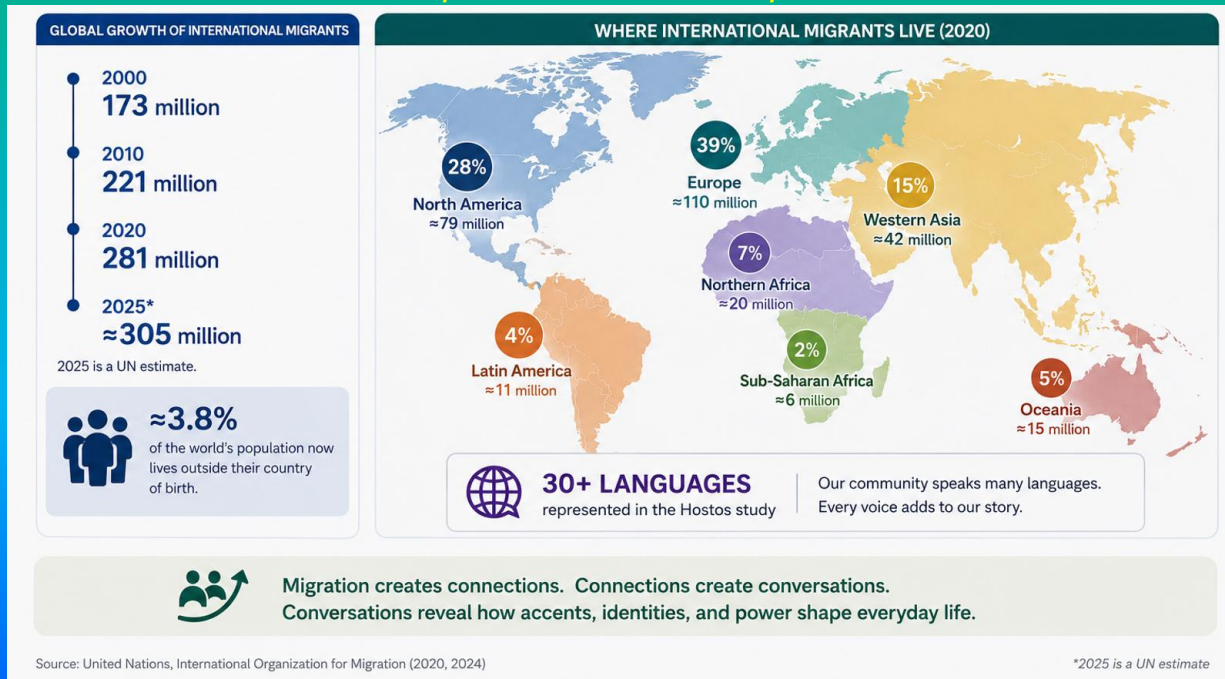
Mare Nostrum Bilingualism:
Book Link



Bilingualism Studies: Sample Assignment

Applied Linguistics - Student Immigration Interviews (Chapter 10)

Special Assignment: Interview 3-5 people who are L2 speakers. Try to find people who came here as teen-agers or older, although younger immigrants are acceptable. You may interview yourself. Ask each person all of the 10 questions.



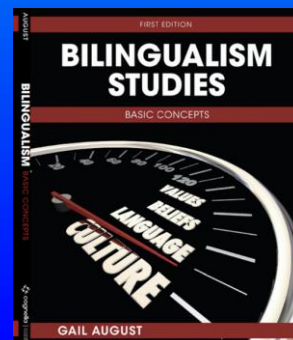
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Chapter 3 –
Languages in Contact:
Immigration

Chapter 10 –
Bilingualism and the Brain:
Accent and Hearing:
Language Transfer



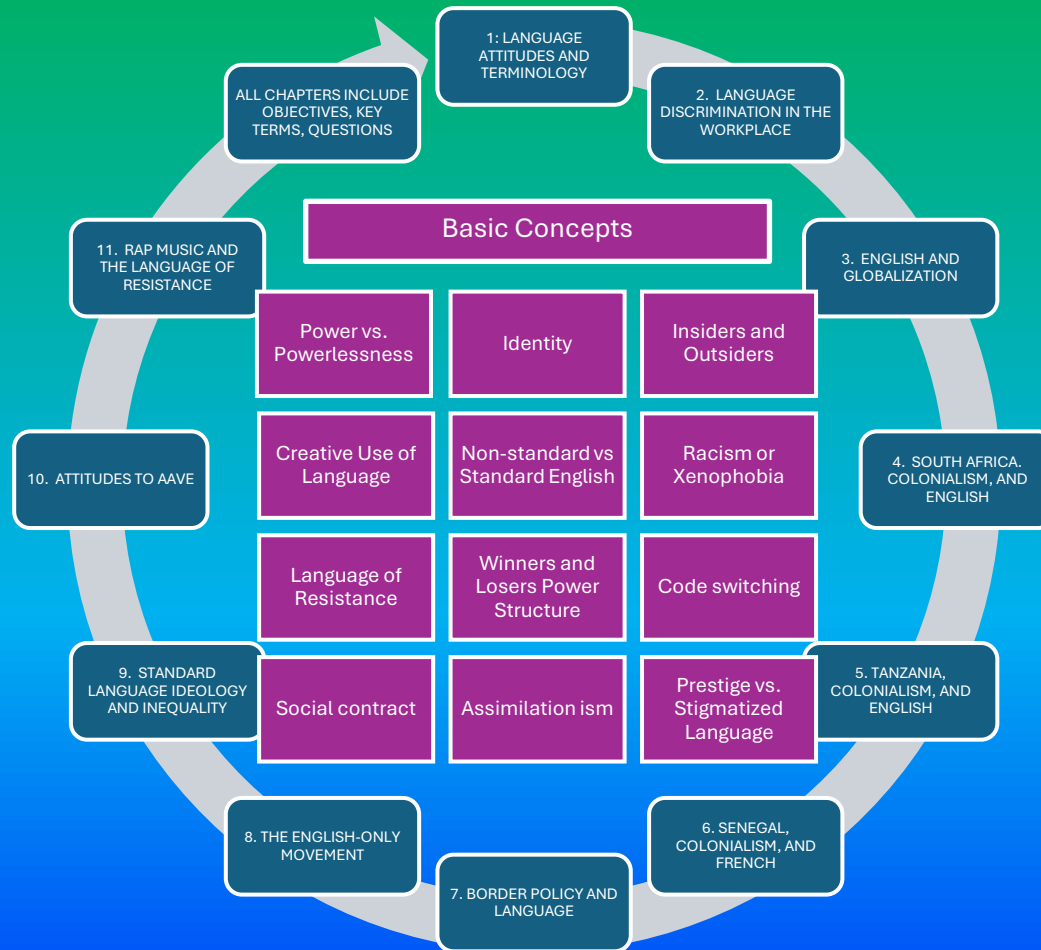
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AT A GLANCE	
	182 Immigrant Interviews from the South Bronx
	5 Semesters of Data Collection F23, S24, S25, F25, S26
	10 Open-ended Questions Rich narratives & real experiences
	~1,820 Long-format Responses Multiple coding layers: age, severity, themes, respondent, and more

Language and Power: Basic Concepts

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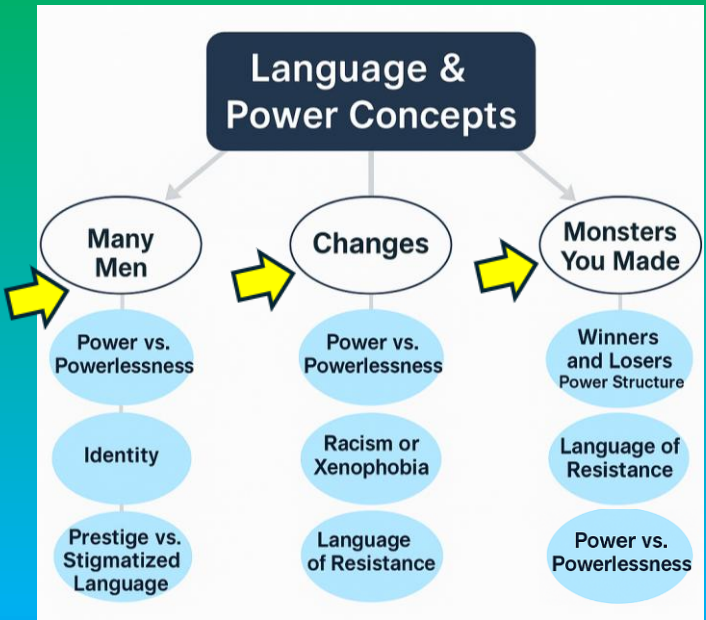
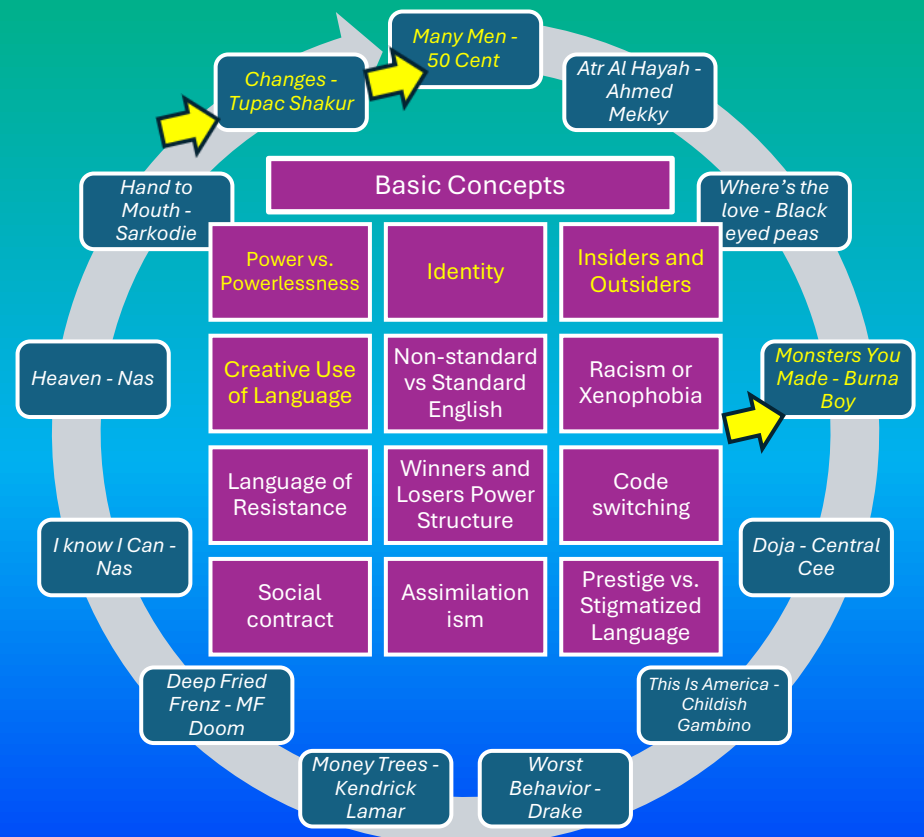
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Book Link



Language and Power: Sample Assignment

Educating with Rap (Chapter 11 – Microphone Commandos)

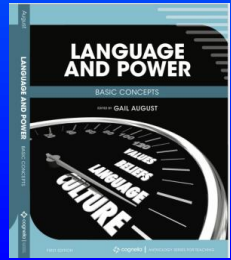
Assignment: Select a Rap song and artist, and connect lyrics to themes in class



➔ **“Many Men (Wish Death)” — Language & Power Analysis Table**

Language & Power Concept	Lyrics / Song Evidence (brief phrases)	How the Song Demonstrates the Concept
Power vs. Powerlessness	Surviving multiple gunshot wounds; “many men wish death”	The song begins in vulnerability (near death) and moves toward reclaimed power through survival and success.
Identity	Street survivor, hustler, self-made figure	50 Cent constructs an identity forged by violence, resilience, and ambition—identity shaped by environment and conflict.
Insiders and Outsiders	“Many men” vs. “me”	Clear boundary between allies/insiders (loyal circle) and outsiders/enemies who wish harm.
Creative Use of Language	Prayer imagery; fate vs. destiny	Religious language reframes street violence as a moral and existential struggle.

Chapter 11 – Microphone Commandos: Rap Music and Political Philosophy
Reading by Bill E. Lawson

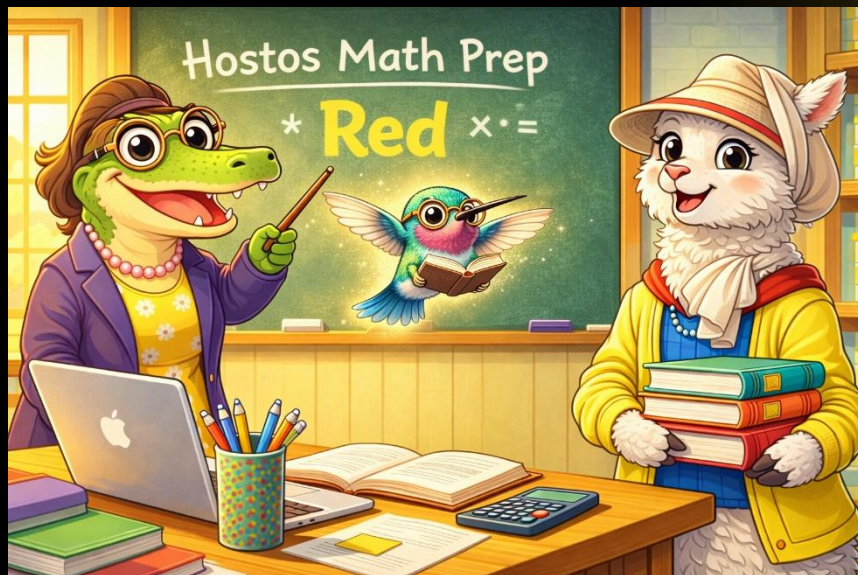


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HOSTOS / CUNY MATH DAY March 25, 2026

Session 5 (*Gail August Slides*)

Professors: Dr. Karin Lundberg, Dr. Gail August,
Dr. Patricia Frenz-Belkin



Language vs. Math: What Humans Are Born to Learn

Why fluency in speech is universal - but fluency in math is not

Roadmap:

- Innate vs. learned skills (language vs. math)
- Language & number history (evolutionary timeline)
- What cognitive science says about learning complex skills
- Practical examples and takeaways

1. OVERVIEW OF THIS PRESENTATION

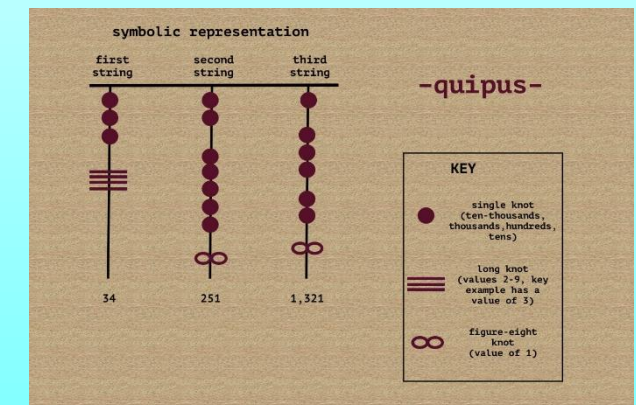
- What **cognitive science** says about learning complex skills
- Acquiring **language skills as a baby is significantly different** from learning a new language as an adult
 - Process
 - Cognitive load
 - Result
- Learning a **language as an adult is comparable to learning math** or other complex skills at any age
- **This presentation will show how studying language acquisition at all ages, both innate and learned, can be applied to learning Math**

2. BACKGROUND

- **Studying languages reveals how humans think**
 - Rare/endangered languages expand understanding
 - Show range of human cognition
- **Number systems vary across cultures**
 - Mixed bases (e.g., base 12 + base 10)

3. EVOLUTION AND THE HUMAN BRAIN

- **Timeline difference**
 - Language: ~50,000 years
 - Written language: ~5,000–6,000 years
 - Evidence of numbers alongside earliest writing
- **Early math concepts**
 - Initially clay tokens, quipu knots (Incas)
 - One, two, many
 - Some cultures still lack number systems
- **Implication**
 - Math is a recent cognitive development



4. WHAT BABIES KNOW - LANGUAGE

- **Before birth:** Babies begin processing language
 - in the 6th month of pregnancy
- **At birth:** Recognize their mother's language within days
- **Early skill:** Distinguish sounds many adults struggle with
 - beat vs bit, right vs light
- **By age 1:** Understand words, rhythm, and basic grammar
- **Evidence:** Language exposure used in NICUs (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) to support development

5. LANGUAGE ACQUISITION - BABIES

Innate ability

- Babies acquire language naturally
- No formal teaching required

Exposure is enough

- Hearing language triggers learning
- True even in cultures where parents don't talk to babies

Evidence

- Processing begins before birth
- Newborns recognize mother's language

6. LANGUAGE SUMMARY FOR BABIES

First Language Acquisition - Babies

- Automatic and natural
- Works for any language heard

Multiple languages

- Can be acquired simultaneously

Comparable skills

- Crying, walking (no teaching needed)

7. IS MATH ABILITY SIMILARLY INNATE?

Core Question

- Is math ability innate like acquiring first language skills as a baby?
- Or does it require teaching and cognitive effort like acquiring new languages as an adult?

Evidence of Early Number Sense

- Some scientists believe infants have a basic number sense
- This sense is **very primitive**
 - Similar to early language concepts of “**one**” vs. “**many**”
- Babies have been shown to have some other simple math skills
- Therefore, we don’t think we are starting from zero for math skills
 - There is a rudimentary cognitive foundation for math
 - **But significant additional training is required to build on that foundation**
- They are not reading math problems in the NICU

8. TRAINING - THREE A'S and a P

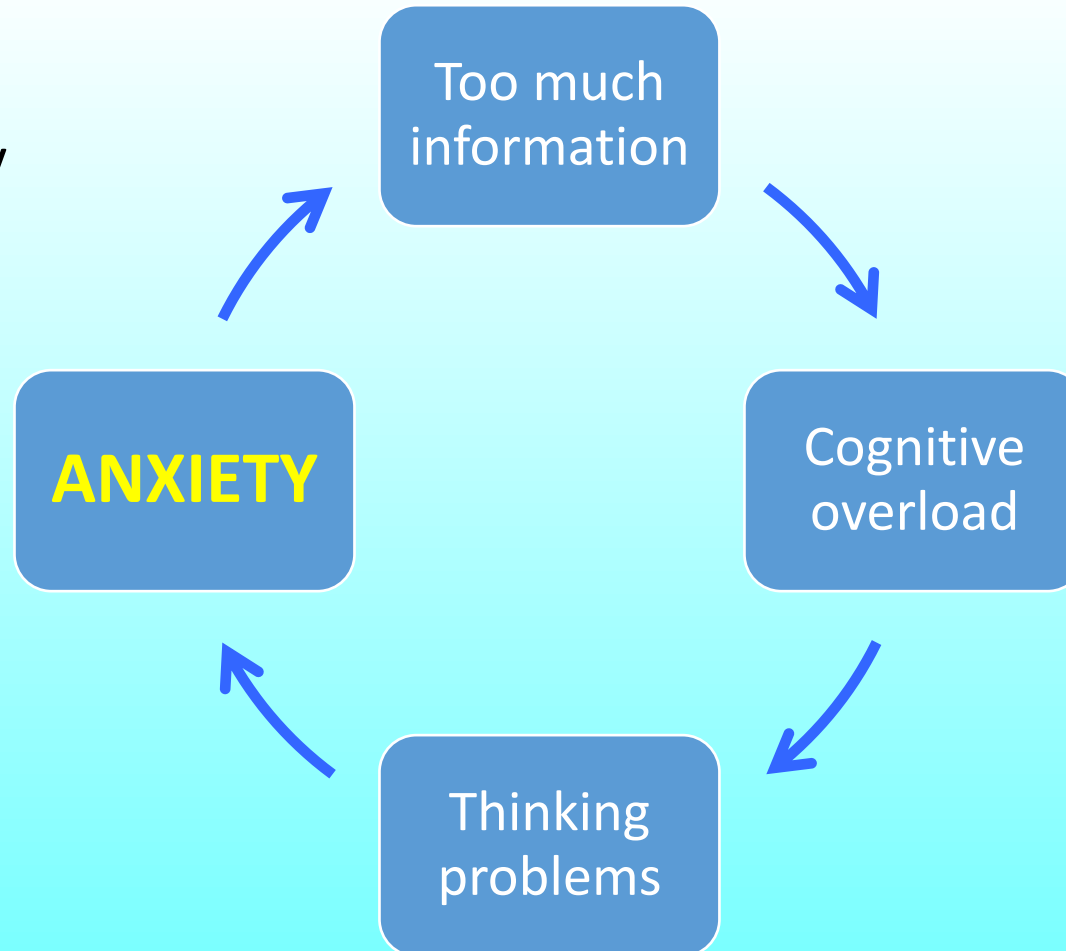
Core framework	Applies to	Learning requires
• Automaticity • Anxiety reduction • Attitude	• 2nd language, math, reading • Music, sports, dance	• Instruction • Focused thinking • Practice

9. ANXIETY AND COGNITIVE OVERLOAD

- **Cognitive limits**

- Learning about learning
- Brain has limited capacity
- Like eating too much

- **Overload chain:**



10. AUTOMATICITY OVERVIEW

- **Definition**
 - Performing without thinking
- **Language example**
 - Fluent speech is automatic
- **Reading example**
 - Slow → fast automatic recognition
- **Stroop insight**
 - Words processed faster than colors

Congruent	Incongruent
Red	Red
Blue	Blue
Green	Green
Yellow	Yellow
Orange	Orange
Purple	Purple

11. SYMBOLIC THINKING IN MATH REDUCES COGNITIVE OVERLOAD

Symbols	Benefit	Impact	Application
• Words and numbers • Use of symbols (like +, ÷, Σ)	• Compress information • Reduce effort	• Makes automaticity possible in lower level procedures	• Word problem • Translate words into symbols

12. AUTOMATICITY EXAMPLE - DANCE

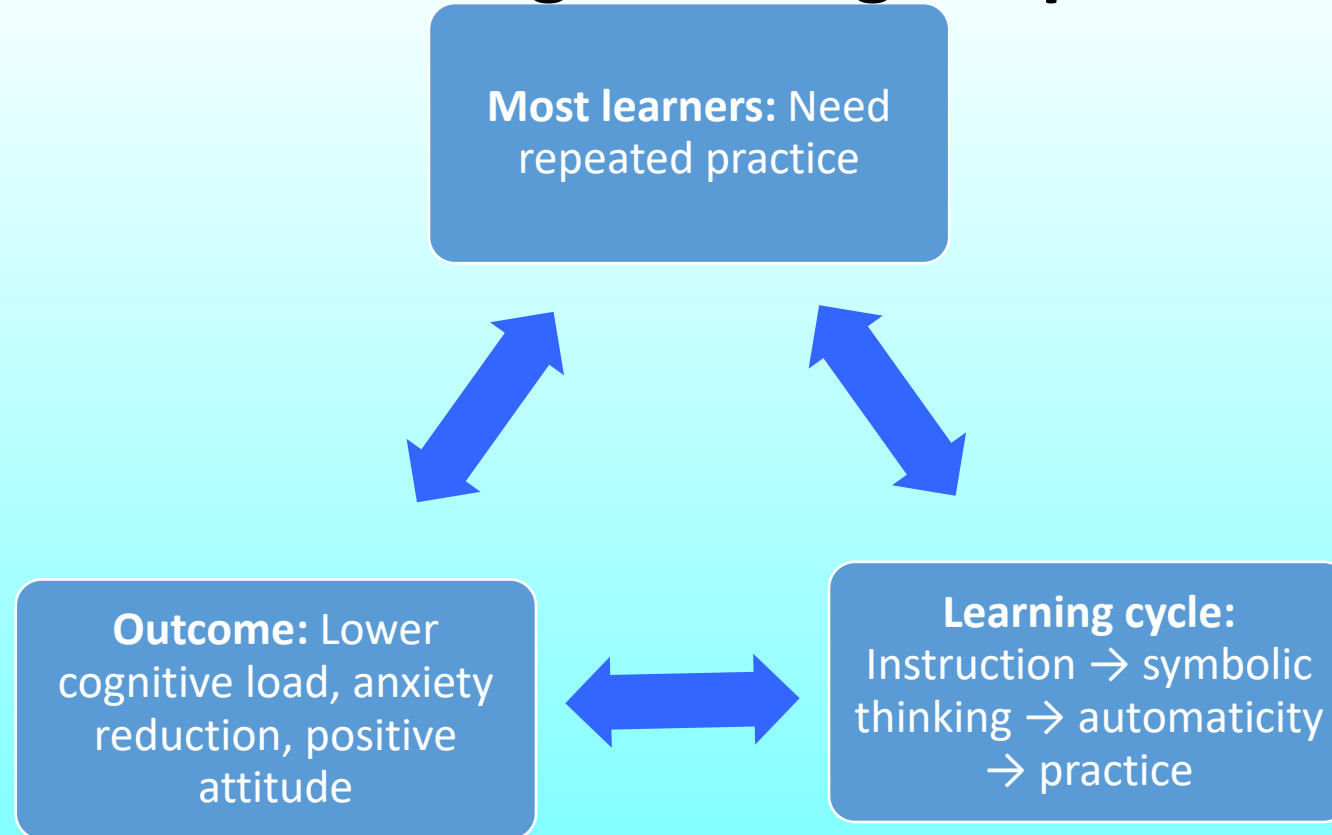
- **Practice**
 - Repetition builds automaticity
- **Symbols**
 - Numbers, phrases, imaginary picture as short-hand for movements
- **Challenge**
 - Processing speed

13. MORE AUTOMATICITY EXAMPLES

- **Subway**
- **4th grader**

14. OUTLIERS AND THE REST OF US

Lifelong Learning Loop



For outliers, we have super ballerinas, math geniuses, poets, great writers

15. CONCLUSION

- **Myth**

- “I’m just not good at math”
 - Corollary: “I’m just not good at learning languages”

- **Reality**

- Positive attitude grows with practice

- **Keys**

- **Three A’s** (*Automaticity, Anxiety reduction, Attitude*)
- **P** (*Practice*)

Questions? Next Steps

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