

Qualitative Experiences of Bilingual Speakers

Student: Denise Picazo

Department: Psychological Sciences

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Laura Getz

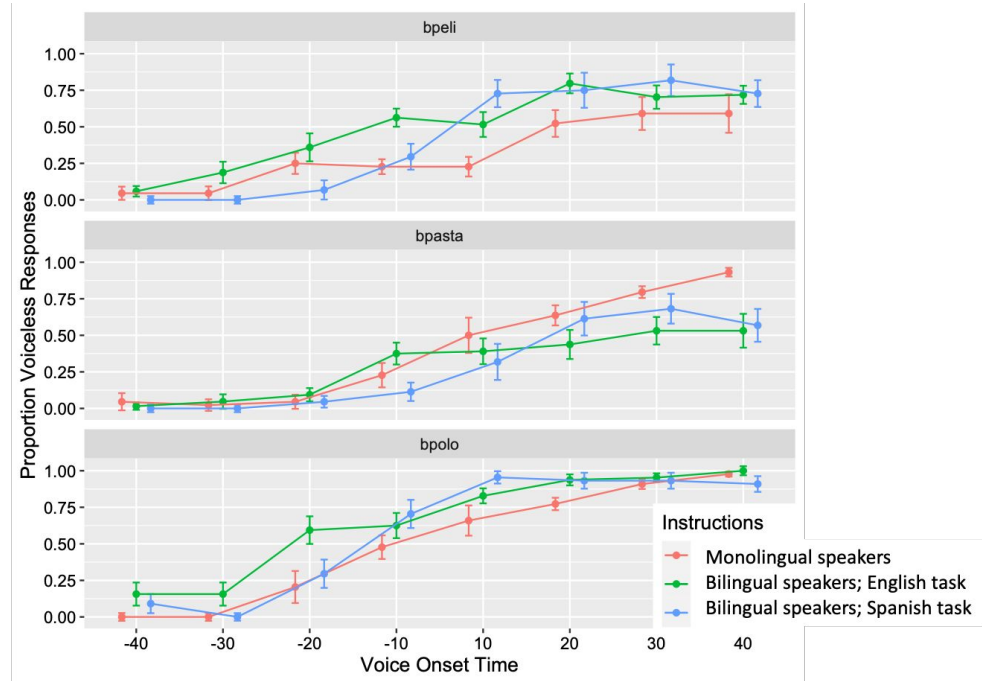
Project Abstract:

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of the lived experience of bilingual individuals, including personal, social, and cognitive impacts. There is extensive data that shows that bilinguals are particularly well-suited for task-switching, executive control, and divergent thinking (Kharkhurin, 2007; Poarch & Bialystock, 2015). However, there is a growing focus on qualitative experiences, and participant perspectives to better understand the individuating experiences of those who are bilingual (Higby et al., 2023; Lopez et al., 2023; Peace-Hughes et al., 2021). Our study asked bilinguals about experiences of living as a bilingual person in San Diego, CA. We held several focus groups that included either English/Spanish bilinguals or participants who were bilingual in English and a second language other than Spanish. Themes such as culture, connection, identity, and proficiency guided the discussions. The results indicate that factors such as age of acquisition and an individual's background are often determinants of how much each language is maintained. These focus group findings will inform future quantitative studies in our lab, providing a more holistic answer on how participants' perceive their L1 and L2. Results will help to better separate participants rather than just comparing all bilinguals to all monolinguals.



Construction of Current Research

- Our previous research showed that comparing **all** bilinguals to monolinguals makes speech perception comparisons difficult
- Therefore we wanted to look more at **different types** of bilingual experiences to guide our research



Why a Focus Group?

- Our research question:
 - What factors in bilinguals' lifetime have impacted their language learning and what more could be understood about their expertise in each language?
- A focus group allows diverse individuals with different backgrounds to share their own story
- It can help connect individuals because of shared experiences

Participants Needed

For our **"Experiences
with Bilingualism"**

Research Study on
bilingual individuals

Next up: Oct 31; 12-1pm
*non-Spanish-English
bilinguals*

Nov 7; 12-1pm
*Spanish-English
bilinguals*



In this study, you will...

- Complete a 10-minute online demographics questionnaire on your own
- Come in-person to Saints 121 for a 50 minute focus group session
- Discuss focus group questions with 4-5 other bilingual students
- Be audio recorded
- Receive a \$20 Target gift card for participating

email Denise Picazo at
dpicazo@san Diego.edu to
join the study!

Study PI: Laura Getz (lgetz@san Diego.edu)

Focus Group Methodology

- Focus groups of 5-6 individuals shared their answers in a non-formal setting
 - English-Spanish bilinguals
 - English-other L2 bilinguals
- Categories of questions:
 - Proficiency in each language
 - Personal and social experiences
 - How they have been impacted by the Spanish-speaking population in San Diego
 - Cognitive abilities
 - Recommendations for researchers



Themes and Results



Conclusions

- Not all bilinguals are the same!
- In order to properly research the variety of bilinguals, it is important to examine differences and similarities alike
- Bilingual populations vary immensely based on cultural, social, and personal experiences
- In our lab, we will use these qualitative results to better group participants for future quantitative studies

