Multiracial Multilinguals: How Language Influences Multiracials' Interpersonal Relationships

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Abstract

Lovers in interracial couples are more likely to have different heritage languages and first languages than same-race couples, and Multiracials are the offspring of interracial couples. As such, Multiracials' linguistic socialization likely differs from that of monoracials. Our study examined the influence of ethnoracial socialization on monoracials' and Multiracials' linguistic knowledge and the influence of language and ethnoracial identity on individuals' interpersonal relationships. We hypothesized that monoracials would be more likely to know their heritage language than Multiracials, that linguistic knowledge would differ between interminority Multiracial groups and half-White Multiracial groups, and that linguistic knowledge would be associated with the formation of both friendships and romantic relationships. Our sample included nearly a thousand students from a university in California. We found that monoracial minorities were more likely to be multilingual than both interminority Multiracials and half-White Multiracials. East Asian participants who spoke an East Asian language had a higher proportion of East Asian friends. Among Multiracials, Wasians and Latinasians who spoke an East Asian language primarily dated someone East Asian, Latinasians who spoke a Latin American language primarily dated someone Hispanic, and monolinguals of both groups were the ones most likely to date someone White. These findings suggest that linguistic knowledge plays a significant role in a community's social dynamics, affecting monoracials' and (especially) Multiracials' interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: culture, identity, language, multilingual, multiracial, relationships, socialization

1. Multiracial Multilinguals: How Language Influences Multiracials' Interpersonal Relationships

Though America has the greatest ethnoracial diversity of any country in world history, and currently the greatest variety of Multiracial identities, the United States is a majority monolingual country (Palmer, 2013). Multilingualism differs significantly based on ethnoracial background. For instance, monoracial minority groups (except Black Americans) are significantly more likely to be multilingual and know their heritage language (HL) than White Americans. However, less is known about the linguistic knowledge of Multiracial groups. Given that Multiracials are currently the fastest growing group in America (Foster-Frau et al., 2021), the present study investigated differences in multilingualism across various Multiracial groups. Specifically, we focused on the association between their ethnoracial socialization experiences and HL knowledge, and how HL knowledge influenced their interpersonal relationships. In the following section, we review the extant literature on linguistic socialization as it relates to monoracials and Multiracials, including how it may influence identity development and interpersonal relationships.

1.1 Note on Terminology

Please note that throughout this article the term *Multiracial* is used opposed to biracial, as Multiracial is inclusive of individuals comprised of two or more ethnoracial groups, and does not imply discrete, biologically based ethnoracial groups the way the term *biracial* does (Jackson et al., 2021). Moreover, we capitalize the ethnoracial group *Multiracial* throughout this article in a manner consistent with the APA standard of capitalizing the names of monoracial groups (Small, 2022) as critical Multiracial scholarship asserts that this helps "*to validate and empower Multiracial individuals*" (Atkin et al., 2022).

Multiracial participants were categorized as either half-White (possessing one White and one minority background) or

interminority (comprising two or more minority backgrounds, regardless of any White ancestry).[1] This distinction was key given our focus on multilingualism and heritage language knowledge. We predicted that interminority Multiracials (irrespective of any White ancestry) would have different outcomes than half-White Multiracials, consistent with trends showing higher multilingualism and HL knowledge among minority groups (with the exception of Black Americans). The focus on Multiracials comprising two minority groups is consistent with research asserting that interminority Multiracials "*have uniquely different racialized experiences to part-White Multiracials in the United States*" (Kandamby, 2023).

Furthermore, we use the term Multiracial specifically for Multiracial individuals - not for multiethnic individuals who are monoracial. "*Multiracial people are inherently panethnic"* (Stokes, 2021), but the experiences of Multiracials differ from multiethnic monoracials. Similarly, Multiracial identity was only coded based on ethnoracial background, not location of geographic upbringing. For instance, someone with a White mom and Mexican dad who grew up in South Korea was coded as Whitino, not Wasian, Latinasian, or monoracial East Asian.

Moreover, we use the term interracial to discuss both partial-racial and entirely interracial couples. This is because both are structurally interracial. For instance, Michelle Obama is not White but her husband is White, and Former President Barack Obama is White but his wife is not White. In addition, he is Multiracial whereas his wife is not. Thus, they would be coded as a partial-racial interracial couple because they overlap on their Black identity. When relevant for clarity (primarily in the results and discussion sections), we discuss partial-racial and 100% interracial couples separately. We never use the term interracial to refer to *interethnic couples* in our results. Furthermore, the term *coracial* is used in instances in which one of the ethnoracial backgrounds of the Multiracial group being discussed overlaps with a monoracial comparison group (e.g., a comparison between Latinindians and their monoracial Pakistani or Sri Lankan peers).

Finally, each of the portmanteau terms used to describe Multiracial groups are consistent with the terminology used in related research, well known in Multiracial media, used in Mixed Student Unions, and/or colloquially understood as the terms Multiracial individuals of the relevant compositions generally utilize to describe themselves at the time (Harris, 2022) (see Table 1). Multiracial groups without descriptors that are well known in Multiracial literature, media, and/or colloquially are described according to their composition (e.g., Black - White, East/Southeast Asian - Middle Eastern/North African [MENA]).

Table 1. Descriptions of Multiracial Group Identities

Term	Ethnoracial Identities	References
Latinasian	East/ Southeast Asian - Hispanic	(Castillo, 2022; DeGuzman, 2005; Guevarra, 2012; Mejia et al., 2022; Poudel, 2023)
Wasian	East/Southeast Asian - White	(Haemin & Vittrup, 2022; Yamane, 2018)
Blasian	East/Southeast Asian - Black	(Castillo, 2022; Poudel, 2023; Yamane, 2018)
Whitino	Hispanic - White	(Parker et al., 2015)
Blatino	Hispanic - Black	(Garcia-Louis, 2016; Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022; Moslimani et al., 2023; Tamir, 2021)
Latinindian	South Asian Indian - Hispanic	(Leonard, 1989, 1993)
Whindian	South Asian Indian - White	(Yamane, 2018)

1.2 What Do You Speak?

The question '*What Are You?'* often precedes Multiracials' experiences of ethnoracial mislabeling or identity incongruent discrimination (Tran et al., 2016). It is sometimes followed by the question '*What Do You Speak?',* highlighting the association between ethnoracial identity and linguistic ability. Multiracials often experience racial identity invalidation or denial from their monoracial coracial peers (Albuja et al., 2019; Harris, 2022; Sanchez et al., 2020; Tran et al., 2016). Markers of identity (in)validation may include phenotype, linguistic background (e.g., being fluent in one's HL), knowledge of cultural history, etc.

Heritage language knowledge influences the degree to which Multiracials are perceived to be part of an ethnoracial group.

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[1] We realize that some interminority Multiracials may be compositionally majority White. For instance, actress Caroline Ford is 51%+ White as she has a monoracial White father and interminority Multiracial (Chinese, Black, and White) mother. The relevant distinction in this study was whether someone's ethnoracial background is associated with one non-White heritage language or two (or more) non-White heritage languages.

For example, Whitinos who are fluent in Spanish are viewed as better candidates for minority scholarships than those who cannot speak Spanish (Sanchez et al., 2020). Wasians who are not fluent in their East/Southeast Asian HL report experiencing more microaggressions and exclusion from that side of the family (Poudel, 2023). Interestingly, lack of White HL knowledge is not associated with experiences of misidentification, exclusion, or other microaggressions.

1.3 Multiracials' Ethnoracial Socialization

Parents may "*see language as a question of identity… a way of allowing the child to claim what "belonged" to him or her, by virtue of genealogical affiliation*" (Le Gall & Meintel, 2015).

The racial and/or ethnic socialization (RES) experiences of Multiracials differs from that of monoracials (Hughes et al., 2006; Vezaldenos et al., 2023). RES encompasses various aspects, one of the most pivotal being language socialization, which includes HL acquisition.

Parents' approach to socializing their Multiracial offspring is generally based on how they believe their offspring will be racialized in society - their *socially ascribed* identity (Ortiz, 2017). For example, part-White Multiracials with greater phenotypic proximity to their White identity are more likely to be socialized predominantly in relation to their White heritage (Atkin et al., 2022; Peng, 2023). This may decrease the likelihood that they will learn the HL(s) associated with their minority background(s). As such, the intersection of phenotypic appearance and ascribed identity is consequential to the linguistic aspects of RES and HL acquisition.

The influence of ascribed identity on linguistic socialization is consequential given the influence of HL proficiency in the formation of a strong ethnic and cultural identity (Ghabrial, 2019). Moreover, language serves as a powerful social cue of cultural identity to others, underscoring its role in successfully forming and maintaining interpersonal relationships (Gaither et al., 2015; Peng, 2023). For example, the ability to converse with grandparents, learning speech patterns, and adhering to honorifics are among the markers of cultural literacy associated with HL proficiency.

Unfortunately, Multiracials report feeling less parental support than monoracials (Hughes et al., 2006; Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2013; Schlabach, 2013), though this is moderated by the degree to which Multiracials' parents engage in RES. Moreover, gender socialization literature finds that women are perceived as being the primary socializing agents within households and are often responsible for transmitting cultural heritage to offspring (Xu et al., 2021).

For example, research on interracial households in the 20th century found that their Multiracial offspring were more likely to learn their mom's HL than their dad's (Leonard, 1989). For instance, most Latinindians and Latinasians had Hispanic mothers and knew their mom's HL of Spanish. Rarely did they know their dad's South Asian Indian (Punjabi) or East Asian (Japanese) HL. Research on interminority couples find that they are more likely to practice cultural hybridization in which both cultures are a part of RES for their Multiracial offspring.

Finally, some Multiracial youth may be at a greater risk for family disruption than either of their coracial monoracial peers (Choi & Goldberg, 2021; Kothari et al., 2022). For first-generation Multiracials, parental separation constitutes the loss of a person in the household associated with half of their identity. This reduction in exposure may lead Multiracial youth in single-parent households to only learn the HL associated with their custodial parent's ethnoracial background (Parker et al., 2015).

Taken together, exploring HL knowledge among Multiracials provides crucial insights into their identity formation and their experiences of socialization within their diverse familial contexts. We now present the hypotheses for this study.

1.4 Overview of Hypotheses

The primary focus of this study was to explore the influence of language in the identity formation and interpersonal experiences of monoracial and Multiracial individuals. This study analyzed several key variables: multilingualism, knowledge of heritage language and non-heritage languages, Multiracial composition (e.g., minority-White Multiracials and interminority Multiracials), friendships, romantic relationships, and ethnoracial socialization.

Furthermore, our research contributes to the literature by answering calls for more research centered on Multiracials of Latinasian, Blasian (Castillo, 2022; Poudel, 2023), Wasian (Haemin & Vittrup, 2022; Yamane, 2018), Blatino (Garcia-Louis, 2016; Moslimani et al., 2023), Whitino (Parker et al., 2015), Latinindian (Leonard, 1989, 1993), Blindian (South Asian Indian – Black) and Whindian (Yamane, 2018), and other Multiracial identities beyond Black-White Multiracials.

1.4.1 Hypothesis 1: Linguistic Socialization

Our first hypothesis was that monoracials would be more likely to know their HL than Multiracials. We also predicted Multiracials' HL knowledge would differ between interminority and half-White Multiracials, across the various Multiracial identities of interminority (e.g., Latinasian and Blasian) and half-White Multiracial groups (e.g., Wasian and Whitino), and that Multiracials would be more likely to know their mom's HL.

1.4.2 Hypothesis 2: Language as a Gateway for Friendship

Our second hypothesis was that linguistic knowledge would be associated with friendship patterns such that individuals with HL proficiency would have a higher proportion of friends from their ethnoracial background than those without HL knowledge.

1.4.3 Hypothesis 3: Language as a Gateway to Dating

Our third hypothesis was that linguistic knowledge would be associated with individuals' dating patterns such that individuals who knew their HL would be more likely to date someone from their ethnoracial background than those who did not know their HL.

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

Participants were 989 undergraduate students (M_{age} = 20.44; range = 18-49; 724 women; 44 lesbians/gays, 171 bisexuals, 708 heterosexuals) at a university in California. Most participants were multilingual (n = 688) and 301 were monolingual. Most participants were American (n = 778) and 201 were international. Of our American participants, 12.05% were out of state students with most being from eastern (e.g., New York, New Jersey) and southwestern (e.g., Arizona, Colorado) states.

The ethnoracial composition of the monoracial participants (n = 694) was: 357 East Asian, 156 Hispanic, 101 White, 39 MENA, 32 South Asian Indian, and 8 were Black.

The ethnoracial composition of the Multiracial participants (n = 293) was: 200 were half-White (5.6% of which were *majority White* or $\geq$ 51% White with one minority identity) and 93 were interminority (36.56% of which were *majority minority* as they had one parent who was $\leq$ 49% White).

The ethnoracial composition of interminority Multiracials (n = 93; 59 were non-White) was: 46 Latinasian, 18 Blasian, 14 Blatino, 10 MENA-interminority, and 4 were Latinindian.

The ethnoracial composition of half-White Multiracials was: 136 Wasian, 27 Whitino, 10 were Black-White, 9 were MENA-White, and 8 Whindian.

2.2 Procedures

Participants were recruited using the SONA system (Fidler, 1997) and were given class credit as compensation for their participation in this study. We constructed a survey to assess participants' perceived roles in race-based friend groups. The anonymous survey was administered to participants online via Qualtrics. The duration of time spent on the survey was approximately 60 minutes. All participants provided informed consent by clicking a button indicating that they consented to participate in the study. Participants were redirected to debriefing information following the completion of the questionnaire. This study was approved by the institutional review board.

2.3 Measures

2.3.1 Demographic Information

All participants completed an array of demographic items to help us construct a portrait of how each participant identified in relation to relevant sociocultural and experiential factors. Information on ethnoracial background was collected for participants, their parents, their current or most recent lover, and their lover's parents. Information on religious identity was collected for participants, their parents, and their current or most recent lover. The following demographic data was collected for participants and their current or most recent lover: sex, sexuality, gender, age, first language, additional language(s), domestic or international/immigrant student status, nationality and country(ies) they were raised in, and years in the United States. The following demographic data was collected for participants: romantic status (including if participants had never been in an official romantic relationship before), age they finished high school, and accent.

2.3.2 Linguistic Coding

We defined participants as multilingual if they reported knowing a language, regardless of mastery, proficiency, or overall literacy, as perfection in "*two or more languages is not necessary to be termed bilingual or multilingual*" (Alhjahmmed, 2021). Given that all respondents were either US-born Americans or international students who were required to develop proficiency in English to enroll in a US university, English was considered a *default* language for all participants and was not a HL or non-HL for any participants. In addition, 21 participants were multi*modal* multilinguals who reported knowing American Sign Language as their 2nd language.

3. Results

We begin with the results associated with linguistic socialization. Next, we describe the findings demonstrating how

language is related to the development and maintenance of friendships. Finally, we present the data revealing the association between linguistic knowledge and dating patterns.

As a preliminary analysis, we assessed the proportion of same-race and interracial couples who shared the same first language. A chi-square analysis of independence found that interracial couples were significantly less likely to report sharing the same first language (60.6%) than partial-racial (71.2%) and same-race couples (80.0%), $\chi^2(2, N = 355) = 12.74$, $p = .002$. Given that Multiracials are the offspring of interracial couples and that interracial couples are more likely to have different first languages and HLs, it is likely that Multiracials' linguistic socialization differs from that of monoracials.

The linguistic knowledge of each ethnoracial group is presented in Table 2. The five language-specific variables were coded in a binary manner (knows language or does not know language), and the percentages reflect multilingual participants.

3.1 Hypothesis 1: Linguistic Socialization

We considered whether individuals from mixed backgrounds were more or less likely to be multilingual than their monoracial and monoethnic peers. A Chi-square analysis of independence found that monoracial minorities (84.9%) were significantly more likely to be multilingual than both interminority Multiracials (45.7%) and half-White Multiracials (47.3%), and White monoracials were the least likely to be multilingual (36.6%), $\chi^2(3, N = 983) = 188.01$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, we found that monoethnic monoracials were significantly more likely to be multilingual (79.7%) than multiethnic monoracials (63.3%), $\chi^2(1, N = 661) = 8.58$, $p = .003$.

Given that both parents were minorities for all interminority subjects, we conducted a Chi-square goodness of fit analysis to determine whether they were more likely to learn the language of their mother's or father's heritage background. The analysis revealed that multilingual interminority Multiracials were significantly more likely to learn their mother's language (65.4%) than their father's language (19.2%) or the languages of both parents (15.4%), $\chi^2(2, N = 26) = 12.08$, $p = .002$.

We focused on Latinasians among interminority Multiracials given that, in the US, East Asian and Hispanic individuals were more likely to be multilingual than White and Black individuals. Moreover, there was not sufficient data to assess Multiracials who were part MENA, South Asian Indian, or Native American.

A Chi-square analysis of independence found that Latinasians whose mother is East Asian reported knowing their father's language (Spanish; 80%) and those whose mother is Hispanic reported knowing their mother's language (Spanish; 85.7%), $\chi^2(1, N = 12) = 5.18$, $p = .023$. In short, the overwhelming majority of Latinasians in our sample reported knowing Spanish rather than an East Asian language. This is likely due to the university's geographic proximity to Mexico. Indeed, if this investigation was conducted at a university in Hawaii we would predict that most Latinasian participants would know an East Asian language relative to a language associated with Latin America.

Among half-White Multiracials, a chi-square goodness of fit analysis revealed that they were significantly more likely to learn their mother's HL (75%) than their father's HL (11.5%) or the languages of both parents (13.5%), $\chi^2(2, N = 52) = 40.65$, $p < .001$.

An analysis for Whitinos found that they were more likely to report knowing a Latin American language when their mother was Hispanic (66.7%) than when their father was Hispanic (0%), $\chi^2(1, N = 13) = 4.95$, $p = .026$.

3.1.1 Heritage Language

Heritage language knowledge was coded in relation to participants' reported ethnic background(s) and the ethnic background(s) of their parents. Importantly, the HL variable differs from the broader linguistic knowledge variables at the level of specificity. To illustrate, a Korean participant who knows Tagalog was coded as knowing an East Asian language (broader variable) but not their HL. Similarly, White respondents who indicated being German and knew German were coded as knowing their HL, whereas those who indicated knowing Greek or French were not. Respondents who did not report their ethnic background were not coded as knowing or not knowing their HL, even if they were coded on the broader linguistic knowledge variables. Finally, multiethnic respondents and Multiracial respondents were coded as knowing their HL if they knew either HL or all of them.

Among multilingual monoracials, Hispanic respondents were the most likely to know their HL (100%), followed by East Asian respondents (97.7%), MENA respondents (94.4%), South Asian Indian respondents (88.9%), and with White respondents being the least likely to know their HL (51.4%), $\chi^2(4, N = 546) = 148.56$, $p < .001$. In addition, monoethnic monoracials were significantly more likely to know their HL (77.1%) than multiethnic monoracials (55.6%), $\chi^2(1, N = 666) = 14.17$, $p < .001$.

Among multilingual Multiracials, part-Hispanic respondents were the most likely to know one of their HLs (Blatinos 100%; Latinasian 96%; Whitinos 86.7%), followed by MENA-White respondents (80%), MENA-interminority and

Blasian respondents (71.4%), Wasian respondents (70.2%), Whindian respondents (60%), and with Black-White respondents being the least likely to know one of their HLs (51.4%), $\chi^2(8, N = 132) = 23.59, p = .003$.

Table 2. Multilingual Participants' Reported Linguistic Knowledge Based on Ethnoracial Background

Ethnoracial Identity	Linguistic Knowledge						
	English (Monolingual)	Multilingual	Latin American Language	East Asian Language	MENA Language	South Asian Language	European Language
East Asian	14.6	85.4	7.2	**99.7**	.7	0	3.3
White	63.4	36.6	50	3.3	10	0	**60**
Hispanic	9.6	90.4	**100**	1.4	0	0	1.4
MENA	7.7	92.3	11.1	2.8	**94.4**	0	8.3
Black	50.0	50.0	33.3	0	**66.7**	0	33.3
South Asian Indian	12.5	87.5	21.4	3.6	0	**89.3**	3.6
Wasian	58.1	41.9	28.8	**65.4**	0	0	**19.2**
Whitino	44.4	55.6	**100**	0.0	0	0	7.7
Black-White	60.0	40.0	100	0.0	**0**	0	**0**
MENA-White	44.4	55.6	0.0	0.0	**80.0**	0	**60.0**
Whindian	37.5	62.5	40.0	0.0	0	20	**40.0**
MENA-Interminority	30.0	70.0	71.4	**14.3**	**14.3**	14.3	0
Latinasian	45.7	54.3	**70.8**	**33.3**	0	0	8.3
Blasian	61.1	38.9	28.6	**42.9**	0	0	16.7
Blatino	50.0	50.0	**100**	0.0	**0**	0	14.3
Majority White (75% White)	33.3	66.7	60	0	0	0	60
Half-White	54.5	45.5	42	44.4	4.9	1.2	**17.3**
Minority White (25% White)	62.5	37.5	63.6	36.4	0	0	**36.4**
Interminority (Non-White)	49.2	50.8	73.3	23.3	3.3	3.3	0

Note. All participants spoke English in order to participate in the study, therefore all participants that reported speaking another language are by default multilingual. Languages matching subjects' heritage background are in **bold** font.

[a] All African languages were coded within the MENA language category.

[b] Portuguese and Spanish were coded as HLs for all participants with Latin American heritage, as well as for European participants who indicated being from Portugal (Portuguese) or Spain (Spanish).

3.1.2 Multiethnic Multiracials

We then assessed rates of multilingualism and heritage language knowledge between Multiracials who were monoethnic and multiethnic. Given that all Multiracials are inherently multiethnic, this variable was coded based on being multiethnic within one of their identities (e.g., a Wasian subject with a White father & a mother who is half Chinese/ half Korean). In addition, these analyses assessed differences between interminority Multiracials who were non-White and any part-White Multiracials.

Multiethnic interminority (non-White) Multiracials were more likely to be multilingual (81.8%) than those who were not multiethnic within any of their ethnoracial identities (43.8%), $\chi^2(1, N = 59) = 5.19, p = .023$, and multiethnic interminority Multiracials were more likely to know one of their HLs (81.8%) than monoethnic interminority Multiracials (37.5%), $\chi^2(1, N = 59) = 7.08, p = .008$. Thus, a multiethnic identity facilitated multilingualism and HL knowledge among interminority Multiracials whereas it inhibited it among monoracial minorities.

Among part-White multiethnic Multiracials, those with a multiethnic minority identity were more likely to know a HL (53.8%) than those with a multiethnic White identity (23.3%), $\chi^2(1, N = 56) = 5.53, p = .019$. There was no difference in multilingualism between White multiethnic Multiracials (34.7%) and White monoethnic Multiracials (48.1%) ($N = 232; p = .094$).

Interestingly, multiethnic Multiracials were descriptively (though not significantly) more likely to learn the HL associated

with their monoethnic background (61.1%) than any of the HLs associated with their multiethnic identity (38.9%). For instance, a chi-square goodness of fit analysis found that Multiracials with a multiethnic White identity were marginally more likely to learn their minority HL (85.7%) than any of their White HLs (14.3%), $\chi^2(1, N = 7) = 3.57$, $p = .059$.

3.1.3 Non-Heritage Language

Non-heritage language knowledge was coded in relation to participants' reported ethnic background(s) and the ethnic background(s) of their parents. For instance, White respondents who knew Spanish (the predominantly reported heritage language for Hispanic respondents) or Mandarin/Tagalog/Korean (among the heritage languages for East and Southeast Asian respondents) were considered to know a non-heritage language, whereas those who indicated knowing French, German, Polish AND indicated those were their ethnic backgrounds, were not. Further, respondents who did not report their ethnic background WERE coded as knowing or not knowing a non-HL if the language they reported knowing was associated with a different ethnoracial group. For instance, a respondent who only reported being Hispanic and reported knowing Marathi were coded as knowing a non-HL (see Table 3).

Among all participants, the least common non-HL was a South Asian language and the most common non-HL was a Latin American language. Among multilingual monoracial Americans, White respondents were the most likely to know a non-heritage language (50%), followed by South Asian Indian respondents (28.6%), East Asian respondents (20.3%), and MENA respondents (9.5%), with Hispanic respondents being the least likely to know a non-heritage language (2.3%), $\chi^2(4, N = 355) = 48.55$, $p < .001$. Given the greater emphasis in American middle and high school education on learning Spanish and Mandarin relative to German or Polish, this finding for White monoracials is understandable.

Among multilingual Multiracials, Black-White respondents were the most likely to know a non-HL (100%), followed by Whindian respondents (40%), Wasian respondents (31.6%), MENA-interminority and Blasian respondents (28.6%), MENA-White respondents (20%), and with part-Hispanic respondents being the least likely to know a non-HL (Latinasian 8%; Whitinos and Blatinos 0%), $\chi^2(8, N = 132) = 26.19$, $p < .001$.

We proceeded to analyze which non-heritage language participants were most likely to know based on ethnoracial background and nationality. International East Asian participants who reported knowing a non-heritage language primarily knew a non-coethnic East Asian language (61.9%; e.g., Korean participant who speaks Mandarin, Thai participant who speaks Japanese), whereas American East Asian participants who reported knowing a non-heritage language primarily knew Spanish (54.8%) or a non-coethnic East Asian language (32.3%), $\chi^2(2, N = 52) = 6.77$, $p = .034$. In short, they were most likely to know a non-heritage language associated with a country in geographic proximity to where they were born and raised (see Figure 1).

Table 3. Multilingual Multiracials' Heritage Language and Non-Heritage Language Knowledge

Ethnoracial Identity	Multilingual Multiracials' Linguistic Knowledge		
	Know Non-HL	Know HL	Know Non-HL and HL
Wasian	31.6	70.2	10.5
Whitino	0.0	86.7	0
Black-White	100.0	0.0	0
MENA-White	20.0	80.0	0
Whindian	40.0	60.0	0
MENA-Interminority	28.6	71.4	0
Latinasian	8.0	96.0	8.0
Blasian	28.6	71.4	0
Blatino	0.0	100.0	0
Majority White (75% White)	33.3	50.0	0
Half-White	27.6	71.3	5.7
Minority White (25% White)	25.0	91.7	25.0
Interminority (Non-White)	10.0	90.0	0

Note. HL = Heritage Language. Non-HL = Non-Heritage Language.

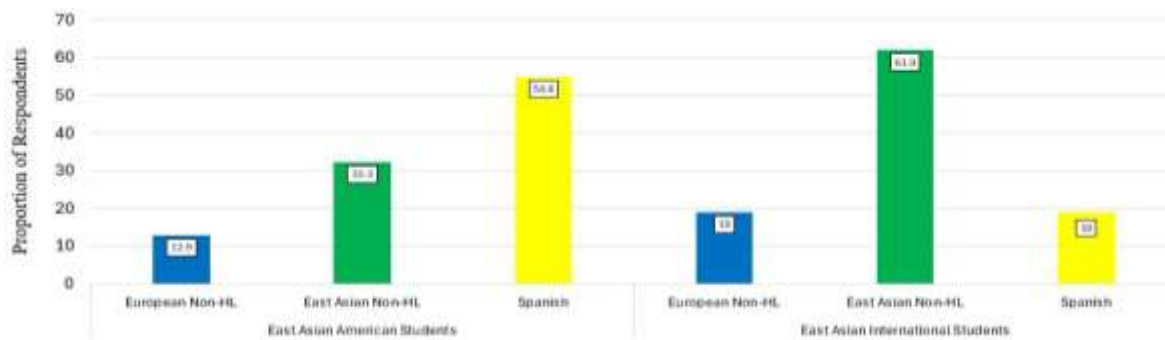ᵃ The reported percentages reflect multilingual participants.

Figure 1. East Asians' Non-Heritage Language Knowledge Based on Nationality

Note. HL = Heritage Language. Non-HL = Non-Heritage Language.

3.1.4 High and Low Status Heritage Language

To assess the heritage language(s) Multiracials were most likely to report knowing, we coded their linguistic knowledge based on the ethnoracial background with the highest societal status for each participant. This was based on research on America's tri-racial hierarchy of ethnoracial stratification (Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Walters, 2018) . Specifically, we coded individuals' White ethnoracial background (and thus HL) as their highest status identity, followed by East Asian, Hispanic, South Asian Indian, MENA, and Black as the lowest status ethnoracial background (and thus HL). For instance, Wasian Multiracials' highest status ethnoracial background would be their White background, whereas for Latinasian and Blasian Multiracials it would be their East Asian background.

Importantly, this coding structure enabled comparisons between half-White and interminority Multiracials which would not have been possible if we assessed whether they know their White HL and/or minority HL. This was because most interminority Multiracials could only be coded based on their minority HL. As a reminder, English was not considered a HL or non-HL for any participants.

3.1.5 Status and Linguistic Knowledge

We then assessed differences in high and low status HL acquisition between half-White and interminority Multiracials, between part-White Multiracials based on the proportion of their White ethnoracial background, and between each Multiracial group (see Table 4).

A Chi-square test of independence assessed rates of HL knowledge based on the proportion of Multiracials' White background (i.e., majority White, half-White, majority minority, interminority) was significant, $\chi^2(9, N = 283) = 22.17$, $p = .008$. Knowledge of non-HL (22.2%) and a high-status HL (22.2%) was highest among majority White Multiracials. Half-White Multiracials were most likely to know their low-status HL (26.2%). Majority minority Multiracials knew either their high-status HL (15.6%) or low-status HL (18.8%) at relatively similar rates. Similarly, interminority Multiracials knew either their high-status (21.8%) or low-status HL (20%) at relatively similar rates, and almost none knew a non-HL (5.5%). Finally, majority White Multiracials were the least likely to be monolingual (44.4%) whereas majority minority Multiracials were the most likely to be monolingual (65.6%).

Importantly, the high status HL knowledge reported by majority minority participants reflects their higher status minority HL as opposed to their White HL. A chi-square goodness of fit analysis found that majority minority Multiracials were marginally more likely to know their minority heritage language (34.4%) than their White heritage language (0.0%), $\chi^2(1, N = 32) = 3.13$, $p = .077$.

Among interminority Multiracials who were part-White and indicated knowing their high-status HL, most of them knew their high-status minority HL as opposed to their White HL.

Table 4. Multiracials' Knowledge of Their High and Low Status Heritage Languages

Ethnoracial Identity	Linguistic Knowledge		% of High Status HL that was White HL
	Low-Status HL	High-Status HL	
Wasian	84.2	15.8	100
Whitino	100	0	0
Black-White	0.0	0.0	0
MENA-White	100	0.0	0
Whindian	33.35	66.65	100
MENA-Interminority	25	75	0
Latinasian	77.3	22.7	0
Blasian	0	100	25
Blatino	0	100	0
Majority White (75% White)	33.35	66.65	100
Half-White	82.8	17.2	70
Minority White (25% White)	54.5	45.5	0
Interminority (Non-White)	47.8	52.2	N/A

Note. The reported percentages reflect participants who reported knowing a HL.

Latinasians were more likely to know an East Asian language (15.4%) than their Hispanic peers (1.4%) and more likely to know a Latin American language (92.3%) than their East Asian peers (7.3%), χ^2(2, N = 436) = 427.58, p < .001.

3.2 Hypothesis 2: Language As a Gateway For Friendship

Next, we considered whether language was a gateway for Multiracials' friendships with coracial monoracial peers. A univariate ANOVA found that Wasians who could speak an East Asian language had a higher proportion of East Asian friends (33.62%) than those who could not (22.50%), F(1, 113) = 9.73, p = .002, regardless of any other language they may speak. Those who could not speak an East Asian language compensated by having a higher proportion of White friends (24.91%) than those who could (17.74%), F(1, 113) = 5.05, p = .027.

3.3 Hypothesis 3: Language as a Gateway to Dating

3.3.1 Wasians

Wasians who knew an Asian language were more likely to report dating someone East Asian (44.4%) than those who were monolingual (34.1%) or (especially) reported knowing a Latin American language (0%), χ^2(4, N = 72) =12.75, p = .013. Moreover, the odds of dating someone White were higher for monolingual Wasians and those who reported knowing a Latin American language (both 50%) than for those who speak an Asian language (16.7%). Interestingly, the odds of dating someone Hispanic are higher for multilingual Wasians, whether they speak a Latin American language (50%) or an Asian language (38.9%), than for monolingual Wasians (15.9%).

We then considered those who were dating someone with any East Asian heritage or White heritage, whether monoracial or Multiracial, and whether or not they knew a Latin American language, an East Asian language, or a European language (regardless of if it was their HL). Wasians who knew a Latin American language were less likely to report dating someone of East Asian heritage (0.0%) than those who did not know a Latin American language (39.3%), χ^2(1, N = 103) = 8.34, p = .004. Wasians who knew an East Asian language were less likely to report dating someone with White heritage (24.0%) than those who did not know an East Asian language (55.1%), χ^2(1, N = 103) = 7.36, p = .007.

3.3.2 Latinasians

Latinasian participants displayed clear language-related trends in their dating choices. Latinasians were more likely to date someone East Asian if they reported knowing an Asian language (100%), someone Hispanic if they reported knowing a Latin American language (70%), and someone White if they indicated being monolingual (46.7%), χ^2(4, N =

29) = 16.60, p = .002. Moreover, monolingual Latinasians were more likely to have a Hispanic boyfriend/girlfriend (13.3%) than those who reported knowing an Asian language (0%), and were more likely to date someone East Asian (40%) than those who reported knowing a Latin American language (10%) (see Figure 2).

We then considered those who were dating someone with any East Asian heritage or Hispanic heritage, whether monoracial or Multiracial, and whether or not they knew a Latin American language or an East Asian language (regardless of if it was their HL). Latinasians who knew an East Asian language were marginally more likely to report dating someone with East Asian heritage (66.7%) than those who did not know an East Asian language (26.5%), χ^2(1, N = 40) = 3.76, p = .053. Similarly, Latinasians who knew a Latin American language were more likely to report dating someone with Hispanic heritage (58.8%) than those who did not know a Latin American language (21.7%), χ^2(1, N = 40) = 5.74, p = .017.

3.3.3 Monoracials

Among monoracials, those who reported knowing a non-HL were not more likely to date someone whose ethnoracial background was associated with that language. A chi-square goodness of fit analysis found that this also applied to East Asian individuals in monoracial relationships whose non-HL was the HL of non-coethnic East Asians, χ^2(1, N = 19) = 6.37, p = .012, as they were more likely to date someone of an unrelated ethnic group (78.9%; e.g., a Chinese participant who reported knowing Malay was dating someone Korean rather than someone Malaysian). In addition, participants who reported knowing their HL were not more likely to be in a same race relationship than their coracial peers who did not know their HL.
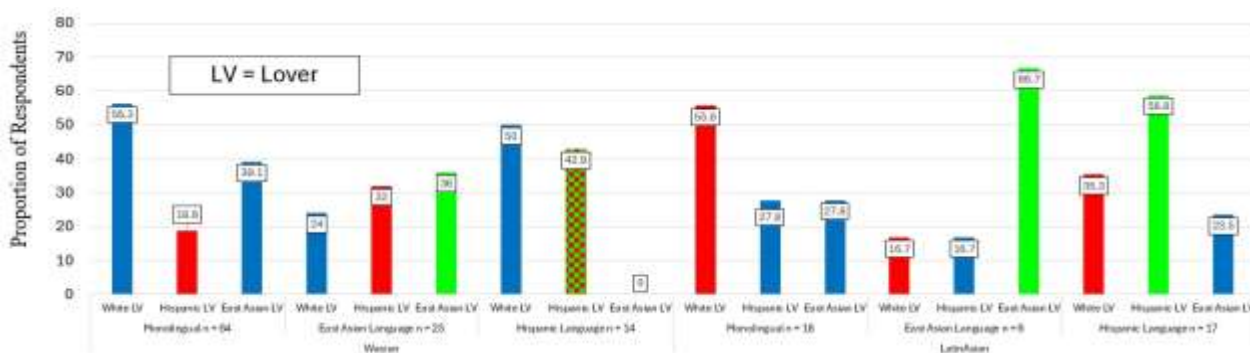

Figure 2. Multiracials' Linguistic Knowledge and the Ethnoracial Background of Their Lover

4. Discussion

The current study investigated the influence of ethnoracial socialization on monoracials' and Multiracials' linguistic knowledge, and the influence of language and ethnoracial identity on individuals' interpersonal relationships. We focused on three key areas: the multifaceted nature of linguistic socialization, the role of language in friendship patterns, and the association between linguistic knowledge and dating patterns. In the following discussion, we contextualize our findings within the extant literature on RES, linguistics, and interpersonal relationships. We close by situating our investigation within the broader spectrum of Multiracial critical theory and scholarship.

4.1 Hypothesis 1: Linguistic Socialization

We found general support for hypothesis one, which predicted that linguistic knowledge would differ between monoracials and Multiracials, between Multiracial groups based on composition, and based on the sex of the minority parent for half-White Multiracials.

4.1.1 Heritage Language

White monoracials were least likely to know their HL whereas monoracial minorities were most likely (except Black monoracials). Half-White Multiracials were most likely to know the HL of the minority parent - their low status HL. This may have been because the White monoracial parent did not know theirs, consistent with White monoracial subjects. Interestingly, non-White/Interminority Multiracials were likely to know either their high or low status HL, but not both.

Blatinos and Whitinos were more likely to know their Latin American HL (primarily Spanish) than Latinasians. This is likely because of the lack of a strong ethnic heritage identity among monoracial Black and White parents which minimizes any linguistic competition with the Hispanic parent in prioritizing Spanish as the child's second language. In contrast, Latinasians' parents may prioritize both languages (e.g., Korean and Spanish) or neither. More research is needed to better understand linguistic socialization in Latinasian households.

Regarding the interaction between the parent's sex and ethnoracial background, interminority Multiracials were more

likely to learn their mom's HL than their dad's HL or the HL of both parents. For Whitinos, those with a Hispanic mom were more likely to report knowing a Latin American language than those with a Hispanic dad. Overall, this is consistent with research indicating that "*mothers carry responsibility of transmitting the minority language*" (Wilson, 2021). Latinasians were an exception as almost all Latinasian participants knew a Latin American language regardless of the sex of the Hispanic parent.

Regarding multiethnic participants, multiethnic monoracials were less likely to know their HL than monoethnic monoracials, whereas multiethnic interminority Multiracials were more likely to know one of their HLs than monoethnic Multiracials. Thus, a multiethnic identity facilitated multilingualism among interminority Multiracials whereas it inhibited it among monoracial minorities.

Importantly, multiethnic Multiracials were less likely to learn a HL associated with any of the identities associated with their multiethnic ethnoracial background. Rather, multiethnic Multiracials were more likely to learn the heritage language of their monoethnic ethnoracial identity than of their multiethnic ethnoracial identity, reflecting the finding that monoethnic monoracials were more likely to know their HL than multiethnic monoracials. Taken together, the finding that HL knowledge was lower for multiethnic than monoethnic monoracials and was lower for multiethnic Multiracials within their multiethnic identity relative to their monoethnic identity is consistent with the finding that "*language transmission for interethnic parents is more likely to fail than those who share a common language*" (Farr et al., 2018).

4.1.2 Non-Heritage Language

Among monoracials, White and Black monoracials were most likely to know a non-HL as their second language and were the least likely of *any* group to know their HL. Consistent with their monoracial counterparts, Black-White Multiracials were most likely of *any* group (Multiracial or monoracial) to know a non-HL as their second language and least likely of all Multiracial groups to know at least one of their 2(+) heritage languages. This is consistent with the research finding that only 11% of Black monoracials are multilingual (Moslimani et al., 2023) and only 2% of non-Blatino Black Multiracials are multilingual (Tamir, 2021).

Many half-White Multiracials who knew a White ethnic language knew a language that was not associated with their White parent's heritage background (e.g., someone German learning Russian; someone Swedish learning Greek). In contrast, almost no part-East Asian Multiracials knew an East Asian ethnic language that was not associated with their East Asian parent's heritage background (e.g., most part-Chinese Multiracials do not learn Thai/Siamese; most part-Malaysian Multiracials do not speak Korean).

Similar to their monoracial Hispanic peers, none of the part-Hispanic Multiracials knew a non-Heritage language. Of the 5 Latinasians reporting high-status HL knowledge, 4 were also part-White. Of those 4, the high-HL was their East Asian language and none knew their White HL. The finding that most Latinasians knew Spanish as opposed to an East Asian heritage language may reflect the fact that Latinasians in our California sample have greater access to one set of grandparents (by driving to Latin America) than the other (by flying to Asia).

4.1.3 Latin America and East/Southeast Asia

The linguistic landscapes of Latin America and Asia are worth considering here. If someone from Mexico travels to Peru, or someone from Venezuela travels to Guatemala, they will be speaking Spanish in each country. In contrast, if someone from China travels to Cambodia, or someone from South Korea travels to Malaysia, they will be speaking completely different languages. Speaking Spanish is a unifying practice across Latin America in a way that is not true for any single language across East/Southeast Asia.

The relevance of this distinction is borne out in our analyses of multiethnic East Asian and Hispanic monoracials. Multiethnic East Asians are less likely to know their HL (62.1%) than monoethnic East Asians (84.9%) [$\chi^2(1, N = 353) = 9.81, p = .002$], whereas multiethnic Hispanics are MORE likely to know their HL (100%) than monoethnic Hispanics (89.9%). The fact that the parents of a Mexican-Guatemalan individual are more likely to share the same HL than the parents of a Korean-Thai individual speaks to the relevance of this difference.

This may also be related to the finding that most East Asian international participants who knew a non-HL reported knowing the language of a non-coethnic East Asian country. The one international Hispanic participant (out of 9) who reported speaking a non-HL spoke Italian, not Portuguese (or another language associated with a non-coethnic Latin American country).

4.1.4 Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia

Interestingly, none of the White international participants (n = 15) reported knowing a non-HL, even though the country-by-country language differences in Europe reflects the linguistic geography of Asia more so than Latin America. Similarly, only one of the MENA international participants (n = 17) reported knowing a non-HL associated with a

non-coethnic Middle Eastern or North African country. Of the 5 who reported knowing a non-HL, the other 4 knew a European language (French or German), Spanish, or both. It is noteworthy that knowledge of French and German could be considered utilitarian given the region's proximity to Europe and the linguistic vestiges of colonialism that remain in several Middle Eastern and North African countries.[2] We do not consider languages introduced during colonialism to be heritage languages the way that indigenous languages are.

Lastly, none of the South Asian international participants (n = 6) reported knowing a non-HL associated with a non-coethnic South Asian country. The one international South Asian participant who reported speaking a non-HL spoke Dutch.

4.1.5 Status and Linguistic Knowledge

Most Wasians and Whitinos reported knowing their lower status HL (less than 20% knew their White HL) whereas most Blasians, Blatinos, and Whitinos reported knowing their higher status minority HL (0% knew their Black HL). Over 70% of Latinasians reported knowing their lower status minority HL. Most Black-White and MENA-interminority Multiracials reported knowing a minority non-HL (primarily Spanish).[3]

4.2 Hypothesis 2: Language as a Gateway for Friendship

"*Not speaking their heritage language creates a barrier to participation with their ethnic community*" (Ghabrial, 2019).

Our second hypothesis, which predicted that linguistic knowledge would be associated with individuals' friendship patterns was partially supported. Among Wasians, those who reported knowing their East Asian HL had a higher proportion of East Asian friends than those who did not know their East Asian HL. Wasians who did not know their East Asian HL reported having a higher proportion of White friends. This is conceptually consistent with extant research finding that Wasians are more likely to make White friends to the extent that they do not feel close to or included by East Asian monoracial peers (Chen et al., 2019; Chong & Song, 2022), and research indicating that Multiracials may experience linguistic gatekeeping from their coracial monoracial peer groups (Ghabrial, 2019).

Among monoracials, there was no significant difference in the proportion of friends from their respective ethnoracial backgrounds based on knowing their HL. It may be the case that linguistic gatekeeping is more relevant for Multiracials' friendships as monoracials may be accepted by coracial peers based on phenotypic characteristics.

4.3 Hypothesis 3: Language as a Gateway to Dating

Our third hypothesis, which predicted that linguistic knowledge would be associated with individuals' dating patterns was partially supported. Among Wasians and Latinasians, those who reported knowing an East Asian language were more likely to be dating someone East Asian, those who reported knowing a Latin American language were more likely to be dating someone Hispanic, and those who reported being monolingual were more likely to be dating someone White. This suggests that their dating patterns were associated with their linguistic knowledge.

4.4 Limitations

Our study is not without limitations and any insights derived from our study should be taken into consideration.

4.4.1 Parents' Linguistic Knowledge

Our linguistic items did not ask which languages their parents were fluent in and/or if their parents knew their heritage language(s). As such, interpretations of linguistic socialization were based solely on the descriptions participants provided of their parents' ethnoracial background.

In addition, we did not ask which languages were spoken at home, whether with parents, siblings, grandparents, or other family members or affiliates. Parents' decision to raise children in a one parent one language, language mixing household, or monolinguistic household is consequential to the linguistic development of their offspring (Koelewijn et al., 2023). Moreover, offspring who grow up with siblings may have more opportunities to practice other languages than offspring who do not grow up with siblings (whether they are an only child or they do not live with their sibling(s)) (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004).

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[2] As a reminder, HL and non-HL was coded based on participants' ethnoracial background and the ethnoracial background of their parents, but not nationality or the country(ies) participants were primarily raised in. As such, an ethnically Iraqi individual who grew up in Morocco and knows French was coded as knowing a non-HL because French is unrelated to their Iraqi heritage even though it is commonly spoken in Morocco.

[3] A few part-East Asian Multiracial participants who were multiethnic in their East Asian identity had the HLs associated with those identities coded based on being higher status (e.g., Mandarin) and lower status (e.g., Khmer).

4.4.2 Literacy

While our items assessing aspects of linguistic knowledge provided participants opportunities to share their first language and other known languages, we did not assess their literacy within each language. Specifically, their ability to produce (speak in and write in) and understand (when listening and reading) a language. For example, someone may report knowing Korean, but they may only be able to understand it when listening. Thus, this individual may understand some dialogue in K-dramas on Netflix without needing subtitles, but would not be able to converse in, read a map of, or write a request in Korean as a tourist in South Korea.

Literacy in each HL should be considered in future research as Multiracials may be more literate in one HL than the other, and/or may differ from their coracial monoracial peers in HL literacy. This may also interact with parents' sex. For instance, a study of Bangladeshi speaking parents in Australia found that those whose mothers taught them the language developed full literacy whereas those whose fathers taught them only developed verbal fluency (Chowdhury & Rojas-Lizana, 2021). Moreover, literacy may differ between those who learn languages simultaneously rather than sequentially. For instance, most of our international participants learned their HL first and then English, whereas our American participants who knew their HL learned English first and then their HL.

Finally, the generalizability of our findings may be limited given that our sample comprised students at a university in California within a narrow age range. Results may differ in different populations, particularly those outside of academia and with broader age ranges.

4.5 Conclusion

Future research should consider naming practices within interracial families as first, middle, and last names may influence Multiracials' identity development and interpersonal relationships. For instance, a Latinasian Multiracial with a Hispanic first name and East Asian mother may be more motivated to learn a language associated with their mother's ethnoracial background given that both their first and last name (assuming a paternal surname) would be associated with their father's ethnoracial background. In addition, parents may strategically confer names that increase the saliency of aspects of identity that are not phenotypically apparent. For instance, Gonzales-Backen (2013) noted "*how several parents deliberately gave their children names and other signifiers of their cultural membership out of a recognition that their child's physical appearance might not automatically indicate such membership*" (Seider et al., 2023).

The proportion of interracial, inter-ethnic, inter-nationality, interfaith, multicultural, and other mixed families continues to grow. As such, research should continue to investigate the influence of heritage language differences within households on the ethnoracial socialization, linguistic socialization, friendship, and romantic relationship experiences of individuals raised within these households.

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Authors contributions

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The data are available upon request via the corresponding author.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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