

Just to Be Clear
Episode 4: Are You What You Speak?

[Music]

INTRO SEGMENT [00:22]

Welcome to Episode 4 of *Just to Be Clear*, the podcast from the Tools for Clear Speech program at Baruch College. I'm Kim Edmunds, the host and Curriculum Specialist with the program.

Episode 4 was remotely recorded and edited during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. In New York and around the world, life has dramatically changed for most of us, in some cases to a devastating extent. As we cope with a shifting reality and an uncertain future, we hope that our listeners are able to take comfort in the people and pursuits that mean the most to them, even if it's at a distance.

Every student we work with at Tools for Clear Speech is multilingual; that is, they can use more than one language. That term describes somewhere between half to two-thirds of the people on the planet, as well. If you grew up speaking 2 or more languages, or if you acquired a second language later in life, you're multilingual. Today we'll look at the experience of being multilingual from two different angles: a cognitive one, and a social one.

There has historically been a lot of curiosity about whether or not the languages we speak influence the way we think or perceive the world; in linguistics, that theory is sometimes known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, or linguistic relativity. But is there actually solid evidence for meaningful differences in cognition between "thinking" in one language versus in another? And if so, what does that mean for language learners?

It's also important to talk about how being multilingual connects to one's identity, especially when it comes to navigating the social and academic experiences of college. How do multilingual students describe themselves, and how does that compare with how they're described by institutions and other societal entities? What does all this mean for linguistically diverse campuses across the country?

Joining me for a conversation about these questions today is Dr. Eva Fernández. She's a researcher, educator, and academic leader whose areas of expertise span from psycholinguistics to the teaching and learning of academic discourse; she's also bilingual herself. She is currently Associate Provost for Innovation and Student Success at Queens

College, CUNY, where she works to support innovation in teaching, experiential education, and student success in a variety of programs. I was so excited to have her join me on Zoom for this episode.

Before we play the interview, I'd like to note that there is a minor background noise, a sort of thumping sound, that you might hear during the first half of the audio. It's most likely due to new equipment and the Zoom medium, which were both necessitated by the pandemic. Thanks for your understanding. Here's Dr. Eva Fernández.

MAIN INTERVIEW SEGMENT [03:04] with Kim Edmunds (KE) and Eva Fernández (EF)

EF: I was born in Madrid in a very monolingual part of the world, I guess. And my family got relocated to the United States when I was 10. I was suddenly faced with having to learn English with very little sort of preparation for it. So, I think I mean, some of my early kind of interest in the study of bilinguals came from having experienced that dramatic shift and just the ability to, to belong to two different cultures through this kind of experience into languages. And when you came, it's not just a matter of the brain aging and treating the second language differently but also your socio-anthropological kind of allegiance is to groups where I mean growing up, I always wanted to maintain my Spanish spend as much time in Spain as I could, as my parents were possibly let me and of course part of my focus and studying language had to do with that. And to make a rather long story short, I eventually found myself in grad school, and I fell in love with the idea of studying bilinguals from the psycholinguistic perspective.

KE: Thinking back about what you mentioned about bilingual people or multilingual people and you mentioned you use the word allegiance which I think is really interesting because that really echoes an experience that that many of my multilingual New Yorker friends and also multilingual international students I've worked with, they feel, you know, when they're learning or speaking and another language or a language, they feel less comfortable in it feels like they're like a different face they have on or a different kind of jacket they've put on and it reflects this idea of linguistic relativity right and Sapir-Whorf and and you know do I do you think differently when you have a different language? And in your personal experience and also in research that you, that you've done or you've read is there any substance to this notion that the languages we speak influence the way we actually think?

EF: Well, so here, I'll give you a fun anecdote when I think I was a junior in high school. I got this scholarship to go spend a week learning how to sing at the Manhattan school of music. So one of the instructional periods, the teacher you know, imagine this operatic type of person, kind of, you know, a unique individual telling me okay so you speak multiple languages so I

want you to find a place on the stage where you are Spanish, and find another place in the stage where you are English. And I thought that that was the most absolutely peculiar thing like honestly, I mean, I can do both in either part of the stage, what do you mean? I guess this is, I mean, I I did what she asked. Is better in Spanish or English or differently in each, but um, but it's an example of the popular imagination taking that linguistic relativity thing really really seriously. I think bilinguals are kind of like the fun counterexample to all of that because you know people who speak multiple languages don't necessarily, well first of all, don't store memories in a particular language, and there's some neat studies that kind of document this. For sure you don't, even if you store some of the words you store the low frequency words that might be associated with some sort of memory or an event but you really are storing just the gist. There's work that reports that bilinguals who constantly are reading newspapers and watching TV and listening to radio in both languages will not accurately be able to report the language of the recording but they'll remember what they heard. So those are kind of like interesting examples that completely debunked the idea that you think in a language kind of specific way. Separating this language and thought idea is, I think it helps you, first of all, understand how language works. So yeah I come from that sort of strand of linguists that don't really buy into the linguistic relativity stuff.

KE: Right, and that's so fascinating because it sort of... I had never heard of these studies you mentioned where your memories are of a sense or of a meaning, not of actual encoded language. And some of the reading that I did in preparation talked about not only conflating language and thought but language and culture, language and self...but I am curious if the, if you as a bilingual person or having worked with many bilingual people, um, do some multilingual people just anecdotally report feeling different when they're thinking or you know they're primed to the use a certain language or they're speaking in other language? Has that been your experience personally and have you heard about that sort of thing?

EF: So that's definitely a really good question. And there's work, for example that takes a look at what the impact is of the language of therapy in a therapy session and whether you can improve a patient's kind of outcomes or you know improvement over time, if you switch to the language that maybe they prefer, or if they can have certain kinds of overcome blocks that when you switch to another language. So there's some documentation of that, for example, which would lead one to believe so yeah, there's this, you are a different self perhaps when you're speaking Spanish versus when you're speaking English. I mean, one of the interesting things about being bilingual is that you are, your communicative repertoire is expanded. Because in addition to being able to modulate your prosody or you know, speak faster or slower, or choose particular words or syntactic frames, you can also switch language. So for example, a bilingual can exclude people or include people, just by switching to the other

language right? And you can do that with like important sort of effect for the psychological state of the other and for the psychological state of yourself, so I tend to think of, when people say that they feel a different way in, like elicit a different identity, well, that's probably part of again, it's your repertoire of things that you can do with language as a bilingual, and whether those things make you feel good, right, like if you are systematically excluding others by switching back into the the language that they don't necessarily feel comfortable with I can see how that that relates. I guess that's because you know, we're all a whole person not just our the sort of part of our brain that manages our language.

KE: Right.

EF: There's a whole lot of other things that are going on. I guess as a person interested in the mental architecture for bilingualism, um, it is essential to be able to separate those things, if only so that we can understand, well what part is psycholinguistic, what part is controlled by the grammar, what part is controlled by those mechanisms that put that grammar to use.

KE: When you say separate those things, can you clarify what you meant by that?

EF: Yeah, I was gonna say, to go back to the linguistic identity and allegiance, right, I mean, so of course the languages that you speak might be whatever they are, and us psycholinguists are so interested in trying to describe that. But still because you operate in a sociological environment, right, you're going to make sense of your own self and your own knowledge in ways that are so shaped by your history. So I remember when, I started, a long time ago, I think this might have been the questionnaires for my dissertation. So a semi-largeish kind of body of data, where we asked students, we asked the participants in the studies to fill out these very elaborate language history questionnaires. You know in a psycholinguistic study you always want to know as much as you possibly can about where people learn the languages that they know. At the time we adopted this question from another research group that was taking to asking their participants, "you are going to go have brain surgery, imagine this, and the doctor tells you that sadly, you know, the piece of the brain that is you know diseased and they have to remove will impact your linguistic abilities as a bilingual. You have the choice of which of your two languages to keep. Which one do you keep?" And that was supposed to be a really good indicator of what your language dominance might be. I mean, it turns out that people have absolutely no clue how to answer that question. They're like, oh my god, what? I have to have brain surgery? Um, but in those questionnaires we often, I certainly spent a lot of time looking at how different kinds of bilinguals in my sample were responding to those language dominance questions, and there were there were those that would even almost lie in terms of responding, "Well, it's English because I have to speak English because I have to move money."

Right? And then there were those bilinguals who would choose Spanish because, “It’s the language of my heritage, and I have to be Spanish dominant because my grandmother would be rolling in in her grave” kind of thing or or it doesn’t, it would, “it is such a critical part of my identity.” and those answers didn’t always map up with what their actual dominance profiles might be. What they show is how kind of like sometimes even despite your linguistic ability, your psychosocial setup or whatever your affiliations are going to, kind of change the way that you see yourself.

KE: Right.

EF: And I think that has like really very complicated implications at the pedagogical level.

KE: Yeah.

EF: How do you deal with some of these complex attitudes. You get a student who is on one camp or the other, right.

KE: That’s really interesting to think about, the fact that it’s not all about proficiency or dominance, it’s about other values that you as an individual, may be attached to your language or that society has attached to your language. Um, that’s so fascinating, that’s really interesting to think about. And then you, you mentioned when you get a student you, know who, has, that’s their experience, that’s their lived experience, did you have, have you had that experience and did you have ideas for how you might bring those students into whatever classroom or academic sort of community that you’re building?

EF: Well, I guess um, you know, I like to think that our job as educators is, first of all to accept sort of where students are coming from and where they’re at. And get them motivated to want to be the kind of person that our student learning outcomes are designed to produce right? So you have to embrace what they’re coming with. With their own biases and their own, sort of, language histories as complex as those may be and work with those, to build on them. So rather than excluding and denying that that stuff exists if you embrace it, I think it makes a difference.

KE: Do you have any ideas for people who teach subjects like business for example, or economics, or art? You know, are there any practical ways that we can really bring diverse - linguistically diverse students and help them participate more and not literally just participate in class, but feel that there’s an ownership, right, and a sense of belonging in these academic environments where academic discourse is not always accessible to, as you mentioned in your

work, anyone who's just not accustomed to academic discourse, whether whatever their languages.

EF: Right, right. I mean, I and I think that is the key, you just put your finger on what the key problem is in sort of, in the struggles in higher ed. How do we bring people up to a level that we may not have even very well defined, right? Because the economist teaching the intro to economic class or the person teaching that really difficult biology class that has to be taken by almost everybody who's majoring in a STEM discipline. Those instructors may not have necessarily interrogated well, what does it mean to talk like a biologist or like an economist. What are the the buzzwords, what are the standard kind of strategies in presenting arguments, and where people are going to have where people going to have problems? I think we sometimes fall prey to thinking of multilingual students as coming with a deficiency. And so what really helps is I mean, I wish I knew how to do this. I haven't figured it out, but how do we get rid of that myth, that misunderstanding of what multilingualism means? So much interesting work, again a lot of it contested, but so but but it doesn't matter, suggest to us that bilinguals are really good at dealing with ambiguity and, for example, at suspending certain ways of thinking about the world by function of speaking to languages. So in fact embrace it and celebrate it and I think that that helps you take students to the next level about adopting a new code which is the code of your academic discipline hmm.

KE: Yeah.

EF: I wish actually that we could celebrate multilingualism by having more events in languages other than English.

KE: I think that's a really great idea. I think that there could be more sort of student organizations, because we know CUNY students, and you know, I certainly think we can generalize to most college students, but certainly CUNY students, they have so much drive and energy, and I think bringing you know, it can't ,and I don't think that either one of us has this idea, but it certainly can't just be a top-down process. Um, you know, and having the students participate actively.

EF: That's absolutely right. But you have to empower them to do it, right? Because there are so many signals that we send, um, not even knowing, that could so easily turn them off, and make them worry.

KE: Can you give an example?

EF: So I'll give you an example from my personal life that I like to talk to my students about. So when my kids were little, we were on a train to Westchester one day. My kids, let's see, I'm married to a guy from the United States, so he speaks English to them, I speak Spanish to them. And so my kids at that age in particular, they were talking back in English systematically. So here I am the whole train ride speaking Spanish to the kids, the kids are speaking English to me. A woman, as she was about to get off, says to me, "Oh, I wish you were my kids' babysitter." My heart sank. What do you mean? Is it because I'm speaking Spanish to them? So notice that she meant this in a very positive like oh, I love that you're engaging in such a wonderful rapport with people, but it's the fact that I'm speaking Spanish all of a sudden....I don't know that she would have done that had the rapport been, I don't know, imagine a different kind of linguistic context, right? So it's so easy for us to devalue people's identities. And that's gonna be aware of it.

KE: Right.

EF: And I just again, I, fear that with the multilingual community that would have, we might be doing this all the time, we don't really think about it.

KE: Kind of alienating or reducing others to just what they speak and what they could do for you as like a tool.

EF: Right, right, well and making assumptions that well because of the languages you speak you must be in a particular profession.

KE: Right.

EF: I mean, I did want to say to the woman I'm actually, I'm a Phd professor, you know, not a babysitter, but right that's an interesting assumption.

KE: Yeah, that is... do you talk to your students about that early on? And kind of have a conversation about maybe experiences that they've had, in a similar way.

EF: Yeah and I have to say that symbol of my most enjoyable and profound moments in classes big and small are when we talk about those linguistic identity things, um in a psycholinguistics class, they don't always come up but of course they do whenever we're talking about acquisition and about aspects of you know, bilingualism etc. And they all have incredibly beautiful stories about both how their language and language history serves to validate who they are and is something that they treasure, and they would never give up or they're so sorry

that they lost this language or whatever. To those moments of like agony based on um, the kind of suffering that comes from others making assumptions that are clearly not right.

KE: Right, clearly incorrect. There's this, there's this host of labels out there. I read an interesting article that you cited Ortmeier-Hooper, about students maybe feeling alienated by and not really feeling, "I'm not really ESL," and you write about this with the two students you describe from Queens College in the music department. Right and they're like, "I'm not really ESL. But I don't really feel comfortable in my other language, but I, I do consider myself English, but maybe my English isn't good." And they have those kinds of thoughts. What, what do you think is the impact of these labels that exist or the lack of labels that exist on students who have these identities?

EF: I suspect that a lot of our students feel kind of disregarded by some of these bureaucratic categories that we have and we need to work a little bit to get them a bit better and also I mean, I also think that we need to have better ways to allocate the right supports for people. Because if they do need more personalized writing support because they, well because of whatever, because of whatever reason, and I would also say that in that respect the kind of writing support that you need when you are in native and a non-native speaker of the language, in some respects, a lot of it is going to be very similar regardless of your history. And the the real question about what kind of specific supports you need as a non-native speaker, probably more focused on vocabulary is hey there, and developing fluency and feeling comfortable, right? So some of the things that you guys are trying to do with the intelligibility stuff. So it's not about saying you've got to change the way that you speak, but really you've got to feel more comfortable when speaking this way. The pedagogical supports for that, I think also apply to the student who only speaks English and is all of a sudden being asked to write like a linguist like, "Oh my gosh, what is that? Where, how do I make a cogent linguistic argument, okay? I've never really known how to do that."

KE: Right? I mean, I think meeting the students where they are, all of them, is so critical. And you mentioned, you know students might feel unseen or disregarded or disrespected even by well-intentioned attempts at inclusion and support and how carefully we need to think about our approaches to, to these supports. That's all kind of wrapped up together, right? The labels that you mentioned and the the finer grained look that we want to take. And I'll just mention now for our listeners, our future listeners, that. Where is my... "*Academic discourse on a multilingual campus*", Chapter 10. Oh, do you remember the name of the book? Do I have it here? Oh, it is a book about general education. *Making Teaching and Learning Matter*. Yes, I think so, right? So chapter 10 "*Academic discourse on a multilingual campus*" by Ann Davison and Eva Fernandez and Sue Lance Goldhaber is something that I just recommend for general

reading for anyone who's interested in more because it takes a really great look at how support has been integrated in the music department at Queens - *Queens* College for linguistically diverse students and I think that's just really great work that I'd love to see elsewhere. So, what would you, as a multilingual person yourself, and as a researcher, and as a faculty member and as an administrator, what would you like to say, if anything to learners and multilingual listeners who sometimes find that their identities are, maybe they feel in flux or they don't feel welcome or acknowledged, what kind of...would you give them advice, or what would you like to say to them?

EF: Don't be afraid to be who you are, it is such a, I thin, in all of my wanderings around the university and New York City and you know, around the world, and whenever I traveled, not that we get to do that very frequently now, but uh, the differences between people are and the uniqueness of all the people that are that I meet in all of those wanderings are so wonderful and we can learn so much from that so, don't be afraid to let that kind of shine. It sounds kind of corny, but I think it's, I think it's really important to embrace who you are. I do think that we need to do a lot of work in understanding where those biases come from at the language level to begin to eradicate them. And which then of course makes it kind of difficult for the person being in the position of having to sort of stand up for yourself, when you speak with what's perceived as an accent, right? But sometimes those, that uniqueness is the thing that actually makes you highly memorable, and might even be the thing that makes you stand above and beyond your competition, if you will, right? I think that that's really, really powerful. And also, I mean, I guess another thing about the multilingual identity that goes beyond the language. Being part of two linguistic communities for me was always so much fun because it gave me the ability to be able to read more books. Because I could read literature from more places. I could have friends from more countries and cities and so on because I was able to communicate with them in different ways. So that kind of ability to engage with a bigger sector of the world I think is awesome, so, embrace that.

KE: Thank you so much for your time for being on the show. We really appreciate it, our listeners, I know will really enjoy this. And again, thank you for your time and I will post a few other recommendations from Dr. Fernandez's body of work on our website, so you guys can all peruse it the way that I did and thank you again.

EF: Kim, Thank you so much. This is such a fun way to spend my morning.

KE: I'm so glad.

[Music]

TRANSITION SEGMENT [29:59]

If you're interested in some of the work referenced in my conversation with Eva, visit the fourth episode page at jtbc.baruch.cuny.edu.

Coming up in a moment, TfCS Speech Consultant Jessica Coyle chats with her long-time tutee Li Ma, a graduate student at Baruch who has been participating in TfCS services since 2019. Li Ma tells us about her experience speaking multiple languages, how she describes herself, and the rewards and challenges of academic life.

STUDENT INTERVIEW [30:42] with Jessica Coyle (JC) and Li Ma (LM)

JC: Hi, I'm here with Li Ma who is a PhD candidate in Finance at Baruch. Yeah, and she is a fabulous, fun, interesting young woman and I've loved working with you, Li Ma.

LM: Me too. Yeah, those words are also I want to describe you. Fabulous and wonderful yeah, this is for you.

JC: A mutual admiration society, fabulous. So I just wanted to get just a little background on, you know your relationship, with English.

LM: Actually I studied English from Middle School since, you know, I am from a little, I come from a little village in China, so it's not a big city. So maybe some big cities in China, they can start to learn English at a very young age. For example, nowadays, the kids in China, they start to learn English at kindergarten. Yeah. But for me I just started. It's a natural and a normal process. I started to learn English and middle school, maybe around twelve, twelve years old.

JC: Do you think of yourself as ESL, do you think of yourself as a non-native speaker, as a multilingual person as a bilingual person? Which of those labels do you typically use to describe yourself?

LM: Oh, maybe I will say I am non-native speaker. I can regard it as my advantage or something since yeah and you know speaking English is very important nowadays, especially in this 21st century, yeah. In the, I can learn more things, especially in Internet. When there are so many fabulous things and videos and music they are in English. They are described in English. So I think yeah and it could give me more confidence sometimes speaking English and you can, like for example, I can come here to study for PhD in America. English is very important in English

can help me to, to seize this opportunity, yeah.

JC: So, you know, it sounds like the way you're describing it you think of English more as like a skill set?

LM: Yeah, yes skill, tool

JC: A skill, rather than part of who you are.

LM: If in front of a foreigner, at first I will say where I come from. Yeah, I am Chinese and one of my identity, I'm a PhD student. Yeah and maybe, yeah these programs is totally in English.

JC: So it would be a little strange to say and I speak English because obviously.

LM: I don't think I will mention that since you know, everybody knows students can speak Chinese and you can also speak English because in China most students study English as their second language, but maybe a part of them study like Japanese, French but it's very yeah, it's a very small group. Most of students will choose English as their second language. So I heard that in America, maybe it's different right they can choose to learn different second language.

JC: So maybe just because it's so common to say learn English, that would almost be like saying my name is Li Ma and I have glasses, you know, that's it's so it's like why would you say that of course who cares.

LM: Yeah you know, yeah everybody knows that you won't mention that yeah,

JC: Okay that's interesting um, so like, you know, do you find that when you wake up in the morning do you feel like you're thinking in English or do you think you're thinking more in Mandarin or do you think in Sichuan?

LM: Maybe I guess nowadays, you know, it's in quarantine, every day I wake up, I just, think my mind is just blank, but several months ago since you are in a very, in an English environment, you read English, you speak it you're speaking English and you read English and you the class is talking English so maybe at that period, yeah my mind will follow English yeah if you you are in you are in an environment we full of, always English.

JC: So you really are deeply deeply immersed in English.

LM: It depends sometimes, and sometimes not yeah. I guess maybe there will be a little difference since you know, when you are thinking English maybe you will have a different thinking way especially compared with the traditional yeah, Chinese Mandarin or my dialect. I think I will try to think...how to say that? Maybe.... you were, for me if I can practice English more and more I think I will enjoy this kind of English speaking, you know, just it's just like you are you, you get familiar with this culture. You learn something different to you, have a, you gain something different from the previous myself, so I guess, it will be a second me,

JC: So where is the place right now where you feel the most English language Li Ma?

LM: Maybe, maybe in the restaurant since yeah yeah when you order the food and when you talk with your American friends or some other some other friends, but not from China, from Korea or yeah, like you said from India, yeah, yeah, you will more feel not you, I will feel more I'm like a maybe an American Li Ma. Yeah yeah yeah.

JC: What has your experience been as a multilingual person speaking, you know, either two or three languages depending on how you define the languages, what is your experience been in an English speaking higher ed institution? The idea of getting my PhD in another country is very hard for me to imagine, I'd think it's hard for a lot of people.

LM: Yeah, it's also hard for us even though that we start to learn English at a very young age. Since you know, and because you are a foreigner, you are still when you read something especially read those literature, it's hard. Not, not for the native native speaker and no more say as we are from non-native or we are non-native speakers so yeah, reading those literatures might be of hard thing for for me, at least for me, and doing presentation is also a difficult task for me at first, but after several presentations you'll, I can feel that I am making a progress so.

JC: You know I'm curious, you just mentioned like how things are in terms of how difficult they are in like your studies, how about socially? How about like culturally?

LM: You know, because you are, I am a PhD program so most of your life is related to study and the research and yeah, it's a hard thing, you know, and it's very, it's a pity for me to, I don't have time or there's no, there's yeah, very very few opportunities for me to know new friends, especially the native speakers. And yeah, that's a pity for me, you know, especially I want to hang out with those friends. I want to know more about American study, American lifestyle, American food, American culture. Yeah yeah, yeah, that's one thing maybe. That's what yeah, that's one thing and, yeah, that's what I can, what I can think of now.

JC: I remember one time this guy that I was friends with in France said to me, "I like you Jessica because you're so nice" and I was like, oh he doesn't know me because I think people who really know me that's not the first thing they would say they would say, oh you're funny or you're fun, but like nice is like my number six or seven descriptor..

LM: Yeah, if you want to do that funny, you must be good at French.

JC: That's a whole different level of fluency, I am not there. Well, you know as someone who has been through that journey of learning English is there anything that you would change, is there anything you wish you did differently or do you feel like yep, I'm happy with my English language process.

LM: I wish I could speak more when I started, start to learn English at the first time. You know, there there is a show in China it's called non-formal meeting and there are a bunch of maybe not a bunch, a group of, a group of foreigners from different countries, but they speak Mandarin very well yeah very very well, and some some of them maybe just learn Chinese for two years or even one year yeah. They can speak Chinese very very good, but and for me, yes speaking is a shortage for me, so I wish I could practice speaking many years ago. Yeah that's one suggestion maybe for those English learners.

JC: Yeah it's hard to find that practice. I mean, if you're especially if you're somebody as busy as you, that can be, that can be really tough to to even find time to do anything other than your finance studies. Do you think that you know that feeling that you mentioned of being in a restaurant of feeling like American Li Ma, do you think that's something that's gonna disappear when you go back to China or do you think that that's something that's gonna stay with you from time to time.

LM: Yeah think it's this second, second one yeah if I didn't come back and for most of time if I stayed at my own country and I didn't use, I mean use, I mean speaking with foreigners maybe that feeling will disappear, yeah.

JC: Well maybe you'll have to go you know, just like I did when I was in Korea, maybe I'll have to find an American restaurant and you know hang out with some Americans just to get that feeling back yeah.

LM: Yeah I should keep that feeling, right?

JC: It's nice. I miss and I, I always feel so, excited when I go to like a sauna and Korea town or

something and I'm like, I feel like I'm back. It's so nice. Yeah. Well, thank you so much for for having this chat. Li Ma. I will stop recording now and I'll say goodbye to you when we get off.

LM: Okay.

CONCLUDING SEGMENT [42:13]

Producing this episode sometimes felt like I was on the outside looking in. I grew up monolingual, and even though I started learning and using Spanish in middle school, I've never really been sure if that "qualified" me for multilingual status. Is my Spanish good enough for me to consider myself multilingual? Does that have an impact on who I am?

I suspect that I'm not the only one who's had this question. One of the threads that I noticed connecting the interviews with Eva and Li Ma was their sense of being the same person, the same self, regardless of the language they used at any given moment. To me, at least, their stories and beliefs underscored the way a shared language is the framework for so much of the work and play of life: for building relationships, for creating memories, for engaging with the creativity of others, and for putting your own creativity out in the world. Like Eva pointed out, as users of multiple languages, they have the opportunity to do more of that with even more people. I suspect that it's those kinds of experiences that most profoundly shape who we are, rather than the particularities of the different grammars that may live inside our heads. That's what I hope you take away from this episode, if English is a second language for you; in other words, if you're multilingual.

We were able to learn so much through this episode, and I still feel that there is a lot more to say and know. The beliefs and experiences of multilingual people no doubt vary widely, so if you'd like to share yours, drop us a line at jtbc.baruch.cuny.edu. You can also listen to our other episodes there, and check out the helpful supplemental practice materials we have for English language learners. You can work on important listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills, as well as practice with new vocabulary taken straight from this episode.

We'd like to give a special thanks to Dr. Eva Fernández from Queens College, CUNY for her appearance on this episode, and to Li Ma.

Original music for JTBC is written, recorded, and produced by Colby Hamilton. Supplemental materials were created by TfCS Speech Consultant Michelle Kaplan.

This is the *Just To Be Clear* podcast, produced by the Tools for Clear Speech program at Baruch College in New York City. Join us next time for our fifth episode! And just to be clear, we appreciate you listening. See you next time.