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The hierarchical effects of employee choice of language: The role of customer bilingualism and self-concept clarity

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THE HIERARCHICAL EFFECTS OF EMPLOYEE CHOICE OF LANGUAGE: THE ROLE OF CUSTOMER BILINGUALISM AND SELF-CONCEPT CLARITY

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ABSTRACT

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The impact of the choice of language is continuously widening and deepening in different socio-political contexts due to globalization and multiculturalism (Heller, 2010). A nascent stream of research (Zolfagharian, Hasan, & Iyer, 2017) also suggests that, in multicultural service encounters, employee choice of language affects customer perceived interaction quality, which in turn influences a host of outcome constructs germane to service researchers. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on how employee choice of language works in customer mind and shapes their attitude toward service interaction and the service itself. The exploration of this underlying psychological mechanism is expected to provide answers to the queries on whether and to what extent language matters in bilingual service interactions. This dissertation specifically identifies cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of customer attitude where employee choice of language may exert influence. Besides, this research studies how employee choice of language evokes positive and negative routes of attitudes. This study also conceptualizes and tests how customer bilingualism and self-concept clarity play a role in directing customers toward these alternative routes of attitudes through their interplay with employee choice of language. To conduct this study, a scenario-based between-subjects

experiment of 3 (employee choice and use of language: adheres to, adapts to, and ignores) × 2 (customer preference: two languages spoken in a bilingual service context) is conducted to capture the effects of employee choice of language on customer attitudes. The experiment is conducted on Mexican-Americans who are eighteen years or older and who have a preference for English or Spanish in the specific service context. The results support in general the proposed conceptual model and reveal the impact of employee choice of language in triggering both positive and negative attitudes. Self-concept clarity moderates the effect of employee choice of language on cognitive attitudes. However, the effect of positive and negative affect on customer behavior shows a negativity bias of employee choice of language. Unlike negative affect, positive affect does not influence customer behavior.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my family and advisor who wholeheartedly inspired, motivated, and supported me to reach where I am. I am indebted to my loving parents, Professor Dr. Mohammad Hasan and Mrs. Rehana Akhter, who sacrificed their priorities and made efforts for me to be here today. I am deeply thankful to my wife, Nazia Hasnayeen, who has been extremely supportive of me throughout this entire process and has made countless sacrifices to help me get to this point. A special thanks to my brother, Sayeed Hasan, who always stands by me when things look bleak. I also dedicate this dissertation to my exuberant and sweet children, Umayza, Unaysa, and Aiyan, whom I love to the moon and back. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Mohammadali Zolfagharian, who guided me and kept me on track throughout the process.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The interactive nature of service businesses has drawn research attention for several decades (e.g., Surprenant & Solomon, 1987; Grönroos, 1978; Eiglier & Langeard, 1976). The central role of effective interaction toward successful service encounter (Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert, & Zeithaml, 1997; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996; Grönroos, 1978, 1984; Lovelock, 1983) underscores the importance of employee-customer interaction (Lovelock, 1983; Grönroos, 1978; Shostack, 1977; Eiglier & Langeard, 1976). This dissertation is focused on a relevant key aspect: namely, employee-customer interaction linguistics (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012).

Service literature suggests that interaction quality comprises the whole of service quality (Grönroos, 1984) or at least the major part of it (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990; Bitner, 1990; Czepiel, Solomon, & Surprenant, 1985). As such, employee-customer interaction is supposed to determine the customer perception of service quality (Bitner, 1990, 1992; Grönroos, 1984). More specifically, frontline employees play the prime role in determining customer perception of interaction quality in both of service and sales encounters (Bettencourt & Gwinner, 1996). Good communication between a frontline employee and a customer is generally considered a major part of a good service interaction (Mattson & den Haring, 1998; Bitner et al., 1990). An effective service encounter is also found to depend largely on the effortless communication between company representatives and customers (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012). Since language

competency plays a major role behind communication (Crystal, 2012; Kameda, 1996; Babcock & Du-Babcock, 2001)) it may be argued that language, the main vehicle of communication, plays a vital role in determining customer perceptions when employees interact with them (Beamer, 1992). For example, in a bilingual service setting, employees may speak either English or Spanish. Their choice of language for service interaction may have a bearing upon customer perceptions about service outcomes. Language impacts customer service experience by influencing his/her perception of interaction quality (Bitner et al., 1997; Grönroos, 1978, 1984). Therefore, it can also be said that appropriate choice of language by an employee becomes a very important component of a successful service encounter and its outcomes (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012).

Importance of the Study

Although language, particularly Employee Choice of Language (hereafter ECL), is crucial to service encounters, it has not received deserved attention in service research (Vaerenbergh & Holmqvist, 2013). Holmqvist & Grönroos (2012, p.430) identified this research gap as "a paradox in existing marketing research". Although language in interactive service contexts appears most important it got the least attention in interactive service researches (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012). As such, research on the impact of ECL on service encounter and service outcome is essential. The interactive nature of services (Surprenant & Solomon, 1987; Grönroos, 1978) also underscores the need for understanding how language influences customer perceived service outcomes (Vaerenbergh & Holmqvist, 2013). Studying the impact of ECL is even more important for services taking place in bilingual service contexts (Callahan, 2005, 2006) since customers perceive value explicitly from their interaction with employees when both parties speak, more or less, two different languages (Vaerenbergh & Holmqvist,

2013). Besides, we have very little or no knowledge on how ECL impacts behavioral outcomes in a bilingual service setting (Vaerenbergh & Holmqvist, 2013). Researchers are yet to devote due attention to this area of bilingual interactions (Luna, Peracchio, & de Juan, 2003; Usunier, 1996). This dissertation will focus on this research gap, aiming at identifying the psychological underpinnings of such encounters.

Why is it important to study the impact of ECL in bilingual service encounters? Two specific reasons are stated here. First, when consumers speak two or more languages, their perceptions and behavioral intentions might change with the changes in interaction language (Briley, Morris, & Simonson, 2005). So, the impact of language on customer perception and behavioral intentions is important to know for any service-oriented business. Second, although English has been emerging as the most dominant language of the world (Peters, 2004; Crystal, 2003) most countries are still multilingual (Wei, 2007). Besides, many of the monolingual countries have regions where people speak multiple languages (Comrie, 2011). In fact, there are many pockets of markets scattered all over the world where more than one language are spoken with almost equal importance. The number and total size of such markets show the importance of this study. It also reflects the level of relevance of this research to a large number and size of markets of this world. For example, Spanish is now considered a significant language in many of the major U.S. cities (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012). Only about 25% of New York's immigrants speak "only English at home," and the proportion of such immigrants is lower, about 10%, in California and Texas (Stepler, 2016). This has compelled different US states to provide legal guarantee for services in different languages for people whose first language is not English. The state of California has passed an Act named Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act that requires all state and local agencies to employ a "qualified bilingual staff" and to translate

specific documents into first languages of "substantial number of non-English speaking people" (Summary of Language Access Laws in California). US state of Hawaii (the Constitution of the state of Hawaii) and some territories like American Samoa (Revised Constitution of American Samoa) and Northern Marianas Islands (Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Constitution) are officially multilingual. In Canada, more than 40% people of Toronto and Vancouver and around 88% of the populations of Montreal do not speak English as the first language (Michon & Chebat, 2004). Likewise, nearly 50 million people in European countries speak minority languages as their first language (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012). For example, around 40% people of Spain live in places where the simultaneous use of two languages is officially recognized. Catalan, Galician, and Basque have the status of co-official language while Castilian (Spanish) is used as the official language of the territory (Sigu´an 1994). In Austria, Croatian and Slovenian minorities speak their own language side by side the official language, i.e. German. These languages are protected under federal laws (State treaty for the re-establishment of an independent and democratic Austria). Belgium recognizes three languages officially: Dutch, French, and German. But, in Flanders, 59% of the Flemings know French while 53% of them speak English as their first language. In Wallonia, only 19% speak Dutch and 17% speak English. In these regions, Belgium's other official language, German, is less known than Dutch, English, or French (Van Parijs, 2007).Danish is the official language of Denmark. But, in South Jutland, people also speak German and, in Greenland, Greenlandic is used as the principal language (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages). In Estonia, Estonian is the only official language. But, a sizeable community there is native speaker of Russian (Kablukova, 2017). Although German is the national language of Germany, Low Saxon is a recognized regional language of five northern states. Besides, several other languages are spoken as minority

languages in different parts of Germany (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages). Latvian is the official language of Latvia. But, 37.3% of the population speaks Russian as native language (Population and Housing Census, 2011). English is the only national language of United Kingdom. But, in Wales, 19% people speak Welsh as their native language (National Survey for Wales, 2015). Switzerland has four national languages: German, Italian, French, and Romansh (The Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, 2017). Of them, 59.5% speak Swiss German, 10.4% speak standard German, 22.7% speak French (Swiss French or Arpitan dialects), 8.4% speak Italian (Swiss Italian or Lombard dialects), and 0.6% speak Romansh at home (Swiss Federal Statistics, 2015). Thus, the statutory status of languages in different countries as well as the demographic picture of usage of languages by their native speakers shows how diverse and dispersed the bilingual markets are in the US and the whole world. Successful addressing of customer needs in such markets requires a clear understanding of the impact of ECL.

Due to globalization and multiculturalism, the impact of the choice of language is continuously widening and deepening in different socio-political contexts (Heller, 2010; Schmidt, 2002). Extant service research (e.g., Balaji, Roy, & Wei, 2016; Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012) emphasizes the appropriate choice of language for service providers. A nascent stream of research (Zolfagharian et al., 2017) also suggests that, in multicultural service encounters, ECL affects customer perceived interaction quality, which in turn influences a host of outcome constructs germane to service researchers. Therefore, this dissertation will specifically focus on how ECL works in customer psyche and shapes their attitude toward service interaction and the service itself. The exploration of this psychological mechanism would be a significant contribution since it would let us know the "hows" and "whys" pertinent to the phenomenon

(Guo, Xiao, & Tang, 2009; Jones & Roelofsma, 2000). It would also explain the links between the components germane to that phenomenon (Rupp, McCance, Spencer, & Sonntag, 2008). More specifically, it would explain the affective episodes customers go through and their compelling perceptions generated from those episodes (Russell, 2009). Therefore, the study to explore this underlying psychological mechanism is expected to provide answers to the queries on whether and to what extent language matters in bilingual service interactions. It will also identify the attitudinal aspects where ECL may exert influence and through which it may influence customer experiences, evaluations and decisions. The findings of this study may also pave the way of formulating organizational policies for using interaction language with bilingual customers in service settings. Previous research (e.g. Piekkari, Vaara, Tienari, & Säntti, 2005; Griffith, 2002; Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen & Piekkari, 2006; Harzing & Feely, 2008; Barner-Rasmussen and Björkman, 2007) focused on the language policy for MNCs and discussed the role language in communications between parent and subsidiary units as well as inter-subsidiary communications. Instances of language policies in MNCs (e.g. Nordea) have also been studied (Piekkari et al., 2005; Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari, & Säntti, 2005). But, no such policy research or instance is available on the use of language to communicate with customers in bilingual service contexts. This research may contribute toward the thoughts on language policy formulation for interacting with bilingual customers.

Contribution of this Research

This study contributes to service research on interaction linguistics by focusing on the research gaps in bilingual service interactions (Luna et al., 2003; Usunier, 1996). Specifically, it puts forward and tests the psychological mechanism of the effect of ECL on the cognitive,

affective, and behavioral aspects of customer attitude. This mechanism builds on the theoretical framework of hierarchy of effects (Ray, 1973; Feick, 1987; Barry, 1987).

As a second contribution, the dissertation delves into the alternative routes of attitude formation and identifies determinants of attitude change leading to a particular route. Specifically, it examines how some moderators evoke alternative routes of attitude by affecting the relationship between ECL and the cognitions. Each of these moderators determines which stream of attitude would be generated and thus initiates one of the two alternative routes of attitudes. The interplay between ECL and the moderators exhibits various scenarios of ECL-cognition relationships and underscores the role of the moderators as the determinants of the route of attitudes. Thus, these determinants reveal the conditions that activate an alternative route of effects comprising cognitions, affects and behaviors.

The third contribution relates to detecting and empirically testing all the possible affects incited by ECL, as well as the corresponding behavioral outcomes, in bilingual service encounters. There is paucity of knowledge on the impact of language in service interactions, be it a unilingual (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012) or bilingual (Vaerenbergh & Holmqvist, 2013) service setting. This study identifies the possible cognitions, affects, and behavioral intentions triggered by ECL in a bilingual service encounter. In particular, I build upon interaction linguistics and communication literature (e.g. Holmqvist, 2011; Dillard & Shen, 2005; Dillard & Meijenders, 2002; Nabi, 2002; Quick & Stephenson, 2008; Rains & Turner, 2007) and relevant theories, i.e. psychological reactance theory (Brehm & Brehm, 1981) and communication accommodation theory (Giles, 1973; Giles & Powesland, 1975; *Giles, Coupland, & Coupland*, 1991; Gallois & Giles, 1998) to conceptualize the attitudinal ramifications of ECL.

In summary, this dissertation spotlights the impact of language in service interactions, a crucial topic that is yet to receive deserved attention in service research (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012). It aims at highlighting the critical role of employee communication, particularly in terms of ECL, and demonstrating why choice of language deserves more attention in marketing research and practice.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses: 1) the information processing triggered by ECL in bilingual service encounters; 2) the resultant hierarchy of effects of attitude formation; 3) the two alternative routes that ECL may activate; 4) the cognitions triggered by ECL; 5) the role of moderators impacting the ECL–cognition relationship; and 6) the subsequent affective and behavioral consequences.

Employee Choice of Language

ECL plays a vital role when customers interact with employees (Callahan, 2006). It is even more important in bilingual service encounters (Holmqvist & Gronroos, 2012). Employee choice of language triggers customer emotion (Krishna & Ahluwalia, 2008) and leaves marked influence on how they perceive the whole service (Holmqvist & Gronroos, 2012). As such, it is evident that ECL may have twofold implications: direct impact on interaction quality as well as direct or derivative impact on perceived service experience and customer behavior (Bitner et al., 1997; Grönroos, 1978, 1984).

In multilingual service settings, bilingual employees choose a language to initiate conversation with customers. Employees have to make an intuitive judgment about the customer while choosing a conversation initiation language. In this regard, they may match customer's physical attributes with the ethnic cues stored in memory (Dane & Pratt, 2007; Gore & Sadler-Smith, 2011). This intuitive judgment is crucial to the outcomes of the service encounter

(Homburg, Wieseke, & Bornemann, 2009; McFarland, Challagalla, & Shervani, 2006). It directly impacts transaction effectiveness (Hall, Ahearne, & Sujan, 2015; Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Rackham, 1988; Weitz, 1981) and efficiency (Hall et al., 2015). When an employee's intuitive judgment adheres to the customer's preference, a language alignment is created. Such a language alignment certainly causes mutual understanding (Pickering & Garrod, 2004). Once adhered to, the employee usually continues conversation in that language. In situations where conversation initiation language does not adhere to customer language preference, adverse impacts on customer experience are likely (Zolfagharian et al., 2017). A non-adherence may create linguistic misalignment and, hence, confusion between the employee and the customer (Shockley, Richardson, & Dale, 2009; Pickering & Garrod, 2004). Customer choice of language in response to conversation initiation language often represents his/her language preference which signals whether or not employee choice of language was consistent with customer preference. A case of non-adherence may lead to two types of responses. Subsequent to conversation initiation language and customer response, employees have the opportunity to adapt to customer preference; which they may adapt to or ignore. When employees discern what language the customer prefers for communication, they can adapt to that preference and restore the possibility of an appreciative customer experience (Gwinner, Bitner, Brown, & Kumar, 2005; Bitner et al., 1990). Such adaptation may even pleasantly surprise the customers who take it as a generous effort on behalf of the employee to accommodate them (Miller, Craighead, & Karwan, 2000; Shostack, 1984). On the other hand, when ECL fails to adhere to customer preferences and the employee continues to ignore it, customers may become unpleasantly disposed in their perception and evaluation of the service.

In summary, the foregoing discussion points to three alternative ECL scenarios: 1) adheres to customer preference; 2) adapts to customer preference; or 3) ignores customer preference. The first scenario takes place when employee choice of language matches customer language preference. One of the two other scenarios appear in case of non-adherence of ECL to customer language preference. If the employee switches to customer's preferred language after his/her initial response an adaptation takes place. Otherwise, customer language preference remains ignored in ECL.

Attitudes Stemming from ECL

Most of the researchers agree that one's attitude embodies his/her evaluation of a person, object, or issue in question (Fazio, 1995; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Bargh, Chaiken, Raymond, & Hymes, 1996; Petty, Wegener, & Fabrigar, 1997). Thus, attitude refers to how positively or negatively or how favorably or unfavorably one views something or someone of judgment (Petty & Wegener, 1998). These evaluations can vary in several ways, e.g. based on emotions, beliefs, or behaviors (Breckler, 1984; Zanna & Rempel, 1988). In Marketing, it has been discussed almost in the same way and defined as the general evaluation of something formed over time (Solomon, 2008). Attitude has three dimensions: cognitive (beliefs that people hold about the object), affective (emotional feelings stimulated by the object), and behavioral (predispositions to act in certain ways toward the object) (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997). This study identifies and tests the hierarchical order of these three dimensions (i.e., hierarchy of effects) in bilingual service encounters where ECL serves as stimulus. This hierarchical order is shaped by the customer involvement with the transaction process (Solomon, 1997). So, establishing the relevance of customer involvement to bilingual service encounters should precede the discussion on this theoretical framework.

Customer involvement may be influenced by an array of factors like physical characteristics of product (Kinard & Capella, 2006; Wright, 1974), personal characteristics of consumer (Lastovicka & Gardner, 1978), and situational characteristics (Clarke & Belk, 1979). Literature contains different views of customer involvement, challenging the possibility of manipulating and measuring the construct "involvement" as a unitary one (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). For example, Clarke & Belk (1979) underscored customer involvement in the situation engulfing the product or service to be purchased. Houston & Rothschild (1977) distinguished between enduring and situational involvement where the latter reflects the idiosyncrasy of a particular situation. This situational involvement is provoked as and when a customer perceives some risk in a given situation (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). Sherif & Cantril (1947), Baudrillard (1968, 1970) and Laurent & Kapferer (1985) posit that involvement is there when a situation possesses elements that correspond to one's own identity in an unusual way. Besides, a situation perceived as novel or requiring active problem-solving may warrant customer involvement (Solomon, Surprenant, Czepiel, & Gutman, 1985). Applied to this study, these findings help understand the level of customer involvement in a bilingual service encounter. Language is recognized as the primary instrument of interpersonal identity negotiation (Bucholtz, 1999; Heller, 1992). This is because of the affective connotations language, as a communicator of personal identity, possesses for individuals in a bilingual service setting (Spolsky & Cooper, 1991). Pavlenko (2006) studied a group of multilingual speakers who speak 75 different first languages to analyze the relationship between second- language use and self-perception and found a significant impact of use of language on perceived personal identity. Brala (2007) also found that people's perceptions about how they are identified changes when they have to speak different languages. Likewise, ECL, in a bilingual service encounter, is also charged with typical

social meanings regarding the way a customer is perceived (Miller, 2000; Gee, 1996). In addition, the importance of language in bilingual service encounters indicates how much situational involvement is required from a customer for a successful service interaction. In service encounters, customers strive for competence to play their role in co-creating value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In this regard, they seek active dyadic interactions with employees (Bitner, 1990; Grönroos, 1984; Surprenant & Solomon, 1987). But, any communication difficulty because of the absence of preferred language places the interaction outcomes at risk (Holmqvist, 2011). Besides, customers used to strive for control over the interaction with the employee (Bagozzi & Kimmel, 1995; Hui & Bateson, 1991). Therefore, they generally want to interact in their preferred language with a view to exercise their control in the service encounter effectively (Kang, 2005; MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998). Thus, a bilingual service setting, which exposes a customer to questions and dynamics of identity negotiation, appears as a problem-solving situation and triggers high situational involvement. This suggests that linguistic issues in bilingual service encounters often comprise high-involvement problems.

Among the three alternative hierarchies of effects (Solomon, 1997), the standard learning hierarchy is based on the assumption of high customer involvement in the process of buying something (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001). Since the customers experiences high situational involvement in bilingual interactions, this study considers the standard learning hierarchy of effects, i.e. cognition→affect→behavior (Holbrook, 1986), to be the appropriate paradigm for hierarchical order of the three dimensions of attitude. According to this paradigm, customers begin by forming beliefs about an object; and the specific beliefs formed incite feelings (affective responses), which in turn shape behavioral responses (Solomon, Bermossy, & Askegaard, 2002).

Cognitive Responses to ECL

This study analyzes ECL as a possible source of two alternative routes of attitudes. In so doing, we need to know about cognitions, the initial dimension of attitude in standard learning hierarchy (Holbrook, 1986) as triggered by choice of language. Research findings show that differences among languages can bring about differing cognitions (Holtgraves & Kashima, 2008). In bilingual service settings where customers and employees speak two different languages, employees make an intuitive judgment about customer identity and language as they attempt to initiate conversation. Apart from pre-interaction intuition, this judgment can also be the result of interpersonal communication (Kashima, Klein, & Clark, 2007). One consequence of this judgment through a collaborative interaction is that employees and customers co-construct relative collective representations (Kashima et al., 2007). Collective representations in the bilingual context are connected with collective identity to which each of the parties belongs (Holtgraves & Kashima, 2008). Therefore, ECL can perpetuate intergroup differences among the parties involved, create linguistic intergroup bias, and encourage approval or disapproval in describing actions of ingroup and outgroup members (Maass, 1999; Maass & Arcuri, 1996; Maass, Milesi, Zabbini, & Stahlberg, 1995; Fiedler, Semin, & Finkenauer, 1993; Maass, Salvi, Arcuri, & Semin, 1989). Hence, identity negotiation becomes the focal point of the appreciative or unappreciative customer cognitions provoked by ECL (Maass, 1999). On the one hand, customers may perceive that their identity has been acknowledged and accommodated when employees discern and honor their language preferences. On the other hand, they may perceive that their identity has been ignored and some other identity has been imposed upon them when employees fail to adhere or adapt to their language preferences. Diversity accommodation and identity imposition comprise the two primary cognitive responses by customers to ECL.

Identity Imposition

Language carries cultural heritage; thus, it can be used to signal one's perceived identity (Smeets, 2004). Imposition of individual identity or social group membership also takes place through differentiated use of language (Miller, 2000). As such, in any service interaction, language becomes a significant means of identity negotiation. When customers, who generally take part in service interactions from a disadvantaged side (Anderson et al., 2013), negotiate their identity, there is a higher probability that they might interpret any intentional or unintentional cue like ECL as identity imposition. Identity imposition refers to making people burdened with a categorization in relation to others (Parsell, 2011). It is also defined as imposing distinctiveness upon people externally instead of letting them define it internally (Hecht et al., 1993). It can preempt customers from exercising their right to avow their individual identities in their own terms (Cornell & Hartmann, 2006; Zolfagharian, Saldivar, & Braun, 2016). It may even be interpreted as commercial intentions to distinguish between 'us' from 'them' leaving adverse consequences on customer perceptions (Cornell & Hartmann, 2006; Zolfagharian et al., 2016). Identity imposition in a bilingual service encounter may take place in several phases. Employee choice of a language to initiate interaction appears as one of the strongest means of expressing intuitive judgments about customer identity. An employee may make unconscious but intuitive evaluation of customer identity or social category by matching that customer's physical attributes with the ethnic cues stored in memory (Dane & Pratt, 2007; Gore & Sadler-Smith, 2011). This intuitive evaluation may inadvertently impose an unwarranted identity upon customers. If the initial choice of language is inconsistent with customer preference, which becomes apparent given customer verbal response, the employee may proceed by adapting to or ignoring customer

preference of language. Thus, perceived identity imposition can be ameliorated or affirmed (or even deepened) after the initial exchange.

ECL may take different forms through different combinations of employee choice of language to initiate conversation and subsequent adjustment to customer language preference in continuation of conversation. The choice of ethnic or non-ethnic/official language to initiate and continue conversation adds more dimensions to ECL in terms of its direct impacts on customer's cognitive responses. For example, when ECL ignores customers' preference for non-ethnic/official language expressed through their initial response to employee choice of conversation initiation language, their perception of employee action is unfavorably impacted. Preference for non-ethnic language shows customer inclination toward non-ethnic/national identification. When an employee ignores a customer's preference for the non-ethnic language, the customer may perceive that the employee is matching, consciously or unconsciously, his or her physical attributes with the ethnic cues stored in the employee memory and making intuitive judgment about the customer's social category (Dane & Pratt, 2007; Gore & Sadler-Smith, 2011). Such uncalled-for assignment of identity can place customers at the receiving end of identity imposition. Therefore, I hypothesize:

H1a. When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, customers perceive identity imposition.

Diversity Accommodation

Diversity accommodation emanates from cross cultural understanding as well as appreciation for differences in individual, organizational and societal interaction. Since service business exchanges are inseparable from such interactions, the need for diversity accommodation is an undeniable business reality and a crucial issue given the rapidly growing multicultural nature of today's markets (Barker & Hartel, 2004). Research on customer responses to service

provider behaviors point to employees' indifference toward diversity accommodation and provides evidences of inequitable level of services offered to diverse groups of customers (Barker & Hartel, 2004). Cox & Blake (1991) discussed the dimensions impacting diversity accommodation and asserted the role of maintaining flexibility in dealing with diverse customer groups. Front-line employees who are flexible in their role during interaction with multilingual customers are identified as more suitable than others in multicultural service settings (Furnham & Coveney, 1996; Bowen, 1996). Particularly, employees with pre-existing flexibility toward cultural diversity are found to serve intercultural encounters better than those without it (Härtel & Fujimoto, 2000; Powers & Ellison, 1995). On the other hand, diversity accommodation is ultimately translated as a favor to the minority customer groups and draws appreciative evaluation from them (McLaughlin, Bell, & Stringer, 2004; Cox & Blake, 1991). Language is considered an important vehicle of perceiving employee flexibility toward accommodating diverse ideas, beliefs, and cultures (Gallois & Callan, 1997) since the choice of different languages by two individuals interacting each other exhibits the cultural distance prevailing between them (Triandis, 1994). Therefore, ECL comprises a crucial source of customer perception of diversity accommodation in service encounters.

If employee choice of language adheres to customer preferences, a language alignment is created. Such an alignment facilitates mutual understanding between the two parties (Pickering & Garrod, 2004) and draws appreciation on the customer's part. When customer preference for ethnic language is confirmed through employee choice of ethnic language, customers appreciate employee deviation from the officially scripted language for the sake of customer comfort and may even take it as a favor to the social category they belong to (McLaughlin et al., 2004; Cox & Blake, 1991). Thus, such employee behavior can be taken as a diversity accommodation

instance, to be followed by favorable customer responses. Similar outcomes are expected when employees adapt to customer preference for ethnic language even though their initial choice of language had failed to adhere to customer preference. This is because adaptation to customer preference appears as redemption of employees to customers through adaptive selling (Román & Iacobucci, 2010; Franke & Park, 2006; Weitz, Sujan, & Sujan, 1986) and, as such, the initial disapproval to linguistic misalignment can be nullified through subsequent adaptation. Thus, I posit:

H1b. When their preference for ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, customers perceive diversity accommodation.

Customers' perception of diversity accommodation might not be in same level when their preference for ethnic language is adhered to and adapted to. ECL is expected to adhere to their ethnic preference and cause diversity accommodation. However, the degree of this perception varies across the level of employees' flexibility toward accommodating them. When they see the employee adapts to their preference with a view to accommodate their diversity they might be overwhelmingly surprised (Miller et al., 2000; Shostack, 1984). This surprising outcome is supposed to trigger even higher diversity accommodation among them compared to the outcome of the situation when their preferred language is adhered to in ECL without creating a surprise. As such, I hypothesize:

H1c. Customers perceive higher diversity accommodation when their preference for ethnic language is adapted to than when it is adhered to.

Apart from the direct impacts of ECL, the role of some moderators contributes toward splitting-up to two different routes of attitudes. The interplay among ECL, the cognitions, and the moderators exhibits various scenarios of ECL-cognition relationships.

Customer Bilingualism as a Moderator

When ECL ignores customer preference for non-ethnic/official language the degree of customer skill in ethnic and non-ethnic language is supposed to play an explicit role in determining the ensuing cognitions. Compared to bilingual ones, monolingual customers, who mainly speak official/non-ethnic language irrespective of their level of ethnic identification, possess more preference for official/non-ethnic language to interact with an employee. These customers evaluate an ethnic language, ignoring the preferred non-ethnic language, as ECL as the employee's reliance on their ethnic cues derived from their physical attributes (Dane & Pratt, 2007; Gore & Sadler-Smith, 2011). For example, Mexican Americans who speaks only English consider employee choice of Spanish to interact with them as a judgment call about their ethnicity. The difficulty they feel in communication incites the perception of identity imposition. As such, monolingual customers are more likely than the bilingual ones to perceive this linguistic disparity as an unwarranted identity imposition upon themselves.

When customers prefer non-ethnic/official language their relative skill in non-ethnic or both the languages may not make them perceive identity imposition because of the ECL which adheres to their preference. Rather, this choice of language would be perceived as scripted officially by the firm for which the employee is working. They would not perceive identity imposition even if the employee initiates conversation in ethnic language but immediately adapts to official language sensing the customer's different preference. The disapproval caused by non-adherence to customer preference in initial choice of language would be nullified by the subsequent adaptation in continuation of conversation. Therefore, I hypothesize:

H2a. When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, monolingual customers will perceive higher identity imposition than bilingual customers. When customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, the effect of customer mono/bilingualism will be null.

Bilingual customers, who are fluent and proficient in both the languages, would not feel so much affective or cognitive deprivation as the monolinguals do. For example, Mexican Americans, who are proficient in both of English and Spanish, feel lesser difficulty in communication when Spanish is chosen to interact with them. Therefore, they are more likely than the monolingual Mexican Americans to evaluate this situation leniently and be more forgiving in reactions to such linguistic non-adherence. Rather, such a disparity may relatively be the source of appreciation from these bilingual customers. They might think that the employee proactively judges the physical attributes to predict their ethnicity and thereby chooses to accommodate their diversity through ECL only to make them feel more comfortable albeit that is not the official/host country language.

In the cases of employee adherence to customer preference of non-ethnic/official language through ECL, customers would not perceive diversity accommodation irrespective of their level of command over one or both of the languages. This is because they would perceive ECL as scripted officially by the firm for which the employee is working. The cognitive response would be the same even if the employee initiates conversation in ethnic language but immediately adapts to official language sensing the customer's different preference. Customers generally possess a pre-existing idea that they may have to switch between languages in bilingual service interactions (Callahan, 2006). Hence, in such a situation, when they see the employee switches to their preferred language, with or without an accent, they might be overwhelmingly surprised with the employees' effort to accommodate them (Miller et al., 2000; Shostack, 1984). However, unlike the customers preferring ethnic language, they do not perceive such an adaptation as a favor like their diversity accommodation (McLaughlin et al., 2004; Cox & Blake,

1991) when they prefer the firms' officially scripted language for interaction. Rather, they take it as the restoration of justice to them. Therefore, I hypothesize:

H2b. When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, bilingual customers will perceive higher diversity accommodation than monolingual customers. When customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, the effect of customer mono/bilingualism will be null.

Self-Concept Clarity as a Moderator

Self-concept clarity (henceforth SCC) refers to "the extent to which self-knowledge is clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent and temporally stable" (Lee, Lee, & Sanford, 2010, p. 1481). Customers, irrespective of their physically exposed ethnic attributes, may possess high or low SCC (Lee et al., 2010). While the low-SCC customers are relatively confused about their identity the high-SCC customers may affiliate themselves either with an ethnic identity (e.g. Mexican) or a non-ethnic/national identity (e.g. American) (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Ravallee, & Lehman, 1996). When the ECL adheres or adapts to customers' ethnic language preference and accommodate their differences thereby both of high and low-SCC customers would perceive diversity accommodation out of thankfulness to employees. However, compared to high-SCC customers, low-SCC customers would perceive higher diversity accommodation. This is because customers, who do not strongly affiliate themselves with their respective group, tend to be uncertain of who they are, exhibit higher level of excitability towards service encounters where issues of identity may arise (Harter, 1999; Rotheram & Phinney, 1987).

When their preference for ethnic language is ignored in ECL, both of high and low-SCC customers will perceive neither diversity accommodation nor identity imposition. They are supposed to remain indifferent to such employee action because the employee insists on using officially scripted language. Therefore, I posit:

H3a. When their preference for ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, low-SCC customers will perceive higher diversity accommodation than high-SCC customers. When customer preference for ethnic language is ignored, the effect of SCC will be null.

For any interaction, high-SCC customers usually prefer the language aligned with their affiliation (Harter, 1999). As such, a customer, who affiliates themselves with non-ethnic/national identity, prefers non-ethnic/official language (e.g. English) to interact with others. Accordingly, low-SCC customers are relatively indifferent about language preference and, therefore, may favor the use of any of the ethnic or non-ethnic languages. Published literature suggests that the strength of SCC influences individuals' reactance process when they comply with a product or service offer and the level of compliance is negatively related to the strength of SCC (Lee et al., 2010). Therefore, the level of customers' SCC plays explicit role in determining the relatively perceived cognitions when customer preference for non-ethnic language is ignored in ECL. A non-ethnic language may generally be expected as ECL since it is supposed to be officially scripted language for interaction. As such, ignoring preference for official language is supposed to ignite reactance and lessen the possibility of compliance (Lee et al., 2010) with employee action. In addition, such kind of ignoring prompts customers, irrespective of their SCC level, to perceive it as employees' overreliance on the ethnic cues derived from their physical attributes (Dane & Pratt, 2007; Gore & Sadler-Smith, 2011). Thus, both of high and low-SCC customers may perceive that the employee is imposing an identity on them through ECL rather than letting them identify themselves in their own terms. However, compared to low-SCC customers, high-SCC customers would feel affectively more deprived because of their higher affiliation with non-ethnic identity. This would lead them toward perceiving higher level of identity imposition. In contrast, low-SCC customers, with their relatively weaker affiliation to any particular identity or language, might be relatively forgiving to such employee action and perceive lower identity imposition than the high-SCC customers do.

When their preference for non-ethnic/official language is adhered or adapted to, both of high and low-SCC customers are supposed to perceive neither identity imposition nor diversity accommodation. Since their preferences are adhered to customers would not perceive identity imposition. They would not perceive diversity accommodation either as they would evaluate it as mere following of officially scripted practice and no favor to them. In the cases of adaptation to customer preference for non-ethnic/official language, low-SCC customers would not perceive diversity accommodation since they would see it as the restoration of official language and, hence, no favor to them (McLaughlin et al., 2004; Cox & Blake, 1991). Identity imposition would not be perceived either because of their confusion with ethnic identity. In similar scenarios, the high-SCC customers might go through a different psychological process. Due to employee choice of ethnic language to initiate conversation, they are supposed to feel identity imposition initially because of their strong identification with non-ethnic culture. But, this feeling would not perpetuate. Collins (1990) showed how an emotion generated during an interaction can be an input for subsequent interactions. But, compared to initial pleasant emotions, initial unpleasant emotions are less likely to persist even in the case of unjust outcomes (Stets & Osborn, 2008) let alone the just ones like the adaptation scenarios. As such, the initial unpleasant feeling would be nullified by the adaptation of preferred language and they would perceive ECL neither as identity imposition nor as diversity accommodation. Based on this analysis, I posit:

H3b. When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, high-SCC customers will perceive higher identity imposition than low-SCC customers. When customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, the effect of SCC will be null.

Affective Consequences of Identity Imposition

Drawing upon the hierarchy of effects (Solomon, 1997), this study determines the appropriate hierarchy of attitudes triggered by ECL and discussed identity imposition as the

unfavorable cognitive response, which also initiates the unfavorable stream of attitudes. After discussion on the cognitions and their relationships with ECL moderated by two constructs in previous sections, this section conceptualizes the theoretical framework working upon identity imposition and subsequent affective responses.

Psychological Reactance Theory

Customers generally hold higher possibility of perceiving unfavorable cognition like identity imposition out of ECL since they take part in service interactions from a comparatively disadvantaged side (Anderson et al., 2013). They may perceive ECL as an intuitive evaluation about their identity or social category generated by matching their physical attributes with the ethnic cues stored in employees' memory (Dane & Pratt, 2007; Gore & Sadler-Smith, 2011). Identity imposition also preempts customers from exercising their right to avow self-identities in their chosen terms (Zolfagharian et al., 2016; Cornell & Hartmann, 2006). Thus, identity imposition impinges customer freedom and autonomy and ignites an affective state called psychological reactance (Dillard & Shen, 2005). Psychological reactance elicits reaction intended to regain lost freedom and autonomy (Brehm, 1966, 1972; Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Wicklund, 1974). It may encourage a customer to espouse an attitude against the attitude encouraged or coerced through jeopardizing his/her freedom and, thereby, augments his/her resistance to an act of persuasion (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Extant research further indicates that interactional features like controlling (Miller, Lane, Deatrick, Young, & Potts, 2007) or explicit (Grandpre, Alvaro, Burgoon, Miller, & Hall, 2003) language seems to ignite the perception of curtailed freedom and provoke psychological reactance. So, it is plausible that customers may experience reactance whenever their free action or choice is thwarted through non-adherence to or ignorance of their language preference. I, therefore, adopt *Psychological Reactance Theory* as

the overarching theory for explaining the customers' psychological mechanism that underlie and shape the impact of identity imposition on customer affects.

Affects Associated with Identity Imposition

Negative affect or emotions are incited when individuals perceive disparity between their choice and the environment (Dillard & Peck, 2001). Accordingly, psychological reactance, aroused by identity imposition, may entail an array of disapproving reactions (Dillard & Shen, 2005) since identity imposition is generally a result of disparity between customer choice of asserting identity in own terms and the identity imposed upon him/her by an employee. Rains & Turner (2007) also showed that individuals, being reactant, expresses disapproving attitudes. Reactance may provoke them to behave opposing the action imposed upon them (Buller, Borland, & Burgoon, 1998). Such kind of imposition (e.g. identity imposition) entails the feeling of being judged and offended by others (Dane & Pratt, 2007; Gore & Sadler-Smith, 2011). Offending action was, again, found to be the source of feeling upset (Johnson & Rule, 1986)). As such, particular patterns of ECL might frustrate customers. Reactance may also promote unfavorable attitudes towards the action or object that has been imposed (see Dillard & Shen, 2005; Rains & Turner, 2007). It may even incite adverse attitudes towards the individuals or other sources that restricts freedom (Miller et al., 2007). Because of its multifaceted reactions reactance is conceived in different ways. It was initially described as the experience of being dominated and forced by others (Brehm, 1966). But, Dillard & Shen (2005) assume it as a blend of cognition and anger. According to them, reactance comprises both of affective and cognitive components. Some other writers considered the similarities between the sources of reactance and cognitive appraisals that results in anger and opined that reactance might be, in whole or in part, an affect that makes someone angry (Dillard & Meijenders, 2002; Nabi, 2002). Quick &

Stephenson (2008) studied the impact of "dogmatic messages" on communication and opined that reactance comes with anger and unfavorable thoughts. Earlier, a study on "controlling language" identified reactance having effect on attitude toward topic and source (Miller et al., 2007). In a different study, dominance was found congruent with the level control felt by someone in a given situation (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Besides, sadness was found as a result of such controlled situations (Watson & Spence, 2007). Quick, Kam, Morgan, Montero Liberona, & Smith (2015) also reported the arousal of sadness where customers perceive something lost, e.g. the freedom to assert identity in own terms. Lerner, Small, & Loewenstein (2004) showed how sadness prompts people to reverse their product choice. Thus, sadness is possibly a component of the gross feeling of reactance. Besides, Mikulincer (1988) showed that loss of control over a situation results in helplessness. Based on the discussion made above, this dissertation will consider *angry, judged, dominated, sad, upset,* and *helpless* as affective ramifications of identity imposition. However, a pilot study would be conducted to reaffirm the presence of these negative emotions and the operationalization of negative affect would be adjusted according to the findings of that study.

H4. The higher the perceived identity imposition, the stronger the negative affect.

Affective Consequences of Diversity Accommodation

As discussed earlier, this study conceptualizes and models the role of diversity accommodation as the appreciative cognitive response to ECL. Diversity accommodation is one of the two possible initial cognitive responses toward ECL. Drawing upon the hierarchy of effects (Solomon, 1997), we already know that the favorable stream of attitudes is initiated with the evoking of diversity accommodation. After discussion on the affective consequences of

identity imposition in the previous section, this section conceptualizes the theoretical framework working upon diversity accommodation, and subsequent affective responses.

Communication Accommodation Theory

Diversity accommodation emanates from cross cultural understanding as well as appreciation for differences in individual, organizational and societal interaction through acting or adapting to the needs of people from diverse backgrounds (Barker & Hartel, 2004). It creates a favorable interaction context marked with flexibility for dealing with multilingual customers (Cox & Blake, 1991). Communication accommodation theory (Giles, 1973; Giles & Powesland, 1975; Giles et al., 1991; Gallois & Giles, 1998) suggests that such a favorable interaction context generated through diversity accommodation offers a flexible service setting that evokes emotion among the benefited customer groups (Gallois, 1993). Giles et al. (1991) posited that it happens because such an accommodation generates relatively higher level of appreciation for the employee and thereby the customer perceives convergence with the employee, which in turn enhances the effectiveness of the conversation as well as the mutual understanding between the employee and the customer. They also observed that, in a bilingual service setting, an appropriate ECL is incredibly important because it can easily trigger an appreciative evaluation in this area of communication and can unwittingly promote positive affective responses. Therefore, this study adopts *communication accommodation theory* (Giles, 1973; Giles & Powesland, 1975; Giles et al., 1991; Gallois & Giles, 1998) as the overarching theory for explaining the customers' psychological mechanism that underlie and shape the impact of diversity accommodation on customer affect.

Affects Associated with Diversity Accommodation

Communication accommodation theory holds that, compared to monolingual contexts, customers are more likely to be affectively responsive in multilingual contexts. Besides, affective communication is facilitated through favorable contextual elements like diversity accommodation. This theory also suggests that customers feel a favorable change in their comfort level once they perceive themselves accommodated in a multilingual context and converge toward employees accordingly (Gallois, 1993). The level of convergence of bilingual customers also depends on how much pleased they are with the employee action toward diversity accommodation (Barrett, Robin, Pietromonaco, & Eyssell, 1998). On the other hand, such convergence, off and on, evokes an unconscious need for social integration and leads customers toward perceiving inclusion into the broader group (Giles et al., 1991). In fact, their eagerness to be socially more accommodated leads them toward such an affective response (Chatman, 2010; Shelton, 2003). Social inclusion through diversity accommodation also makes them feel excited (Akudinobi, 1997) and respected (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). It may also foster pride among the customers for their community and help develop new insights about their idiosyncrasies, and promote cross-cultural understanding (Rubalcava, 1991). Therefore, this dissertation will consider *comfortable, pleased, excited, included, respected,* and *proud* as affective ramifications of diversity accommodation. However, a pilot study would be conducted to reaffirm the presence of these positive emotions and the operationalization of positive affect would be adjusted according to the findings of that study.

H5. The higher the perceived diversity accommodation, the stronger the positive affect.

Behavioral Intentions Associated with Affective Responses

Research on emotions documents support for its involvement in changes across behavioral responses (e.g., Colquitt, 2004; Dolan, 2002; Van denBos & Lind, 2001; Levenson, 1994; Panksepp, 1994; Ekman, 1992). This study reviews literature to identify the most pertinent behavioral responses instigated by emotions. A good number of studies suggest how emotions lead customers to word-of-mouth (henceforth WOM). Several studies reported how anger prompts consumers to be engaged in negative WOM as revenge or a means of venting feelings (Dubé & Maute, 1996; Maute & Dubé, 1999; Nyer, 1997). Bougie, Pieters, & Zeelenberg (2003) also found dissatisfaction unrelated to WOM when they controlled for anger although Wetzer, Zeelenberg, & Pieters (2007) listed dissatisfaction along with anger as an affect related to WOM. However, upset and helpless customers may engage themselves in negative WOM to aware others about possible setback with a service while sad customers try to strengthen social ties as well as alert others through their involvement in such WOM (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004; 1999). In contrast, Söderlund & Rosengren (2007) as well as Dick & Basu (1994) found some consumers' affective experience responsible behind generating positive WOM. Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu (2008) specifically discussed how customer comfort may prompt customers to such WOM. Ferguson, Paulin, & Bergeron (2010) added pleasure to comfort as antecedents to positive WOM. Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst (2005) also explained how pleasurable fulfillment leads to such WOM. Pleasure was also found causing repurchase intention (Oh, 1999). Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) showed how excited customers get involved in brand love and ultimately become engaged in positive WOM and feel repurchase intention. Hars & Ou (2002) and Cheung & Lee (2012) studied the affective feeling of being included. They defined it as a feeling of affective involvement with a particular group. When customers feel themselves as part of a

particular community and align own goals with that community goals they become interested to do something helpful to that community. Accordingly, customers may feel kinship with a particular service brand or setting and get involved in positive WOM. Corfman, Lehman, & Narayanan (1991) and Ferguson et al. (2010) studied two categories of emotions and explained the impact of pride and sense of being respected on such WOM. Besides, Westbrook (1987) studied emotions and found positive and negative affect influences customer satisfaction while Han, Back, & Barrett (2009) found customer satisfaction influences repurchase intention. However, Gountas & Gountas (2007) observed that customers exhibit various degree of repurchase intention because of positive and negative emotional influences. Earlier, Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer (1999), Taylor (2000), and Arora & Singer (2006) also found negative and positive affect stimulating behavioral response like repurchase intention. Thus, this literature review suggests that the behavioral intentions like WOM and repurchase intention turns from unfavorable to favorable direction with the arousal of weaker negative affect or stronger positive affect and vice-versa. Based on this discussion, this study considers *WOM* and *repurchase intention* as the behavioral consequences caused by emotions. Therefore, I posit:

H6. The stronger the negative affect, (a) the less likely the repurchase intention and (b) the more likely the negative WOM.

H7. The stronger the positive affect, (a) the more likely the repurchase intention and (b) the more likely the positive WOM.

Control Variables

Besides the emotions discussed and summarized above, literature suggests several other factors of behavioral consequences, i.e. WOM and repurchase intention. These behavioral intentions may be influenced by an array of antecedents. This study controls the factors of such behavioral intentions which are most pertinent to this research context. WOM and repurchase are a kind of behavior that is dependent on individual intention to perform it (Kim, Han, & Lee,

2001). Theory of planned behavior suggests that social factor like subjective norms have effect on behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991). In a bilingual service setting where identity question arises due to ECL, customers' subjective ethnic norm is supposed to be a factor of their behavioral intention toward the service. Subjective ethnic refers to their belief about whether most people from their ethnic group approve or disapprove of their behavior. Generally, the stronger the subjective ethnic norm the stronger is a customer's intention to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Apart from subjective ethnic norm, relational investment can also explain variation in repurchase intention (Colgate & Lang, 2001; Burnham, Frels, & Mahajan, 2003; Patterson & Smith, 2003). Customers may continue with a relationship if they get relational benefits like confidence and special treatment benefits even if the service attributes appear not to be completely satisfactory (Gwinner, Gremler, & Bitner, 1998). Extant literature also provides evidence for the negative effect of attractiveness of competing brands on the customers' behavioral intentions (Sharma & Patterson, 2000; Wathne, Biong, & Heide, 2001). Attractiveness of competing brands refers to customer perception about the degree of availability of viable competing alternatives in the marketplace (Jones, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2000). Customers' intention to repurchase or spreading WOM may vary with the changes in their perception about the attractiveness of the alternative brands in terms of those brands' level of service, proximity of location, price etc. (Sharma & Patterson, 2000; Wathne et al., 2001). Based on this discussion, I decided to control the effect of *subjective ethnic norm, relational investment,* and *attractiveness of competing brands* while measuring the impact of positive and negative affect on the behavioral consequences.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Model

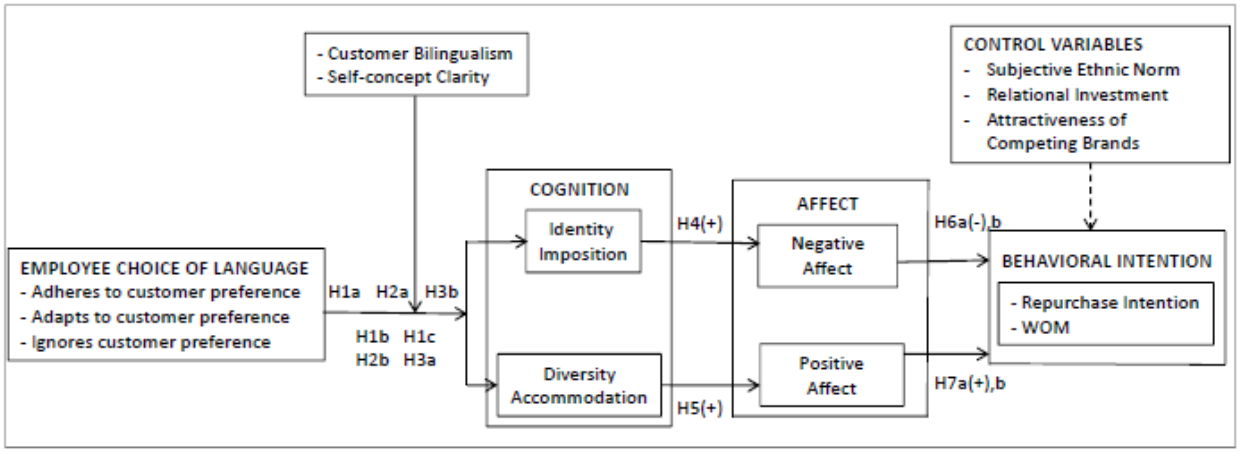

Table 1: List of Hypotheses

H1a.	When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, customers perceive identity imposition.
H1b.	When their preference for ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, customers perceive diversity accommodation.
H1c.	Customers perceive higher diversity accommodation when their preference for ethnic language is adapted to than when it is adhered to.
H2a.	When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, monolingual customers will perceive higher identity imposition than bilingual customers. When customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, the effect of customer mono/bilingualism will be null.
H2b.	When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, bilingual customers will perceive higher diversity accommodation than monolingual customers. When customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, the effect of customer mono/bilingualism will be null.
H3a.	When their preference for ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, low-SCC customers will perceive higher diversity accommodation than high-SCC customers. When customer preference for ethnic language is ignored, the effect of SCC will be null.
H3b.	When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, high-SCC customers will perceive higher identity imposition than low-SCC customers. When customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, the effect of SCC will be null.
H4.	The higher the perceived identity imposition, the stronger the negative affect.
H5.	The higher the perceived diversity accommodation, the stronger the positive affect.
H6.	The stronger the negative affect, (a) the less likely the repurchase intention and (b) the more likely the negative WOM.
H7.	The stronger the positive affect, (a) the more likely the repurchase intention and (b) the more likely the positive WOM.

Table 2: Hypotheses Tested across Scenarios

Scenarios / Language Preference	Adherence to CLP	Adapted to CLP	Ignoring CLP
Non-Ethnic Language/ English			H1a: IDI
	H2a: Null CB effect on ECL–IDI relationship		H2a: IDI - Mono>Bi
	H2b: Null CB effect on ECL–DA relationship		H2b: DA - Bi>Mono
	H3b: Null SCC effect on ECL–IDI relationship		H3b: IDI – HSCC>LSCC
	H4 – H7		H4 – H7
Ethnic Language/ Spanish	H1b: DA		
	H1c: DA<DA		
	H3a: DA – LSCC>HSCC		H3a: Null SCC effect on ECL–DA relationship
	H4 – H7		H4 – H7

CLP: Customer Language Preference
IDI: Identity Imposition
DA: Diversity Accommodation
Mono: Monolingual customers
Bi: Bilingual customers
CB: Customer Bilingualism
HSCC: High Self-Concept Clarity customers
LSCC: Low Self-Concept Clarity customers
SCC: Self-Concept Clarity

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This dissertation comprises two pre-tests and a main study to test and validate the proposed theoretical model. The two pre-tests are to test the appropriateness of the emotions listed in the research model. The main study is to test the moderated effects on the relationship between ECL (the stimulus) and the cognitive responses, as well as the subsequent effects of cognitive responses on affect and behavioral intentions.

Instrument

This study used a 3 (employee choice of language: adheres to, adapts to, ignores) × 2 (customer preference of language: English, Spanish) scenario-based between-subjects experiment to capture the effects of ECL when it adheres, adapts, and ignores customer language preference. One instrument with six scenarios was used to capture these effects. The different versions of the instrument were alike except in the narrative of the scenarios (i.e., customer language preference, employee initial choice of language, and employee choice of language after customer's initial response). The common portion of the scenarios fixed the factors that prior research identifies as having impact on customers' behavioral intentions. These factors are service/product quality, pricing, convenience of the store, core service failure, ethical issues, peer pressure, corporate image, brand image, and value. Other relevant factors were accounted for by incorporating them in measurement and analysis.

The instrument began with two qualifying/screening questions: one item to confirm that the respondent is a Mexican American ("Are you a Mexican American?") and the other item to capture the existence of the preference for English or Spanish ("At pharmacies, in what language do you prefer employees to speak to you?"). Given their preference, respondents were instructed to imagine themselves in one of the 6 scenarios and complete the tasks based on that. The manipulations of adherence to, adaptation to, and ignoring of customer preference were checked using two items. Once the manipulations were checked, the respondents were asked to complete the scale items, mostly adapted from published studies. Four marketing professors reviewed the instrument. Their comments were solicited and incorporated to improve content validity.

Survey Context

I conducted this study in the context of pharmacies since customers can frequently access this service and the nature of exchange between the provider and the customer at pharmacies is usually transactional. In addition, pharmacy as a context offers customers the scope to make comparisons easily and exhibit varying levels of behavioral outcomes including switching due to the presence of available competitors. Besides, the high level of variability in customer pharmacy-related needs provides the scope to capture the variability of service experience and attitudes toward it.

Pre-Tests

Before the abovementioned experiments, Pre-test 1 and Pre-test 2 were conducted using the same scenarios. Pre-test 2 survey included the same scales that were used to conduct the main study. Although the two pre-tests are mainly to test the appropriateness of the 12 positive and negative emotions listed in the research model, I also tried to use these tests to make

predictions about the validity of relationships between ECL and the hypothesized cognitions, i.e. identity imposition and diversity accommodation. In addition, I also pre-tested the variation in negative and positive affects due to ECL. While Pre-test 1 was a recall test, Pre-test 2 comprised a recognition test. As such, Pre-test 1 used open-ended questions while I opted for likert scales or multiple choice questions in Pre-test 2. The findings of these tests were considered to adjust the model before approaching the main study.

These surveys targeted at least 10% of the sample size of the main study (Connelly, 2008), i.e. 22 Mexican Americans who are 18 years or older and who had strong preference for either English or Spanish at pharmacies. In order to administer the survey, the researcher intercepted the potential respondents in a campus in Southwestern United States, where a large proportion of population is primarily immigrants from Mexico (Stepler, 2016). Thus, non-probability based sampling was used (Cooper & Schindler, 2008) to conduct these surveys. The detailed analyses and the results of these studies are discussed below.

Pre-Test 1

Pre-test 1 was conducted on 22 Mexican American pharmacy customers using six study scenarios. These scenarios are presented in Table 4. The respondents were asked to carefully read the scenario assigned to them based on their language preference. They were then asked five open-ended questions: “Imagine that the above scenario actually happened to you. How personally involving would this situation be to you?”, “Have you had similar experiences in your real life? How realistic does this scenario sound to you?”, “How frequently do you encounter this scenario in pharmacies or other retail stores”, and “What would you think and how would you feel about this interaction if you were the customer in this scenario?”. The objective of the first question was to gauge the typical level of consumer involvement with the research context while

the second, third, and fourth questions aimed at verifying the empirical presence of the postulated scenarios. The fifth question was to explore the possible cognitive or affective consequences of the scenarios. Respondents generally reported that the situation would be personally involving to them. They also found the scenarios to be present in real life and shared that they had encountered similar situations before. In response to the final question, all respondents alluded to specific affects that they would experience given the scenarios. The affects mentioned confirmed the ones that were incorporated *a priori*. Overall, this recall test through pre-test 1 provided support for the research model.

Pre-Test 2

Pre-test 2 included all the scenarios used in Pre-test 1. These scenarios were assigned to the respondents based on their language preference. There were a total of 95 valid responses after removing the ones that did not satisfy the screening questions regards Mexican American identity and existence of language preference. The respondents were asked to imagine themselves in the scenario assigned to them and respond to the questions based on that. They found the research context personally relevant and involving, with a composite score of 4.96.

Two one-way between-subject ANOVA tests were conducted to compare the effect of ECL on identity imposition and diversity accommodation in the six scenarios. ECL was found to have significant effects on identity imposition [$F(5, 89) = 6.24$, $p<.001$] and diversity accommodation [$F(5, 89) = 6.66$, $p<.001$]. Each of these two tests was followed by *post hoc* comparisons of the mean scores of identity imposition and diversity accommodation across the six scenarios. For respondents with non-ethnic language preference, the mean identity imposition score was significantly higher (a) in the adaptation scenario ($M=5.54$) relative to the adherence scenario ($M=3.81$; $p<.001$); and (b) in the ignored scenario ($M=5.49$) relative to the adherence

scenario (M=3.81; p<.001). These results are consistent with the hypothesis although the mean identity imposition score was not significantly different between the ignored (M=5.49) and adaptation scenarios (M=5.54; p=1.000). For respondents with ethnic language preference, the mean identity imposition scores were not significantly different between adherence and adaptation scenarios (M=4.67 vs. 4.36; p=.995), or between adherence and ignored scenarios (M=4.67 vs. 4.37; p=.998), or between adaptation and ignored scenarios (M=4.36 vs. 4.37; p=1.000).

For respondents with non-ethnic language preference, mean diversity accommodation scores were not significantly different between adherence and adaptation (M=4.58 vs. 4.81; p=.995) and between adherence and ignored scenarios (M=4.58 vs. 3.50; p=.123). However, adaptation had a significantly higher diversity accommodation score relative to ignored scenarios (M=4.81 vs. 3.50; p<.05). For respondents with ethnic language preference, no significant difference was found in the mean diversity accommodation scores between adherence and adaptation scenarios (M=5.76 vs. 5.69; p=1.000). In contrast, that score was significantly higher in the adherence (M=5.76) and adaptation (M=5.69) scenarios relative to the ignored scenario (M=2.70; both p<.005). These findings are consistent with the hypotheses related to customers who prefer ethnic language.

Subsequently, two one-way between-subject ANOVA tests were conducted to compare the effect of ECL on negative affect and positive affect in the six scenarios. Composite scores for negative and positive affects were used for these tests. ECL showed a significant effect on negative affect [F(5, 89) = 2.96, p<.05] and marginally significant effect on positive affect [F(5, 89) = 2.30, p=.052]. In *post hoc* comparisons for respondents with non-ethnic language preference, the mean negative affect composite scores were not significantly different between

adherence and adaptation scenarios (M=1.98 vs. 3.28; p=.109) or between adherence and ignored scenarios (M=1.98 vs. 3.08; p=.240) or between adaptation and ignored scenarios (M=3.28 vs. 3.08; p=.999). Similarly, for respondents with ethnic language preference, the mean negative affect scores were not significantly different between adherence and adaptation scenarios (M=2.43 vs. 2.15; p=.999) or between adherence and ignored scenarios (M=2.43 vs. 4.39; p=.261) or between adaptation and ignored scenarios (M=2.15 vs. 4.39; p=.141).

For respondents with non-ethnic language preference, the mean positive affect composite scores were not significantly different between adherence and adaptation scenarios (M=4.30 vs. 4.11; p=.999) or between adherence and ignored scenarios (M=4.30 vs. 3.57; p=.656) or between adaptation and ignored scenarios (M=4.11 vs. 3.57; p=.878). For respondents with ethnic language preference, the mean positive affect scores were not significantly different across adherence and adaptation scenarios (M=4.28 vs. 4.98; p=.948) and between adherence and ignored scenarios (M=4.28 vs. 2.36; p=.265). However, that score was significantly higher in the adaptation scenario (M=4.98) relative to the ignored scenario (M=2.36; p<.005). In summary, while ANOVAs indicated significant variation in negative and positive affects across ECL scenarios, only one of the 12 *post hoc* comparisons appeared to be significant. This is partially attributable to the small sample size used in Pre-test 2.

This research hypothesized positive relationships between identity imposition and negative affect and between diversity accommodation and positive affect. Two linear regressions were run to inspect these relationships using Pre-test 2 data. Significant positive associations were found between identity imposition and negative affect (b=.26; p<.05) and between diversity accommodation and positive affect (b=.55, p<.001), with variance explained (R^2) exceeding .07 and .31 [F(1,93) = 6.94 and 41.24; p<.05 and p<.001], respectively.

Finally, 12 linear regressions were run to test the pertinence of each of the 12 negative or positive emotions. Identity imposition was significantly associated with *angry* (b=.27, p<.01; R^2=.07, F[1,93] = 7.07, p<.01), *dominated* (b=.22, p<.05; R^2=.05, F[1,93] = 4.70, p<.05), and *upset* (b=.38, p<.001; R^2=.15, F[1,93] = 15.94, p<.001); marginally associated with *judged* (b=.20, p=.054; R^2=.04, F[1,93] = 3.81, p=.054); but not associated with *sad* (b=.06, p=.558; R^2=.004, F[1,92] = .35, p=.558), or *helpless* (b=.04, p=.684; R^2=.002, F[1,93] =.17, p=.684). Diversity accommodation was significantly associated with *comfortable* (b=.45, p<.001; R^2=.20, F[1,93] = 23.43, p<.001), *pleased* (b=.45, p<.001; R^2=.21, F[1,93] = 23.92, p<.001), *excited* (b=.24, p<.05; R^2=.06, F[1,91] = 5.43, p<.05), *included* (b=.37, p<.001; R^2=.14, F[1,92] = 14.62, p<.001), *respected* (b=.54, p<.001; R^2=.29, F[1,93] = 38.13, p<.001), and *proud* (b=.37, p<.001; R^2=.14, F[1,92] = 14.42, p<.001). Given the small sample size of Pre-test 2, all of these 12 emotions will be used in the main study.

Sample

This main study was conducted on Mexican Americans who are 18 years or older and who have strong preference for English or Spanish to interact with employees at pharmacies. Mexican Americans were recruited since (a) their language, Spanish, is generally spoken by the second largest population group of the United States and (b) they comprise a distinctive market segment for various services (Gail Perry, 2008; Stevenson & Plath, 2006). A total of 220 respondents were targeted so that at least 30 responses per experimental cell could be secured. The scenario based survey was conducted by Centiment.co.

Measures

All of the measures except those for WOM were adapted from extant marketing literatures. Measures for WOM were developed since no such scale is available in extant

research publications. Apart from the measured variables, some of the variables were manipulated.

Manipulated Variables

ECL may take different forms based on the employee choice of language and employee response to customer language preference. These forms, i.e. adherence to, adaptation to and ignoring of customer language preference constitute the independent variables of this study. The manipulation of ECL was checked using two items: adherence to customer language preference was checked using: "Did the employee greet you in your preferred language?" while adaptation to and ignoring of customer language preference were checked using another item: "If you answered "No", did the employee acknowledge your language preference and adapt accordingly?". An affirmative answer to the latter question denotes adaptation to customer language preference while a negative answer denotes ignoring of that preference.

Measured Variables

All the constructs were measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree', except customer bilingualism, negative affect, positive affect, and WOM. Customer bilingualism was captured on a 5-point semantic differential scale from 'very low' to 'like a native speaker' or from 'very poor' to 'very well'. Extant research on emotions generally measures each with a single item (e.g. Stets & Osborn, 2008; Antón, Camarero, & Carrero, 2007; Maute & Dubé, 1999). I captured negative affect with six single items, each measuring a specific negative emotion (angry, judged, dominated, sad, upset, and helpless). Likewise, positive affect was captured via six items (comfortable, pleased, excited, included, respected, and proud). Responses to every item were captured on a 7-point Likert scale from 'Not at all' to 'intensely' (Stets & Osborn, 2008). The direction of WOM was measured by semantic differential scale

ranging from -5 to +5, with the negative portion of the continuum representing negative WOM and the positive end representing positive WOM. Items for identity imposition and diversity accommodation have been adapted from a study on organizational behavior (McKay, Avery, Liao, & Morris, 2011). Table 3 depicts the measures used in the study.

Table 3: Scale Items

Construct; Source	Item
Identity Imposition McKay et al. (2011)	The employee formed an opinion about who I am based on my appearance.
	The employee perceived me as a typical member of my ethnic group.
	The employee had his/her preconceived idea about who I am.
	The employee had a stereotypical understanding of my identity.
	To the employee, I came across as representative of my ethnic group.
Diversity Accommodation; McKay et al. (2011)	The employee showed an understanding of my preference.
	The employee honored my distinctiveness.
	The employee approached me in a diversity-friendly manner.
	The employee treated me with an open mind.
	The employee interacted with me in an equitable manner.
Customer Bilingualism; Luna, Ringberg, & Peracchio (2008); Liu, Bates, & Li (1992)	Speaking
	Listening
	Understand cooking directions, such as those in a recipe.
	Understand newspaper headlines.
	Read personal letters or notes written to you.
	Read popular novels without using a dictionary.
	Make out a shopping list.
	Fill out a job application form requiring information about your interests and qualifications.
	Write a letter to a friend.
	Leave a note for someone explaining where you will be or when you will come home.
	Write an advertisement to sell a bicycle.
Self-concept Clarity; Campbell et al. (1996); Lee et al. (2010)	My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another. (r)
	On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion. (r)
	I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am. (r)
	Sometimes I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be. (r)
	When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like. (r)
	I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality.
	Sometimes I think I know other people better than I know myself. (r)
	My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently. (r)
	If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another day. (r)
	Even if I wanted to, I don't think I would tell someone what I'm really like.
	In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.

	It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want. (r)
Negative Affect	Angry
	Judged
	Dominated
	Sad
	Upset
	Helpless
Positive Affect	Comfortable
	Pleased
	Excited
	Included
	Respected
	Proud
WOM	Spread negative word-of-mouth ….. Spread positive word-of-mouth
	Warn against ….. Recommend
	Bad mouth ….. Praise publicly
Repurchase Intention; Swanson & Kelley (2001)	I would use XYZ again if I have a choice.
	I will go back to XYZ next time if I need medicine.
	I would repurchase from XYZ in the future.
	I will not switch to another pharmacy for medicine.
Subjective Ethnic Norm; Han, Hsu, & Sheu (2010)	Most people of my ethnic group would think I should purchase from XYZ.
	Most people of my ethnic group would want me to purchase from XYZ.
	Most people of my ethnic group would prefer that I purchase from XYZ.
Relational Investment; Han, Kim, & Hyun (2011)	I am confident that XYZ provides the best deal.
	I feel like there is a bond between XYZ and myself.
	XYZ provides reliable products and services.
Attractiveness of Competing Brands; Jones et al. (2000)	If I needed to change pharmacy, there are other pharmacies to choose from.
	I would probably be happy with the medicines and services of another pharmacy.
	There are other pharmacies, with which I would probably be equally or even more satisfied.
	Compared to XYZ, there are not many other pharmacies with which I could be satisfied. (r)
Realism Checks; Dabholkar and Bagozzi (2002)	The situation described was realistic.
	I had no difficulty imagining myself in the situation.
	I have had similar experiences in real life.
Involvement with Context; Laurent and Kapferer (1985)	It's a big deal if I make a mistake in getting medicine.
	It's rare to make a bad choice while getting medicine.
	Medicine is very important to me.
	For me, medicine does matter.
	I would care as to which medicine I get.
	I am concerned about the outcome of my medicine purchase.

r: reverse-coded

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

Data for the main study were collected using the services of Centiment.co, which enforced the screening criteria (Mexican Americans of 18 years or older who have preference for either the ethnic or the non-ethnic language in the pharmacy context). There were no missing data in the 220 received responses. The six study scenarios were randomly assigned to the respondents so as to ensure at least 30 effective responses per scenario (see Table 4). All respondents satisfied attention and manipulation checks.

The sample varied in age from 16 to 79 years, with a median age of 30 years, and included 25.9% male and 74.1% female respondents. While 38.6% and 46.4% of them were never married single and married, respectively, 7.7% were divorced, 0.9% widowed, and 6.4% in civil union. A majority (54.5%) completed high school diploma. Others had associate (14.1%), bachelor (11.4%), or master or higher degrees (7.3%), while 12.7% did not complete high school. About 60.9% earned less than $40,000 annually and 39.1% earned more than $40,000.

Table 4: Scenarios and Sample Sizes

n	Customer Preference	Scenarios
		You need some over-the-counter medicine and pharmacist advice. You go to a nearby pharmacy, which is a branch of a national chain called XYZ. Being part of the XYZ national chain, the pharmacy has a typical American appearance and vibe. It is surrounded by other typical American businesses in a mainstream part of the city. When you reach the counter, you notice that there are only two other customers sitting at a distant waiting area, so far that they cannot hear your conversation with the employee who greets you. The employee, who appears to share the same ethnic background as you,
38	English, Adhered to	**greets you in English: "Hi, welcome to XYZ."** After you respond to the employee's greeting in English, the employee **continues interacting with you in English exclusively**. After talking to the pharmacist, you receive the medicine promptly and find everything as expected. Once outside the pharmacy, you remind yourself that **consistent with your preference, not only the initial language in which the employee greeted you was English, but also the employee continued interacting with you in English throughout the conversation**.
39	English, Adapted to	**greets you in Spanish: "¡Hola! Bienvenidos a XYZ." After you respond to the employee's greeting in English, the employee acknowledges your language preference and begins interacting with you in English exclusively.** After talking to the pharmacist, you receive the medicine promptly and find everything as expected. Once outside the pharmacy, you remind yourself that **even though the initial language in which the employee greeted you was Spanish, but the employee acknowledged your language preference and began interacting with you in English afterwards.**
33	English, Ignored	**greets you in Spanish: "¡Hola! Bienvenidos a XYZ."** After you respond to the employee's greeting in English, **the employee ignores your language preference and continues interacting with you in Spanish exclusively**. After talking to the pharmacist, you receive the medicine promptly and find everything as expected. Once outside the pharmacy, you remind yourself that **not only the initial language in which the employee greeted you was Spanish, but also that the employee ignored your language preference and continued to interact with you in Spanish throughout the conversation**.
36	Spanish, Adhered to	**greets you in Spanish: "¡Hola! Bienvenidos a XYZ."** After you respond to the employee's greeting in Spanish, the employee **continues interacting with you in Spanish exclusively**. After talking to the pharmacist, you receive the medicine promptly and find everything as expected. Once outside the pharmacy, you remind yourself that **consistent with your preference, not only the initial language in which the employee greeted you was Spanish, but also the employee continued interacting with you in Spanish throughout the conversation**.
36	Spanish, Adapted to	**greets you in English: "Hi, welcome to XYZ."** After you respond to the employee's greeting in Spanish, **the employee acknowledges your language preference and begins interacting with you in Spanish exclusively**. After talking to the pharmacist, you receive the medicine promptly and find everything as expected. Once outside the pharmacy, you remind yourself that **even though the initial language in which the employee greeted you was English, but the employee acknowledged your language preference and began interacting with you in Spanish afterwards**.
38	Spanish, Ignored	**greets you in English: "Hi, welcome to XYZ."** After you respond to the employee's greeting in Spanish, **the employee ignores your language preference and continues interacting with you in English exclusively**. After talking to the pharmacist, you receive the medicine promptly and find everything as expected. Once outside the pharmacy, you remind yourself that **not only the initial language in which the employee greeted you was English, but also that the employee ignored your language preference and continued to interact with you in English throughout the conversation**.

First, reverse-coded items were adjusted and a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in SmartPLS in order to inspect the underlying structure of the data. Only 1 out of 12 items for self-concept clarity was flagged for removal. After recoding reverse-coded items to be

consistent with the direction of other items in the scale, anomalous items still loaded negatively on the corresponding factors. This problem has been recognized in the past. For example, Wong, Rindfleisch, & Burroughs (2003) and Weijters & Baumgartner (2012) suggest that reverse-coded items should not be included in cross-cultural research from the get-go. Given these observations, the anomalous negatively-loaded items were excluded from further analyses. Loadings of the other items were within acceptable range for self-concept clarity (0.727-0.857), customer bilingualism (0.768-0.950), identity imposition (0.844-0.910), diversity accommodation (0.891-0.943), negative affect (0.779-0.923), positive affect (0.786-0.897), repurchase intention (0.827-0.937), WOM (0.948-0.960), subjective ethnic norm (0.898-0.936), relational investment (0.889-0.916), and attractiveness of competing brands (0.832-0.940). These loadings are indicative of an acceptable level of convergent validity. Table 5 exhibits the factor loadings of all items used to measure different constructs. As shown in Table 6, the comparatively smaller inter-factor correlations than the associated square roots of average variance extracted (AVEs) signal an acceptable level of discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Like Pre-test 2, the respondents of the main study found the research context quite involving, with a composite score of 4.74. They also found the six study scenarios quite realistic, with a composite score of 4.96. These results support the empirical presence of "adhered to", "adapted to", and "ignored" scenarios in service encounters.

Table 5: Factor Loading

Construct; Source	Item	Loadings
Identity Imposition McKay et al. (2011)	The employee formed an opinion about who I am based on my appearance.	0.844
	The employee perceived me as a typical member of my ethnic group.	0.884
	The employee had his/her preconceived idea about who I am.	0.910
	The employee had a stereotypical understanding of my identity.	0.889
	To the employee, I came across as representative of my ethnic group.	0.861
Diversity Accommodation; McKay et al. (2011)	The employee showed an understanding of my preference.	0.917
	The employee honored my distinctiveness.	0.916
	The employee approached me in a diversity-friendly manner.	0.891

	The employee treated me with an open mind.	0.943
	The employee interacted with me in an equitable manner.	0.911
Customer Bilingualism; Luna, Ringberg, & Peracchio (2008); Liu, Bates, & Li (1992)	Speaking	0.804
	Listening	0.768
	Understand cooking directions, such as those in a recipe.	0.921
	Understand newspaper headlines.	0.887
	Read personal letters or notes written to you.	0.930
	Read popular novels without using a dictionary.	0.915
	Make out a shopping list.	0.885
	Fill out a job application form requiring information about your interests and qualifications.	0.924
	Write a letter to a friend.	0.950
	Leave a note for someone explaining where you will be or when you will come home.	0.932
	Write an advertisement to sell a bicycle.	0.926
Self-concept Clarity; Campbell et al. (1996); Lee et al. (2010)	My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another. (r)	0.797
	On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion. (r)	0.849
	I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am. (r)	0.857
	Sometimes I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be. (r)	0.814
	When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like. (r)	0.832
	Sometimes I think I know other people better than I know myself. (r)	0.751
	My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently. (r)	0.801
	If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another day. (r)	0.846
	It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want. (r)	0.727
Negative Affect	Angry	0.896
	Judged	0.861
	Dominated	0.871
	Sad	0.859
	Upset	0.923
	Helpless	0.779
Positive Affect	Comfortable	0.863
	Pleased	0.881
	Excited	0.786
	Included	0.897
	Respected	0.895
	Proud	0.863
WOM	Spread negative word-of-mouth ….. Spread positive word-of-mouth	0.960
	Warn against ….. Recommend	0.960
	Bad mouth ….. Praise publicly	0.948
Repurchase Intention; Swanson & Kelley (2001)	I would use XYZ again if I have a choice.	0.914
	I will go back to XYZ next time if I need medicine.	0.914
	I would repurchase from XYZ in the future.	0.937
	I will not switch to another pharmacy for medicine.	0.827
Subjective Ethnic Norm; Han, Hsu, &	Most people of my ethnic group would think I should purchase from XYZ.	0.903
	Most people of my ethnic group would want me to purchase from XYZ.	0.936

Sheu (2010)	Most people of my ethnic group would prefer that I purchase from XYZ.	0.898
Relational Investment; Han, Kim, & Hyun (2011)	I am confident that XYZ provides the best deal.	0.916
	I feel like there is a bond between XYZ and myself.	0.916
	XYZ provides reliable products and services.	0.889
Attractiveness of Competing Brands; Jones et al. (2000)	If I needed to change pharmacy, there are other pharmacies to choose from.	0.940
	I would probably be happy with the medicines and services of another pharmacy.	0.832
	There are other pharmacies, with which I would probably be equally or even more satisfied.	0.840

r: reverse-coded

Table 6: Cronbach Alpha (α), Composite Reliability (CR), AVE, and Correlation Matrix

	α	CR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Employee Choice of Language	NA	NA	NA											
2. Customer Bilingualism	0.98	0.98	0.34	0.89										
3. Attractiveness of Competing Brands	0.85	0.90	-0.16	0.06	0.87									
4. Diversity Accommodation	0.95	0.96	-0.41	0.02	0.15	0.92								
5. Identity Imposition	0.93	0.94	0.22	0.08	0.30	-0.30	0.88							
6. Negative Affect	0.93	0.95	0.36	0.12	0.08	-0.45	0.25	0.87						
7. Positive Affect	0.93	0.95	-0.11	0.15	0.06	0.57	-0.16	-0.27	0.87					
8. Relational Investment	0.89	0.93	-0.23	0.11	0.30	0.70	-0.06	-0.33	0.61	0.91				
9. Repurchase Intention	0.92	0.94	-0.26	0.08	0.25	0.66	0.03	-0.36	0.56	0.80	0.90			
10. Self-Concept Clarity	0.93	0.94	0.06	-0.03	-0.27	-0.24	-0.08	-0.18	-0.20	-0.34	-0.27	0.81		
11. Subjective Ethnic Norm	0.90	0.94	-0.21	0.03	0.24	0.61	0.01	-0.20	0.46	0.70	0.68	-0.44	0.91	
12. WOM	0.95	0.97	-0.28	0.11	0.24	0.53	-0.04	-0.38	0.52	0.64	0.62	-0.14	0.51	0.95

Note: Square roots of AVEs are reported on the diagonal line of each correlation matrix.

To test the hypotheses, a six-category variable called employee choice of language was constructed, in which values of 1, 2, and 3 indicate adhered to, adapted to, and ignored scenarios for customers with English language preference; and values of 4, 5, and 6 indicate the same scenarios for customers who prefer Spanish (see Table 4). Using this categorical variable, ANOVA *post hoc* comparisons were performed to test H1a and H1b. When customers prefer non-ethnic language, the mean score of identity imposition was significantly higher in the ignored scenario (M=5.89) relative to the adherence (M=3.59; p<.001) or adaptation (M=4.29; p<.001) scenario. Thus, H1a is supported. When customer preference is ethnic language, the mean score of diversity accommodation was significantly lower in the ignored scenario (M=2.60) relative to the adherence (M=5.71; p<.001) or adaptation (M=5.67; p<.001) scenario. This result provides support for H1b. H1c was tested by an independent-samples t-test. Contrary

to H1c, the mean score of diversity accommodation was not significantly different when customer preference for ethnic language was adhered to (5.71) or adapted to (5.67; t = .121).

H2a to H3b concerned the moderating effect of customer bilingualism and self-concept clarity on the ECL–identity imposition and ECL–diversity accommodation relationships. These hypotheses were tested in Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro Model 2 using 5000 bootstrap resamples and 95% confidence interval. Customer bilingualism and self-concept clarity were measured as continuous variables. Therefore, following Hayes' (2013, 2015) recommendation, the effect of these continuous moderators are reported at one standard deviation above and below the mean with a view to facilitate the analysis and visualization of the results.

In testing the moderating effect of customer bilingualism, it was necessary to exclude respondents whose English fluency composite score was poor (rated 1-2), proceeding with those who had a fair or better fluency in English. Using the Spanish fluency composite score, the moderating effect of customer bilingualism was then tested on the ECL–identity imposition and ECL–diversity accommodation relationships. While the R^2 of .39 observed for the moderated ECL–identity imposition relationship was significant (p<.001) in the scenarios where English is preferred, the customer bilingualism × ECL interaction effect was not significantly associated with identity imposition (b=-.04; $t_{(109)}$=-.37; p =.712) and accounted for a non-significant portion of the variance explained (ΔR^2=.0008; $F_{(1, 104)}$=.14; p =.712). Specifically, among the low-SCC customers, identity imposition scores were not significantly different across the monolingual (low customer bilingualism) and bilingual (high customer bilingualism) groups ($M_{\text{mono, English ignored}}$ =5.50 vs. $M_{bi,\ English\ ignored}$ =5.24) in the ignored scenario. Similarly, among the high-SCC customers, identity imposition scores were not significantly different across the monolingual and bilingual groups ($M_{\text{mono, English ignored}}$ =6.35 vs. $M_{bi,\ English\ ignored}$ =6.09) in the ignored scenario.

These results do not support the moderating effect hypothesized in H2a. Likewise, among the low-SCC customers, identity imposition scores across monolingual and bilingual groups in the adherence ($M_{\text{mono, English adhered}}$ =3.95 and $M_{bi,\ English\ adhered}$ =3.98) and adaptation ($M_{\text{mono, English adapted}}$ =4.73 and $M_{bi,\ English\ adapted}$ =4.61) scenarios were not significantly different. Among the high-SCC customers, identity imposition scores across monolingual and bilingual groups in the adherence ($M_{\text{mono, English adhered}}$ =2.70 and $M_{bi,\ English\ adhered}$ =2.73) and adaptation ($M_{\text{mono, English adapted}}$ =4.53 and $M_{bi,\ English\ adapted}$ =4.41) scenarios were also not significantly different. These results show that customer bilingualism does not affect ECL-identity imposition relationship in adherence and adaptation scenarios when customers prefer English.

A similar pattern emerged in the moderated ECL–diversity accommodation relationship (R^2=.42; p<.001) when customers prefer English. The customer bilingualism × ECL interaction effect was not significantly associated with diversity accommodation (b=-.01; $t_{(109)}$=-.06; p =.952) and accounted for a non-significant portion of the variance explained (ΔR^2=.0000; $F_{(1,\ 104)}$=.004; p =.952). Among the low-SCC customers, diversity accommodation scores were not significantly different across the monolingual and bilingual groups ($M_{\text{mono, English ignored}}$ =3.94 vs. $M_{bi,\ English\ ignored}$ =4.23) in the ignored scenario. Similarly, among the high-SCC customers, diversity accommodation scores were not significantly different across the monolingual and bilingual groups ($M_{\text{mono, English ignored}}$ =2.99 vs. $M_{bi,\ English\ ignored}$ =3.27) in the ignored scenario. Thus, moderating effect hypothesized in H2b is not supported. Likewise, among the low-SCC customers, diversity accommodation scores across monolingual and bilingual groups in the adherence ($M_{\text{mono, English adhered}}$ =5.97 and $M_{bi,\ English\ adhered}$ =6.31) and adaptation ($M_{\text{mono, English adapted}}$ =4.95 and $M_{bi,\ English\ adapted}$ =5.27) scenarios were not significantly different. Among the high-SCC customers, diversity accommodation scores across monolingual and bilingual groups in the

adherence ($M_{\text{mono, English adhered}}$ =6.57 and $M_{bi,\ English\ adhered}$ =6.90) and adaptation ($M_{\text{mono, English adapted}}$ =4.78 and $M_{bi,\ English\ adapted}$ =5.09) scenarios were also not significantly different. These results show that customer bilingualism does not affect ECL-diversity accommodation relationship in adherence and adaptation scenarios when customers prefer English.

The same technique was used to test and report the moderating effect of self-concept clarity on the ECL–identity imposition and ECL–diversity accommodation relationships for the customers who prefer English and Spanish respectively. The R^2 of .56 observed for the moderated ECL–diversity accommodation relationship was significant (p<.001). The SCC × ECL interaction effect was significantly associated with diversity accommodation (b=-.26; $t_{(109)}$=-2.44; p <.05) and accounted for a significant portion of the variance explained (ΔR^2=.03; $F_{(1,\ 104)}$=5.95; p <.05). Among the monolingual customers, diversity accommodation scores were not significantly different across the high ($M_{\text{high SCC, Spanish adhered}}$ =5.68) and low ($M_{\text{low SCC, Spanish adhered}}$ =6.00) self-concept clarity groups in the adherence scenario. Similarly, among the bilingual customers, diversity accommodation scores were not significantly different across the high ($M_{\text{high SCC, Spanish adhered}}$ =6.28) and low ($M_{\text{low SCC, Spanish adhered}}$ =6.61) self-concept clarity groups in the adherence scenario. These results do not provide support to the moderating effect hypothesized in H3a. However, among the monolingual customers, diversity accommodation scores were higher in the low self-concept clarity group, relative to the high self-concept clarity group in the adaptation scenario ($M_{\text{low SCC, Spanish adapted}}$ =5.03 vs. $M_{\text{high SCC, Spanish adapted}}$ =3.90) as well as the ignored scenario ($M_{\text{low SCC, Spanish ignored}}$ =4.06 vs. $M_{\text{high SCC, Spanish ignored}}$ =2.12). Likewise, among the bilingual customers, diversity accommodation scores were higher in the low self-concept clarity group, relative to the high self-concept clarity group in the adaptation scenario ($M_{\text{low SCC, Spanish adapted}}$ =5.44 vs. $M_{\text{high SCC, Spanish adapted}}$ =4.30) as well as the ignored

scenario ($M_{\text{low SCC, Spanish ignored}}$ =4.26 vs. $M_{\text{high SCC, Spanish ignored}}$ =2.32). Thus, the moderating effect hypothesized in H3a was only supported in adaptation scenario.

The testing of the moderated ECL–identity imposition relationship returned a significant R^2 of .39 (p<.001). The SCC × ECL interaction effect was significantly associated with identity imposition (b=.32; $t_{(109)}$=3.02; p <.05) and accounted for a significant portion of the variance explained (ΔR^2=.05; $F_{(1, 104)}$=9.12; p <.05). In the ignored scenario for monolingual customers, identity imposition scores were higher in the high self-concept clarity group ($M_{\text{high SCC, English ignored}}$ =6.35) relative to low self-concept clarity group ($M_{\text{low SCC, English ignored}}$ =5.50). Similarly, among the bilingual customers, identity imposition scores were higher in the high self-concept clarity group ($M_{\text{high SCC, English ignored}}$ =6.09) relative to low self-concept clarity group ($M_{\text{low SCC, English ignored}}$ =5.24). Thus, the moderating effect hypothesized in H3b is supported. In the adherence scenario for monolingual customers, identity imposition scores were lower in the high self-concept clarity group ($M_{\text{high SCC, English adhered}}$ =2.70) relative to the low self-concept clarity group ($M_{\text{low SCC, English adhered}}$ =3.95). These scores were not significantly different in adaptation scenario ($M_{\text{high SCC, English adapted}}$ =4.53 and $M_{\text{low SCC, English adapted}}$ =4.73 respectively). Likewise, in the adherence scenario for bilingual customers, identity imposition scores were lower in the high self-concept clarity group ($M_{\text{high SCC, English adhered}}$ =2.73) relative to the low self-concept clarity group ($M_{\text{low SCC, English adhered}}$ =3.98). These scores were not significantly different in adaptation scenario ($M_{\text{high SCC, English adapted}}$ =4.41 and $M_{\text{low SCC, English adapted}}$ =4.61 respectively). Hence, SCC does not affect ECL-identity imposition relationship in adaptation scenario when customers prefer English. Figure 2 exhibits the moderating effects of self-concept clarity.

Figure 2: The Moderating Effects of Self-Concept Clarity

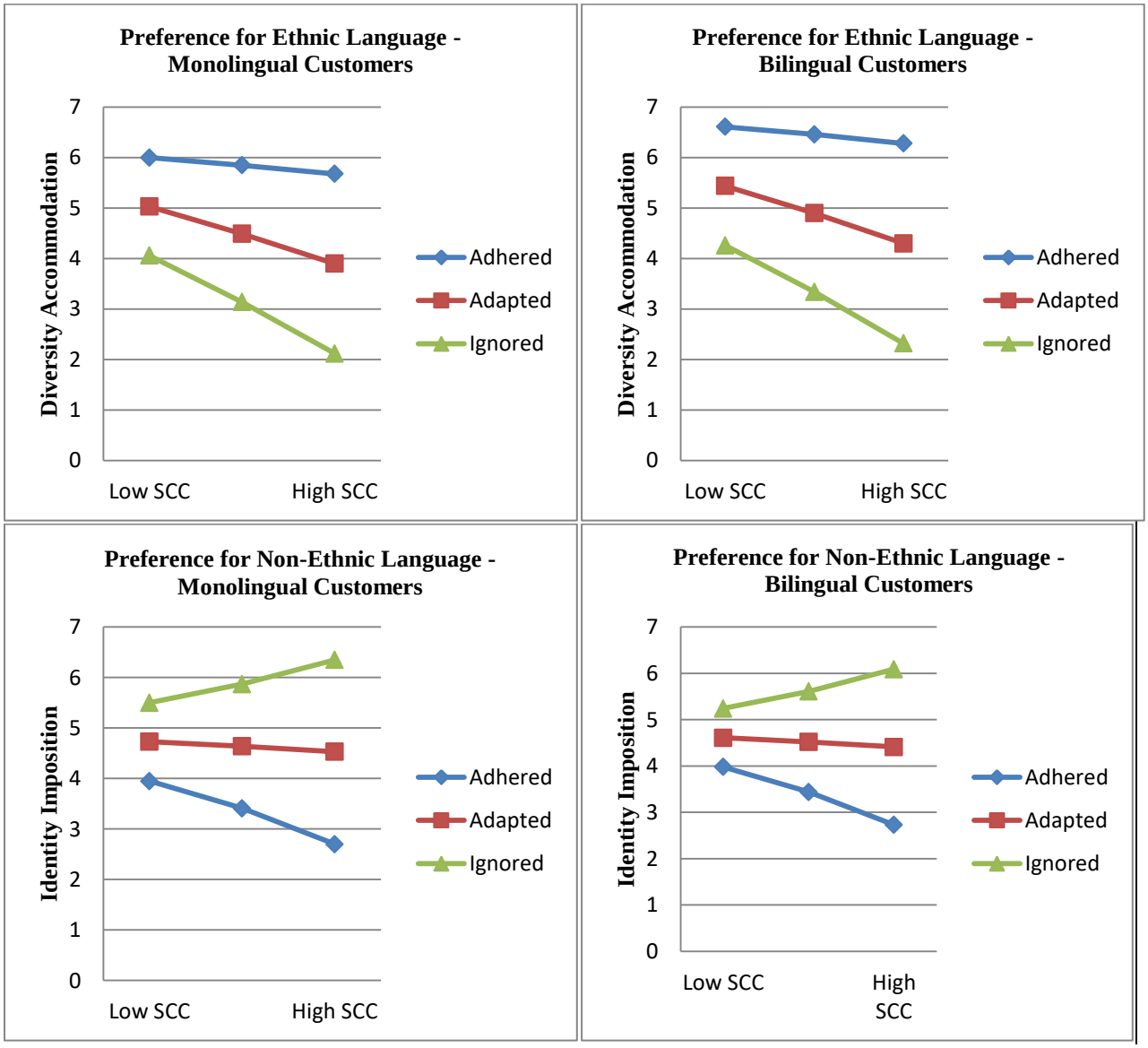

Table 7: Results of ANOVA *post hoc* Comparisons, t-test, and PROCESS Macro

	Hypothesis	Effect Tested	Result
H1a.	When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, customers perceive identity imposition.	Main	Supported
H1b.	When their preference for ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, customers perceive diversity accommodation.	Main	Supported
H1c.	Customers perceive higher diversity accommodation when their preference for ethnic language is adapted to than when it is adhered to.	Main	Not supported
H2a.	When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, monolingual customers will perceive higher identity imposition than bilingual customers.	Moderating	Not supported
	When customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, the effect of customer mono/bilingualism will be null.	Null	Supported
H2b.	When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, bilingual customers will perceive higher diversity accommodation than monolingual customers.	Moderating	Not supported
	When customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, the effect of customer mono/bilingualism will be null.	Null	Supported
H3a.	When their preference for ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, low-SCC customers will perceive higher diversity accommodation than high-SCC customers.	Moderating	Supported for adaptation scenario
	When customer preference for ethnic language is ignored, the effect of SCC will be null.	Null	Not supported
H3b.	When their preference for non-ethnic language is ignored, high-SCC customers will perceive higher identity imposition than low-SCC customers.	Moderating	Supported
	When customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered or adapted to, the effect of SCC will be null.	Null	Supported for adaptation scenario

Partial least squares - structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test H4-H7. R^2 for negative affect, positive affect, repurchase intention, and WOM were 0.064, 0.328, 0.690, and 0.481 respectively. The hypotheses were tested while accounting for the contribution of the significant covariates towards variance explained. Of the three covariates, only relational investment was significant in predicting both of the dependent variables i.e. repurchase intention

(β = 0.538, p<0.05) and WOM (β = 0.325, p<0.05). Identity imposition was significantly and positively associated with negative affect (β = 0.253, p<0.05). This provides support for H4. Diversity accommodation showed significant and positive association with positive affect (β = 0.572, p<0.05), supporting H5. The association between negative affect and repurchase intention was not significant (β = -0.113, p>0.05), failing to support H6a. WOM was captured with a bipolar scale, with the lower/negative end of the continuum representing negative WOM and the higher/positive end representing positive WOM. Negative affect was significantly and negatively associated with WOM (β = -0.200, p<0.05), supporting H6b and suggesting that the stronger the negative affect, the more likely the negative WOM. Positive affect was not significantly associated either with repurchase intention (β = 0.096, p>0.05) or with WOM (β = 0.203, p>0.05). H7a and H7b are not supported.

The above results were the same irrespective of the inclusion or exclusion of two non-significant covariates, i.e. subjective ethnic norm (β = 0.226, p>0.05, when associated with repurchase intention; β = 0.124, p>0.05, when associated with WOM) and attractiveness of competing brands (β = 0.037, p>0.05, when associated with repurchase intention; β = 0.117, p>0.05, when associated with WOM). The strength of relational investment as a covariate predictor of both of the dependent variables suggests that the results would have been inflated without the presence of this covariate. When relational investment was omitted from the model in *post hoc* tests, three non-significant paths (Negative Affect → Repurchase Intention, Positive Affect → Repurchase Intention, and Positive Affect → WOM) became significant. Thus, *post hoc* results confirm the choice of covariates as rival hypothesis predicting repurchase intention and WOM. It also shows how the inclusion of these covariates is zooming in the true contribution made by this research.

In the tests above, the two cognitions, identity imposition and diversity accommodation, were measured using a separate scale for each construct. Since we had also used a semantic differential scale to capture identity imposition and diversity accommodation as a bipolar construct (i.e., the endpoints of a continuum), the above test were repeated using this scale. The pattern of the results remained highly similar.

Table 8: PLS SEM Results

Path	**Hypothesis**	***β***	***p***	**Result**
Identity Imposition → Negative Affect	H4	0.253	<.05	Sup
Diversity Accommodation → Positive Affect	H5	0.572	<.05	Sup
Negative Affect → Repurchase Intention	H6(a)	-0.113	>.05	Not
Negative Affect → WOM	H6(b)	-0.200	<.05	Sup
Positive Affect → Repurchase Intention	H7(a)	0.096	>.05	Not
Positive Affect → WOM	H7(b)	0.203	>.05	Not
Subjective Ethnic Norm → Repurchase Intention		0.226	>.05	Not
Subjective Ethnic Norm → WOM		0.124	>.05	Not
Relational Investment → Repurchase Intention		0.538	<.05	Sup
Relational Investment → WOM		0.325	<.05	Sup
Attractiveness of Competing Brands → Repurchase Intention		0.037	>.05	Not
Attractiveness of Competing Brands → WOM		0.117	>.05	Not

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This research examines the role of language in cross-cultural service interactions with the spotlight being on the critical role of ECL in conjunction with customer language preference. Using Mexican Americans as the focal ethnic group, it specifically hypothesizes and tests the psychological mechanism underlying the effect of ECL on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of customer attitude. In so doing, this study explains and tests the alternative routes of attitude formation based on ECL, as well as the moderators that may influence the attitudes. It also detects and tests the affects incited by ECL which, in turn, may trigger the corresponding behavioral outcomes in bilingual service settings.

The results of this study extend the extant literature on cross-cultural service encounters. Previous studies have identified an array of issues in intercultural service interactions which mainly stem from linguistic disparity, interaction difficulty, cultural differences from employees, and different perceptions about service encounters (Sharma, Tam, & Kim, 2009; Wang & Mattila, 2010; Sharma, Tam, & Kim, 2012; Tam, Sharma, & Kim, 2014). Of late, the role of language in categorizing customers/employees (Cayla & Bhatnagar, 2017), the interplay between ethnicity and language (Azab & Clark, 2017), the social determinants of linguistic choice (Bell & Puzakova, 2017), language and linguistic symbols (Touchstone, Koslow, Shamdasani, & D'Alessandro, 2017), linguistic stereotypes (Alvarez, Taylor, & Gomez, 2017), and language

divergence (Balaji, Roy, & Lassar, 2017) have been studied as antecedents of customer service evaluation. Touchstone et al. (2017) and Bell & Puzakova (2017) particularly underscored the sensitivity attached to ECL and cautioned that it may even affect service outcomes. These works and their findings prompt the need for exploring the psychological mechanism underlying the impact of ECL on customer evaluation of service. Hence, this study not only adds to and strengthens the ongoing stream of research on service encounter linguistics, but also extends it to a new level which may trigger newer avenues of investigation.

This study finds support for key hypotheses that put forward certain theoretical, managerial, and public policy implications. Additionally, the fact that certain hypotheses did not receive support points to important directions for future research. First, when customers prefer ethnic language, the perception of diversity accommodation is more or less the same regardless of whether the employee adapts or adheres to that preference. This finding suggests that adaptation to ethnic language, compared to adherence to it, does not bring about additional positivity among these customers although they prefer ethnic language. They probably expect employees to initiate conversation using the non-ethnic language since it is the official language of the country. However, they perceive diversity accommodation in both of these two scenarios. Second, English-preferring customers were immune to the moderating effect of customer bilingualism. Specifically, both of monolingual and bilingual customers gave ratings of identity imposition and diversity accommodation in the scenario ignoring customer preference for non-ethnic language. This finding suggests that English-preferring customers, irrespective of their ethnic language proficiency, are flexible as to what language employees will use in a bilingual service encounter. Exposure to a second subsequent language might make them forgiving of or indifferent toward such moderating effects. Third, customers were immune to the moderating

effect of SCC in the adherence to ethnic language preference scenario. The similarity of ethnic background of both of the employee and the customer, as specified in the scenarios, is probably responsible behind such perception. This similarity might generate an affinity-driven expectation regarding the use of language and, in adherence scenarios, the fulfillment of this expectation might seem obvious to customers who prefer the ethnic language. Besides, when customer preference for the ethnic language was ignored, the high-SCC customers, compared to low-SCC ones, gave significantly lower ratings of diversity accommodation. In this scenario, high-SCC customers probably find their affinity-driven expectation unfulfilled and, therefore, perceive low diversity accommodation. Fourth, when customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered to, low-SCC customers perceive higher identity imposition than high-SCC customers. Weak ties to any ethnicity might make low-SCC customers uncertain about employee intention behind choosing non-ethnic language to initiate or continue conversation. As such, they tend to evaluate it as an attempt to categorize them and perceive identity imposition. Fifth, positive affect was found having no significant effect on repurchase intention and WOM while negative affect has no significant effect on repurchase intention. Repurchase intention is a positive behavior. In this study, WOM consists both of negative and positive WOM. The direction of WOM was measured by semantic differential scale where the negative end of the continuum represents negative WOM and the positive end of the continuum represents positive WOM. Thus, the findings on the effect of positive and negative affect on customer behavior shows a negativity bias of ECL. It does not incite positive affect so strongly that can effect customer behavior. Even negative affect cannot affect a positive behavior, i.e. repurchase intention, as much as it can affect a negative behavior.

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical point of view, this research extends the understanding of the role of language in shaping customer service evaluation. Language is one of the major vehicles of expressing and negotiating personal identity as well as group membership (Bucholtz, 1999; Touchstone et al., 2017; Bell & Puzakova, 2017). At the same time, language is considered an important means of perceiving employee flexibility toward accommodating diverse ideas, beliefs, and cultures (Gallois & Callan, 1997). Although language is considered crucial in cross-cultural interaction understanding its mechanism to influence customer evaluation about service requires further research (Touchstone et al., 2017; Cayla & Bhatnagar, 2017). This study examines how ECL in bilingual service encounters incites a psychological mechanism that shapes customer attitudes toward service encounter as well as the overall service. It showed and tested how ECL triggers two alternative paths (negative and positive) of attitude formation depending on the cognitive response to ECL. The results of this study also inform the nature of these cognitive attitudes, i.e. identity imposition and diversity accommodation, when they are incited by ECL. When the attitude formation takes the negative route, customers perceive identity imposition and react accordingly in both affective and behavioral terms, ultimately adversely affecting their behavioral intention toward the service. When it takes the positive route, customers perceive diversity accommodation and react only in affective terms, leaving no impact on their behavioral intention toward the service. The positive affects triggered by ECL are not so strong as to affect customers' behavioral intention. The stronger effect of the negative route of attitude formation compared to the positive one also shows the negativity bias of ECL as a stimulus in this psychological mechanism customers go through during bilingual service encounters.

The second theoretical implication extends our understanding of the levels of accepted service in bilingual service interactions (Tam et al., 2014; Sharma et al., 2009; Zolfagharian et al., 2017). Customers with preference for ethnic language tend to perceive diversity accommodation similarly in adherence and adaptation scenarios. This underscores customers' readiness to welcome the attempt by employees who signal diversity accommodation. However, ignoring the preference of customers who desire to encounter non-ethnic/official language can lead to perception of identity imposition. Even when customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered to, low-SCC customers perceive higher identity imposition than high-SCC customers. Thus, in some situations, well-intentioned attempts to be accommodative can be perceived inappropriate. In summary, linguistic alignment with customers may not be the only principle to manage their attitude toward service in bilingual service encounters. Rather, other factors like customers' personal traits might play an important role in shaping their attitude toward ECL.

A third theoretical implication concerns the importance of customers' personal characteristics in shaping their attitude toward the service. Extant literature suggests that customers' ethnic identification and ethnic language proficiency play a moderating role in shaping customers experience in cross-cultural service settings (Zolfagharian et al., 2017). This research extends that understanding by testing the role of customers' SCC in shaping their attitude toward the service. The results show manifold impact of SCC. When their preference for ethnic language is adapted or ignored, low-SCC customers perceive higher diversity accommodation than high-SCC customers. On the other hand, high-SCC customers perceive higher identity imposition than low-SCC customers when customer preference for non-ethnic language is ignored. But, low-SCC customers will perceive higher identity imposition than high-

SCC customers when customer preference for non-ethnic language is adhered to. These findings suggest that customers might be sensitive because of their varying levels of SCC and can easily misjudge an attempt of embracing diversity through ECL. These findings are consistent with Touchstone et al.'s (2017) argument that language is not the only key to solve the relevant issues.

Managerial Implications

Use of communication guidelines and empowering employees to act accordingly have been regarded as key factors in attracting and retaining customers (Grönroos, 2004; Balaji et al., 2016). From the managerial perspective, this research extends our understanding regarding the areas where the frontline employees need to ensure accommodation of customer linguistic expectations in cross-cultural service settings. Frontline employees are often put to work with minimal training on issues related to multiculturalism (Iyer and Johlke, 2015). So, proper training for them may be the best way to respond to the linguistic preference of cross-cultural consumers. Instead of focusing only on language, training should cover the ways in which employees may translate customer language preferences during cross-cultural service interactions. The findings of this research suggest that speaking the ethnic or non-ethnic/official language may not work in all cases. Rather, the ways of understanding customers' personal traits and predicting and embracing customer language preference in an appropriate manner should get attention while designing the training programs.

At a strategic level, service managers should consciously choose between the official language of the country and the ethnic language when so doing is warranted given the size of the focal ethnic population. The focus should be on embracing customer language preferences in ways that signal diversity accommodation intentions on behalf of the company and minimizing customer perceptions of identity imposition. They can consider hiring employees who are fluent

in both ethnic and non-ethnic languages, especially in markets dominated by ethnic populations. This research finds the perception of diversity accommodation mostly in adherence and adaptation to ethnic language scenarios. Diversity accommodation is perceived least in the scenarios ignoring ethnic language. It also shows that identity imposition is perceived mostly in the scenario ignoring mainstream language while adherence to such linguistic preference minimizes this perception. As such, an accurate prediction of customer language preference is very much important. But, in reality, a flawless guessing of the preferred language of bilingual customers is not always possible. Therefore, the capability to *adapt* to customer language preferences is essential (van Laer, De Ruyter, & Cox, 2013). Employee training to capture the verbal and non-verbal cues through which customers usually signal their language preference may help in this regard.

The findings of this study suggest that, unlike negative affect, positive affect incited by ECL is not strong enough to affect customer behavior. Even negative affect cannot affect a positive behavior as much as it can affect a negative behavior. It implies that minimizing negativity of ECL is way more important than maximizing positivity out of it. Managers should, therefore, emphasize on minimizing identity imposition rather than maximizing diversity accommodation.

This study explored the importance of understanding customer characteristic in managing customer language preference. SCC plays a crucial role in determining which route of attitude formation will be triggered. As such, it is also responsible in shaping the cognitive and subsequent affective and behavioral responses to ECL. The study results suggest that contrary to general findings, adherence to language preference may minimize diversity accommodation and maximize identity imposition and ignoring of language preference may do vice-versa in some

scenarios because of the varying level of customers' SCC. Therefore, frontline employees should be trained to guess the level of customers' SCC accurately. This study, however, did not find significant impact of customer bilingualism on the relationship between ECL and cognitive responses. As such, customers irrespective of their bilingualism appear to be same from managerial point of view even at a bilingual service setting.

Finally, managers need to be cautioned about the trend of maximizing the number of transactions at the cost of adequate time to spend per customer. This trend may force the frontline employees to ignore the need to guess customers' level of SCC and adhere or adapt to the customer language preferences. It may also lead them toward passing identity judgment upon customers knowingly or unknowingly through wrong choice of language. This study results suggest that identity imposition incites negative affect which ultimately affect customer behavior toward a service. This trend of limiting the time to spend per customer might have a worse bearing upon the ethnic customers like Mexican Americans. Many ethnic customers are not proficient in the mainstream language. Hence, a strategic focus on increasing the number of transactions reducing time for each transaction can trigger negative attitudes among many ethnic customers. As a solution, service organizations need to find an optimum balance between transaction time and its number so that they can successfully address issues of cross-cultural service interactions.

Public Policy Implications

From the public policy perspective, this research has implications to address stereotyping and stigmatization of ethnic customers. Stereotyping ethnic customers, which is a common phenomenon in multicultural service settings (Gill, Kim, & Ranaweera, 2017), can have adverse impacts on customer attitude toward the service. Mexican Americans in USA commonly

experience ethnic stereotyping and various forms of differential treatment (Peñaloza, 1995; Alba, Jiménez, & Marrow, 2014; Zolfagharian et al., 2017). The recent rise of right-wing populism has aggravated these anti-Mexican American sentiments (Beauchamp, 2016). This study explicitly measured identity imposition, which also implies ethnic stereotyping, and found support for its deep-rooted impact on customer perception in the context of a bilingual service interaction. As such, these findings may serve as instances of ethnic boundary establishment through identity imposition and call for research attention to address the ethnic customer stereotyping and measure their well-being.

Ethnic customers are a large component of multicultural markets in developed countries. Such markets are growing rapidly in size and number around the world. Extant literature suggests that marginalization in multicultural societies can adversely affect the well-being of ethnic customers (Anderson et al., 2013; Anderson & Ostrom, 2015). As such, eradication of societal marginalization of ethnic minorities has become an immediate challenge to overcome. From a social perspective, it is also the responsibility of trade associations as well as other regulatory authorities to emphasize on the appropriate codes on how to deal with people from diverse culture and backgrounds. An investment in ensuring a respectful and equitable service context for ethnic customers should earn a net positive return and enhance firm profitability. Public service outlets should also fetch in positive responses through creating similar environment for people from various ethnic backgrounds.

This research showed and tested the juxtaposition of identity imposition and diversity accommodation. With the rapid increase of multicultural markets in number and size, it has become very much important to educate frontline employees as well as the whole society on communication etiquette appropriate for and acceptable in multicultural markets and societies

(Heller, 2010; Schmidt, 2002). This need can also be realized from the increasing adversities the ethnic groups, especially Hispanics, face now-a-days (Korgstad & Lopez, 2016). Their experience calls for more accommodative public policy to govern business conduct. The findings of this study are also expected to provide some impetus to that end.

Limitations and Further Research

While this research imparts remarkable insights into service encounter linguistics in the context of cross-cultural interaction, there are some limitations. Several avenues can also be identified for further research. First, I only investigated the scenarios where employees initiated the conversation in an interaction. But, there are service interactions where customers initiate the conversation. Further research can be conducted on such interactions. Second, this study was conducted on only one ethnicity in a single country. Also, only one service context (i.e. pharmacy) was used for it. So, this research needs to be replicated across various ethnicities, various service contexts and in different other countries. Such replication on other ethnicities would also pave the way of bringing in other languages into this investigation and testing the extent to which this study finding apply to other populations. Tourist destinations might also be an interesting context in this regard since cross-cultural communication is considered as a norm there. Third, this study was conducted in the scenarios where the employee appears to share the same ethnic background as the customer. Future research can examine the impact of difference between their ethnicities. Fourth, the role of immigrant generations on shaping ethnic customers' perception about service interaction can also be examined. Fifth, this research did not examine the effect of the timing of switching to the ethnic language in order to *adapt* to customer preference during bilingual service interactions. Future research should examine this aspect. Sixth, there are numerous ways other than employee–customer conversation where language

may become a factor of customers' cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses. Future research can investigate employee–employee and customer– customer interactions and provide crucial inputs to service providers for formulating and implementing multiculturally accommodative communication policies and guidelines. Finally, since cross-cultural service contexts fit well with transformative service research (TSR) projects (Anderson et al., 2013) future research from TSR perspective may dig deep into this context and better elucidate the social and ethical aspects of ECL.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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