

[Articles (論説)]

The Potential Effects of Language Switching on Self-Concept, Values and Personality Expression – Examining the Evidence

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Multicultural and multilingual individuals can be thought of as having multiple self-concepts or cultural/linguistic identities related to each of the distinct cultures and languages in which they have significant meaningful experience. Multicultural people often need to navigate the different norms and values associated with their multiple cultural identities. In their theory of multiculturalism, Hong et al. (2000) propose that multicultural individuals possess at least two “cultural frames,” each based upon a corresponding set of cultural experiences and knowledge. Knowledge of two or more cultures and languages is stored in the minds of multicultural/multilingual individuals and knowledge of a particular culture is brought to the forefront when activated by priming agents such as cultural symbols, interacting with individuals from the culture in question and, importantly, engaging in the related language. In turn, these cultural frames affect many phenomena such as personality, values, emotional expression and self-concept.

There is a considerable amount of research evidence showing language effects in bilingual individuals’ responses to a wide range of psychological inventories such as measures of personality (Earle, 1969; Ervin, 1964), values (Bond, 1983; Marin, Triandis, Betancourt, & Kashima, 1983), self-concept (Trafimow, Silverman, Fan, & Law, 1997), emotional expression (Matsumoto & Assar, 1992), or even other-person descriptions (Hoffman, Lau, & Johnson, 1986). According to Hong et al. (2000), this observation suggests that (a) internalized cultures are not necessarily blended and (b) absorbing a second culture does not always involve replacing the original culture with the new one. For a case in point, they mention classical scholarship on African Americans in which there is a reported movement back and forth between “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals” (DuBois, 1903/1989, p. 5).

Eva Hoffman, who was born in Cracow, Poland and immigrated to America at age 13, wrote an autobiography, *Lost in Translation*, which is often quoted in

the context of language-primed internal cultural conflicts. The following passage is quite illustrative of such conflict,

-Should you marry him? the question comes in English. Yes.
-Should I marry him? the question echoes in Polish. No
... Why should I listen to you? You don't necessarily know the truth about me just because you speak in that language. Just because you seem to come from deeper within ...
-Should I become a pianist? the question comes in English.
No, you mustn't. You can't.
-Should I become a pianist? the question echoes in Polish.
Yes, you must. At all costs. (Hoffman, 1989, p. 199)

Thus, it has been noted that multilingual/multicultural individuals may experience a change in perceptions, feelings, judgment, and behavior when switching from one linguistic/cultural context to another. The frequency and intensity of such occurrences are logically modulated by the degree of proficiency in the language in question as well as, and perhaps more importantly, the degree of assimilation of the norms, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations and perceptions of the culture(s) associated with the language(s). In other words, it is the degree to which people identify with the culture associated with the language in question. In fact, culture is most likely the core element in the language-switching effect. The context in which the language switching takes place is also a major variable in terms of how much the context primes the cultural frames associated with the language into which one switches.

The above observations are supported by evidence from qualitative and experimental research carried out by Luna et al. (2008), which indicates that language can activate distinct sets of culture-specific concepts among bilingual biculturals, but not among bilingual monocultural individuals. Bilingual biculturals refers to people exposed to two cultural value systems, with identity constructs related to both cultures, and each culture linked to its own distinct language. In contrast, bilingual monocultural individuals refer to people who have acquired the additional language without significant direct experience in the language's cultural context.

Many of the studies discussed in this paper focus on bilingual and bicultural subjects. However, as a polyglot with over 40 years of experience in diverse languages and cultures (mainly European and Asian), my personal interest and

perspective on this subject is from a multilingual and multicultural standpoint. Nevertheless, the evidence, observations and conclusions generated from the study of bilingual and bicultural individuals, for the most part, still hold true for polyglots when there is significant cultural identification created in the process of acquiring the language in question.

Among polyglots there often exists proficiency in some languages that has not been acquired with a significant amount of direct cultural experience. In particular, this often may be the case with acquisition of cognate languages. A case in point is my own learning of Slovak, which was greatly facilitated by two years of studying in Polish in Poland, studying Russian language/literature along with travelling in the former Soviet Union, and study and use of Croatian/Serbian while riding a bicycle across the former Republic of Yugoslavia during the summer of 1977. Due to my knowledge of these cognate languages, I was able to communicate with monolingual speakers of Slovak concerning a great variety of subjects even before I began formal study of their language. Before the formal study and subsequent increased interaction with Slovaks during on-line practice sessions and travel in Slovakia, I possessed very limited direct experience with Slovak culture, nevertheless there existed a familiarity with the related Slavic languages/cultures mentioned and thus it may be said that I had already developed a macro-type Slavic language/cultural (Sprachbund/Kulturbund) identity that facilitates identification with Slovak cultural values, norms and perspectives.

My experience with learning and using Greek and Afrikaans are two interesting examples of how today's multimedia sources at our fingertips can facilitate not only the acquisition of an additional language but also the creating of a new linguistic/cultural identity. Before actually using the languages in the respective countries, I spent hundreds of hours learning vocabulary and syntax followed by watching many movies and TV series as well as enjoying music in these languages. In the process, I began to identify with the related cultures. The result was that my first actual conversations in these two languages were relatively sophisticated and I already had a feeling of being part of the languages and cultures, which greatly facilitated fluency and mutual understanding. Thus, even in the early stage of direct cultural contact, speaking the languages primed 'feeling different'. It is interesting to note that in the case of Afrikaans, I sometimes spoke better than white South Africans whose mother tongue was English, even though many of them were 'forced' to study Afrikaans in school. The most likely reason is that they resisted learning the language and identifying

with what they probably viewed as a competing language and culture.

Culture, Language and Worldview

Language has a dual character: both as a means of communication and a carrier of culture (Wei, 2005). Language serves to transmit culture, convey culture, preserve culture and strengthen cultural ties. Culture and language work together to help create common perceptions and evaluations among group members, a process that lays the foundation for a shared reality. Language serves to transmit culture, convey culture, preserve culture and strengthen cultural ties. A language and its associated culture develop and evolve together throughout a long period of history. The language becomes a unique expression of that culture. Baker (2006) wrote about how language *indexes* its culture: the songs, hymns, folk tales, sayings, metaphors, appropriate politeness for interaction with others, the history, wisdom, and ideals of a particular cultural group are all reflected in the group's language.

Culture shapes language by providing a historical and ongoing context to the meaning of words and phrases in the language and thus language can be viewed as a verbal expression of culture. Folklorist Crats Williams expressed this insight by defining language as "culture expressing itself in sound," (Quoted in Ovando, 990:341). The semantic categories or boundaries of words, that is what a word can normally signify, are formed in the context that culture provides. Extending the meaning of words is done by relating them to phenomena that are familiar in the culture of the speaker and listener. Language is the vehicle facilitating the creation of shared perceptions and interpretations among the people who use it. Thus, a high level of acculturation is only possible when it is accompanied by a high level of competence in the language associated with the target culture.

Kramsch (1998) discusses three ways how language and culture are bound together. First, language expresses cultural reality in that with words people express not only facts and ideas but they also reflect their attitudes, perceptions, perspectives, and values. Second, language embodies cultural reality in the way people give meaning to their experience through the means of communication. Third, language symbolizes cultural reality since people view their language as a symbol of their social identity. In the process of learning a language our experience and insight are enriched by awareness and attention to expression of these types of information.

Edward Sapir (1985[1929]) who is strongly associated with the concept of

linguistic relativity stated:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies lie are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached. (p. 162)

In discussions of linguistic relativity, arguments based only on 'color' experiments or how many words the Eskimos allegedly have for snow often miss the big picture. Differences in perception and interpretation of the world are fundamentally grounded in the Gestalt of language and culture. In other words, language and culture function together as an organized whole that affects the habitual ways of how attention is directed, of how we perceive, and of how we interpret. It is principally a matter of habit. This is not a trivial point. Habits create and reinforce neural networks, which are the material aspect or basis of the consciousness we experience. Just as habits in attention, perception and interpretation can be changed; the same is true of the neural networks supporting the habits. Awareness is an essential part of stimulating change. Contact with diverse languages and cultures has the potential to engender such awareness.

The robust form of the linguistic relativity hypothesis links individual thought to larger, culturally based patterns of language and thus posits an interdependent relationship between language and culture. If each culture represents a distinct worldview (or *Weltanschauung*) and language is essential in the process of representing and transmitting these distinct worldviews then language plays a very important role in sustaining a culture. When trying to accurately describe a culture in a language other than the one belonging to the culture, depending on the degree of cultural and linguistic distance or 'dissonance', you may find important words with deep meaning in that culture that cannot be fully explained without extensive understanding of the linguistic and cultural context.

Important Links between Language and Cognition

There are other important links between language and cognition that should be kept in mind when exploring the topic at hand. The main theme of this paper is that the language we speak at any given time may play a significant role in the cultural frame or schemata we adopt in that particular situation. Before addressing this theme, it is useful to examine other related effects of language use. Language can also cue or prime memories, it may determine what we pay attention to and how we perceive, additionally it may even influence decision-making.

Language can cue or prime memories and are more vivid in the language of encoding:

Marian and Neisser (2000) examined the retrieval of autobiographical memories in bicultural individuals and found that memories become more accessible when the language used at retrieval matched the language used at encoding. Their observations involved Russian-English bilinguals who were able to remember more events from the Russian-speaking period of their lives when they responded in Russian and more from their English-speaking period of their lives when they responded in English. Essentially, the mental frames arise from culturally specific meaning systems that are shared by individuals within the culture and associated language in question. The degree of acculturation in a specific culture along with corresponding language ability determines the robustness of the meaning systems within an individual along with the emotional valence of the meaning system. The degree of bicultural identity integration also appears to be a factor. The authors concluded that these findings show that language at the time of retrieval, like other forms of context, plays a significant role in determining what will be remembered.

In a study by Matsumoto and Stanny (2006), Japanese bilinguals retrieved autobiographical memories in response to 20 English and 20 Japanese cue words. US monolinguals were cued with 40 English words. Japanese bilinguals retrieved more memories and earlier memories when cued with Japanese words. They also retrieved more memories when the cue language matched either the language of memory encoding or the language of first thought. Although English cues elicited equivalent numbers of English and Japanese memories in the more fluent speakers of English, Japanese words elicited significantly larger numbers of

Japanese memories in all Japanese-English bilinguals.

Additionally, Schrauf and Rubin (2000) demonstrated that bilinguals encode and retrieve certain autobiographical memories in one language or the other according to the context of the encoding, and these linguistic characteristics are stable properties of those memories over time. Schrauf (2000) also argues that the consecutive bilingual's dual cultural-linguistic self-representations act as filters for memory retrieval of events from the personal past. Examination of work in experimental psychology on bilingual autobiographical memory and clinical case reports from psychoanalytic therapy with bilinguals suggests that memory retrievals for events from childhood and youth (in the country of origin) are more numerous, more detailed and more emotionally marked when remembering is done in the first language ('mother tongue') rather than in the second language.

Language may determine to what we pay attention and how we perceive:

Bruner (1957) observed that the categories by which we sort and respond to the world about us reflect deeply the culture into which we are born. How we categorize perceptual information and the categories we create based on our experiences and enculturation certainly influence our perceptions. Perceptual categorization is perhaps one of the most fruitful components of understanding cognitive similarity between cultures and relating it to cross-cultural attribution and adjustment (Oddou & Mendenhall, 1984). The patterns of shared meaning and expectations are a result of cultural-based categorizing. Thus, people from different cultures learn to attach meaning and learn to expect certain responses according to learned experience or socialization.

Elgin (2000) explores the power of categorization in her book *The Language Imperative*. In discussing 'medicine and the power of language' she first mentions the discoveries of quantum physics and perception,

This whole semantic domain is one vast lexical gap in English; we have no vocabulary for talking about quantum reality in everyday life. Our language reflects our ordinary perceptions; we refer to chairs and books as 'concrete objects' ... however, many things that are abstract have just as much power to create effects in human beings as concrete objects do ... in the field of medicine this particular power of language – the power to use language to create abstractions with substantial effects in the real world – is magnified enormously, so much that it comes very close to being magical. (p. 74)

Throughout her book Elgin (2000) challenges Pinker's (1994) attack on linguistic relativity partly based on his contesting the claimed reality-shaping power of language. Elgin discusses the power of such semantic categories as 'patient' and 'disease.' She points out the effect of referring to 'menopause' as 'hypoestrogenemia' and 'estrogen deficiency' (euphemisms) leads to the creation of a 'patient,' particularly in America. She quoted Halstead (1998:44) to demonstrate the power of categories and their labels, "The initial response by many physicians was that the problems were not real. For a time they were dealing with a cluster of symptoms that had no name – without a name, there was, in essence, no disease." Once an observed phenomenon is defined by a name it takes on a life of its own - essentially a new existence in the world of our sensory and cognitive world of abstractions. Thereafter, there may be continuous debate about the boundaries of the phenomenon – what constitutes the thing we have named. When a certain degree of consensus is not reached then the name may be modified with prefixes (in the case of English) to indicate a new conceptual abstraction that is related to the original one but calls for distinction between the two due to a lack of consensus or the need for more precise, expanded, or even limited semantic and conceptual boundaries.

In addition, McGilchrist (2009:110) argues, "Thinking is prior to language. What language contributes is to firm up certain particular ways of seeing the world and give fixity to them. This has its good side and its bad. It aids consistency of reference over time and space. But it can also exert a restrictive force on what and how we think. It represents a more *fixed version* of the world; it shapes, rather than grounds, our thinking."

Decisions may differ when using a foreign language:

Costa et al. (2014) report evidence that people using a foreign language make substantially more utilitarian decisions when faced with moral dilemmas such as "should you sacrifice one man to save five?. The researchers argue that this stems from the reduced emotional response elicited by the foreign language, consequently reducing the impact of intuitive emotional concerns. In general, they suggest that the increased psychological distance of using a foreign language induces utilitarianism. This shows that moral judgments can be heavily affected by an orthogonal property to moral principles, and importantly, one that is relevant to hundreds of millions of individuals on a daily basis (people functioning in a non-native language).

Keysar, Hayakawa & An (2012) discovered that using a foreign language reduces decision-making biases. Four experiments show that the framing effect disappears when choices are presented in a foreign tongue. Whereas people were risk averse for gains and risk seeking for losses when choices were presented in their native tongue, they were not influenced by this framing manipulation in a foreign language. Two additional experiments show that using a foreign language reduces loss aversion, increasing the acceptance of both hypothetical and real bets with positive expected value. They propose that these effects arise because a foreign language provides greater cognitive and emotional distance than a native tongue does.

Self-Formation in Cultural Adaptation and Foreign Language Learning

The process of cross-cultural adaptation and foreign language acquisition, particularly when engaged in simultaneously, such as in the case of learning a foreign language in the country where it is spoken, both serve as a vehicle of self-discovery. Intercultural experiences and foreign language learning contribute to the construction or reconstruction of a sense of self, a process that may be referred to as 'self-formation.' It is essentially a process of creating new cultural and linguistic identities.

When speaking to people who have participated in programs for studying a language abroad, they often describe their experiences as profoundly meaningful often crediting them with bringing about changes at fundamental levels (Milstein, 2005). The experiences usually involve a transformation of their sense of self both in how they view their own culture and language as well as their direction in life. The new culture and language create the opportunity for self-reflection and self-learning. This means that the simultaneous process of cross-cultural adaptation and foreign language acquisition involves learning about the new culture and language as well as better understanding about one's self within the context of a new culture and language.

Guiora (1972:145) stated, "Second language learning in all of its aspects demands that the individual, to a certain extent, take on a new identity." This statement was made in relation with language ego permeability, which deals with both social and affective factors. Identities are formed in sociocultural contexts that are particular to each individual. A lack of language ego permeability and rigid cultural identification can be stumbling blocks for learning another language, particularly in areas of phonology, accent, and fluency. Language ego permeability

also refers to the ability to move back and forth between languages and the different 'language personalities' that develop in the process of acquiring the languages (see Keeley, 2014 for an in-depth discussion).

The ability and flexibility to emphatically identify with a new language and culture has a positive correlation with formation of a corresponding new linguistic /cultural 'self'. In today's modern world children are exposed to a wide variety of speech as they acquire their first language (television programs, videos, and all other sorts of audio/visual media). Nevertheless, children acquire a particular style that is emotionally significant for them. McGilchrist (2009) stressed the importance of empathetic identification in the process of acquiring language,

A child does not acquire the skill of language, any more than the skill of life, by learning rules, but by imitation, a form of emphatic identification, usually with his or her parents, or at any rate with those members of the group who are perceived as more proficient. I have suggested that such identification involves an (obviously unconscious) attempt to inhabit another person's body, and this may sound somewhat mystical. But imitation is an attempt to be 'like' (in the sense of experiencing what it is 'like' to be) another person, and what it is 'like' to be that person is something that can be experienced only from the inside. Not just the acquisition of language, but the everyday business of language involves such inhabiting. Communication occurs because, in a necessarily limited, but nonetheless crucially important, sense, we come to feel what it is like to be the person who is communicating with us. This explains why we pick up another person's speech habits or tics, even against our will. It explains many of the problems of emotional entrainment in conversation, the countertransference that occurs, not just in therapy, but in ordinary, everyday life, when we experience in our own frames the very feelings that our interlocutor experiences. And empathy is associated with a greater intuitive desire to imitate. (p. 115)

In the process of learning foreign languages I noted that the more I identified with a new culture and language, the easier it became to imitate the speech patterns, accent, body language and other ways which individuals express themselves in the frame of a given culture and language. This type of resonating behavior also facilitates the acquisition of vocabulary and syntax. This process leads to the formation of a new linguistic and cultural identity that becomes part of my repertoire of linguistic and cultural self-identities, each offering a particular

systematic way of self-expression. The ability to identify with a new cultural and language while maintaining the integrity of other existing cultural and linguistic identities is contingent on flexibility grounded in core beliefs and core values that evolve through constant reexamination. Simultaneously, an interdependence and independence of these beliefs and values exist. The interdependence is in relation to the sociocultural and linguistic environments in which these core beliefs and core values are formed and continuously modified. The independence is in relation to the fact that many of the core beliefs and core values become unique, associated with my own personal multicultural and multilingual experiences, and evolve through introspection.

If people have a rigid view of who they are in cultural and linguistic terms, which does not evolve in response to interaction with different cultural and language patterns, then those individuals will tend to limit the effect that these interactions have on his/her form of self-expression. This behavior may be related to a lack of willingness to challenge core beliefs and core values that have been constructed within the cultural/linguistic environment(s) that are most emotionally salient. In this mode the individual continues to perceive a foreign language/culture as something distant and external, even in the case of prolonged exposure. As a result, there is minimal learning and adaptation. People who never acquire the language or make major adaptations to cultural differences even though they live for a long time in a foreign language/cultural environment typify this phenomenon. In order to evolve linguistically and culturally, the individual must have an open attitude towards transformational learning that comes with having a flexible self-identity rooted in a strong core identity that is modified through careful introspection in relation to experience.

Cognitive Schemas or Cultural Scripts

Exposed to an extreme array of complexity in the number and kinds of stimuli to which people can pay attention, people create mental schemas or scripts that simplify the environment by reducing its complexity. These perceptual schemas assist in the automatic processing of information and in guiding their interpretation of and responses to familiar social situations. These schemas are based on values and expectations embedded in culture. Differences in values among cultures lead to differences in perceptual filters – what people pay attention to and how they interpret what they notice. When unexpected occurrences are encountered, reliance on automatic processing becomes

insufficient and people need to become more engaged in analyzing their environment and give more thought to what they had previously filtered out (Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). However, in the case of multilingual/multicultural individuals, the appropriate schema for the language and culture may 'automatically' come to the forefront when interacting in a language/culture in their repertoire of languages and cultures.

Research carried out by Morris & Mok (2011) suggests that culture schemas influence the linguistic categories used to describe and remember social targets. Cross-national research on social description documents that Westerners favor abstract linguistic categories more than East Asians. Their study used the cultural priming paradigm to distinguish the role of cultural schemas from alternative country-related explanations involving linguistic structures or educational experiences. It compared Asian-Americans' descriptions of others and memory for social information following American versus Asian priming. Asian priming fostered more concrete, contextualized verb-based descriptions and reduced memory errors associated with trait inference, compared to American priming (and to separate samples of non-primed Asian-Americans and Euro-Americans).

Frame Switching

Ożańska-Ponikwia (2012) examined, when speaking a foreign language, why some people report feeling different while others do not. She asked 100 bilinguals made up of people who had grown up speaking two languages, immigrants who acquired their second language later on in life, as well as students who had stayed in a foreign country for an extended period of time, to give answers to two personality questionnaires and to give scale values to statements such as, "I feel I'm someone else while speaking English", or "Friends say that I'm a different person when I speak English". The results indicated that only people who are emotionally and socially skilled are able to notice feeling different. They notice that they adapt aspects of their personality and behavior when using another language. Ożańska-Ponikwia believes that some people do not report changes in their behavior or in their perception or expression of emotions when changing language, not because they do not exist, but because they are unable to notice them.

One of the reasons to account for feeling different when speaking different languages is that language can be a cue or prime that activates different cultural

frames. Cultural frame switching refers to the idea that interpretive frames, in individuals who have internalized two cultural identities, can shift due to situational cues (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). These cultural schemas guide behaviors only when they come to the foreground in one's mind and only when they are applicable to social events that need to be judged (Hong et al., 2003). Essentially, the mental frames arise from culturally specific meaning systems that are shared by individuals within the culture and associated language in question. The degree of acculturation in a specific culture along with corresponding language ability determines the robustness of the meaning systems within an individual along with the emotional valence of the meaning system. The degree of bicultural identity integration also appears to be a factor. While frame switching, the individual shifts between interpretive frames rooted in different cultures in response to cues in the social environment (LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993).

The more people identify with a culture the greater they experience emotional sensitivity toward the culture. In other words, there is greater emotional attachment and reaction to stimuli representing the culture. Furthermore, interaction in a specific culture and language develops memories that have emotional valences (emotionally encoded through the medial temporal limbic system¹) associated with the language and culture in question. Luna et al. (2008) studied groups of Hispanic women who were all bilingual but with varying degrees of cultural identification. They found significant levels of 'frame switching' (changes in self perception or self-identity) corresponding to high levels of biculturalism – those Hispanics with high levels participation in both Latino and Anglo culture.

When cued with a particular language, these individuals activate distinct sets of culture-specific concepts, mental frames, which include aspects of their identities. Multicultural individuals have distinct cognitive frameworks associated with each of their cultures and languages. Those mental frames may consist of different repertoires of values and behaviors as well as separate worldviews and identities that are entwined with language/culture-specific memories and experiences. Cultural and corresponding linguistic identities may be stored in separate knowledge structures and activated by interaction in the associated language and/or culture (Luna et al., 2008).

¹ Subcortical brain structures of the limbic system, such as the amygdala, are thought to decode the emotional value of sensory information (Fruhholz, Trost & Grandjean, 2014).

The emotional valence of a particular culture/language based meaning system and framing that is part of the repertoire of meanings systems in a multicultural/multilingual individual may vary according to the linguistic and socio-cultural context of the moment. Interacting in a particular culture/language tends to bring the emotional valence of the meaning system and framing associated with that culture/language to the forefront and causes the emotional valence of other meaning systems and framing to recede from consciousness and robustness in terms of dominance at that moment. In such a case, an aspect of emotional sensitivity related to self-awareness may be viewed as the awareness of the fact this process is occurring and the subsequent potential ability to modulate the effects of this phenomenon. Differences in this type of emotional sensitivity as well as the degree of acculturation and language proficiency help explain Ozańska-Ponikwia's belief that some people do not report changes in their behavior or in their perception or expression of emotions when changing language because they are not aware of them.

The language used in personality questionnaires can affect the responses of multilingual/multicultural individuals. Ramirez-Esparza et al. (2006) had users of both Spanish and English complete a questionnaire to measure the 'Big Five' personality dimensions of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness and neuroticism – once in English and once in Spanish. The researchers observed the same pattern across three separate samples – when the participants completed an English version of the questionnaire, they tended to score higher on extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness and slightly lower on neuroticism, compared with when they completed the Spanish version. The researchers claimed that there were no profound changes in personalities when these bilinguals switch languages; instead they become more extraverted when they speak English rather than Spanish but retain their rank order within each of the groups. The results are consistent with a study of thousands of monolingual participants who spoke either English or Spanish that showed English speakers tended to score higher on extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Analysis confirmed that these effects are not related to questionnaire translation issues; rather they are attributed to cultural frame switching.

Self-construal can also be affected by language choice. Marian & Kaushanskaya (2005) were interested in how language use might affect self-construal in terms of collectivist vs. individualist self-construal. They tested Russian-English bicultural bilinguals, born in the former Soviet Union, who

immigrated to the United States in their teens and were undergraduate and graduate students at an American University at the time of testing. For these bilinguals, Russian is associated with the culture of former Soviet Union, a collectivist culture, and English is associated with the culture of the United States, an individualistic culture. They predicted that bicultural Russian-English bilinguals would produce more individualistic narratives when speaking English than when speaking Russian, and more collectivist narratives when speaking Russian than when speaking English. The results revealed that Russian-English bilinguals used more personal pronouns when speaking English than when speaking Russian and more group pronouns when speaking Russian than when speaking English, even when narrative length and proficiency in the two languages were taken into account. Moreover, independent judges rated English narratives as more self-oriented than Russian narratives and Russian narratives as more other-oriented than English narratives. These results suggest that a bilingual's language may influence cognitive styles, so that speaking English, a language associated with a more individualistic culture, resulted in more individualistic narratives, whereas speaking Russian, a language associated with a more collectivist culture, resulted in more collectivist memories.

To capture how bicultural individuals switch between cultural frames, Hong et al. (2000) adopted a conceptualization of internalized culture as a network of discrete, specific constructs that guide cognition only when they come to the fore of an individual's mind. By experimentally modeling frame switching among bicultural individuals, they were able to identify cultural aspects of cognition. In a follow-up study, Hong et al. (2003) demonstrated that when exposed to Chinese primes (e.g., pictures of a Chinese dragon or Chinese calligraphy), Chinese American biculturals make more external attributions, a typical Eastern attributional style. However, when they are exposed to American primes (e.g., pictures of the American flag or the White House), they make more internal attributions, a typical Western attributional style.

Cultural Accommodation

In addition to cultural frame switching, Chen & Au (2017) also point to cultural accommodation and cultural mindset as explanations for the language-switching effect. Essentially, cultural accommodation, frame switching, and cultural schemas are all related concepts that are describing the same language-switching phenomena. Cultural accommodation simply states that bilinguals

accommodate the cultural norms associated with the language they are currently using when they respond to situations (Bond & Yang, 1982). In other words, language itself primes the bilingual's cultural-specific values, attitudes and memories, which in turn affects their behavior. The perceived cultural norms of the group associated with the language in use activate behavioral expressions of personality that are appropriate in the corresponding linguistic-social context (Chen & Bond, 2010).

The Feeling of Freedom When Speaking a Foreign Language

Some people might find that speaking in a foreign language gives them a feeling of liberation or freedom. This is a very probable feeling if someone obtains a high level of proficiency in the target language in conjunction with the development of a corresponding new linguistic and cultural identity that comes to the forefront when interacting in the foreign language and culture. Part of the freedom comes from the absence of expectations that are present when you interact with people who know you well in your native culture. In such a context you are not only subject to the norms, values, attitudes, and expectations of the culture in general but also the expectations of those who know you well. Your past history with those people is your anchor. Language learners will most likely find it more difficult to comfortably imitate a native accent in a foreign language or exhibit different body language and behaviour associated with the language and culture in the presence of their friends and family than in the presence of people with whom they do not have such a shared history.

There are other aspects of freedom that can be experienced when speaking a foreign language and they are revealed through an Internet search on the topic. For example, the following is an edited excerpt from a blog written by Merve Pehlivan, a writer and interpreter based in Istanbul:

Foreign language can indeed be liberating. Without a whole host of personal and cultural connotations that might distract your thought process, you have greater leeway to express yourself ... freedom from cultural baggage aside, foreign language can cure self-censorship. Language becomes a film that blocks the immediacy of comprehension through which you can convey your thoughts without inhibition. You can be bolder, more honest and even obscene while distracting yourself from the full impact of your words.²

² <https://bosphorusreview.com/foreign-language-freedom-or-captivity/> Accessed Nov. 25, 2017

Conclusion

Language is a unique expression of the associated culture and together they create a unique collective shared reality encoded in and transmitted by the language. Numerous multilinguals, the author included, have reported that they sometimes feel different when switching languages. The intensity of this feeling depends on the degree to which people identify with the culture associated with the language in question as well as their proficiency in the language and the total emotional salience of their experiences in the language and culture. The language-switching effect is supported by a considerable amount of research evidence showing the effect in bilingual individuals' responses to a wide range of psychological inventories such as measures of personality, values, self-concept, emotional expression, or even other-person descriptions. Speaking a foreign language can even offer a sense of freedom from the confines of one's native language and culture. It offers a different way to perceive the world, particularly in terms of social phenomena.

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