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Culture and emotional language¹

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INTRODUCTION/DEFINITIONS

In answer to the question “In which language does the phrase ‘I love you’ feel stronger?”, Rie, a native speaker of Japanese with English as a second language (L2), points out that the Japanese avoid expressing their emotion overtly: “... silence is beautiful in Japanese society. We try to read an atmosphere” (Dewaele 2008: 1768). Veronica Zhengdao Ye, a Chinese scholar who immigrated to Australia, had made a similar point about the expression of emotion in China compared to how it is done in the West: “We do not place so much emphasis on verbal expression of love and affection, because they can evaporate quickly” (Ye 2004: 140). She explains that she prefers the Chinese way of expressing emotions: “subtle, implicit and without words” (Ye 2004: 139-140). She describes her first parting from her parents, just before boarding the plane that would take her to Australia: “we fought back our tears and urged each other repeatedly to take care; we wore the biggest smiles to wave good-bye to each other, to soothe each others’ worries. Just like any other Chinese parting between those who love each other – there were no hugs and no ‘I love you’. Yet I have never doubted my parents’ profound love for me” (Ye 2004: 141). Ye explains that at the beginning of her stay in Australia, when she was clearly expected to verbalise her feelings, it made her feel “stripped and vulnerable” (Ye 2004: 140). She was struck by the ease with which Australians use “honeyed words”. She gradually understood that these expressions are pleasantries for social purposes (Ye 2004: 140). She needed some time before she was able to recognize the emotions displayed in the Australian context accurately and deal with them appropriately. Interestingly, two years later, at the end of a visit home, Ye decides to give her parents “a long and tight embrace” at the same airport gate (Ye 2004: 142).

These two observations highlight the basic fact that the expression of emotions varies across cultures. That is, there are cultural differences in the prevalent, modal, and normative emotional responses (Mesquita, Frijda and Scherer 1997). Ye’s story also illustrates my belief that “emotions are first and foremost a type of connection with our social worlds” (Mesquita 2010: 83). In this view “emotions themselves are social phenomena that in the moment constitute a relationship and are constituted by it” (Mesquita 2010: 84).

Ye also offers a glimpse of the fascinating cultural differences in the communication and perception of emotion in East and West. Moreover, her exposure to Australian culture seems to affect the way she interacts with her parents on a return visit to China. It seems a good illustration of emotional acculturation of immigrants, namely the fact that individuals’ emotional patterns shift in response to changes in their sociocultural context (De Leersnyder, Mesquita and Kim 2011). In other words, emotions are “ongoing,

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dynamic, and interactive processes that are socially constructed” (Boiger and Mesquita 2012: 221). Multilingual and multicultural individuals are an ideal group to investigate the relationship between culture and emotional language as they have developed a unique capacity to navigate between the different norms of their different languages (Dewaele 2010a).

The present chapter will present an overview of the empirical work carried out by cultural psychologists, cognitive psychologists and applied linguists on the relationship between culture and emotion in bi- and multilinguals. The work reviewed will come from both sides of the epistemological and methodological divides, starting with the etic – quantitative approach which characterizes much of the psychological work, and the emic – qualitative approach which is more frequent in multilingualism research. Researchers who adopt an etic approach use carefully defined and relatively stable concepts from the analytic language of the social sciences (Pike 1954). This makes them useful for comparative research across languages, situations, and cultures, and they are ideally suited to look into automatic processes. Researchers who prefer an emic approach, on the other hand, incorporate the participants’ perspectives and interpretations of behaviour, events, and situations using the descriptive language of participants (Pike 1954). This approach is particularly useful for volitional acts (freely chosen) such as language choices, sense of self). Both approaches have strengths, the etic – quantitative approach allows to establish the existence of general patterns in data collected from large samples, while the emic – qualitative approach allows researchers to explore what a small group of individuals say about their behaviour and the reasons underlying that behaviour. We feel that in research on multilingualism/multiculturalism and emotion both approaches are needed to shed light on the complexity of the phenomena under investigation (Dewaele 2010a).

CULTURAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Markus and Kitayama (1991) attribute the differences in the display of emotion between Easterners and Westerners to different views of the self: “While in the West the self is viewed as independent, self-contained, and autonomous, it is considered interdependent in Asian, African, Latin-American and many southern European cultures” (Markus and Kitayama 1991: 225).

For those with independent selves own goals and desires are the priority. These individualists will resist interference from the outside in what they consider to be their own interests. As a consequence, they express their emotions freely and frequently. Indeed, an individual has a sacred right in individualist cultures to be self-sufficient, autonomous and to strive for personal goals, which implies the freedom to express both negative and positive emotions to members of the in-group and strangers alike. For those with interdependent selves, however, emotional restraint is the norm (Markus and Kitayama 1991: 236). Individuals in collectivist cultures learn that they have a duty to the in-group and that they have to strive for group harmony in order to maintain social cohesion. Emotional restraint is seen as a sign of maturity, and is particularly important in dealing with superiors: “in Japanese society, the overt expression of anger and verbal attack is interpreted as evidence of immaturity and childishness” (Markus and Kitayama 1991: 281).

Emotions thus seem to have more or less intrapersonal meaning depending on the culture. Personal feelings, and their free expression, reaffirm the importance of the individual compared to social relationships (Suh, Diener, Oishi and Triandis 1998). These cultural differences between East and West in the display of emotions are also linked to life satisfaction. While individuals in individualist cultures set up their own expectations, those in collectivist cultures internalize the expectations of family, friends and teachers. Suh *et al.* (1998) looked at the effect of internal versus external standards in life satisfaction judgments among over sixty thousand participants of 61 countries. They found that in collectivist countries those who were living close to external standards felt happier while those from individualist countries were happier when they were able to live a life congruent with their internal standards.

In Japanese culture socially engaging emotions such as friendly feelings or shame (both signal the acknowledgment of social rules) are more frequent than socially disengaging emotions such as pride and anger, which are more prevalent in the American independent cultural context. Indeed, “Socially disengaging emotions tend to signal and contribute to the boundedness and independence of an individual, and thus fit the goals in independent contexts” (Mesquita 2010: 96).

A comparison of a European-American sample and a Japanese sample revealed that disengaged emotions were more frequent in the former, while engaged emotions were more frequent in the latter (Kitayama *et al.* 2006). Interestingly, the disengaged emotions were the best predictors of happiness in the American sample while the engaged emotions were the best predictors of happiness among the Japanese participants.

Mesquita (2010: 98) reports that emotions themselves “may differ in the ways that fit the cultural models”. A study on experiences of offense among Japanese and American participants showed that offense triggered anger in both groups but that the prevalent action was very different: only 30% of Japanese reported being aggressive in response to the offense compared to 70% of Americans. A majority of Japanese reported doing nothing, which is consistent with the Japanese preoccupation to preserve relationship harmony (2010: 98).

Differences between Japanese and Westerners also exist in how they establish the emotional state of their interlocutor. Tanaka, Koizumi, Imai, Hiramatsu, Hiramoto and de Gelder (2010) argue that individuals rely on a combination of multiple emotional cues including the voice and the face of interlocutors in their perception of emotion. The authors found that participants’ cultural background modulates the multisensory integration of affective information. Japanese participants were more attuned to vocal processing in the multisensory perception of emotion while Dutch participants focused more on facial expression (2010: 1259).

Cultural differences have also been linked to memory for emotional experiences (Oishi, Schimmack, Diener, Kim-Prieto, Scollon and Choi 2007). A comparison of European Americans and Asian Americans in their retrospective frequency judgments of emotions revealed that emotional events congruent with personal values remain in memory longer and influence retrospective frequency judgments of emotion more than do incongruent events. How well emotional experiences are remembered is not just a matter of congruence but also whether the recall happens in the language in which the event happened. Immigrants recalling L1 memories from childhood in an L2 typically lose some emotional intensity. Moreover, immigrants’ memories that were experienced in the

L1 were generally richer in terms of emotional significance when recalled in that L1 (Schrauf and Durazo-Arvizu 2006).

COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND APPLIED LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES

Bilinguals' processing of emotion words

Cognitive psychologists have examined lower-level and automatic processes in bilinguals' handling of emotion words. This included reaction times (RTs) experiments with affective priming and measurement of skin conductance response (SCRs), which reflect the level of arousal. Altarriba and Canary (2004) found that bilinguals who had learned their English as an L2 in a school context had reduced affective priming effects, possibly because the words had fewer emotional connotations. Harris, Ayçiçeği and Gleason (2003) looked at SCRs of Turkish-English university students to emotion words in both languages. They had learnt English later in life and were enrolled in an American university. The researchers found that reactions to taboo words and reprimands in the L1 resulted in significantly higher SCRs compared to equivalent words and expressions in the L2. Caldwell-Harris and Ayçiçeği-Dinn (2009) confirmed these findings with Turkish-English bilinguals living in Istanbul who displayed higher SCRs to emotional phrases presented in an L1 compared to emotional phrases in English L2.

Eilola and Havelka (2011) combined SCRs of native and non-native English speakers during emotional and taboo word Stroop tasks. Significantly slower RTs were found for negative and taboo words when compared to neutral words in both groups of participants (Eilola and Havelka 2011). SCRs were different in both groups: native English speakers responded with significantly higher SCRs to negative and taboo words when compared with neutral and positive words. No such difference was observed in non-native speakers. Ayçiçeği-Dinn and Caldwell-Harris (2009) also found emotion memory effects among the bilingual participants, i.e. emotion words were more frequently recalled than neutral words. Overall emotion-memory effects were similar in the two languages, with reprimands having the highest recall, followed by taboo words, and non-emotional words. This phenomenon has been linked to the "emotional contexts of learning hypothesis", arguing that language emotionality is independent of age of onset of acquisition, but linked to the emotional context in which the language was acquired and used (Harris, Berko Gleason and Ayçiçeği 2006: 276-277). Pavlenko (2012) reviewed this literature and argues that affective processing in the L1 is more automatic than in the L2, hence fewer interference effects and less electrodermal reactivity to taboo emotional stimuli in the L2. She also suggests that for some late bilinguals, their languages may be differentially embodied, with languages learnt later in life processed semantically but not affectively.

Caldwell-Harris, Tong, Lung and Poo (2011) interviewed Chinese-English bilinguals residing in the US about their experience of using emotional expressions. Participants reported L1-Mandarin expressions as feeling stronger than L2-English expressions. They did prefer to express their emotions in English, citing more relaxed social constraints in English-speaking environments. Electrodermal monitoring on a similar sample of Chinese-English bilinguals showed that participants with both good Mandarin and good English proficiency had similar magnitude SCRs in English and Mandarin emotional expressions. The only exception was the category of endearments (e.g., 'Thank you', 'I

miss you', 'I love you'), where larger SCRs occurred for English expressions. The authors speculate that English-speaking societies encourage more open expression of positive emotion than do Chinese cultures, which means that the frequent exposure to English endearments "may have led to easy retrieval of personal situations with strong emotional resonances; these memories then resulted in increased affect and increased SCRs" (2011: 329). Surprisingly, ratings of the emotional intensity of endearments were similar in Chinese and English, in contrast with the SCRs findings. Finally, "English childhood reprimands were rated as less intense than L1-Mandarin reprimands, consistent with other studies showing that childhood reprimands are felt to be more intense in the native language" (2011: 329).

A surprising finding of automatic processing of emotion words by bilinguals emerged from a study by Wu and Thierry (2012). Participants were native speakers of Chinese with advanced knowledge of English. They were asked to indicate whether or not pairs of English words were related in meaning while monitoring their brain electrical activity (ERP) and skin conductance. Unbeknownst to the participants, some of the word pairs hid a sound repetition if translated into Chinese. The authors observed the expected sound repetition priming effect for positive and neutral words, but English words with a negative valence such as "failure" did not automatically activate their Chinese translation. It thus seems "that emotion conveyed by words determines language activation in bilinguals, where potentially disturbing stimuli trigger inhibitory mechanisms that block access to the native language" (2012: 6485). The authors point out that the explanation advanced in the work of Caldwell Harris and Dewaele about differences in emotional resonance of L1 and L2 cannot account for their findings. It is unlikely that late L2 learners would acquire negative and positive words in systematically different contexts, in different periods of life, or master them at relatively different levels (2012: 6488). The valence-specific effects can therefore not be attributed to differences in the emotional resonance between languages (2012: 6488). The authors suggest that a cognitive suppression mechanism may involve interactions between the limbic system and the caudate nucleus which plays a role in inhibitory control during code-switching (2012: 6489). The authors conclude that "emotional processing unconsciously interacts with cognitive mechanisms underlying language comprehension" (2012: 6489).

Perception of emotion in a foreign culture

The story of Veronica Zhengdao Ye in the introduction was a good illustration of the difficulty facing an individual suddenly transplanted in an environment with a different set of emotional norms. Recognising the emotion of interlocutors and judging its intensity is the first difficult step before the immigrant can hope to react to these emotions appropriately in interactions.

A pioneering study in this area is Rintell (1984) who asked foreign students of Spanish, Arabic and Chinese origin, enrolled in an American Intensive English Program, to identify which emotion – pleasure, anger, depression, anxiety, guilt, or disgust – best characterized each tape-recorded conversations played to them. Participants were also asked to rate the intensity of each emotion. Their responses were compared to those of a control group of native English speakers, among whom there was a high level of agreement. Cultural background and language proficiency played a significant role in the students' performance. Language proficiency had the strongest effect, with intermediate

and advanced students scoring significantly higher than beginners. However, even the most advanced students in the sample, who identified the emotions conveyed in the conversations only about two thirds of the time, had significantly lower scores than the control group. In addition, when learners of the three groups at comparable levels of proficiency were compared to each other, it was found that Chinese students had most difficulty with the task, followed by the Arab students and finally the Spanish students. Graham, Hamblin and Feldstein (2001) found similar patterns for the identification of emotion in English voices by native speakers of Japanese and native speakers of Spanish in an EFL programme. The control group of native English speakers obtained the highest rate of correct identification across all conditions, followed by the Spanish and the Japanese students. An analysis of the misjudgments revealed a mostly systematic pattern across related pairs of emotions (anger confused with hate and vice versa) for the English and Spanish students. The Japanese students manifested more non-systematic confusions than the Spanish students.

Emotion concepts in bilinguals

Pavlenko (2008) demonstrated that “emotion concepts vary across languages and that bilinguals’ concepts may, in some cases, be distinct from those of monolingual speakers” (2008: 147). She defines emotion concepts as “prototypical scripts that are formed as a result of repeated experiences and involve causal antecedents, appraisals, physiological reactions, consequences, and means of regulation and display” (2008: 150). She distinguishes three possible relationships between emotion concepts encoded in two different languages: complete overlap, partial overlap or no overlap at all. This sets the stage for seven conceptual processes in the bilingual lexicon: “(1) co-existence; (2) L1 transfer; (3) internalization of new concepts; (4) restructuring; (5) convergence; (6) shift; and (7) attrition” (2008: 153).

The first case is illustrated in the work of Stepanova Sachs and Coley (2006) on Russian-English bilinguals and two monolingual control groups. The authors focused on differences in the mapping of envy and jealousy in both languages. In Russian ‘revnuet’ is used to refer to the emotion of jealousy while ‘zaviduet’ is used to refer to the emotion of envy. In English, on the other hand, the word jealous is applied to both jealousy and envy. Participants had to select a word to describe a jealousy or an envy story they had heard. Russian monolinguals chose the most appropriate term while the English monolinguals considered the words envious and jealous as being equally appropriate for describing the emotions of characters in envy stories. For bilinguals, testing language determined responses. They behaved like Russian monolinguals in Russian, and when they were tested in English, they responded like English monolinguals.

In a second experiment, involving a free sorting task, English monolinguals and bilinguals were more likely to group envy and jealousy situations together than were Russian monolinguals (2008: 225). It thus seems that bilinguals’ familiarity with the emotion terms in both languages alters their conceptual representation of these emotions.

Pavlenko and Driagina (2007) offered evidence for L1 transfer in the domain of emotion concepts with advanced American learners of Russian. The learners used the copula verbs and emotion adjectives in contexts where Russian monolinguals use emotion verbs. This is evidence that “that in discussing emotions in Russian the learners draw on the

dominant L1 concept of emotions as states and have not yet internalized the representation of emotions as processes” (Pavlenko 2008: 153-154). Pavlenko and Driagina (2007) found that internalization does not always accompany L2 learning. Although the American learners of Russian were aware of the meaning of the Russian emotion verb ‘perezhivat’ (to experience things keenly) they did not use this verb in narrative tasks where Russian monolinguals did.

Evidence of conceptual restructuring was found in Stepanova Sachs and Coley (2006). The Russian–English bilinguals grouped situations eliciting jealousy and situations eliciting envy together in the sorting task, while Russian monolinguals separated the two situations.

Panayiotou (2006) also found evidence of conceptual restructuring among her Greek-English bilinguals for the concepts of guilt (‘enohi’) and shame (‘ntropi’) in Greek Cypriot culture. Although the terms have linguistic equivalents in Greek and English, “the meanings of these translations differ in the cultures examined” (2006: 203).

Interestingly, some participants realized that their use of the English “guilt” had affected the narrower conceptual category of ‘enohi’ and had led them to produce inappropriate statements in Greek such as “I feel guilty for eating too much cake”, which caused surprised stares from their interlocutors (2006: 196). The participants acknowledged that they borrowed emotion terms from two emotional universes but insisted that these universes “are interconnected and guided by one unified ‘experiencer’ of the terms” (2006: 204).

Pavlenko (2008: 154) reports to have found no examples of conceptual convergence in emotion concepts of bicultural bilinguals. However, she did find ample evidence of conceptual shift, which “takes place in the lexicons of L2 users residing in the L2 context, whose representations of partially overlapping concepts have shifted in the direction of L2-based concepts” (2008: 154). She observed this shift in her own work on Russian–English bilinguals “who in their Russian narratives appealed to combinations of change-of-state verbs and adjectives to describe emotions as states, rather than as processes, thus displaying L2 influence on their L1 performance” (2008: 154).

De Leersnyder, Mesquita and Kim (2011) looked at conceptual shift among immigrants, labeling it “emotional acculturation”. The authors point out that the emotional experiences of people who live together (dyads, groups, cultures) tend to be similar and that immigrants’ emotions probably approximate host culture patterns of emotional experience. They carried out a study on Korean immigrants in the United States and on Turkish immigrants in Belgium using an Emotional Patterns Questionnaire that allowed them to collect data on emotional experiences of immigrants and host group members. The degree of immigrants’ emotional similarity to the host group was reflected in a correlation value of their individual emotional patterns with that of the average pattern of the host group. Immigrants’ exposure to and engagement in the host culture predicted emotional acculturation (2011: 460). In other words, immigrants who had spent a larger proportion of their life in the host country were more likely to have emotionally acculturated as a result of intercultural interactions and relationships (2011: 461). The authors raise the question about the changes that underlie the shifts in emotional patterns: “Emotional patterns may change either because immigrants who are introduced in the new culture will experience different situations or because immigrants start appraising

the same situations differently” (2011: 461). The authors argue that this combination of external and internal components of acculturation is not mutually exclusive.

The final process described by Pavlenko (2008) is conceptual attrition, where, due to prolonged contact with the L2, bilinguals cease to rely on a L1 conceptual category to interpret their experiences (2008: 155). Evidence of such attrition was found in Pavlenko (2002) where monolinguals and bilinguals retold the same short film, portraying an emotional situation. While the Russian monolinguals mentioned two central emotion concepts, ‘rasstraivat’sia’ (to be getting upset) and ‘perezhivat’, the Russian–English bilinguals, however, only used the first notion “that has a lexical and conceptual counterpart in English but did not invoke the language- and culture-specific notion of ‘perezhivat’” (2008: 155).

Language preferences of multilingual and multicultural individuals

A number of significant patterns emerged concerning language choices of multilingual and multicultural individuals in the data collected through the Bilingualism and Emotions Questionnaire (BEQ) (Dewaele and Pavlenko 2001-2003) from more than 1500 multilinguals (Dewaele 2010a). Emotional speech acts happened most frequently in the multilinguals’ dominant language, which was generally the L1 in the BEQ.

Ryoko (Japanese L1, English L2), for example, observes that her languages are used in particular domains. She uses English – which she teaches – for her academic writing, while Japanese seems to emerge spontaneously when she writes about her feelings:

Ryoko: I chose the language I feel like using for that day or even on the same day I switch languages following my urge. (...) I feel that whenever I write in English, my thoughts become clearer than in Japanese. This is why I prefer writing papers (academic) in English. On the other hand, I tend to enjoy the vagueness and the poetic/artistic way Japanese comes out when you make sentences. (...) If I write about my emotions, Japanese sounds much more suitable to my feelings than English (2010a: 89).

However, some participants reported occasionally using their other languages to express emotion depending on their communicative intentions. Participants who had learned a foreign language through classroom instruction but had also used that language in authentic interactions outside the classroom tended to use that language more frequently for swearing than participants who had purely formal instruction. A similar pattern emerged for age of onset of acquisition: participants who had an early start in the acquisition of the foreign language used swearwords in that language more frequently than later starters. General frequency of use of a language showed a highly significant positive relationship with language choice for swearing in all languages. An analysis of individual variation in perceived emotional force of swearwords in the multilinguals’ different languages revealed similar patterns (Dewaele 2004b). L1 swearwords were rated highest in emotional force and swearwords in languages learned later in life had gradually lower emotional force. Participants who had learned a language only through classroom instruction gave lower ratings on emotional force of swearwords in that language than participants who learned their language(s) in a naturalistic– or mixed– context. High levels of proficiency in a language and frequent use of that language was linked with more emotional force of swearwords.

Similar patterns were uncovered in Dewaele's (2008) study on the perceived emotional weight of the phrase "I love you". The phrase "I love you" was felt to be strongest in multilinguals' L1. It appeared to be linked with self-perceived language dominance, context of acquisition of the L2, age of onset of learning the L2, degree of socialization in the L2, nature of the network of interlocutors in the L2, and self-perceived oral proficiency in the L2. Japanese participants made some interesting comments about the expression of love.

One Japanese participant who wished to remain anonymous, YT, a female (Japanese L1, English L2), argues that the phrase "I love you" has no proper equivalent in Japanese:

YT (Japanese L1, English L2): 'I love you' does not exist in Japanese. Even though we can translate it to "Aishiteimasu" "Aishiteiru" "Aishiteru". This word is translation from English word. The feeling is there. Why should we have to say that? It seems that you have a doubt in love. Even if I heard that in English the word does not move me. Sounds sweet but this is just a word. (2008: 1768).

Dewaele (2011) selected a subsample of 386 multilinguals from the BEQ who reported to be equally proficient in their L1 and L2, and used both languages constantly. The analysis revealed that despite their maximal proficiency in the L1 and L2, participants preferred the L1 for communicating feelings or anger, swearing, addressing their children, performing mental calculations, and using inner speech. The L1 was also perceived to be emotionally stronger than the L2 and participants reported lower levels of communicative anxiety in their L1. The qualitative analysis of the «Multilingual Lives» corpus, where participants were interviewed on the topics covered by the BEQ, confirmed the finding that the L1 is usually felt to be more powerful than the L2, but that this did not automatically indicate a preference for the L1. Longer immersion in the L2 culture was linked to a gradual shift in linguistic practices and perceptions where the L2 started to match the L1 in their hearts and minds.

Dewaele (2010b) focused on language choice for swearing in the same sample of multilinguals from the BEQ and found that despite equal levels of proficiency and use, the L1 was used significantly more for swearing and L1 swearwords were reported to have a much stronger emotional resonance than L2 swearwords. Interview data confirmed that L1 swearwords are perceived to be stronger. However, the L1 was not always the preferred language for swearing. Participants who had socialized into their L2 culture reported picking up local linguistic practices (including swearing). L2 swearwords evolved from being «funny» words without any emotional connotation or social stigma, to proper swearwords, ready to be used, but not necessarily matching the emotional force of L1 swearwords.

AH points out that swearwords in her L2 lack power:

AH (German L1, Italian L2, English L3): I rarely use them (swearwords) in my L2.

Also I find saying such things sounds really really funny.

Mustafa (Kurdish and Turkish L1, German L2, French L3, Arabic L4 and English L5) had lived in the UK for 12 years and reported feeling dominant in Turkish and English. He explained that swearing in English and Turkish allowed him to escape the social constraint that weighs on him in Kurdish.

Mu: I feel really swearing is always kind of in these two languages Turkish and English.

Interviewer (B): OK.

Mu: But not Kurdish.

B: Not Kurdish, why?

Mu: Because there aren't many swearwords in Kurdish, and there are extremely rude and undignified kind of expressions, it's kind of cultural, so even in Kurdish there aren't many swearwords that I can use, they are usually Turkish. (Dewaele, 2010b: 608).

Michelle (Taiwanese L1, Mandarin L2, English L3) had lived in the UK for 17 years and feels very fluent in English which she uses all the time. She reported that despite the fact that Chinese sociocultural norms forbid her from swearing, she did use mild English swearwords with her Chinese friends in London:

Mi: It's funny, you do get by isn't it without swearing, you still get by, but I just think that even now I swear, I swear when I'm with my friends, Chinese friends, you have to say 'oh shoot' or 'sugar' or whatever, and you know and then you say that in English, so...

B: While you speak in Chinese?

Mi: Yeah. (Dewaele 2010a: 208).

The effect of strong socialisation in English has an effect on linguistic choices to express angry emotions among Japanese who returned to Japan:

Ryoko (Japanese L1, English L2): I tend to use English when I am angry, Japanese when I'm hurt or sad, both when I am happy or excited (...). My other bilingual friends who are all returnees like me said the same thing about using English when they're angry. I guess I like the sound of the swearing words since I heard it so many times during my stay in the US. This swearing doesn't happen so often in Japan. It's a cultural difference. (Dewaele 2010a: 120).

Another Asian participant, Miho (Japanese L1, English L2, Thai L3, German L4, dominant in L1 and L2) explains that she prefers English to express strong emotions but that she uses either English or Japanese with a monolingual interlocutor. She is a bit surprised when asked what she would say in Japanese to express anger, and explains that she would communicate her feelings non-verbally:

B: You're angry at a Japanese friend who doesn't understand English, which language do you use?

M: Um, Japanese.

B: Ah-ah.

M: but I don't know how to say.

B: So what do you say?

M: I just show angry face?

B: Ah ah.

M: Yeah. (Dewaele 2010a: 209).

Quipinia (Cantonese L1, English L2) reported that her family suppressed the expression of emotion at home, "therefore I feel a lot easier to use another language to express the feelings and the different personality inside me" (Dewaele 2010a: 120). She recalls an incident in which she burst out in English at her parents who know English but with whom she usually speaks Cantonese:

Quipinia: But I remember one time when they were arguing with me and I was soooooo angry that I shouted out 'IT'S UNFAIR!!!!' I guess it's regarded quite impolite if I shouted at my parents (you know Chinese Traditional family) but at

that point I feel that I had to express my anger and let myself just do it in another language; perhaps I feel I'm another person if I say that in English. (Dewaele 2010a: 120).

Bilingual selves

Quipinia's observation about being a different person in English shows that the systematic choice of a particular language in a particular emotional context can lead to a perception of different selves in different languages. A pioneer in this domain is Koven (1998, 2001, 2006) who elicited stories of different kinds of personal experience of two French-Portuguese bilinguals telling a story to a social peer. They were then asked to tell the same story in the other language and subsequently interviewed about the experience of telling the story. Koven looked at how the women presented themselves and also analysed their own impressions of their "verbally produced selves" which she combined with the listeners' impressions. Koven found that both participants:

perform(ed), enact(ed), or inhabit(ed) the role of their characters in the stories quite differently (...) Isabel sounds like an angry, hip suburbanite in French, whereas in Portuguese, she seems a frustrated, but patient, well-mannered bank customer who does not want to draw attention to the fact that she is an émigré. (Koven 1998: 435).

Koven noted that the evaluators tended to report that the women seemed to let themselves be pushed around more when they spoke Portuguese and stood up for themselves more when they spoke French (Koven 1998). Koven suggested that using different languages allowed speakers to "perform a variety of cultural selves" (Koven 2001: 513). Koven focused specifically on the performance of affect by Linda, who was asked to tell twelve stories about a bad experience twice each, once in Portuguese and once in French, to a Portuguese-French bilingual of her own age (Koven 2006). Her accounts were recorded and formally analysed in terms of interlocutory devices and different styles. Five bilingual listeners gave commentaries on the recordings of each story. The findings showed that she was "angrier, more forceful and more aggressive in French" (Koven 2006: 107), despite recounting the stories in similar ways in both languages. Koven reports that Linda is aware that she "contains" herself in Portuguese and does not have access to profane or vulgar vocabulary in that language. Koven notes that "Linda may not be free to perform an aggressive persona in Portuguese" (Koven 2006: 108).

Panayiotou (2004a) investigated Greek-English and English-Greek bilinguals' reactions to the same story read to them in both languages. It concerned a young professional – Andy or Andreas as appropriate – who neglected his girlfriend and his care for his elderly mother because of work pressure. When asked what advice they would give to Andy/Andreas, participants were found to be much more tolerant of Andy's behaviour compared to Andreas's behaviour. Panayiotou suggests that participants' judgments differed according to the linguistic repertoires and cultural frames they were drawing from (Cultural Frame Switching).

Pavlenko (2006) used the feedback from 1039 participants of the BEQ (Dewaele and Pavlenko 2001-2003) to the question whether participants feel that they become different people when they change languages. She found that almost two thirds of participants offered an affirmative response to the question, a quarter of participants gave a negative response, with the remaining 10% of participants giving an ambiguous response

(Pavlenko 2006: 10). Many participants answered that they felt more ‘real’ and ‘natural’ in their L1, and more “fake”, “artificial” in later learned languages (2006: 18). The perception of different selves was not restricted to late or immigrant bilinguals, “but is a more general part of bi- and multilingual experience” (2006: 27).

This finding was confirmed in a smaller-scale study (Dewaele and Nakano 2012), where 106 multilinguals reported feeling gradually less logical, less serious, less emotional and increasingly fake when using the L2, L3 and L4 compared to their L1.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This overview has shown that research on culture and emotion happens with different approaches and methods across a wide range of disciplines. The study of differences between emotions in Eastern and Western cultures has spawned a considerable body of work. It shows that culture permeates the experience and communication of emotion. Psychologists have become more interested in the emotional change that immigrants experience as they settle in a new culture. Applied linguists and psychologists have also delved into the unique emotional behaviour of multilinguals, their emotion concepts and their selves in their various languages. Most research has been cross-sectional, i.e. focused on variation between individuals at the moment of data collection. Much less research has focused on diachronic variation among the same individuals, i.e. in change over time as a result of acculturation and socialization into a new culture. This is not surprising given the fact that change can occur gradually over a period of several years and that few researchers can wait that long. Testimonies by multilinguals do allow researchers to obtain a glimpse of the process of change in progress. As these are typically case studies, it is hard to generalize the findings. One research question that deserves future attention in the etic and emic paradigms is why some multicultural individuals shift further and faster than others? To what extent is the speed and extent of change linked to sociocultural or psychological variables? Do age and gender mediate these changes? It would be particularly interesting to see to what extent variance in lower-level and automatic processes can be explained by stable sociobiographical and psychological variables, and whether volition can explain any variance. In other words, will the multilingual who is particularly motivated to master a particular language or culture display different lower-level and automatic processes compared to those who might be slightly less motivated? Further research is also warranted on various emotional variables, to establish the effect of new and additional languages and cultures on existing emotion concepts and automatic processes.

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FURTHER READING

Berry, J. W., Poortinga, Y.P., Breugelmans, S. M., Chasiotis, A. and Sam, D. L. (2011) *Cross-Cultural Psychology: Research and Applications*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

The authors discuss all domains of behavior (including emotion and perception), and present the cultural, culture-comparative, and indigenous traditions in cross-cultural psychology. They also discuss acculturation and intercultural relations.

Kövecses, Z. (2003) *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling*.

The authors address the question whether human emotions are best characterized as biological, psychological, or cultural entities. He shows how cultural aspects, metaphorical language, and human physiology are part of a complex integrated system.

Kitayama, S. and Markus, H.R. (1997) *Emotion and Culture: Empirical Studies of Mutual Influence*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

The authors argue that emotions are not "hardwired" biological events, but are influenced and shaped through social, cultural, and linguistic processes. Culture is shown to penetrate into every component process of emotion: cognitive, linguistic, physiological and neurochemical elements.

Pavlenko, A. (2005) *Emotions and Multilingualism*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

This is the first book to consider the relationship between language and emotions in bi- and multilinguals, condemning the monolingual bias in much psychological research and delving into autobiographical literature and empirical research.

Wierzbicka, A. (1999) *Emotions across Languages and Cultures: Diversity and Universals*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

The author combines psychological, anthropological and linguistic theories to understand how emotions are expressed and experienced in different cultures, languages, and social relations.

Zhu Hua (2013) *Exploring Intercultural Communication: Language in Action*. London: Routledge.

This book shows how intercultural communication (a process of negotiating meaning, cultural identities between people from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds) permeates everyday life. It investigates what is needed to achieve effective and appropriate intercultural communication, and the considers the link between language, culture and identity.

RELATED TOPICS

Culture and Language processing

Culture, Language and context

Language, Culture, and Politeness

Language and cultural scripts

Language and culture in intercultural communication

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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