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Multilinguals' perceptions of feeling different when switching languages

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Research into multilingualism and personality has shown that a majority of multilinguals report feeling different when they switch from one language to another. The present study looks at perceived shifts on five scales of feelings (feeling logical, serious, emotional, fake and different) in pair-wise comparisons between languages following the order of acquisition (L1/L2, L2/L3 and L3/L4). Participants were 106 adult multilinguals with a total of 31 different first languages. The results showed a systematic shift on most scales across the four languages, with participants feeling gradually less logical, less serious, less emotional and increasingly fake when using the L2, L3 and L4. Regression analyses showed that self-perceived proficiency was a significant predictor of shift on the feelings scales in the L3.

Keywords: feeling different; codeswitching; multilingualism; proficiency; age of onset of acquisition; personality

Introduction

Nils Enkvist, a multilingual Finnish linguist, reports that people 'often ask whether I change personality when switching from one language to another' (2001, 54). He confirms that this is indeed the case:

In Finnish I am an honest, straightforward, homely, down-to earth person, occasionally digging into the politer layers of a wartime military substratum of language. In Swedish, I am pedantic and, alas, sound precisely like the academic administrator I used to be. And in English, a language I originally learned through formal education, I am stuck with an RP variant that strikes today's Britons as a relic from high society in the days of Edward VII. (54–55)

Enkvist's observation seems to reflect the perception of a majority of multilinguals who were asked the question whether they felt any different when using a particular language. Grosjean (2011) reports the observations of three bilinguals who confirm this general trend:

Bilingual 1: When I'm around Anglo-Americans, I find myself awkward and unable to choose my words quickly enough. . . . When I'm amongst Latinos/Spanish-speakers, I don't feel shy at all. I'm witty, friendly, and . . . I become very out-going.

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Bilingual 2: In English, my speech is very polite, with a relaxed tone, always saying 'please' and 'excuse me.' When I speak Greek, I start talking more rapidly, with a tone of anxiety and in a kind of rude way . . .

Bilingual 3: I find when I'm speaking Russian I feel like a much more gentle, 'softer' person. In English, I feel more 'harsh,' 'businesslike'.

Grosjean (2011) expresses his surprise about the fact that so many bilinguals report being different in each of their languages, and yet, that relatively little research has been carried out on the question. The aim of the present study is thus to pursue this line of inquiry (Grosjean 2010; Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2011, 2012; Pavlenko 2006; Wilson 2008) adopting a combined quantitative and qualitative approach. We will focus on variation on five scales of feelings linked to language switching (feeling logical, serious, emotional, fake and different). We are not claiming to be measuring changes in personality, which would require a different research design and instrument. Our investigation will consider the combined effect of independent variables such as level of proficiency, frequency of use and age of onset of acquisition (AoA) of a language on the five scales of feelings.

In the following section we present an overview of the research on variation on scales of feelings accompanying language switches. Participants and research instruments will be presented in the following section. Subsequently, we present three research questions. The results are discussed in the following section. Finally, we discuss the findings and present some tentative conclusions.

Literature review

Multilingual memoirists such as Enkvist provide insightful accounts of how they are not the same in their different languages. Such differences are not only felt by the speaker, but can also be noted by observers and identified on psychological tests. A number of studies with bilingual participants have shown that scores on various psychological scales can be significantly different according to the language in which the test was taken (Hull 1990, 1996; Ramirez-Esparza et al. 2006; Veltkamp et al. 2012).

Bicultural individuals change their declared values and self-descriptions when presented with stimuli relevant to a particular culture. Evidence for this 'Cultural Frame Switching' has been provided by Koven (1998, 2001, 2007) who, in a study of French–Portuguese bilinguals, elicited stories of different kinds of personal experience depending upon whether the participants used French or Portuguese to tell the story to a social peer. The participants were then asked to tell the same story in the other language and subsequently interviewed about the experience of telling the story. Koven analysed the discursive forms to show how the speakers presented themselves and also analysed their own impressions of their 'verbally produced selves' and the listeners' impressions. Drawing on the results of these analyses for two female speakers, Koven (1998) found that both speakers:

. . . perform(ed), enact(ed), or inhabit(ed) the role of their characters in the stories quite differently. The image of the kind of woman who would say 'I'm not that kind of girl' in the sociocultural landscape of rural village northwestern Portugal is not comparable in the urban youth culture of Paris . . . Similarly, 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. (435)

Moving beyond the particular narratives that the participants told, 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). In a continuation of the same study, Koven went on to examine how bilingual speakers performed the same quoted characters when telling the same story in their two languages (Koven 2001). She found that the speakers used direct quotations to the same degree, but in their second language, French, they were more likely to present all the characters as speaking in more marked registers, for example, more 'bourgeois' or more 'young, aggressive suburbanite'. They also presented themselves in a more colloquial and somewhat vulgar way, leading Koven to suggest that using different languages may allow speakers to 'perform a variety of cultural selves' (Koven 2001, 513). Drawing on a study of one female participant from the same Portuguese–French bilingual cohort, Koven focused specifically on the performance of affect (Koven 2004, 2006). Koven's participant, Linda, was asked to tell 12 stories about a bad experience twice each, once in Portuguese and once in French, to a Portuguese–French bilingual of her own age. 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. While Koven notes that Linda's relationships with family and friends may mean that her affective displays in either language are 'relatively segregated', the findings showed that she was 'angrier, more forceful and more aggressive in French' (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.

One theme that emerges from the studies by Koven (2001, 2007) is that learning to operate in a second or foreign language has the ability to affect the behaviour of the individual. It is unclear whether the participants were aware that the changes in themselves were the result of using a different language, but observers reported that they presented themselves differently. Authors such as Hoffman (1989) have reported how the change in language was a cause of observable personality changes in themselves. One's self-image when operating in a foreign language can even be deeply upsetting, as was the case for the two immigrant women who dropped out of their English as a second language class because they rejected learning the language (Norton 2001); in the case of other immigrants, the thought of acquiring the new language can spur one on to seek previously unimagined opportunities (Dagenais 2003; Kanno and Norton 2003). In the same vein, Ogulnick (2000) points out that learning a language is not just about learning words and grammar, but also about taking on a new role and knowing how to behave according to how that role is defined.

To investigate the aspect of self-image in different languages, the Bilingualism and Emotion Questionnaire (BEQ) (Dewaele and Pavlenko 2001–2003) included one open-ended question: 'Do you feel like a different person sometimes when you use your different languages?'. Pavlenko (2006) drew on the feedback from 1039 participants to this question and, using a Bakhtinian approach, asked if:

- (1) ... some bi- and multilinguals feel that they become different people when they change languages;
- (2) how do they make sense of these perceptions;
- (3) what

prompts some bi- and multilinguals to see their language selves as different, while others claim to have a single self. (6)

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 or leaving the question unanswered (10).

One common theme in the responses was the feeling that the first language was perceived ‘as “real” and “natural”, while later learned languages are “fake” and “artificial”’ (18). Pavlenko speculates that participants might have felt more authentic and comfortable in their L1 because it was the language in which they were most proficient, ‘whereas the perception of artificiality stems from the need to manipulate less familiar repertoires of languages learned later in life’ (19).

The analysis of the responses showed that the perception of different selves was not restricted to late or immigrant bilinguals, ‘but is a more general part of bi- and multilingual experience’ (27). She also observed that ‘similar experiences (e.g. change in verbal and non-verbal behaviours accompanying the change in language) may be interpreted differently by people who draw on different discourses of bi/multilingualism and self’ (27). She found that when participants used the discourse of bilingualism as linguistic schizophrenia ‘it was mostly in the form of a voice from “elsewhere” that is being mocked and resisted’ (28). Pavlenko concluded that the bi- and multilinguals are not like single monolinguals. Many feel a shift in personality when switching languages while some do not experience this. ‘Some may derive enjoyment from hybridity and relativity of their existence and others may feel that they inhabit distinct and at times incommensurable lifeworlds and experience pain and anguish over this condition’ (29).

Wilson (2008) carried out a two-stage investigation into the relationship between personality and feelings about foreign language use. She used the feedback from 1414 participants to the same question about feeling different in a different language from the BEQ. Nearly half of the participants answered ‘yes’ to the question, 16% gave a ‘qualified yes’, 6% gave a ‘qualified no’ and 29% answered a straight ‘no’. The remaining answers were ambiguous (85). Statistical analysis showed that female participants and participants with higher levels of education were more likely to report feeling different when using different languages. An analysis of the corpus (27,938 words) revealed a highly frequent use of the adjective ‘more’. It was used repeatedly with themes such as Control/lack of control (19%), Emotionality (14%), Intellect (22%). The majority of respondents reported that using foreign language had a positive, even exhilarating effect on how they felt and acted.

In the second stage, Wilson constructed a questionnaire based on a selection of statements reflecting the key themes in the BEQ corpus. It was administered together with a Big-Five personality test to 172 adult foreign language users. The findings revealed a negative relationship between Extraversion and feeling different when operating in a foreign language for participants who rated their proficiency at intermediate level or above. She also found that individuals with lower levels of education were more likely to feel different. Finally, participants who had learned their L2 at a younger age were more likely to feel differently (Wilson 2008, 157).

Ożańska-Ponikwia (2011, 2012) investigated the link between various psychological variables and multilinguals’ self-reported feeling of a difference when they switch languages. She hypothesised that feeling different when using an L2 is ‘a

matter of self/social awareness as well as emotional intelligence' (2011, 189). Her investigation into 102 Polish immigrants in English-speaking countries and their perception and expression of emotions in the L1 and L2 included the dimension of 'feeling different' when switching language. She used a three-item scale adapted from Wilson (2008). She found significant, positive correlations between 'feeling different' and a number of personality traits, namely Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (108). Significant positive correlations also emerged between feeling different when using the L2 and Emotional Intelligence traits such as Emotion management, Emotion perception, Emotionality, Social awareness, Empathy and Sociability (112). Female participants scored significantly higher on feeling different compared to the male participants (115). She thus speculates 'that the ability to notice changes occurring in personality and behavior while operating in a foreign language is largely dependent on personality'. Bilinguals who are socially and emotionally skilled are 'better able to notice subtle changes in personality and behaviour while using the L2, and are also more aware of any changes occurring in their linguistic repertoire' (152).

Dewaele (2010) looked at the perceptions that 485 pentalinguals (extracted from the BEQ; Dewaele and Pavlenko 2001–2003) have of their five languages. He found a gradual decline in values from the L1 to the L5 for perceived usefulness, colourfulness, richness, poetic character and emotionality. In other words, the pentalinguals felt that their L1 scored highest on all dimensions. Participants who had acquired a language early in life (before puberty) tended to perceive their languages as more useful, colourful, rich, poetic and emotional compared to those who had acquired the languages later in life. Frequency of use was also positively linked with scores on various dimensions. While gender was not found to have any effect, increased age and higher levels of education were associated with higher scores on perceived usefulness, colourfulness, richness and poetic character of the L2. He speculated that the perceptions of the languages might be transferred to the perception of the self when using that language. In other words, a multilingual who chooses a language perceived to be more colourful, rich, poetic and emotional might feel more colourful, rich, poetic and emotional when using that language.

While previous research has investigated feelings of difference in multilinguals, it has typically been through binary questions (Yes/No), followed up with open questions to those who answered 'yes', asking them to elaborate. The present study will seek to extend this line of research by proposing participants a set of closed questions with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'feel the same' to 'feel very different', on five specific feelings scales (feeling logical, emotional, serious, fake and different). Open questions will allow participants to comment. The Likert scale values will allow us to compare how participants feel in their different languages, and whether these values are linked to independent variables such as self-perceived proficiency, frequency of use of languages, AoA and sociobiographical variables.

Method

Participants

A total of 106 multilinguals (75 females, 31 males) participated in the study. Their ages range from 18 to 58 (mean = 28.6; SD = 7.0). A majority of participants were students at Birkbeck College, University of London. Many were enrolled in the

Table 1. Mean and SD for frequency of use and self-perceived proficiency in the four languages.

| | Mean frequency | SD | Mean proficiency | SD |
|----|----------------|------|------------------|------|
| L1 | 4.81 | 0.50 | 4.88 | 0.43 |
| L2 | 4.59 | 0.84 | 4.35 | 0.81 |
| L3 | 3.33 | 1.65 | 3.31 | 1.29 |
| L4 | 2.92 | 1.48 | 2.86 | 1.09 |

master's degree (42%) or the bachelor's degree (41%), and the others had either a high school degree (14%) or a doctoral degree (3%). More than 90% of the participants had lived abroad for more than 3 months. Over half of the participants (54%) reported having a language-related job or doing studies on bi- and multilingualism. The sample consists of 29 bilinguals, 34 trilinguals, 25 quadrilinguals and 18 pentalinguals. The participants speak a total of 56 different languages. The most frequent L1s were German ($n = 16$), English ($n = 16$), Japanese ($n = 15$) and Spanish ($n = 7$). Other L1s included Bulgarian, Cantonese, Catalan, Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese Chinese, Croatian, Danish, Faroese, Farsi, French, Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Swedish, Swiss German, Telugu and Thai. The most frequent foreign languages were English, French, Spanish and German.

Table 1 shows that the L1 was the most frequently used language and also the language in which participants felt most proficient. The values for the L2 do not lag far behind the L1, but a wider gap separates the L2 from the L3. The increasing higher values for SD going from L1 to L3 suggest a wider variation between participants in frequency and proficiency for the L3 and L4.

A series of paired *t*-tests, with Bonferroni correction, showed that languages which had been acquired later were used significantly less frequently and were not mastered to the same degree as languages acquired earlier (Table 2).

This sample is not representative of the general population. It consists of educated, mostly female multilinguals, and reflects the composition of the student population in the Department of Applied Linguistics and Communication at Birkbeck. It is also quite typical for online questionnaires dealing with language and emotion issues (Wilson and Dewaele 2010). The high level of ethnic and linguistic diversity is also a characteristic for London.

Table 2. Pair-wise comparison between frequency of use and self-perceived proficiency in the four languages.

| | <i>t</i> | df | <i>p</i> |
|--------------------|----------|-----|----------|
| <i>Frequency</i> | | | |
| L1/L2 | 2.18 | 103 | 0.031 |
| L2/L3 | 5.41 | 71 | 0.0001 |
| L3/L4 | 2.08 | 38 | 0.044 |
| <i>Proficiency</i> | | | |
| L1/L2 | 5.82 | 103 | 0.0001 |
| L2/L3 | 8.03 | 74 | 0.0001 |
| L3/L4 | 4.72 | 41 | 0.0001 |

Instrument

Participants filled out an online questionnaire that focused on sociobiographical background, educational and linguistic history. They were asked to give feedback on closed questions with 5-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (feel the same) to 5 (feel very different). The question was repeated for every language (L1, L2, L3, L4 and L5):

- (1) How logical do you feel in this language?
- (2) How serious do you feel in this language?
- (3) How emotional do you feel in this language?
- (4) How fake (not yourself) do you feel in this language?
- (5) How different do you feel in this language?

These scales of feelings were chosen based on recurrent observations in the literature (Koven 2001; Ożańska-Ponikwia 2012; Pavlenko 2006; Wilson 2008). We deliberately choose positively oriented scales (logical, serious, emotional), one negatively oriented one (fake) and one indeterminate scale (different).

A one-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test showed that the values on these scales are normally distributed. One open question allowed participants to comment on their perceptions: ‘How do you feel when you switch language?’

We used content analysis of this open-ended exploratory question, categorised the answers according to whether or not the participant reported feeling different and then looked at the range of reasons the participant suggested for (not) feeling different when switching language.

Research questions

- (1) Is there a systematic shift on the scales of feelings across languages?
- (2) To what extent can scores on the scales of feelings be predicted by self-perceived proficiency, frequency of use and AoA in the different languages?
- (3) Are scores on the various scales of feelings linked to gender, age or education level?

Results

Shift on the scales of feelings

A number of paired *t*-tests with Bonferroni correction ($0.05/3 = 0.016$) showed an interesting pattern of differences across languages and scales (Figure 1). Overall, participants reported feeling significantly less logical, less emotional and marginally less serious in languages acquired later in life, while feeling significantly more fake and different in these later languages (Table 3). Interestingly, the latter two scales show a similar pattern. However, only the difference between the L1 and L2 is significant for feeling different. The difference between L1 and L2 is significant for feeling fake, with marginal differences for comparisons between L2 and L3, and L3 and L4 (Table 3).

The scores on the scales ‘feeling fake’ and ‘different’ are also much lower than those of the three other scales for the L1 and L2. For the L3 the scores on the five

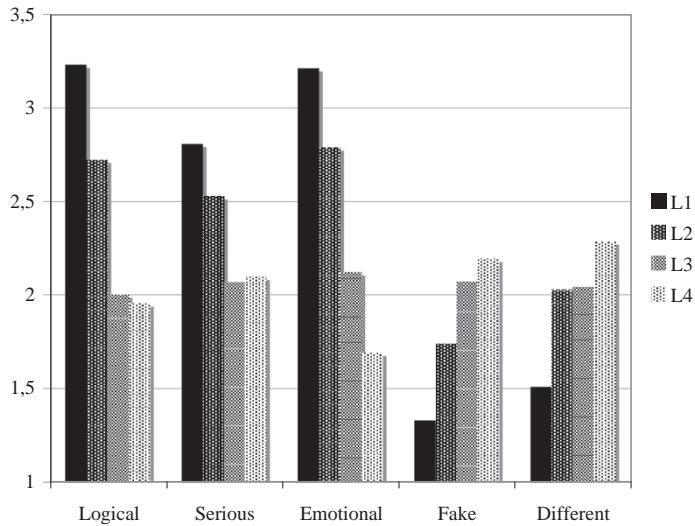


Figure 1. Perceived shifts on feelings scales when switching language.

scales range from 2.0 to 2.1 on the 5-point scale. The range is slightly larger for the L4 where values range between 1.7 and 2.2. This shows that the L1 and L2 seem to belong to the category of languages where shifts are more clearly perceived than in the L3 and L4. One possible reason is that the L3 and L4 are used too infrequently, and are not mastered well enough to experience a difference when switching to these languages. The exception is feeling emotional, where the value in the L4 is significantly lower than that for the L3.

Feedback from participants on the open question generally supports the pattern uncovered in our statistical analyses. Most participants reported feeling more authentic, more logical, more emotional and more serious in languages acquired earlier in life compared with languages acquired later.

Table 3. Pair-wise comparisons on the five scales in the four languages (paired *t*-tests).

| | <i>t</i> | df | <i>p</i> |
|-----------------|----------|-----|----------|
| Logical L1/L2 | 3.51 | 103 | 0.001 |
| Logical L2/L3 | 3.45 | 74 | 0.001 |
| Logical L3/L4 | 1.43 | 41 | 0.161 |
| Serious L1/L2 | 2.23 | 103 | 0.028 |
| Serious L2/L3 | 2.10 | 74 | 0.039 |
| Serious L3/L4 | 0.46 | 41 | 0.647 |
| Emotional L1/L2 | 2.49 | 103 | 0.014 |
| Emotional L2/L3 | 3.51 | 74 | 0.001 |
| Emotional L3/L4 | 2.67 | 41 | 0.011 |
| Fake L1/L2 | -3.50 | 103 | 0.001 |
| Fake L2/L3 | -2.14 | 73 | 0.036 |
| Fake L3/L4 | -2.08 | 41 | 0.044 |
| Different L1/L2 | -3.92 | 103 | 0.0001 |
| Different L2/L3 | 0.002 | 74 | 1 |
| Different L3/L4 | -1.338 | 41 | 0.188 |

Kenji (Japanese L1, English L2), who acquired his English mainly at school in Japan, comments on his feeling more fake in his L2:

When I'm speaking in English, I tend to rely on 'ready made phrases' (if you know what I mean), use phrases that I heard from other people. Thus, I feel a little restricted in expressing my own feelings, as I feel like borrowing the words from someone... compared to when I'm speaking in Japanese, where I feel like I'm constructing my own sentence, and could play around with it. Also, when I'm using Japanese, I feel more often I could communicate with someone, not just with the actual meaning of the word, but with the hidden meaning/expression of it.

Jonathan (English L1, Spanish L2, French L3) compares how he feels using his L2 rather than his L3:

When I switch to Spanish, which I speak fluently, I can articulate myself more clearly emotionally. When I speak French, which I speak at intermediate level, I become more serious and less humorous as I try to make myself understood.

Tomoko (Japanese L1, English L2, Spanish L3), who is dominant in her L3, reports feeling very different when switching from her L2 to her dominant L3:

I feel like my personality changes. I feel more or less comfortable depending on the language I switch to. If I switch from English to Spanish, I feel better and easier to express since I'm more confident about speaking Spanish.

Erika (Swedish L1, English L2, Spanish L3), who reports using her L1 very rarely, also ponders the differences she experiences when switching to her L2 rather than her L3:

More confident switching into English. Switching into Spanish I feel more 'theatrical', like I'm stepping into a character knowingly. Swedish like it's very familiar but hard to communicate, lost for words.

Paolo (Italian L1, English L2) reports personality changes that were not included in the closed questions:

When I switch language I can feel more pragmatic/young/common (English) or more poetic/old/elite (Italian).

However, a number of participants reported feeling no difference at all when switching languages.

Thyra (Swedish L1, English L2, Norwegian L3, Danish L4, Italian L5) rejects the idea that her personality might shift when switching languages:

The same, I don't think different languages define me.

Janina (Polish L1, German L2, English L3, Dutch L4, Spanish L5) feels that the lack of shifts is linked to her bilingual upbringing:

Because I grew up with two languages and it was familiar to think in two languages while still being 'me'.

Laksha (Telugu L1, Hindi L2, Tamil L3, English L4) reports switching languages so often that she stopped noticing it, and does not feel any different when choosing a particular language:

I am very comfortable switching languages. This happens on almost a daily basis. I do not realize sometimes that I am switching languages. I speak the language in which I am comfortable to express what I want to say.

A couple of participants observed that while they felt no differences when switching languages, they did experience either foreign language anxiety (Jacob) or needed some time to adapt to the new language (Marika).

Jacob (English L1, French L2, Mandarin L3): Mostly I feel unsteady when I don't have complete mastery of the language – my personality remains basically the same but I am less confident of my ability to express myself in my second and third language.

Marika (Greek L1, Bulgarian L2, English L3, Italian L4, Japanese L5): My feelings/way of thinking and personality remain the same when I decide to switch languages. However, if I am not as fluent as I would like to be in the language I am switching to then I could take me a couple of minutes to adapt. Feelings/ way of thinking and personality still remain the same though.

Predictors of scores on the feelings scales

A number of linear stepwise regression analyses were carried out on the scores of the five feelings scales in the L2, L3 and L4 in order to identify the best predictors. The three independent variables were self-perceived proficiency, self-reported frequency of use and AoA. The stepwise regression reveals that self-perceived proficiency is the independent variable that predicts between 7 and 17.4% of variance on a number of scales. AoA in the L2 is a significant predictor on the 'feeling different' scale, explaining 4% of variance. Self-reported frequency of use was excluded from all stepwise regression analyses. Only the significant predictors are presented in Table 4.

Sociobiographical variables

A series of independent *t*-tests showed that no significant gender differences existed in the scores on the five scales in the various languages. Age and education levels were also unrelated with the dependent variables.

Table 4. Linear stepwise regression analyses on the feelings scales.

| Feelings scale | Predictor | R^2 | F | p |
|----------------|----------------|-------|------|--------|
| Logical | L3 proficiency | 0.114 | 9.03 | 0.004 |
| Serious | L3 proficiency | 0.083 | 6.36 | 0.014 |
| Emotional | L3 proficiency | 0.070 | 5.29 | 0.024 |
| Fake | L2 proficiency | 0.174 | 21.3 | 0.0001 |
| Fake | L3 proficiency | 0.175 | 21.1 | 0.0001 |
| Different | L2 AoA | 0.040 | 4.13 | 0.045 |

AoA, age of onset of acquisition.

Discussion

We found a systematic shift in how multilinguals feel in their different languages. They reported feeling significantly more authentic, more logical, more emotional and more serious in their L1, with gradually lower values for languages which they had acquired later in life, and in which they felt significantly less proficient. The pattern was different for the scale 'feeling different' where the L1 values were much lower than the L2 values but where the L3 and L4 values did not increase further. This distinction between the L1 and all languages acquired later could be linked to the relative indeterminacy of the term 'different', which makes it harder to operationalise. Indeed, feeling 'different' might catch a constellation of vague intuitions and feelings, which could be positive or negative. It seems as if the participants made a more categorical distinction (yes/no) on this scale. They were able to provide more nuanced judgements on the four other scales which had a positive or negative orientation.

The findings confirm the general picture uncovered in previous research, that is, a majority of multilinguals report feeling different in their different languages (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2011; Pavlenko 2006; Wilson 2008), even though some participants deviated from this pattern. Interestingly, we found that the shift went in the same direction on all five scales, with higher values on the positive end of the scales for the languages acquired first in life. This included not only both the coldly rational scales such as feeling more logical and serious, but also the emotional scale. It thus seems that multilinguals feel that their range on the various scales becomes more restricted in languages they have acquired later in life. This corresponds to a well-known phenomenon in second language acquisition, namely that L2 learners and users typically remain somewhere in the middle of the continuum of speech styles. While L1 users can vary their speech styles from the informal end of the continuum all the way to the highly formal end, L2 learners and users start from the middle before slowly working to expand their stylistic range towards the opposite poles of the continuum (Valdman 2003).

The gradual decline in values on the various scales for languages acquired later in life mirrors the perceptions that pentalinguals had of their languages (Dewaele 2010). It seems to confirm our speculation that the perceptions of the languages might be transferred to the perception that a person has of itself when using that language. The switch to a language perceived to be more colourful, rich, poetic and emotional seems to make the pentalinguals feel more colourful, rich, poetic and emotional. As Ellen, one of the participants in Dewaele (2010), observed:

Speaking my L1 is like being in my own skin – a completely natural and comfortable feeling. Using my L2 is perhaps like wearing gorgeous clothes and evening make-up – a not completely natural state of affairs but one which allows me to shine and appear 'beautiful'. (186)

Considering the feedback from our participants, it is also striking that those who feel different when switching typically report a change in the context (environment, culture, interlocutors) in which they use their languages. Grosjean (2011) pointed out that these environmental factors might cause the variation in feeling, rather than the language switch itself. It could also be argued that Koven's bilinguals behaved different in their two languages, not because of the language itself, but because of different sociopragmatic rules in the French and Portuguese speech communities.

One could speculate that within a community of codeswitching bilinguals the feelings of differences would be minimal because the context would remain unchanged. This seems to be confirmed by Janina, Thyra and Laksha who report switching languages within the same context and not feeling any different.

Self-perceived proficiency was found to be a significant, but modest, predictor on various scales in the L3, on a single scale in the L2, and did not predict any score in the L4. The fact that more regression analyses were significant for the L3 than for the L2 or L4 could be linked to the higher level of variation in proficiency levels and the significantly lower mean score for self-perceived proficiency. Participants with lower levels of self-perceived proficiency may have felt restricted in their communicative abilities and felt therefore that they were less logical, serious and emotional, and more fake in their L3. The lack of relationships in the L4 might be linked to the fact that the levels of self-perceived proficiency were too low on average to have any significant effect.

The general lack of effect of AoA suggests that, contrary to the perceptions that multilinguals have of their languages – where early starters perceive their languages to be more emotional (Dewaele 2006, 2008, 2010) – the attributes of the language are not transferred to the individual.

Gender, age and education levels were found to be unrelated to scores on the five scales in the L1, L2, L3 and L4.

These findings cannot be linked to Cultural Frame Switching (Panayiotou 2004a, 2004b; Ramirez-Esparza et al. 2006; Veltkamp et al. 2012) because of the cultural heterogeneity of our sample and the fact that our dependent variables were not personality traits, but scales of feelings. Further research, following the lead of Ożańska-Ponikwia (2012), could look whether the variation on ‘feelings’ scales for various languages is linked to specific personality traits.

Conclusion

Nils Enkvist’s humorous comment about his range of characters in different languages is a sentiment shared by a majority of the participants in the present study. It is important to remember that our multilingual participants were highly educated, possessed high levels of meta-pragmatic awareness – possibly further strengthened by their studies in applied linguistics, allowing them to convert subtle shifts in feelings into numerical form. We are not claiming that multilinguals with lower education levels would behave differently, but it is notoriously harder to persuade them to participate in this type of survey (Dewaele 2010, Wilson and Dewaele 2010).

Participants reported feeling significantly less logical, less serious, less emotional and increasingly fake when using the L2, L3 and L4. Comments made by participants generally confirmed these broad patterns although some participants reported feeling not different at all when switching languages. Variation on the ‘feeling’ scales was mostly linked to self-perceived proficiency in the L3, but less, or not so, in the other languages. We argue that at very high levels of proficiency and/or use (i.e. typically the L1 and L2) shifts are less perceptible and that participants code-switch without necessarily being consciously aware of it. Also, at very low levels of proficiency and/or use (i.e. typically the L4), participants may not have established yet how they feel on these scales. In other words, only in a language that is mastered relatively well (i.e. typically the L3), can participants compare how they feel on various scales, using the L1 and L2 as points of reference. Variation on the ‘feeling’

scales was unrelated to the age at which a language has been acquired, and the sociobiographical variables such as gender, age and education level have had no effect. What this study shows is that the chronology of acquisition of languages affects how participants feel when using these languages, but that a large amount of variance remains unexplained, possibly because language use is confounded by various contextual factors.

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