

Eurasian Journal  
of Humanities and  
Social Sciences



## How We Shift Personalities While Speaking Different Languages

Scientific adviser: **Saodat Sadikova**

**Anastasiya Nam**

Jizzakh State Pedagogical Institute e-mail:  
sadikovasaodat9@gmail.com

Student Jizzakh State Pedagogical Institute of Uzbekistan  
Foreign languages faculty  
e-mail: [namkyouk@mail.ru](mailto:namkyouk@mail.ru)

### ABSTRACT

Whether language shapes our behavior has long been a contradicting issue. Several research into the connection between languages and the way we act was made over the course of decades. The current study discovered and recapitulated the last research on the effects of language use on personality perception and dialectical thinking, especially the Study 3 of the research, as it mainly concerns with the consequences of dialectical thinking on behavioral manifestations. In this study 68 participants demonstrated self- and other-perceived variations in personality and behavior across bilingual contexts.

### Keywords:

Dialectical Thinking, Second Language, Linguistic Context, Self-Perception, Shifts In Behavior, Bicultural People, Second-Language Identity, Decontextualized Sentences, Behavioral Changeability, Interlocutor

### Introduction

Do the languages change the way we behave? That is the question that has arisen many debates among scientists and ordinary people. The hypothesis of linguistic relativity, also known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is a principle that suggests that a language affects its speakers' outlooks or cognition and thus people's perceptions are interrelated to their spoken language. The principle of linguistic relativity and the link between language and behavior has also received attention in different academic fields: philosophy, psychology and anthropology. As Charlemagne once said: "To have a second language – to possess a second soul." Everyone learning foreign languages can relate to that quote. Languages we speak can trigger different shifts in our behavior, self-concept, values, personality and expressions of emotions.

### Literature review

The first shift that can arise in your speech is a change of voice and intonation. Your familiar voice can sound in two completely different ways: low with tedious intonation in your mother tongue and bold, loud – in a second. Probably, you will think:

"On what grounds should I change the tone of my voice on purpose?"

But the point is that we tend to do that automatically and unconsciously. What is behind such a subconscious reaction?

Over the course of the whole process of acquiring languages, learners catch up various tones, tunes and chunks of native speakers. As a result, the learners insert some fillers and features into their speech. We reproduce everything we hear around, making speech more fluent and natural.

Nairan Ramírez-Esparza, an assistant professor of social psychology at the University of Connecticut says, that “the language cannot be separated from the cultural values of that language,” “You see yourself through the cultural values of the language you are speaking.” This effect works particularly on bilingual and bicultural people who are deeply grounded in multiple cultures.

“It is arguable,” Jill Hadfield, a professor of language studies at Unitec Institute of Technology in New Zealand, writes in an email, “that if all you use a language for is to translate or fill blanks in decontextualized sentences such as ‘The pen of my aunt is on the table,’ you will not develop a second-language identity.”

### The study

Study 3 applied real conversations to test the effects of oral speech. Researchers exposed participants to real conversations in Chinese with a representative from China, and in English with native speakers of that language, as it enables to create a linguistic context.

The sample included 68 female Chinese-English bilingual students from Chinese University of Hong Kong and two Caucasian and two Chinese interviewers who were fluent in both languages. The interviewers were instructed to standardize their body language during the conversations so that participants shifts in personality and behavior would not be due to the characteristics of interviewers.

### Method

Each student took part in four conditions: talking with a Caucasian partner in English, with a Caucasian – in Cantonese, with a Chinese – in English, and with a Chinese – in Cantonese. The questions were generally about sports/movies/songs/paintings, the participants were supposed to talk about their taste and favorite pieces of art in different languages.

### Procedure

After presenting general information, participants were asked a set of questions on the differences of their feelings, thinking and behaving across languages. “Do you feel

differently when you use Chinese and English?” “Do you think differently when you use Chinese and English?” “Do you behave differently when you use Chinese and English?” “Do you perceive your personality differently when you use Chinese and English?” “Do other people perceive you as a different person when you use Chinese and English?” and “Do you perceive yourself to be a different person when you speak English to a native speaker and a second-language speaker of English?” These six items were anchored on a 5-point Likert scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ) ranging from 0 (no difference), 1 (slightly different), and 3 (moderately different), to 5 (very different).

After the intercourse with each participant in both languages, interviewers were asked to complete a questionnaire on the extent to which they observed the participant behaving differently between languages (e.g., “Did the participant behave differently when s/he used Cantonese and English?” and “Do you perceive his/her personality to be different when he/she used Cantonese and English?”). The two items were anchored on a 5-point scale ( $\alpha = .64$ ) ranging from 0 (no difference), 1 (slightly different), and 3 (moderately different), to 5 (very different).

### Results

The personality differences observed by participants and interlocutors were correlated,  $r = .26$ ,  $p < .05$ . The correlation between self-observers and other viewers upheld the evidence for behavioral changeability across linguistic contexts. The observations of interlocutors overlapped with participants’ self-perceptions, indicating that the more participants measured themselves in dialectical terms, the more differently they behaved across the bilingual contexts.

### Conclusion

The linguistic context plays a pivotal role in your sense of self in particular language. To put it another way, if you are learning to speak English while living in England, the firsthand observations you make about the culture and people during that time will be ingrained into your sense of identity as an English speaker. If

you are learning English in a classroom in China, in all likelihood, you will mingle the beliefs and associations of your instructor along with your own. If you learn a language without surrounding and exposing yourself to the environment to that language, it may not influence on your personality at all.

## References

1. Ambady, N., & Rosenthal, R. (1992). Thin slices of expressive behavior as predictors of interpersonal consequences: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 111, 256–274.
2. Bagozzi, R. P., Wong, N., & Yi, Y. (1999). The role of culture and gender in the relationship between positive and negative affect. *Cognition and Emotion*, 13, 641–672
3. Ramírez-Esparza, N., Gosling, S. D., Benet-Martínez, V., Potter, J. P., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2006). Do bilinguals have two personalities? A special case of cultural frame switching. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40, 99–120
4. Sadikova, S. (2020). Reflection Of Lingvoculturological Peculiarities In Phrases. *Mental Enlightenment Scientific-Methodological Journal*, 2020(2), 120-129.
5. Sadikova, S. M. (2022). ANALYSIS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN THE CONTEXT BASED ON THE NOVEL “SISTER CARRIE” BY THEODORE DREISER. *Mental Enlightenment Scientific-Methodological Journal*, 2022(1), 300-309.