

A Cross-Linguistic Analysis of Language Effects on Personality Measures in Spanish-English Bilinguals

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Do Spanish-English bilinguals described themselves differently in different languages?

Introduction

- Studies have found that bilinguals report feeling like a different person when speaking different languages, including having different values (Ramirez-Esparza et. al, 2006). Thus, bilinguals exhibit changes in behavior, personality, and emotions depending on the language they are using and the cultural context (Ramirez-Esparza et. al, 2006). Personality measures such as the Big Five Inventory can help elucidate the degree to which bilinguals classify their personalities in different languages.
- The Big Five inventory is a widely used 44-item scale that classifies participants based on five dimensions of personality (openness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness), with versions available in English and Spanish. Previous studies have found differences in BFI dimensions (extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness) of Spanish-English bilinguals, with scores higher in English than in Spanish.
- We asked if Spanish-English bilinguals described themselves differently when answering in different languages. The present study investigated how Spanish-English bilinguals are classified when answering the BFI in both languages.
- In a cross-linguistic design, we administered the BFI in English and Spanish to sample of 140 Spanish-English bilinguals that reside in South Florida. We hypothesized that bilinguals would score significantly different in both languages in the dimensions of extraversion and conscientiousness, with English scores being expected to be significantly higher than Spanish scores.

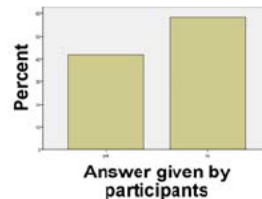
Method

Participants

140 Spanish- English bilinguals that attend Florida Atlantic University as undergraduates

Age:	18 - 44 years old ($M= 21.58$ years)
Gender:	40 males (24.7%) 100 females (61.7%)
Formal education :	12 - 27 years ($M= 14.71$ years)
Age language acquisition:	0- 30 years old ($M= 5.35$ years)

Do you feel like a different person in different languages?



Materials

44 item BFI in Spanish and in English

Procedure

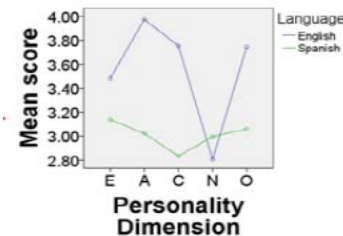
- Each participant completed the BFI in both Spanish and English.
- Some participants completed the BFI in Spanish first and some participants completed the BFI in English first.
- The participants were given instructions in the same language of the BFI they were going to complete.
- The participants completed verbal fluency tasks and questionnaires between each BFI.

Results

- We conducted a 2x5 general linear model (GLM) analysis to compare the scores of the five personality dimensions in English and Spanish.
- There was a significant main effect of language:
 $F(1,137) = 437.8, p= 0.00, \eta^2 = .76$
- There was a significant main effect of dimension:
 $F(4, 134) = 42.17, p= 0.00, \eta^2 = .56$
- There was a significant interaction between language and dimension:
 $F(4,134) = 43.2, p = 0.00, \eta^2 = .56$

Personality dimensions:

- There was a significant difference in extraversion scores:
 $F(1,137) = 23.3, p= 0.00, \eta^2 = .15$
- There was a significant difference in agreeableness scores:
 $F(1,137) = 245.8, p = 0.00, \eta^2 = .64$
- There was a significant difference in conscientiousness in scores:
 $F(1,137) = 238.9, p= 0.00, \eta^2 = .64$
- There was a significant difference in neuroticism scores:
 $F(1,137)= 8.83, p = 0.03, \eta^2 = .06$
- There was a significant difference in openness scores:
 $F(1,137) = 140.1, p = 0.00, \eta^2 = .51$



Discussion

- We asked if Spanish-English bilinguals described themselves differently when answering in different languages. We hypothesized that we would find that bilinguals would score significantly different in both languages in the dimensions of extraversion and conscientiousness, with English scores being expected to be significantly higher than Spanish scores.
- Consistent to the hypothesis, results revealed significantly different scores in Spanish and English in all five dimensions of the BFI; specifically, bilinguals had higher scores in English in the personality dimensions of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness; however, in the neuroticism dimension, scores were higher in Spanish than in English. Results were particularly consistent with those reported by Bennet-Martinez (1998), in addition to agreeableness and conscientiousness, our participants scored differently in the extraversion and openness scales, indicating that in our sample, the language effect on the personality measure (BFI) was significantly larger, extending to all personality dimensions.
- These results emphasize the issue of language in psychological evaluations, with the possibility of language dependence skewing the results for bilingual patients.

References

- Benet-Martinez, V., John, O. (1998). Los Cinco Grandes Across Cultures and Ethnic Groups: Multitrait Multimethod Analysis of the Big Five in Spanish and English. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75(3), 729-750.
- Ramirez-Esparza, N., Gosling, S., Benet-Martinez, V., Potter, J., & Pennebaker, J. (2006). Do Bilinguals have Two Personalities? A Special Case of Culture Frame Switching. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40, 99-120.