Bilingual bonds

Acculturation, attachment, and being yourself in a new language

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This paper investigates the perception of 'being yourself' when speaking in the second language (L2) in the context of mobility-migration. Participants consist of 149 highly educated sequential Polish-English bilinguals who relocated to the UK at the average age of 23, and underwent processes of acculturation.[1] The independent variables in this study include acculturation level, social network profile, language of attachment in adulthood, language dominance, length of residence, predicted future domicile, gender, and age of L2 acquisition (AoA). The study employs both emic and etic approaches. The findings reveal strong links between the perception of being yourself in L2 and acculturation level, social network profile, language dominance, predicted future domicile, and language of attachment. The results show that sociocultural and psychological integration into the new society and culture are strongly linked to the perception of being yourself in L2. This study adds acculturation and attachment perspectives to current research on the perception of feeling different when using languages learnt later in life.

Keywords: Acculturation, attachment, being yourself, L2, feeling different, bilinguals

1. Introduction

From the point of view of second language users, 'being yourself' when speaking L2 is the opposite of feeling 'fake' when speaking L2. The perception of feeling 'artificial' or 'fake' when speaking languages other than the native tongue (L1) is an experience shared by many multilinguals worldwide (Pavlenko 2006, p. 18).

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1. Twelve of the 149 participants were residing outside the UK (Republic of Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia).

This phenomenon of feeling different, of not feeling yourself, is often attributed to the fact that languages learnt later in life are associated with instructed contexts of learning and formal relationships between speakers, where only a fraction of human emotions can be experienced, perceived and expressed (Ivaz, Costa, & Duñabeitia 2015). In contrast, native languages are acquired during childhood, in emotionally rich, familiar contexts, where the presence of primary attachment figures provides a sense of security and understanding. All of this strengthens the attachment and emotional reactivity of L1 (Dewaele 2010; Dewaele & Pavlenko 2002; Harris, Aycicegi, & Gleason 2003; Pavlenko 2006; Schrauf 2000). Linguistic contexts are understood to modulate affective neural mechanisms that regulate emotions, which relate to the sense of self, and so to the feeling of 'being oneself' (Ivaz et al. 2015). Dewaele (2016b) investigated the perception of feeling different when speaking in languages other than L1, and found a highly polarized reaction among multilinguals. Some reported feeling decidedly different, while others categorically disagreed. The uniqueness of this striking contrast was in the high levels of conviction and confidence the speakers had about their experiences. The analyses established links between the perception of feeling different and foreign language anxiety, education level, and age, suggesting that older bilinguals and multilinguals were more likely to feel different when using their non-native languages (Dewaele 2016b). Surprisingly, the typical second language acquisition (SLA) variables, including AoA, self-perceived proficiency and dominance, as well as frequency of use, were found to have no links with the perception of feeling different, which could indicate that there might be other key variables behind the phenomenon. Dewaele (2016b, p. 92) stated that "some participants presented unique explanations, linking feelings of difference to conscious or unconscious shifts in behavior and to unique contexts of language use. Several participants also reported these feelings of difference to change over time." The above-quoted different contexts of language use, behavioral shifts, and changes over time, link with research on the relationship between language, culture, cognition, and context (Kecskes 2015; Sharifian 2015a; Sharifian 2015b). Ivaz et al. (2015) argue that it is the restricted contextual diversity that is behind the different emotional reactivity that multiple languages elicit. According to Mesquita (2010), emotions serve as a connection with the social world, which makes them "ongoing, dynamic, and interactive processes that are socially constructed" (Boiger & Mesquita 2012, p. 221). In the era of increased mobility-migration, language speakers use languages acquired later in life more and more often, in environments that they find different not only linguistically, but also culturally and socially (Singleton, Regan, & Debaene 2013). In situations where the use of the L2 in culturally different environments is exercised for a longer period of time, be it in cases of international mobility or permanent settlement, the non-native language may become the prevailing means

of communication and sociocultural mediation (Hoffman 1989). This is when, beside changes in language use and possible lexical expansion, processes of socio-cultural and psychological integration begin to unfold, at which point the sense of self in the new context begins to be negotiated (Hoffman 1989; Regan, Diskin, & Martyn 2016). Using the L2 in L2-dominant settings is associated with coming into firsthand contact with speakers whose primary socialization was different to one's own — in other words, speakers whose first language, behavior, perception, and interpretation of actions and events, may be different to what feels natural to the 'self' (Kramsch 2015). Languages are said to be carriers of cultures (Kecskes 2015), for they contain cultural-conceptual structures and categories shared and understood by their speakers (Sharifian 2015a). Attempts to function in a different sociocultural reality by means of a different language may result in the experi-ence of a cognitive and, effectively, emotional dissonance. Extensive L2 use and high-scale immersion in the host culture can lead to a shift in patterns of language use, and ultimately to restructuring at cognitive (Grosjean 2002; Pavlenko 2014), and emotional (Hoffman 1989) levels. The latter links with processes of accultura-tion and language shift at an individual level (Hammer 2015; Hoffman 1989). De Leersnyder, Mesquita and Kim (2011) argue that shifts in emotional patterns, in other words, emotional acculturation, may occur as a result of changes of socio-cultural contexts. Hong, Fang, Yang, and Phua (2013) also argue that individuals functioning in cultures other than their native one, may develop cultural attach-ment to their new social groups, and so effectively develop attachment to the new culture. They claim that combining acculturation theory with attachment theory paves the way to a new level of analysis in cross-cultural phenomena (Hong et al. 2013). Dewaele (2015) calls for more research into the shift in emotional patterns as a response to changes in sociocultural contexts, including acculturation and socialization into a new culture, and specifically "why some multicultural indi-viduals shift further and faster than others? To what extent is the speed and extent of change linked to sociocultural and psychological variables?" (Dewaele 2015, p. 370). The aim of this paper is to address the above by investigating the percep-tion of 'being yourself in L2' against sociocultural and psycholinguistic variables including acculturation level, social network profile, language of attachment, lan-guage dominance, length of residence, predicted future domicile, AoA, and gen-der, employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

2.   Literature review

2.1   Being yourself when speaking L2

As part of the Bilingualism and Emotions Questionnaire (BEQ), which was administered to a large number of multilinguals around the world, Dewaele and Pavlenko (2001–2003) asked the following question: "Do you feel like a different person sometimes when you use your different languages?" The analysis of 1,039 responses revealed that 65% answered yes, 26% answered no, 6% answered 'no but' (adding a personal insight), and 3% did not respond to the question. Many multilinguals answered that they felt more "real" and "natural" when speaking L1, and more "fake" and "artificial" when speaking languages learnt later in life (LX) (Pavlenko 2006, p. 18). These results were later confirmed by Dewaele and Nakano (2013), who conducted a study on a group of multilinguals in order to measure how they felt when speaking in languages learnt later in life. The results showed that multilinguals felt gradually less logical, less serious, less emotional, and more fake when using languages learnt later in life. This contrasted with the participants' feelings when speaking in L1, in which they felt most logical, most serious, most emotional and most natural (Dewaele & Nakano 2013). The perception of feeling not at ease when speaking in languages learnt later in life was also found in a form of increased levels of foreign language anxiety (FLA) in multilinguals, who felt significantly more anxious when using LX compared to when using L1 (Dewaele 2010, 2016b). Significant decrease in FLA levels was recorded for multilinguals who acquired the LX in a mixed or naturalistic context, who used LX more frequently, who socialized in LX, and whose network of interlocutors included multiplex relations (Dewaele 2010).

Numerous autobiographies and memoirs (Besemeres & Wierzbicka 2007; De Courtivron 2003; Hoffman 1989; Lesser 2004), as well as qualitative studies (Koven 1998, 2001, 2006; Kramsch 2009; Wilson 2008) have focused on emotional experience of language use in bilinguals. Empirical findings, as well as insights gained from non-scientific literature, suggest that people who speak more than one language significantly differ in whether they feel they are themselves versus 'fake' when speaking a language other than L1 (Dewaele 2016b). This links with discussions on the nature of the self, whether it is independent of language (language-independent self), or whether it is intertwined with language (one language only is the language of the self) (Pavlenko 2014). Empirical research found that memories recalled in different languages of bilinguals may impact how the self is construed and projected in those respective languages.

Marian and Kaushanskaya (2004) studied autobiographical memory retrieval in Russian-English bilinguals in the US. They found that language choice in acts

of memory retrieval can have an impact on self-construal in bicultural bilinguals. Memories retrieved in English were found to be more individualistic in nature, while memories retrieved in Russian were more collectivist, which reflected the respective cultures of the bilinguals who took part in the study. Panayiotou (2004a, 2004b) found that the language in which a situation is presented has an impact on how the situation is appraised by bicultural bilinguals. She studied differences in situational appraisal in Greek-English bilinguals, who were found to draw two different conclusions in reference to one situation, associated with feelings ranging from sympathy to indifference, depending on the language in which the situation was presented. The choice of language was found to activate cultural scripts relevant to the sociocultural reality to which a particular language belonged. The findings are linked with the phenomenon of cultural frame switching in bicultural bilinguals, namely, being able to see the very same thing from a different perspective, which affects how it is judged (Ramírez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martínez, Potter, & Pennebaker 2006; Ross, Xun, & Wilson 2002). When multilinguals are aware of the experience described above, and depending on their individual assessment of such experience, a feeling of incoherence, difference or unease may appear as a result (Pavlenko 2014). The latter may be linked with the perception of speaking in L2 as 'fake'. Research suggests that variables including L2 affective socialization, emotional acculturation and L2 internalization have an effect on feelings associated with L2 perception and use.

There is a significant body of research suggesting that as far as multilingual speakers are concerned, L1 typically evokes a stronger emotional reaction, and is perceived as more emotional, than L2, which tends to be described as more cold, detached, or distant (Dewaele 2010; Dewaele & Pavlenko 2001–2003; Harris 2004; Harris et al. 2003). Thus many bilinguals, not irrespective of their life experiences, however, are found to prefer L1 for emotional expression. Increased perceived emotionality of L1 is said to stem from it being acquired in childhood, the time when one learns about the world for the first time, which strengthens its emotional connotations (Altarriba 2003; Harris, Gleason, & Aycicegi 2006; Pavlenko 2005). L2, on the other hand, is usually acquired in the instructed context of a formal classroom environment, which does not promote creation of emotional connotations. The latter results in the perceived feeling of detachment and dissociation. Emotion words in L1 are said to hold stronger semantic representations when compared to L2 equivalents, due to the benefit of having multiple traces in memory (Altarriba 2003). If one language is predominantly used as part of emotional experiences, its activation threshold is lowered, which results in this language being more accessible (Paradis 2004). The latter results in deeper encoding of words belonging to the language that is used more frequently. Numerous studies found that high impact lexemes, such as taboo or swearwords, tend to evoke stronger

physiological responses in bilinguals when pronounced in L1, rather than L2 (Harris et al., 2003). However, language dominance was found to be of significant importance in emotional perception in bilinguals. L2-dominant bilinguals were found not to perceive L1 as more emotional than L2 (Harris 2004). This phenomenon is referred to as the age-independent emotional context of learning hypothesis. According to the hypothesis, whether it is L1 or L2, "language is experienced as emotional when it is acquired and used in an emotional context" (Harris 2004, pp. 276–277). Harris (2004) suggested that it is therefore not the language itself, but the emotional context behind the language, that populates symbolic forms with emotionality, allowing for a later perception of that emotionality by means of lexical cue retrieval. In other words, emotional contexts are what fill words of any language, once devoid of emotion, with emotion:

> Words become, as they were in childhood, beautiful things — except this is better, because this is now crosshatched with a complexity of meaning, with the sonorities of felt, sensuous thought (Hoffman 1989, p. 186).

2.2   Acculturation, socialization, and emotions

Acculturation is associated with circumstances of mobility-migration, and is understood as the process of adaptation to a new culture (Berry 1997). Brown (1994) stresses that acculturation includes processes of reorientation of feeling and thinking, referred to as psychological acculturation (Graves 1967; Sam & Berry 2006). Acculturation is a multidimensional process encompassing the psychological, cognitive, linguistic, and social elements (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus 2000; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik 2010). A core component of acculturation is that of socializing and developing relations with members of the host culture, which, once sought and exercised on a regular basis, may result in acculturating to a higher degree (Berry 2005). Socialization with members of the host culture, and use of the dominant language in the process, is understood to link with emotions as part of the psychological acculturation process (Sam & Berry 2006). Schumann (1976) also argued that acculturation of permanent resettlers differs from that of temporary sojourners, as the latter do not ultimately see themselves as belonging to the new culture in the long run, which may weaken the degree and depth of their acculturation (Bochner 2006). Dewaele (2016a) points out that adding a new culture to an individual's cultural repertoire has far-reaching consequences stretching over multiple domains, including one's emotional topography. He also stresses that affective socialization in the target language, as well as extension of the emotional portfolio by adding novel emotion concepts, results in the formation of a unique multi-competence in the multilingual speaker (Dewaele 2016a).

The concept of emotional acculturation was proposed by De Leersnyder, Mesquita and Kim (2011) to address gradual changes in the patterns of emotional experience in sojourners. The notion rests on the premise that members of a particular culture share patterns of emotional experience. The latter is the result of underlying shared concepts and ways of perceiving and classifying external reality, as well as understanding, appreciation and appraisal of that reality (Sharifian 2015b). The same events may be perceived differently by members of different cultures, which is likely to cause discrepancies in the ways in which those events are classified, whether they are marked as significant, amusing, upsetting, or altogether worth remarking on (Pavlenko 2014). Emotional acculturation predicts that sojourners who spend a lot of time with members of the host culture, are likely to approximate their patterns of emotional expression to those that are characteristic of the host culture. The latter points at social network profile as an important variable in the processes of acculturation, as well as the linguistic and emotional make-up of the individual. Friendships, informal relations, peer groups, and interest groups occur in different forms and sizes, and the individual may assign different levels of importance and loyalty to each of them. Milroy (1987) divided social networks into simplex and multiplex, according to the Plexity Model. Simplex ties with members of the group are described as weaker than multiplex ties in the overall impact they exert on the individual. Multiplex ties are more involved and are likely to stretch over more than one domain of life. Milardo (1988) continued the distinction by dividing social networks into exchange and interactive networks. Exchange networks are said to have a strong influence on the individual's ego. They consist of people who are close and important to the individual, who can offer advice, criticism, and support. The interactive networks, on the other hand, are frequently attended; however, they do not have a strong influence on the ego of the individual; they are perceived as more casual and detached (Milroy & Wei 1991).

De Leersnyder, Mesquita and Kim (2011) conducted a study investigating emotional experience in Korean L1 speakers in the US, as well as Turkish L1 speakers in Belgium. The authors used the Emotional Patterns Questionnaire in order to record individual emotional patterns of the migrant speakers, and compare them with those of the native culture members, who comprised the control group in the study. Participants who spent more time in the host country, and interacted and formed relationships with members of the host culture, were found to acculturate patterns of their emotional experience to resemble those of the host group. In other words, exposure and engagement in the host culture were found to be reliable predictors of emotional acculturation (De Leersnyder et al. 2011, p. 460). This connected with Ochs and Schiefelin's (1989, pp. 21–22) conclusions that "friendships and other intimate relationships also depend on individuals' abilities to seek out, recognize, and respond appropriately to their partner's feelings about a given

situation. In all societies, members must be attentive to the affective keys provided by others. These keys often define social contexts and are the basis for successful participation in those contexts. Languages of the world are responsive to this fundamental human need to express and assess affect." De Leersnyder and colleagues (2011, p. 461) suggested two possible explanations for their findings, namely, "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." The first explanation suggests that it is the experience itself that is different, thus evoking a different emotional reaction; the second explanation refers to conceptual shift in emotional categories and ways of appraising external reality following migration and acculturation.

2.3 Language, culture, and attachment

Dewaele (2008) investigated the perceived emotional weight of the phrase 'I love you' in multilinguals. The purpose of the investigation was to establish which language, L1 or L2, would be preferred to express feelings of love, and how emotionally resonant such a declaration would be when received. The results showed that in the majority of multilinguals the phrase 'I love you' was perceived to be the strongest when communicated in L1, rather than in a language acquired later in life. Variables which were found to be linked with the perceived emotionality of the phrase in question included self-perceived language dominance, context of L2 acquisition, age of onset, level of L2 socialization, number of L2-speaking interlocutors, and self-perceived verbal L2 proficiency (Dewaele 2008).

The L1-oriented preferences declared by the majority of participants in the above study differ, for comparison, from Eva Hoffman's experience of L2 as the language of emotional expression: "'Darling,' I say to my lover, 'my dear,' and the words are filled and brimming with the motions of my desire." (Hoffman 1989, p. 245). This autobiographical extract demonstrates a close connection between perceived emotionality of language and a real-life experience. Empirical studies on autobiographical memory and language retrieval suggest that the language in which events are experienced, and thus encoded, is the preferred language of recall (Marian & Neisser 2000; Schrauf & Rubin 2000). Memories are found to be generally richer in terms of emotional significance, when retrieved in the same language in which they happened, irrespective of whether it was L1 or L2 (Schrauf & Durazo-Arvizu 2006). The latter suggests that L2 can be emotionally significant if it is part of significant life experiences, periods in life, or relationships, particularly those that involve deep emotions. From the point of view of developmental psychology, intimate attachments to other human beings are the core axis around which a person's life gravitates, from birth, through adolescence and adulthood, and into

old age (Bowlby 1969). Intimate attachments in one's life are the main source from which one draws strength and enjoyment, fulfilment and love. Beginning with adolescence and extending through adulthood, a human being gradually extends their choice of attachment figures from parents to friends and life partners, while primary attachment figures remain on reserve (Weiss 1982). Principal attachment figures in adulthood are the people to whom one turns for comfort and recognition, reassurance and encouragement. Their role stretches beyond emotional protection as they become important means through which a person begins to understand their own internal states and thus extends their understanding of others (Burman 2008; Howe 2011). The development of self across the lifespan "is tantamount to the aggregation of experiences of the self in relationships" (Gergely, Fonagy, Jurist, & Target 2002, p. 40). For some sequential bilinguals attachments across the lifespan can be associated with two languages, not one, which reflects their autobiographical as well as emotional trajectory (Hoffman 1989). The experience of migration is said to create two separate contexts of usage for L1 and L2, which results in bilinguals having different associations with their languages, as they are linked to different stages in their lives (Schrauf & Hoffman 2007). Empirical research suggests that forming relationships with L2 speakers deepens the interconnections between emotionality, language, and culture (De Leersnyder et al., 2011). Affective L2 socialization and the experience of L2 use in emotional contexts may "result in the feeling of greater language emotionality and reinforce the attachment to the language in question" (Pavlenko 2013, p. 17).

The above-mentioned feeling of attachment to language links with the cultural attachment theory proposed by Hong et al. (2013). Combining attachment theory with acculturation theory, they postulate that processes of adaptation to a new culture bear qualities of infants' attachment to their carers in childhood, the time of L1 acquisition. They claim that by developing emotional attachment to the new social and cultural group, sojourners gain feelings of safety and security, which gives them a sense of protection in the new sociocultural reality, and can make them feel "at home" in the new culture (Hong et al. 2013, p. 1025). Attachment to the new culture is borne out of emotional bonds created between the individual and the members of the new cultural group, in a manner analogous to developing attachment with a cultural group in childhood. Empirical research shows that the ability to correctly recognize and respond to emotions in new sociocultural contexts influences processes of intercultural adjustment (Matsumoto et al. 2001; Matsumoto, LeRoux, & Yoo 2005; Yoo, Matsumoto, & LeRoux 2006), and thus underlies the overall psychological functioning of sojourners (Hong et al. 2013). Developing attachment to a new cultural group provides a new secure base for the individual to receive comfort and understanding in times of distress, which is a crucial component of the sense of security which the 'self' requires (Sroufe &

Waters 1977). This in turn reduces anxiety (Dewaele 2010), promotes wellbeing, and strengthens the attachment to the cultural group at the same time. While primary attachments in life are mediated by means of L1, attachments developed in adulthood in contexts of international mobility-migration can be mediated exclusively by the L2. This is when the L2 has an opportunity to become emotionally resonant in a way similar to how the L1 once did, by developing attachment in a new cultural setting (Hong et al. 2013). Based on the above, it can be hypothesized that if the L2 is used to mediate attachment, it will pave the way for the L2 to become perceived as emotional and soothing, which is why the present study employs language of attachment as one of the variables.

3.   Methodology

3.1 Research questions

The present paper aims to answer two research questions:

1. Why do some competent bilinguals feel they are themselves in L2, while others do not?
2. To what extent is this variation linked to:
    a.   Acculturation level
    b.   Social network profile
    c.   Language of attachment (in adulthood)
    d.   Language dominance
    e.   Length of residence
    f.   Predicted future domicile
    g.   Age of acquisition
    h.   Gender?

3.2 Participants

The sample consisted of 149 highly educated young adult L2-competent sequential Polish-English bilinguals who migrated to the UK in early adulthood, and were professionally/academically active. The average age at migration was 23 (range = 18–41, mean = 23.6, SD = 3.8). The overwhelming majority, 128 participants, had migrated by the age of 26. The average length of residence was 8 years, and the average current age was 31 (range = 23–45, mean = 31.1, SD = 4.7). Over a half of the respondents started learning English L2 by the age of 13, with the lowest AoA being 3 years, and the average being 12 years (mean = 12.3 years, SD = 4.6).

The majority, 80.5%, did not declare knowing another language at a similar level of proficiency to L2. Respondents were competent users of English and, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) criteria, 45.6% were proficient L2 users, 38.3% had native-like proficiency, and the remaining 16.1% were independent users of English (Council of Europe 2011). Participants were university/college graduates holding the following academic qualifications: 58.4% MA, 26.2% BA, 10.1% PhD, and 5.4% college graduates. Females comprised 86% of respondents, versus 14% males, which is a typical gender distribution in online questionnaires devoted to feelings surrounding language use (Wilson & Dewaele 2010).

3.3 Procedure

The present investigation employed both emic and etic approaches, which combined personal experience with rigorous statistical quantification (Dewaele 2015; Dörnyei 2007). Participants completed a web questionnaire consisting of closed- and open-ended questions, and a table of language use (Hammer 2012). Closed-ended Likert scale questions measured key sociocultural variables including acculturation level, social network profile, language of attachment, and predicted future domicile. Open-ended questions elicited sociobiographical data including gender, current age, AoA, age at migration, and personal experience of linguistic transition. Fourteen participants were interviewed in English as part of the study.

Acculturation was operationalized by asking the following question: 'Acculturation is a process roughly defined as: social and psychological integration with the target language group. How integrated with your English language group do you feel?' Participants chose one out of five available answers which included the following levels: 'Completely', 'Highly', 'Moderately', 'Slightly', or 'Not at all' (Hammer 2012). Acculturation level scores were validated by means of correlation with other variables, namely, social network profile ($r_s = .454$**, p < .0001), predicted future domicile ($r_s = .279$**, p < .001), L2 dominance ($r_s = .450$**, p < .0001), and length of residence ($r_s = .264$**, p < .001). Social network profile was operationalized employing the ethnographic approach, in other words, by eliciting information about the participants' personal network (Daming, Xiaomei, & Wei 2009).

Language of attachment was operationalized using the following question: 'Think about the person with whom you share your life most these days (e.g., a romantic partner or a close friend). Which of the below is true for you?' The available choices reflected three basic linguistic categories: 'Polish, no English', 'Both Polish and English', and 'English, no Polish' (Hammer 2012). The questionnaire provided numerous text boxes allowing the participants to leave comments or explanations should they wish, which additionally informed the enquiry. The qualitative data

obtained by means of the questionnaire and interviews were categorized as part of the analysis. The qualitative examples presented in this paper illustrate patterns of experience that were found to be particularly relevant, and resonant (Smith 2011; Straub 2006).

Language dominance was measured using the Complementarity Principle (CP), which postulates that bilinguals use different languages in different domains (Grosjean 2010, 2016). Language dominance was operationalized by means of including the table of language use in the questionnaire. The table recorded language use scores across 20 experiential domains of language use, using a five-point Likert scale. Empirical validity for domain-specific self-report was provided by Schrauf (2014). The domains included: workplace/daytime study, household, interest group (course/regular activity), peer group (main group of friends), nuclear family, romantic partner, best friend, role model, thinking of events experienced in L1, thinking of events experienced in L2, praying/having an internal monologue about life, writing in a personal journal/diary, calculating/counting, note-taking (for personal use/synthesizing information/learning), writing out a to-do list/personal action plan, writing out a shopping list, reading books/magazines/newspapers, watching films/programmes, listening to music/radio, and language for hobby maintenance (Hammer 2012). Language dominance scores were created by computing the means of language use for all 20 experiential domains, which enabled the researcher to categorize participants into a) Polish dominance, b) Mainly Polish dominance, c) Balanced Polish-English dominance, d) Mainly English dominance, or e) English dominance. A high internal consistency reliability for language use in the 20 experiential domains was revealed during Cronbach's alpha analyses, where the alpha equalled .88. Employing domain-based methodology allowed a rigorous analysis of language use across both internal and external domains of language use, which captured the unique patterns and the complexity of language use in bilinguals (Grosjean 2010, 2016). The latter is especially important since public domains tend to be L2-dominant more often than private domains, which results in the development of two competencies in the bilingual speaker: a professional one attached to L2, and a private one attached to L1 (Grosjean 2010).

The dependent variable of 'being yourself in L2' was operationalized by asking the following question: 'Do you feel you are fully yourself when you speak in English?' The available answers represented the extent to which participants felt they were themselves in L2, namely, 100%, 75% plus, 50% plus; and less than 50%. A series of one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests revealed that the scores for the perception of being yourself in L2 are not normally distributed (Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z value = 3.3, $p < .0001$), therefore a non-parametric equivalent of the one-way ANOVA was used.

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative effects

Acculturation level and being yourself in L2. A Kruskal-Wallis test showed a significant effect of acculturation level on being yourself in L2 ($\chi2 = 40.4$, $p < .0001$), with a mean rank of 27.8 for the slightly acculturated group, 54.0 for the moderately acculturated group, 73.8 for the highly acculturated group, and 101.5 for the completely acculturated group. Figure 1 presents the effect of acculturation level on being yourself when speaking L2.

Social network profile and being yourself in L2. A Kruskal-Wallis test showed a significant effect of social network profile on being yourself when speaking L2 ($\chi2 = 21.6$, $p < .0001$), with a mean rank of 46.3 for the majority Polish-speaking social network, 66.5 for the equally Polish and English-speaking social network, and 88.6 for the majority English-speaking social network. Figure 2 illustrates the effect of social network profile on being yourself when speaking L2.

Language of attachment and being yourself in L2. A Kruskal-Wallis test showed a significant effect of language of attachment on being yourself when speaking L2 ($\chi2 = 9.2$, $p < .010$), with a mean rank of 51.9 for Polish with no English category, 66.1 for bilingual Polish-English category, and 83.8 for English with no Polish
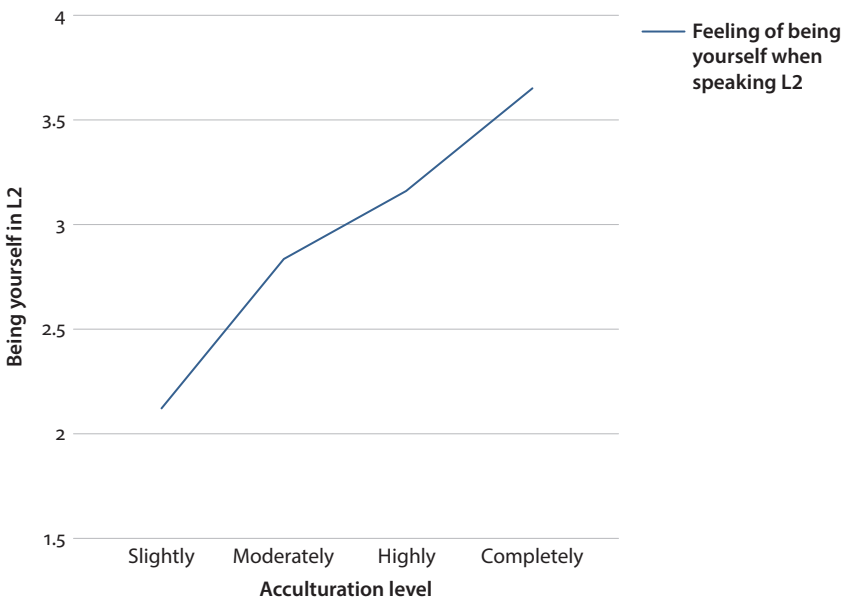

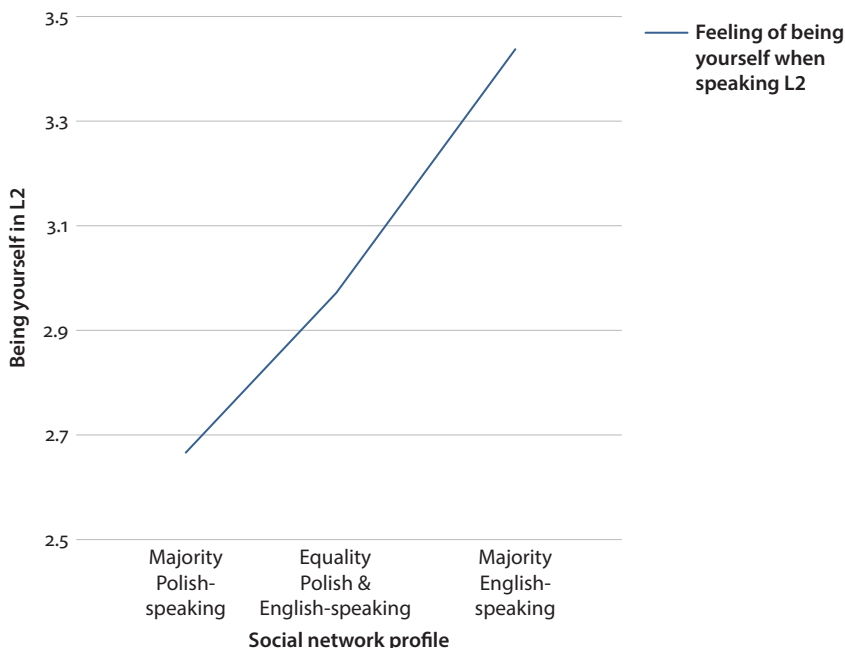**Figure 1.** Effect of acculturation level on being yourself in L2.

Figure 2. Effect of social network profile on being yourself in L2.

category. Figure 3 illustrates the effect of language of attachment on being yourself when speaking L2.

Language dominance and being yourself in L2. A Kruskal-Wallis test showed a significant effect of language dominance on being yourself in L2 ($\chi2 = 18.8$, $p < .0001$), with a mean rank of 52.0 for majority Polish dominance, 65.4 for balanced Polish-English dominance, 84.4 for majority English dominance, and 106.9 for English dominance. Figure 4 illustrates the effect of language dominance on being yourself when speaking L2.

Length of residence and being yourself in L2. A series of Kruskal-Wallis tests showed no significant effect of length of residence on being yourself in L2 ($\chi2 = .578$, $p = .749$), with a mean rank of 73.8 for the <5 years of residence group, 74.0 for the 5–10 years of residence group, and 80.5 for the >10 years of residence group.

Predicted future domicile and being yourself in L2. A Kruskal-Wallis test showed a significant effect of predicted future domicile on being yourself in L2 ($\chi2 = 7.5$, $p < .023$), with a mean rank of 81.4 for intention to stay in the L2-speaking country indefinitely, 71.4 for being unsure about predicted future domicile, and 50.1 for the intention to leave the L2-speaking country at some point in the future.
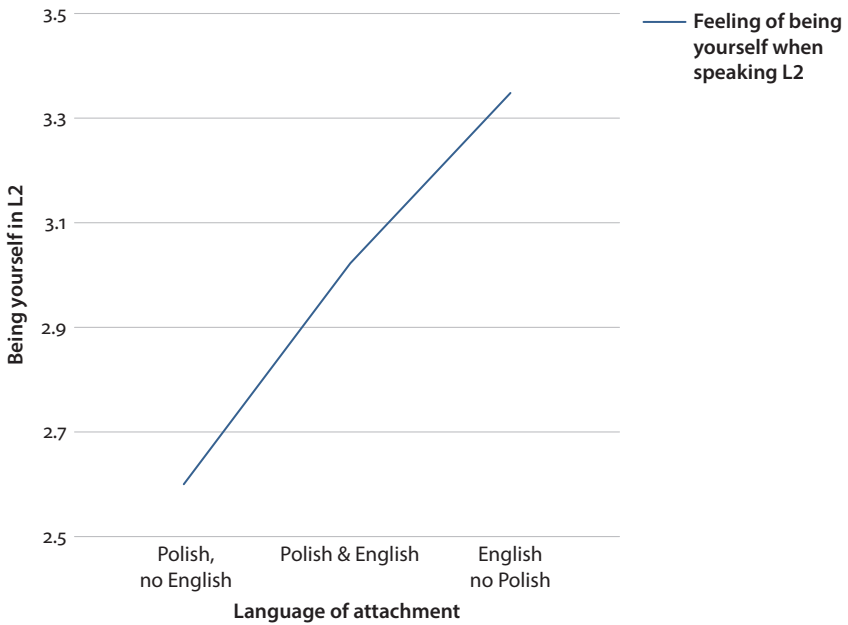
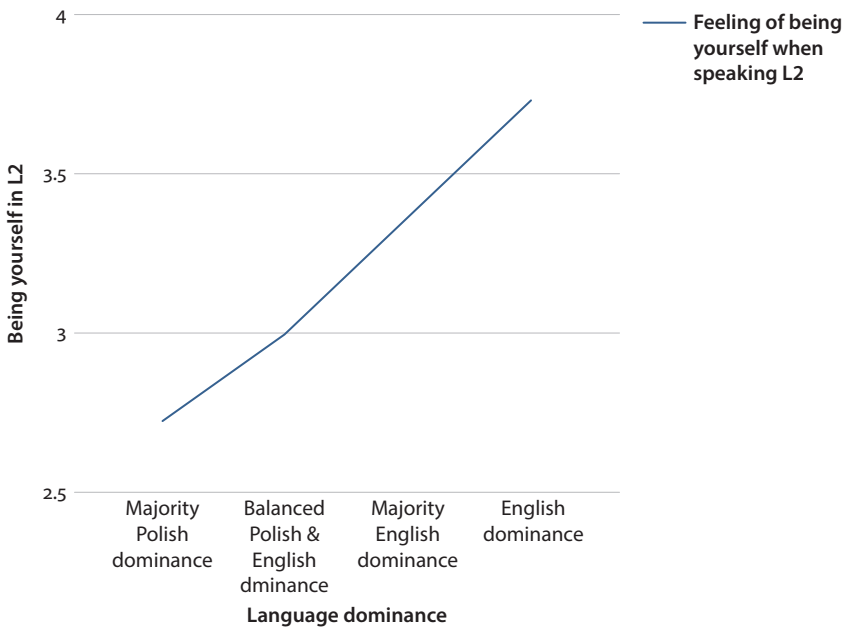**Figure 3.** Effect of language of attachment on being yourself in L2.

Figure 4. Effect of language dominance on being yourself in L2.

Figure 5 illustrates the effect of predicted future domicile on being yourself when speaking L2.
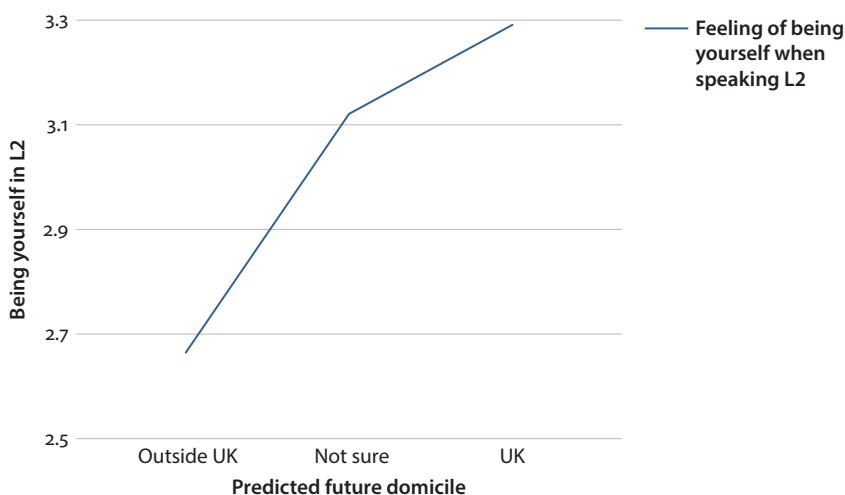

Figure 5. Effect of predicted future domicile on being yourself in L2.

AoA and being yourself in L2. A series of Kruskal-Wallis tests showed no significant effect of age of onset on being yourself in L2 ($\chi2 = 5.2$, $p = .075$) with a mean rank of 82.4 for the 0–9 years of age group, 75.0 for the 10–16 years of age group, and 59.1 for the 17 years of age and over group.

Gender and being yourself in L2. A series of Kruskal-Wallis tests showed no significant effect of gender on being yourself in L2 ($\chi2 = 1.5$, $p = .220$), with a mean rank of 65.4 for males, and 76.6 for females.

4.2 Qualitative illustrations

The feedback from the interviews and the open-ended questions confirmed the statistical patterns. A selection of the most illustrative and interesting extracts is presented below.

MI5 (completely acculturated, majority L2 social network, attachment exclusively in L2) reported that she feels closer to the L2 language-culture combination and that the L1 sociocultural context now feels distant to her:

> I think English is more me, the mindset and everything… For me language is the whole cultural experience, not only the grammar, whatever… My friend bought me a book [in Polish] for my birthday, but maybe it's, again, because I've been here for 13 years now, so I'm kind of removed, I don't know who is who, on TV and cinema and I can't relate to… it's like, I'd say, Polish Ant & Dec [laughs]; you

> know, I would probably laugh at Ant & Dec's book but I just don't know what they refer to, the social context is gone. As much as I try to follow the internet, I'm still removed, so that's the only thing.

N40 (highly acculturated, balanced social network, attachment exclusively in L2) reported experiencing a transition from a feeling of not being herself, to being herself when speaking L2, and she noticed that the transition happened when inner translation stopped and she could fully speak and feel in the L2:

> First when I moved I was translating in my head everything from Polish to English. I didn't feel I was myself, most of the time my words were empty without a true meaning. With time that changed; now I speak and feel in English. Even my dreams are in English, and that is very important part of my life, of being me in 100%.

N174 (completely acculturated, majority L2 social network, attachment exclusively in L2) reported that the L2 is closer to her, while L1 feels more distant:

> I use English at work and school, to read, watch TV, chat with friends, so it's natural that this language has a primary role in my life…Polish, though it's my mother tongue, seems somehow distant…

MI6 (highly acculturated, majority L2 social network, mixed language of attachment) shared her transformative experience achieved by relocating to the L2 sociocultural reality, governed by different norms and values, which enhanced and developed her natural traits:

> I think what happened in Poland — it's the education system, the whole bringing up of a child and growing up, it sometimes forces people to behave in a certain way or to develop some personality traits that are not really what they want to do; and relocation and speaking another language gave me a chance to in a way redevelop my personality the way I wanted it to be, so I left whatever others told me, teachers at school or parents and I… redesigned some bits that I like… I don't think it would have been the same in Poland, even if I moved out or started university there, I think it was the fact that I moved out of the country, started using another language, which for me represents different values, that gave me the opportunity to look at myself and change the features that I didn't like, I didn't like the way they developed earlier on [in Poland].

MI8 (completely acculturated, majority L2 social network, attachment exclusively in L2) recalled her initial feeling of detachment caused by using new linguistic forms which later disappeared. She stressed that change is a part of life and that she would have changed even if she had stayed and lived in Poland:

> I felt to begin with that I was departing from myself because there are certain ways that people say things here that you just wouldn't say in Polish and it didn't sound

like me, but that's interesting, because… whether I became someone different to who I was when I came over here… it was definitely strange for me to say phrases that people say here because you wouldn't say them in Polish and it just wasn't who I was, but today, that's who I am if that makes sense. I'm sure I've changed over all those years. It's some sort of transition. Even if I hadn't lived in England and just lived in Poland, I would be a different person to who I was 10 years ago, but I think that the language definitely had an impact on who I am today, it added an extra factor.

MI1 (highly acculturated, balanced social network, no L2 attachment) reported not feeling fully himself when speaking in L2; during the interview he disclosed his preference for L1 for outside-of-work socialization:

> I think because English is not my first language and it will always be a foreign language, an acquired language, it's not going to be 100% natural and… I don't want to say fake but it will make me feel a bit… it's not fully me, I'm not sure if I'm… it's difficult to explain. In social contexts I will feel more stressed when I speak English than when I speak Polish; I'm quite self-conscious so I'll be quite weary of making a mistake, and you will look at the facial expression of your Anglo-Saxon interlocutors, and I think, is it what I said or how I said it; have they picked up a mistake or have I offended them?

N158 (slightly acculturated, majority L1 social network, no L2 attachment) reported that inability to fully express herself in L2 (despite her proficient level of English) is why she feels more herself in the L1: "I will never be able to fully express myself in English. I feel more myself when using Polish."

MI9 (moderately acculturated, balanced social network, no L2 attachment) reported that inner translation and lexical selection process takes units of time that are crucial in humorous situations, and that the quality of expression she enjoys in L1 is higher than that in L2, which makes her feel more natural in L1:

> There are certain words that have 100 synonyms and you can use them whenever you fancy but maybe you are lacking the one that is most to the point, and I will always, maybe not always but several years to come, I will find myself in a situation where I know I could have expressed myself better if this conversation took place in Polish for example, so this will be that issue because there is just this lack of… maybe not fluency, but native fluency… you know what you're saying is not quite right and that there is a word that would collocate better or even make a bigger impression, but if the word is missing then there is only as much as you can do… I think it will take a lot of time for me to kind of even think of these two languages as being parallel because for now it will always be Polish, even thinking of a funny joke, you can't really replicate it in another language even if you are given an opportunity, it's just very difficult… I just know that sometimes you just wait for a second too long and it's not funny anymore… I feel funnier in Polish, definitely, more clever as well,

like in a way of being sharp and funny, making witty comments. They come to my head first in Polish and then if I get the equivalent fast then I kind of translate it in my head. But I'm definitely much funnier and basically more fun in Polish.

5. Discussion

The results showed significant links between the perception of being yourself when speaking L2 and acculturation level, social network profile, language of attachment, language dominance, and predicted future domicile. No links were established between the perception of being yourself in L2 and length of residence, AoA, or gender.

Participants with higher acculturation levels were found to feel significantly more themselves when speaking L2, compared with less acculturated participants. Participants who function in majority English-speaking social networks were found to feel more themselves in L2, compared to participants whose social networks were balanced or predominantly L1-speaking. Participants who developed attachment exclusively in English were found to feel more themselves when speaking in L2, compared with participants whose language of attachment was Polish-oriented. L2-dominant participants who planned to remain in the UK indefinitely were found to feel more themselves when speaking in L2 than those whose language dominance was more L1-oriented, who were unsure of their future domicile, or whose residence was temporary.

These findings connect with research by Dewaele and Pavlenko (2001–2003), Dewaele and Nakano (2013), and Dewaele (2016b), who found that a significant proportion of multilinguals described feeling not at ease, artificial, or fake when speaking L2, a perception that contrasts with the feeling of being yourself when speaking L2. The findings showed that in the context of mobility-migration, the feeling of being yourself when speaking in L2 is strongly linked to high acculturation levels, functioning in majority L2-speaking social networks, L2-oriented language dominance, using the L2 to mediate attachment, and permanent domicile in the host country. The results link with the theory of cultural attachment by Hong et al. (2013), and emotional acculturation research by De Leersnyder et al. (2011), in that acculturation to the L2-speaking cultural group, socializing with L2-speaking peers, and developing attachments in that process have an effect on an individual's emotional life. The findings provide empirical evidence that acculturation level, social network profile, and language of attachment are strongly linked with the perception of being yourself when speaking L2. The remaining variables that were found to be tightly linked to being yourself in L2 were language dominance and predicted future domicile, a finding that links with the age-independent

emotional context of learning hypothesis (Harris 2004) and acculturation research (Schumann 1976). Competent bilinguals who planned to remain in the UK indefinitely were found to feel that they are themselves in L2 to a significantly higher degree than those whose predicted future domicile was declared to be outside the UK or not yet known. L2-dominant bilinguals who socialized and mediated emotional attachment in L2 were found to feel that they are themselves in L2 to a significantly higher degree than non-L2-dominant bilinguals, whose social networks and attachments were mediated by L1 (Harris 2004).

Completely and highly acculturated bilinguals who function in L2-oriented social networks and those who mediate attachment in L2 were found to share the perception of being themselves in L2. The perception of being themselves in L2 decreased significantly and monotonically, in proportion to the decrease in acculturation levels and types of social network profile. Participants with lower acculturation levels, whose social networks were linguistically balanced or majority L1-speaking, reported feeling increasingly less themselves when speaking L2, despite being competent bilinguals who function in L2 on a daily basis. The emic results in particular revealed that participants whose social networks were linguistically balanced or L1-oriented, and who were moderately or less acculturated, were found to be L2-dominant for professional purposes, yet L1-dominant for social purposes. This highlights the workings of the CP (Grosjean 2010), and the development of two competencies which are attached to the two languages, namely, L2 as the language of work, and L1 as the language of socialization and mediation of attachment. Such duality could potentially explain why participants for whom L2 is associated with professional and functional domains and L1 serves as the main language for social purposes, can feel 'artificial' when speaking in L2 outside of the professional or formal contexts. It can also potentially link with increased levels of foreign language anxiety in L2 if the L2 is used outside of the professional domain with which it is typically associated (Dewaele 2010, 2016b). The results show a very clear and significant link between core acculturation variables, including acculturation level, social network profile, and language of attachment, and being yourself when speaking in L2, which adds to the previous studies undertaken by Dewaele and Pavlenko (2001–2003), Dewaele and Nakano (2013), and Dewaele (2016b) by offering acculturation and attachment perspectives on why a significant proportion of multilinguals may feel 'fake' when speaking in L2. Acculturation level, social network profile, and language of attachment may be the most central variables affecting the perception of being yourself when speaking L2.

These findings extend the social network perspective by linking it with the notion of emotional acculturation (De Leersnyder et al. 2011) and affective L2 socialization, which can impact the speaker's attachment to the L2 (Pavlenko 2013, p. 17), and so extend patterns of L2 use. It connects with Milroy's (1987) notion

of plexity, and Milardo's (1988) notion of exchange relationships, which have an impact on the individual's ego as they offer advice, support, criticism, and encouragement. The language used to mediate such relations is more likely to be internalized to a higher degree. This also links with the developmental psychology view that attachments developed in young adulthood are crucial to individual psychological development, as the new attachment figures become the main source of recognition, strength, enjoyment, love, and comfort (Bowlby 1969; Burman 2008; Howe 2011). If these attachments are developed exclusively in L2, this moves the nature of L2 use from potentially more functional, into the personal sphere of individual attachment. The L2 is used not only to discuss formal or social aspects of life, but also to discuss topics close to the individual's heart, which increases the chances of internalizing the L2 to a higher degree. This is not to say that the L1 ceases to have the role of mediating attachment, as the original attachment figures associated with L1 remain on standby (Weiss 1982), yet the new attachments are a normal developmental stage in the life of the individual, and they may happen to be mediated in the L2, rather than the L1. If the language of the new attachments is L2, it is likely to result in higher levels of emotional acculturation and increased attachment to L2, which becomes reflected in the perception of being yourself when speaking L2. As far as language of attachment is concerned, principal attachments in life can be mediated by two languages, one associated with being a child (L1), and the other associated with being an adult (L2). If L2 never mediates emotional attachment, it may remain functional and thus perhaps not satisfactory enough to provide important feelings of safety, which are typically associated with attachment and are pivotal in the life of a human being. This was particularly well explained by one of the L1-dominant interviewees (MI10), whose all attachments were all mediated exclusively in L1: "Polish just gives me this kind of feeling of... I feel really secure, like having somewhere..." An L2-dominant interviewee (MI5), who developed attachment exclusively in L2, noticed that her emotional life as an adult happened outside of Poland and "outside of the language", which is reflected in her extensive use of L2, and perception of the L2 as her main language in life. This connects with the notion of two separate contexts of usage for L1 and L2 being created following migration, which results in bilinguals having different associations with their languages as they are linked to different stages in their lives (Schrauf & Hoffman 2007). For participants who develop attachment in L2, the second language becomes the language that mediates relationships with new important figures in their life, and with new attachment figures, in the new L2-dominant cultural setting. The findings show empirical evidence that people who acculturate to a higher degree, whose language dominance is L2-oriented, and who socialize and mediate attachment in L2, are more likely to internalize that

L2 to a higher level so that it becomes an equally emotional language. The latter is reflected in those individuals' perception of being themselves when speaking L2.

6. Conclusion

The present study provides empirical evidence that the perception of being yourself in L2 in the context of mobility-migration is linked to acculturation level, social network profile, language dominance, language of attachment, and predicted future domicile. Bilinguals who engage with the host culture on a larger scale, who form friendships with their L2-speaking peers, who become acculturated and whose language dominance is L2-oriented, are more likely to feel they are themselves when speaking L2. On the basis of the results obtained in this study it can be suggested that feeling different can occur when one language is the dominant and emotionally more resonant language, and using the less dominant language causes this feeling of being different. Using the less dominant language, outside of which the majority of life events happen, may result in feeling different when reporting those events (Marian & Kaushanskaya 2004). Also, if the two languages of sequential bilinguals who migrated are associated with two different contexts (Schrauf & Hoffman 2007), the result of feeling different when using a language may appear, as the language used is part of a different reality: a different sociocultural and socio-historical constellation. The emic results especially highlighted the participants' experience of associating different stages in their life with their two languages. Some of the highly acculturated participants reported that they feel "younger" and "less experienced" when they use their mother tongue; as they gained significant life experience and new knowledge by means of the new language, they progressed in their personal development in the new language (Dewaele 2010; Grosjean 2010). Such a perception could make them feel different when they use the two languages, as the two languages are associated with two stages in life: the younger, less experienced self, and the older, more experienced self. The findings suggest that aside from language dominance and predicted future domicile, it is the degree of acculturation, type of social network, and the language that mediates attachment in adulthood, which link with perception of being yourself when speaking L2.

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