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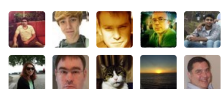
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Do bilingual people often have different personas when they speak in either language?


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12 ANSWERS

ASK TO ANSWER

 **Tony Silva**
 Edit Biography • Make Anonymous

Write your answer, or answer later

 **Mikhail Kotykhov**, Speak to people, not flashcards. It's... (more)
 49 upvotes by Philip Newton, David Chevance, Tom Farmer, (more)

Yes, absolutely, and there is a good explanation for that.

When you are learning the language, you are learning to communicate in this language the way native speakers do.


To communicate with people from a different culture, you need to adopt certain values from that culture and change your own habits and attitudes quite a bit. Communication is not only verbal.

A simple example... if in your native culture people don't smile when they meet first time, but in a new culture that you are learning, they do... it would be rather meaningless to stick to your original habits when you are communicating with people from a different culture.

When in Rome... right?

In fact, how can you really be bilingual, if you are speaking one language, but using a non-verbal language from another culture?

Written 25 Aug, 2014. 1,479 views.

 **Philip Newton**, professional software developer, amat... (more)
 11 upvotes by Mikhail Kotykhov, Anshuman Bhattacharjee, Irene Grijalvo Tarrés, (more)

I think they may but that this is connected more to the culture than to the language, per se.

For example, my Japanese teacher (in Germany) once told me that if someone called her when she was busy and asked her for a favour, she would have no difficulty to tell them that it's not the best time for that and could she get back to him at a later date.

However, if someone called her in Japanese and asked for the same favour, she would say that it's not a problem at all.

So she would act differently based on the language she was speaking: more like a German when speaking German (where it's acceptable to be more frank about your own opinions and priorities) and more like a Japanese when speaking Japanese (where you don't tell someone to their face that they're imposing on you).

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JD Davidson, Living that Polyglot life

6 upvotes by Bijibaba Massoumi, Thomas Hukahu, Pierrick Jaouen, (more)

Not necessarily often, but sometimes.

I've met bilinguals "straight down the middle" who act the exact same in each language. I've also heard of and experienced the changing of personalities between languages. They're somewhat subtle, though.

It largely depends on the environment and circumstances one learned the language. People who learned their second language under natural conditions at a young age probably won't feel it, but if you learned your language for a profession such as engineering or medicine and that's what you mainly use it for you, you're likely to develop a persona based around that. Another example is me, having learned Spanish at a young age and talking with people my age trying to make good first conversations to practice. Basically made be all happy and a big jokster in the language. I somewhat feel this the same as well when learning another language for the same reason.

It's not really the substance or configuration of the language that affects personality, though. That's a different matter and I wrote about that on some question around here that's like this one.

Written 25 Aug, 2014. 312 views.

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India Drummond, writer, traveller, artist, techie, friend

3 upvotes by Usman Qazi, Ilana Halupovich, and Kate McIntire.

I think so, to an extent.

My boyfriend is fluent in English and Italian (native Italian speaker) and I'm a native English speaker who speaks perhaps at an advanced-beginner or low-intermediate level Italian. (I can understand a lot more than I can say myself.)

When he speaks Italian, he is much more expressive. He uses shrugs and non-verbal vocal expressions and facial expressions more freely. On the other hand, he's funnier and he laughs more when he speaks English, I think because English lends itself to word-play a bit better.

I've heard people say that if you want to tell someone you love them, do it in their native language because it will mean more to them on a subconscious level. I understand the point of that, but in truth, I find it more touching when he tells me he loves me in Italian, rather than when he says it in English, because of the fact that he's more expressive.

Written Fri. 56 views.

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Irene Grijalvo Tarrés, fluent in Spanish, Catalan and Englis... (more)

1 upvote by Ilana Halupovich.

I think that greatly depends on which languages they are and how there were learned. [Philip Newton](#)'s answer clearly illustrates how two languages can have conflicting views on what's socially acceptable while [JD Davidson](#)'s makes a very good point about how it affects you when you learn them.

I think another factor is how closely related the languages are to each other, specially if they're spoken in the same place. The way a language can change the way you think should also be taken into account ([Lost in Translation](#)).

I grew up bilingual because my mother spoke to me in Catalan and my father in Spanish and I have friends with whom I spoke one or the other from the beginning, so I don't behave differently when I speak either. English, on the other hand, I learned later in life. I don't think there are major differences in the "persona" I adopt speaking in English or one of my mother tongues other than, perhaps, how loudly I speak. I probably come across as "friendlier" in Spanish than in Catalan or English.

Written 26 Aug, 2014. 113 views.

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Usman Qazi

3 upvotes by Ahmed Meggouh, Mikhail Kotykhov, and Mahmoud AlJammal.

People who are good communicators tend to be responsive to the other person's persona. I'm fluent in several languages, but I think my French flows much better in France. My Punjabi-accented Urdu (native tongue) became much smoother in Delhi.

As I learned English as a child while growing up in Pakistan, I don't think I'll lose my accent despite living in the United States. Actually, sounding a bit Asian-techie may be a plus these days.

Written 26 Aug, 2014. 174 views.

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Manuel Aicart, Linguist

2 upvotes by Aaron Moskowitz and Anonymous.

If they do, it's for cultural, not linguistic reasons. If language itself made you have a "different persona", what type of "persona" would you create when learning a language whose culture you knew nothing about?

Written Sun. 40 views.

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Nuno E. F. Silva, Fluent in English, French, Spanish an... (more)

1 upvote by Usman Qazi.

I wouldn't put it just like that. Each culture carries its different "standard cultural attitude" for handling most situations. One might call it a collective attitude or cultural approach. I doubt one could really call it a "persona" (is there a psychologist in the room?).

Speaking for myself, for each language I have to express myself in, I choose the closest attitude I can muster for that culture (in my poor, humble view) and the circumstances at hand. French projects a very different "melody" than Spanish does, for example.

And, of course, I do express myself differently whether I'm talking or writing (even within the same language).

Written 3 Sep, 2014. 121 views.

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Kaushal Narayan, can speak 4 languages fluently

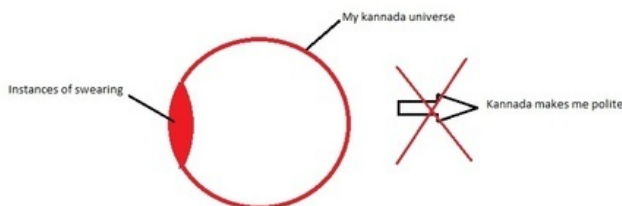
3 upvotes by Philip Newton, Umang Rungta, and Anonymous.

Agree to a large extent with the answer by Anon.

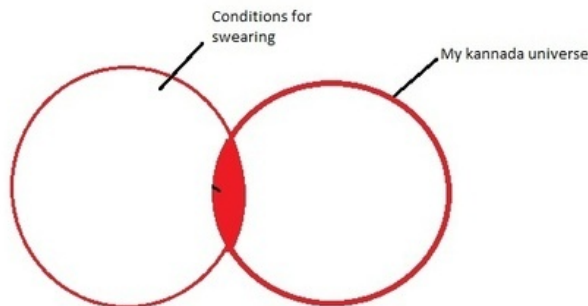
Personality change is an overstatement. What might happen is that certain characteristics could be associated with a language, but these characteristics are hardly set or unchangeable. I believe the personality change hinges on the extent of difference between what you associate the languages with.

If you are using a language mainly for purposes of study, you might adopt a very mechanical mindset with that language. Or for e.g. my mother tongue is Kannada - [Kannada language](#) . However because I was brought up in a different Indian state, my Kannada conversations have remained restricted within my family circles. As a result my knowledge of swear words in Kannada is limited. Does this mean that I am more polite when speaking in Kannada? Yes. But the reason is not because my personality has changed. The reason is that the number of occasions / opportunities for me to use swear words is limited in Kannada. Given a prolonged exposure to such an environment, maybe I will pick up words and phrases.

Faulty reasoning with incomplete picture



Complete picture for better reasoning



Note: Swearing is just an example. I am otherwise a very good boy!

Written 25 Aug, 2014. 146 views.

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Anonymous

3 upvotes by Pierrick Jaouen, Kaushal Narayan, and Mona Charrouf.

Maybe. What is a persona?

The *social space* is just different in different cultures. You pick up on that the first time something you say or do gets you in trouble when it wouldn't at home.

Different ways of expressing yourself might become habits because they are more accepted or expected by users of that language.

Within my community, for example, I have to avoid most of the controversial topics of conversation I could freely discuss with in some of the languages I know. That might give the impression that I am more argumentative in those languages. Yet, because of the difference in the social space, a different side of the person seems to come out.

In some cultures, for example, you can be quite flirtatious and it's not judged as insulting, harassing, etc. So you might behave that way too when with speakers of those languages, where you'd never do that in your native language.

Here's your ultimate example.

A late professor of mine (God rest his soul) talked about this very subject with some of his students. He was American but of Italian heritage, and often spent summers there. As a teen, he said, he used to sit with his friends in the plazas and catcall the pretty girls walking by. This was something he never, ever did in the US... and anyway he was gay. (We all knew he was gay, and this was at a small town Southern university decades ago, so the uncloseted identity *really* stood out as unusual.)

Naturally we had to know why. Why would he do something so obviously wrong, offensive, disrespectful, obnoxious, and... well, not true to his nature? I'll never forget his answer. *It's because nobody thought it was wrong, and I was expected to do it.* The girls expected it too, he said, or it would be like him shouting that they were too ugly for him. It was the neighborhood, the culture, the social space. I'm not defending it, but different rulebooks, different rules...

Let's not assume that languages themselves are what cause this "different" person to come out. No, it's the different culture's rulebook, and to a point, there is a what's-not-forbidden-is-mandatory dynamic to it.

Written 25 Aug, 2014. 130 views.

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Ivan Akinfiev

1 upvote by Ilana Halupovich.

Grew up in a family of Russian immigrants. First language on paperwork is "Russian". I can speak it, I can read it, when it comes to writing it though, I make mistakes. I'd rate my accent a 8.9/10.

I speak fast and confidently with relatives. I need something done and I don't care how I sound. Now imagine a Spanish student in High School. In the presence of his class mates, he will speak confidently, there is less pressure on him and so he can get good grades on paper. Put the same student in a restaurant (myself, been there, done that) and ask him to order an ice cream whilst the bartender is standing there and putting pressure on him, gazing into his eyes, he won't be able to utter a word

I've since learnt Spanish, and I speak it moderately quickly, pausing only to remember words, with friends. They don't care if I put in English words some times after a few attempts. With Russian, my use of words sometimes gets mixed up, and whilst I will speak with peers, I will never stand up and do a speech in Russian. I sound like the Mexican who just arrived in America who speaks Spanglish.

However, when speaking English I speak it better than a native does. My accent is just AMAZING, and I can write long paragraphs, such as now, for SMS text messages. People say I'm a "poet" but I tell them, when I want to say something, and you can't talk on the phone, I will literally "put it down on paper" as I would say it. I am quite the Chatterbox.

I get really cocky and put people in place. I lead heated discussions in English and would much rather prefer, even in Russia or in Ukraine, to speak in English.

Written Sun. 41 views.

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Peige Shanghaied, reading

yes ,i suppose do .my mother tougue is chinese,second language is english.everytime when i try to express myself in english,i felt as if it was a

little [weird.it](#) sounds like other“” voice.

Written 13 Sep. 88 views.

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Not only watch it, but write, film it produce it and...gasp! perform in it! For money!

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Nick Malik, proud to be American

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Well, considering the fact that the OP is likely an opponent of the president, I doubt

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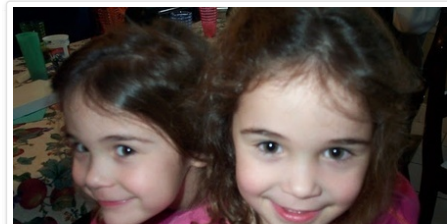
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