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The effect of multilingualism/multiculturalism on personality: no gain without pain for Third Culture Kids?

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The present study investigates the link between multilingualism/multiculturalism, acculturation and the personality profile (as measured by the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire) of 79 young London teenagers, half of whom were born abroad and had settled down in London during their childhood 'Third Culture Kids' (TCKs; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Statistical analyses revealed that TCKs scored higher on the dimension of Openmindedness and Cultural Empathy and scored lower on Emotional Stability. Language dominance (first language (L1), L1 and one or two other languages (multidominance), or any language which is not the L1 (LX) had a significant effect on the participants' personality profile, with the multidominant group scoring significantly higher on Openmindedness, marginally higher on Cultural Empathy and significantly lower on Emotional Stability than participants dominant in one language only. The number of languages known by participants was also significantly linked to their personality profile, with functional multilinguals scoring significantly higher than incipient bilinguals on Openmindedness, marginally higher on Cultural Empathy and significantly lower on Emotional Stability. These findings confirm that personality is shaped by social and biographical factors. Acculturation is stressful but the experience of having to fit in and being in contact with different languages and cultures strengthens Cultural Empathy and Openmindedness.

Keywords: language learning; multiculturalism; plurilingualism; migration; multilingualism

Introduction

Globalisation and increased emigration flows mean that larger numbers of children following their parents find themselves transplanted in unfamiliar surroundings. The adaptation to local meteorological conditions is undoubtedly smoother than the process of re-socialisation in a new language and culture (Pavlenko, 2005; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Useem, Donoghue, & Useem, 1963). Freshly arrived immigrants can experience a culture shock when they realise that not only they need to learn the new language quickly, but they also need to adjust to an unfamiliar culture, find work and shelter, and understand how the local bureaucracy, education and economy function. They need to master new interpretative frameworks: indeed what is considered appropriate or funny in one culture is not necessarily perceived similarly

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in the host culture (Vaid, 2006). This urgent need to learn new skills and absorbing information about their new environment combined with the experience of loss, bereavement, dislocation and cultural differences can cause continuous traumatic stress disorder (Silove, Tarn, Bowles, & Reid, 1991), generalised anxiety disorder (i.e. persistent, unrealistic and excessive anxiety and worries about the future), panic disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder (Jones, 2000).

As Jones (2000, p. 118) points out: 'Migration calls into question established personal identity, the sense of self in the world and the boundary between inner and outer reality. Migrants tend to articulate their experience by recourse to the body metaphor "I feel as if half of myself is missing"'. Residential moving has been reported to have different effects on adolescent girls compared to adolescent boys (Haynie, South, & Bose, 2006). The researchers found that adolescent girls who had moved recently were about 60% more likely than non-movers to report having attempted suicide during the following year. Residential mobility had no effect on suicide attempts of adolescent males.

The ability of the immigrant to cope with the new environment will be linked to pre-existing personality traits, the impact of pre-departure conditions, the journey itself, the subsequent resettlement, and the attitude of the host community (Gonslaves, 1992). Gonslaves (1992) points out that the aim of the immigrant is not assimilation per se, but the development of 'third culture personalities' that retain basic ethnic identity while at the same time coming to respect and understand the values of the new country.

Xiaohua Chen, Benet-Martínez, and Harris Bond (2008) investigated the impact of bicultural identity, bilingualism and social context on the psychological adjustment of Mainland Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong, Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese college students. The researchers controlled for the personality traits of neuroticism and self-efficacy and found that bilingual competence and perceiving one's two cultural identities as integrated were important antecedents of beneficial psychological outcomes.

Migrant children may be better able to adapt to a new environment, picking up the language and the local cultural norms more quickly than their parents (cf. Hoffman, 1989) but some studies have reported that when compared with non-migrant children, migrant children suffer from lower self-esteem with higher depression and anxiety (Diler, Avci, & Seydaoglu, 2003). However, a study comparing adolescents with immigrant backgrounds in Portugal and a control group of Portuguese youth revealed no difference in the degree of loneliness of both groups (Neto, 2006). Hoffman recalls the weight of her parents' expectations on her teenage shoulders after having immigrated to Canada from Poland: 'I know how unprotected my family has become; I know I'd better do well or else' (Hoffman, 1989, p. 157). Her mother admitted her own helplessness to her daughter: '"In Poland, I would have known how to bring you up, I would have known what to do", my mother says wistfully, but here, she has lost her sureness, her authority' (p. 145). The young teenager starts developing a new 'Canadian' self: 'I do not go as far as the schizophrenic "she" – but I am driven, as by compulsion to the double, the Siamese-twin "you". My voice is doing funny things. It does not seem to emerge from the same part of my body as before' (p. 121). The new Eva struggles to overcome linguistic and cultural obstacles and works very hard to rebuild a social self that matches her Polish self: 'I'm enraged at my adolescent friends because they can't see through the guise, can't recognise the light-footed dancer I really am. They only see this elephantine creature who too often sounds as if she's making

pronouncements' (p. 199). However, not all emotions linked to the immigration are negative: 'the processes of uprooting, transportation, replanting, acclimatisation, and development took place in my own soul. I felt the pang, the fear, the wonder and the joy of it' (p. 163).

Eva Hoffman was one of the so-called 'Third Culture Kids' (TCKs; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Some TCKs may have parents who lived and studied abroad or were refugees for a while. Other TCKs followed their parents who moved regularly because of their jobs in international business, in the diplomatic corps, in military or in religious organisations (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001, p. 6). Most of the research on TCKs focus on higher social strata, however, looking at the definition of TCKs presented by Pollock and Van Reken, there is no reason to exclude TCKs from lower social classes, more often labelled 'immigrants' or 'refugees'.

Pollock and Van Reken (2001, p. 19) define a TCK as:

> A person who has spent significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.

Pollock and Van Reken (2001, p. xxi) point out that because these TCKs 'have grown up with different experiences from those who have lived primarily in one culture, (they) are sometimes seen as slightly strange by the people around them'. Having been raised in one dominant culture, and moved to a second or even third culture, TCKs develop their own unique life patterns. President Obama has been hailed as the prototypical example of a successful TCK: having a global perspective, being socially adaptable, intellectually flexible, able to think outside the box and reconcile different points of view. Yet, also somewhat rootless and aloof (Byerly, 2008).

Some researchers (cf. Kim, 2001, p. 32) have opted for the more neutral term of 'strangers' to refer to 'a wide range of individuals crossing cultures and resettling in alien cultural environments'.

Immigration and acculturation to a new culture constitute a tremendous social change which may well affect the young immigrant/refugee/stranger/TCK's personality. Indeed, psychologists agree that personality is determined both by physiological and social factors (Furnham & Heaven, 1999; Jang, Livesley, & Vemon, 1996; McCrae et al., 2000).

In the following section, we will look at the research on the psychological profiles of TCKs and the effect of multilingualism on individuals. We will then present our research instrument, the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ), our research questions and the design of our empirical study. Subsequently, we will test four specific hypotheses using the data of 79 London-based teenagers. The findings will be discussed in the final section.

Literature review: the psychological and linguistic profiles of Third Culture Kids (TCKs)

The literature that deals with TCKs is situated within a larger area of research that deals with immigration and cross-cultural adaptation. While most of the research on TCKs typically involves comparisons with non-TCK control groups, research on immigration and cross-cultural adaptation does not involve comparisons between the immigrants and the local population, but focuses on the difficulties that immigrants

encounter in their acculturation process and look at individual differences between immigrants. Although these researchers talk about communication issues, they rarely focus on language issues. Experts on multilingualism do focus on the linguistic aspects of immigration and acculturation, but typically pay less attention to psychological aspects. The present literature review will thus attempt to present a quick overview of contiguous research areas with fuzzy borders.

Devens (2005) examined the influence of cross-cultural experiences upon affective mood states amongst TCKs, aged 11–14, attending an international school. The researcher investigated the relationships between TCK experiences and depression. He found that compared to non-TCK populations, 80% of the mean scores of TCKs were within the average range. The remaining 20% had higher scores on depression. Female TCKs were found to score higher on depression when compared to males. This is in line with general findings with respect to gender and depression. The variable 'Total Schools Attended' predicted the depression scores for males and females, holding all other variables constant. In other words, the more schools a TCK had attended, the more likely the TCK was to struggle with depression.

Sandhu and Asrabi (1994) created a 36-item questionnaire to measure acculturative stress among 120 international students in the USA (40% Asian) who had no previous experience of living abroad. The questionnaire covers 12 themes which came up through interviews and literature reviews. The students assigned the highest scores on alienation and perceived discrimination, homesickness, perceived hatred, fear related to unfamiliar surroundings, stress as result of culture shock and guilt.

Cockburn (2002) presents a series of case studies of TCKs in which the theme of uncertainty related to identity comes to the fore. One 15-year-old girl placed in a special school within an international context as a result of her learning difficulties describes the ambiguities of her multicultural identity as follows:

> What is my identity? Although I was born in Singapore I never once had the opportunity to study in a local school and to mix with local friends. In fact I have had very few local friends because for the past seven years of primary education, I studied in a Japanese school, surrounded only by Japanese people. Naturally my spoken Japanese became slightly better than my English but, despite having a lot of Japanese friends, I still feel closer to Singapore and I'm proud to be a Singaporean. But sometimes I feel that I don't belong here because I don't speak Chinese. At times when I am with my local friends I feel that I'm a bit of a foreigner to them. I don't feel this way (like a foreigner) when I'm with my Japanese friends because I speak fluent Japanese. However, I hardly know much about the Japanese culture, so again sometimes I feel, what's my identity? Japanese? Singaporean? (p. 475)

Fail, Thompson, and Walker (2004) also investigated the sense of identity, sense of belonging, identity and the nature of relationships of TCKs through a multiple case study. They focused on 11 former international school students who all attended an international school between 20 and 50 years ago. The researcher used postal questionnaires and in-depth interviews. A qualitative analysis revealed that several claimed to have no sense of belonging in the communities in which they are living. One participant, Matthias, talked about his ambiguous feelings towards the host community (the UK):

> I don't want to take on all the English habits, I love India and feel very at home in India…I am not going to move back to Austria, I couldn't live there…I don't identify with any country one way or the other. London is very convenient (…) it's the last truly cosmopolitan city…it's become such a huge international community and I think that

> we probably feel more at home amongst our fellow internationalists. . .(Fail, Thompson, and Walker, 2004, p. 331)

Most participants perceived their marginality to be constructive. One participant, Anna, stated: 'I am FREE like a bird. I can live where I like. Be with whom I like. Say what I want' (Fail, Thompson, and Walker, 2004, p. 329). All participants enjoyed their ability of feeling at home in different places and being able to relate to other TCKs.

Konno (2005) conducted a quantitative study comparing levels of ethnic identity of TCK international students of Asian descent and that of Asian international students who did not have extensive experience of living overseas enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate programme in the USA number of months lived overseas during adolescence was the independent variable, and ethnic identity was the dependent variable. The researcher hypothesised that TCK international students would have a lower level of ethnic identity. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to investigate how ethnic identity affects emotional and psychological adjustment (measured with the Homesickness and Contentment Scale) of all participants. While the author found a negative linear relation between months lived overseas and ethnic identity, no significant differences in ethnic identity between the two groups studied were found. The relationship between ethnic identity and psychological adjustment was equally weak.

Finally, Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) compared a group of American and a group of international students in the USA and found a significant higher level of perceived discrimination and homesickness in the latter group.

A different strand of research has focused on the independent variables (environmental factors, but also individual factors of the immigrants, such as ethnic origin, social background and psychological profile) that are linked to successful cross-cultural adaptation. Kim (2001) lists the following dispositions, i.e. 'the internal conditions of the strangers themselves' as playing an important part in cross-cultural adaptation: preparedness for change, ethnic proximity between the immigrant and the natives, and adaptive personality. The most important personality traits are openness, strength and positivity (Kim, 2001, p. 85). Openness 'enables strangers to minimise their resistance and to maximise their willingness to attend to new and changed circumstances (. . .) and to perceive and interpret various events and situations without making ethnocentric judgments' (p. 84). Personality strength is seen as the 'internal capacity to absorb shocks from the environment and to bounce back with being seriously damaged by them' (p. 85). Personality strength is also linked to positivity, which is an optimistic outlook on life and the 'capacity to defy negative prediction' (p. 85).

What this research shows is that TCKs upon entering a new culture may experience a culture shock which generates stress and a feeling of loss, the intensity of which is linked to environmental factors but also to individual dispositions. The TCKs go through a transformative process of deculturation and acculturation (Kim, 2001) which can be stressful and painful, but which can also be a period of progression, as Moos and Tsu (1976, p. 13) observed: 'Every crisis presents both an opportunity for psychological growth and a danger of psychological deterioration'.

Surprisingly little research has been carried out on the effect of multilingualism on personality (see, however, Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2003 which focuses on social, educational and psycholinguistic issues). Most of the research in this young field has

focussed on the question whether the knowing of more languages is an advantage in the learning of additional languages (Kemp, 2007) and whether the knowledge of more languages enhances general metalinguistic and cross-linguistic awareness (Jessner, 2006). The tentative answer to both questions is that knowing more languages is generally advantageous. Some researchers have also considered the effect of L1 attrition alongside linguistic and conceptual enrichment and transformation among immigrants who acculturated into a new culture and language (Pavlenko, 2003).

Another strand of this research has focused on the cognitive advantages of bilinguals compared to monolinguals in non-verbal control tasks. The bilinguals' superior performance has been linked to extensive practice with two active languages which constantly require the activation of one language and the inhibition of the other language, and the switching between the languages (Bialystok et al., 2005). Bilingualism has also been linked to an advantage in divergent thinking (Kharkhurin, 2008). The author attributes this finding to the fact that multilingual/multicultural experience allows individuals to perceive the world through the amalgam of two different conceptual prisms and view events with a wider range of enriched experiences.

The only work so far (to our knowledge) to have linked the knowledge of more languages to psychological variables, is the first author's own work. Dewaele (2007a) found that quadrilinguals and trilinguals reported lower levels of on foreign language anxiety (FLA) in their L2 when compared to bilinguals; however, trilinguals and quadrilinguals experienced similar levels of FLA. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that trilinguals and quadrilinguals feel to have become better communicators as a result of their multilingualism. A more consistent effect of multilingualism on FLA emerged in Dewaele (2007b) and Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham (2008). Participants with knowledge of more languages reported significantly lower levels of FLA in their different languages. It was suggested that knowing more languages may give the foreign language user a little bit more confidence in their ability to avoid linguistic icebergs (Dewaele et al., 2008).

Dewaele (2009a) focused on the effects of knowing more languages and more languages typologically related to French. He found that both independent variables had significant positive effects on self-perceived communicative competence in speaking, comprehending, reading and writing French L2, L3 and L4. Knowing more languages was also linked to lower levels of FLA in using French in relatively stressful situations.

In another study on the perception of French by native and non-native speakers, Dewaele (2009b) found that the knowledge of more languages (up to five) was linked with higher scores on the dimensions of perceived richness, poetic character, usefulness and difficulty of French. Pentalinguals judged syntax to be less challenging than participants with fewer languages and the pentalinguals also judged the system of pronouns of address in French to be easier. It was argued that participants knowing more languages are like seasoned travellers, with a keener appreciation of the beauty and the difficulty of a language.

Finally, Dewaele and Thirtle (2009) used the corpus on which the present study is based to investigate the link between foreign language classroom anxiety and the decision to pursue the study of foreign languages among young teenagers enrolled in

foreign language classes in a London school. The decision to abandon further foreign language instruction was more frequent in the group of English L1 participants and among participants suffering more from FLA.

In summary, a fair amount of research has been carried out on the psychological profiles of TCKs and immigrants, but personality dimensions are usually used as predictor variables of successful cross-cultural adaptation. A small number of studies have focused on the link between multilingualism and psychological factors. Most of the work that we reviewed focused on specific lower-order personality traits or states rather than on the higher-order personality traits. The quantitative studies also often focused on the negative end of dimensions, i.e. depression, acculturative stress, homesickness, loneliness, perceived discrimination and loss of identity. Surely, the effect of becoming multilingual and multicultural must also enrich and strengthen the individual, and may also have positive effects on his/her personality. Comments from former TCKs like Eva Hoffman and the participants in the Fail, Thompson, and Walkers' (2004) study suggest that having to settle in a new country can bring a sense of exhilaration, an increased sense of freedom and openness.

It seems to us that the research on TCKs needs the kind of paradigm shift that occurred in bilingualism research in the 1990s. Rather than focusing on aspects in which the acculturating group is expected to be 'deficient' compared to control groups, a more global description of the acculturating group is needed, including variables in which it may score better than the control group. In other words, by focusing exclusively on the pain, researchers have omitted to consider the potential gain of TCKs. To achieve a more balanced portrait of the TCK, an instrument is needed that allows the measurement of the personality dimensions of the multicultural individual. We have chosen the MPQ, which will be described in more detail in the following section.

The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ)

Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee (2002) developed a multidimensional instrument, the MPQ. The MPQ is a 91-item questionnaire with five-point Likert scales.

The MPQ was designed to measure multicultural effectiveness amongst expatriate employees and students. Just like the Big Five personality inventory, the MPQ scales look at five factors. However, the MPQ scales are more tailored to predictions regarding multicultural success than general personality questionnaires.

The five dimensions used in the MPQ can be described as follows:

(1) Cultural Empathy: measures the ability to empathise with the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of individuals from a different cultural background.
(2) Openmindedness: refers to an open and unprejudiced attitude towards outgroup members and towards different cultural norms and values.
(3) Social Initiative: is defined as a tendency to approach social situations in an active way and to take initiative.
(4) Emotional Stability: this dimension refers to a tendency to remain calm in stressful situations versus a tendency to show strong emotional reactions under stressful circumstances.
(5) Flexibility: the fifth dimension is described as the ability to learn from experiences. Elements of flexibility, such as the ability to learn from mistakes

> and adjustment of behaviour whenever it is required, are associated with the ability to learn from new experiences in particular (Spreitzer, McCall, & Mahoney, 1997).

In large, the MPQ questions refer to behaviour in multicultural situations, making the relation between the aspired job or academic career transparent, thereby enhancing the face validity of the instrument. Even the MPQ scales that closely correspond with Big Five scales are designed to cover more specifically those aspects that are of relevance to multicultural success (Ali, Van der Zee, & Sanders, 2003; Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002). A clear example of this would be the MPQ dimension of Cultural Empathy and agreeableness from the 'Big Five' construct. These two personality dimensions refer to the ability to empathise with other's feelings, however, the MPQ dimension of Cultural Empathy also covers empathising with and understanding the feelings of members of different cultural groups.

The MPQ has been used in various cultures: The Netherlands, Taiwan, Britain, Canada, Singapore, Italy, Australia, China, Germany and New Zealand. It has been applied to various groups: students of several age levels, local employees, expatriate employees, spouses of expatriates, children of expatriates and refugees. In all cases, the scales proved to be reliable and to show consistent patterns of correlations with related variables. The scales also have sufficient construct validity, that is, they show correlations as predicted with related personality and attitudinal variables (Leone, Van der Zee, Van Oudenhoven, Perugini, & Ercolani, 2005; Mol, Van Oudenhoven, & Van der Zee, 2001; Van der Zee & Brinkmann, 2004; Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). The assumption of cross-cultural equivalence of the scales of the MPQ was tested in Van Oudenhoven, Timmerman, and Van der Zee (2007). A multigroup common factor analysis yielded a satisfactory level of scale equivalence for the Dutch and Italian versions of the MPQ, and between Dutch, German and Australian versions. Ponterotto, Utsey, Pedersen, and Pedersen (2006) reported similar satisfactory results with an American-English version of the MPQ.

So far most studies using the MPQ have used the scores on the five dimensions as predictor variables of measures of success in intercultural communication. Leong (2007) used the MPQ to investigate the link between the five dimensions and outcome indices relating to sociopsychological adaptation in a group of Singaporean students in an international exchange programme and a control group of domestic students. The MPQ dimensions were found to account for significantly more variance in the exchange sample than in the control group. The exchange sample scored higher on most intercultural dimensions compared to the domestic control group (Leong, 2007, p. 545).

The originality of the present study is that we use the five dimensions exclusively as dependent variables. We want to find whether the linguistic/cultural background of multilinguals has an effect on their scores on Cultural Empathy, Openmindedness, Emotional Stability, Flexibility and Social Initiative. To our knowledge, no research within the field of TCKs has yet examined the effect of their multiple cultural and linguistic experiences on their personality profiles.

Participants also filled out a short sociobiographical questionnaire. It contained questions about sex, age, nationality, place of birth (within or outside the UK), order of language acquisition and language dominance. The question on the latter was formulated as follows: 'Which do you consider to be your dominant language(s)?'

The responses were categorised as being either: (a) the L1; (b) a combination of the L1 and another language; (c) a language which is not the L1.

We realise that this question is relatively crude, given the fact that language dominance can vary according the mode (oral or written language), the topic and the interlocutor. This observation lies at the heart of Grosjean's (2008) Complementarity Principle: 'bilinguals may vary in level of proficiency in a language according to the need and the type of domain for which the language is needed' (p. 23). A language that is spoken with a limited number of interlocutors in a reduced number of domains 'may be less fluent and more restricted than a language used extensively' (p. 24).

A final question on the sociobiographical questionnaire enquired whether the participant intended to take French/Spanish at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)[1] level (i.e. continue the study of foreign languages to age 16).

Research questions and hypotheses

The present study will address the following questions:

(1) Will the position of TCKs differ from that of non-TCKs on the five personality dimensions measured by the MPQ? We expect the TCKs to score higher than non-TCKs on the dimensions of Cultural Empathy and Openmindedness and to score lower on Emotional Stability.
(2) Is an individual's specific language dominance linked to that individual's position on the five personality dimensions measured by the MPQ? Our expectation is that respondents who are multidominant will score higher than respondents who are dominant in the L1 on in another language (LX) on the dimensions of Cultural Empathy and Openmindedness and lower on the dimension of Emotional Stability.
(3) Is an individual's knowledge and active use of multiple languages and cultures linked to that individual's position on the five personality dimensions measured by the MPQ? We expect that multilinguals will score higher than incipient bilinguals on the dimensions of Cultural Empathy and Openmindedness.
(4) Is there a sex effect among the TCKs on the five personality dimensions measured by the MPQ? Our expectation is that female participants will score lower on Emotional Stability (cf. Devens, 2005).

Method

Participants

Our 79 participants were young teenagers from London. The first group consisted of 41 TCKs, i.e. young teenagers of African, Arabic, Caucasian and Asian origin who were born outside the UK, moved to London and found themselves in an English-speaking school. The second group consisted of 38 locally born, British teenagers of Caucasian and Asian origin. All 79 participants were ninth grade pupils at a Roman Catholic School in London. The official Ofsted report (2007) on the school describes it as follows:

> smaller than average voluntary-aided, comprehensive school. When students are admitted to Year 7, their attainment is below average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is higher than usual. The school has identified a higher than average proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. (p. 3)

The sample consisted of 53 males and 26 females. The age of the participants ranged from 13 to 15. All pupils had formal instruction in English, and either Spanish or French (three hours a week in Year 7, and two hours a week in Years 8 and 9, starting at the age of 11). The nationality of the participants varied: 38 British, one Brazilian, one Brazilian–Italian, one Colombian, one Congolese, one Dutch, two Egyptians, one Fijian, 13 Filipinos, two Ghanaians, two Indians, one Iranian, one Iraqi, one Irish, three Jamaicans, four Lebanese, one Nigerian, one Pole and four Portuguese. Forty-one had been born outside the UK, 38 were born in the UK. Out of the 79 participants, 43 had English as their first language. Twenty-seven participants were in fact monolinguals in the process of learning a foreign language (French or Spanish), not yet using their foreign language outside the classroom, we labelled them 'incipient bilinguals' and to contrast them to the functional multilinguals (i.e. those who reported knowledge of more than two languages: 43 were trilingual, six were quadrilingual and three were pentalingual). Forty-two participants were dominant in their L1 (this was English for 39 participants, Albanian, Spanish and Tagalog for three others), 30 were 'multidominant', i.e. dominant in one or more other languages and English, and seven with various L1s were dominant in English (which was either their L2 or L3 – hence the use of 'LX'). Here are illustrations of the three categories:

(1) One British participant was dominant in her L1 English and was learning Spanish as an L2.
(2) One Filipino participant who had English as an L1, Ilocano as an L2, Tagalog as an L3, Spanish as an L4 and Vietnamese as a L5 declared to be dominant in his L1, L2 and L3 as was thus categorised as being 'multi-dominant'.
(3) One Ghanaian participant had Twi as an L1 but declared to be dominant in his L2 English and was learning French L3 at school.

No data were collected concerning levels of proficiency in the different languages.

Instrument

The participants filled out the 91-item English version of the MPQ consisting of the following five subscales: Cultural Empathy (18 items); Openmindedness (18 items); Emotional Stability (20 items); Social Initiative (17 items); and Flexibility (18 items). The English version of the MPQ has been widely used and proven to be a reliable instrument with an average Cronbach's Alpha of 0.80.

In addition, respondents were asked to answer sociobiographical questions that focused on their linguistic history, i.e. the languages they knew and their order of acquisition, their dominant language, and finally their place of birth, their nationality, their age and sex.

Table 1. The effect of TCK versus non-TCK on the five MPQ subscales.

	TCK ($n=41$)		Non-TCK ($n=38$)			
Dimension	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Cultural Empathy	3.5	0.8	3.1	1.1	1.8	0.07
Openmindedness	3.9	0.8	3.4	1.0	2.6	0.01
Social Initiative	3.2	1.1	3.1	1.0	0.3	0.74
Emotional Stability	3.1	1.1	3.8	1.1	2.8	0.01
Flexibility	2.8	1.1	3.1	0.9	1.3	0.19

Results

A first independent samples t-test showed that the TCKs scored significantly higher than non-TCKs on Openmindedness and significantly lower on Emotional Stability. The TCKs also tended to score higher on Cultural Empathy (see Table 1).

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine the effect of language dominance on the five personality dimensions. This indicated a significant effect: Wilks' lambda $=0.69$, $F(5, 72)=2.86$, $p=0.001$, $\eta^2=0.17$. According to Cohen (1992), 17% corresponds to a medium effect size. Further univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) indicated significant between-subjects effects of language dominance on Openmindedness: $F(2, 76)=5.04$, $p=0.002$, $\eta^2=0.15$ and on Emotional Stability $F(2, 76)=4.34$, $p=0.02$, $\eta^2=0.11$. The effect was marginally significant for Cultural Empathy: $F(2, 76)=2.62$, $p=0.08$, $\eta^2=0.06$, and for Flexibility: $F(2, 76)=2.42$, $p=0.096$, $\eta^2=0.06$. There was no effect on Social Initiative.

A series of post-hoc Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference tests showed significant differences between L1-dominant and multidominant participants for Openmindedness: mean L1-dominant $=3.43$, SD $=0.98$, mean multidominant $=4.14$, SD $=0.71$, $p=0.001$ and for Emotional Stability: mean L1-dominant $=3.79$, SD $=1.05$, mean multidominant $=3.09$, SD $=1.03$, $p=0.023$. The differences between both groups were marginally significant for Cultural Empathy: mean L1-dominant $=3.03$, SD $=1.06$, mean multidominant $=3.55$, SD $=0.83$, $p=0.069$. A marginal difference also emerged between the L1 and the LX-dominant group for Flexibility: mean L1-dominant $=3.13$, SD $=0.93$, mean LX-dominant $=2.28$, SD $=1.09$, $p=0.093$ (see Figure 1).

A t-test was performed to investigate the difference between bilinguals and multilinguals on the five personality dimensions. The t-test shows a marginally significant difference between incipient bilinguals and multilinguals on Cultural Empathy: mean bilinguals $=2.95$, SD $=1.13$, mean multilinguals $=3.40$, SD $=0.88$, $t(77)=-1.96$, $p=0.054$. A highly significant difference emerged between both groups on Openmindedness: mean bilinguals $=3.26$, SD $=1.05$, mean multilinguals $=3.92$, SD $=0.79$, $t(77)=-3.14$, $p=0.002$ and on Emotional Stability: mean bilinguals $=4.05$, SD $=1.18$, mean multilinguals $=3.11$, SD $=0.96$, $t(77)=-3.81$, $p=0.0001$ (see Figure 2).

The last analysis focuses on the effect of gender on scores on the different personality dimension for the group of TCKs. A t-test reveals a marginal difference ($t(39)=1.9$, $p=0.064$) between males and females on Emotional Stability, the latter scoring slightly higher (mean females $=3.54$, mean males $=2.90$). A marginal

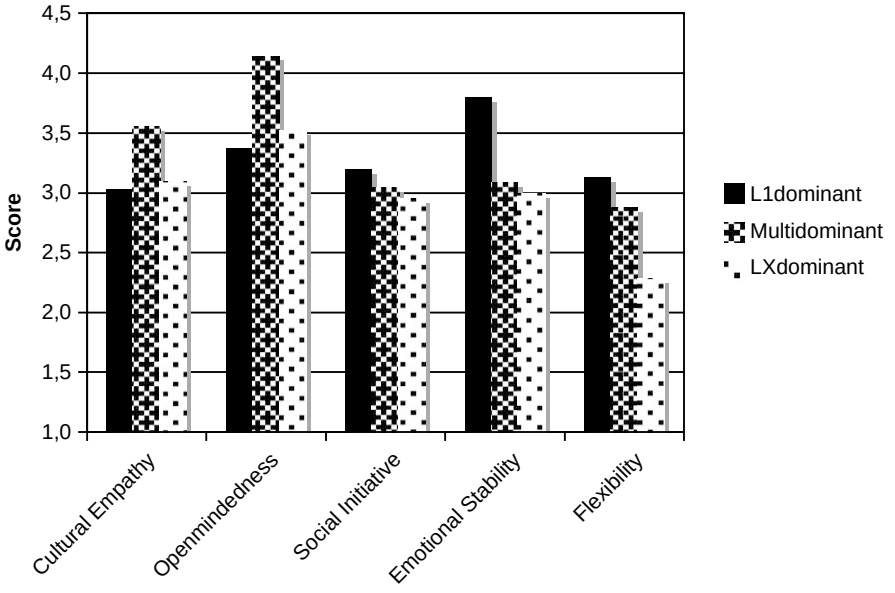

Figure 1. The effect of language dominance on the five personality dimensions.

difference ($t(39) = 1.98$, $p = 0.055$) also emerged on flexibility (mean females = 3.26, mean males = 2.59).

This pattern of higher scores of Emotional Stability for females is different from the one reported by Haynie, South, and Bose's (2006) on female adolescents suffering more from residential mobility than male adolescents.

Discussion

The results suggest that certain personality dimensions of young teenagers are linked to their multilingualism and multiculturalism. Confirming our first hypothesis, TCKs did score significantly higher than non-TCKs on the dimensions of Openmindedness and – marginally on Cultural Empathy, and they scored significantly lower on Emotional Stability.

Our second hypothesis was equally confirmed: language dominance had a significant effect on the five personality dimensions. A closer look revealed that multidominance corresponded with significantly higher scores on the dimensions of Openmindedness, marginally higher scores on Cultural Empathy and significantly lower scores on Emotional Stability compared to participants who were dominant in a single language.

Our third prediction concerning the relation between number of languages mastered and multicultural personality dimensions was also confirmed: multilinguals scored significantly higher on the dimensions of Cultural Empathy and Open-mindedness, and scored significantly lower on the dimension of Emotional Stability compared to mere incipient bilinguals, i.e. classroom learners of a second language.

Our last hypothesis was rejected as female TCKs were found to score even marginally higher on Emotional Stability and Flexibility compared to male TCKs.

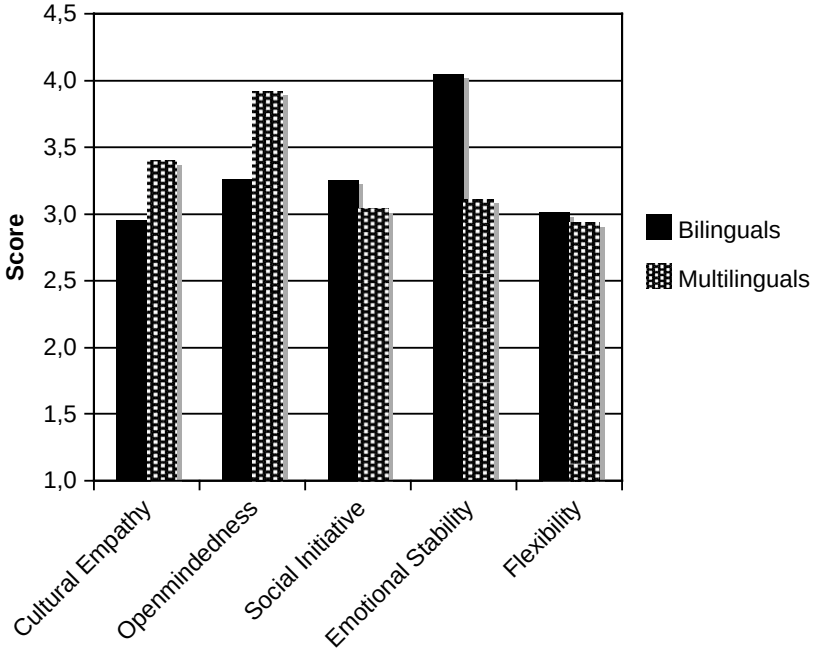

Figure 2. The effect of language knowledge on the five personality dimensions.

Before developing some preliminary conclusions from our analyses, it is important to point to some limitations and possible confounding variables in the present research design. Because we had no information on the social background of the participants, we could not separate what could be a genuine TCK effect from a social class effect. The 2007 official Ofsted report suggests that the school has a higher than average proportion of minority ethnic groups, a higher than average proportion of students who speak English as an additional language and a below average attainment in Year 7. This suggests that many TCKs are probably relatively recent arrivals and certainly not 'elite multilinguals'. It would be very interesting to replicate the present study in a school with students from more affluent backgrounds and with TCKs from higher social classes. Another limitation of the present research design is that we had no information about the length of stay in the UK of the TCKs and that we did not know how frequently they used their different languages. The information on language dominance gave us only a glimpse of the acculturation process and of socialisation into the UK language and culture. It could be assumed that the TCKs who were still L1-dominant (i.e. not English) were relatively recent arrivals at the very start of the acculturation process.

Despite these obvious limitations, we feel that our findings add to our understanding of exposure to different languages and cultures and its effect on personality profiles. The first point is that the fact of being born abroad, thus harbouring a radically different linguistic and cultural history compared to local teenagers, exerts a very strong effect on the degree of Openmindedness and on the degree of Emotional Stability of an individual, and a somewhat weaker effect on the degree of Cultural Empathy. The finding that TCKs score lower on Emotional Stability could be seen as a confirmation of earlier research on TCKs and immigrants. The fact that these

children do not fit in automatically makes them feel less emotionally stable. The realisation that they might somehow lack some of the knowledge that locals might have, makes them feel less secure. As Kim (2001, p. 228) points out, immigrants' capacity to absorb stress and instability is not limitless and they may retain some ill effects. However, the immigration experience also makes them stronger, more open-minded and unprejudiced. They realise that their own views and attitudes may not be shared by the people around them; hence their need to develop awareness of different cultural norms and values. This particular personality profile may also explain why TCKs were found to be more likely to pursue further foreign language instruction and suffered significantly less from foreign language classroom anxiety (Dewaele & Thirtle, 2009).

While TCK/non-TCK is a categorical distinction based on the place of birth, the language dominance measure provides a glimpse of impending cultural and linguistic transformation. On one end of the continuum are those participants whose dominant language is no longer their L1 but an LX (English). This could correspond to complete acculturation into UK society concomitant with a certain amount of deculturation in the L1 language and culture (Kim, 2001). The group of 'multi-dominant' participants who report a different L1 and English as jointly dominant languages occupy a middle position, they are bicultural, have acculturated into the host culture while retaining their L1 roots. Finally, the group who reported dominance in the L1 (mostly English native speakers) occupies the other end of the continuum. The English native speakers in this group are exposed to a limited amount of foreign cultures through their foreign language classes and through contact with their foreign-born classmates. It is unlikely that this will suffice to trigger a transformative process. The three participants in this group who report dominance in their L1, namely Albanian, Spanish and Tagalog, are probably still at the start of the acculturation process. It comes as no surprise that the same personality dimensions are linked to language dominance: multidominance corresponds with lower levels of Emotional Stability: i.e. acculturation is a stressful process; but it also corresponds with higher levels of Openmindedness: i.e. as long as the acculturation is ongoing, an individual needs to remain openminded about what the local values and attitudes are. Unsurprisingly, multidominance corresponds to higher levels of Cultural Empathy: i.e. individuals must soak up cultural norms of the host environment. Once this is complete, or if there was never much need to learn new cultural norms since one belonged to the majority group, the need to be attuned to the different cultural norms diminishes, and levels of Cultural Empathy are lower.

The last independent measure, language knowledge, shows that knowing more languages truly opens one's eyes to the world. Previous research has already reported that individuals who know more foreign languages suffer less from communicative anxiety in their different languages (Dewaele, 2007a, 2007b, 2009; Dewaele et al., 2008). The present study suggests that multiple language knowledge, or actual usage of other languages outside school, may have an effect on higher-order personality traits.

The monolinguals with some formal instruction in a foreign language (incipient bilinguals), scored high on Emotional Stability, while the (functional) multilinguals scored much lower on that dimension. This seems to confirm the finding by Guiora et al. (1975) that one's language ego in a first language is shattered in the face of an empathetic relationship with a foreign language: 'To speak a second language authentically is to take on a new identity. As with empathy, it is to step into a new and perhaps unfamiliar pair of shoes' (Guiora et al., 1975, p. 48). Not surprisingly, this

move towards a new identity would be impossible without a higher degree of Openmindedness and Cultural Empathy, but it does create stress, uncertainty and anxiety, lowering the levels of Emotional Stability of the multilinguals. The new shoes do not fit straight away (cf. Jones, 2000; Silove, Tarn, Bowles, & Reid, 1991), and only after some initial discomfort does one adapt to the new environment having gained cognitive and behavioural flexibility, Cultural Empathy, strength and a non-ethnocentric posture (Kim, 2001).

The finding that language knowledge has similar effects on Emotional Stability as being a TCK shows that it is not just the trauma of immigration that affects the TCKs' levels of Emotional Stability. Without this measure of language knowledge, one may have been tempted to attribute the immigration as the cause of the TCKs' lower level of Emotional Stability. The language dominance measure provides the vital link to solve the puzzle: it is the process of linguistic and cultural acculturation that is stressful. But this experience has obvious benefits: Openmindedness and, to a lesser degree, Cultural Empathy are reinforced by the experience of fitting in. This confirms the findings by Xiaohua Chen et al. (2008) on the psychological benefits of bilingualism. In other words, there might be some pain for the TCKs, but the gains should not be underestimated. Obama is an excellent example of a former TCK who managed to fit in after some soul-searching (Byerly, 2008), and deployed his Openmindedness and Cultural Empathy to reach out to people from very different ethic and social backgrounds.

Our results contradict Devens' (2005) and Haynie et al.'s (2006) findings that female adolescent immigrants were more likely to suffer from depression. In our small sample, the female TCKs tended to score higher on Emotional Stability.

The present study thus confirms the observations by Furnham and Heaven's (1999), Jang et al. (1996) and McCrae et al. (2000) that personality dimensions are also shaped by environmental factors. We are aware that our study only offered a snapshot in an ongoing process of complex change, and that other factors might be involved in that dynamic situation. However, our findings suggest that Guirora (2005, p. 187) was correct in declaring that '. . .language is both a manifestation, and an engine, of that intricate and many-colored fabric we call personality'.

Note

1. An academic qualificaion awarded in a specified subject to students aged 15–16 in secondary education in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

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