Bilingualism and Personality

A cognitive-semiotic approach

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Previous research has shown that some bilinguals report feeling as though they have two different personalities in their different languages. For some this experience is stable, for others situational or linked to life stages, while many claim never to have felt it. Despite extensive research, there is no consensus on the topic, including on what exactly is meant by "personality" in the context. Such issues are difficult to address within trait-based approaches, as the phenomenon concerns subjective self-perception and contextual fluctuations – which are better explored qualitatively. Yet the literature on the Self offers limited guidance, lacking both a comprehensive framework and sufficient studies of bilingual adults' self-perception. With its rich ontology and pluralistic methodology, cognitive semiotics can here make an important contribution.

This thesis examines how Russian–Swedish bilinguals with high proficiency in Swedish experience themselves across their two languages, focusing on perceived personality differences and the factors shaping them. Adopting a cognitive-semiotic approach, it applies tools such as the conceptual–empirical loop, phenomenological triangulation, and the Semiotic Hierarchy, using phenomenological interviews as the method of data collection. The analysis identified three major categories: (a) perceived differences, (b) levels of experience, and (c) factors of change, with corresponding themes. The findings revealed a spectrum of experiences, from prosodic and communicative shifts to personality changes and the experience of being non-authentic in their second language, all aligned with Swedish linguistic and cultural patterns. Even participants reporting no change showed subtle shifts across linguistic, cultural, and bodily levels of self. Variation appeared both across individuals and over time, shaped by proficiency, social environment, and age. Overall, the study showed that bilingual selfhood cannot be reduced to a binary division of change versus stability, but rather it emerges as a dynamic, multilayered process in which body, language, and culture are co-constitutive.

Keywords: bilingualism; selfhood; personality; phenomenology; cognitive semiotics; Russian–Swedish bilinguals

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Abbreviations

BFI   Big Five Inventory

CFS   Cultural Frame Switching

L1   First Language

L2   Second Language

Chapter 1 Introduction

Have you ever felt like a different person when speaking a foreign language? If you reply positively to this question, you are not alone. Changing your daily communication from your first to a second (or third) language can be the result of moving to another country, which means changing your social circle, your place of work and sometimes profession, and perhaps, even changing yourself to some degree. Will the new language become the main means of communication, or will it occupy just a delimited niche, leaving areas of memories and thoughts connected to your first language untouched? Moving to another country can be an opportunity to start life anew and maybe even, to some degree, creating a new personality. Does a person make such a choice deliberately or does this happen spontaneously? Will this person appear to his or her new contacts the same way as they used to appear to those who know them in their first language, or will they seem like someone different? These are the kinds of questions that I address in the present thesis, within a cognitive-semiotic framework.

Prior research has shown that some *bilingual speakers* report feeling like two different people during different periods: for some of them this feeling is permanent, while for others it diminishes or disappears over time (Mijatović & Tytus, 2016; Dewaele, 2015). Despite considerable variation, bilingual speakers often report feeling that they have different *personalities* when using different languages (e.g., Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006). Furthermore, these personalities can manifest as either compatible and integrated or oppositional and competing (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002).

However, it is noteworthy that despite the large number of studies, there is still no consensus on the terminology used to describe the phenomenon of psychological variations associated to the use of different languages. Various authors (e.g., Heinz, 2001; Mijatović & Tytus, 2016) do not make clear distinctions between the terms "personality", "self" and "identity", often using them as interchangeable, while others define identity as a special case of self, as "self in situation" (e.g., Tracy & Naughton, 1994, as cited by Heinz, 2001, p. 87). Still others (e.g., Pavlenko, 2006) warn against equating the notion of "self-perception" with that of "performance". However, what each of these, and other terms, and their corresponding concepts, really mean remains unclear.

In addition, the concept of *bilingualism* itself requires clarification. Not all speakers of two languages consider themselves bilingual. For instance, those who are still learning their second language tend to identify themselves as monolingual (Sia & Dewaele, 2006). This suggests that bilingualism may vary in types and degrees. Thus, I will approach bilingualism as a complex phenomenon with multiple definitions, ranging from "native-like control of two languages" (Bloomfield, 1935, p. 56) to the "everyday" use of two languages or dialects (Grosjean, 1994, p. 1656) and even to "the presence of two or more languages [in the same speaker]" (Dewaele, Housen & Li, 2003, p. 1). However, whether the perception of oneself as monolingual depends on a lack of proficiency, the individual's subjective experience, or other factors remains an open question.

In this thesis, I address *bilingualism* and *personality* with the help of *cognitive semiotics*, the relatively new discipline that focuses on meaning-making by combining concepts and methods from semiotics, cognitive science and linguistics informed by phenomenology (e.g., Sonesson, 2012; Konderak, 2018). One of the core-principles of cognitive semiotics is the *conceptual-empirical loop* (Zlatev, 2015), which implies close interaction between conceptual investigation and empirical research. The study typically starts from conceptual side, asking "What is X?", and then proceeds with an empirical investigation addressing "How does X manifest in practice?". Finally, the aim is to return to the original concepts, thus creating a spiral which enriches understanding of the concepts with new insights. The application of the conceptual-empirical loop allows for a better formulation of theoretical constructs and their further operationalization with every iteration of the loop. The key concepts I investigate in this thesis are those of bilingualism and personality, as well as their interrelation.

The second methodological principle of cognitive semiotics is that of *phenomenological triangulation* (Zlatev, 2015; Zlatev & Mouratidou, 2024), a combination of complementary methods allowing one to analyze the phenomenon from three complementary perspectives. First-person methods involve the systematic intuition and reflection of the researcher. Second-person methods are based on empathetic interaction with participants including phenomenological interviews. And (optionally) third-person methods allow for quantification and statistics. While third-person methods are useful in many cases, such as when there is need to operationalize and quantify features of the phenomenon under study, they are not strictly necessary (Mouratidou et al., 2024). By applying the principles outlined above, thesis aims to deepen our understanding into the relationship between bilingualism and personality, and to extend and deepen previous research on the phenomenon of personality variation in bilingualism.

More specifically, the study poses the following research questions, based on an investigation of bilingual speakers with Russian as their first language:

RQ1 How do Russian bilingual speakers experience themselves when they use their first and second languages?

RQ2 For those who experience themselves differently, what kind of differences do they report?

RQ3 Does the relationship between language and personality change over time, and if so due to what factors?

The structure of this thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical background. It clarifies key concepts of cognitive semiotics such as sign, semiotic system and language, and some theoretical models such as the Semiotic Hierarchy (e.g., Zlatev & Konderak, 2023), addresses the key concepts of bilingualism and personality, and gives an overview of relevant empirical research on the topic. Chapter 3 describes in detail the methods used and presents the study design. Chapter 4, presents and discusses the results. Finally, Chapter 5 provides the conclusions and summarizes the key findings.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Background

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide the necessary theoretical background of the thesis. Section 2.2 elaborates on the general methodological principles and their relation to phenomenology. Section 2.3 describes the Semiotic Hierarchy (e.g., Zlatev, in press), and its different levels of meaning-making (semiosis) and intentionality, and relates these to various possible levels of selfhood. Section 2.4 focuses on the concepts of selfhood and personality, as well as their relationship as discussed in the psychological literature. In Section 2.5, I turn to bilingualism and address its relation to what is sometimes referred to as "biculturalism". Section 2.6 reviews prior empirical studies on personality in bilinguals, highlighting key findings and methodological approaches. Finally, Section 2.7, summarizes the chapter and present a refined formulation of the research questions.

2.2. Methodological principles in cognitive semiotics

2.2.1. Cognitive semiotics and phenomenology

Cognitive semiotics is a relatively recent discipline that emerged in the mid-1990s, drawing on earlier traditions in linguistics, semiotics and cognitive science. Building on the foundational work of scholars such as Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Peirce, and Roman Jakobson, it seeks to investigate the interplay between meaning and mind. The field has grown through the work of various institutions, including the Center for Semiotics in Aarhus, founded by Per Aage Brandt in 1995, and the Centre for Cognitive Semiotics at Lund University, established in 2009, with key contributions from Göran Sonesson, Jordan Zlatev, and others. Over time, both the scope and methodology of cognitive semiotics have evolved, giving rise to distinct theoretical orientations – from Brandt's (2011) approach based on cognitive linguistics, to Paolucci's (2021) model rooted in the Italian semiotic tradition and influenced by Umberto Eco.

Practitioners of cognitive semiotics differ in their views on which disciplines have most significantly shaped the field. Brandt (2011), for instance, emphasized semiotics and cognitive science as two main contributors, defining cognitive semiotics as the study of meaning and mind. Sonesson (as cited by Zlatev, in press, p. 1), in contrast, adopted a more expansive view, identifying influences from semiotics, linguistics, psychology, cognitive science, computational modelling, anthropology, philosophy and other fields. Zlatev proposes a more constrained view, integrating some, but not all, ideas from semiotics, linguistics, and cognitive science. Most recently, he defines cognitive semiotics as "the academic discipline that focuses on meaning-making (semiosis), combining concepts and methods from semiotics, cognitive science, linguistics, as well as phenomenology" (Zlatev in press, p. 2). Within this perspective, cognitive semiotics benefits from the strengths of each contributing discipline. From semiotics, it inherits tools for comparing and analyzing diverse systems of meaning; from cognitive science, it draws an interdisciplinary orientation, particularly in relation to technology and the mind; and from linguistics, it adopts a commitment to methodological precision in a balanced use of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Phenomenology, in turn, plays a central integrative role, shaping cognitive semiotics' ambition to go beyond interdisciplinarity and toward genuine transdisciplinary synthesis.

Despite the differences between the various approaches to cognitive semiotics mentioned above, all are in fact influenced, to a greater or lesser degree, by *phenomenology* – the philosophical movement that began in the early 20th century with its founder, Edmund Husserl (e.g., *Logical Investigations*, 1900), and further developed by other prominent figures, such as Merleau-Ponty (e.g., *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1945), Heidegger (e.g., *Being and Time*, 1927), Sartre (e.g., *Being and Nothingness*, 1943), and Levinas (e.g., *Totality and Infinity*, 1961) (see Zahavi, 2018, for an overview). Phenomenology studies various aspects of consciousness, such as perception, imagination, body-awareness, social cognition and self-consciousness, in order to understand reality, in the broadest sense of the word: the phenomena that make up the *lifeworld* – the world we (and other sentient beings) live in.

In phenomenological terms, consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. Whether listening to the music, observing an image, recalling a past journey, or planning a meeting, consciousness is directed toward an object or phenomenon within the lifeworld. This inherent directedness of consciousness beyond itself is referred to in phenomenology as *intentionality*, and the object to which it is directed as the *intentional object* (Zahavi, 2018). From this

perspective, objects become meaningful only through an intentional act, but they do not thereby become "mental representations" or so other such solipsist notion. As Husserl emphasized,

> the objects of which we are "conscious", are not simply in consciousness as *in* a box, […] they are first constituted as being what they are for us, and as what they count for us, in varying forms of objective intention (Zahavi, 2009, p. 25, italics and quotation marks in original).

Importantly, this does not imply that consciousness invents or fabricate objects. Rather, constitution refers to the process through which objects appear as what they are, a process made possible through the activity of consciousness (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008). In other words, there is no lifeworld and no meaning without the contribution of consciousness.

Apart from such philosophical concerns, phenomenology has been increasingly involved in empirical research in psychology and sociology for the purpose of obtaining a better understanding of the qualitative experience of people in actual circumstances (Giorgi, 2009; van Mannen, 1990; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Importantly, such applied phenomenological research is not an objectivistic analysis where the experiencer is excluded from the experienced, since as in phenomenological philosophy, the emphasis is on how what is "given" to consciousness is experienced by the subject (Giorgi, 2009). Thus, study participants are never reduced to "research subjects", but instead act as co-researchers. For the topic of the present thesis, such a qualitative approach implies that the focus is not on *how many* participants report feeling different while speaking different languages, but rather on *what is* it *like* for them to feel different, or not, when using them. In other words, the focus is on the analysis of the lived experience of the phenomenon in question.

At the same time, both philosophical and applied phenomenology do not aim to describe idiosyncratic experiences, but rather attempt to capture the invariant structures of experience, that make it possible for *anyone*, in principle, to experience the phenomenon (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008, p. 26). According to these authors, the four basic steps of the phenomenological method, can be schematically presented as follows.

The first step, the *epoché* is used to "place in brackets" the *natural attitude*: the attitude of everyday life, including all the assumptions and habits of daily life. This step allows for viewing the objects of consciousness from the perspective of a consciousness that is not limited by unreflective forms and biases and for investigating the phenomenon under study – in the present case, the relations between bilingualism and personality – without the bias of various preconceptions, theoretical or otherwise. The second, closely related step is the *phenomenological reduction*, which implies a focus on the correlation between the object of

experience (*noema*) and the process of experiencing (*noesis*). In this context, this implies focusing on my own experiences as a bilingual speaker. The third step, the *eidetic reduction*, aims to establish which features of the phenomenon are necessary and which are accidental, thereby determining its invariant or essential aspects of the phenomenon. Finally, the fourth step, *intersubjective corroboration* consists in comparing one's own phenomenological description with those of other researchers to investigate the degree of universality of the revealed structures. As seen in the following subsection, the methodology of cognitive semiotics is influenced by this basic schema.

Although phenomenological research is not primarily quantitative, it does not preclude statistical or other third-person methods. However, as Gallagher and Zahavi (2008, p. 40) argue:

> Intersubjectively accessible objects are intersubjectively accessible precisely insofar as they can be accessed from each first-person perspective. There is no pure third-person perspective, just as there is no view from nowhere. To believe in the existence of such a pure third-person perspective is to succumb to an objectivist illusion.

Phenomenology thus does not aim to describe singular, idiosyncratic episodes, but rather to articulate the general structures that make experience of a shared world possible (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008). Scientific validity in this context is grounded in both methodological rigor and experiential insight: the more careful and appropriate the approach, the more meaningful and illuminating the findings are likely to be.

2.2.2. Phenomenological triangulation and the conceptual-empirical loop

At least as practiced at Lund University, the methodology of cognitive semiotics is based on two core, and closely related principles – the *conceptual-empirical loop* (Zlatev, 2015) and *phenomenological triangulation* (Pielli & Zlatev, 2020; Zlatev & Mouratidou, 2024). The former, as described briefly in Chapter 1, states that any inquiry should begin with a reflection on the phenomenon in question, and the conceptual tools suited for its analysis, rather than with predefined theories and hypotheses ("What is X?"). The next step is to move towards the empirical side, developing concepts further, according to emerging theories, and observing the empirical data ("How is X manifested?"). The process then loops back to the original question – here, "What is the relation between personality and bilingualism?" – now enriched with new insights, thereby producing a spiral of inquiry. Accordingly, I will return to this principle in the final section of the present chapter, where I elaborate my research questions in line with the theoretical background.

The second principle, *phenomenological triangulation*, complements the first by allowing the phenomenon to be studied from three perspectives: "subjective", "intersubjective" and "objective". Both the principle itself and its understanding have developed over the last decade along with its label from "methodological triangulation" (Zlatev, 2015) to "pheno-methodological triangulation", since methodological triangulation is generally understood as the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Mouratidou, in press). Phenomenological triangulation, in contrast, approaches the phenomenon from three different perspectives: *first-person* based on systematic intuition, *second-person* based on social interaction, and *third-person* based on detached observation (Pielli & Zlatev, 2020), but it is their interconnectedness that is essential, as they reflect inseparable dimensions of the human lifeworld as a whole (Zlatev & Mouratidou, 2024).

Recently, phenomenological triangulation was extended conceptually along the *epistemological* plane, referring to the perspective the researcher takes to access the phenomenon, and the *ontological* plane referring to the dimension of the lifeworld that is more in focus: Self, Others or Things (Zlatev & Mouratidou, 2024) (See Table 1). These dimensions reflect the relationship between a conscious subject (Self) and an intentional object (Things) with the mediation of Others.

Table 1. *Phenomenological Triangulation along the Ontological (Horizontal) and Epistemological (Vertical) Planes,* based on Zlatev and Mouratidou (2024, Table 1)

	Dimension		
Perspective	**Self**	**Others**	**Things**
First-person	Reflection	Empathy	Phenomenological reduction
Second-person	Psychotherapeutic dialogue	Interview	Intersubjective validation
Third-person	"Third-person data" analysis	Experiment	Causal explanation

Employing such phenomenological triangulation, the investigation begins with the first-person perspective, as the scientific inquiry is grounded in the researcher's own pre-reflective, lived experience of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, p. ix). The study opens with reflection on the phenomenon, guided by systematic intuition and shaped by prior experiential engagement with it. This is also the stage of époché and phenomenological reduction – the suspension of the

natural attitude, that is, the everyday stance in which the world is taken for granted, and attending to the phenomenon as it is given to consciousness (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008). Crucially, this also involves, even if only implicitly, the co-perception of Others. As Sokolowski (2000, p. 153) states, "[t]he object is or can be given intersubjectively, and is presented to me as such". This means that the presence of others enables a broader grasp of the phenomenon, allowing the subject to recognize that their experience is potentially shared and perceivable from multiple perspectives. Intersubjective givenness thus permits one's viewpoint to be confronted and enriched by the perspectives of others. Notably, this is still on the first-person perspective.

This naturally leads to the inclusion of second-person methods, which involve literature review, dialogical collaboration with co-researchers or direct engagement with participants. For the study in the present thesis, the *phenomenological interview* was chosen as the primary method due to its capacity to yield in-depth, rigorous descriptions of lived experience. As Giorgi (2009) notes, while quantitative methods are not without value, they are not ideally suited to exploring the qualitative dimensions of human experience. The goal of phenomenological interviewing is to elicit rich a first-person account of specific domains through dialogue (Pollio, 1997). With the exception of an initial set of guiding questions, the interview proceeds organically, with themes and follow-up questions emerging from the interaction. Recurrent topics may reappear in later phases, as part of the dynamic unfolding of meaning. Dialogue thus becomes a collaborative inquiry rather than a structured interrogation.

According to Giorgi's (2009) particular four-stage method, following each interview, audio recordings are to be carefully transcribed. These transcriptions represent raw data which subsequently has to be analyzed applying the following criteria:

(1) *Reading for a sense of the whole*. This allows the researcher to grasp the overall sense of the participant's account. The researcher should adopt the attitude of phenomenological reduction.

(2) *Determination of meaning units*. The transcription is segmented into discernible shifts in experiential content, not for theoretical interpretation, but to make the material analytically manageable.

(3) *Transformation of participants' natural attitude expressions into phenomenologically sensitive expressions*. This involves rephrasing the participants' descriptions in "the third

person"[1], preserving the essences of the experience while avoiding scientific jargon or theoretical assumptions. This procedure clarifies that the researcher analyzes the subject's experience rather than their own, discerning the subject's viewpoint from the perspective of the researcher's consciousness. Not all meaning units contribute equally to the research questions; transformation entails both clarification and delimitation.

(4) A final step synthesizes these transformed units into general structures of experience. Through imaginative variation, the researcher identifies the invariant components of the phenomenon – those without which the structure would collapse. These structural descriptions aim to capture how the phenomenon is lived, even if certain aspects remain unnoticed by participants.

The four-stage method follows the core steps of the phenomenological approach as outlined in Section 2.2.1 and incorporates intersubjective validation, either through discussions with co-researchers (Giorgi, 2009) or by presenting the resulting summaries to participants for feedback and refinement (Pollio, 1997)

2.3. The Semiotic Hierarchy and selfhood

2.3.1. The basic ideas of the Semiotic Hierarchy model

Among the models developed within cognitive semiotics, the Semiotic Hierarchy (Zlatev, 2009, 2018, in press; Zlatev & Konderak, 2023) stands out for its integrative framework that accounts for different types of *meaning-making (semiosis)* and the relations between them. Essentially, it is a phenomenology-based model that presupposes a hierarchical structure comprising five interdependent levels of meaning with each "higher" level building upon and presupposing the "lower" ones. Crucially, no level can be reduced or replaced by another. In phenomenological terms, this relationship is described as *Fundierung* (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), a two-way foundational structure in which:

> […] the founding term, or originator [i.e., the lower level] is primary in the sense that the originated [i.e., the higher level] is presented as a determinate or explicit form of the originator,

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[1] Notably, this is not at all the same as "the third-person perspective" in phenomenological triangulation, which employs operationalizations and quantification, as in the natural sciences. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this step is optional in cognitive semiotics, and has not to been used for the present study.

> which prevents the latter from reabsorbing the former, and yet the originator is not primary in the empiricist sense and the originated is not simply derived from it, since it is through the originated that the originator is made manifest [i.e., becomes fully explicit] (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 458).

This means that each level is present to human experience, and accessible from a first-person perspective.[2]

Importantly, semiosis is understood as reciprocal to the phenomenological notion of intentionality (see Section 2.2.1) – "the pointing-beyond itself proper of consciousness" (Thompson, 2007, as cited in Zlatev & Konderak, 2023, p. 176) – which is likewise layered, as shown in Table 2. Intentionality/consciousness and semiosis are closely interconnected, yet oriented in opposite directions: intentionality highlights the outward-directed aspect of the subject-world relation, while semiosis emphasizes its inward-directed, subject-oriented dimension. This duality is consistent with the essence of intentionality as "openness to the world" (*l'ouverture au monde*) (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) and the fundamental semiotic principle that "*meaning is always meaning for someone*" (Zlatev & Konderak, 2022, p. 178, italics in original).

Table 2. *The Dialectics of Spontaneity (S1) and Sedimentation (S2), as Orthogonal to Five Layers of Semiosis, Intentionality, and Selfhood.* Adapted from Zlatev and Konderak (2023, p. 178) and Pielli and Zlatev (2020, p. 18).

Level	Dominant type of semiosis	Intentionality	Level of selfhood
5 S1 S2	Language	Linguistic	Narrative self
4 S1 S2	Sign use	Signitive	Signitive self
3 S1 S2	Intersubjectivity	Shared	Interpersonal self
2. S1 S2	Subjectivity	Perceptual	Perceptual self
1. S1 S2	Animation	Operative, drive	Minimal self

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[2] Whether, and how, the model can be applied to third-person, empirical research, for example concerning ontogenetic and phylogenetic development, is a separate issue, which is not relevant for the present thesis.

Each layer of semiosis is characterized by an internal dialectic between *spontaneity* and *sedimentation,* reflecting the dual nature of meaning as both process and structure. The concept of sedimentation, originating in Husserl's phenomenology, denotes the passive retention of previous semiotic acts (spontaneity) that subsequently provide context for interpretation of the new ones (Sonesson, 2021). Sedimentation can be *genetic* (emerging from the individual's lifetime experiences) or *generative* (transmitted across generations). On every level, meaning manifests as relatively stable structures (norms) and as dynamic processes (acts of meaning-making) that both arise from and transform these norms over time (Zlatev & Konderak, 2023).

Further, and highly relevant for the present thesis, each level corresponds to a kind of selfhood, or *identity*. The idea that identity/selfhood is structured on a number of different levels of cognitive and/or semiotic complexity is not exclusive to cognitive semiotics. For instance, Neisser (1993) distinguishes levels of selfhood based on the kind of knowledge that dominates one's interactions with the environment: ecological self, interpersonal self, conceptual self, etc. Correspondingly, but from a more phenomenological and cognitive-semiotic perspective, every kind of intentionality in Table 2 is not only directed "outwards" but also, even if pre-reflexively, towards itself – which is what makes phenomenological reduction possible. As Husserl notes:

> When I say "I", I grasp myself in a simple reflection. But this self-experience is like every experience [*Selbsterfahrung*] is like every experience [*Erfahrung*], and in particular every perception, a mere directing myself towards something that was already there for me, that was already conscious, but not thematically experienced, not noticed (Husserl, 1973, pp. 492-493, as cited by Zahavi, 2003, p. 163, italics in original).

Admittedly, the representation in Table 2 is highly schematic; while these levels may be empirically identified in human ontogeny, and, to some extent, in evolution, they are all simultaneously present in adult human beings across cultures. A simplified tripartite model of selfhood, as proposed by Pielli and Zlatev (2020) in their analysis of identity reconstruction following limb loss and prosthesis adoption, is used and further adapted for the current thesis. This model includes (a) the layers of animation and subjective experience (levels 1 and 2); (b) the layer of interpersonal experience (level 3); and (c) the layers of signitive (i.e., sign-based) meaning and language (levels 4 and 5) (as emphasized by different colors in Table 2). I present these in detail in the following three subsections, with focus on their respective dimensions of selfhood.

2.3.2. Subjective meaning and selfhood

The first most basic level of selfhood is rooted in the body's sensorimotor interaction with its environment referred to by Merleau-Ponty (1945) as body schema (*schéma corporel*). The schema operates as "a system of dynamic motor equivalents that belong to the realm of habit rather than conscious choice" (Gallagher, 2005, p. 20). As Pielli and Zlatev (2020) note, this system of habits can give rise to both pragmatic and epistemic actions. Over time, these actions sediment into habits, establishing normative relations between the embodied subject and the world. This enables individuals to act in a spontaneous and automatic manner, without the need of explicit reasoning.

Importantly, the functioning of body schema is not completely unconscious, but accompanied by marginal bodily awareness. The self does not stand apart from the stream of consciousness, nor is it merely a social construct shaped over time. Rather, this "minimal self", in the terms of Gallagher (2005), has fundamental experiential reality, manifesting as the first-personal givenness of experience. The basic self-experience consists in being pre-reflectively aware of one's own consciousness, at the same time as one is outwardly open, engaged with one's bodily interactions with the world. Crucially, this should not be mistaken for an experience of a detached or solipsistic self, but rather, as Gallagher and Zahavi (2008, p. 204) emphasize, "it is always the self-experience of a world-immersed embodied agent". From the phenomenological perspective, the experiential minimal self is not constructed through language and narrative practices, but precedes them as a fundamental, pre-linguistic feature of conscious experience, upon which the narrative self is subsequently built.

2.3.3. Interpersonal meaning and selfhood

While the minimal self is rooted in embodied experience, it develops and acquires depth through interaction with others. This transition from bodily self-awareness to interpersonal selfhood reflects a continuity between sensorimotor engagement and social meaning-making. Gallagher (2005) distinguishes between *body schema* and what he calls *body image*, stressing that the difference is not merely terminological. The body image comprises "a system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs pertaining to one's own body" (p. 25), and differs from the body schema in involving evaluative and representational components. In this sense, "having a perception of (or a belief about) something and having a capacity to move (or an ability to do something)" (ibid.)

engage different dimensions of embodiment. Thus, while the body schema, from the first level of selfhood, is pre-reflective, the body image is a product of *reflective* consciousness.

Unlike the relatively stable and automatic body schema, body image is shaped by social context and may vary across situations. These self-related beliefs and perceptions are not formed in isolation, but rather emerge through social interactions. As Husserl writes, "To acquire a personality it is not enough that the subject becomes aware of itself as the center of its acts: personality is rather constituted only when the subject establishes social relations with others" (Husserl, 1973, p. 175, as cited in Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008, p. 206). Thus, while intersubjectivity – defined by Zlatev (2008, p. 215) as "the sharing of affective, perceptual, and reflective experiences between two or more subjects" – is to some degree already present at the first level, the reflective social experiences on this level are foundational for the development of a more elaborated sense of selfhood. Our ideas about ourselves are shaped by others through interactions, social approval or disapproval.

Crucially, reflective intersubjectivity also forms the basis of culture, understood as establishment of shared habits, behaviors, and norms within a community. Culture, while defined variously, consistently implies social transmission and continuity. According to Sinha (2006), culture consists of "intergroup differences in behavioral patterns and repertoires, which are not directly determined by ecological circumstances but are learned and transmitted across generations" (p. 112). Similarly, Richerson and Boyd (2005) define culture as "information [i.e. knowledge] capable of affecting individuals' behavior that they acquire from other members of their species [i.e. community] through teaching, imitation, and other forms of social transmission" (p. 5). Cultural practices at this level are grounded in shared intentionality, yet do not necessarily require the use of signs. Such practices may be partially or fully implemented through coordinated activities, as exemplified by collaborative tasks like house construction or performance of ritual actions.

While joint actions and shared cultural practices may involve pre-signitive meaning, human cultures are invariably grounded in sign use – particularly in language – leading to the next layer of meaning and selfhood.

2.3.4. Signitive meaning and selfhood

Sign use extends beyond language to include images, pointing gestures, and other modes of expression. The notion of sign is highly controversial in semiotics, with authors like Ferdinand

de Saussure, Charles Pierce and Umberto Eco giving completely different definitions, in relation to aspects such as conventionality, centrality of language and consciousness. The present thesis takes the approach adopted by the "Lund school" of cognitive semiotics, where it has for decades been emphasized that semiosis is much more inclusive than sign use:

> A useful concept of *sign* designates a kind of meaning, but does not cover all meanings. Perception is clearly meaningful to animals and infants alike, but it seems reasonable to suppose that the capacity for *sign use* is a much more exclusive property (Sonesson, 2012, p. 4).

In particular, Sonesson (2010, pp. 24-25) defines the sign as follows, intending this to apply to any semiotic system, including language, gesture, and depiction:

> (a) It contains (at least) two parts (expression and content […]); (b) These parts are differentiated, from the point of view of the subjects involved in the semiotic process […]; (c) There is a double asymmetry between the two parts, because the other part, content, is more in focus than the other.

As a natural continuation of this, Zlatev, Żywiczyński and Wacewicz (2020, p. 160), propose the following definition, which highlights the essential role of reflective consciousness, without which the (b) condition would not be possible, and which provides the (b) and (c) conditions in Sonesson's definition given above:

> A sign <E, O> is used (produced or understood) by a subject S, if and only if: (a) S is made aware of an intentional object O by means of expression E, which can be perceived by the senses. [and] (b) S is (or at least can be) aware of (a).

This definition highlights that any expression E, in any sensory modality, is not just associated with the object O but *signifies* it. In Sonesson's terms, E is directly perceivable, and O is more in focus. The relationship between signifying expression and signified object, or, in Peircean terminology, the *ground* for the sign can be of three kinds: *iconic*, *indexical*, and *symbolic* (Jakobson, 1965). Iconic signs rely on resemblance between expression and object, such as a picture of an apple representing an apple. Indexical signs are grounded in contiguity, as smoke indicates fire. Symbolic signs are based on convention, for example, a heart pierced by an arrow conventionally signifies love. A sign may, and typically does, involve multiple grounds, but its classification depends on the dominant one.

Signs form *semiotic systems*. Three universal human semiotic systems – *language*, *gesture* and *depiction* – can be distinguished and defined based on how they are produced and perceived, as well as the structural organization of meaning-production they entail (Zlatev, Devylder, Defina, Moskaluk & Andersen, 2023). To different degrees, and in different ways, all three systems can be used to express *narratives*, understood as "the logically consistent representation of at least two asynchronous events that do not presuppose or imply each other" (Prince, 2008, p.

19). This capacity enables the production of signitive meaning not only by the self, but also about the self. The narratives we construct and those constructed about us – referred to as *narrations* – play a significant role in shaping identity (Pielli & Zlatev, 2020).

Crucially, the narrative self and the narrations that sustain it are less private than they might appear, especially when they are mediated by language and shaped by the cultural norms reflected in each individual language. As Bruner (2002, p. 65, as cited by Zahavi, 2015) observes, "when talking about myself, my selfhood becomes part of the public domain, and its shape and nature is guided by cultural models of what selfhood should and shouldn't be". The influence of language extends beyond narrative, since language is realized on different levels. The famous representative of the integral approach to language, Eugenio Coşeriu, defined language as "a *universal* human activity that is realized *individually*, but always according to *historically* determined techniques ("languages", Sp. "*lenguas*")". (Coşeriu 1999 [1981]: 265; 1992 [1988]: 250; italics in the original, as cited by Willems and Munteanu (2021, p. 7)).

Coşeriu identified three levels of language: *universal*, *historical*, and *individual*. The universal level concerns language as a general human capacity; the historical level refers to particular languages of communities; and the individual level denotes actual language use in discourse (Coşeriu, 1985). According to Zlatev and Bloomberg (2019), linguistic norms operate on all the three levels of language. Violations of these norms result in different types of social or communicative sanctions, depending on the level. While the universal level does not entail concrete norms, it is grounded in two experiential structures of the human lifeworld – typification and embodied intersubjectivity. These universal preconditions underpin the emergence of culturally and linguistically specific norms at the historical level, where normative systems gain meaning in contrast to other such systems. This opposition gives rise to boundaries between "in-group" and "out-group" membership, or what Husserl (1973) conceptualized as the distinction between the *homeworld* [*Heimwelt*] and *alienworld* [*Fremdwelt*]. Language at the historical level thus becomes not only a medium of communication but also a key marker of group identity.

In this light, migration – such as moving to another country – necessarily entails the need to adopt new cultural and linguistic norms, at least to some degree. What was before an alien world thus becomes a new home world. Thus, the boundary between home and alien worlds is not fixed, but relational. For some individuals, the new environment may remain permanently alien, while for others, cultural norms and linguistic practices can gradually become sedimented through lived experience, allowing the alien world to be reconstituted as a new home world. This

may challenge the continuity of the speaker's previous identity and selfhood, especially as defined by this level, and to some degree the previous, interpersonal, one. For bilingual individuals, the need to navigate between two or more home worlds can result in a dynamic interplay between multiple normative frameworks.

2.3.5. Summary

The Semiotic Hierarchy implies that our sense of selfhood and personality (in the broad sense of the term, see Section 2.4) is much more basic than language, with roots in the embodied, pre-reflective structures of phenomenological experience. This bodily self – anchored in the dynamic sensorimotor functioning of the body – is not exclusive to humans and shares continuity with other animals. In contrast, the emergence of interpersonal and cultural selfhood marks a distinctly human domain, due to our capacity for shared intentionality, even before the onset of language.

Finally, sign use in general, and language specifically, enable the construction of a narrative self and complex identities. Unlike the bodily self, which maintains a relatively stable structure across the lifespan, the narrative self is dynamic, continuously integrating temporally distinct events and experiences into a coherent storyline (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008). Through narrative, the self is articulated both as a unique individual and as a member of specific linguistic and cultural communities.

In sum, each level of selfhood builds upon and integrates the previous ones without reducing them, illustrating the layered, developmental nature of human identity within the Semiotic Hierarchy. Still, what follows from this overall conception is that some aspects of one's personality are likely to be more closely connected to the use of language, and thus affected by bilingualism, than others.

2.4. Selfhood and Personality

In the previous section, the terms "selfhood" and "personality" were used interchangeably, as the discussion was still on a general, phenomenological level. However, according to Robinson and Sedikides (2020), as theoretical constructs, they appear to be investigated within two distinct research traditions that remain largely separate. Those who focus on the *self*, draw on phenomenology and semiotics (as in Section 2.3.), as well as social psychology (e.g., Festinger,

1954; Bem, 1972). Despite many differences in these approaches, a common theme is that the self is layered, and to large extent context dependent (Morf & Mischel, 2012). In contrast, *personality* is the topic of personality psychology, and the construct is generally viewed as comprising stable, trait-like dimensions that are consistent across situations (Robinson & Sedikides, 2020). How can the two approaches be combined, so at to be further related to language and bilingualism, as in the present thesis?

The literature on "the self" appears to lack consensus on how to understand this concept, with definitions involving distinctly different phenomena such as (a) the self as a total person, (b) the self as personality, (c) the self as the experiencing subject, (d) the self as the executive agent, and (e) the self as a set of self-beliefs (Leary & Tangney, 2012). Critics have noted the proliferation of constructs prefixed by the term, such as "self-esteem", "self-enhancement", "self-control", "self-awareness", "self-regulation", "self-monitoring", "self-reflection", and many others – coining the term "self-zoo" to describe this conceptual sprawl (Tesser, Martin, and Cornell, 1996, as cited by Morf & Mischel, 2012, p. 37). From the perspective of the Semiotic Hierarchy of the selfhood in the previous section, it is obvious that these concern different levels of selfhood.

Morf and Mischel (2012) emphasize that separating self from personality detaches the concept from individual motivation and life goals, while excluding the self from personality risks reducing personality to a static list of traits, as explained below. Therefore, they propose a view of selfhood as an organized, dynamic system characterized by both stability and malleability. Morf and Mischel (2012, p. 27) distinguish between the following two core aspects of the self:

(1) The self is an organized, dynamic cognitive-affective motivated action system.
(2) The self is an interpersonal self-construction system.

The first, intrapersonal dimension, conceptualizes the self as a multilevel system in which various aspects and functions interact coherently. This system emerges through continuous reciprocal exchanges between internal dynamics and the demands and affordances of specific contexts. Interpersonal processes may precede and shape intrapersonal changes, which in turn are adapted to accommodate other interpersonal aspects. According to this model, the self both varies across situations in response to individual's motivations and goals, and exhibits relative stability within them (Morf & Mischel, 2012, p. 36). Further, we can see that it matches the analysis in Section 2.3, as (1) corresponds to the bodily level, while (2) to the two higher levels.

Within the personality psychology framework, inter-individual differences are commonly organized according to "the Big Five model", including the following features (Jayawickreme & Zachry, 2020):

- Extroversion

- Agreeableness

- Conscientiousness

- Emotional stability

- Intellect/open-mindness

Terminological variations may appear across studies: for instance, emotional stability is often referred to as "neuroticism", while intellect/open-mindedness is frequently labelled as "openness to experience" or simply "openness". Each of these five domains encompasses a broad spectrum of attributes. For example, agreeableness is associated with warmth, kindness, generosity, and respectfulness. Furthermore, each trait comprises narrower facets that reflect developmental trends, and are uniquely to specific behaviors and life outcomes. In the case of agreeableness, these facets include compassion, trust, and respectfulness (Soto & John, 2016).

As mentioned, the Big Five personality inventories (BFI) are generally considered stable and consistent across situations and throughout the lifespan. McCrae and Costa (1994) argue that this stability persists even among individuals who themselves perceive their personalities to have changed. In a longitudinal study involving 552 participants, they examined self-reports and spouse ratings to assess the consistency of personality traits over time. Their findings suggest that although individuals undergo various life changes, these events have limited impact on trait-level assessments. However, McCrae and Costa (1994) acknowledge that deliberate and sustained interventions may produce measurable changes. Moreover, the comparison between self-reports and spouse ratings indicated that self-concepts of most adults were reasonably accurate representations of their personalities at all ages. Thus, there seems to be a distinction between enduring personality characteristics and more malleable, situationally influences aspects associated with the participants self-understandings, implying at least some confluence between selfhood and personality.

Further, Robinson and Sedikides (2020) have criticized the conceptual separation between the personality and self. They argue that when individuals report on their personality traits, they are effectively accessing their self-concept – suggesting that insights into personality depend on

how individuals organize and retrieve self-related information. Thus, bridging the gap between trait-based and self-focused approaches may therefore yield a more integrated and explanatory account of individual differences, encompassing both stable dispositions and context-dependent self-perceptions and behaviors – including those concerning the use of different languages in bilingualism.

Recent developments in personality psychology have proposed more integrative and dynamic models of personality traits (Jayawickreme & Zachry, 2020). Although traits are generally considered stable, individuals may display varying degrees of a trait across different moments and contexts. For instance, a person might fluctuate between extraverted and introverted behaviors and all the points in between over the course of a few days (Baird, Le & Lucas, 2006, as cited by Jayawickreme & Zachry, 2020, p. 356). Contemporary approaches seek to identify the factors that support both the stability of traits and their context-dependent manifestations. In addition, traits may be modified through self-regulated behavior. In sum, personality traits are considered somewhat malleable, being influenced by underlying *values* but not determining them (Kandler, Zimmermann & McAdams, 2014, as cited by Jayawickreme & Zachry, 2020, p. 354).

Overall, the concepts of self and personality should be viewed as related, and the Semiotic Hierarchy model (see Section 2.3) can help further this integration. At the basic levels of the hierarchy – those of the bodily self – the sense of self is more stable and closely tied to sensorimotor embodiment. Moving upward through the levels, selfhood becomes increasingly shaped by social practices and more susceptible to cultural variations. The highest level, grounded in language and other forms of sign use, the dimension of self is the most flexible and culturally mediated, allowing for reconfiguration over time. Personality spans these levels: grounded in embodied dispositions, yet shaped and expressed through social norms and verbal narrations.

However, the conceptual (and terminological) tensions described in this section are mirrored in empirical research on bilingualism, where differing assumptions about self and personality lead to divergent interpretations. These will be examined in more detail in Section 2.6, but prior to this we need a better understanding of the phenomenon of bilingualism.

2.5. Bilingualism

Academic definitions of the term "bilingualism" vary considerably reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the concept used in different fields like linguistics, sociolinguistics, second language acquisition, psycholinguistics etc. This section provides an overview of the main approaches to understanding the *phenomenon* of bilingualism, so as to link this to the topic of self/personality, as discussed in the previous sections.

Over the years, there is a discernible trend toward broadening the scope of bilingualism – from the early, restrictive notion of "native-like control of two languages" (Bloomfield, 1935, p. 56) to more inclusive formulations such as "the presence of two or more languages" (Dewaele, Housen & Li, 2003, p. 1). This shift is driven by the recognition of various contextual and individual factors that complicate attempts to establish a generally accepted uncontroversial definition (Sia & Dewaele, 2006). Among these factors are the following (Li, 2000; Gottardo & Grant, 2008):

(a) age and manner of acquisition;

(b) language fluency and proficiency level;

(c) domains of language use.

Li (2000) identified more than 30 types of bilingualism based on these criteria. He also noted that while the term "bilingual" primarily refers to individuals who know two languages, it may also encompass those who use three, four, or more languages with varying degrees of proficiency and the ability to alternate between them. Hence, in the following I will use the term in this more general sense.

A crucial distinction regarding factor (a) lies in the five-year threshold, which demarcates *early* from *late* bilinguals (Gottardo & Grant, 2008, p. 2). Grosjean (2013), in exploring the other two core factors (b) and (c) emphasizes their inherently dynamic nature. It is essential to consider not only the situations in which the languages are used, or the individual's proficiency across the four language skills – speaking, listening, reading, and writing – which may vary between languages, but also the individual's language history. This includes which languages were acquired, the age and manner of acquisition; the evolving pattern of fluency and usage over time, and whether any of the languages underwent restructuring due to the influence of a dominant language or became dormant and gradually forgotten (Grosjean, 2013).

Language history may be characterized by discontinuity and change, as influenced by life transitions such as relocation to another region, new social networks, partnership shifts, or new learning environments. As a result, one language may become more important than another, some linguistic skills can be improved or worsen, some domains of use may be reduced, the person's accent may be influenced by the accent of a stronger language, or there can even be language loss. As individuals undergo changes in their social or professional ambient, one language can become more dominant, certain linguistic skills might improve or deteriorate, domains of use may narrow or expand, accents could shift under the influence of a stronger language, and in some cases, partial or complete language attrition may occur.

Grosjean (2013) further notes that domains of language use (e.g., interactions at work, at home, with friends, or with relatives) are typically unequally distributed across languages. Some domains may be shared between languages, while others remain exclusive to a single language. Rare are the bilinguals who use all their languages at the same degree in all their domains. Figure 2 provides a schematic representation of the distribution of domains across three languages, La, Lb, and Lc.

Different domains are represented by circles. Each domain can be covered by one language (see the circles marked by La or Lb only), by two languages (the two circles marked La & Lb), or more than two languages – in this case, three languages – (one circle marked La & Lb & Lc).
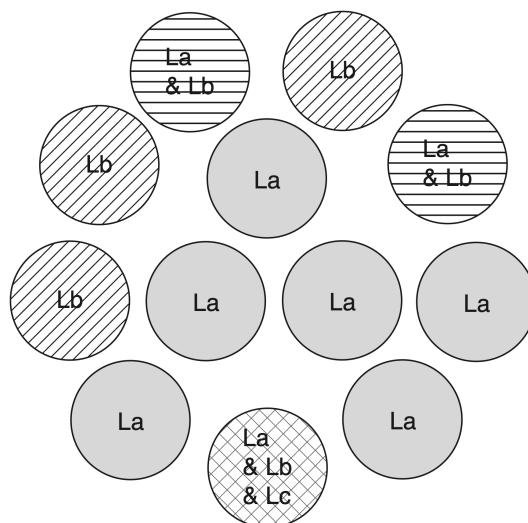
Figure 1. The domains covered by a bilingual's three languages (La, Lb, and Lc)
(Grosjean, 2012, p. 11)

This pattern illustrates the Complementary Principle, formulated by Grosjean (1997) (as cited in Grosjean, 2013, p. 12): "Bilinguals usually acquire and use their languages for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people. Different aspects of life often require different languages". This principle accounts for linguistic fluency by indicating that the more domains a language is involved, the higher its frequency of use, and consequently, the greater the speaker's fluency. Thus, the third criterion for defining bilingualism (c) is intrinsically linked to the second (b). The Complementary Principle also contributes to explaining language dominance; however, caution is needed, as dominance cannot be determined simply by summing up the number of domains in which a language is used. An individual may exhibit balanced proficiency in two or more languages within one domain, yet show dominance in another where only one language is used – regardless of whether it is the globally dominant language for the speaker. Moreover, language dominance, the range of domains covered by a given language, and consequently language fluency, are subject to change over time.

Alongside the three previously discussed criteria, researchers in bilingualism also emphasize self-categorization – whether an individual classifies herself or himself as a bilingual – as an important factor (Li, 2000; Liebkind, 1995). However, its relevance remains contested. Sia and Dewaele (2006) conducted a study involving 45 self-reported bilinguals to examine whether self-categorization as bilingual correlates with sociobiographical and linguistic variables, such as gender, age, educational background, self-assessed language proficiency, duration and recency of exposure to the second language, method of instruction, and residence in a second-language-speaking environment. The findings indicated that participants who rated themselves as more proficient in their second language (L2) were more likely to classify themselves as bilingual. Moreover, those who were currently residing, or had recently resided, in an L2-speaking context, and those no longer engaged in formal L2 study, were also more inclined to adopt the label "bilingual". However, the study did not investigate participants' motivation for self-categorization, nor did it assess their understanding of the concept or usage of the term "bilingual". Given that self-classified bilinguals tended to be younger, the authors hypothesized that younger individuals may adhere to more inclusive definitions of bilingualism, while older participants may rely on narrower interpretations.

If defining "bilingualism" is hard, what can one say with the often-mentioned term "biculturalism", given the many interpretations of the notion of culture (see Section 2.3.2). Luna,

Ringberg, and Peracchio (2008, p. 280) define *culture* as "beliefs, values, and norms of a specific sociocultural group"*,* and consider bilingualism a necessary component of biculturalism. Interestingly, they claim that it is specifically *bicultural bilinguals* – those with significant immersion in two cultures environments – who report shifts in self-perception when switching languages. They describe this phenomenon as *frame-switching*, or the activation of distinct cultural mindsets associated with each language. This process, they argue, is unique to individuals who have internalized multiple cultural systems.

Grosjean (2015, p. 575) provides a kind of definition of "significant immersion" by proposing that bicultural individuals:

(1) take part, to varying degrees, in the life of two or more cultures.
(2) adapt, at least in part, their attitudes, behaviours, values, languages, etc., to these cultures.
(3) combine and blend aspects of the cultures involved.

Certain traits may be attributed to one culture or the other, while others emerge as hybrid forms shaped by both, rendering their cultural origin difficult to disentangle due to the close integration of two systems. However, it is uncommon for individuals to engage equally with both cultures; rather cultural dominance – analogous to language dominance in bilinguals – often emerges. Nguyen and Benet-Martínez (2007) describe biculturalism as the capacity to shift between cultural frameworks, behaviors and norms in response to cultural cues. Grosjean (2015) similarly suggests that biculturalism may follow a distributed pattern comparable to the Complementary Principle observed in bilingualism, where different cultural domains may be activated depending on situational relevance (see Figure 1).

Still, as pointed in Section 2.3.2, the levels of selfhood that have to do with culture and language do not complexly coincide: there are many cultural meanings that are not linguistic, or even based on sign use. And one could be monolingual, but bicultural – say speaker of Spanish that has lived both in Spain and in Latin America. Conversely, a bilingual may be monocultural as a culturally Swiss, who speak both Swiss German and standard German.

In sum, the experiences of (bicultural) bilingual individuals – shaped by shifts in language use, frame-switching, and evolving social environments – raise important questions about their self-perception and self-expression. As reviewed in the following section, many bilinguals report feeling like a different person when switching languages (Pavlenko, 2006), suggesting that language may play a role in how individuals experience and express themselves. Yet, others do not report such feelings (Dewaele, 2014). Could this be because the latter identify above their selves on the lowest (embodied) levels of the Semiotic Hierarchy? Or is so that they are only

bilingual, but not really bicultural? These are some of questions that are the present thesis, with the help of the study described in the following chapters. But prior to that, the following subsection provides a brief review of some empirical studies on the topic.

2.6. Previous Studies on Personality and Self in Bilingualism

One of the challenges in bilingualism research lies in the use of the terms "personality" and "self", which are ambiguous, as pointed out in Section 2.4. While some authors employ them interchangeably (e.g., Mijatović & Tytus, 2016), and some other blend them (e.g., Heinz, 2001; Miramontez, Benet-Martinez & Nguyen, 2008), the terms do not denote exactly the same phenomenon. In the review of recent empirical research on the topic, I point out some of the risks of these ambiguities.

Interest in the relationship between language and personality has grown in parallel with the expansion of research on bilingualism. Several studies have documented that bilingual individuals sometimes report feeling like different persons when switching languages (Heinz, 2001; Pavlenko, 2006). Pavlenko (2006), for instance, found that 65% of participants reported such experience. However, in a larger study involving 1005 bilingual participants, fewer than half responded affirmatively to the same question (Dewaele, 2014).

As mentioned in the previous section, this has been framed as the Cultural Frame Switching (CFS) effect (Luna, Ringberg & Peracchio, 2008), whereby a specific language cues the activation of culturally specific concepts, or "mental frames", including culturally shaped aspects of the speakers' personality. According to this model, CFS is typical of bicultural bilinguals and is not observed among bilinguals with monocultural backgrounds (Grosjean, 2015; Luna et al., 2008). However, evidence reported by Mijatović and Tytus (2016), based on German-English bilinguals, challenges the necessity of biculturalism for experiencing changes in self-perception. The authors conducted the study among bicultural and monocultural bilinguals, and members of both categories of participants reported the feeling of being different when speaking different languages. In their study, though, only about one-third of participants reported feeling different in different languages. Mijatović and Tytus (2016) suggest that the binary yes/no question format – unlike in Pavlenko (2006) and Dewaele (2015), where participants were asked "if they sometimes felt different" – may have influenced this lower rate of positive responses. Nonetheless, it remains likely that bicultural bilinguals report such feelings more frequently.

Several studies have investigated the CFS effect on personality through the lens of the Big Five Inventory (BFI), described in Section 2.4 (e.g., Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006; Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2011; Mijatović, & Tytus, 2016). Ramírez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martínez, Potter and Pennebaker (2006) conducted one of the first such studies with Spanish-English bicultural bilinguals. The BFI, due to its efficiency, brevity and robust psychometric properties, has been widely used in monolingual personality research. The design comprised four parts: a control condition with Spanish and English monolinguals and three experiments aimed at replicating the CFS effect in different bilingual samples. The results showed that bilinguals expressed greater extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness in English than in Spanish, in line with cultural norms associated with each culture. Although these findings apparently argue against the stability of personality, the authors emphasize that relative trait ranking within individuals remained stable; an "introvert" did not become suddenly an "extrovert", but rather exhibited comparatively higher extroversion when speaking English. They linked this dynamic to age-related personality changes, which reflects both continuity and variation (Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006, p. 115). These results are also in line with the observation made by Jayawickreme and Zachry (2020) that traits can exhibit malleability through self-regulation, and that motivation can serve as a catalyst for long-term personality change, as discussed in Section 2.4.

However, these findings have not been widely interpreted as evidence of personality shift. Researchers in bilingualism have largely maintained the assumption of personality stability and have instead focused their attention on the concept of biculturalism. Grosjean (2015), for instance, argues that while the notion of a changing personality is compelling, it remains "a myth" (p. 24). He attributes the observed changes to shifts in behavior prompted by situational or contextual factors, rather than changes in personality per se. According to his view, it is not language itself that induces behavioral shifts, but rather the sociocultural context, which in turn also determines language choice. From this perspective, even a monolingual bicultural individual would likely adjust their attitudes and behaviors depending on the topic or interlocutor – in much the same way bilinguals do (Grosjean, 2015, p. 23).

On the other hand, although the literature on biculturalism devotes considerable space to the role of context and interlocutor, Grosjean's clam that it is culture that triggers language, and not vice versa, has not found widespread support. Chen and Bond (2010), for example, provide evidence for the *cultural accommodation hypothesis*, which holds that language cues the perception of cultural norms, which in turn influence behavior and affect the expression of personality traits. Language thus serves as a communicative tool creating an interactive social

situation. The bilingual's personality expression is influenced both by which language is used and by expectations concerning the interlocutor's cultural background.

To test this hypothesis, Chen and Bond (2010) conducted two studies with Chinese-English bilingual university students in Hong-Kong. The first assessed participants' self-perception and their perceptions of the prototypic traits in Chinese- and English-speaking cultures. The second examined whether participants exhibited culturally prototypical traits when primed by language and interlocutor ethnicity. Notably, the study included carefully selected interviewers whose ethnicity and language proficiency were taken into account. The authors explained this particular attention citing earlier findings from a study by Bond (1985), in which Chinese participants presented with audio recordings and corresponding photos of either Chinese or British speakers, described the speakers of Cantonese as humble, honest and friendly, regardless of ethnicity, while British speakers were described as competent, regardless of language (Chen & Bond, 2010, p. 1519). The interviewers had also played the roles of external observers, and their reports were subsequently compared with self-reports of participants.

The results confirmed the role of cultural accommodation in personality shift. Bilinguals demonstrated traits aligned with their perception of normative personality within each cultural group. However, ethnicity effects were more pronounced than language effects. While language may act as a cue for cultural expectations, its direct influence on personality shift was relatively weak in magnitude with observer ratings greater than self-ratings. Notably, these findings were based on participants who were permanent residents of China, a group identified by Sia and Dewaele (2006) as less likely to self-identify as bilinguals, but also, according to Grosjean (2013), less exposed to various cultural and linguistic contexts of their second language.

Other studies on personality (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2011; Mijatović & Tytus, 2016) have attempted to identify individual differences that distinguish bilinguals who report personality shift from those who do not. Both employed the BFI, but their samples differed. While Ożańska-Ponikwia focused on bicultural fluent bilinguals, Mijatović and Tytus included a broader range of bilingual profiles. In the former study involving the Trait Emotional Questionnaire, participants scored significantly higher in extroversion, agreeableness and openness, and on a number of traits linked to emotional intelligence. Ożańska-Ponikwia (2011) argued that all bilinguals experience a shift when switching languages, but only those with specific personality profiles are aware of and report these changes. Mijatović and Tytus (2016) proposed that the traits associated with successful intercultural interaction – such as agreeableness – may predispose individuals to perceive their interlocutors as culturally different, rather than being

directly shaped by cultural or linguistic knowledge, which in part aligns with Grosjean's Complementary Principle. However, these traits and striving for a successful interaction, also exist for the speakers of the same culture and the same language (Mijatović & Tytus, 2016, p. 232).

Still, the question remains: do bilinguals who report no perceived change truly experience no difference, or do they conceptualize and articulate their experience differently? This question is difficult to address within the framework of traits-based approaches, as it concerns subjective self-perception and contextual fluctuations, which are better explored through qualitative methods. Much of the literature on the Self offers limited support, as it lacks a comprehensive theoretical framework and remains sparse in studies specifically addressing self-perception in bilingual adults. Moreover, as Heinz (2001) noted, few studies approach bilingual experience from a phenomenological perspective – and this remains largely true today.

2.7. Summary and Revised Research Questions

Phenomenological inquiry may offer valuable insights into bilinguals' lived experience and the nuanced relationship between language and self-perception. Such an approach is well-suited to the transdisciplinary methodology of cognitive semiotics, which emphasizes the interplay of subjective and intersubjective experiences, meaning-making, and embodied cognition – domains that remain under explored in personality psychology. Drawing on the Semiotic Hierarchy model, the self is understood as multi-layered: from pre-linguistic, embodied levels based on perception and action in the environment, to interpersonal and cultural layers enabled by shared intentionality, and culminating in narrative constructions shaped by sign use and language.

Prior studies suggest that bilinguals often report shifts in self-perception across languages, raising questions about which aspects of the self or personality are experienced as stable, and which are more fluid. The phenomenological perspective highlights the relative stability of the bodily self, while intersubjective self and narrative self are more dynamic and culturally mediated. Thus, building on the theoretical foundations established with the help of cognitive semiotics, as well as the prior empirical research reviewed in this chapter, the goals of the study can be more clearly defined. The three research questions initially presented in Chapter 1 are accordingly revised and further specified as follows:

RQ1 How do Russian bilingual speakers experience themselves when they use their first and second languages? More specifically: To what extent are there reported differences in personality, and what factors these relate to?

RQ2 For those who experience themselves differently, what kind of differences do they report? More specifically: Do they concern specific levels of the Semiotic Hierarchy and if so which?

RQ3 Does the relationship between personality and language change over time, and if so due to what kind of factors? More specifically: To what extent do perceived changes in personality correlate with changes in linguistic or cultural factors in the new environment?

Chapter 3 Methods

Following the principle of phenomenological triangulation, as described in Section 2.2, this methodological chapter is structured by grouping it into those aspects that correspond to the first-person perspective of the research (3.1), and those that match the second-person perspective, as in applied phenomenology (3.2). As mentioned, third-person perspective methods such as quantitative analysis are optional in cognitive semiotics (Zlatev & Mouratidou, 2024), and not applied in this study.

3.1. First-person methods

The inspiration for this research originated from an article in the Russian edition of *Psychologies*, in which several bilingual individuals described the experience of feeling like a different person when switching between languages. Some reported feeling more open in one language, others more serious or competent. I had never observed such personality shifts in myself. On the contrary, when learning a foreign language, I consciously attempted to transfer aspects of my self-perceived Russian personality into the target language – carefully selecting registers, jargon, and expressive devices to adapt not only the content but also the form of my utterances. In doing so, I aimed to convey, alongside the message itself, information about who I am and how I position myself as a speaker. The fact that others seemed to experience this process differently prompted a series of questions: Is such perceived personality change related to language proficiency? And if yes, does it change over time? Does it depend on whether the speaker resides in a country where the language is spoken and becomes "engulfed" by it, or uses it only occasionally? What does it mean to be truly bilingual, and to what extent must one master a language to be considered as such?

These reflections soon turned toward more fundamental questions concerning the nature of the personality one seeks to convey through language, and the self that serves as the agent of this intention. This led me to consider not only personality as a set of traits, but also the self as a center of experience and decision-making. Could it be that maturity and definition of one's sense of self influences the degree to which it can be transferred – intact or transformed – across linguistic and cultural boundaries? These initial reflections provided the impetus for the design of

my study and the subsequent engagement with relevant theoretical and empirical literature. The first-person perspective helped me reflect on the phenomenon, identify the concepts, shape my research questions, and design the study. The discussions provided in Chapter 2, while largely affected by my interactions with my supervisors and the literature, are still predominantly a reflection of my first-person perspective.

3.2. Second-person methods

Building on my reflections and insights from a first-person perspective, I began by reviewing relevant literature related to key concepts such as bilingualism, personality, and self. This step already involved a dialogical engagement with other perspectives, introducing a second-person, intersubjective mode of understanding. The literature review, presented in Chapter 2, was complemented by empathic engagement with participants as co-researchers, as well as collaborative discussions with my supervisors. Empathy also played a key role during the analysis of participants' narratives, as interpreting their experiences required adopting their perspectives to ensure appropriate interpretation.

In the following parts of this section, I structure the methodological steps in terms of standard categories such as "participants" and "materials", as customary in the empirical literature (see Section 2.6). However, I emphasize that these methods were still done from the intersubjective, second-person perspective, and not from the objectified third-person one.

3.2.1. Participants

For the purposes of recruitment feasibility and sample homogeneity, the present study focused on late bilinguals whose first language (L1) is Russian and who acquired Swedish as a second language (L2) after relocating to Sweden. This design choice allowed for a relatively uniform group in terms of both language acquisition trajectory and sociocultural context. Further, since my own first language is Russian, we would conduct the interviews in our first language, and there could be a greater degree of empathy between us, as co-researchers (see Pollio, 1997; Giorgi, 2009). This alignment aimed to facilitate open communication and ensure cultural sensitivity during the interviews (see also Chen & Bond, 2010).

Given the multilingual context of Sweden, where English is commonly used alongside Swedish, it was necessary to consider not only the linguistic environment of the host country but also that of Russian as the first language. Many Russian speakers from the former Soviet Union, particularly those born before its dissolution, acquired Russian in diverse cultural and regional contexts. While Russian functioned as the primary language for these individuals, their early language socialization may vary considerably.

For the present study, I adopted Li's (2000) definition of bilingualism, which allows for the inclusion of individuals from both monolingual and multilingual backgrounds, while maintaining a focus on the Russian-Swedish bilingual dyad. This choice ensured a clearly defined scope and sample, while still acknowledging the linguistic diversity of participants. Language history and domains of language use were collected for each participant to contextualize their bilingual experience.

While bilingualism was a central focus, biculturalism was also considered relevant in the case of Russian-speaking individuals living in Sweden. However, participants were not selected based on self-categorization into cultural identities. Instead, inclusion criteria required (a) self-reported fluency in Swedish, (b) Russian as a first language, and (c) current residence in Sweden. To ensure sufficient exposure to Swedish language and culture, a minimum residency of 5–7 years was set. All participants had completed formal instruction in Swedish at the time of the interview.

Thirteen native Russian speakers (10 female), aged between 19 and 67 (mean age: 43; median age: 42), were recruited for the study. Recruitment occurred through advertisements in relevant Facebook groups, snowball sampling, and outreach within the researcher's personal network. The advertisements provided information on the study's purpose, the estimated duration and format of the interview, and participation criteria (see Appendix B). Although the residency requirement aimed to ensure a homogeneous group in terms of language proficiency and integration, this expectation was only partially fulfilled. Several participants reported using English more frequently than Swedish in their daily lives. Nevertheless, all participants demonstrated multilingual competence, including Swedish, and the interviews included detailed discussions about the use of each language in different domains. This approach ensured that the inclusion criteria were sufficiently robust to address the study's objectives.

Table 3 summarizes participants information. Languages are stated approximately according to the order of acquisition.

Table 3. *Basic participants data.*

Code	Gender	Age	Place of birth	Educational background	Occupation	Spoken languages	Years in Sweden
P1	F	40	Moldova	Master degree	Teacher of Swedish	L2 English L3 Swedish L4 Moldovan Rumanian L5 Spanish	16
P2	F	19	Belarus	High school	Student	L2 English L3 Swedish L4 German	7
P3	F	40	Russia	Master degree	Student	L2 English L3 Indonesian L4 Swedish	10
P4	F	39	Azerbajan	Master degree	Client support	L2 Azerbaijani L3 English L4 Turkish L5 Swedish L6 Danish L7 Norwegian	8
P5	F	42	Russia	PhD	UN	L2 Ukrainian L3 English L4 French L5 German L6 Swedish	15
P6	F	37	Uzbekistan	Master degree	Student	L2 Uzbek L3 English L4 Swedish	10
P7	F	67	Russia	PhD	Researcher	L2 English L3 Swedish	35
P8	M	44	Russia	PhD	Researcher	L2 English L3 German L4 Swedish	18
P9	F	43	Latvia	Professional school	IT support	L2 Latvian L3 English L4 Swedish	21

P10	M	47	Belarus	Master degree	Construction business	L2 Belorussian L3 Polish L4 English L5 Swedish L6 Danish L7 Norwegian	23
P11	M	29	Russia	Master degree	PhD student	L2 English L3 Spanish L4 Swedish	5
P12	F	62	Crimea	Master degree	Teacher of music	L2 English L3 Swedish L4 Ukrainian L5 Bielorussian	13
P13	F	50	Ukraine	Master degree	Translator / Interpreter	L2 Ukrainian L3 English L4 Polish L5 French L6 Italian L7 Swedish	8

3.2.2. Materials

A semi-structured interview guide was developed for the interviews (see Appendix A for both the original in Russian and for an English translation). The design of the guide was informed by my intuition shaped by personal experience and following discussions with my supervisors (see Section 3.1), as well as by the design of previous empirical studies (Heinz, 2001; Dewaele, 2015; Mijatović & Tytus, 2016). The questions were formulated in accessible, everyday language to facilitate natural integration into the conversation. For organizational clarity, they were grouped into sections A-F, as outlined below:

A. *Factual Information* (age; education; occupation; length of stay in Sweden)

B. *First Encounter and Bilingualism* (spoken languages; proficiency)

C. *Contexts for Different Languages* (contexts of use; preferences for contexts; perception by the others)

D. *Language and Self-perception* (communication style in different languages; linguistic expression of personality, language perception)

E. *Shifts in Self-perception* (perception of the shift; changes over time; relationship between linguistic and cultural components)

F. *Terms for Personality* (explanation, if any, of the terms used by participants)

Final question

Section A aimed to collect factual information about the participants. Section B helped to determine linguistic background and self-reported proficiency in second languages of participants, as well as the type of environment – monolingual or multilingual – in which they were raised. Both sections contained factual data, and were excluded from the analysis of meaning units, but taken into account as potentially relevant for interpretation. Section C served to identify domains of language use and to verify self-reported linguistic proficiency. Section D aimed to elicit descriptions of self-perception in each language and to determine which personality traits participants attempt to express through their second language. Section E focused on questions related to perceived personality shifts, if such existed. Section F contained optional questions, which were asked of participants only if they explicitly mentioned a particular term in relation to their self-experience such as *lichnost'* ('personality', 'identity'), *harakter* ('personality', 'character') and *identichnost'* ('identity'), which as suggested by the glosses are more or less ambiguous, and could potentially lead the participants interpretations of the questions in different directions.

The content of the different sections was consistent throughout each interview, but individual questions could be reordered following the context of the conversation or omitted, if the participant had already provided a comprehensive response on the specific question or had already stated that they had never had a similar experience.

All questions that could potentially be interpreted by participants as relating to *national* identification (e.g., "Do you feel Russian, Swedish etc?") were excluded from the initial draft of the interview guide, also for ethical reasons. In addition, explicit references to terms such as *lichnost'* and *identichnost'* were avoided, since these terms are, as pointed above, ambiguous and could prime the participant in different directions, including those concerning "national identity".

The final question – "Is there anything else you would like to add? Anything that I have not covered?" – was not associated with any specific section of the interview. Its purpose was to encourage participants to offer their own interpretations of the issues related to bilingualism and personality, positioning them as active co-researchers and potentially contributing novel insights to the study.

A pilot test of the early version of interview guide was conducted with two participants to gather feedback and identify potential shortcomings. Based on the insights obtained, several modifications were made: the wording of certain items was adjusted for clarity, questions in Section E were refined, items concerning perception by others were relocated to Section C, and Section F was added as an optional component.

3.2.3. Procedure

After reading and signing the informed consent form, participants were informed that the interview had the form of an informal conversation about their experiences and were encouraged to ask questions should anything appearing unclear. In conducting the interview, I generally followed the order of Sections A to E in the interview guide. However, if participants addressed topics from later sections, I adapted by pursuing related questions to explore the topic more deeply, in accordance with the natural flow of the conversation, as typical for phenomenological interviews (see Section 2.2.2). Once the topic or section was exhausted, the interview returned to the original sequence – providing the participant had nothing further to add.

When participants provided descriptions, I occasionally asked clarifying questions not included in the guide, if these were relevant to the study's aims or emerged naturally from the dialogue. At the end of the interview, participants were thanked for their time and compensated with a cinema voucher (alphanumeric code) for *Filmstaden*, provided by the MA Program for Language and Linguistics at Lund University.

3.2.4. Data collection and transcription

The interviews were conducted in Sweden, in the region of Scania, during April 2025. Different locations were used (e.g., a designated room at Lund University, the *Orkanen* Library in Malmö) ensuring comparable conditions across all interview settings: a room equipped with a table.

All interviews were recorded using QuickTime Player (version 10.5; Apple Inc., 2020) and initially automatically transcribed simultaneously with the dictation tool in Pages (version 12.2.1; Apple Inc., 2022) on the same laptop. The average duration of the interviews was 44 minutes and 55 seconds, with individual sessions ranging from 26:33 to 64:21[3]

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[3] One participant sent a follow-up voice message lasting 1 minute and 25 seconds within an hour after the interview, which was also included in the dataset.

The interviews were transcribed partly using dictation tool of Pages (version 12.2.1; Apple Inc., 2022) and manually, and partly using Whisper Batch Transcriber[4], a speech-to-text transcriber for Windows. Whisper Batch Transcriber was selected and used for the half of the texts because it enables audio-to-text conversion entirely offline, and also due to the low quality and efficiency of automatic speech recognition of Pages, which omitted between one-third and one-half of the spoken content during transcription. Each interview transcript was subjected to manual verification to prevent omissions and inaccuracies in word or speaker identification. During this process, certain repeated filler expressions like *ну* ('well'), *как бы* ('sort of'), *вот* ('so'), *то есть* ('that is') and interjections that impaired the coherence of the discourse were selectively omitted. However, the majority were retained to preserve the authenticity of spontaneous speech. Incomplete or interrupted utterances were marked with a dash (–), and each line was manually aligned with its corresponding time code. The interviews were translated into English with the assistance of ChartGPT [GPT-4.5, OpenAI, May 2025], and subsequently subjected to manual revision and editing to ensure linguistic accuracy and fidelity to the originals.

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3.2.5. Ethical considerations

Especially within research grounded in phenomenology, as in the present study, ethics goes beyond the formal aspects of informed consent, even if these are also important. Rather, as in any true second person method, I made everything possible to treat the participants as human beings on par with myself, and to carry out the data collection with a concern for their well-being. Interviewing entails a one-to-one engagement with the speaker of a target language, who in this context, is not merely a research "subject", but rather a collaborator and co-researcher of the study. Accordingly, ethical responsibility extends beyond compliance with formal regulations: it also requires attentiveness to individual sensitivities and to specific cultural and interpersonal dynamics of the community. Since linguistic research is inherently a meaning-making endeavor, it is an ethical duty to ensure that participants' contributions are genuinely valued and that their involvement in the research feels purposeful and worthwhile.

On the formal side, prior to each interview, participants were provided with an informed consent form (see Appendix C), which outlined the procedures for data handling and storage.

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[4] https://reactorcore.itch.io/whisper-batch-transcriber

They were informed that the interview would be audio-recorded and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to provide a reason. They were also assured that no information concerning political views, religious beliefs, sexual orientation would be collected. Participants were granted anonymity through the removal of names and other identifying data from transcripts, and all audio-recordings were securely stored on an offline hard drive.

Overall, establishing trust and mutual respect between myself and the participants was a priority throughout the interview. Care was taken to avoid intrusive or compromising questions, and participants' privacy was respected by limiting data collection to information relevant to the study's aims.

3.2.6. Data analysis

Building on the phenomenological approaches outlined by Giorgi (2009) and Pollio (1997) (see Section 2.2.2), I analyzed the structures of the participants' lived experiences. Each transcript was first read holistically to grasp its overall meaning. Subsequently, I identified segments corresponding to distinct meaning units, which were then transformed from participants' first-person accounts into third-person narratives. This transformation preserved the essence of participants' experiences and retained original wording wherever possible.

To facilitate comparison across participants, I organized the essential meanings of each unit into three categories guided by the research questions. Within each category, I identified themes that emerged through a combination of bottom-up and top-down analyses of the essential meanings. These themes guided the organization of Chapter 4, where categories serve as main sections and themes as subsections.

1. Perceived differences

This category encompasses all forms of self-perceived variation in personality and behavior. It captures how participants perceive changes in themselves across different languages and contexts. Themes:

- Linguistic and prosodic features
- Communicative style

- Personality change

- "True self" vs. "wearing a mask"

2. Levels of experience

This category situates the reported differences within the levels of the Semiotic Hierarchy – bodily, cultural, and linguistic. It identifies which level of the self is implicated in each reported difference, providing a framework to interpret the interplay between language, culture, and personality. Themes:

• Core self

• Cultural self

• Linguistic self

3. Factors of change

This category examines the influences participants themselves attribute to observed changes in personality, including linguistic, social, and age-related factors. It also considers how these factors relate to the levels of the Semiotic Hierarchy in which participants locate their personality shifts. Themes:

• Language proficiency

• Social environment

• Age-related changes

This structure allows for a systematic presentation of participants' accounts, linking individual experiences to broader theoretical constructs while preserving the richness of their descriptions.

Chapter 4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study and discuss the major themes that emerged from the participants' accounts. As noted in Section 3.2.7, the chapter is structured around three main categories, corresponding to the research questions, with themes identified within each category forming the subsections. This approach enables a systematic presentation of the findings, linking individual experiences to broader theoretical constructs while preserving the richness and nuance of their descriptions. Representative examples are provided in the original language (Russian), with English translations in italics. For reasons of space, only selected excerpts are included. Each example is identified by participant ID and timestamp, with full transcripts available in Appendix D.

4.2. Perceived differences (RQ1)

RQ1 How do Russian bilingual speakers experience themselves when they use their first and second languages? More specifically: To what extent are there reported differences in personality?

This section investigates the differences perceived by participants when switching languages. Most participants claimed that switching languages does not affect their personalities but rather more superficial features, as in (1), while others described in detail the differences between their personalities, which differ not only on a linguistic but also on a "physical" level (2).

> (1) […] я так не думаю, что что-то меняется. Может быть, по-шведски мне немножко сложнее какие-то передать нюансы.
>
> […] *I don't think anything changes. Maybe in Swedish it's a bit harder to convey certain nuances (P13, 15:35-15:52).*

(2)   Я чувствую себя меньше, когда я говорю на шведском. Вот вплоть до физического. […] Если я когда говорю на русском, я чувствую себя […] с прямой спиной, как бы там, жестикулирую. То когда я говорю на шведском, я чувствую себя […] чуть-чуть согнувшись, чуть-чуть пространства меньше моего […], я занимаю меньше места вот в пространстве.

I feel smaller when I speak Swedish. Like, even physically. Like—when I speak Russian, I feel like with a straight back, gesturing, and all that. But when I speak Swedish, I feel like a bit hunched, taking up a bit less space [...], I occupy less space in the room. (P9, 22:48-23:23).

However, all participants noted differences in prosody, communication style, and self-perception. These constitute salient aspects of bilingual experience and form the basis of the following subsections, each addressing a particular dimension and illustrating how participants articulate shifts in expression, interaction, and personality when navigating between languages. These shifts are presented accordingly to the themes revealed in the participants' descriptions, as pointed out at the end of Chapter 3.

4.2.1. Linguistic and prosodic features

Several participants reported that their voice, tone, and intonation change when they switch to Swedish, as expressed in (3) and (4). Interestingly, P4 specified in (4) that she consciously adjusts her intonation to follow the patterns of Swedish vocal system adapting her way of speaking and pronunciation to the interlocutor.

(3) У меня даже голос меняется. Я заметила, что я, когда говорю на русском, я говорю, как я сейчас говорю. Когда я говорю на английском, у меня голос поднимается до какого-то вот, вот что-то вот. И когда я говорю на шведском, я вообще говорю вот так вот. Я не знаю почему. Ну, то есть, я на работе, я думаю, что народ реально думает, что у меня достаточно высокий голос.

Even my voice changes. I noticed that when I speak Russian, I talk like I'm talking now. When I speak English, my voice goes up to somewhere—like, this kind of thing. And when I speak Swedish, I talk like this. I don't know why. At work, I think people actually think I have a fairly high voice (P9, 15:13-16:09).

(4) […] я пытаюсь её [манеру говорить] подстроить, если я говорю с шведами, я как бы, я думаю, что они это поймут лучше, если я скажу это с этим произношением или использую эти слова именно.

[…] I try to adapt [my manner of speaking]. If I'm speaking to Swedes, I think: they'll understand me better if I say this with that pronunciation or use these words. (P4, 34:51-35:41).

Some participants, as P3 in (5), reported simplifying their language – reducing word and sentence length as well as the complexity of constructions in both written and oral forms – to adapt to Swedish linguistic usage.

(5) […] если мы сравниваем с русским языком или с английским языком, когда мы переходим на шведский, у нас неизбежно происходит упрощение. Это и длина слов, и сложность конструкций, и длина предложений, и вообще вот эта философия, что не нужно усложнять там, где можно не усложнять. Она начинает проникать и в то, как я говорю, и в то, как я пишу.

[…] compared to Russian or English, when we switch to Swedish, there is inevitably simplification. It's word length, complexity of constructions, sentence length, and even the general philosophy of "don't complicate where you don't have to." It starts to influence how I speak, how I write (P3, 11:51-13:15).

4.2.2. Communicative style

While many participants insisted that they remained fundamentally the same across languages, some noted subtle shifts in "mode" when switching from one language to another, as expressed in (6-8). Interestingly, in (8) P3 specified that her "adjustment styles" in different languages do not change due to random conversational partners, but to people she spends a lot of time with; that is, to the typical behavioral and linguistic patterns associated with each language. This suggests that it is the shift in social environment, rather than the language itself that contributes to the feeling of being different.

(6) […] я могу будто бы в какие-то режимы, скажем так, входить на русском как бы более сильно или там как-то это более глубоко будет. На английском это как-то более так смягчённо что-то, приглушённо немного. Или ты что, лимиты видишь, какие-то границы.

[…] I feel like I can enter certain "modes," let's say, in Russian more deeply — like it'll be more full-on. In English it's more toned down, a bit muted. Like you see some limits, some boundaries. (P11, 19:16-21:41).

(7) […] я более собранная такая в кучку на английском, на русском –
     гуляй душа, а на шведском что-то близкое к русскому, но, тем не
     менее, поменьше чуть-чуть, пособраннее.

     *[…] I'm more put-together in English—in Russian, it's like "let the soul
     roam free," and in Swedish it's something close to Russian, but a bit more
     toned down, more composed* (P1, 31:02-31:28).

(8) […] это как будто ты входишь в разный режим на каждом языке и
     чуть-чуть по-другому начинаешь подстраиваться. А поскольку разная
     структура, допустим, там слов-паразитов, каких-то интонаций,
     вставок, которые ты используешь, то ты в целом немножко меняешься.

     *[…] it's like you enter a different mode in each language and start
     adjusting slightly differently. And since there's a different structure – like
     filler words, intonations, phrases you use – you kind of change a bit
     overall. (P3, 43:27-44:43).*

In (9) P11 reported that he is more polite, careful, and diplomatic in English and in
Swedish compared to Russian. He illustrated this distinction through a comparison of conflict
strategies across languages. When anticipating a potentially difficult conversation in English, he
reported preparing himself psychologically and carefully selecting his words. By contrast, in
similar situations in Russian, he tends to act more spontaneously and express himself verbally
more freely.

(9) [На английском] я какой-то там более вежливый, наверное, более аккуратный, более дипломатичный. […] если, да, у меня какая-то проблема или какая-то там у нас предконфликтная ситуация, у меня […] мысли, что […] надо быть аккуратным, [следить] за своим языком, за словами, которые ты будешь использовать. […] На русском же […] меня вообще мало бы чего остановило, что я такой, так, у меня проблема, но сейчас я её пойду и решу, и вообще в выражениях скупиться не буду.

[In English] I'm a bit more polite, maybe more careful, more diplomatic. […] if I have some problem, or we're in a pre-conflict situation, [...], then I [...] have this thought [...] like I need to be careful, [to] pay attention to how you speak, the words you use. [...] But in Russian [...] almost nothing would stop me. Like, "okay, I've got a problem, I'm going to go deal with it and not hold back at all." (P11, 27:10-28:56).

4.2.3. Personality change

Three participants – P2, P6, and P9 – explicitly reported feeling like a different person when switching between languages. When these participants described their personalities, they tended to contrast their Russian (and/or English) selves with their Swedish ones, whereas their English self was described as neutral or similar to when they use Russian, as expressed in (10-12).

(10) [на английском] более прямолинейная […]. По-шведски я все-таки себя чувствую как-то неуверенно, не то что не уверена в своем языке, а просто не уверена, как человек.

[in English] more straightforward [...]. In Swedish, I still feel kind of insecure—not insecure in the language itself, but as a person,(P2, 20:58-22:14).

(11) На русском языке я достаточно жёсткая. На английском, ну, такой, наверное, нейтральный. На шведском я стараюсь общаться вот как шведы. Достаточно так лояльно, мягко.

In Russian I'm quite harsh. In English—well, maybe more neutral. In Swedish I try to communicate like Swedes. More tolerant, soft. (P6, 11:17-11:39).

(12) […] если по-русски я могу быть достаточно жесткой, и на английском я могу быть достаточно жесткой, на шведском у меня жесткой быть не получается. Почему-то. Я не знаю почему. И на шведском я больше […] уступчивая и нерешительная.

[…] in Russian I can be quite firm, and in English I can also be quite firm—but in Swedish, I can't manage to be firm. For some reason. I don't know why. And in Swedish I'm more […] compliant and indecisive. (P9, 15:13-16:36).

It is noteworthy that P2, P6, and P9 emphasized that the perceived personality shift occurs "unconsciously" once they begin speaking Swedish. They described it as an involuntary process, almost as if the language itself imposed a transformation they could not fully resist. A contrast emerged between participants who reported such personality shifts and those who did not, manifested in their lexical choices: while the former described an unconscious, incontrollable change, as expressed in (13), the latter spontaneously spoke in terms of adjustment and adaptation, as illustrated in (14).

(13) […] это происходит на неосознанном уровне. То есть я разговариваю на этом языке, я автоматически уже тот человек, которым мне предназначено быть.

[…] it happens on an unconscious level. When I speak a language, I automatically become the person I'm supposed to be in that language. (P2, 32:02-32:37).

(14) […] по-шведски я все-таки подстраиваюсь и пытаюсь это сказать или вести себя в соответствии со шведским кодом поведения.

[…] In Swedish I still adapt and try to say things or behave according to the Swedish code of conduct. (P4, 53:36-55:06).

4.2.4. "True self" vs. "Wearing a mask"

Some participants reported feeling more real and natural when speaking Russian, as in (15-16). In (15), P2 associates her personality when using Russian with authenticity and sincerity, in contrast with the case when she uses Swedish.

(15) На русском, я бы сказала, я более какая-то настоящая […]. И мне кажется, что я какая-то более неискренняя, когда говорю по-шведски, вот из-за именно этих любезностей, которые нужно всем говорить.

In Russian, I'd say I'm somehow more real […]. And I feel like I'm somehow less sincere when I speak Swedish, precisely because of all these niceties you're supposed to say to everyone. (P2, 20:58-22:14).

(16) […] я всегда звучу на шведском, как это такая милая кошечка. Ну, я себя [такой] не воспринимаю. […] я воспринимаю себя более такой кошечкой, да, которая с этими, с царапками. А на шведском я всегда звучу так, как это, snälla.

[…] I always sound in Swedish like—like a cute little kitty. I don't perceive myself [in this way]. […] I perceive myself more like a kitty, yes, but with claws. And in Swedish I always sound like, you know, snälla (sweet) (P6, 17:00-17:31).

Other participants also described their experiences when using a "Western" language as "performing" and "wearing a mask". For instance, P8 acknowledged that he occasionally modifies his communication style and behavior consciously in professional contexts, likening it to "pretending" and "playing a role", as in (17).

(17) […] нужно немножко притворяться, […] играть роль […], если я буду делать доклад в русском стиле, меня просто не поймут, я не донесу свою мысль. То есть, чтобы быть более доступным, более понятным, чтобы донести научную суть, которую я хочу донести, я […] притворяюсь, я принимаю такую маску западного поведения.

[…] you have to pretend a bit — play the role, [...] if I gave a talk in a Russian style, people just wouldn't understand me, I wouldn't get my point across. So to be more accessible, to convey the scientific essence I want to convey, I [...] pretend. I adopt a Western behavioral mask (P8, 21:14-23:09).

The "mask" can function as a strategy directed toward a specific audience – the audience at an academic conference, as in (17) – or more broadly toward the Swedish community as a whole. In (18), P5 illustrates this by reporting that she deliberately minimizes herself in Swedish in order to align with perceived cultural norms.

(18) […] я и стараюсь говорить меньше, потому что мне кажется, что меня очень много на русском, меня иногда очень много на английском, поэтому на шведском я стараюсь себя минимизировать максимально, чтобы не отличаться от других. Они очень любят, чтобы ты не отличался.

[...] I try to talk less. Because I feel like I'm too much in Russian, sometimes too much in English. So in Swedish I try to minimize myself as much as possible, to not stand out. They really like it when you don't stand out. (P5, 29:17-32:27).

This example illustrates the distinction participants draw between a public and a private self. Similarly, P4 distinguishes between cultural traits she perceives as positive and those she views as negative. She refers to the former, such as a tendency to compromise, as qualities she deliberately adopts and integrates into her own repertoire of behaviors. In contrast, traits she considers undesirable – such as what she terms a "culture of tattling" – are consciously regulated to prevent their full incorporation into her personality. While she acknowledges being able to enact such behaviors if circumstances require, she refrains from sustaining them.

(19) […] вот это вот пропускать мимо, не через себя, а мимо, это я взяла да, у шведов, то есть это во мне осталось. А например, […] стукачество здесь развито. Такие вещи на меня, например, никогда не перейдут. […] если я с ними [чертами] согласна, я их могу перенять. А если я не согласна, против этого всего, я это могу сделать, просто потому что ситуация обязывает к этому, но я это на себя не возьму, то есть я не буду так поступать или так делать дальше.

[to] let [...] pass by—not through me, but by me—and that I've taken from the Swedes. That's something that's stayed with me. But, for example, [...] here there's a very developed culture of tattling. Those kinds of things, for example, will never rub off on me. [...] if I agree with them [traits], I can adopt them. But if I don't agree, if I'm against all that, I can still do it—just because the situation calls for it—but I won't take it on as mine. I won't keep doing it.. (P4, 55:32-57:52).

The theme of "wearing a mask" when using their second language emerged also in P12's description. As shown in (20), she explained that while her communication style no longer changes, it did in the early stages of learning Swedish. After returning from her first visit to Sweden, she noticed while watching a video of herself. Her friends also remarked that she appeared to be performing, and she later explained that this was a compensatory strategy to make up for limited vocabulary by investing more in prosody and expressiveness. This phase coincided with a period of increased activity on social media, where she frequently posted photos to express her identity and show who she was. As her linguistic competence grew, she became more reserved in sharing her private life.

(20) […] я на видео стала замечать, что мой язык как кукольный какой-то, как будто я вот фильм смотрю и стараюсь копировать эти фильмовые интонации

[…] I started noticing on video that my language was kind of puppet-like, like I was watching a film and trying to copy those cinematic intonations (P12, 19:01-21:36).

4.2.5. Summary

The participants' accounts revealed a wide range of perceived differences when switching languages, including shifts in linguistic and prosodic patterns, engagement in distinct communicative modes, the adoption of performative roles, and the use of "masks" that did not correspond to their "true selves". Most participants described themselves as becoming "more composed," "softened," or "toned down" when speaking their second language, in contrast to experiencing their first language as more "straightforward", "natural" and "sincere". While a few participants characterized these changes as involuntary personality shifts, the majority framed them as conscious adjustments. These findings lay the groundwork for the subsequent analysis, where the reported differences are situated within the levels of the Semiotic Hierarchy, illuminating how linguistic, cultural, and bodily aspects of selfhood are differentially engaged in bilingual experience.

4.3. Levels of experience (RQ2)

RQ2 For those who experience themselves differently, what kind of differences do they report? More specifically: Do they concern specific levels of the Semiotic Hierarchy and if so, which?

This section examines participants' accounts through the lens of the three levels of selfhood, as outlined in Section 2.3. According to the Semiotic Hierarchy, as well as much phenomenological research (e.g., Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008), the bodily level represents the

most basic dimension of selfhood, grounded in sensorimotor interaction with the environment and marked by relative stability. The cultural level reflects the intersubjective dimension of the self, shaped through social experience and characterized by variability. Finally, the linguistic level corresponds to the narrative self, where experiences are articulated, structured, and interpreted through language. The following subsections are organized according to these three levels, in order to highlight how participants' experiences of the above-mentioned differences are located across embodied, cultural, and linguistic dimensions of selfhood.

4.3.1. Core self

Many of the participants' reports point to the coexistence of a stable core self alongside multiple sub-personalities, each associated with a different language, as shown in examples (21-22).

(21) Я это я. […] Такой там стержень торчит, на который все надето, и если что-то убрать, то пирамидка не сложится.

I am who I am. It's like there's this central rod sticking up, with everything threaded onto it, and if you remove something, the whole pyramid falls apart. (P1, 44:13-44:47).

(22) […] я чувствую себя единой. Я знаю, что это я, которая по-разному реагирую. То есть на контекст. То есть я не чувствую, что это реально три разные субличности. Я чувствую, что это я, которая по-разному на контекст реагирую.

[…] I feel whole. I know it's me, just reacting differently. I mean, to context. So I don't feel like it's truly three different sub-personalities. I feel like it's me, reacting differently depending on the context. (P9, 27:01-27:22).

As outlined in Section 2.3.1, phenomenology has shown that the experience of a core sense of self does not concern an isolated or detached self but rather emerges through embodied interactions with the world. Each level of selfhood is characterized by the spontaneity of actions and their sedimentation into habits, with the bodily level providing the foundation upon which higher levels are built. For the participants, these primary habits were formed within a Russian-

speaking environment. Unsurprisingly, this foundational experience is often perceived as "deeper" (6) and "more real", as in (15). For instance, in (23), P8 explicitly refers to his core self, describing his personality as stable and firmly shaped in Russia, regardless of the changes he may undergo later in life.

(23) […] я сформировался как личность в России. И поэтому на каком бы языке ни говорил, как бы я там, как бы меня жизнь не изменила здесь, я всё равно в основе своей остаюсь тем же человеком.

[…] I formed as a person in Russia. So, no matter what language I speak, or how life has changed me here, at my core, I remain the same person. (P8, 31:33-33:00).

4.3.2. Cultural self

This level builds on the bodily foundation by situating self-experience within cultural and intersubjective contexts. Participants' accounts of "adjustment styles" and "modes", as in (6-8) in the previous section, underscore the decisive role of the social environment in shaping their perceived variations. This perspective is consistent with Grosjean's (2013) Complementarity Principle (see Section 2.5), which emphasizes the influence of context on language use. Notably, P6 and P11 described an increased attentiveness to interlocutors and greater sensitivity guided by cultural expectations, in (24) and (25), respectively.

(24) […] отношение к людям меняется. […] Уже я выбираю, с кем и как общаться.[…] мне нужно узнать, какой это человек. Вначале теперь. То есть, раньше мне не нужно было. А теперь мне нужно узнать человека. Поговорить, пообщаться. Понять. То есть, я думаю, что это в Швеции. Так стало.

The attitude toward people changes. […] Now I choose who and how I communicate with.[…] I need to know what kind of person it is now. Before, I didn't have to. And now I need to get to know the person. Talk, interact. Understand. I think that's Sweden. That's how it became. (P6, 17:52-18:24).

(25) […] будто бы как-то ты себе лимит выстраиваешь. Я не уверен, на самом деле, что это может быть с языком только проблема. Может быть, с кем ты говоришь на этом языке. То есть это будет не очень, может быть, привычно для другого человека, да, там англоговорящего или шведскоговорящего, воспринимать вот этот вот стёб какой-то, да, такой, как я мог бы на русском сделать.

[…] it's like I place limits on myself. I'm not even sure that's just about the language — it might also be about who you're speaking to. Like maybe for an English speaker or Swedish speaker, this kind of sarcastic banter wouldn't come across the same way it would in Russian (P11, 19:16-21:41).

Similarly, "wearing a mask" in response to the cultural context, as illustrated in examples (17) and (18) in the previous section, reflects the intersubjective dimension of the self. Participants reported adjusting their communication, as in (11), and behavior, as expressed in (26) to align with perceived social norms thereby orienting themselves to the cultural patterns of the Swedish context:

(26) […] я просто их правила принял. То есть какие-то вещи можно делать, какие-то нельзя; какие-то вещи можно говорить, какие-то нельзя. Естественно, это ограничивает тебя, ты меняешься как человек, да, но это не что-то такое очень-очень важное для тебя как личности. Ты просто понимаешь, что машину надо вот так вести, потому что по-другому тебя не поймут.

[...] I've [just] accepted the rules. Like, some things are allowed, some aren't; some things you can say, others you can't. Naturally, that limits you, and you change as a person, yes—but it's not something that's deeply important for you as a person. You just understand: this is how you have to drive a car, because otherwise people won't understand you. (P8, 35:51-38:27).

4.3.3. Linguistic self

The linguistic level builds upon the bodily and cultural levels, yet extends beyond the language of an individual speaker to encompass individual, historical, and universal dimensions of language, as emphasized by Coşeriu (e.g., 1985) (see Section 2.3.4). This level is reflected in participants' accounts of linguistic and prosodic features illustrated by examples, as shown previously (3-4) as well as in their adjustments to the interlocutor during interaction, as expressed in (27).

(27) […] я немножко по-другому говорю. Что-то я смягчаю. Что-то я произношу так, как человек хочет услышать. Да? Или как принято слышать. Поддакиваю там в чем-то. Там в чем, допустим, в русском я бы сказал, допустим, нет, здесь я просто, чем шведу объяснять, проще сказать: да, да.

[…] I speak a little differently. I tone things down sometimes. I say things in a way that the person wants to hear—or in the way it's expected to be heard. I might agree with something, where in Russian I'd say no—but here, instead of explaining it to a Swede, it's easier to say, "Yes, yes." (P10, 25:36-26:22).

Additional examples concern accent, which several participants identified as the source of insecurity and frustration, particularly in professional contexts, as shown in (28-29).

(28) Как бы хорошо я ни говорила, у меня все время есть акцент, плюс в этом контексте даже если какие-то маленькие ошибки делаю это уже непростительно, потому что это влияет на восприятие меня как профессионала.

No matter how well I speak, I always have an accent, and in that context even small mistakes become unforgivable, because they affect how I'm perceived professionally (P3, 17:34-20:54).

(29) […] социологически в Швеции, наверное, тяжело, потому что у меня есть акцент, какой-то непонятный, на шведском, то есть у меня какая-то смесь английского и русского акцента, и все сразу понимают: а, ну, она не шведка. И все как-то автоматически отстраняются.

[…] socially, in Sweden, it's probably hard, because I have an accent, a kind of unclear one, in Swedish—it's like a mix of English and Russian—and people immediately get that I'm not Swedish. And they kind of automatically distance themselves (P2, 08:34-09:01).

Similarly, Pavlenko (2006) reports examples of some participants who refer to an act of speaking a second language as to "a test and a performance that is observed and judged by others" (Pavlenko, 2006, p. 19) and relate them to the low mastery of language.

However, it is interesting to observe how the attitude towards the same linguistic feature changes depending on language. Example (29) reveals perception of social pressure related to accent. Further, in describing the reaction of other people to her manner of speaking in Russian, the same speaker P2 reports that she used to hear from Russian people that she has a bit of an accent when she uses her first language too. However, she attributes this to a speech defect, refuting to consider it as "an accent". At the same time, she describes her English accent as neutral, considered as such by other people too. Although English is not the first language for most participants, the accent in English bothers them much less than their accent in Swedish.

Interestingly, for many of the participants, English acts as a mediator in a monolingual environment, a kind of island of safety where mistakes are more forgivable and what is unacceptable in Swedish is allowed or at least deserve more leniency. P8 describes the English-speaking contexts as more comfortable and "democratic" compared to Swedish-speaking and even Russian-speaking contexts, as shown in (30).

(30) В англоязычной, когда люди только на английском говорят, я чувствую себя уверенно. […] В шведоязычной среде я все равно еще немножко чувствую себя неуверенно. […] здесь, когда говорят люди по-английски, они немножко допускают отклонение от стандартного поведения […] не так строго судят. А в шведоязычной среде все-таки есть некие нормы поведения. И нужно вот так говорить, а не так. […] А в русскоязычной я опять начинаю себя плохо чувствовать, потому что я уже вижу, что есть люди, которые ну, лучше по-русски говорят.

In English-speaking contexts, where everyone speaks English, I feel confident. […] In Swedish-speaking contexts, I still feel a bit less confident. […] here, when people speak English, they allow a bit more deviation from standard behavior. They don't judge as strictly. But in Swedish-speaking contexts, there are behavioral norms – speak like this, not like that […] In Russian-speaking ones, I'm starting to feel uncomfortable too, because I can see there are people who speak better Russian than I do (P8, 10:16-14:00).

4.3.4. Intersections between levels of selfhood

According to the theory, but also to the present findings, the three levels of selfhood are inherently interconnected and often permeate one another. In practice, participants' accounts demonstrate that it is not always possible to draw a clear boundary between the cultural and linguistic level. According to participants' reports, cultural features are transmitted and internalized through language, often via specific expressions encountered during language acquisition, as stated in (31).

(31) На шведском я стараюсь общаться вот как шведы. Достаточно так лояльно, мягко. В таком ключе, да. Как шведы сами общаются. Допустим, здрасте, пожалуйста, до свидания, будьте добры и всё такое. […] на русском языке я уже выросла в таком повелительном наклонении, то есть все там как бы говорят давай, сделай, сейчас. Никаких пожалуйста никто никогда не говорил, пока росла. Поэтому, да. А в шведском языке, как бы, когда шведский начинал, ну, я его слышала постоянно, то есть он в таком ключе всегда говорится, поэтому эти слова и запоминаются.

In Swedish I try to communicate like Swedes. More tolerant, soft. In that way, yes. Like Swedes talk themselves. Like "hello," "please," "goodbye," "would you be so kind," and so on. […] *I grew up in Russian with this imperative tone—like, people just say "come on," "do it," "now." No one ever said "please" while I was growing up. So, yes. And in Swedish, when I started hearing it all the time, it was always in that tone, so those words got memorized. (P6, 11:17-12:12).*

Adjustment to cultural norms occurs through the assimilation of acquired linguistic patterns and accordingly linguistic norms on all the three language levels. As P3 reported, as in (8) in Section 4.2.2, adjustment strategies aligned to languages lead to transformation of adaptations into values and beliefs, as also highlighted in (32).

(32) Со временем […] ценностные какие-то изменения […] уже въелись, то есть, наверное, использование языка и жизнь в среде повлияли на их изменения. Но я не изменю свое мнение […] потому что я перейду на русский или приеду в Россию. Они уже произошли, те изменения, уже въелись.

Over time [the] value-related changes [have] become ingrained, so probably language use and living in the environment influenced those changes. But I won't change my opinion [...] just because I switch to Russian or go to Russia. Those changes already happened, they've taken root. (P3, 53:09 -53:50).

These changes occur through ongoing social interactions, shared affective experiences, and social approval or disapproval. Such interactions may lead to personality changes either via self-regulation to adapt to social norms or through emotional involvement, which enables the creation of new affective memories in a different cultural and linguistic environment, as shown in (33).

(33) […] мне хотелось ходить в театр и там все понимать. Я помню отлично, когда я дошла до того, что всё, мне уже комфортно, я получаю удовольствие, я туда иду, иду, может быть, с друзьями. И я помню этот момент первый, когда я поняла там какой-то трогательный момент в пьесе и прослезилась. И для меня это был момент эмоциональный, супер важный.

[…] I wanted to go to the theatre and understand everything. I remember very clearly when I got to the point where, that's it, I feel comfortable, I enjoy it, I go there, I go maybe with friends. And I remember that first moment when I understood some touching moment in a play and I teared up. And for me, that was an emotional moment, super important (P3, 21:25 -23:50).

Another example of the intersection between levels is humor. Several participants emphasized the difficulty – if not the impossibility – of transferring their Russian sense of humor

into Swedish, as illustrated in (34).

(34) Вот насчёт языков, кстати, но это еще не только языки, это всё равно, не понимают мое чувство юмора, к сожалению ни на каком языке, ни на английском, тоже не понимают.

Speaking of languages, by the way—but it's not only about language, they still don't understand my sense of humor, unfortunately not in any language, not in English either. (P5, 17:21 -17:59).

Humor emerges both as a personality-related disposition, reflecting one's expressive style, and as a culturally embedded practice shaped by shared norms, conventions, and collective references. While participants often perceive humor as part of their stable self, its actual expression relies heavily on cultural frameworks and linguistic resources, such as wordplay and subtle linguistic cues, thus operating at the intersection of the different levels of the Semiotic Hierarchy.

In addition, the blending of languages and cultures may contribute to a perceived sense of being an outsider, arising from the difficulty of fulfilling the need for belonging and achieving a sense of being at home, as expressed by P5 in (35).

(35) […] я человек без дома, без родины, без ничего. С таким количеством языков, с таким количеством стран, с таким количеством переездов, с таким количеством разных всяких моментов чувствуешь, что ты нигде не принадлежишь, поэтому там ты такой, тут ты сякой. […] ты и шведом никогда не будешь и восточную Европу из себя никогда не изгонишь. Ты вот такой какой-то, странный.

[…] *I am a person without a home, without a homeland, without anything. With so many languages, so many countries, so many moves, so many different situations—you feel like you don't belong anywhere. So you're like this here, and like that there. […] you'll never be Swedish, and you'll never erase Eastern Europe from yourself. You're just this strange kind of person. (P5, 27:21 -29:14).*

4.3.5. Summary

Participants who reported changes in their personality nevertheless described their selves as having a stable, unchanging core, underlying possibly distinct language-specific personalities. To a considerable degree, these could be matched to the basic bodily self and to higher levels of selfhood in the Semiotic Hierarchy. However, clear distinctions between the cultural and linguistic levels were not always possible, given their close interconnections and the overlapping influence of multiple languages and cultures, which suggest the emergence of a multi-layered and complex personality. This "hybrid self" integrates multiple linguistic and cultural identities in a flexible, context-dependent manner. While such hybridity can enhance self-expression and adaptability, it may also generate a sense of only partial belonging, accompanied by feelings of being an outsider in both cultural spheres.

4.4. Factors of change (RQ3)

RQ3 Does the relationship between personality and language change over time, and if so due to what kind of factors? More specifically: To what extent do perceived changes in personality correlate with changes in linguistic or cultural factors in the new environment?

This section examines the factors in the new environment that participants identified as contributing to perceived changes in personality. The accounts presented extend beyond momentary, language-switching experiences of personality shifts, encompassing participants' broader, long-term experiences of living in Sweden.

4.4.1. Language proficiency

Some participants indicated language as a factor of their changes. P1 and P4 reported becoming more confident as their proficiency in Swedish increased, as in (36-37). For P1, as she describes it in (36), improved competence translated into greater comfort in speaking, with confidence arising from the ability to express thoughts freely, and to ensure successful communication. In (37), P4 similarly associated increased proficiency with more appropriate and contextually sensitive reactions in interpersonal exchanges, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings.

(36) Со временем как язык развивался, гораздо комфортнее становилось говорить на шведском, чем, например, на английском […]. Я бы сказала, что уверенность, больше уверенности появилось. Чем свободнее выражаешь свои мысли, тем больше ты уверен в том, что ты их передал правильно и что тебя поняли правильно, что сообщение достигло.

Over time, as my Swedish developed, it definitely became much more comfortable to speak in Swedish [...]. I'd say I feel more confident now. The freer you are in expressing your thoughts, the more confident you are that you've conveyed them properly and that you've been understood correctly—that your message got through. (P1, 35:57-37:04).

(37) Чем больше ты владеешь, тем больше ты понимаешь, тем больше ты более адекватно реагируешь […]. Было даже непонимание с родителями мужа. Потом я уже поняла, что вообще имелось в виду.

The better you know it, the more you understand, the more appropriately you react [...]. There was even misunderstanding with my husband's parents. Later I understood what they actually meant. (P4, 43:52-45:15).

Similarly, P6 stated that over time she became more decisive in English, attributing this shift to her increased language proficiency, which boosted her confidence. She explained that she is able to be "tougher" and more authentically herself in English, as illustrated in (38).

(38) […] возможно, уже сейчас на английском тоже [я становлюсь] более такая решительная. [Раньше] сам язык, ну, не так хорошо знала, наверное.

[...] maybe now in English too [I become] more decisive. I probably didn't know the language as well back then (P6, 16:11 -16:31).

Interestingly, P12 – who reported that once she used to feel like a different person in Swedish and "wore a mask", as illustrated in (20) (see Section 4.2.4) – stated that this sensation diminished as her Swedish vocabulary expanded, as expressed in (39).

(39) Потом несколько таких недель прошло, и все, и уже полился шведский. Но всё равно, как бы все это было связано с каким-то фасадом поначалу. Из-за недостатка, я думаю, из-за недостатка выражений, когда ты можешь как-то себя обрисовать.

Then a few weeks passed, and that's it—Swedish started to flow. But still, all of it was connected to some kind of façade at first. Because of the lack of expression, I think—because you can't describe yourself well. (P12, 19:01 -21:36).

These accounts align with research indicating that linguistic proficiency can influence self-perceived personality expression (Pavlenko, 2006). As communicative competence grows, speakers may experience an increase in assertiveness, self-assurance, and willingness to engage in interactions, traits often interpreted as markers of confidence.

4.4.2. Social environment

Most of the participants reported changes in personality over time that they linked to Swedish society, as in (40-42). These personality traits are often associated by participants with culturally specific Swedish characteristics, describing Swedes as soft, calm, unobtrusive, and prone to compromise.   This situates their experiences at the cultural level of the Semiotic Hierarchy.

(40) Говорят, что я стала какая-то более спокойная, возможно. Более толерантная, возможно. Ну, не то, что толерантная, но просто уже люди когда говорят такие контроверсиальные вещи, то я как-то пугаюсь.

They say I've become somehow calmer, maybe. More tolerant, perhaps. Well, not tolerant exactly—but when people say controversial things, I kind of get startled now. (P2, 34:49-35:58).

(41) Ну, бывает, говорят, что вот спокойнее стала. […] То есть, некоторые друзья считают, что я совсем стала спокойная. А некоторые говорят, нет, мне кажется, ты такая же весёлая, такая же энергичная.

Well, sometimes they say I've become calmer. […] Some friends think I've become completely calm. And others say, no, I think you're just as cheerful, just as energetic. (P6, 18:33-18:53).

(42) Влияние среды, наверное. Потому что шведы, они такие достаточно мягкие сами по себе.

Maybe it's the influence of the environment. Because Swedes themselves are quite soft. *(P9, 16:11-16:36).*

These findings also align with the findings of Ramírez-Esparza et al. (2006), who reported an increase in traits consistent with specific cultural norms in their participants, while their relative trait rankings remained stable. In the participants' accounts, personality changes were described primarily in terms of degree – "calmer," "more tolerant" reflecting both continuity and variation.

Some participants reported deliberately adopting Swedish cultural traits such as a tendency to compromise, as expressed in (43-44). Such a deliberate adaptation aligns with previous research on personality that states that traits may be malleable through self-regulated behaviour (Jayawickreme & Zachry, 2020).

(43) […] раньше я могла очень долго выяснять отношения, потому что в Азербайджане это прямо вот я прав, я прав, я прав, вот это вот, вот это я должна и там и ругаться и выяснять отношения или что-то. Шведы как-то более спокойные в этом плане, и мне кажется, я […] все равно могу выругаться, но как-то основное вот это вот пропускать мимо, не через себя, а мимо, это я взяла да, у шведов, то есть это во мне осталось.

[…] *before, I could drag out a conflict for a long time, because in Azerbaijan it's like: "I'm right, I'm right, I'm right," and you have to argue, and fight, and resolve things. Swedes are calmer in that sense, and I think [...] I can still argue, but now I let the main part pass by—not through me, but by me—and that I've taken from the Swedes. That's something that's stayed with me (P1, 35:57-37:04).*

(44) Более непрямой стиль коммуникации, потому что русский – это очень прямой стиль коммуникации […]. Здесь это культура избежания конфликта, это культура консенсуса, что сначала меня очень бесило, а теперь я очень много из этого заимствую в общении и профессиональном, и личном.

A more indirect style of communication, because Russian is a very direct style of communication [...]. Here it's a culture of conflict avoidance, a culture of consensus, which at first really irritated me, but now I've adopted a lot of it in both professional and personal communication. (P3, 46:26-51:18).

In addition, the expansion of experience through an increasing range of contexts and interlocutors within the same language may gradually blur the boundaries between language-specific personalities, fostering a more integrated sense of self or "blended" personality, as expressed in (45).

(45) […] в последнее время это [различие между личностями] меняется, потому что я завела много интернациональных друзей, которые разговаривают по-шведски. То есть у меня все как-то смешивается, но все-таки русский остается довольно четкий, потому что я на нем общаюсь только с одинаковыми людьми. Мне кажется, что английская и шведская личность смешиваются.

[...] it [the difference between personalities] is changing lately, because I've made many international friends who speak Swedish. So everything's kind of blending, but Russian still remains pretty distinct, because I only speak it with the same people. I feel like my English and Swedish personalities are blending (P2, 32:02-32:37).

4.4.3. Age-related changes

Some participants – for instance, P7 and P10 – suggested that perceived changes in their personality may be attributed to age-related development more generally, as stated in (46-47). This interpretation finds some support in research on personality stability and change across the lifespan. For instance, data on the Big Five personality traits indicate that neuroticism tends to increase during adolescence, decline throughout adulthood, and rise again in older age (Atherton, Donnellan, & Robins, 2020).

(46) […] неважно, где ты живешь, как бы ты по жизни меняешься. И это правильно, потому что многие вещи, как бы нужно себя самому воспитывать и как бы стараться избавляться от своих недостатков характера и так далее. То есть я это не связываю совершенно с пребыванием в другой стране.

[...] no matter where you live, you change over time. And that's right. Because many things — you need to educate yourself, and try to get rid of your character flaws, and so on. So I don't link it specifically to being in a different country (P7, 27:13-27:38).

(47) […] естественно, на меня повлияла Швеция, конечно, я стал намного терпимее относиться ко многим вещам Научился больше слушать, то есть пропала категоричность какая-то там в суждениях. Но это может быть и возраст тоже. Поэтому, может быть, это и в Беларуси было бы так же.

[…] *of course Sweden has influenced me, naturally. I've become much more tolerant about many things. I've learned to listen more, lost some of that categorical edge in my judgments. But maybe that's just age too. So maybe it would have been the same in Belarus (P10, 30:56-31:37).*

Furthermore, P8 acknowledged that these changes may also be influenced by interpersonal relationships, suggesting that social context and emotional bonds may play a significant role alongside developmental factors, as in (48).

(48) […] брак – это вообще такая очень, это работа тяжелая. То есть там два человека должны хорошо друг друга понимать и постоянно нужно находить какие-то компромиссы. То есть ты меняешься, конечно, как человек […] И это, с чем это связано? Это связано со шведской средой? Или это связано с браком? Или это связано с твоим естественным взрослением? Непонятно.

[…] *marriage is in itself, how to put it, a lot of work. Two people have to really understand each other, and you constantly have to find compromises. So, of course, you change as a person. […] And is that because of Sweden? Or because of marriage? Or just natural maturing? I don't know. (P8, 35:51-38:27).*

This example illustrates how diverse factors – cultural and linguistic environment, social interaction, and age – intertwine, reflecting the intersections between levels of selfhood (see Section 4.3.4). Such blending highlights the dynamic, context-sensitive nature of bilingual selfhood, where experiences cannot be fully explained by a single level alone. Instead, they point to an integrative process in which multiple dimensions of the self continuously interact and co-constitute one another.

4.4.4. Summary

Regarding the extent to which participants perceived changes in personality as related to linguistic and cultural factors in the new environment, responses varied and were sometimes contrasting. Several participants associated increased confidence over time with improved linguistic proficiency, which contributed to blurring the distinction between personalities. Others reported becoming calmer, more tolerant, and more inclined to avoid conflict as a result of the influence of the social environment, while some attributed these changes to age-related

developments. Taken together, these accounts point to an integrative process in which multiple dimensions of the self continuously interact and co-constitute one another.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

In this thesis, with the help of concepts and methods from cognitive semiotics and phenomenology, I have examined the relationship between language and personality, from a conceptual point of view, and have empirically investigated the perceived differences reported by Russian-Swedish bilingual individuals residing in Sweden. Adopting the methodological principle of the conceptual-empirical loop, described in Chapters 1 and 2, the goal has been to provide an integrated and veridical account of the phenomena under scrutiny.

In this chapter, I first summarize the findings by answering the three research questions, in the elaborated forms that appear at the end of Chapter 3, and as they structure the presentation in Chapter 4. Then I address some limitations of the study and suggest possible directions for further research in Section 5.2. Finally, I return to the conceptual side of the conceptual-empirical loop in Section 5.3, stressing the major theoretical value of the study.

5.1. Answering the research questions

The first research question (RQ1) aimed to investigate the extent of perceived personality differences among Russian-Swedish bilingual speakers when using their first and second languages. While most participants explicitly denied undergoing personality change, their accounts revealed a rich spectrum of perceived differences related to their "selves" when navigating between their first and second languages.

The analysis identified four central themes: (a) shifts in linguistic and prosodic patterns that affected how the bilinguals expressed themselves; (b) engagement in distinct communicative modes, which influenced how they could be experienced by others; (c) experiences of personality-shifts, at least in certain contexts; and (d) the use of their second languages as "masks", covering up who they truly were. These themes illustrate the complexity of bilingual experience, which cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy of change versus stability. Notably, themes (a), (b), and (d) were primarily characterized in the participants' accounts as forms of "conscious", i.e. reflective adjustments, rather than as embodying two distinct personalities. Across these four domains, the reported shifts were consistently aligned with Swedish linguistic, prosodic, and culturally embedded personality patterns.

Addressing the second research question (RQ2), participants who reported differences described them in ways that align with the three levels of the version of the Semiotic Hierarchy adopted in previous research (Pielli & Zlatev, 2020), and for present purposes. At a basic level, participants anchored their sense of a stable core self, rooted in early experiences within a Russian-speaking environment. At a general (not specifically linguistic) cultural level, they described adopting adjustment strategies – such as toning down straightforwardness, softening conflictual tendencies, or using a "mask" – that reflected sensitivity to Swedish norms of interaction. At a specifically linguistic level, participants reported differences in prosody, lexical and syntactical choice, as well as feelings of insecurity related to accent. Importantly, these levels were not experienced in isolation but frequently intersected. Humor, for instance, emerged as a personality disposition, a cultural practice, and linguistically mediated performance, exemplifying the interwoven nature of the levels of meaning-making within the Semiotic Hierarchy.

With regard to the third research question (RQ3), the findings suggest three main factors guiding differences experienced by participants over time: (a) language proficiency; (b) social environment; and (c) age-related changes. Several participants associated increased confidence and reduced perception of difference with improved linguistic proficiency, which blurred boundaries between language-specific personalities. Others emphasized the influence of long-term immersion in Swedish society, describing themselves as calmer, more tolerant, and less prone to conflict in ways they attributed to cultural adaptation. Still others linked such changes to age and life stage, highlighting the importance of developmental factors. These different explanations for personality changes point to the multifactorial and integrative nature of bilingual selfhood, in which linguistic, cultural, and personal dimensions continuously interact and co-constitute one another.

5.2. Limitations of the study and further research

While the cognitive-semiotic and phenomenological method followed supports the validity of these findings, several limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. First, the participant group was relatively homogeneous in terms of educational background, with all participants being highly educated, see Table 3. This may have influenced both their linguistic awareness and their ability to reflect on subtle aspects of self-perception, which may not be

typical of a more general population of Russian-Swedish bilinguals in Sweden, and even less to bilinguals in general.

Second, the participants differed in their levels of linguistic proficiency in Swedish, which complicates the interpretation of whether perceived differences reflect language-specific influences or varying stages of second-language acquisition. Relatedly, the frequent description of feeling "toned down" in Swedish may, as suggested by Pavlenko (2006), stem from the use of a foreign language more generally rather than from Swedish cultural particularities per se. To address this concern, future research could include comparative studies with bilinguals in different host cultures, such as Italian, and in predominantly monolingual contexts, in order to disentangle language-specific effects from more universal features of bilingualism and second-language use.

5.3. Returning to the conceptual side of the loop

Despite the reservations made above, the study findings provide meaningful insights into the conceptual questions from which it began: *What is bilingualism? What is personality? How do they interrelate?* The methodological principle of the conceptual-empirical loop (Zlatev, 2015) presupposes that research should not stop at the level of empirical description, but that the empirical insights should feed back into the conceptual side, creating a spiral of increasing refinement.

What is bilingualism?

The experiences of Russian-Swedish bilinguals revealed that bilingualism is not a mere command of two or more languages, but rather a mode of being-in-the-world encompassing communicative strategies, social and cultural interaction and embodied dispositions. Bilingualism is a lived dynamic phenomenon: it is sedimented in past linguistic and cultural experiences while at the same time open to spontaneity in generating new semiotic acts. This perspective underscores the insufficiency of static or purely quantitative measures of bilingualism to capture the full spectrum of what it means to live with two, or more, cultures and languages.

What is personality?

On the one hand, many participants anchored themselves in the idea of a stable, unchanging "core self" rooted in their Russian-speaking upbringing. On the other hand, they reported adopting new communicative styles, emotional responses, and interactional strategies aligned with Swedish cultural and linguistic patterns. For this reason, and given the limitations of trait-based psychology, as described in Section 2.4, the more comprehensive term *selfhood* was adopted. The study supported a conception of selfhood as layered and dynamic, encompassing bodily, cultural, and linguistic levels, and characterized both by stability and malleability. The findings suggest that even those bilinguals who explicitly denied experiencing personality change nevertheless reported subtle shifts in prosody, communicative strategies, or cultural alignment when speaking Swedish. In other words, the absence of *reported* difference does not necessarily imply the absence of *lived* difference. Rather, it reflects differences in how individuals conceptualize and articulate their experiences of selfhood.

How do bilingualism and selfhood interrelate?

The interrelation between bilingualism and personality cannot be reduced to a binary distinction of change vs. stability. Rather, the empirical findings point to a process of continuous negotiation across different levels of selfhood, where linguistic, cultural, and bodily dimensions intersect in complex ways. This interplay gives rise to "hybrid selves", in which cultural involvement and linguistic updating are not fully aligned. Such hybridity enriches the bilingual experience, yet it also entails a sense of partial belonging and incomplete fit. In this light, the relationship between bilingualism and selfhood appears co-constitutive: body, language, and culture continuously shape and transform one another in the lived experience of bilingual individuals.

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Appendixes

Appendix A - Interview guide

Russian version

Приветствие и благодарность

- Спасибо за согласие принять участие в исследовании.

Общая информация об исследовании

Целью настоящего исследования является изучение, как люди воспринимают себя, когда используют разные языки. Пособие для проведения интервью поделено на блоки А-Е. Порядок блоков сохраняется на протяжении всего интервью, но порядок вопросов в каждом из них, за исключением блока А, может меняться, либо некоторые вопросы могут опускаться, например, если участник предоставил исчерпывающую или противоречащую информацию в одном из предыдущих блоков.

- Я провожу исследование, посвященное тому, как люди воспринимают и описывают себя, чувствуют ли они себя такими же или другими, когда говорят на разных языках. Я задам вам вопросы о вашем опыте, мыслях, отношении и ситуациях, в которых вы используете разные языки в повседневном обиходе. Если вы почувствуете себя некомфортно, отвечая на тот или иной вопрос, дайте, пожалуйста, мне знать, и мы перейдем к следующему вопросу. Интервью займет около 45-60 минут и будет записано на аудио-носитель, чтобы упростить его последующий анализ.

Подписание формы согласия

- Прежде чем мы начнем, ознакомьтесь, пожалуйста, и подпишите форму согласия. Если по какой-либо причине, вы почувствуете, что хотите остановить интервью и выйти из участия в исследовании, вы можете сделать это в любой момент. Если что-нибудь непонятно, я буду рада разъяснить, либо я готова ответить на любые вопросы относительно исследования в конце.

Часть А: фактическая информация

Пример: *Для начала разрешите мне собрать некоторые данные о вас, расскажите немного о себе. Откуда вы родом? Где вы родились и выросли?*

- Откуда вы? На каких языках говорят/говорили в вашей семье?

- Сколько вам лет?

- Какое у вас образование?

- Чем вы занимаетесь?

- Как давно вы живете в стране Lx?

Часть B: первая встреча и билингвизм:

1. На каких языках вы говорите и как хорошо вы владеете каждым из этих языков?

2. Когда и как вы изучали иностранные языки?

3. С какими чувствами было связано для вас изучение этих языков? Было ли изучение языков необходимостью или удовольствием? Как вы относитесь к этим языкам сейчас?

   Наводящий вопрос:

   - *Если вы начали изучать язык после переезда в страну:*

   - *Как вы чувствовали себя, когда слышали, как люди вокруг говорят на Lx?*

   - *Как вы чувствуете себя сейчас?*

4. Чувствуете ли вы себя свободно и естественно, когда говорите на Lx/на других языках?

5. Так же ли вам легко выразить себя на Lx, как на русском?

6. Есть ли у вас ощущение, что владение несколькими языками дает вам преимущество или чем-то мешает? Помогает ли оно вам сближаться с людьми?

Часть C: контексты для разных языков

1. Когда вы используете свой родной язык и когда второй или третий языки в течение обычного дня? С кем вы обычно на них говорите?

   Наводящий вопрос:

   - *Общаетесь ли вы чаще с людьми, говорящими на одном языке или на нескольких?*

   - *С кем вы чувствуете себя комфортнее?*

2. Как вы думаете, как люди воспринимают вас, когда вы говорите с ними на русском? Они когда-нибудь говорили об этом?

3. Как вы думаете, как люди воспринимают вас, когда вы говорите с ними на шведском? Они когда-нибудь говорили об этом?

4. Предпочитаете ли вы использовать какой-либо язык в определенной ситуации?

   Наводящий вопрос:

- *На каком языке вы общаетесь с коллегами, друзьями, с семьей?*

- *На каком языке вы предпочитаете читать, смотреть фильмы, общаться в соцсетях?*

5. Есть ли у вас особое чувство, что в определенном контексте подходит именно этот язык?

    Наводящий вопрос:

    - *На каком языке вы бы предпочли говорить в романтической ситуации? Когда злитесь?*

    - *Такое же ли эмоциональное действие оказывают на вас слова и выражения на Lx, как на русском (крепкие выражения, выражения любви, "детские" слова, уменьшительно-ласкательные формы, ошибки, акцент)?*

Часть D: язык и восприятие себя

1. Находите ли вы, что ваша манера говорить/стиль общения меняется при переходе на другой язык? Если да, то как?

    Наводящий вопрос:

    - *Каков ваш коммуникативный стиль, когда вы общаетесь с другими людьми на русском/Lx?*

    - *Вы общаетесь спонтанно или раздумываете, прежде чем что-то сказать? Много ли вы жестикулируете на каждом языке?*

2. Есть ли какая-то особая черта, присущая вам, когда вы говорите на русском, и пытались ли вы когда-либо перенести ее на Lx и наоборот?

    Наводящий вопрос:

    - *пытались ли вы перенести на другой язык какую-то черту, которая помогла бы собеседнику лучше понять вас или ваше отношение к чему-либо? (Например, сленг, юмор, словообразование, употребление поговорок)*

3. Часто ли вы используете обороты или выражения из одного языка в другом? Из какого языка они чаще приходят? Это происходит спонтанно или обдуманно? Как вы при этом себя чувствуете?

4. Является ли Lx более/менее или таким же эмоциональным или точным для выражения мыслей, как русский?

Часть E: переключение в восприятии себя

1. Чувствуете ли вы себя как-то иначе, когда говорите на разных языках?

   Наводящий вопрос:

   • *Происходит ли это часто? Иногда?*

   • *Происходило ли это раньше?*

   • *Можете ли вы описать, в каких ситуациях это происходило?*

2. Изменилось ли это ощущение или его частота в течение вашей жизни в стране Lx?

3. Находите ли вы, что общение на Lx и/или жизнь в стране Lx вас изменили?

   - **Если да**, то как? Как вы относитесь к этим изменениям? Влияют ли они на ваше ощущение себя?

   - **Если нет**, то чувствуете ли вы, что вы тот же человек, как до опыта в Lx?

4. Есть ли у вас чувство, что одна часть вас по какой-то причине важнее, чем другая или чувствовали ли вы так себя раньше?

5. Есть ли у вас иногда ощущение, что одна часть вас доминирует над другой?

   - **Если да**, то в каких ситуациях?

   - **Если нет**, то чувствуете ли вы себя единым, вне зависимости от того, на каком языке говорите?

6. Находятся ли ваши языки и ощущения себя как части русской и Lx культур в балансе между собой?

Часть F: русские обозначения внутренней части себя

1. Не могли бы вы объяснить, что подразумеваете под словами, которые использовали раньше?

2. Чем они различаются между собой?

3. Как они связаны с языком?

Заключительный вопрос

• Есть ли что-то еще, что вы хотели бы добавить? Что-нибудь, что я не затронула?

English version

Greeting and Acknowledgment

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

General Information about the Study

The aim of this study is to explore how people experience themselves when using different languages. The interview guide is divided into sections A–F. The order of the sections remains the same throughout the interview, but the order of questions within each section (except for Section A) may be reordered or omitted—for example, if the participant has already provided comprehensive information in a previous section.

I am conducting research on how people perceive and describe themselves, and whether they feel the same or different when speaking different languages. I will ask you questions about your experiences, thoughts, attitudes, and situations in which you use different languages in everyday life. If you feel uncomfortable answering a particular question, please let me know, and we will move on to the next one. The interview will last approximately 45–60 minutes and will be audio-recorded to facilitate subsequent analysis.

Consent Form Signing

Before we begin, please review and sign the consent form. If, for any reason, you decide to stop the interview and withdraw from the study, you may do so at any time. If something is unclear, I would be happy to explain, else I can answer any questions you may have regarding the study at the end.

Part A: Factual Information

Example: *To begin, let me gather some basic information about you. Could you tell me a bit about yourself? Where were you born and raised?*

- Where are you from? What languages are/were spoken in your family?
- How old are you?
- What is your educational background?
- What do you do for a living?
- How long have you been living in Lx country?

Part B: First Encounter and Bilingualism

1. What languages do you speak, and how well do you speak each of them?

2. When and how did you learn languages you speak?

3. How did you feel about studying languages? Was language learning something you had to do or was it a pleasure for you? How do you feel about these languages now?

    Prompt:

    - *If you started learning the language after arriving in the Lx country:*

    - *How did you feel hearing people around you speaking Lx?*

    - *How do you feel about it now?*

4. Do you feel comfortable and natural when speaking Lx/other languages?

5. Is it just as easy for you to express yourself in Lx as in Russian?

6. Do you feel that knowing multiple languages gives you an advantage or creates difficulties? Does it help you feel more connected to people?

Part C: Contexts for Different Languages

1. When do you use your Russian, and when do you use your second or third languages in a typical day? Who do you usually speak them with?

    Prompt:

    - *Do you tend to communicate more often with people who speak one language or multiple languages?*

    - *With whom do you feel more comfortable?*

2. How do you think people perceive you when you speak Russian? Have they ever commented on you?

3. How do you think people perceive you when you speak Lx? Have they ever commented on you?

4. Do you prefer using a particular language in some situations?

    Prompt:

    - *What language do you speak with your colleagues? With your friends? With your family?*

    - *In which language do you prefer to read, watch movies, or interact on social media?*

5. Do you feel that a specific language fits a particular context better?

    Prompt:

- *In which language would you prefer to speak in a romantic situation? When you're angry?*
- *Do words and expressions in Lx have the same emotional impact on you as they do in Russian (e.g., strong language, expressions of love, "childish" words, diminutives, mistakes, accents)?*

Part D: Language and Self-perception

1. Do you find that your speaking style/communication style changes when you switch languages? If so, how?

   Prompt:

   - *What is your communication style when speaking Russian/Lx?*
   - *Do you speak spontaneously, or do you think before you say something? Do you gesture a lot in each language?*

2. Is there a particular trait that is characteristic of you when you speak Russian? Have you ever tried to transfer it to Lx and vice versa?

   Prompt:

   - *Have you tried bringing a particular characteristic into another language to help your conversation partner better understand you or your attitude towards something? (e.g., slang, humour, word formation, use of proverbs)*

3. Do you often use words or phrases from one language while speaking another? Which language do these expressions come from most often? Does this happen spontaneously or deliberately? How do you feel about it?

4. Is Lx more, less, or just as emotional and precise as Russian for expressing your thoughts?

Part E: Shifts to Self-perception

1. Do you feel differently when speaking different languages?

   Prompt:

   - *Does this happen often? Occasionally?*
   - *Has it happened in the past?*
   - *Can you describe situations in which this has occurred?*

2. Has this feeling or its frequency changed over time while living in Lx?

3. Do you find that speaking Lx and/or living in Lx has changed you?

- **If yes:** How? How do you feel about these changes? Do they affect your self-perception?

- **If no:** Do you feel like the same person as before your experience in Lx?

4. Do you feel that one part of you is more important than another, or have you ever felt this way in the past?

5. Do you ever feel that one part of you dominates the other?

   - **If yes:** In what situations does this occur?

   - **If no:** Do you feel you are who you are, regardless of which language you are speaking?

6. Are your languages and your sense of belonging to Russian and Lx cultures balanced?

Part F: Specific Russian Terms for the "Inner"

1. Could you explain what you meant by terms that you used before?

2. How are they different?

3. How are they related to language?

Final Question

• Is there anything else you would like to add? Anything I haven't covered?

Appendix B - Participant recruitment

Русскоговорящие в Швеции/Rysktalande i Sverige
Strega Del Vento · 3 g · 🌐

Уважаемые "сообщники",
Прошу вашей помощи и надеюсь, что мое объявление не противоречит правилам сообщества.
В рамках моей выпускной магистерской дипломной работы по лингвистике в Лундском университете я ищу участников, которые хотели бы рассказать о своем опыте повседневного использования двух и более языков и о том, как влияет владение разными языками на их восприятие себя.
Условия участия:
- Вам 18 лет или старше;
- Вашим родным языком является русский;
- Вы живете в Швеции 7 лет или более (чем больше, тем лучше) и свободно владеете шведским языком;
- Вы живете в Лунде, Мальмё или ближайших окрестностях.
Интервью продолжительностью около 45–60 минут будет проходить в Лундском университете или в другой удобной для вас тихой локации. Ваше участие останется анонимным.
В качестве благодарности за участие вы получите билет в сеть Filmstaden.
Если вас заинтересовало предложение или вы хотели бы узнать больше, свяжитесь со мной по электронной почте natalia.basalaeva@gmail.com
Заранее спасибо за возможный интерес, совет или репост.
Наталья

👍 2   Commenti: 3

👍 Mi piace   💬 Commenta   ⊙ Invia   ↪ Condividi

English version

Dear community members,

I kindly ask for your help and hope that my announcement does not violate the rules of the group.

As part of my master's thesis in linguistics at Lund University, I am looking for participants who would like to share their experiences of using two or more languages in everyday life and how speaking different languages affects their self-perception.

Participation requirements:

- You are 18 years or older;

- Your native language is Russian;

- You have lived in Sweden for 7 years or more (the longer, the better) and speak Swedish fluently;

- You live in Lund, Malmö, or the surrounding areas.

The interview will last about 45–60 minutes and will take place at Lund University or another quiet location convenient for you. Your participation will remain anonymous.

As a token of gratitude for your time, you will receive a ticket to the Filmstaden cinema chain.

If you are interested in participating or would like to learn more, please contact me by email: natalia.basalaeva@gmail.com.

Thank you in advance for your possible interest, advice, or repost.
Natalia

Appendix C - Consent form

Russian version

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Письменное согласие

Информированное согласие на участие в исследовании восприятия себя среди билингвов

1.	**Предпосылки и цель**	Исследование является частью магистерской диссертации по когнитивной семиотике на факультете гуманитарных наук и теологии Лундского университета под научным руководством проф. Йордана Златева и Александры Муратиду. Его цель – изучить, как билингвы воспринимают себя, говоря на разных языках.
2.	**Исследование**	С этой целью будет проведено интервью, в ходе которого вы поделитесь своим опытом, мыслями, отношением и ситуациями в которых вы используете разные языки в повседневной жизни. Мы не собираем никакую информацию, касающуюся политических взглядов, религиозных убеждений, сексуальной ориентации или других чувствительных тем.
3.	**Хранение и обработка данных**	Интервью будет записано на аудио-носитель и расшифровано для последующего анализа, цитирование отдельных фрагментов может быть включено в дипломную работу. Аудио-материалы не будут передаваться третьим лицам и будут храниться на внешнем жестком диске не подключенном к интернету. Все данные будут анонимизированцы в отчете для обеспечения вашей конфиденциальности.
4.	**Добровольное участие и вознаграждение**	Участие является добровольным, и вы имеете право прекратить участие без объяснения причин. В качестве вознаграждения за участие вы получите билет в кинотеатр Filmstaden (или подарочный онлайн сертификат на 10€ для тех, кто не проживает в Швеции). Кроме того, после завершения исследования у вас будет возможность ознакомиться с финальной версией диссертации на сайте: https://www.sol.lu.se/en/semiotik/student-papers/.
5.	**Ответственные лица**	Магистрант: Наталья Басалаева Whatsapp: +39 340 093 6814, email: natalia.basalaeva@gmail.com Научные руководители: Jordan Zlatev, email: jordan.zlatev@ling.lu.se Alexandra Mouratidou, email: alexandra.mouratidou@semiotik.lu.se

Я подтверждаю своей подписью, что ознакомился(-лась) с информацией об исследовании и даю свое согласие на участие.
Форма согласия составлена в двух экземлярах: один для меня, другой для ответственного лица.

Дата, место: _____

Подпись/расшифровка подписи: _____

English version

Språk- och litteraturcentrum (SOL)
Finngatan 1
223 62 Lund, Sverige

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Consent form

Informed consent to participate in a study on personality in bilingualism

1. **Background and purpose**

The study is a part of a master's thesis in cognitive semiotics at faculties of Humanities and Theology, at Lund University, supervised by Prof. Jordan Zlatev and Alexandra Mouratidou. The purpose is to explore how bilingual speakers experience themselves when they use different languages.

2. **The study**

For this reason, you will be interviewed about your experiences, thoughts, attitudes, and contexts in which you use your respective languages in day-to-day life. No information related to political opinions, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or any other sensitive topics will be collected.

3. **Handling and storing the data**

The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis, and excerpts may be included as quotes in the thesis. The audio material will not be shared with third parties but will be kept on an external hard drive not connected to the internet. All data will be anonymized in the report to guarantee your privacy.

4. **Voluntary participation and compensation**

Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to cease participation without needing to provide a reason. As compensation for your participation, you will receive a cinema voucher for Filmstaden (or 10 € online gift voucher for those not residing in Sweden). Additionally, upon completion of the study, you can access the final thesis on https://www.sol.lu.se/en/semiotik/student-papers/.

5. **Responsible persons**

Researcher: Natalia Basalaeva
Whatsapp: +39 340 093 6814, email: natalia.basalaeva@gmail.com

Supervisors:
Jordan Zlatev, email: jordan.zlatev@ling.lu.se
Alexandra Mouratidou, email: alexandra.mouratidou@semiotik.lu.se

I confirm by my signature that I have read the information about the study and that I consent to participate.
The form is made in two copies, one for me, and one for the responsible person.

Date, Place: _____

Signature/clarification of signature: _____