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Linguistic Competence and Bicultural Identity: Mutually (Re)enforcing or Compensatory Mechanisms for Acculturation?

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Abstract

The article describes a cross-cultural study comparing bicultural identity and bilingualism of first-generation Poles and high school students in the Rhône Alpes Region (France), high school students in Brussels (Belgium) as well as Polish university students of French language and culture in Poland. The study results portray the contrast between Polish students and three other groups acculturating abroad so that French identity appears stronger than Polish among the university students, and Polish identity stronger than French among the migrants. Secondly, acculturative context (home vs host country) is a moderator between Polish-French bilingualism and bicultural identity. Results are discussed in the context of studies on idealized identity, nostalgia and fluency in the second language being perceived as cultural capital.

Keyword: cultural identity, acculturation, language, Polish, French

Linguistic Competence and Bicultural Identity: Mutually (Re)enforcing or Compensatory Mechanisms for Acculturation?

A number of studies have provided evidence for the relation between the language(s) used on a daily basis by bilinguals and bilingual cultural identity (Grosjean, 2010, 2015; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Hoffman, 1989; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Phinney, 2003; Shaules, 2019; Wierzbicka, 1999). This use is combined with the adoption of, *inter alia*, reasoning styles, systems of meaning, social norms of behavior and manners of expressing feelings associated with the given language. Thus, from the acculturative standpoint, one of the fundamental research problems concerns the relation between language and cultural identity based on values: To what extent is the use of a language a determinant of human values, identities or cognition?

Kmiotek et al., (2018) assessed value-based cultural identity together with language proficiency to explore the relation between two components of biculturalism among Polish migrants in France and Belgium and students learning French at a Polish university. The study revealed a negative correlation between bilingualism (L1-Polish, L2-French) and the integrated bicultural identity index (see also Kmiotek & Boski, 2017). These results stand at variance with Schumann's (1986) acculturation model for second language acquisition, predicting that learners will acquire the target language to the degree they acculturate to the target language group (see also Ricento, 2005).

In the present article, we extend the previous studies by analyzing the data from additional study samples. We explore a research question regarding the direction of the relation between language and value-based identity. We ask how second language performance is related to bicultural identity. Secondly, we ask if value-based identity is formed on the basis of a language and whether cultural values facilitate the acquisition of language, especially a second language.

Biculturalism and Acculturation

A thorough analysis of the literature on the subject of migration and acculturation psychology leads to the conclusion that there is more than one definition of biculturalism (Chen, 2015; Chen et al., 2008; Grosjean, 2015; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; LaFromboise et al., 1993; Liebkind et al., 2016; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Phinney, 2003).

Based on a thorough review of the literature, Boski (2008) proposed a typology of five distinct levels of psychological regulation (integration); this gradability being used to determine the individual's level of biculturalism. Boski describes his model of biculturalism in terms of a fusion of two cultural systems. In his view, biculturalism is the result of combining cultural scripts and values typical of both cultures, creating a new quality, which

encompasses the synthesis of cultural norms from two groups into one behavioral repertoire (see Figure 1).

Not far from the fusion model is the bicultural competence and frame switching approach by Benet-Martínez et al. (2002). The bicultural identity integration model stresses the importance of acquiring the preferable cultural competences relative to two cultural orientations. Such acquisition may manifest itself in frame switching in terms of cognitive functioning, perception, and communicative and linguistic competencies. An ability to switch between two cultures is a way of responding adequately to situational demands. This mechanism comes in handy in daily life; it helps the bicultural person fulfill his or her multiple social roles and negotiate the hyphenated identity (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). In parallel, the use of two languages consecutively may influence the behavior of a bilingual person to fully reflect that individual's double consciousness or simultaneous awareness (Bois, 2007; see also: Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007; Phinney, 2003).

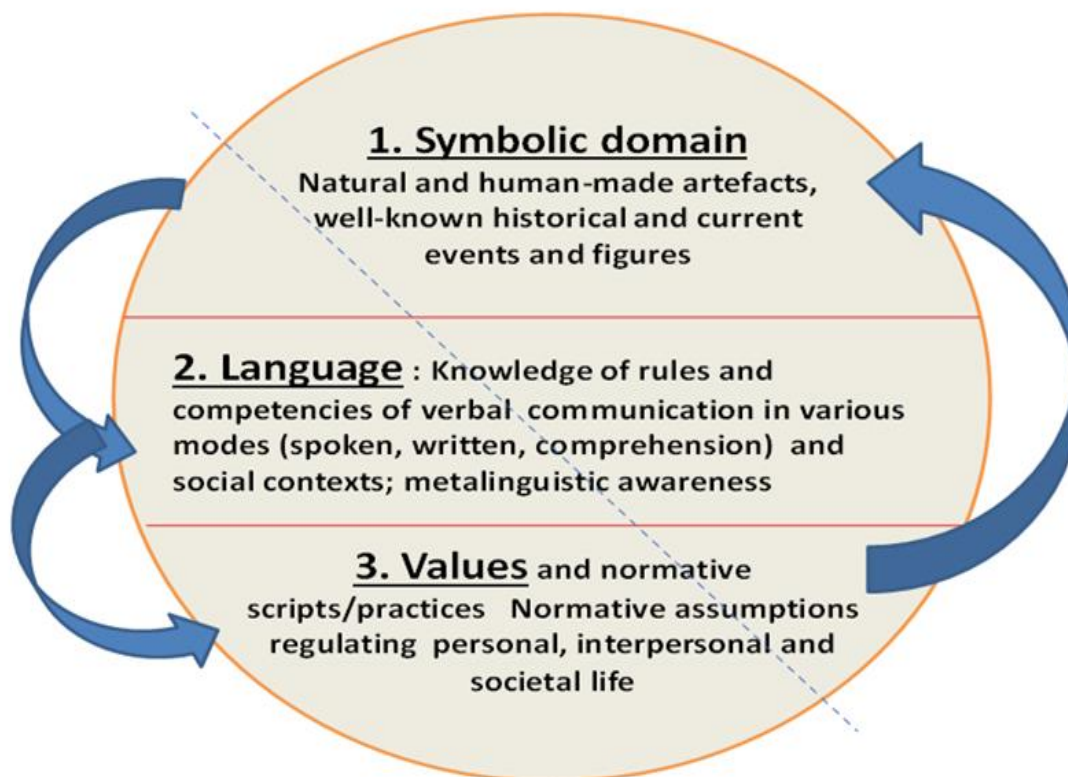
Acculturation – understood as the process of learning or adopting to a new culture (Sam & Berry, 2016) – ultimately results in the person becoming bi/multicultural, i.e., by acquiring competencies and developing affective attachment to the other culture(s) in terms of the three domains: symbolic, language and values/practices. Cultural distance may hinder the acquisition of cognitive (language) and/or affective (symbols and values) aspects of biculturalism (i.e. foreign accent as a result of L1 transfer in SLA). The cultural model of acculturation (Boski, 2008; 2022; see Figure 1) provides the theoretical background for the present study. This theoretical model was implemented to study Polish-French biculturalism, as described below.

Analyzing Relations Between Language and Values

The research model applied in the study is grounded on the acquisition of three layers of culture and the differences between them (Boski, 2008; 2022). We argue that individuals functioning as members of any culture are programmed by its three layers: symbols, language, values / practices (Figure 1). This “programming” affects the crystallization of cultural identity, which we define as the distance (fit) between one's endorsement of cultural values and one's perception of their importance in the culture (Boski, 2006). When a second culture is learned/acquired, the same three components are involved in the process of acculturation, and eventually make up the bicultural individual.

The three layers are interconnected, but they maintain relative autonomy. Figure 1. may need more explication here. Cultural symbols are natural or human-made artifacts (i.e. Eiffel Tower/Wawel Royal Castle), events (i.e. storming of the Bastille/Gdansk shipyard on strike), and eminent figures in history and current public life (i.e. incumbent and past presidents, Nobel Prize winners) considered to be important for cultural identity. Their representations are mainly pictorial, taught at school/home, through culturalization (intentional culture learning). Values and practices, on the other hand, are not subject of school explicit learning but are acquired mainly via socialization.

Figure 1.
Three Layers of Culture in Acculturation Studies



Language vs. Values: Problems and Hypotheses

Language is the communicative aspect of culture. At the individual level, language proficiency can be assessed by objective tests measuring a variety of competences: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, text and speech comprehension, etc. (Komorowska & Krajka, 2020). We argue that proficiency in a second language is one of the fundamental factors determining one's bicultural identity.

Values are motivators. Although culturally embedded among individuals, personal values exhibit considerably higher variability within a culture than linguistic competencies. Since standards of correctness exist in each language, deviations are interpreted as errors. This does not hold for values, where individuals (in modern societies) enjoy freedom to endorse different priorities.

An important theoretical inspiration to the research on the relationship between language and values can be drawn from studies conducted in the linguistic relativity paradigm. Initially formulated by Sapir and Whorf, it assumes that grammar, syntax and vocabulary determine an individual's thoughts and cognition (Whorf, 1956). The classical

linguistic relativity hypothesis is considered controversial, namely due to the lack of precision.

However, the most pertinent source of information for our work comes from studies of the acculturation context. In the U.S. this relation has been actively investigated by Phinney et al. (2001). The authors have proposed a model describing the influence of parental ethnic language proficiency and social interaction with in-group peers on the child's ethnic identity. Adolescents originating from immigrant families (Armenian, Vietnamese and Mexican) completed measures of ethnic language proficiency, in-group peer social interaction, and ethnic identity. Parents filled in a survey to measure the degree of support for cultural maintenance. Parental cultural maintenance predicted adolescent ethnic language proficiency. The authors concluded that across all immigrant groups, ethnic language use predicted ethnic identity, which suggests a common process underlying ethnic identity, in spite of differences among these groups in language retention and social interaction. The results documented the importance of ethnic language, parents, and ethnic peers as contributors to the ethnic identity of adolescents in immigrant families. Phinney et al., (2001), argue that language provides these adolescents with a link to the culture in which their parents were raised.

Boski (1991) described the loss of Polish language among 2nd and 3rd generation Polish immigrants in North America, with core values being maintained. More recently, numerous studies have demonstrated the effects of language switching among biculturals on their cognitive style (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002); and values (Boski, 2008; Boski & IbenYouseff, 2012). These studies suggest that when an individual acquires a second language, his or her values change to become biculturally flexible. Still, in other cases the opposite pattern may occur. Adopting values of another culture may precede second language learning and provide motivation for that process. Canadian studies, from classical works by Lambert, et al. (1984) and more recent ones by Chandler et al. (2003) are relevant here. Similar phenomena may be at work, when university students choose foreign languages and cultures as a major in their academic career. Let's look now at the empirical arguments for the bidirectional relationship [language ↔ values].

Language → Values

Wierzbicka (1999) analyzes the cultures of various ethnic groups (their values, ways of thinking about the world, traditions, etc.) through the language used by these groups. The author argues that the culture of a given group is reflected in its language. The semantic theory proposed by Wierzbicka advances that languages impose cultural constraints on their users. The acquisition and use of a language (second and first alike) implies "becoming" a member of the particular cultural group through participation in a variety of social interactions. The use of a given language is closely related to the individual's identification with the corresponding attitudes, beliefs, social norms and values. An increase in language proficiency parallels the acquisition of cultural knowledge typical for the culture in which this language operates. Since language is the carrier of thought (Boroditsky, 2011), it seems reasonable to assume that learning a second language can lead to the formation of

biculturalism. Previous studies demonstrate that certain cultural concepts or values can only be expressed in the language to which they correspond (Boski & IbenYouseff, 2012; Osińska, 2007; Wierzbicka, 1997). This happens because some values are expressed more easily in the given language and within its cultural context; the language activates these values.

In line with the studies cited above, we hypothesize that high measures of cultural identity, based on values identified by second generation emigrants as typically Polish should be related to proficiency in the mother tongue. The authors speculate that languages (French, Polish) carry values characteristic of the national culture. Consequently, during the language learning process an individual internalizes values embedded in the particular culture.

Values → Language

There is some evidence from the literature that values determine language learning and maintenance: the perceived prestige and attractiveness of cultural values may lead to the decision to learn a language conceptualized as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Bourdieu links the French language of the intelligentsia to symbolic power.

The French language has a number of terms to describe sets of rules and customs, also called etiquette, that define accepted behavior in a high society. Related concepts (i.e. savoir-faire, savoir-vivre, raison d'être) are well understood internationally. These rules define a way of being which is specific to this social group. This refined communicative code illustrates cultural knowledge and a high standard of living. Bourdieu's sociological analysis had led him to the conclusion that language in public discourse has a unique function - it is an instrument used in the pursuit of social position, political clout, recognition and outstanding professional achievements. This process, according to Bourdieu, takes place simultaneously and as a part of formal education. Since the knowledge of French is perceived as an individual's special attribute, monolingual people may wish to achieve desired life goals through this medium; this may lead them to opt for French as a major of study.

Another argument comes from empirical studies of Polish mothers-child dyads living in English-speaking countries (Nott-Bower, 2017). These were bilingual families whose mothers communicated with children in Polish. Nott-Bower aimed to identify various actions and attitudes that favorably contribute to the retention of Polish culture and language. The factors which, in the author's opinion, have a fundamental impact on the mastery of the Polish language as a minority language in the case of a bilingual child include: perceived prestige of the language, support from the authorities and the local community in implementing a multicultural policy, support from the mother's English-speaking partner, as well as the child's perception of the parent as a bilingual and bicultural person. Nott-Bower (2017) concluded that the first-generation emigrants' value system may initiate fascination with the language and culture and leads to language maintenance in the second generation.

Current Research

The present research was conducted in three acculturative contexts: in France, Belgium and Poland. The two former countries are multilingual, multicultural and multifaith with moderate levels of ethnic diversity and recent immigration (Brutel, 2017; Devarenne-Megas, 2003; Dumont, 2016; INSEE, 2020; O'Donnell & Toebosh, 2008; Sabatier, 2008; Sabatier & Boutry, 2006). (Re)immigration to Poland (Statistics Poland, 2020) intensified in the last decade due to various socio-economic factors (incl. Brexit, political unrest in Ukraine and Belarus, Kloc-Nowak et al., 2020).

Research questions

The reported study focused on bilingual proficiency and cultural identity in the domain of values. We explored the extent to which these two domains of acculturation mutually impact each other. We address the question: which of these components is the driving force behind acculturation among participants who reside at home (students in Poland) or in the host country (Polish emigrants). Stated differently, we ask: to what extent are values responsible for the learning, use and proficiency of a second language? Based on theoretical assumptions, we ask how is second language performance related to value-based identity. Is value-based identity formed on the basis of proficiency? Does endorsement of cultural values facilitate the acquisition of a language, especially the second?

Methods

Participants

The sample (N=334; 257 women) consisted of five groups, presented in the table below (see Table 1). Data collection took place from 2014 to 2018.

The G-1 participants were economic migrants. Women were mainly employed as caregivers, and to a lesser extent in the public sector. Men worked in building construction and maintenance. The majority of participants represented the latest post-EU-access emigration wave from Poland. The time spent abroad varied from one year to fourteen years, and the reasons for emigration were mainly economic.

LYN participants were recruited from an International School (CSI), and from a Polish school in Lyon.

Participants from the third group (BRU) were high school students. Their demographic profile was most similar to that of participants from the group (LYN). The majority of these young people arrived in Brussels with their migrant parents after 2004. Their parents came to work in various EU institutions or were laborers. French was the students' language of instruction in Belgian schools.

Table 1
Acculturative Category by Age, Gender and Percent of Lifetime Contact With Each Language

	N (women)	M _{age}	Polish %	French %	CVPQ [version PL/FR]
G-1	50 (42)	35.5	97	41	15.7
LYN	40 (30)	17.3	99	73	47.5
BRU	62 (29)	16.2	100	77	31.6
WRO	79 (73)	21.0	97	24	40.3
WAW	102(83)	21.9	99	19,2	—
Overall	334 (257)				

Note: G-1: First generation migrants in Lyon; LYN: International high school students in Lyon; BRU: Polish high school students in Brussels; WRO/WAW: University students of French language and culture in Poland. The percentage of lifetime contact with each language was computed by dividing each participant's declared length of direct and continuous exposure to the language by his/her age. The last row presents the percentage of participants completing the identity scale (CVPQ questionnaire) in French. WAW students filled out the CVPQ only in Polish.

The fourth group (WRO) was recruited from a University in Poland. Participants included first, second- and third-year students enrolled in the French language major. The faculty curriculum, apart from core academic linguistic subjects, encompassed the study of cultural knowledge (history of France and French literature, Francophony — the proliferation of the French language world-wide). All the courses were taught in French.

The fifth group (WAW) was recruited from another university in Poland. The mean age was 21.9. On average, students declared 19.2 % lifetime contact with this language, which made them the least experienced French language users among all of the tested groups. Still, they would spend around 8h a day exposed only to French language and culture, and were often taught by native French speakers.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through several institutions, including Center for the Development of Polish Education Abroad, Alliance Française, schools, and bicultural associations, which serve as migrants' support systems. After obtaining institutional and individual consent, language proficiency materials, followed by CVPQ and sociodemographic questions were administered. In the case of students, the study was conducted during class time.

Materials

Polish-French Bilingual Proficiency

The oral comprehension and bidirectional translations tests used in the present study were taken from French and Polish textbook materials (Burkat et al., 2008; Dollez & Pons, 2014).

For oral comprehension participants listened to two recorded conversations: one in French and the other in Polish; afterwards they responded to eight True/False statements scoring 1 point for each correct answer. The French recording was a conversation between a couple coming late to a wedding ceremony, and arguing in their car about directions (French sample item: The woman wants Paul (her partner) to turn right – YES | NO). The Polish recording was about a police officer questioning a witness to a car accident (Polish sample item: The man was walking in the park at the time of the event YES | NO). The two oral comprehension scores were zero-correlated.

Bidirectional translations consisted of two 80-word-long texts in French and in Polish, to be translated into the other language. The French text was about an individual living with his family in a working-class area; the text was a personal statement by a political party activist engaged in promoting an ecological lifestyle. The Polish text was a brief letter written by a graduate student to a friend, describing work relations during her internship at a television station. Points were subtracted for mistakes committed in the translation (e.g., omissions, repetitions, mistakes in spelling, grammar, syntax). The highest possible score was 100 % for translation with no mistakes.

The two translation scores received from groups I-IV were positively correlated $r(231) = .56, p < .001$. No significant correlation was found between scores in Polish and French comprehension $r(323) = .08, p > .05$. In the next step of the analysis, two indexes of bilingualism were computed separately (PL_FR comprehension and bidirectional translation). Correlations between scores of PL_FR comprehension and bidirectional translation (two indexes of bilingualism) were low positive $r(330) = .17, p < .05$. Finally, we summed up these two standardized scores to receive a gauge of bilingualism. WAW students were not given the translation task.

Cultural Values and Identities

Unlike language and symbols which typically belong to either Culture A or Culture B, and very rarely to both cultural systems, values and practices are not immediately transparent for identity. Two reasons contribute this lesser fit: (i) lower standardization; and (ii) lower consensus in value-normative than in the linguistic domain. This is why our definition of axiological identity specifies its compound structure, and values are measured in two stages, as cultural markers and as personal preferences. Table 2 presents a 4-quadrant matrix for two cultures, set up for a value sorting task.

Research participants are requested to compare the two cultures by sorting a set of statements into the four cells, the statements representing different cultural values. [An example is used for illustrative purposes.]

The weights inside the cells represent the four outcome categories of the sorting task. When a given item is typical for both cultures (1/1) or for neither of them (0/0), the scores

are equal (similarity axis). Along the difference axis, the weights are uneven. When an item is deemed typical for one culture but not for the other, the weights (2/-1) are amplified.

Individual preferences are measured with the same set of statements in first-person singular form, with responses ranging from strongly disagree (-2) to strongly agree (+2). Finally, normative (axiological) identity is operationalized as the sum of products on these two components.

Table 2
Comparing the Two Cultures at the Culture-Descriptive Level.

CULTURE (A) [E.g. Students call teachers by their first names]	CULTURE (B) [E.g. Students call teachers by their first names]	
	YES	NO
YES	1 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Shared</div> 1	2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">A-Specific</div> -1
NO	-1 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">B-Specific</div> 2	0 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Null</div> 0
Difference axis	Similarity axis	

Note: The weights in the cells (1/1; 2/-1; -1/2; 0/0) are used for computing culture normative identities.

The Cultural Values and Practice Questionnaire (CVPQ) consists of 39 items for assessing values and practices in specific contexts, rather than general statements. It has a third person version for cultural description and the first-person version for measuring individual preferences. It went through the back-translation procedure by bilinguals who are professional translators. The following two types of indices are derived from the construct described above:

- (1) Four partial components: Here, we summed up personal preference scores assigned to items sorted to each of the four descriptive categories: FR * PL; FR*~PL; ~FR*PL; and ~FR*~PL. This procedure provided us with four partial identity components: (i) Integrated (both Polish AND French); (ii) Distinctly Polish; (iii) Distinctly French; (iv) Culturally

external (neither Polish nor French).

- (2) Two components: Aggregated Polish vs. Aggregated French. Here, following Table 1, each item’s cultural ascription to one of the four cells is multiplied by its personal endorsement. For example, if a participant decides that the item “Valuing close, long-term friendships” describes only the Polish culture (2/-1), and s/he strongly endorses this item as personally relevant (+2), then the item identities are: PLid = 2PL * 2Pers = 4; FRid = -1FR * 2Pers = -2. The participant’s total Polish and French scores are obtained by summing up such products for all items.

Results

All linguistic proficiency and cultural identity indices for five categories of participants are jointly presented in table 3.

Table 3.
Means, Standard Deviations and F test Values Among Five Groups.

	G-1	LYN	BRU	WRO	WAW	F (4,318)
	M(SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	
PL Comprehension	5.78 (1.48)	5.40 (1.54)	5.39 (1.41)	5.89 (1.22)	5.79 (1.10)	1.94
FR Comprehension	4.86 (1.77)	5.32 (1.16)	4.88 (1.23)	3.72 (1.32)	4.68 (1.58)	10.83***
PL to FR Translation %	89.90 (8.38)	83.04 (13.10)	64.00 (21.50)	76.86 (15.57)	—	25.73***
FR to PL Translation %	90.76 (6.47)	95.12 (4.77)	39.03 (19.20)	85.43 (7.14)	—	291.88***
Integrated PL*FR Identity	4.48 (7.03)	7.82 (8.69)	10.35 (8.48)	7.46 (7.57)	5.21 (5.07)	6.50*
PL Identity	3.20 (5.64)	6.56 (7.21)	6.75 (6.98)	0.97 (4.67)	2.27 (3.23)	15.24***
FR Identity	2.14 (4.80)	2.82 (4.66)	3.17 (4.87)	3.20 (6.51)	5.70 (4.29)	3.34
Neither Identity	2.10 (6.56)	1.10 (4.77)	1.17 (4.03)	0.32 (3.33)	2.54 (3.00)	2.92

Note:*** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$

Figure 2 presents Polish listening and French listening skills across five groups. Listening was a within Ss variable which entered a significant interaction effect with research groups $F(4,318) = 19,51$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = 0,13$. Unsurprisingly, Polish listening comprehension scores prevailed over French among two group of students in Poland : students in group WRO $F(1,318) = 112,19$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = 0,26$; students in group WAW $F(1,318) = 33,98$; $p < .001$;

$\eta^2 = 0,10$. The discrepancy between Polish and French listening comprehension scores was minimal among the second generation Polish emigrants in France $F(1,318) = 0,68; p > .05$. In the remaining groups Polish prevailed over French in the following trend: BRU < G-1 < WAW < WRO.

We received unexpected results regarding axiological identity scores, particularly with aggregated identities, as presented in Figure 3. Cultural identity was a within Ss variable which entered a significant interaction effect with research groups $F(4, 323) = 14,75; p < 0,001, \eta^2 = 0,15$. Aggregated Polish identity was higher than French among 2nd generation high school students $F(1,323) = 8,00; p < 0,01; \eta^2 = 0,02$; and their peers in Brussels, $F(1, 323) = 13,06; p < 0,01; \eta^2 = 0,04$. The opposite direction with French identity exceeding Polish was observed among students in Poland: WRO $F(1, 323) = 5,36; p < 0,05; \eta^2 = 0,01$, and WAW $F(1,323) = 33,97; p < 0,01; \eta^2 = 0,09$.

Correlations between linguistic indices and value-based identities were low and, unexpectedly, negative; correlation between the index of bilingualism and integrated identity, $r(325) = -.18, p < .001$. These unexpected results were a premise to consider the home vs. host country variable as a moderator in the analysis between Polish-French bilingualism and respective bicultural identity (Figure 4). Such moderation analysis was performed (with the use of Macro PROCESS, Hayes, 2018, model 1). The predictor was the standardized indicator of bilingual proficiency; dichotomic moderator: Poles in Poland vs Poles on emigration (acculturative context); and the French-Polish identity integration index was the dependent variable.

The main effect of bilingualism was significant ($b = -0,18; t = -3,34; p < 0,01$); $F(2,322) = 7,35; p < 0,001$ but the acculturative context was not ($b = 0,10; t = 1,89; p > 0,05$). An interaction effect between an acculturative context and bilingualism was significant $F(3, 321) = 6,41; p < 0,01; b = -0,12; t = -2,09; p < 0,05$. The interactive component improved the percentage of explained variance of the dependent variable by 2%. An analysis of bilingualism separately for two acculturative contexts indicated that in university students this relation was positive but statistically insignificant ($b = 0,15; t = 1,33; p > 0,05$); in emigration, this relation was significant: $b = -0,28; t = -3,54; p < 0,001$.

The pattern of results suggests that an acculturative context impacts negatively on the relation between Polish-French bilingualism and respective biculturalism. In the emigration context bilingualism is negatively correlated with bicultural identity: the higher the bilingual competence, the lower the integrated Polish-French identity. Adding the home country acculturation context produced meaningful results in this study. University students of French language and culture had the lowest scores in French and bilingual indices, and yet their identity was French oriented, which suggests that values may be the driving force towards psychological biculturalism. Bilingualism among immigrant youths was, strengthened by their school attendance. Yet, it did not lead to a stronger bicultural axiological identity, but resulted in a nostalgic strengthening of Polish identity.

Figure 2
Bilingual Proficiency Rates (Listening) Among French Language Students in Poland and Emigrants in France and Belgium.

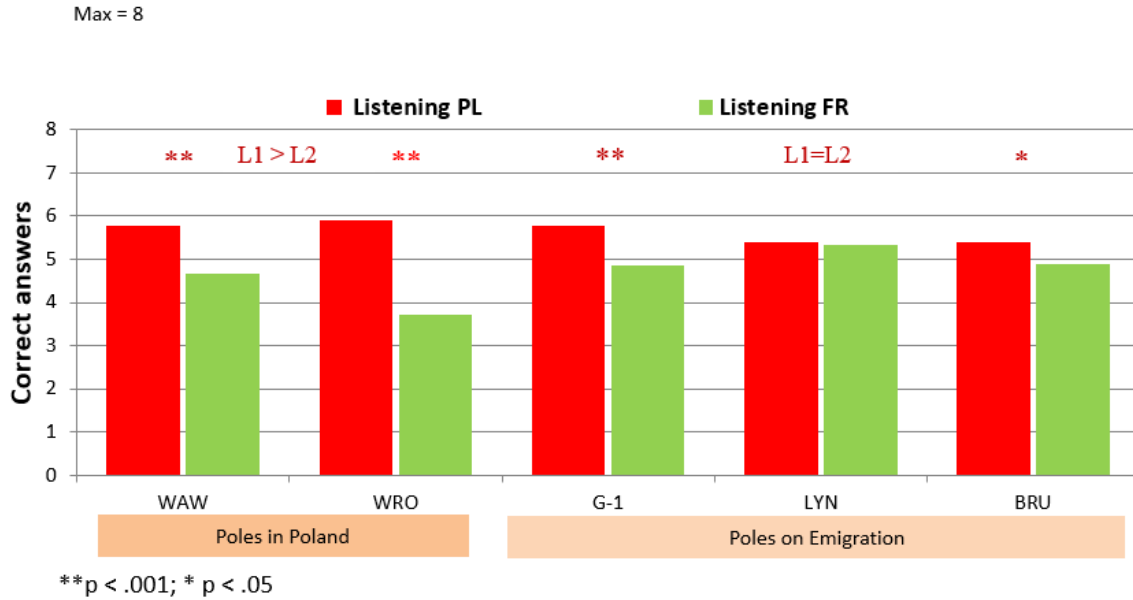
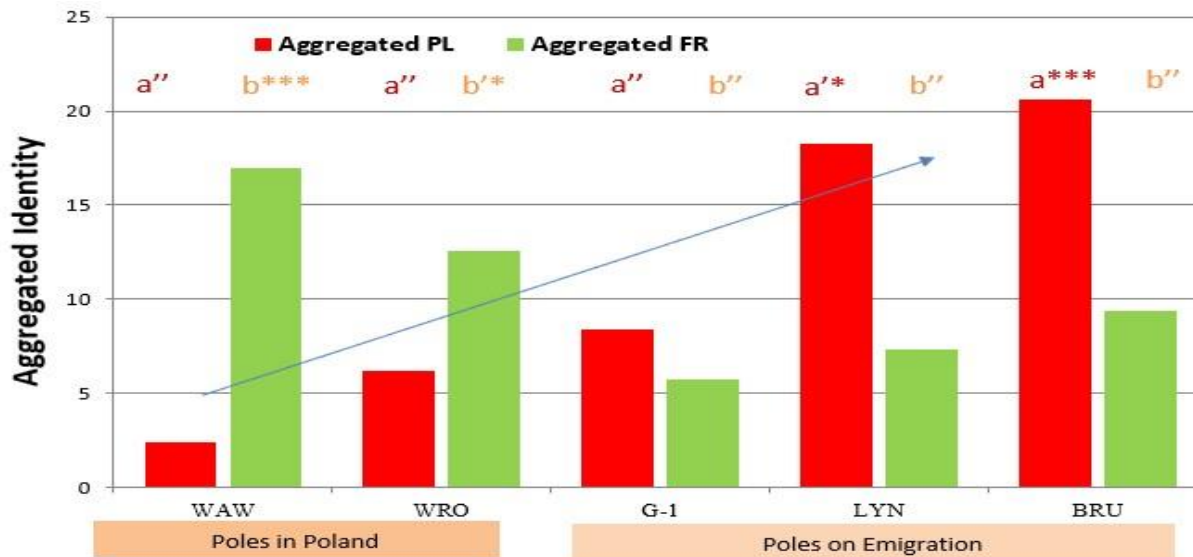


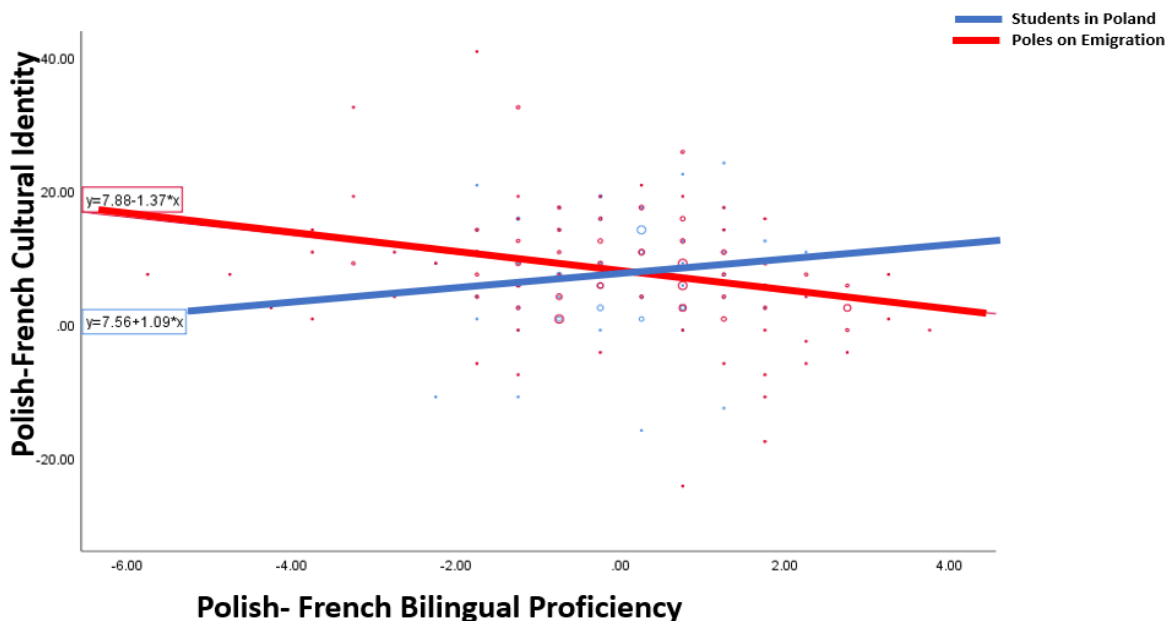
Figure 3
The two Cultural Identity Components Among French Language Students in Poland and Emigrants in France and Belgium.



Note: Letters with unequal numbers of apostrophes represent group significant differences. e.g., Polish Aggregated Identity indices (a) in group BRU is significantly higher ($p < .001$) than in group WAW and WRO; *** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$.

Figure 4

Acculturative Context as the Moderator of the Relationship Between Polish-French Bilingualism and the Bicultural Identity



Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine mutual relations between two components of biculturalism: cultural identity based on values and language proficiency. The aim was a better understanding of the possible causal relation between these two elements of acculturating individuals. In the applied approach, we acknowledge the central role of second language acquisition which becomes the key marker of successful acculturation.

The research target groups were university students of French language and culture compared with Polish emigrants in Francophone countries. The aim was to get a glimpse of an intentional long-term learning process, guided by personal choice and motivation, organized by bicultural teachers.

The main result in our study was the contrast observed between Polish students of French language, residing in Poland and the three other groups of 1st and 2nd generation migrants in France, and Belgium. We found French identity to be stronger than Polish among the Polish university students, and Polish identity to be stronger than French among the migrants; particularly those of the 2nd generation. The findings may appear as counterintuitive, yet facing them we are not left without explanatory clues. First, Weinreich & Saunderson (2005) propose a distinction between realistic and idealistic identity. The latter forms when a person is not in daily contact with the culture of her/his choice, but creates its idealized image (see Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012) . We found evidence for such imagery

identity among repatriates from Kazakhstan (Lewandowska, Rejmer-Ronowicz, 2006; Boski, 2022/2009, ch.13); and also, among two generation Polish immigrant families in Germany (Malinowska-Brokmeier, 2015). Not far from this reference is the more recent theory of nostalgia (Sedikides, et al. 2009; Wildshut, et al. 2006). These authors define nostalgia as a sentimental longing for the past which serves as a shield against acculturative stress. We do not have direct data on nostalgia, yet the mechanism seems plausible for both categories of our participants. Also, nostalgia is an important theme in Polish literature.

Secondly, the results we received are in line with the study conducted in France on second-generation immigrants from various cultural backgrounds: Algerians, Moroccans, Vietnamese, Portuguese, and Antilleans (Sabatier, 2008). The author examined the role of three variables of the social environment in the process of shaping cultural identity: (i) ethnic composition of the school environment; (ii) perception of discrimination at school; (iii) parent-teen relationship. Cultural identity encompassed two sub-dimensions (national and ethnic) each having two components (exploration and affirmation). The study showed that ethnic and French identity appeared as two independent orientations that were even slightly negatively correlated across all groups. The adolescents' perception of family relationships exerted the greatest influence on cultural orientation. Attachment to the parental culture was a strong predictor of both ethnic affirmation and exploration. French national affirmation was moderately but significantly predicted by parental enculturation (i.e., a pragmatic perspective towards the rules that children should abide by, willingness to adopt the emotional and relational style of the French society).

In the present study, bilingualism was a predictor of bicultural identity, while the country of residence served as the moderator. With improved French proficiency (i.e., higher level of bilingualism), university students felt more bicultural; with enhanced bilingualism, emigrants' bicultural identity was lower. Judging from the university students' results, it is the value aspect of identity, which spurs language learning, and not the reverse.

Limitations and prospects for future research. As much as broadening the scope of the studies to include foreign language students is recommended, we should be cautious not to overgeneralize the idealized or nostalgic identity phenomenon reported in this paper. This type of acculturation, motivated by personal interest, may lose its appeal when learners become sojourners or immigrants, coping with everyday acculturation problems. Perceived discrimination/social exclusion are potential mediators to be tested in further studies. We experimented with linguistic proficiency tests provided by specialists of second language learning. The speech comprehension test was proven valid, and more accurate than the self-assessment scales. The unexpected cultural identity results may be due to the nature of the tool used in the present study. Thus, there is a pressing need to develop tests adapted to various acculturation contexts.

Conclusion

The present article concerns a study of Polish immigrants in France, and Belgium and French language and culture students in Poland. Respondents' recognition of symbols, linguistic proficiency and value-based identities were measured in these two cultural

contexts. Idealized or nostalgic identification with the culture other than the current culture of residence was found in all groups under investigation. Such idealized identity was not in conflict with the in-situ residential identity, especially when accompanied by high second language proficiency.

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