

# Language, Level of Acculturation, Personality and Emotion-Word Use

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## INTRODUCTION

- Research has suggested that language shapes our understanding of the world, and that cultural differences lead to differences in the way we express emotions (1).
- Personality has been shown to be an additional factor that influences the use of emotion words (2).
- Past research has suggested a link between trait extraversion and positive emotion-word use (3).
- The current study seeks to extend previous findings by using level of acculturation to identify dominant language status, by controlling for current depressive symptoms when assessing personality, and by examining whether there is a relationship between the personality trait of neuroticism and negative emotion-word use.

## HYPOTHESES

1. Participants who report low acculturation (LA) will utilize more **emotion words** than those with high acculturation (HA)
2. Higher levels of neuroticism, after current depressive symptoms, will be related to higher use of **negative emotion-words**, in both HA & LA participants.

## METHODS

### Participants

- Undergraduate students
- N = 100, 76% identified as female
- Mean age = 21.10yrs (*SD* = 3.21)
- High Acculturation: 90%  
Low Acculturation: 10%

### Measures

- The Short Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (SASH, Marin & Sabogal, 1987): current levels of acculturation
- The Affective Norms for English Words (ANEW, Bradley et al., 1999): use of positive & negative words during memory recall (English & Spanish versions)
- The Beck Depression Inventory II (BDI-II, Beck et. al, 1996): current depressive symptoms
- The NEO Five Factor Inventory-Neuroticism subscale (FFI-N, Costa & McCrae, 1992): trait neuroticism

### Procedure

Participants completed an online assessment. Those who identified as Dominant-Spanish speakers completed the ANEW in Spanish, and English-speakers in English. All other measures were completed in English. In order to control for negative emotion priming, participants completed the ANEW and the SASH, before completing the FFI-N and the BDI-II.

## RESULTS

TABLE 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Between Measures

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Acculturation Level	—					
2. ANEW Emotion Words	-.10	—				
3. ANEW Positive Emotion Words	-.01	.61**	—			
4. ANEW Negative Emotion Words	-.02	.57**	-.28**	—		
5. FFI-Neuroticism	-.19	-.01	-.08	-.07	—	
6. BDI-II	-.11	.25*	.12	.19	.35**	—
Mean	2.45	1.65	.69	31.42	14.69	
SD	1.53	1.26	1.12	6.31	10.02	

Note. For Acculturation Level, HA = 0. FFI-N = NEO Five Factor Inventory - Neuroticism subscale. BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II. \*p < .05; \*\*p < 0.01

### Hypothesis 1: HA vs. LA

Independent samples T-Tests: not sig.

- ANEW Emotion Words,  $t(96) = .98$ ,  $p = .329$

- ANEW Positive Words,  $t(96) = .14$ ,  $p = .889$

- ANEW Negative Words,  $t(96) = .89$ ,  $p = .378$

### Hypothesis 2: Neuroticism

Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that personality and current distress did not predict negative emotion-word use in LA participants ( $R^2 = .13$ ,  $F(2,7) = .54$ ,  $p = .604$ ).

However, the model was approaching significance in the HA participants ( $R^2 = .06$ ,  $F(2,85) = 2.60$ ,  $p = .080$ ).

Regarding the individual predictors: neuroticism was not predictive, after current depression ( $R^2\text{change} = .03$ ,  $p = .13$ ) rather current depression, was predictive after trait neuroticism ( $R^2\text{change} = .05$ ,  $p = .03$ ). This effect was small but reliable. All assumptions were met although the correlations between the predictors and the outcome were small.

TABLE 2. Regression Analysis for ANEW Negative Emotion Words

	Acculturation	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	p-value
HA → Constant	→	1.33	.64	→	2.08	.041
→ FFI-N	→	-.03	.02	→	-1.49	.139
→ BDI-II	→	-.03	.01	→	-.23	.041

Note. HA = High Acculturation, FFI-N = NEO Five Factor Inventory - Neuroticism subscale; BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II. HA: BDI-II to Negative Emotion Words,  $R\text{-square} = .06$

## DISCUSSION

- **Hypothesis 1:** Participants who endorsed low levels of acculturation did not use more emotion words than high acculturation participants
- Thus persons of Latin culture who remain highly influenced by their original culture may not utilize more emotion-laden language
- **Hypothesis 2:** Trait neuroticism, after current depression, did not predict negative emotion word-use, rather current depressive symptoms predicted negative emotion word-use after neuroticism
- Suggesting that current high levels of negative emotions may induce a more negatively emotion-laden view of past experiences
- This effect was only observed in **highly acculturated participants**, suggesting that assimilation to mainstream US culture may amplify the influence of negative emotions on the emotional content of memory recall
- **Strengths:** acculturation, controlled for current depression, unexplored personality factor
- **Limitations:** small number of DS speakers, limited words of the ANEW

### References

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