

Mood modulations of gender stereotypes in bilingual women: A behavioural perspective.

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Research has shown that positive and negative mood states differentially shape reliance on prior knowledge during language comprehension (see Forgas, 2017 for a review). Compared to a negative mood, a positive mood has been consistently observed to promote heuristic processing, thereby facilitating stereotype-based language processing at the sentence level (e.g., Wang et al., 2015; Naranowicz & Jankowiak, 2025). Recent bilingual research has further examined the role of language of operation in stereotype processing, providing evidence for reduced gender stereotype activation in the foreign language (L2) relative to the native language (L1) (e.g., Jankowiak et al., 2024). However, the mood-driven mechanisms that underlie stereotypical thinking in bilingual language processing remain under-explored (Naranowicz & Jankowiak, 2024).

The present behavioural study aims to explore how positive and negative moods shape gender stereotype activation in bilinguals, as triggered by human faces varying in degrees of femininity and masculinity. To this end, Polish–English bilingual women were induced into positive and negative moods with emotionally evocative short films. Feminized female faces and masculinized male faces were used as high stereotype–activation primes, whereas feminized male faces and masculinized female faces were used as low stereotype–activation primes. Primes were adopted from Bjornsdottir et al. (2025) and were additionally rated in a separate norming study on perceived femininity and masculinity. Targets were adopted from a validated database of stereotype-laden words (Jankowiak et al., 2024). Half of them were stereotypically feminine (e.g., *purse, eyelash, flower*) and half were stereotypically masculine (e.g., *bodyguard, engine, beard*). Targets were always congruent with primes in terms of gender reference: stereotypically feminine words followed female faces whereas stereotypically masculine words followed male faces. On a three-point scale, participants were asked to rate how strongly the presented face and word can be associated with each other.

Preliminary results from 17 participants showed a three-way interaction between Mood, Language of operation, and Stereotype activation, revealing faster reaction times in L1 (Polish) than in English (L2) only under a positive mood in the high stereotype–activation condition. This facilitatory language effect suggests stronger activation of gender stereotypes in L1 than in L2 when bilinguals are in a positive mood state. These findings provide initial evidence that a positive mood amplifies language-specific differences in stereotype activation, shedding light on the affective mechanisms that modulate social cognition in bilingual language processing.

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