Bilinguals in social and emotional contexts: How positive and negative moods shape stereotype judgements in bilingual women

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Previous research has pointed to differential effects of a positive and negative mood on the native (L1) and non-native (L2) language processing (see Naranowicz, 2022 for a review). Yet, little is known about if and how mood influences stereotypical thinking in a bilingual context. Here, 38 female Polish–English bilinguals were induced into a positive and negative mood with emotionally evocative animated film clips and read 120 Polish (L1) and 120 English (L2) stereotypically congruent (e.g., *Their daughter loves her new designer purse.*; *Their father works as a plumber.*) and stereotypically incongruent sentences (e.g., *Their son loves his new designer purse.*; *Their mother works as a plumber.*). Half of the sentences aligned with gender stereotypes about females, while the other half reflected stereotypes about males. The response times (RT) and accuracy data were analysed with linear and generalised mixed-effects models, respectively. The analysis revealed that stereotype congruency judgments were influenced by mood in a language-specific manner. In L1, the explicit, task-driven activation of stereotype knowledge led to an attenuated mood effect, resulting in similar accessibility of stereotype-laden information in both a positive and negative mood. Conversely, in L2, a positive relative to a negative mood facilitated access to stereotype knowledge, suggesting a reduced sensitivity to gender stereotypes, possibly due to their weaker internalisation in L2 (Jankowiak et al., in press). The results also showed faster RTs to the sentences violating gender stereotypes about females (e.g., *Her mother works as a warden.*) relative to those about males (e.g., *Their son loves his new designer purse.*) in the positive mood condition only. This indicates that female participants might have been less sensitive to stereotype violations regarding their own gender when being in a positive relative to negative mood, irrespective of the language of operation (Tempel & Neumann, 2016). The reduced internalisation of gender stereotypes in L2 might carry important consequences for various affective contexts, where mood and language of operation might interact and impact bilinguals' susceptibility to gender stereotypes and biases.

References:

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