

# Mainstream Language Gaps and Adaptation among Chinese Migrant Couples in Canada

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## INTRODUCTION

### Family Acculturation

- A double transition for immigrant families in that both the individual and the family adapt to the new culture.
- Previous research: mostly on the parent-child dyads
  - Limited research attention to the couple dyads

**?** How do host language gaps within couples link with individual adjustment?

### The Present Study:


- Examine the relationship between individuals' own and perceived spouses' English competence and adjustment outcomes
- Host language gaps between spouses predict marital dissatisfaction
  - Especially when husbands were the less proficient partners (Kisselev et al., 2010; Min, 2001).
  - Differential language skills within couples may increase marital conflict, impeding problem solving, limiting spousal support.
- Language gaps may enhance feelings of incapability or overload (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2016).
  - May further impact psychological well-being & sociocultural adaptation.

## METHODS

### Participants

- Selected from Chinese Immigrant Study Participant Pool
- 212 G1 Chinese immigrants (63.2% female) in Edmonton
- Age: 30 - 65 (M = 45.87, SD = 14.27); All in marriage

### Procedure

- Recruited from Chinese festivals and communities
- Complete paper-pencil questionnaire in 
- \$40 compensation for participation

### Measures

Self-Evaluation of English Competence (Clément & Baker, 2001)

- 4 items for speak, write, read, & understand ( $\alpha = .88$ )

Perceived Partner's English Competence

- 4 items, rating from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very well) ( $\alpha = .85$ )

Satisfaction With Life in Canada (Pavot & Diener, 1993)

- 5 items, 7-point Likert scale ( $\alpha = .89$ )

Sociocultural Adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1999)

- 23 items, 5-point Likert scale ( $\alpha = .86$ )

## RESULTS

### Descriptives & Correlations

	Men	Women				
	M (SD)	M (SD)	1	2	3	4
1. Own English	3.60 (1.44)	3.41 (1.60)	—			
2. Perceived Partner's English	3.78 (1.68)	3.98 (1.52)	.59***	—		
3. Life Satisfaction	5.23 (.92)	5.16 (.97)	.08	-.03	—	
4. Sociocultural Adaptation	2.54 (.58)	2.53 (.62)	.61***	.25***	.32**	—

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

### Path Model & Moderation

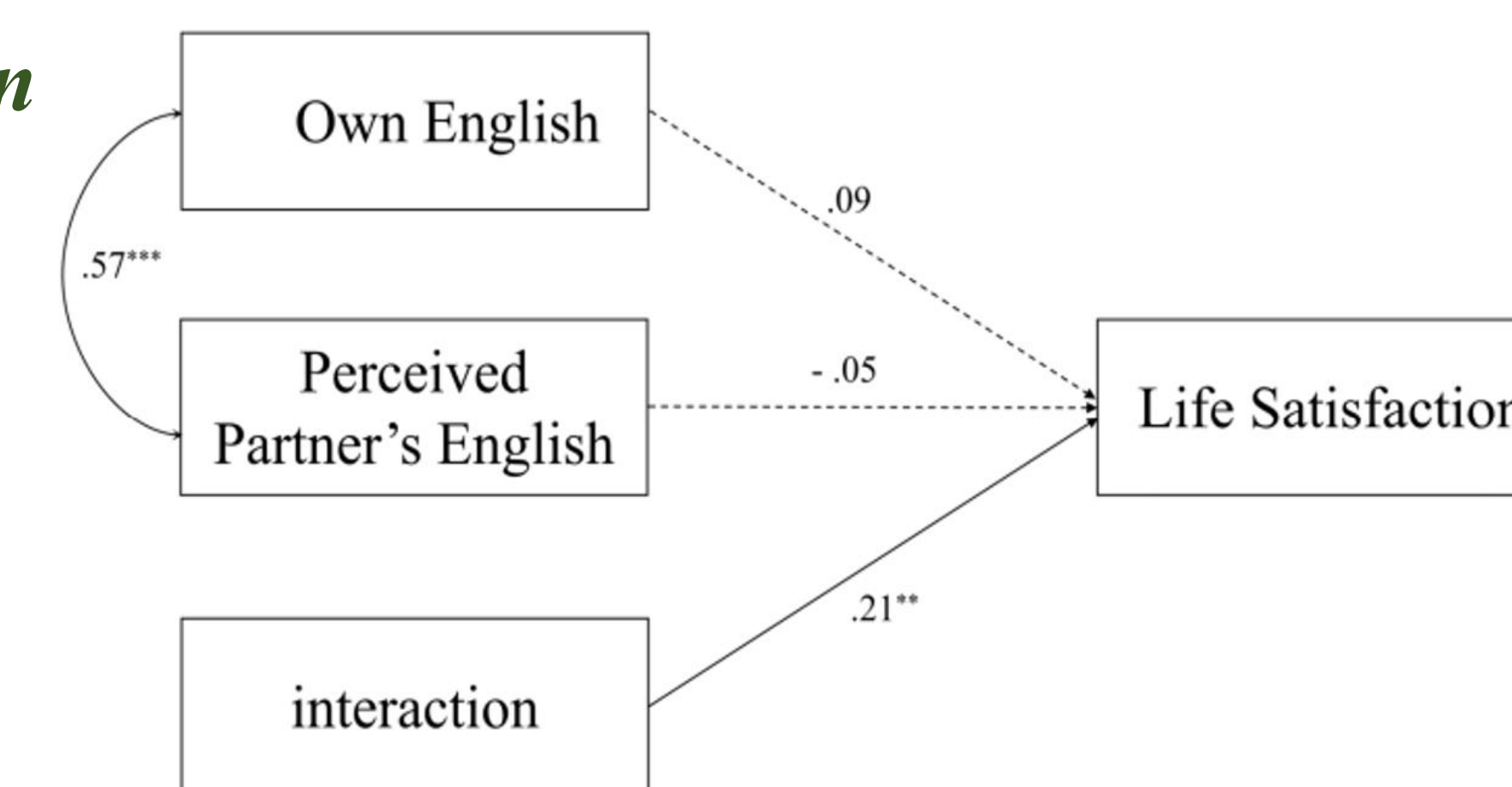


Figure 1. Solid lines indicate significant paths and dash lines indicate non-significant paths.

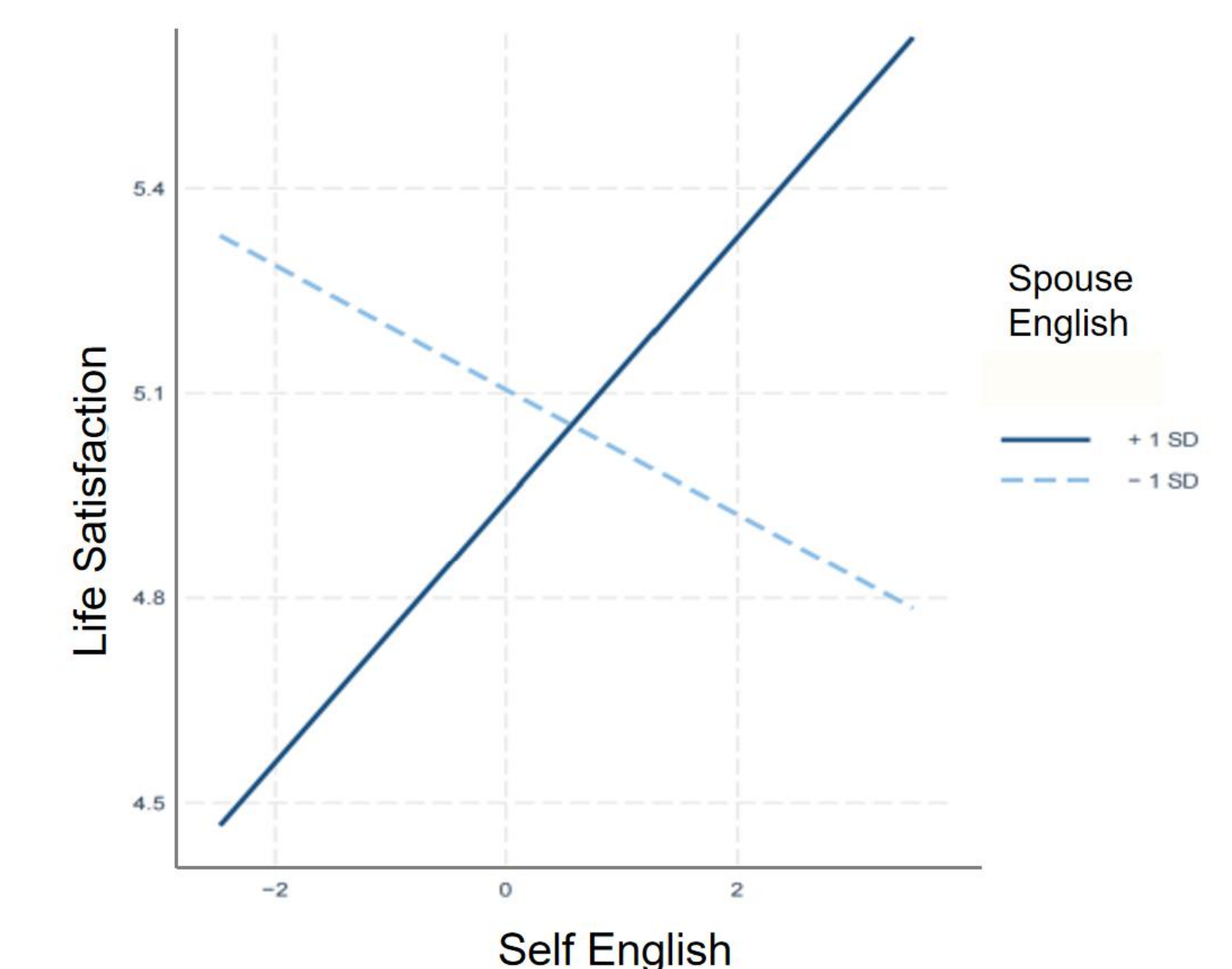


Figure 2. Moderation effects of actor's English on life satisfaction through perceived partner's English.

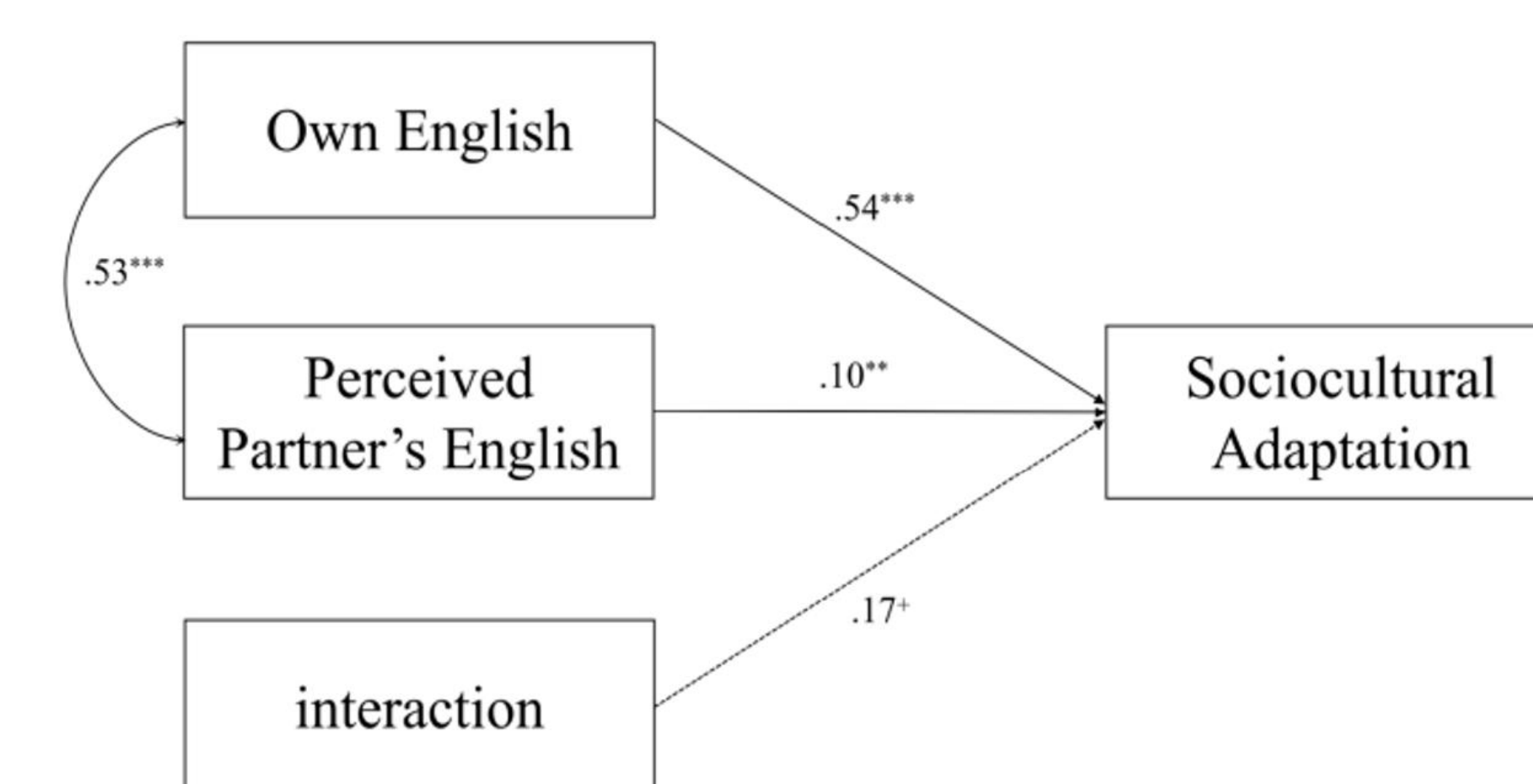


Figure 3. Standardized estimates ( $\beta$ s) are reported. + $p \leq .06$ , \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

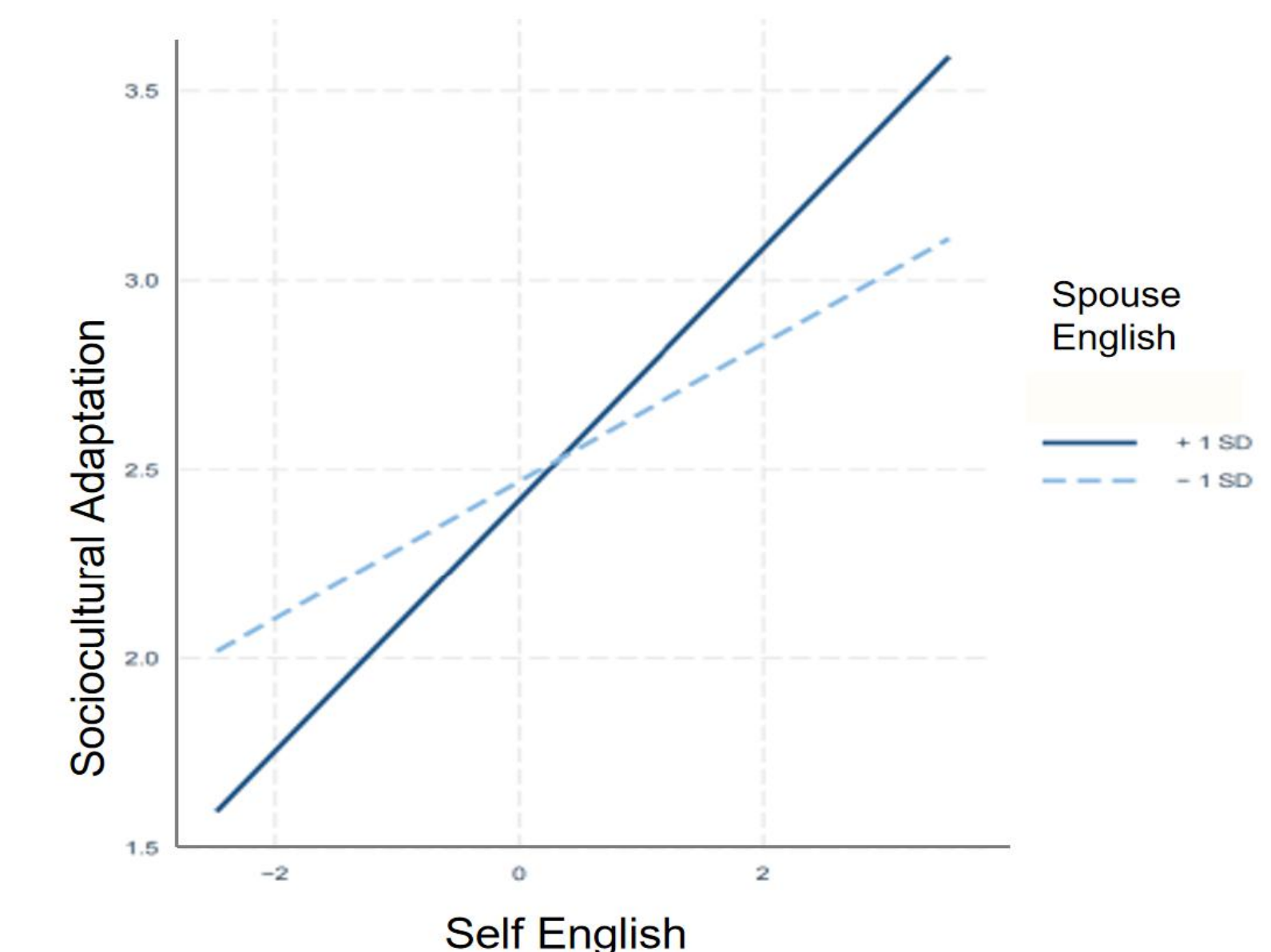


Figure 4. Moderation effects of actor's English on sociocultural adaptation through perceived partner's English. Both actors and partners' English levels were group-centered at 0.

## IMPLICATIONS

- Immigrants' successful adaptation depends not only on their own but also spouse's host language competence
  - Language learning programs for both partners simultaneously could be more effective in promoting mutual adaptation and reducing acculturative stress.
- Policymakers and community organizations should recognize the importance of addressing language gaps within immigrant families as part of broader support services.
- Future research should explore how other domains (e.g., heritage language & ethnic identity) of acculturation gaps within couples, influence both individual-level and family-level outcomes, among immigrant from diverse ethnic groups in various societies.