

The Impact of Foreign Language Use on Health-Related Decisions

Boaz Keysar
University of Chicago



In memory of Albert Costa
1970-2018

It is all autobiographical



Living in a (foreign) language

- Childhood reprimands
- “I love you”
- *F*oul language

Our native language molds decision and choice and judgment by connecting us to

1. our emotions
2. our memories and experiences
3. our sense of self and identity

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."

Plan of presentation

1. What have we discover about the impact of language?
2. Application to mental health decisions
3. Application to vaccination decision



How do we do the research?

- Random assignment
- Consistent language environment
- Language qualifications

Moral Dilemmas

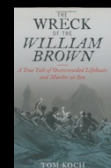


Albert Costa



Sayuri Hayakawa

Moral Dilemmas



Is it acceptable to hurt a few in order to spare many?

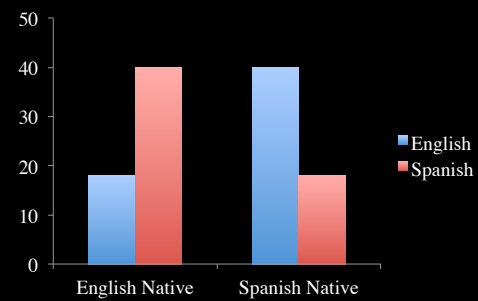
Moral Dilemmas



A moral stress test

Would you
kill one to
save five?

% Utilitarian Choice



Costa, Foucart, Hayakawa, Aparici, Apestguia, Heafner, & Keysar, B. (2014)

Why are people more utilitarian in a foreign language?

More reflective, more calculative
Care more about maximizing the greater good

Less emotional
Less averse to violating norms

Hayakawa, Tannenbaum, Costa, Corey, & Keysar, B. (2017)

The impact of language- The range of phenomena

Moral dilemmas
Cheating
Perception of risks and benefits
Risk taking
Adherence to norms
Imagery
False memory



Imagina una puesta de sol

Application to health decisions

Mental health decisions

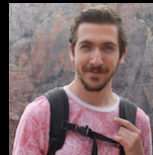
Foreign language as a release from stigma

Vaccination decisions

Native language as a inducing norms

Application to mental health decisions

Foreign language as a release from stigma



Uriel Heller



Miwa Yasui



Leigh Grant

Cultural norms



Mental health problems and therapy as normative

Cultural norms



Mental health problems and therapy as stigmatized



Cultural norms



Mental health problems
and therapy as stigmatized

Native tongue and cultural norms

N= 206 Chinese in the US

Mandarin Native
English Foreign

Native tongue and cultural norms

Consider this person:

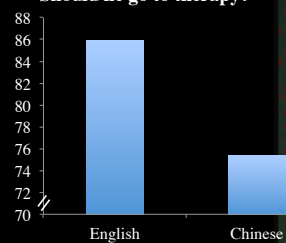
- feeling really sad for the past 2 weeks
- wakes up with a heavy feeling
- no longer enjoys things
- Can't get through the day
- smallest tasks are difficult
- difficult concentrating
- has no energy
- tired but cannot sleep
- feels worthless

Do you feel that he should go to a therapist?

0= definitely not.....100=definitely yes

Native tongue and cultural identity

Should he go to therapy?



Mental health problems
and therapy as stigmatized

How depressed is he?
No language difference

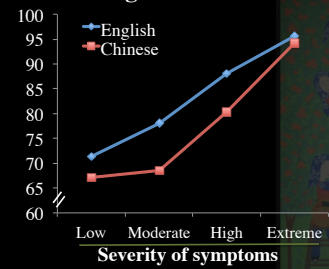
Native tongue and cultural identity

Progressive severity

Low	<i>Socializes and works</i>
Moderate	<i>Does not socialize</i>
High	<i>Fails at work</i>
Extreme	<i>Doesn't get out of bed</i>

Do you feel that he should go to a therapist?

Native tongue and cultural identity



Language effect: $F(1,197)=8.219, p=0.005$
 Language x Severity: $F(3,591)=5.694, p<0.000$

Native tongue and cultural identity

Study 2
 N= 200 native Mandarin
 In Beijing



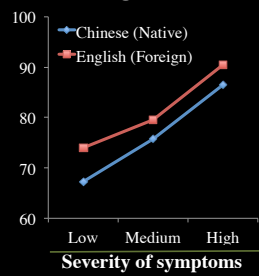
Native tongue and cultural identity

Study 3
 N= 405 native Mandarin
 In Beijing

Evaluate replication:

- Because of added question?
- Because of population?

Native tongue and cultural identity



Language effect: $F=6.87$; $p=0.009$
 Language x Severity: $F=1.32$; $p=0.268$

Native tongue and cultural identity

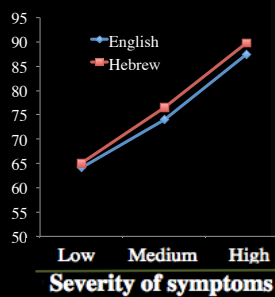
Explanation

- Culture-associated stigma

Study 4

- Remove culture-associated stigma
- $N= 398$ Native Hebrew, Foreign English

Native tongue and cultural identity



Native tongue and cultural identity

Conclusion

The use of a native tongue connects the self to cultural norms thereby exacerbating the impact of stigma

Application to health decisions

Vaccination decisions

Native language as inducing norm



Janet Geipel



Marius
Commodore



Leigh Grant



Julie Edwards

Application to health decisions

Vaccine hesitancy



Somali community, Minnesota, 2017

Measles sweeps an immigrant community targeted by anti-vaccine activists

By HELEN BRANSWELL @HelenBranswell / MAY 8, 2017

Reprints



Why look at language use?
Norms and trust

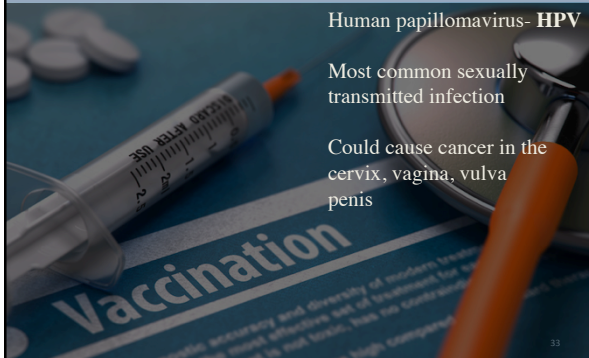
Language Influences Vaccination Uptake

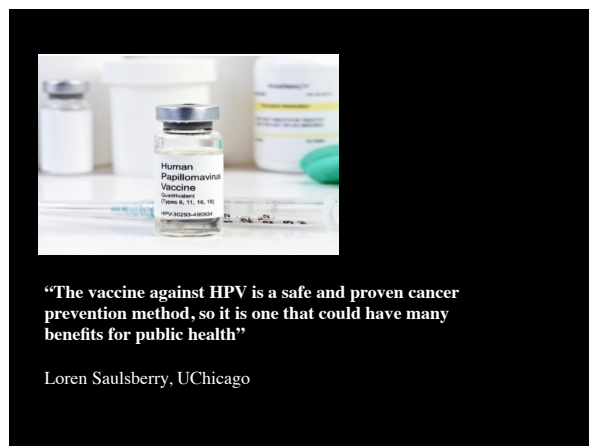
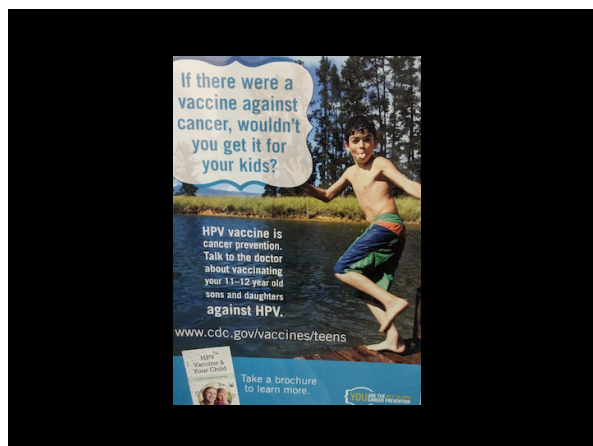


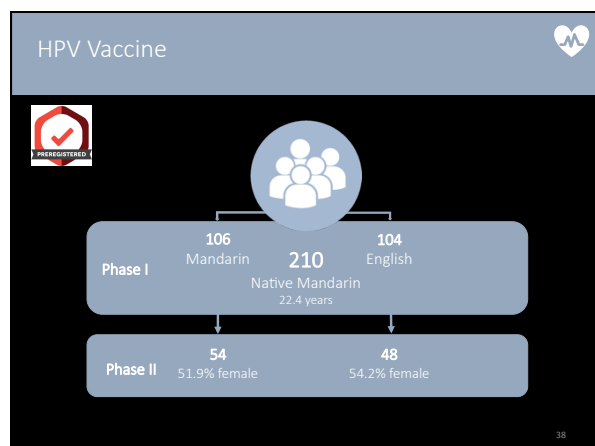
Human papillomavirus- HPV

Most common sexually
transmitted infection

Could cause cancer in the
cervix, vagina, vulva
penis



[illegible][illegible]



Phase I: Do you intend to get the HPV vaccine?

What predicts intention to make an appointment?

Gender- Yes
Language - No

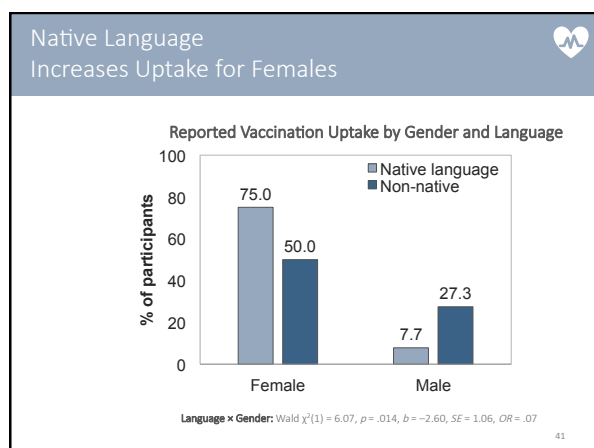
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Three months later

Phase II: Did you get the HPV vaccine?

您是否完成了第一次人乳头瘤病毒 (HPV) 疫苗的注射?

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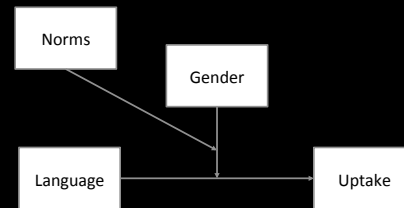
Language and Social Norms



Not at all	A little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
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- How much do your *parents* think that you should be vaccinated against human papillomavirus?
- To what extent does your *best friend* think that you should be vaccinated against human papillomavirus?
- To what extent does your *doctor* think that you should be vaccinated against human papillomavirus?

Language and Social Norms



Language \times Gender \times Norm, $b = 4.42$, $SE = 2.38$, $p = .063$, $CI [-0.24, 9.09]$

Planning: COVID 19 vaccine hesitancy



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Implications

Living in our native tongue connects us to our imagery, emotions, identity and cultural norms

This could have a systematic impact on our health behavior



“Meine deutschen worten haben keine kindheit”
My German words have no childhood

Emine Sevgi Özdamar