

Reading reviews in foreign versus native language: effects on imagery vividness and perceived review extremity

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Abstract

Reading and thinking in a foreign versus in the native language is associated with weaker emotional responses and weaker mental imagery. Despite the importance of online reviews and their inherent language diversity, there is no previous research looking into the Foreign Language Effect (FLE) in this context. We propose that: reading reviews in a foreign (vs. native) language leads to less extreme (more neutral) valence ratings, and this effect is stronger for negative reviews. This hypothesis was tested with a 2 (language: native, foreign) X 3 (review valence: positive, negative, mixed) between-subjects design experiment (N = 312). Results show no significant effect of language on imagery vividness, with imagery vividness having a significant positive effect on perceived review extremity. No significant interaction is found for language and review set valence on imagery vividness or perceived review extremity. These results do not support the manifestation of the FLE in the context of online reviews.