



## HOW OUR EMOTIONS AND DECISIONS CHANGE WHEN WE SWITCH LANGUAGES

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**Abstract.** *This study explores how language switching influences emotional perception and decision-making processes. Research in psycholinguistics suggests that individuals experience reduced emotional intensity and increased rationality when using a foreign language. This paper examines theoretical frameworks and empirical findings to understand the cognitive and emotional shifts that occur during language switching. The results indicate that foreign language use can lead to more analytical thinking, reduced emotional bias, and altered moral judgments. These findings have important implications for multilingual communication, international business, and cognitive science.*

**Keywords:** *bilingualism, emotion, decision-making, foreign language effect, psycholinguistics*

### **1. Introduction**

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a medium through which emotions and thoughts are structured. Bilingual and multilingual individuals often report feeling “different” when speaking another language.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon raises important questions: Do we think and feel differently in a foreign language? And how does language influence our decisions?

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<sup>1</sup> Caldwell-Harris, C. L. "Emotionality differences between a native and foreign language: Implications for everyday life." *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2021, pp. 145–150.



Recent studies in psycholinguistics introduce the concept of the foreign language effect, suggesting that using a non-native language reduces emotional resonance and influences cognitive processing. This paper aims to analyze how switching languages affects emotional responses and decision-making behavior.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Methods

This study is based on a qualitative analysis of existing literature in psycholinguistics and cognitive science.<sup>3</sup> Key experimental studies involving bilingual participants were reviewed, particularly those focusing on emotional processing and decision-making tasks.

The reviewed experiments typically included:

Emotional response assessments (e.g., reaction to emotionally charged words)

Moral dilemma tasks (e.g., trolley problem scenarios)

Risk-based decision-making tasks

Participants were usually bilingual individuals with varying levels of proficiency in their second language. Data were analyzed comparatively between native language and foreign language responses.

## 3. Results

The analysis of multiple studies reveals several consistent patterns:

### 3.1 Reduced Emotional Intensity

Participants showed weaker emotional reactions when using a foreign language. Words and phrases that are emotionally powerful in the native language tend to feel less intense in a second language.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2 Increased Rational Decision-Making

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<sup>2</sup> Costa, A., Vives, M. L., & Corey, J. D. "On language processing shaping decision making." *Current Opinion in Psychology*, vol. 38, 2020, pp. 94–98.

<sup>3</sup> Ferré, P., García, T., Fraga, I., Sánchez-Casas, R., & Molero, M. "Memory and emotionality in bilingual processing." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 12, 2021, p. 648983.

<sup>4</sup> Hayakawa, S., Costa, A., Foucart, A., & Keysar, B. "Using a foreign language changes our choices." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, vol. 25, no. 9, 2021, pp. 791–803.



When making decisions in a foreign language, individuals tend to rely more on logic rather than emotion. This leads to more utilitarian choices in moral dilemmas.

### 3.3 Lower Cognitive Bias

Using a foreign language reduces common cognitive biases such as loss aversion and framing effects. Participants demonstrated more consistent and calculated decision-making patterns.

## 4. Discussion

The findings support the hypothesis that language plays a crucial role in shaping emotional and cognitive processes. One possible explanation is that a foreign language is typically learned in more formal and less emotionally rich environments, which weakens emotional associations.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, processing a foreign language requires greater cognitive effort, which may promote more deliberate and analytical thinking.<sup>6</sup> This aligns with dual-process theories of cognition, where slower, more controlled thinking dominates over intuitive responses.

However, factors such as language proficiency, cultural context, and frequency of use can influence the extent of these effects. Highly proficient bilinguals may experience less distinction between languages.

## 5. Conclusion

Switching languages significantly affects how individuals experience emotions and make decisions. The use of a foreign language tends to reduce emotional intensity and promote more rational, less biased decision-making.

These insights are valuable in fields such as international negotiation, education, and psychology. Understanding the foreign language effect can help individuals and organizations make more informed and objective decisions in multilingual contexts.

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<sup>5</sup> Białek, M., & Fugelsang, J. A. "Cognitive and emotional factors in the foreign language effect." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, vol. 149, no. 6, 2020, pp. 1155–1171.

<sup>6</sup> Geipel, J., Hadjichristidis, C., & Surian, L. "How foreign language influences moral judgment." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 95, 2021, p. 104143.



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