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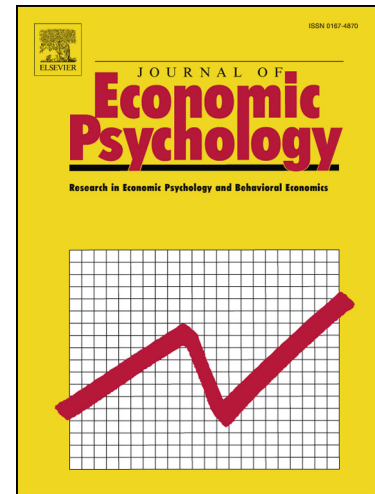
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Li King King*

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Abstract

This paper investigates how communication in a particular language affects decision-making in social interactions and risk preferences. We test two competing hypotheses: the cognitive accessibility hypothesis, and the expectation-based hypothesis. The cognitive accessibility hypothesis argues that communication in a particular language will activate the underlying cultural frame and affect behavior. The expectation-based hypothesis argues that different languages will induce different expectations regarding the choices of others and affect behavior. We test these two hypotheses using an extensive range of behaviors in a set of incentivized experiments with bilingual subjects in Chinese and English. We find that the subjects are more prosocial in strategic interaction games (trust games) when the experiments are conducted in Chinese. However, no treatment effects are observed in the individual choice games on social preference. The results are more in line with the expectation-based hypothesis.

Keywords: language, culture, identity, bilingual, experiments

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