

As a context-sensitive social tool, language activates culturally prescribed thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Prior research found that languages used in individualistic cultures (e.g., English) cued individualism values, context-independent information processing, and independent self-concept; and that languages used in collectivistic cultures (e.g., Chinese) cued collectivism values, context-dependent information processing, and interdependent self-concept (Oyserman & Lee, in press). Motivational effects of language were unexamined, prompting the current research. Data from 200 undergraduate students replicated previously found language effects on self-concept. More important, motivational effects were also observed: English potentiated the need to maintain self-esteem and Chinese primed prevention-focus goals. Results support a situated view of language as a culture-prime with distinct cognitive and motivational effects. Theoretical implications, methodological issues, and future directions are discussed.