

How does culture affect immersion during narrative reading?

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Abstract

Proficient speakers of a second language (L2) show similar processing of affective content as native speakers, but reduced magnitude, later latency, and a less differentiated emotional neural response (e.g., Hsu et al., 2015). Because language and culture are intertwined, this study examined whether cultural relevance of short stories affects immersion during reading, independent of language proficiency. Hong Kong (HK) and Mainland Chinese (MLC) readers were exposed to identical short stories featuring events and traditions related to either culture. Their level of attention, transportation and emotional engagement after each story was measured using the Story World Absorption Scale (Kuijpers et al., 2014). Preliminary results show that HK participants were significantly more immersed in HK cultural stories than in MLC stories, especially when they described modern events. Instead, MLC participants showed no difference in immersion. The results will be discussed considering historical common origins and modern stark distinction between the two cultures.