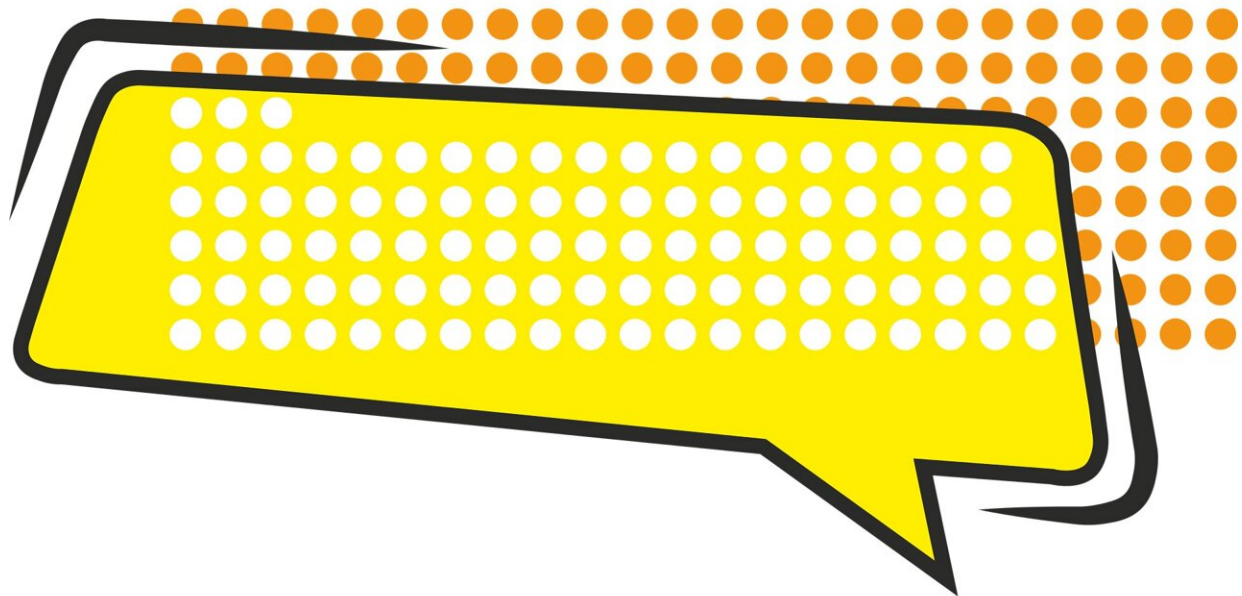


# People respond more intuitively to spoken language and more analytically when reading, study finds

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Opinion poll or survey results could potentially change depending on whether respondents are provided with spoken or written information, new research suggests.

A study in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* on "language modality"—the written or spoken form in which language is

presented—finds that people think more intuitively when responding to spoken information and more analytically when the information is written down.

Researchers including Dr. Janet Geipel from the University of Exeter Business School conducted a series of experiments that resulted in a challenge to long-held assumptions that thought is independent of language modality.

A total of 1,243 participants took part in five controlled experiments and were presented with a combination of trivia questions, verbal riddles, reasoning problems and syllogisms designed to test whether listening prompted more intuitive responses and reading more analytic responses.

Participants were presented with spoken and written problems that involved a conflict between a more "intuitive"—but incorrect—answer, and the correct answer, which required more analytic thought.

Four experiments were conducted in English, and one in Chinese Mandarin and the results supporting the same conclusion, with written problems drawing relatively more analytical responses and spoken problems garnering relatively more intuitive responses.

The research team believes the findings could have a far-reaching impact on many areas of life, such as on how surveys are carried out, how sociology and [psychology research](#) is conducted, how a legal brief might be communicated and in areas such as medicine and business.

Dr. Janet Geipel, a Lecturer in Consumer Behavior and Decision Making at the University of Exeter Business School, said, "The modality effect suggests that by providing surveys in the spoken modality responses might be relatively more intuitive. Therefore, a public opinion survey about [illegal immigration](#) might tap into feelings when conducted orally,

while a written format might involve less such emotional considerations. Such disciplines might rely on our findings for a more reasoned selection of the modality in order to not bias results.

"The findings also carry potential implications to any domain where thinking and reasoning is central such as medicine, [business](#) and the law. A legal brief, for example, makes the same argument whether it is read or heard, but it might not have the same impact. Our discovery suggests that reading an argument would lead to more analytic outcomes, whereas hearing it would give more consideration to intuition."

"Listening Speaks to Our Intuition While Reading Promotes Analytical Thought," by Dr. Janet Geipel from the University of Exeter Business School and Professor Boaz Keysar from the University of Chicago, is published in *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.

**More information:** Janet Geipel et al, Listening speaks to our intuition while reading promotes analytic thought, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* (2022). [DOI: 10.1037/xge0001316](https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0001316)

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