

Similarly, we usually assume a [global understanding of numbers](#). Still, [research](#) has also shown that our perception of numbers varies based on our language, and that variations can sometimes be extreme! People from Brazil speaking the [Múra-Pirahã language](#) face difficulties distinguishing between numbers like 10 and 15, because they [have no words for these numbers](#) in their language.

Language can also affect our [sense of direction](#). While we might say in English "The escape stair is to the right of the elevator," in other languages, like [Guugu Yimithirr in Australia](#), that is not enough: [Yimithirr people need to be more specific](#), so they would say, "The escape-stair is on the southwest of the elevator." Sometimes, the [language structure](#) itself can be a source of confusion as well; saying "Fire again house at started" may not make sense for many of us, but the words are in the [right order in Korean](#).

The problem doesn't end there. We found similar variations in [sense of time](#), [emotional intelligence](#), [gender realization](#) and [memorizing abilities](#), and all of that can greatly influence people's behavior during emergencies. Our data is limited to 10 languages in total, out of [thousands of other languages](#) spoken worldwide, so we are only getting the ball rolling in here!

Moving toward a more inclusive and equitable emergency communication

Today, the global trend is to try [unifying systems in order to reduce cost](#). That can be seen in emergency communication within [language standardization strategies](#) that aim for faster information transfer. But is fast all that we need? What about accuracy? When an institution adopts one communication language, it [faces a significant loss of performance](#). That's why we have to be mindful of these consequences of unifying communication, especially when research shows that unified communication creates a [higher sense of rejection](#).

Customization is no longer a luxury; it's a necessity. We need to design our communication systems around the people we are trying to communicate

with, including the [millions of people in the U.S. who speak English as a second language](#). We have to carry out [orderly evaluations for the current communication](#) systems to see how people get and understand warning messages. It is not enough simply to establish a communication system thinking it is good enough; we need to continuously rethink about how to make it better.

This story is part of [Science X Dialog](#), where researchers can report findings from their published research articles. [Visit this page](#) for information about ScienceX Dialog and how to participate.

More information: Amer Hamad Issa Abukhalaf et al, Psycholinguistics and emergency communication: A qualitative descriptive study, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ijdr.2021.102061](#)

Bio:

Amer Hamad Issa Abukhalaf is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Design, Construction, and Planning College, at the University of Florida. Amer works as a research assistant at the Florida Institute for Built Environment Resilience (FIBER), and he researches disasters with a focus on emergency communication.

Jason von Meding is an Associate Professor at the University of Florida and a founding faculty member of the Florida Institute for Built Environment Resilience (FIBER). He researches disasters – particularly how injustice and inequality are the fundamental drivers of risk in society, and therefore shape disaster impacts. As part of his focus on public facing science communication, he is co-host of the Disasters: Deconstructed Podcast and tweets @vonmeding.

APA citation: Emergency communications, second languages and hurricane season (2021, May 24) retrieved 18 May 2022 from <https://sciencex.com/news/2021-05-emergency-languages-hurricane-season.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.