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Affect and grammatical anomaly in discourse

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Abstract

We investigated the relationship between dispositional affect and the interpretation of sentences containing modal auxiliaries (must, should, might, would), that were embedded in factual vs. non-factual contexts. 49 participants read 2-sentence discourses followed by superficial questions, e.g., The art collector is admiring the statue. It would cost thousands of dollars. Question: The art collector is appreciating the statue. 1) True 2) False A negative correlation (r= -.355) was found for question-response accuracy scores and positive affect for must, should sentences vs. might, would. Thus, low positive affect individuals were more accurate after reading sentences with must, should vs. might, would. Questions were always about the context sentence; less attention at the second sentence would allow for higher accuracy rates. Given that must, should do not require restrictors for interpretation (Stump, 1985) whereas might, would do, low positive affect individuals paid less attention to these sentence types allowing for higher accuracy.

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