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# Does Linguistic Behavior Influence Blame and Punishment?

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## Abstract

Does language play a role in how people assign financial responsibility for damages? In Study 1, after watching either the intentional, accidental, or bystander version of an event, the participants described what happened and judged how much the person should pay for the inflicted damages, whether they thought it was intentional or accidental. We found that people who thought the outcome was intentional were more likely to describe the events using agentive (transitive) verbs. Furthermore, those who gave agentive descriptions were more likely to assign higher financial responsibility. These results demonstrate that linguistic behavior goes together with how people blame and punish. Study 2 aims to expand on this by investigating whether speakers of different languages who have been shown to habitually describe accidents differently show a similar result in their blame judgments. Collectively, these studies add to our understanding of how language plays into event construal and consequent judgments.