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# Why Doesn't Negative Behave? Inferences from Emotional Language

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# Why Doesn't Negative Behave? Inferences from Emotional Language

## **Authors**

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# INTRODUCTION

**Emotions** are involved in all aspects of cognition (Blanchette, 2006).

Individuals experience emotions differently (Kristjansson, 2008).

Communication can be improved with a better understanding of emotional language.

Emotional language is language that conveys an emotional state through a fictional character (Shears et al., 2009).

Positive and neutral valences support the inference formation process, but lacked natural **context** (Shears, et al., 2011).

Context plays an important role in comprehending a character's emotional state (Gygax et al., 2003).

The current experiment builds upon the previous study, replacing two sentence pairs with stories.

## WE HYPOTHESIZED THAT

...if the valence of the story is neutral or positive then readers will be more likely to form inferences to inference related target words than if the valence of the story is negative.



# WHY DOESN'T NEGATIVE BEHAVE?

## Inferences from emotional language

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## METHODS



		STORY TYPE		TARGET TYPE	
		I	C	I	T
VALENCE	P	Charles visited the lake every summer. It was his favorite place to go. The lake reminds him of his family. He was amazed at how beautiful the lake looked. The water was always so refreshing. Charles loved to swim in the lake.	Charles visited the lake every summer. It was his favorite place to go. The lake reminds him of his family. He was amazed at how beautiful the lake looked. The water was always so refreshing. He drove an old SUV.	memory pleasant	lake visited
	N	The young man lay on the ground puking bile. He had never felt so terrible before. He passed out due to the loss of fluid. Medicine was prescribed. The medicine made him feel worse. He had just finished eating spoiled meat.	The young man lay on the ground puking bile. He had never felt so terrible before. He passed out due to the loss of fluid. Medicine was prescribed. The medicine made him feel worse. He thought it would never end.	sick doctor	bile young
	U	The chair was placed in the other room. The chair was not heavy. The table also needed to be moved. Private lessons are worth the price. More space was required for salsa lessons.	The chair was placed in the other room. The chair was not heavy. The table also needed to be moved. Private lessons are worth the price. Jeremy was nervous for his first lesson.	learn danced	chair room

# RESULTS

## ACCURACY BY TARGET TYPE



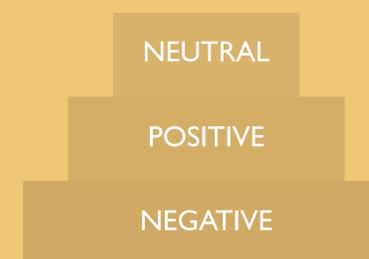
## DISCUSSION

Given significant context, neutral and positive stories supported the inference process, which replicates previous findings (Shears et al., 2011).

Findings support a **hierarchy by valence** in the inference process.

The comprehension of negative emotional language seems to defy typical inference processing.

An individual's perception of an emotion, particularly negative, may influence inference processing.



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