When Speech Becomes Writing: The Case of Disfluencies

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For human readers, written disfluencies (e.g., *um*) render the text more speech-like which in turn opens it up to less literal interpretation.

literal fluent — I'm sure negative peer pressure leads to mostly **idiotic** decisions.

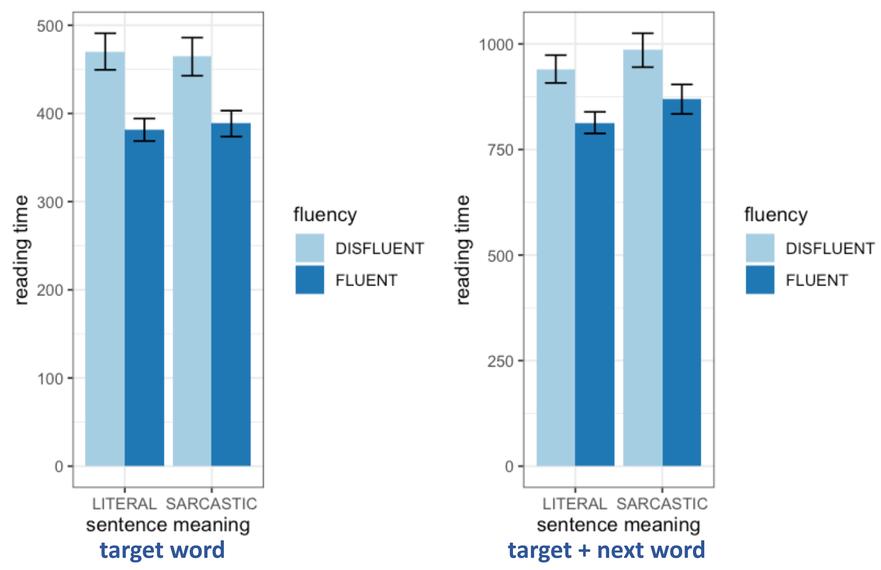
literal disfluent — I'm sure negative peer pressure leads to mostly ***um*** **idiotic** decisions.

non-literal fluent — I'm sure negative peer pressure leads to mostly **clever** decisions.

non-literal disfluent — I'm sure negative peer pressure leads to mostly ***um*** **clever** decisions.

- **When preceded by *um*, sentences compatible with non-literal meaning are not faster to read.**
- **Literal sentences are faster to read than non-literal sentences.**
- **Disfluent sentences are slower to read than fluent sentences.**

self-paced reading



99 participants, word-by-word self-paced reading of 24 items

eye-tracking experiment

natural reading prosody not disrupted

48 counterbalanced pairs, same character count:

`merry(literal)/feral (non-literal)`
`feral(literal)/merry (non-literal)`

commas before and after *um*:

`… be, um, merry when …`

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