

Do we plagiarize more often when the content of the to-be-remembered material is emotional?

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Background The emotional content of the to-be-remembered material could affect source monitoring accuracy as suggested by numerous studies². Although inadvertent plagiarism is considered as a source monitoring error and is often linked to creative-emotional environments such as arts, the effect of emotional content on inadvertent plagiarism has never been investigated. Therefore, the objective of our two experiments was to examine the possible impact of emotion on inadvertent plagiarism. The Brown and Murphy classical paradigm allowed us to investigate plagiarism either when a person remember an item and erroneously think that he/she was the generator of that item (RO task) or when the person erroneously thinks that he/she produces the item at the moment although, in fact, this item is a memory not recognized as such (GN task).

Procedure¹

1. Initial Generation (2 participants together)
“Generate alternately something positive / neutral / negative for you”
For each orally generated word, both participants made 2 judgments: valence (-3 “highly negative” → +3 “highly positive”) & arousal (1 “unexciting” → 6 “very exciting”)

After a one week delay

2. Recall-Own task (2 participants separately) : “Recall as many words as you can that YOU personally produced last week.” (unforced recall)
Confidence rating (exp.1 & 2) : (1 = “Not sure” to 5 = “Sure **I said** that word last week”) and Remember-Know-Guess judgments (exp.2 only)

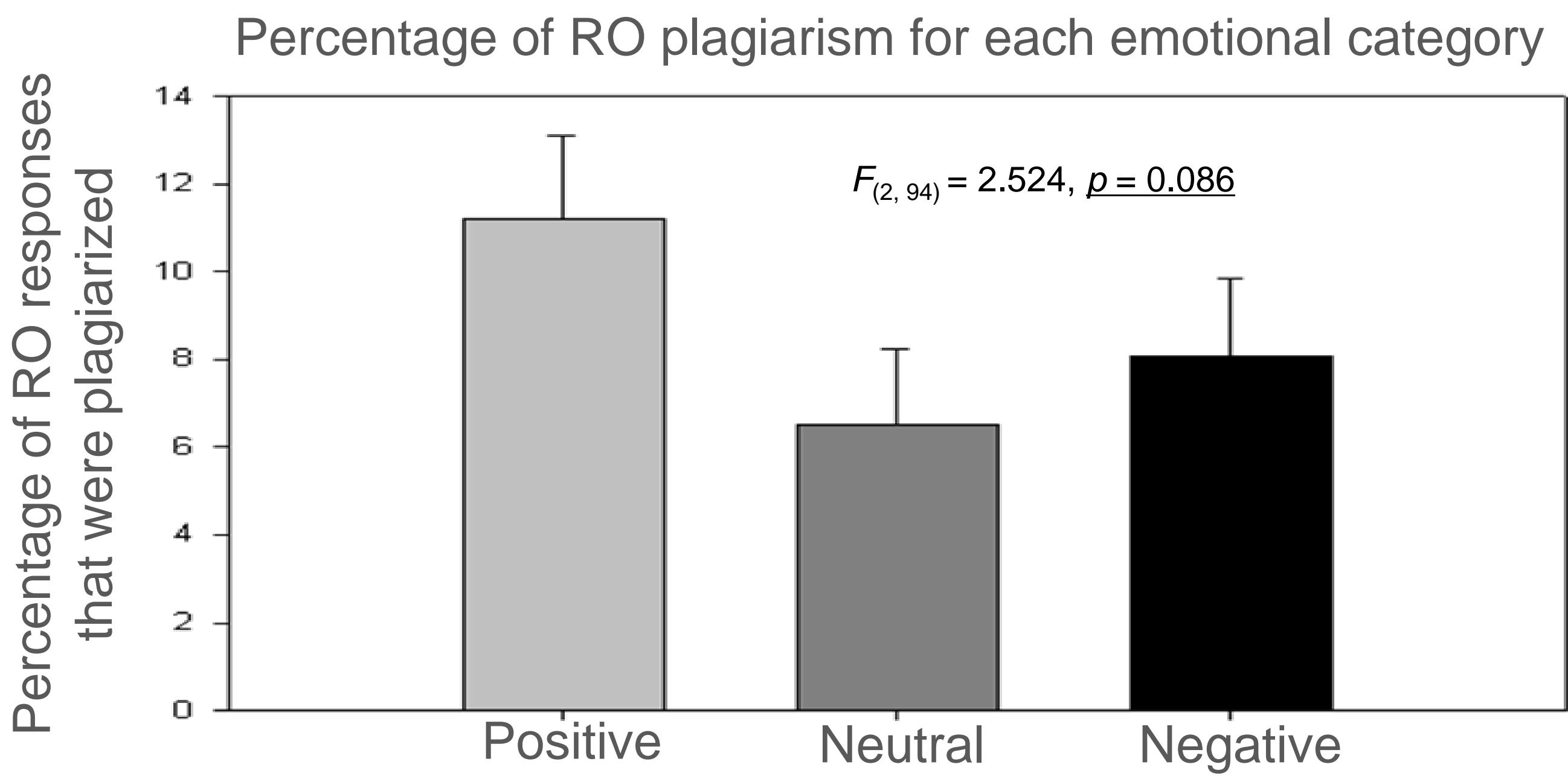
3. Generate-New task (2 participants separately) : “Generate four new items for each category.”
Confidence rating (exp.1 & 2) : (1 = “Not sure” to 5 = “I’m sure **no one** has produced that word last week”)

Design Same-sex dyads of young participants within-subject design → Repeated measures ANOVA's

Exp. 1 (N=48; 24 females)

Recall-Own task Mean plagiarism rate : 8.59%

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	$F_{(2, 94)} (p)$
	Mean (SEM)	Mean (SEM)	Mean (SEM)	
Correct R.	47.14 (2.88)	> 36.44 (2.83)	44.27 (2.55)	< 6.47 (0.01)
Intrusions	7.81 (146)	< 14.10 (169)	11.72 (2.00)	3.69 (0.03)



	Confidence Rating			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Mean
Correct R.	4.41	4.39	4.55	4.45
Plagiarism	3.42	3.03	3.35	3.27
Intrusions	2.82	2.79	3.09	2.90

$p < 0,01$ (for Plagiarism vs Correct R.)
 $p = 0,05$ (for Intrusions vs Correct R.)

Generate-New task Mean plagiarism rate : 7.64%

Percentage GN Responses				$F_{(2, 94)} = 1.607, p=0,206$	
	Positive	Neutral	Negative		
	Mean (SEM)	Mean (SEM)	Mean (SEM)		
Plagiarism	9.38 (2.03)	8.85 (2.27)	4.69 (1.75)		
Self-Plagiarism	3.65 (1.27)	5.73 (1.84)	2.08 (1.24)		
Other-Plagiarism	5.73 (1.52)	3.13 (1.19)	2.60 (1.33)		

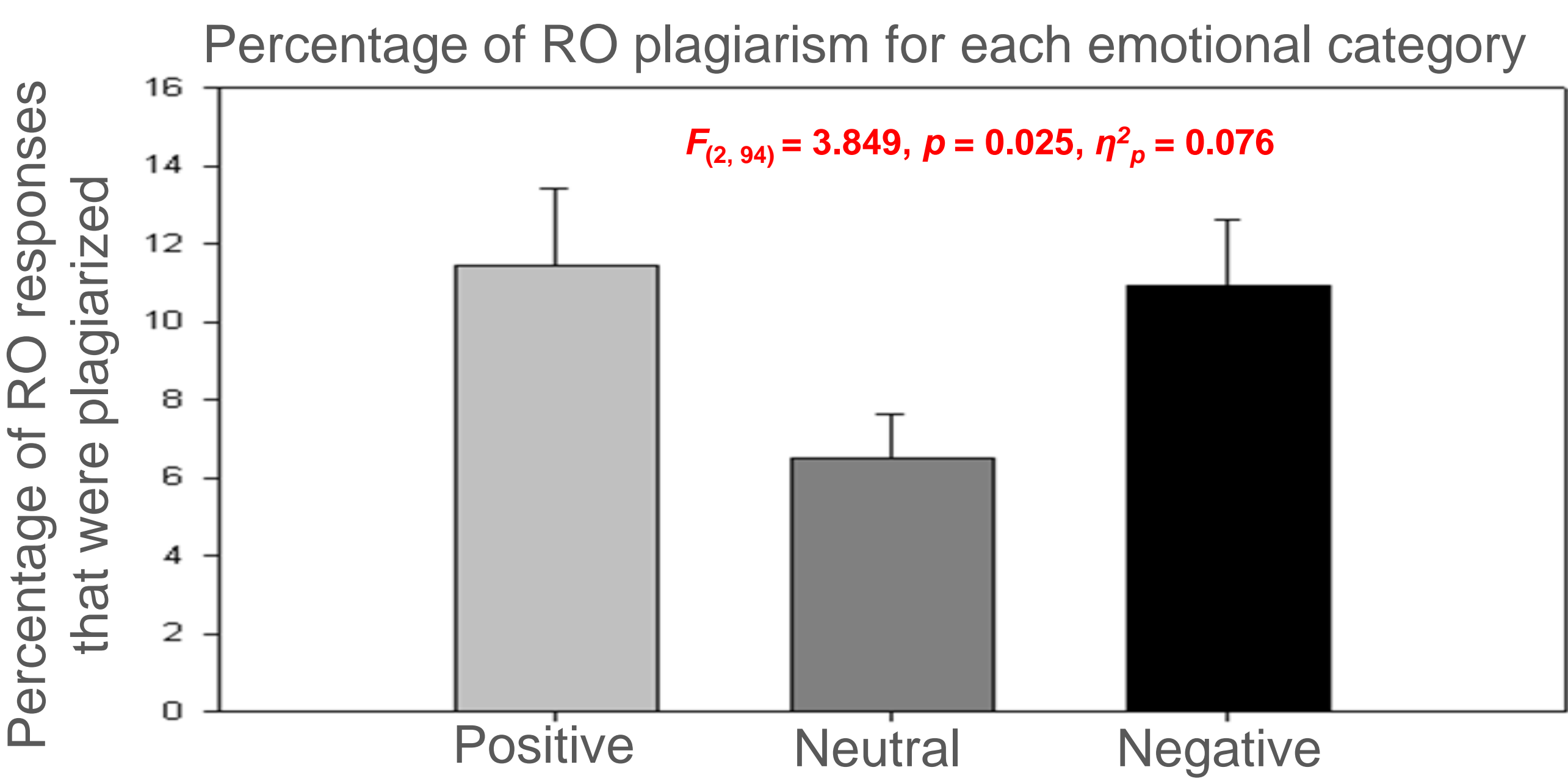
	Confidence Rating			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Mean
Correct R.	4.26	4.42	4.36	4.35
Plagiarism	3.75	4.08	3.36	3.73

$p < 0,01$ (for Plagiarism vs Correct R.)

Exp. 2 (N=48; 24 females)

Recall-Own task Mean plagiarism rate : 9.64%

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	$F_{(2, 94)} (p)$
	Mean (SEM)	Mean (SEM)	Mean (SEM)	
Correct R.	39.58 (2.86)	> 30.99 (2.52)	37.50 (2.52)	3.21 (0.05)
Intrusions	12.24 (182)	10.42 (182)	9.11 (179)	0.92 (0.40)



	Confidence Rating			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Mean
Correct R.	4.27	4.74	4.19	4.40
Plagiarism	3.43	3.52	3.43	3.46
Intrusions	3.06	2.83	3.32	3.07

$p < 0,01$ (for Plagiarism vs Correct R.)
 $p = 0,01$ (for Intrusions vs Correct R.)

Generate-New task Mean plagiarism rate : 9.09%

Percentage GN Responses				$F_{(2, 94)} = 1.425, p=0,246$	
	Positive	Neutral	Negative		
	Mean (SEM)	Mean (SEM)	Mean (SEM)		
Plagiarism	9.90 (2.15)	11.11 (2.33)	6.25 (2.59)		
Self-Plagiarism	4.17 (1.70)	5.21 (1.47)	2.08 (1.00)		
Other-Plagiarism	5.73 (1.84)	5.90 (1.88)	4.17 (1.34)		

	Confidence Rating			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Mean
Correct R.	4.24	4.44	4.10	4.26
Plagiarism	2.54	2.87	2.90	2.77

$p < 0,01$ (for Plagiarism vs Correct R.)

Conclusion In two experiments, the emotional content of the to-be-remembered material was found to affect the rates of plagiarism in the RO task. That is, neutral words were less plagiarized than both positive and negative words. These results do not support the Paradoxical Negative Emotion hypothesis³ which predict higher rates of correct responses and plagiarism for negative materials. In addition, probably because of a floor effect, we failed to obtain an effect of emotion on rates of plagiarism in the GN task. Participants were more confident in their correct responses than in plagiarized responses (RO & GN) and more confident in their plagiarized responses than in intrusions (RO).

References

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