Words Save a Life
How verbal probability expressions and emotion affect people’s donation
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Introduction
- Probability Expressions
  - Verbal “it is certain”
  - Numerical “80%”
- Directionality of verbal probabilities
  (Teigen & Brun 1995, 1999)
  a communicative function that changes listeners’ focus.
  - Positive “X is likely”
    → X may occur.
    → affirmative actions
  - Negative “X is unlikely”
    → X may NOT occur.
    → negative actions
- Emotion
  - More donations to identifiable victims (ident) than to statistical victims (stat) (e.g., Small & Loewenstein, 2003)
  - Greater sympathy may lead to more donations (Small et al., 2007)

H) Directionality will affect decision making.
Q) How is the relationship between directionality and emotion?

Method
#1
- Ask donations for surgeries in a foreign country
- Victims (ident or stat) × Probability Expression (pos, neg, or num)
- The success rate of surgery (Table↓)

#2
- Affective and moral reactions to the leaflet
  e.g.) “How upsetting was the situation to you?”
- Probability Interpretation (pos & neg)
  “What percent do you think the success rate of the surgery is?”

Result & Discussion
- People in ident-pos donated more than those in ident-num.
- No significant differences between other pairs.
- Participants generally donated more as Emotional Arousal increased.
- Interactive effect in ident: near-linear increases in pos and num, a sharp increase in neg.
- No differences between the three groups in stat.

Analysis
- Kruskal-Wallis analysis
- Multi-level logistic regression analysis
  - “Emotional Arousal”: factor scores of affective and moral reactions
  - “Donation Type”: active (> 100 JPY) or passive (≤ 100 JPY) → 0 or 1

Conclusion
- Directionality of verbal probabilities affected people’s decisions.
- There was an interactive effect on donations between the types of probability expressions and emotion.