

Personality influences how one reacts to email errors

March 30 2016, by Jared Wadley



When reading emails, do you become the "grammar police?"

You no who you aer: the person who thinks its her job too catch every typo or gramatical error?

This behavior is partly the result of personality traits that influence how people react to written errors, according University of Michigan linguistics experts.

Extroverted people are likely to overlook typos and grammatical errors that would cause introverted people to judge the person who makes such errors more negatively.

"This is the first study to show that the [personality traits](#) of listeners/readers have an effect on the interpretation of language," said Julie Boland, U-M professor of linguistics and psychology, and the study's lead author. "In this experiment, we examined the social judgments that readers made about the writers."

Eighty-three participants read email responses to an ad for a housemate that either contained no errors or had been altered to include either typos, such as mkae (make) or abuot (about), or grammar errors, such as to/too, it's/its or your/you're. They rated the email writers in terms of perceived intelligence, friendliness and other attributes, as well as provided information about themselves.

At the end of the experiment, participants were asked if they noticed any grammatical errors in the responses. If they answered "yes," they indicated how much the errors bothered them.

As expected, participants who reported grammar being important at the beginning of the experiment were more likely to be bothered by grammatical errors at the end, said study co-author Robin Queen, the

Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and professor and chair of the Department of Linguistics.

In addition, less agreeable people are more sensitive to grammatical errors, while more conscientious and less open people are sensitive to typos, the researchers said.

The study appears on *PLOS One* online.

More information: Julie E. Boland et al. If You're House Is Still Available, Send Me an Email: Personality Influences Reactions to Written Errors in Email Messages, *PLOS ONE* (2016). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0149885](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0149885)

Provided by University of Michigan

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