



Influences of Competence and Response Latency on Awkwardness and Veracity

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ABSTRACT

Interpersonal conversations filled with interruptions and pauses can result in unstable moments...sometimes awkwardly silent. The purpose of this quantitative research study is to explore nonverbal communication and how pausing in conversation, known as response latency, can influence perceptions of social awkwardness. Response latency and communication competence (i.e., one's ability to navigate difference social situations effectively) will serve as the independent variables while social awkwardness and judgments of veracity will serve as the dependent variables. Guided by the theoretical framework of expectancy violations theory, this study examines how changes in response latency (from short to long pausing) may violate social norms and drive conversational fluency.

INTRODUCTION

- Silence communicates emotions and thoughts that are not always awkward or negative- though it's use can determine the outcome of conversation,.
- Communication competence is the appropriate behavior in human interactions.
- Awkwardness is defined as “the reduction of the social to fixed forms that remains the basic error” (Williams 1977, p.129)
- Response latency is the duration of silence in interactions. Awkward perceptions could also be determined by long or short response latencies.
- Veracity is defined as “...truthfulness, accuracy, conveying or perceiving truth.” (Sage Research Methods)
- Expectancy Violations Theory suggests that when a person violates what is expected of them, they experience arousal. (Punyanunt-Carter, 2013). This break in communication “norms” can result in the prolonged response latency, hesitancy, and anxiety.
- Levels of communication competence can determine how communicators respond after awkward exchanges by either addressing or avoiding the encounter.
- Response latency could also have deception. Social intelligence is important in deception because fakers want to know how, when, and what to say to fulfill their motives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1:** How does changes in response latency during conversation affect the perception of social awkwardness in conversation?
- RQ2:** How does one's level of communication competence influence perceptions of response latency in conversation?
- RQ3:** How do changes in response latency influence perceptions of trust/deception used during conversation?

		Response Latency / Speech Rate		
		Slow	Fast	Normal (control)
Communication Competency	High	<i>Social Awkwardness</i> <i>Veracity</i>	<i>Social Awkwardness</i> <i>Veracity</i>	<i>Social Awkwardness</i> <i>Veracity</i>
	Low	<i>Social Awkwardness</i> <i>Veracity</i>	<i>Social Awkwardness</i> <i>Veracity</i>	<i>Social Awkwardness</i> <i>Veracity</i>

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METHODS

Stimulus:

- This study relies on an experimental design where we will first record the audio of an interpersonal conversation surrounding a simple topic such as, “How were your classes today?”
- The extracted audio will be edited using software to create three separate recordings consisting of a conversation where the response latency between pauses in conversation are split into half, doubled in time, and an unedited version.

Participants:

- Randomly assigned one of the conditions and will listen to the conversation.
- Rate perception of the conversational meaning through measures/scales (i.e., awkwardness & veracity).
- Demographics and complete a communication competence scale, serving as independent variable

Measures:

- Communication competence: Self-Perceived Communication Competence scale. McCroskey, McCroskey, L. L. (1988)
- Response latency: Physical time. Faust, Balota, Spieler, & Ferraro. (1999)
- Social Awkwardness: 4-point Likert-type scale. Grossman, Edelson, & Tager-Flusberg (2013).
- Veracity: Measure 1- Dichotomous judgment. Levine, Park, McCornack, (1999). Measure 2- Honesty scale. Mazar, Amir, & Ariely (2008).

