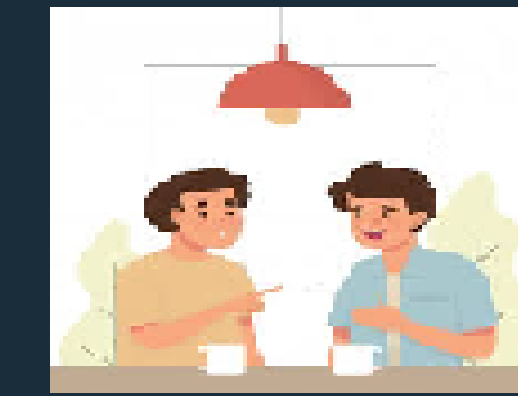


A Taxonomy of Non-verbal Responses to



Gossip



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Gossip is the exchange of socially relevant information. This preliminary research examines the role of gossip in social interactions. Illustrating a variety of facial expressions that could be included in a preliminary taxonomy of facial responses to gossip. We consider how gossip's occurrence is an interpersonal dynamic process that involves evaluative work on the part of the person receiving it. They may display their response in a variety of verbal and non-verbal ways, signaling to the sender their like or dislike of the information. The classic Ekman surprise face may be observed as an expressive facial response to receiving such information. By developing the behavioural ecology view of facial displays (Fridlund, 1994; Crivelli & Fridlund, 2018) we may observe that the surprise face does not display any feelings of surprise that reflect an individual's internal state but reflects aspects of the relationship between the interlocutors. We suggest that if appropriate facial expressions are displayed that match the social context, gossip and the response to it may be considered as socially motivated communication tool, rather than signals that index felt emotion.

Stimuli

- Eight hours of recorded conversation from the ILHAIRE laughter database (McKeown et al, 2012)
- Dyadic pairs N= **Men** 2 **Women** 3 **Mixed** 3
- Random topic generator sourced from internet: film; music; money; holidays

Coding scheme for gossip

- A1 Talk about people known to both interlocutors
- A2 Talk about oneself in relation to an individual known to both interlocutors
- A3 Talk about oneself in relation to an individual not known to conversation partner
- A4 Talk about oneself

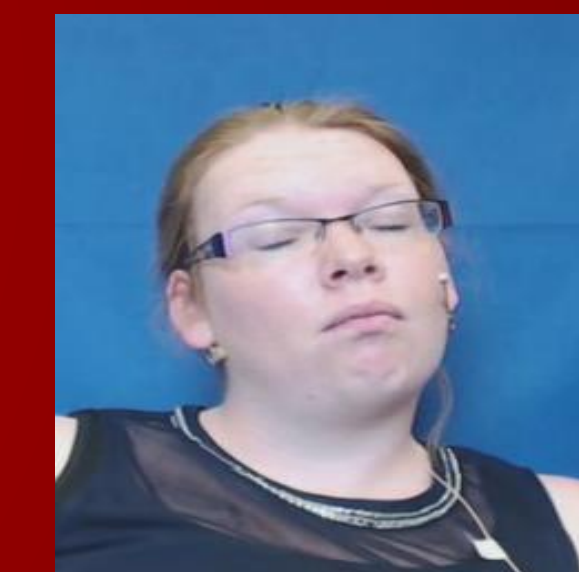
NB: In A2, the third party about whom information is being shared is known to both interlocutors. In A3, the third party about whom information is being shared is known only by the interlocuter who is sharing the information. In A2 and A3, the principal person about whom information is being shared is the person talking.

WHAT MIGHT RESPONSES TO GOSSIP LOOK AND SOUND LIKE?

Positive



Negative



Visual signal	Acoustic signal
Surprise-style expression	Intake of breath/gasp
Intense laughter	Intense sound
Low-intensity laughter	Low sound
Visual signal	Acoustic signal
Changing topic	Speech
Indifference	Speech
Contempt	No sound

Conclusion and discussion

Receivers reacting with positive facial expressions to the gossip may signal to the sender that they have understood the likes and dislikes of the receiver and that their sharing of information has been appreciated. These responses may indicate how the receiver evaluates the relationship between them and the sender rather than the internal emotional state of the receiver.

Negative or indifferent responses from the receiver may signal to the sender that they may not have understood what is in the mind of the receiver. With such responses, the receiver may evaluate the content of the information rather than the relationship with the sender.

This preliminary work will be extended to examine facial expressions responses to gossip contrasting behavioural ecology views of socio-communicative uses of expression in contrast to the classic Ekman/Buck evaluation of expressions reflecting internal emotional felt states.