Shyness and Self-Preoccupation: Effects on Conversation Partners

Lyne Henderson, Leonard Horowitz, Deborah Tatar, and Kirsty Bortnik
Stanford University, Stanford CA

Abstract: Successful interpersonal interaction involves accurate and meaningful communication. Many shy individuals experience difficulties in communicating effectively, which may lead to increased stress and decreased self-confidence. The current study examined the effects on a speaker of a shy or non-shy listener who is focusing on social evaluation. We hypothesized that shy listeners would reduce their degree of involvement in the conversation and report more anxiety and self-preoccupation than non-shy listeners. In this study, we examined the effects of listener type (shy versus non-shy) and interaction type (evaluation versus control) on speaker involvement, anxiety, and self-preoccupation. We also measured the listeners' negative and positive affect during the interaction using a version of the Positive and Negative Affectivity Scale. Our results suggest that shy listeners may be more socially skilled and empathic than non-shy listeners when they are not being evaluated. Furthermore, shy listeners were more likely to report reduced anxiety and increased positive affect in the control condition compared to the evaluation condition, whereas non-shy listeners reported increased anxiety and negative affect in the evaluation condition. These findings have important implications for our understanding of shy behavior and the development of interventions for shy individuals.

Introduction

Shyness is a complex phenomenon that involves a range of cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors. Shy individuals tend to experience anxiety in social situations, which can lead to decreased social competence and increased self-preoccupation. The current study aimed to examine the effects of listener type (shy versus non-shy) and interaction type (evaluation versus control) on speaker involvement, anxiety, and self-preoccupation. We also measured the listeners' negative and positive affect during the interaction using a version of the Positive and Negative Affectivity Scale.

Methods

The study was conducted in a laboratory setting. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: evaluation or control. The evaluation condition involved a conversation with a co-worker who was rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating low evaluative threat and 5 indicating high evaluative threat. The control condition involved a conversation with a co-worker who was not rated. Participants were instructed to rate their degree of involvement in the conversation and to report their level of anxiety and self-preoccupation. We also measured the listeners' negative and positive affect during the interaction using a version of the Positive and Negative Affectivity Scale.

Results

Our results suggest that shy listeners may be more socially skilled and empathic than non-shy listeners when they are not being evaluated. Furthermore, shy listeners were more likely to report reduced anxiety and increased positive affect in the control condition compared to the evaluation condition, whereas non-shy listeners reported increased anxiety and negative affect in the evaluation condition. These findings have important implications for our understanding of shy behavior and the development of interventions for shy individuals.

Discussion

1. Speakers in the evaluation condition were more likely to rate shy listeners lower in social competence than non-shy listeners.
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4. Speakers in the evaluation condition were more likely to rate shy listeners lower in social competence than non-shy listeners.
5. Speakers in the evaluation condition were more likely to rate shy listeners lower in social competence than non-shy listeners.

Overall, our results suggest that shy listeners may be more socially skilled and empathic than non-shy listeners when they are not being evaluated. These findings have important implications for our understanding of shy behavior and the development of interventions for shy individuals.