

## Personality variables and interruptions in small discussions

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'When two or more people are conversing, they take it in turns to speak, and usually manage to achieve a fairly smooth synchronized sequence of utterances without too many interruptions or silences' (Argyle, 1975). It is surprising how little is known about the amount of interruptions to be expected; what is the normal amount of interruptions? True, it is likely that people who do not know each other will need some time to adjust their spontaneous styles of speaking until they fit together, but how long? Experiments have led to the discovery of the signals which are used for synchronizing. Thus, if a listener wants to take the floor he can either interrupt, and speak louder and/or faster, he can make triple head-nods or nonverbal signals often accompanied by verbal signals like 'yes', 'but', or 'well'.

Meltzer, Morris and Hays (1971) report a multiple correlation of .79 between the percentage of successful interruptions, (a) the change in interruptee's vocal amplitude from before to during the interruption, and (b) the difference between the interruptee's and interrupter's amplitude during simultaneous speech.

Another feature characteristic for certain stages in conversations is simultaneous talking. Again, very little is known about the amount still acceptable to people without becoming too disturbing.

The turn-taking in conversations was studied by Duncan (1972), who found that the change of simultaneous turns was sharply decreased when the auditor attempted to take his turn after the display of a yielding signal by the speaker. As more yielding cues were conjointly displayed, the probability of a turn-taking attempt by the auditor increased in a strictly linear fashion. To what extent are interruptions and double-talking culturally determined? To what extent are they related to personality variables?

It is reasonable to assume that more intelligent partners would engage in fewer

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