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Laughing and coughing: testing for vocalised indicators of entrainment and action inhibition

Identifying objective indicators of engagement and disengagement is an important goal within social signal processing and human-computer interactions. One theoretical indicator of engagement in a listener/addressee is action inhibition. One potential action that is inhibited as an intrusion may be coughing. Here we outline a series of “in the wild” experiments structured to test whether the suppression of coughing can be associated with the quality of a live or recorded lecture.

During engagement of dyads the opposite of action inhibition can also occur, when the addressee joins in. However, adding to a conversation may be a sign of politeness or of disagreement. Laughter is generally viewed as a positive signal, although some laughter can be polite. Here we outline an “in the wild” experiment structured to test whether laughter of men or women can be an indicator of attraction during a speed dating session, allowing for us to test the theory that women are attracted to men who make them laugh, and men are attracted to women who laugh at their jokes..