

Examining the Impact of Language Proficiency and Veracity on Overall Rapport

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Abstract

Observers' deception detection accuracy tends to differ depending on the speakers' language proficiencies (e.g., Elliot & Leach, 2016). We explored whether rapport was an underlying factor. Participants with different language proficiencies (i.e., beginner, intermediate, advanced or native English) were instructed to lie or tell the truth during an interview. Then, they completed rapport questionnaires. We hypothesized that rapport would be higher for truth-tellers than lie-tellers. However, we expected that this effect would be exacerbated when language proficiency was poorest (i.e., the lowest rapport would be reported by deceptive beginner English speakers vs. all other groups).

Introduction

- There is a problematic “proficiency effect” in which observers' deception detection accuracy differs across speakers' language proficiency levels (e.g., Evans et al., 2017).
- The level of rapport between the interviewer and interviewee might underlie this effect.
- Rapport is important during an interview as it facilitates information gain (Ewens et al., 2016). This might affect deception detection as observers' often rely on the amount of information to determine whether someone is telling the truth (DePaulo et al., 2003).
- Language barriers can impede the development of rapport due to a lack of understanding and trust (Partida, 2007).
- We examined the effect of language proficiency on rapport when speakers were lying versus telling the truth.

Hypotheses

- Native English speakers would report higher rapport scores than beginner English speakers.
- Truth-tellers would report higher rapport scores than lie-tellers.
- The difference in rapport between lie-tellers and truth-tellers would be greater in beginner English speakers than in intermediate, advanced and native English speakers.

Method

Participants

72 university students

- $M_{age} = 23.71$, $SD_{age} = 6.45$; 33 Males, 39 Females

Procedure

Participants completed a standardized Versant English Test to determine their English proficiency (i.e., beginner, intermediate, advanced or native; Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012).

After viewing a suspicious or innocuous video, participants were instructed to either lie or tell the truth about what they witnessed.

Participants were videotaped as they were interviewed in English by two trained mock attorneys.

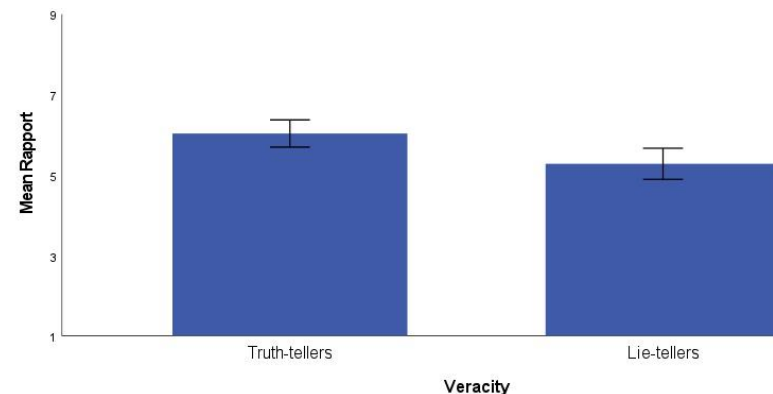
Participants then answered a 35-item measure of rapport rated on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 9 (completely).

Results

A Veracity x Proficiency ANOVA was conducted on overall rapport:

Veracity

- Rapport was significantly higher for truth-tellers than lie-tellers, $F(1, 64) = 5.734$, $p = .020$, $\eta p^2 = .082$.



Language Proficiency

- We did not find a significant main effect of proficiency on rapport, $F(3, 64) = 0.721$, $p = .543$, $\eta p^2 = .033$.
- There was no significant interaction between veracity and proficiency, $F(3, 64) = 0.395$, $p = .757$, $\eta p^2 = .018$.

Discussion

- As predicted, truth-tellers reported higher overall rapport scores than lie-tellers. However, language proficiency had no significant effect on rapport.
- The absence of a proficiency effect could be explained by a lack of power. The required sample size has not yet been reached due to pandemic-related research restrictions.
- Additional data is being collected to determine whether language proficiency impacts rapport development.

References

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