

Detailed Protocol for “Impressions of Dialog Behaviors across Cultures”

March 8, 2007, Yaffa Al Bayyari and Nigel Ward

Preparation

1. set up speakers and headphones on a laptop
2. position it so subjects are facing a wall, so they'll be less distracted

Introduction

1. Welcome the subject and thank them for participating.
2. Overview the purpose *“We are interested in patterns of dialog in various languages, especially Arabic and English. This study is about which patterns of interaction are preferred or disliked by various people. The ultimate aim is to help find ways to overcome problems of intercultural communication. We'll give you more details at the end.”*
3. Tell them the experiment will last 30-45 minutes.
4. Overview what they will do:
 - a. Fill out some paper work.
 - b. Listen to lots of audio clips, and judge how they sound
 - c. Get paid (or get class credit)
5. *Subject fills out consent sheet.
6. Assign an Id and sign as witness.
7. *Subject fills out Participant Datasheet.
8. Write down the subject's ID on the Participant Datasheet
9. Note whether they participated in the Back-Channel trainer experiments; also whether they are English-native, Arabic native, or neither. If neither, either feed them to Anais for her experiment or run them anyway.

Familiarization

1. Explain: *“Most of the time you’ll be listening to dialog fragments which have been modified so that you can’t identify the speakers or their words. They sound like this.”*
2. Using speakers, play them Vera-Ward example 1 in the clear and then masked; then example 2 both ways.
3. Tell them *“Generally you can tell something about the speakers or the situation even with the modified audio, although sometimes it’s hard. In any case, please just do your best.”*
4. Tell them *“For the experiments you’ll be using headphones.”*
5. *Subject puts on the headphones.
6. Using examples 1 and 2, show them how to click on the icons to hear the audio. Also show them how to adjust the volume.
7. Tell them *“In this room it’s easy to be distracted, but we’d like you to focus on the sounds. It may help to close your eyes as you listen. Please try it once and see if it helps.”*
8. *Subject tries it.

Experiment 1

1. Briefly explain: *“In this experiment you’ll listen to 9 fragments of dialogs between two speakers, and we’d like you to judge the naturalness of the second person’s responses given what came before.”*
2. Give them the questionnaire and explain each question.
3. Let the subject listen to the Vera-Ward masked examples and discuss the questions using these as examples.
4. Explain *“First I’d like you to do part a. The samples are grouped into 3 groups and we’d like you to try to identify the most natural response in each group. Please listen to the Long fragment and focus on what the second speaker is doing. Please listen first to the first group”*.
5. *Subject listens
6. Ask them *“how was that?”*.
7. *Subject talks, probably noting that all stimuli sound alike.
8. Whatever they say, now tell them *“in each case, it starts out the same, but the way the first speaker ends his utterance differs slightly, and some responses differ too. It’s subtle. Okay, now let’s do it for real. Please listen to the short samples of each fragment, which will help you focus on the transition in the dialog; and you can play things as many times as you like.*
9. *Subject makes judgments for question a.
10. Watch them; if they make judgments without listening to each short sample at least twice, remind them to do so. If they say it’s unnecessary, don’t argue with them, but just make a note of this. (Continue to do this throughout the experiments.)
11. *“Now please listen again and answer question b. “*
12. *Subject makes judgments for question b.
13. Explain: *“okay, could you now please answer the questions on the back of the sheet?”*
14. *Subject does so.
15. Review their comments briefly; if anything is unclear ask about it and add clarifying notes.

Experiment 2

1. Explain *“This part will go a lot faster. Here you’ll listen to 3 audio fragments from one speaker and try to infer their emotional state. Here’s the questionnaire we’ll be using.”*
2. *Subject reads the questionnaire.
3. Explain *“First there are two easy examples for practice.”*
4. *Subject hears the original happy and angry examples, and scores them on questions a-b.
5. Explain *“Those two fragments sound like this when masked.”*
6. *Subject listens to the masked versions of happy and angry.
7. Explain *“Of course it’s harder this way, but you can probably still hear some of the emotion.”*
8. Explain *“okay, now it’s for real. Listen for nuances; even if it seems only slightly happy, write happy. Since the differences are subtle, please play each at least twice. Also please just answer question a for all three first.”*
9. *Subject listens to the samples and judges them. If they ask “what do I do if it’s just slightly happy” say “then circle happy”.
10. Explain: *“now please listen again and answer question b”*
11. *Subject does so.
12. Explain: *“now please listen again and answer questions c and d”*
13. *Subject does so.
14. Explain: *“okay, could you now please answer the questions on the back of the sheet?”*
15. *Subject does so.
16. Review their comments briefly; if anything is unclear ask about it and add clarifying notes.

Experiment 3 (for Arabic-speakers only)

1. Offer them a short break.
2. Explain: *“In this experiment you’ll listen to 9 audio fragments of dialogs between two speakers, a native-Arabic speaker and a learner, and we’d like you to judge how the learner sounds. First please take a look at the questionnaire.”*
3. *Subject reviews questionnaire.
4. Explain *“Okay, before answering the questions, here are **two examples** of what you’ll hear.”*
5. *Subject does so.
6. Explain *“As you may have realized, these samples generally consist of: a greeting, a request for information, a reply, and a closing. In some cases the learner neglected to make a greeting. Now please listen to all 9 samples and answer question a for each”.*
7. *Subject does so. Don’t expect them to listen more than once to each.
8. Explain *“Now again, for question b.”*
9. *Subject does so. Don’t expect them to listen more than once to each.
10. Explain *“Now again, for question c.”*
11. *Subject does so. Don’t expect them to listen more than once to each.
12. Explain: *“Finally, we’d like you to listen to some pairs, and directly compare them on the three dimensions”.*
13. *Subject does so, answering **question d**. Here they may need to listen more than once.
14. Explain: *“okay, could you now please answer the questions on the back of the sheet?”*
15. *Subject does so.
16. Review their comments briefly; if anything is unclear ask about it and add clarifying notes.

Closing

1. You explain briefly how we'll use their data; if this study shows that some interaction patterns are significantly important, this work will be published.
2. Ask them not to talk to others about the details of the dialogs and dialog patterns, because we need to have unbiased opinions.
3. Hand them compensation or promise to tell their TA they participated.
4. Thank them warmly.