Gender and Communication: Perceptions of Diffuse Status Characteristics in Workplace Email

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RESEARCH QUESTION

RQ: Is the use of language strategies in workplace emails associated with interlocutor perceptions of the speaker’s a) competence, b) gender, and c) diffuse status characteristics?

METHOD

- Experimental design surveys were distributed through social media and email to measure the perceived diffuse status characteristics (Gender, Organizational Ranking, Trust, and Competency).
- Participants were randomly given one of two emails which contained tentative or assertive language strategies.
- Participants were asked to evaluate the email messages they received for certain status characteristics, including communicative competence and trustworthiness.
- Scales used for evaluation:
  - Communication Competence Scale (CCS, Würmann): 36 items, some of which were removed due to irrelevance. Tentative: The scale was reliable (α = .90, M = 3.79, SD = .91). Assertive: The scale was reliable (α = .93, M = 3.35, SD = .38).
  - Individualized Trust Scale (ITS, Wheeless and Grotz): 15 questions containing two polarized words placed on opposite ends of a 5-point scale. Tentative: The scale was reliable (α = .92, M = 3.35, SD = .38). Assertive: The scale was reliable (α = .87, M = 2.29, SD = .44).

The emails sent out with the survey are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tentative</th>
<th>Assertive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dear K., on my commute home last night, I had some time to think about the meeting we had about our upcoming project. I am thinking that it might be beneficial to start with the proposed ideas. I will discuss them with you next week. I believe this should be a manageable timeline. When are you available to get together and discuss this? Let me know and I’ll get back to you as soon as possible.</td>
<td>X. I reflected on the meeting we had about our upcoming project. We’re going ahead with the proposed ideas as soon as possible. Our results will be expected by the end of the month, so we’ll start tomorrow afternoon. Meet me in my office tomorrow at 2:00 PM.</td>
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RESULTS

- T-tests revealed a significant difference between scores on communication competence in the tentative and assertive conditions.
- The tentative/assertive condition were not associated with evaluations of status characteristics related to demographics (age, gender, organizational ranking, education level).

REFERENCES


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