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# Listeners' status and different shades of listener's mood in relation to conversation memory

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**Abstract**
The present research was initiated to study listeners' status and different shades of listener's mood in relation to conversation memory. The main objectives of the study were (1) to investigate the influence of listener's status on conversation memory, i.e. to what extent listener's status facilitate or inhibit conversation memory; (2) to investigate the effect of listener's mood on conversation memory, i.e. to what extent elated, depressed, and neutral mood of the listener facilitate or inhibit the conversation memory; and (3) to examine the various interactional effects' of independent variables i.e. listener's status, and mood on our dependent variable i.e. conversation memory. Socio-Economic Status Scale developed by O.P. Aggarwal, Bhasin, Sharma, Chhabra, K. Aggarwal, & Rajoura (2005) was employed to determine the Socio-Economic Status of the subjects. The scale consisted of 22 items, aadministered on a large numbers of Post Graduate female Students from faculty of Social Science A.M.U, Aligarh. On the basis of their score on SESS; 600 subjects were selected, 300 subject were having high socio-economic status and remaining 300 were having low socio-economic status. Those subjects who obtained 61 and above score were consider as high-economic status and those who obtained 31 to 60 score were consider as low socio-economic status. There were 100 subjects in each group. Mood was induced by Modified Velten Mood Induction Technique (Sinclair, Mark, Enzle, Borkovec, & Cumbleton, 1994) and Musical Mood Induction Technique (Hilal, 2014). 2X3 factorial design was used in the present study.
It was found that conversation memory is better in low listener status than conversation memory in high listener status. In other words, subject having low listener status better remembered than subject having high listener status. Subjects with elated mood, depressed mood and neutral mood do differ with respect to conversation memory.

**Keywords:** Listeners' Status, Listener's Mood, Conversation Memory

## Introduction
The information we acquire about people or environment is often conveyed in informal conversations. A person may tell us about someone he met or we may listen to people exchanging anecdotes about mutual acquaintance; later we may be called to convey our own impression of the individual who was described. We presumably do this on the basis of cognitive representation we had formed of the person while listening to the conversation. So conversation memory may be defined as "The ability of an individual to correctly recall or recognise the contents of the conversation either verbatim or semantic".

Since there are numerous studies to demonstrate the impact of speakers status on conversation memory, however very few studies are reported to demonstrate the influence of listeners status on conversation memory. These few studies are not carried out with regress experimentation. Hence it is imperative to design a study in which one can assess the influence of listeners' status on conversation memory. The present study attempt to fulfill this gape of knowledge. Thus it is one of the main objectives of the present investigation. Variety of mood induction procedures exist, including the Velten procedure (Velten, 1986), music induction (Clark, 1983; Pignatiello, Camp and Rasar, 1986), and various other approaches (Bower, 1981; Polivy, 1981). The strongest mood inductions often combine two procedures to influence mood because it is believed that multiple inductions contribute additively to a mood (Bower, 1981; Clark, 1983). Such dual induction procedures may also enhance specificity because each of the two inductions can be individually targeted to the specific mood of interest.

These are the following objectives of the present study:

1) To investigate the influence of listener's status on conversation memory, i.e. to what extent listener's status facilitate or inhibit conversation memory.
2) To investigate the effect of listener's mood on conversation memory, i.e. to what extent elated, depressed, and neutral mood of the listener facilitate or inhibit the conversation memory.
3) To examine the interactional effects' of independent variables i.e. listener's status, and mood on our dependent variable i.e. conversation memory.

## Methodology
### Design of the Study
In order to answer the above research questions, a 2X3 factorial design was used in the present study, in which one organismic variable i.e. listener's status was varied in two ways (1) high listener's status (2) low listener's status and three values of personality variable i.e. listeners mood were (1) elated mood (2) depressed mood and (3) neutral mood. Thus there were six groups of the subjects as given below and each was tested for conversation memory by recall method.

**Group I** : High Listener's status, and Elated Mood.
**Group II** : Low Listener's status, and Elated Mood.
**Group III** : High Listener's status, and Depressed Mood.
**Group IV** : Low Listener's status, and Depressed Mood.
**Group V** : High Listener's status, and Neutral Mood.
**Group VI** : Low Listener's status, and Neutral Mood.

**Participants**

In order to form these six groups of subject; Socio-Economic Status Scale was administered on a large numbers of Post Graduate Students from faculty of Social Science A.M.U, Aligarh. On the basis of their score on SESS; 600 subjects were selected, 300 subject were having high socio-economic status and remaining 300 were having low socio-economic status. Those subjects who obtained 61 and above score were consider as high-economic status and those who obtained 31 to 60 score were consider as low socio-economic status. There were 100 subjects in each group. Thus there were 600 subjects in the present research. All the subjects were matched on all relevant variables like age, education, physical and mental health and sex. All subjects were female.

**Tool**

Following tool was used in the present study.

**Socio-Economic Status Scale (SESS)**

Socio-Economic Status Scale (SESS) developed by O.P. Aggarwal, Bhasin, Sharma, Chhabra, K. Aggarwal, & Rajoura (2005) was employed to determine the Socio-Economic Status of the subjects. The scale consisted of 22 items. Suitable weightage was given to each item and scoring for each item was based on a scale ranging from 3 to 9.Question 18 i.e. regarding the presence of non milch cattle or pets in the family was scaled on a 3 point scale and question 12 regarding living in the type of a house was scaled on a 9 point scale. The maximum aggregate score was 100. Based on the final score, the socio-economic status of the family was divided into six socio-economic categories, namely Upper high (combined score of more than 76), High (61-75), Upper Middle (46-60), Lower Middle (31-45), Poor (16-30) and Very Poor (combined score less than 15). The reliability and validity of this scale was found to be 0.77 and 0.533 respectively.

**Modified Velten Mood Induction Technique (MVMIT)**

Originally this technique was developed by Velten (1968) but Sinclair, Mark, Enzle, Borkovec, & Cumbleton (1994) modified this technique to make it more effective. This modified technique enhanced the duration of mood as compared to original Velten technique; with the inclusion of an incubation period leading to mood change lasting up to 35 minutes. Further this MVMIT resulted in mood differences, even after various intervening tasks.

This mood induction technique consisted of mood relating statements. There were 60 happy (elated) statements, 60 depressed statements and 60 neutral statements. The happy statements (e.g. "I do feel pretty good today", I have a sense of power and vigor" were related with positive mood as joy, happiness and elation). The depression statements contained in MVMIT were of two types: statements regarding self-devaluation and statements concerning somatic states that were associated with depression (e.g. I have doubt I am a worthwhile person", "I feel rather sluggish now"). For inducing a particular mood among subjects the following written instructions were given to them.

"You will be shown a series of cards with statements typed on them. These statements will represent a certain mood and your success will be largely a question of your willingness to be receptive and responsive to the idea in each statement. Allow each idea to act on you without interference. First, as you go through the cards, you should simply read each to yourself. You should concentrate on it with intended seriousness. Then you are required to go over each statement again and again in your head with the determination and willingness to really believe it. You should experience each idea. You should concentrate your full attention on it. You should exclude other ideas which are unrelated to the mood so respond to the feeling suggested by each item. You should then think of yourself with as much clarity and realism as possible, as definitely being and moving into that mood state".

After reading these instructions, subjects were started reading the mood related statements from one category (Happy, Depressed and Neutral). After reading all the 60 mood related statements of one category; subjects were asked to read the incubation instructions of concerned category to enhance the duration of mood state. In this way a particular mood was induced among the subjects.

**Musical Mood Induction Technique (MMIT)**

Three 20-min tapes were created, one of the each of three moods. 20 songs of each mood were selected from classical, popular Hindi films. These selections were placed in a random order and rated by 4 music therapist interns and 50 students. A 7 point Likert Scale ranging from very elating to very depressing (4 being neutral) was used. Of these 60 selections, 6 depressed songs, 5 elated songs and 5 neutral songs were chosen for the mood tapes on the basis of most consistent rating. The mean rating of elated songs was 1, the mean rating of neutral songs was 4, whereas mean rating of depressed songs was 7. It is important to mention that this group of subjects did not participate in the present study. Ordering of the selections on the tapes was such that all three tapes commenced with the same selection (rated neutral) and then become either more elating, more depressing, or remained neutral with each successive selection, depending on the tape, based on the mean ratings obtained by raters.

**Procedure**

Two forms of conversation between Mr. Ahmad and Mr. Sharma were prepared namely humorous version of conversation and no humorous version of conversation. In each form of conversation, 20 statements uttered by Mr. Ahmad were designated as target items. Each group of subjects namely elated, depressed, and neutral, read the conversation ten times and recalled 20 target statements uttered by Mr. Ahmad after a retention interval of 5 minutes which was filled with a distractor task.

To be more specific, a rapport with the subject was made, then either elated, depressed, or neutral mood was induced by Modified Velten Mood Induction Technique and Musical Mood Induction Technique (given in CD). Immediately after the induction of mood, subject was given ten trials on one of the two forms of fictional conversation that was followed by a 5 minutes distraction task. The purpose of distraction task was to prevent the subjects from rehearsing the stimulus material i.e. fictional conversation. Immediately after distraction task, the subject was instructed to recall in writing as many of Mr. Ahmad's statements as she could. The subject was also instructed to use wording as close to the original as possible. Subject was given 10 minutes to complete the recall task. In short the data were collected group wise but conversation memory was tested individually.

After collecting data on twelve groups of subjects, the recall protocols of the subjects were coded by two coders. These two coders worked independently to code the protocols for the presence of target items, i.e. whether a statement recalled by subjects was one of the twenty targets. Coders were instructed to use a gist or general meaning criterion. That is, a recalled statement was to be coded as one of the targets if it conveyed the general meaning of the target, regardless of the wordings. Thus all of the recall protocols were scored for the number of the target correctly recalled (regardless of the recalled wording). The numbers of target correctly recalled, as given by the two coders, were added and divided by 2 to get mean number of target correctly recalled. This was done to remove any discrepancy if it exists between two coders with respect to the number of targets correctly recalled.

**Statistical Analysis**

The data so obtained was tabulated Group Wise and statistically analyzed by two way analysis of variance to draw necessary inferences.

**Table 1:** Showing mean of the means of subjects under high listener status and low listener status conditions

| Conditions | Elated | Depressed | Neutral | Elated | Depressed | Neutral | Mean of the means |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High Listener Status | 15.77 | 13.90 | 12.86 | 12.48 | 11.74 | 14.14 | 13.48 |
| Low Listener Status | 13 | 12.19 | 14.19 | 12.30 | 12.97 | 14.19 | 13.14 |

**Table 2:** Showing mean of the means of subjects under elated, depressed and neutral moods

| Conditions | High Listener Status | Low Listener Status | High Listener Status | Low Listener Status | Mean of the means |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elated | 15.77 | 13 | 12.48 | 12.30 | 13.38 |
| Depressed | 13.90 | 12.19 | 11.74 | 12.97 | 12.7 |
| Neutral | 12.86 | 14.19 | 14.14 | 14.19 | 13.84 |

**Table 3:** Showing F-ratios

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 723.995[a] | 11 | 65.818 | 11.658 | .000 |
| Intercept | 106306.970 | 1 | 106306.970 | 1.883E4 | .000 |
| Listener | 17.510 | 1 | 17.510 | 3.101 | .079 |
| Mood | 132.866 | 2 | 66.433 | 11.767 | .000 |
| Listener * Mood | 117.956 | 2 | 58.978 | 10.446 | .000 |
| Error | 3319.785 | 588 | 5.646 | | |
| Total | 110350.750 | 600 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 4043.780 | 599 | | | |

a. R Squared = .179 (Adjusted R Squared = .164)

The F-ratios, as shown in Table 3, for listener status variation is 3.10 which is very slightly statistically insignificant (for significant at .o5 level, F-ratio of 3.89 is required). The result weakly suggests that listener status has no differential effect on conversation memory. However, if probability level of .08 is accepted then the F-ratio for listener status variation becomes significant.

It is found in Table1 that mean of the means for high listener status group of subjects is 13.48 and mean of the means for low listener status group of subjects is 13.14. Since there is perceptible difference between these two mean of the means, it is, therefore, concluded that high listener status and low listener status have differential effect on conversation memory. More specifically, it is found that conversation memory is slightly better in high listener status than conversation memory in low listener status. In other words, subject having high listener status better remembered than subject having low listener status.

The F-ratio for mood variation, as given in Table 3, is 11.76 which is significant at .01 level. The result reveals that subjects with elated mood, depressed mood and neutral mood do differ with respect to conversation memory i.e. all the three groups of subjects showed different conversational memory performance. It is found in Table 2 that mean of the means for the subjects with elated mood is 13.38, the mean of the means for the subjects with depressed mood is 12.7 and mean of the means for the subjects with neutral mood is 13.84. Since there are differences among the mean of the means for these groups of subjects, it is, therefore, concluded that mood variation has differential effect on conversation memory. More specifically, conversation memory performance was found high in neutral subjects than in elated and depressed subjects. It can be concluded that mood variation has differential impact on conversation memory.

**Table 4:** Showing mean scores on conversation memory obtained by high listener status-elated mood group, high listener status-depressed mood group, high listener status-neutral mood group, low listener status-elated mood group, low listener status-depressed mood group and low listener status-neutral mood group.

| Conditions | Elated(E) | Depressed (D) | Neutral(N) |
|---|---|---|---|
| High Listener Status | 14.12 | 12.82 | 13.5 |
| Low Listener Status | 12.65 | 12.58 | 14.19 |

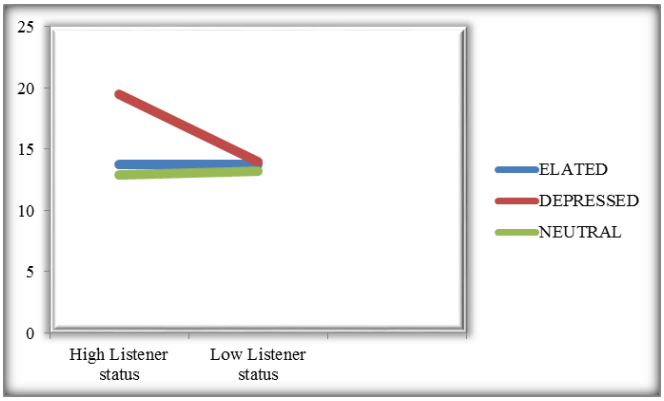


**Fig 1**

The F-ratio for interaction between listener status and mood, as shown in Table 3, is 10.44 which is also significant at 0.01 level. The result suggests that there is an interactional effect of listener status and mood. This finding is depicted in Figure1. In this figure, the two values of high listener status-low listener status are shown on the horizontal axis. The data points represent means of the six conditions. Point 1 is the mean for the group with high listener status-elated mood; Point 2 is the mean for the group with high listener status-depressed mood; Point 3 is the mean for the group with high listener status-neutral mood and Point 4 is the mean for the group with low listener status-elated mood; point 5 is the mean for the group with low listener status-depressed mood; point 6 is the mean for the group with low listener status-neutral mood. The line that connect points 1 and 4 represents the mean conversation memory scores of elated mood, half of which were high listener status and the other half were low listener status. The line that connect points 2 and 5 represents the mean conversation memory scores of depressed mood, half of which were high listener status and the remaining half were low listener status. The line that connect points 3 and 6 represents the mean conversation memory scores of neutral mood, half of which were high listener status and the remaining half were low listener status. Since these three lines do intersect each other, it is concluded that there is an interactional effect of listener status and mood be it elated, depressed or neutral on conversation memory. The same conclusion may also be drawn by turning our attention to Table 4.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The first finding is contrary to the finding obtained by Ahmad (1997). However the first finding of our research may be explained in terms of "differential attention hypothesis". There is a strong possibility that listeners having high status may pay more attention to any conversation than listeners having low status. This increased attention paid by high status listeners may be responsible for increased retention (Bobek, 2002; McLaughlin, 2001; & Power, 2005) [3, 11, 14].

The second finding of the present research, i.e. different shades of mood (elated, depressed and neutral) has differential effect on conversation memory. More specifically, subjects have better conversation memory under elated mood than under depressed mood.

However, many explanations may be offered. First, it may be recalled that different shades of mood were induced by Modified Velten Mood Induction Technique (MVMIT) and Musical Mood Induction Technique in this research. As we observed that when mood was induced only through Modified Velten Mood Induction Technique, different shades of mood (elated, depressed and neutral) have no differential effect on conversation memory as found by numerous researchers. For instance, Frost, Graf, and Becker (1979) [6] failed to support the hypothesis that depressed mood are induced by reading self-devaluative statement. They further noted that reading self-devaluative statements did not induce more depressed mood among subject than subject in the neural condition. If it is so, it is logical to assume that reading uplifting mood statements may not induce as strong elated mood as desired by the experimenter. Thus non-existence of differential effect of different shades of mood on conversation memory may be attributed to this contention. This contention was further strengthened by Riskind, Rholes, and Eggers (1982) [15] who failed to find a correlation between changes produced by the VMIP in mood ratings and memory latencies. This finding suggests that mood cannot account for the memory results and that VMIP statements may have a direct cognitive priming effect on the availability of memories (Teasdale and Fogarty, 1979) [17].

The interactional effect of high listener's status-low listener's status and mood on conversation memory is significant. This significant interactional effect suggests that high listener's status-low listener's status is dependent on mood on conversation memory.

The overall findings of the present research not only open new area of research in memory but also highlight a new mechanism under-lying interpersonal attraction, interpersonal relationship and impression formation. Conversation memory plays crucial role in interpersonal attraction and in the development of interpersonal relationship. Whenever we interact with other individual in our society and converse with them, we are prone to develop either positive or negative relations with other. Similarly we either are attracted or not attracted towards others individual. Whether we will develop positive or negative relations with others or whether we will be attracted or not, all depends on how much information we are able to retain that we exchange during our conversation with other. Consequently even if our conversation is pleasant and has positive affect but if we forget what was transpire in our conversation, such a conversation will have no effect on our interpersonal relationship and on our attitudes. Similarly if our conversation with other individual full of bitterness (negative effects) but we forget what type of conversation took place then again our relationship and attitude will remain unaffected. Contrary to this if we have pleasant conversation with other and we are able to retain it, such conversation will affect our interpersonal relationship in a positive way, we will form positive impression about others and will develop positive attitude towards others i.e. we may be attracted toward other persons. In the same way if our conversation has negative component and if we are able to remember our conversation then such conversation will affect our interpersonal relationship in a negative way, will form negative attitude toward others. Numerous studies have provided empirical evidence to this contention (McDonald, 1962; Dovidio, Gaertner, Isen & Lowrance, 1995; Byrne, 1997a; Ben-Porath, 2002) [10, 5, 4, 2].

Moreover the fact that interpersonal evaluation are strongly influence both directly and indirectly by emotional status can be, and often is, used in attempts to influence our behavior. It has been observed that we may be persuaded to purchase specific product, vote for specific political candidates, and support particular issues just because the right emotions have been aroused and retained. Such manipulation has become familiar aspect of our alive (Pentony, 1995; Weisberg, 1990; Glaser & Salovey, 1998; Harker & Keltner, 2001) [13, 7, 19, 8].

The findings obtained by above mentioned researchers strongly demonstrate the importance of conversation memory in the development of interpersonal relationship and interpersonal attraction. Thus the findings of our research are worthy enough to show how important and significant is conversation memory in determining what type of interpersonal relationship and attitude will develop.

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