

## 東大過去問 2022年 第1問 B

以下の英文を読み、（ア）、（イ）の問いに答えよ。

One evening Adam Mastroianni was reluctantly putting on his bow tie for yet another formal party at the University of Oxford that he had no interest in attending. Inevitably, Mastroianni, then a master's student in psychology at the university, knew that he would be stuck in some endless conversation that he did not want, with no way to politely excuse himself. Even worse, he suddenly realized, he might unknowingly be the one to set up unwanted conversation traps for others. "What if both people are thinking exactly the same thing, but we're both stuck because we can't move on when we're really done?" he wondered.

Mastroianni's idea may have been on the mark. A recent study reports on what researchers discovered when they climbed into the heads of speakers to gauge their feelings about how long a particular conversation should last. ( 1 ) In fact, people are very poor judges of when their partner wishes to stop it. In some cases, however, people were dissatisfied not because the conversation went on for too long but because it was too short.

"Whatever you think the other person wants, you may well be wrong," says Mastroianni, who is now a psychology research student at Harvard University. "So you might as well leave at the first time it seems appropriate because it's better to be left wanting more than less."

Most past research about conversations has been conducted by linguists or sociologists. Psychologists who have studied conversations, on the other hand, have mostly used their research as a means of investigating other things, such as how people use words to persuade. A few studies have explored what phrases individuals say at the ends of conversations, but the focus has not been on when people choose to say them. "Psychology is just now waking up to the fact that this is a really interesting and fundamental social behavior," Mastroianni says.

He and his colleagues undertook two experiments to examine the dynamics of conversation. In the first, they quizzed 806 online participants about the duration of their most recent conversation. ( 2 ) The individuals involved reported whether there was a point in the conversation at which they wanted it to end and estimated when that was in relation to when the conversation actually ended.

In the second experiment, held in the lab, the researchers split 252 participants into pairs of strangers and instructed them to talk about whatever they liked for anywhere from one to 45

minutes. Afterward the team asked the subjects ( 1 ) and to guess about their partner's answer to the same question.

Mastroianni and his colleagues found that only two percent of conversations ended at the time both parties desired, and only 30 percent of them finished when one of the pair wanted them to. In about half of the conversations, both people wanted to talk less, but the points they wanted it to end were usually different. ( 3 ) To the researchers' surprise, they also found that it was not always the case that people wanted talk less; in 10 percent of conversations, both study participants wished their exchange had lasted longer. And in about 31 percent of the interactions between strangers, at least one of the two wanted to continue.

Most people also failed at guessing their partner's desires correctly. When participants guessed at when their partner had wanted to stop talking, they were off by about 64 percent of the total conversation length.

That people fail so completely in judging when a conversation partner wishes to end the conversation "is an astonishing and important finding," says Thalia Wheatley, a social psychologist at Dartmouth College, who was not involved in the research. Conversations are otherwise "such an elegant expression of mutual coordination," she says. "And yet it all falls apart at the end because we just can't figure out when to stop." This puzzle is probably one reason why people like to have talks over coffee, drinks or a meal, Wheatley adds, because "the empty cup or plate gives us a way out — a critical conversation-ending cue."

Nicholas Epley, a behavioral scientist at the University of Chicago, who was not on the research team, wonders what would happen if most conversations ended exactly when we wanted them to. " ( 4 ) " he asks.

While this cannot be determined in the countless exchanges of everyday life, scientists can design an experiment in which conversations either end at precisely the point when a participant first wants to stop or continue for some point beyond. "Do those whose conversations end just when they want them to actually end up with better conversations than those that last longer?" Epley asks. "I don't know, but I'd love to see the results of that experiment."

The findings also open up many other questions. Are the rules of conversation clearer in other cultures? Which cues, if any, do expert conversationalists pick up on? ( 5 )

"The new science of conversation needs rigorous descriptive studies like this one, but we also need casual experiments to test strategies that might help us navigate the important and pervasive challenges of conversation," says Alison Wood Brooks, a professor of business

administration at Harvard Business School, who was not involved in the study. “I think it’s pretty wild, and yet we’re just beginning to rigorously understand how people talk to each other.”

(注) linguist 言語学者

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a) How is it possible for anybody to correctly guess when their partner wants to start the conversation?

b) How many new insights, novel perspectives or interesting facts of life have we missed because we avoided a longer or deeper conversation that we might have had with another person?

c) Most of them had taken place with a family member or friends.

d) Participants in both studies reported, on average, that the desired length of their conversation was about half of its actual length.

e) The team found that conversations almost never end when both parties want them to.

f) What about the dynamics of group chats?

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