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The Effect of Self-Disclosure on Perceived Competency of People Who Stutter in Online Job Interviews

A cross-cultural study in Japan and the US

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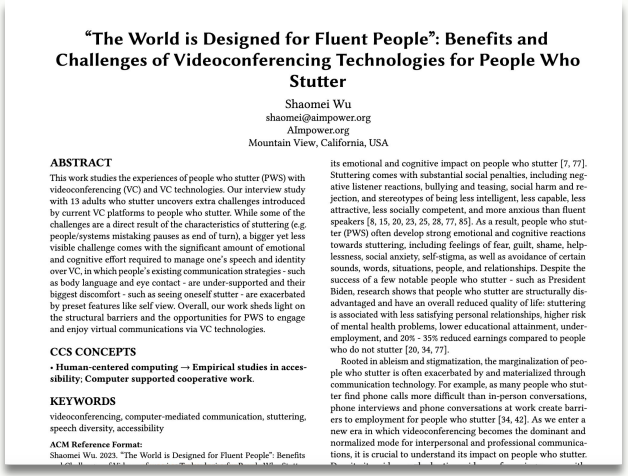
* We are people who stutter

THE PROBLEM

People who stutter (PWS) are systematically disadvantaged in online job interviews

- **70%** of PWS in the US agree that stuttering decreases one's chance of being hired or promoted [1, 2].

- Videoconferencing created additional communication challenges for PWS [3].



"The World is Designed for Fluent People": Benefits and Challenges of Videoconferencing Technologies for People Who Stutter

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ABSTRACT

This work studies the experiences of people who stutter (PWS) with videoconferencing (VC) and VC technologies. Our interview study with 13 adults who stutter uncovers extra challenges introduced by current VC platforms to people who stutter. While some of the challenges are a direct result of the characteristics of stuttering (e.g. people/systems mistaking pauses as end of turn), a bigger yet less visible challenge comes with the significant amount of emotional and cognitive effort required to manage one's speech and identity over VC, in which people's existing communication strategies - such as body language and eye contact - are under-supported and their biggest discomfort - such as seeing oneself stutter - are exacerbated by preset features like self view. Overall, our work sheds light on the structural barriers and the opportunities for PWS to engage and enjoy virtual communications via VC technologies.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing** → **Empirical studies in accessibility**; **Computer supported cooperative work.**

KEYWORDS

videoconferencing, computer-mediated communication, stuttering, speech diversity, accessibility

ACM Reference Format:

Shaomei Wu. 2023. "The World is Designed for Fluent People": Benefits

its emotional and cognitive impact on people who stutter [7, 77]. Stuttering comes with substantial social penalties, including negative listener reactions, bullying and teasing, social harm and rejection, and stereotypes of being less intelligent, less capable, less attractive, less socially competent, and more anxious than fluent speakers [8, 15, 20, 23, 25, 28, 77, 85]. As a result, people who stutter (PWS) often develop strong emotional and cognitive reactions towards stuttering, including feelings of fear, guilt, shame, helplessness, social anxiety, self-stigma, as well as avoidance of certain sounds, words, situations, people, and relationships. Despite the success of a few notable people who stutter - such as President Biden, research shows that people who stutter are structurally disadvantaged and have an overall reduced quality of life: stuttering is associated with less satisfying personal relationships, higher risk of mental health problems, lower educational attainment, underemployment, and 20% - 35% reduced earnings compared to people who do not stutter [20, 34, 77].

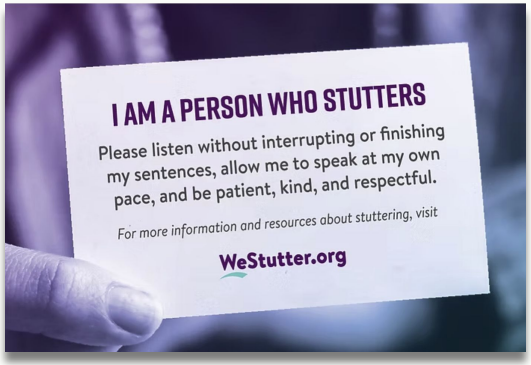
Rooted in ableism and stigmatization, the marginalization of people who stutter is often exacerbated by and materialized through communication technology. For example, as many people who stutter find phone calls more difficult than in-person conversations, phone interviews and phone conversations at work create barriers to employment for people who stutter [34, 42]. As we enter a new era in which videoconferencing becomes the dominant and normalized mode for interpersonal and professional communications, it is crucial to understand its impact on people who stutter.

[1] Joseph F Klein and Stephen B Hood. 2004. The impact of stuttering on employment opportunities and job performance. Journal of fluency disorders.
[2] Hope Gerlach, Evan Totty, Anu Subramanian, and Patricia Zebrowski. 2018. Stuttering and Labor Market Outcomes in the United States. Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research
[3] Shaomei Wu. 2023. "The World is Designed for Fluent People": Benefits and Challenges of Videoconferencing Technologies for People Who Stutter. CHI '23

THE SOLUTION

Self-disclosure as a communication tool for PWS

- Speech and language pathology (SLP) research shows self-disclosure can **reduce listener distraction** and **improve evaluations** of speakers who stutter [1,2,3]



Self-disclosure ID card by
The National Stuttering Association

[1] Jennifer Perez, Leonard S. Newman, and Jenna M. Walmer. 2025. Acknowledging a Stutter Affects the Impression One Makes in a Job Interview. International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders.
[2] Danielle Werle and Courtney T. Byrd. 2022. The impact of self-disclosure and strategies for communication competence on professors' perceptions and evaluations of students who do and do not stutter. Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research
[3] Danielle Werle, Courtney T. Byrd, and Geoffrey A. Coalson. 2023. Impact of self-disclosure and communication competence on perceived listener distraction. Journal of Communication Disorders

THE STUDY

How does self-disclosure influence the evaluation of candidates who stutter in the US and Japan?

800 participants watched one mock video interview and rated the job candidate who stutter.

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Disclose verbally at the start



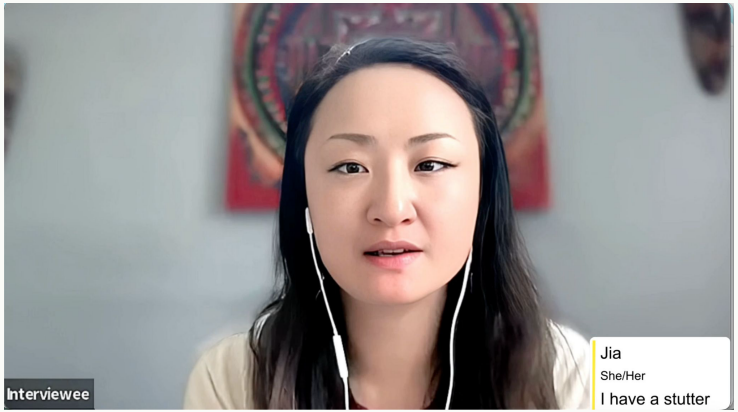
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Nametag
On-screen label under the name



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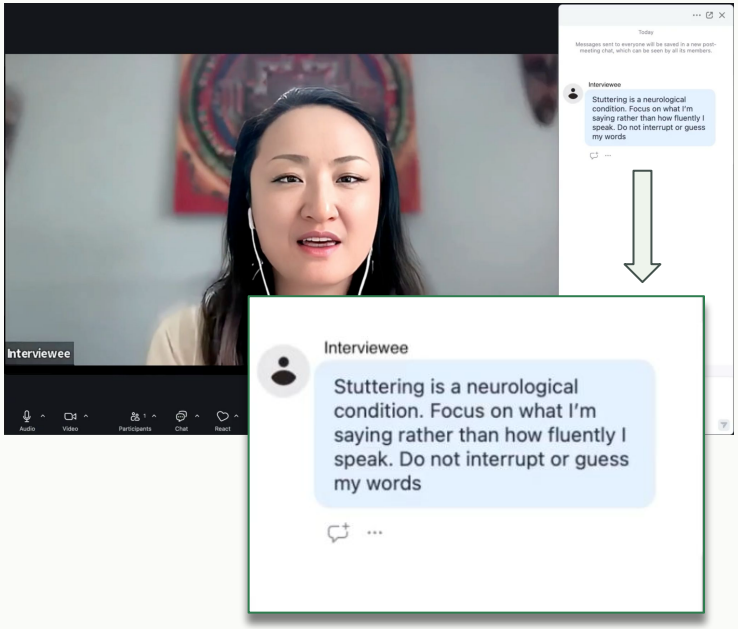
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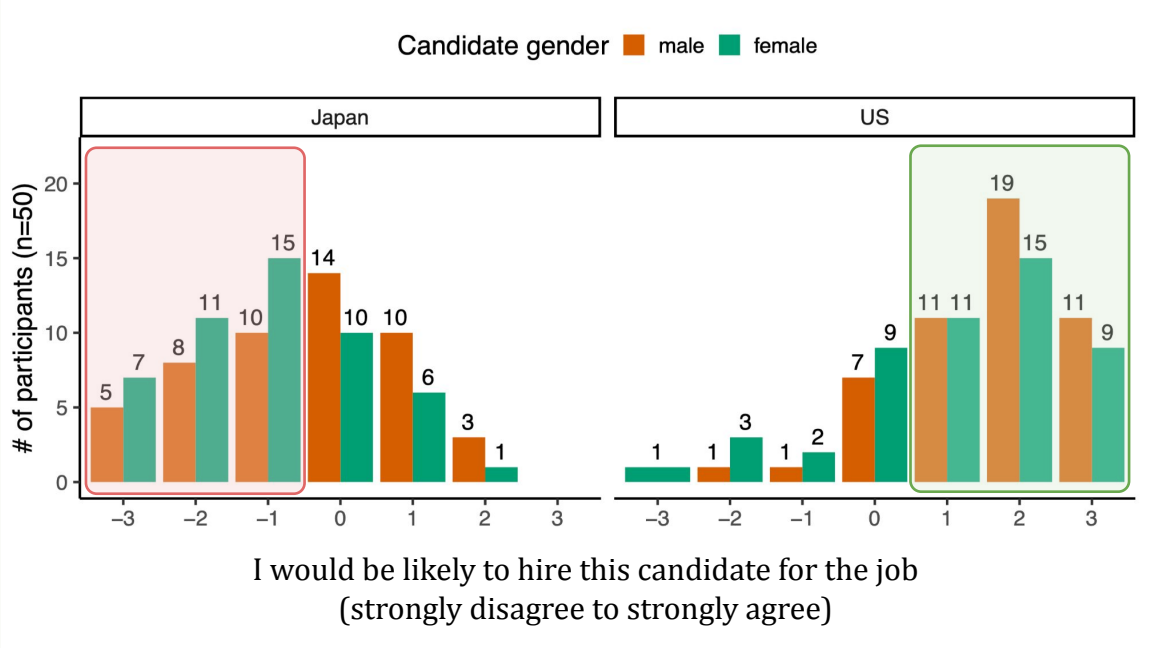
Chat
Informative message in the chat



No disclosure
Baseline

FINDING 1

No disclosure: lower evaluations in Japan than in the US



56% raters in Japan leaning towards "no hire"

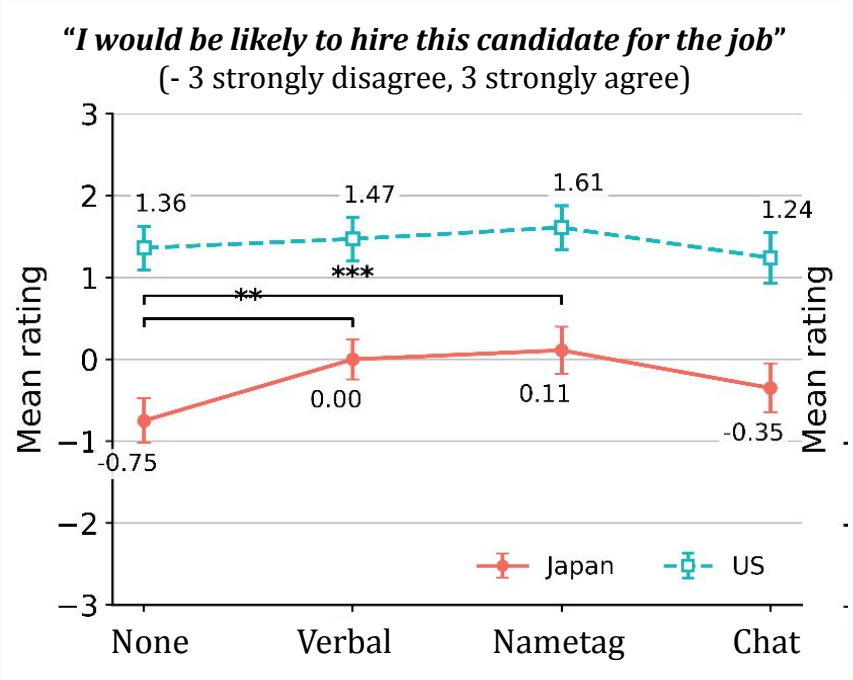
76% raters in the US leaning towards "hire"

FINDING 2

Self-disclosure significantly improved hirablity in Japan

🇯🇵 Statistically significant improvement observed in Japan when disclosed **verbally** or through **nametag**.

🇺🇸 No stat. significant changes observed in the US for any disclosure condition.



Self-disclosure changes how the listener listens to and perceives in the candidate

Prepare the listener
Clarify the situation for them to listen better

"Seeing the disclosure helped me to quickly acclimate to her stutter, rather than wondering if there was another issue."

– P134, US, Nametag

"Because the candidate disclosed in advance, I understood that I should wait when they had difficulty speaking, which I appreciated. "

– P728, JP, Nametag

Self-disclosure changes how the listener listens to and perceives in the candidate

Prepare the listener
Clarify the situation for them to listen better

Counter stereotypes
Directly challenge the assumption of nervousness and underpreparedness

"It [Disclosure] allowed me to know that this is an actual issue for them as opposed to them just being super nervous and anxious."

– P184, US, [Condition]

Self-disclosure changes how the listener listens to and perceives in the candidate

Prepare the listener
Clarify the situation for them to listen better

Counter stereotypes
Directly challenge the assumption of nervousness and underpreparedness

Demonstrate character strengths
Signal candidate's confidence, courage, openness, sincerity, professionalism, etc.

"I felt that he showed courage and sincerity in sharing information that could at first glance be considered negative, which had a positive impact on my evaluation."

– P684, JP, [Condition]

DISCUSSION

Implications for ASSETS

01

Shift the site of intervention

A simple name tag shifts the expected changes from the speaker to the listener.

02

Disability-affirming technology

Design for positive disability identity, beyond functional accessibility

03

Deploy in real world systems

Integrated in a Zoom app that support 150+ disclosures already!

LibOrate by AImpower.org

Download App



Self Affirmation

Personalized affirmative messages only visible to you

Have Wave Buttons

Customizable non-verbal communication shortcuts

Name Tag

Display a virtual name tag to show up more authentically

Disclosure Message

Pre-composed a chat message to let others know how to support you

Mindfulness

Take a short mindfulness break to unwind and focus

SUMMARY

Don’t ask people to pass as fluent. Ask the world to listen differently.

1. Disclosure is powerful, most of all where stigma is high
2. It works by changing how listeners listen and challenging ableist assumptions
3. Design for identity: a new avenue for disability-affirming technology

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