

# That's Music to a Customer's Ears! Conversational Style Matching for Successful Customer-Agent Interactions

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## **Abstract**

Any interaction between a customer and a service agent involves communication. While many prior studies have offered recommendations on what agents should say in a given situation, few have considered how agents should word a message. We aim to close this gap and examine the degree to which the agent's conversational style (CS) leads to rapport in customer-agent interactions. Research in social psychology has shown that when people get along well, they adjust their CS to their counterpart's so that friends subconsciously express themselves very similarly. Consequently, a high degree of conversational style matching (CSM) signals a harmonious relationship between interlocutors. Based on this research, we argue that high CSM marks successful service interactions just as it mirrors close friendships. Concisely, we hypothesize that a customer feels greater rapport with an agent if their CSs match, which in turn will foster satisfaction with the interaction and trust in the agent.

**Keywords:** *conversational style matching; service interaction; customer-agent rapport*

**Track:** Services Marketing