

A perceptual comparison: Spontaneous speech of speakers' today and 40 years ago

Anita Auszmann

Research Institute for Linguistics, HAS, Hungary

Linguistic investigations periodically focus on changes in the language that reflect changes in both the society and the speakers (e.g. Labov 2006). As the society, language itself is changing continuously (Wardhaugh 1995, Labov 2006). The pronunciation of speech sounds is changing both in terms of an individual's life and across speaker generations. The perception of these small differences in articulation goes unnoticed because the listener constantly adapts to the modifications (Ohala 2012). It is often heard subjective observations that people long ago spoke differently than today: with slower tempo, less disfluencies, more accurate articulation. Our previous experiments – carried out on the same database – did not substantiate a significant change in articulation and speech rate through the decades (Auszmann 2016a). However we found a change in the way and the strategies of expressing thoughts (the duration and length of utterances, the duration and occurrences of pauses, proportion of disfluencies) (Auszmann 2015; Auszmann 2016b).

In the present research we would like to make the previous results more detailed with a perception test. The aim of the investigation is to find out whether university students are able to distinguish the spontaneous speech of speakers' today and 40 years ago, and if so, along what kind of criteria.

For the compilation of the perception test we used the same samples (12 male speakers) as in previous research and we set them in pairs. Half of the recordings were selected from BEA (Hungarian Spoken Language Database) database (Gósy 2012; Neuberger et al. 2014) and the other half from the 'Szalag' corpus. The test contains some coherent sentences from all of the speakers. No fillers was added to the speech material. In the perception test university students will participate who are studying phonetics (minimum 50 people). The protocol of the test will be the following: after a short training period in the first part of the test participants have to compare two tokens (one from BEA database – one from 'Szalag' corpus), in the second part of the test participants have to make decisions for each tested speech token (played randomly) whether the speaker lives today or lived 40 years ago. We would like to investigate the reaction time of the participants and ask them to clarify their choice with some words (professional commentary).

We assume in the light of the results of research carried out earlier that the separation of the two speaker groups will not be clear perceptually, but

owing to the phonetics experience students will be successful in the task in a certain degree.

References

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