

ФОНЕТИКА

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INTERRELATION BETWEEN SPEECH TEMPO AND THE DEGREE OF FORMALITY

Tempo is influenced by some extra linguistic factors, among which one can distinguish the temperament and the speaker's level of education, physical or emotional state, size and age of the audience. The rate of speech can depend on the speaker's attitude to what he or she is talking about, the more important the content of the conversation is, the slower is usually the speech, while casual conversations take place at a faster pace. Perhaps the greatest impact on speech tempo is produced by the degree of formality of the speech situation.

In order to determine to what extent the degree of formality changes the rate of speech we have conducted a phonetic experiment. A native RP speaker was invited to speak in 2 situations. In one case she had to assume the role of a dean who addressed a group of students explaining the regulations for applying for a scholarship. In the second case she had to speak in an informal setting to a friend about her son's application for a scholarship. This way we made recordings of 2 oral speeches which were identical in their topic and close in wording but vastly different in the degree of formality.

Professional phoneticians intoned the scripts of the two speeches paying special attention to prosodic division and shared their general impressions about the speeches. The first speech appeared to be much slower, the pauses were longer. Acoustic analysis conducted with the help of SoundForge app demonstrated that the duration of the pauses in the formal speech was on average 1040 milliseconds long, whereas in the second one the pauses had a duration of 329 milliseconds. Besides, identical sentences were 2 seconds longer in the formal speech. It is not only the duration of pauses that is different, but also their number. The experimental data showed that in the formal speech there were pauses after nuclear words not only at the boundaries of utterances but also inside them.

Therefore, the experiment revealed that speech tempo serves as a vital style-forming prosodic feature. Increased formality can triple the duration and number of pauses and considerably slow down the average duration of utterances by about 2 seconds.

The findings of this research and the experimental recordings can be used in the courses of speech prosody and theoretical phonetics in the sections dedicated to speech styles.