

Towards Best Practices in Sociophonetics (2008)

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Our goal in this workshop will be to continue the discussion of **best practices in sociophonetics** begun at NWAV 33. The number of researchers who are interested in engaging in this interdisciplinary area of study continues to grow in spite of the increasingly wide range of knowledge necessary to do high quality work in sociophonetics. It is especially difficult for researchers at institutions with fewer financial and collegial resources to keep up with technical and theoretical advances in acoustic phonetics, speech perception, and recording technology; and theoretical advances in social structure and, of course, in linguistic theory. This workshop has helped provide quick access to methodological, technical, and procedural information from the best labs.

This year the workshop will focus on two areas and, in response to the requests received at the end of last year's session, a long question and answer session:

I. “Voice Quality.”—

Jerold A. Edmondson, University of Texas at Arlington

John H. Esling, University of Victoria, Victoria BC

Voice quality has been recognized as a critical component in sociophonetics for over 100 years. Luminaries such as Sweet, Sapir, Abercrombie, Catford, Laver, and Labov have mentioned voice quality as a part of the social background of speech and of being a *quasi permanent* and invariant posture that represents a deviation from the average that can indicate sex, age, social class or place of origin. Perhaps the most important articulatory region in the vocal tract which contributes to the perception of voice quality at several levels (habitual, recurrent, latently secondary, and ‘initiator’), as Esling has shown, is the ‘laryngeal articulator’.

This workshop segment seeks to examine techniques for analyzing social markers in voice quality in a laboratory setting to capture long-term/monitored styles: (a) long-term average spectral comparison, (b) comparison to phonetically performed model voices, (c) methods in Speech Pathology and Audiology, and (d) techniques to identify by experimental methods the physiological correlates of voice quality; as well as to examine techniques for analyzing and capturing short-term, unmonitored, natural speech with non-invasive methods such as (a) Comparison of spectral tilt techniques and (b) Comparison of F0, F0 change/unit time, F0 change/unit time/unit time, when the scale of measurement uses the same *tessitura* or *personal pitch range*.

II. “Working with Children”

Julie Roberts, University of Vermont
Ghada Khattab, Newcastle University

Previous work by several researchers in child variation research has suggested that children acquire linguistic constraints on variation before social constraints (Labov 1994; Roberts 1997). However, this generalization does little to explain the process of social learning, nor does it explore the possibility that the theoretical accounts of linguistic style posited for adults (e.g., (Labov 1966; Bell 1984) are simply inadequate to capture the stylistic knowledge of children. One goal of this workshop will be to discuss the collection of child data to maximize the stylistic range of preschool children. The transcription and categorization of these data will also be discussed along with the findings from one such attempt at exploring the acquisition of interactional style by children. Another goal will be to explore the methodological challenges that are related to working with infants and pre-school children and to offer some practical solutions. These include a range of hardware and software available to allow for high quality audio and video recordings, synchronization of acoustic analyses with audio-visual transcription, and early word-identification.

III. Q&A: We will make a concerted effort to save time for questions from the floor.

IV. Planning for next time

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