
Prosodic aspects of style and register of live sports commentaries in radio and television

Donnerstag
09.03.2017
11:15 – 11:45
B4 1, 0.04

Jürgen Trouvain
Universität des Saarlandes
trouvain@coli.uni-saarland.de

Friederike Kern
Universität Bielefeld
friederike.kern@uni-bielefeld.de

In phonetic research, there is raising acknowledgment with regard to the diversity of authentic speech that goes beyond highly controlled read speech. Different communicative situations require an adaptation of phonetic and linguistic resources that leads to various forms of non-scripted speech. Live sports commentaries provide good examples for studying such adaptations empirically. For instance, horse race commentaries are characterized by a dramatic rise of pitch and perceived increasing tempo as well as extreme syntactic restrictions.

Studies have shown that live football commentaries feature narrative, pre-dramatic and dramatic phases that can be distinguished by different speech styles with typical phonetic and syntactic characteristics. E.g., the climax of the dramatic phase usually leads to an affective goal comment often produced as roaring with extremely high pitch. Dramatic phases that usually occur before goal scenes are characterized by a shortening and simplification of syntactic phrases co-occurring with a predominant use of pre-fabricated lexical units. In addition, dramatic phrases are marked prosodically by raising pitch and tempo (articulation rate and pausing). This prosodic behaviour serves as a communicative tool to signal increasing affect. It overrides the linguistic prosodic structure: we can observe sharp pitch rising at places where we would expect falling pitch contours (at the end of declaratives) or no marked pitch movement (at non-accented syllables).

In our current research, we investigate the phonetic variation found in dramatic phases of live football commentaries of the same game (Germany v. England at world cup 2010) across languages (German vs. English), media (radio vs. TV) and media culture (public vs. private stations). The results of acoustic and perceptual analysis reveal the general tendency that sets of prosodic features, with pitch as the most important, are typical for dramatic speech.