

Editorial: first two years of a new open-access journal on speech sciences

Barbosa, Plínio A.*

State University of Campinas, Campinas, Brazil

In its second year of publication, the Journal of Speech Sciences (JoSS) offers its readers the fourth issue (issue 2 of volume 2). Starting a new academic journal is not a simple task, not only because disseminating the information of its very existence is a critical as well as a complex matter, but also because we must ensure the journal will offer high-quality and accessible papers.

Free access is the main advantage of an open-access on-line journal, a theme that is thoroughly explored in our website. As for visibility, it is our impression that the dissemination of the availability of JoSS is slow but constant. The number of papers in this issue attests it. It comes out with five regular papers and three thematic papers, after a wonderful job made by our board and the ad hoc reviewers.

It is this internationally highly qualified team that ensures the quality of our papers. Considering the four issues, the mean acceptance rate of JoSS is now 52 %, with a higher rate for this issue. More qualified papers were submitted for review this time: we got eleven valid submissions, of which eight were accepted for publication.

A short description of these eight papers is now presented. Five papers were written in Portuguese, both Brazilian and European, all texts are preceded by a one-page abstract in English. This policy guarantees international visibility and, at the same time, it offers people who still do not master the English Language room to publish high quality work.

In *Formal intonation analysis: applying INTSINT to Portuguese* [In Portuguese], Letícia Celeste and César Reis from the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil, apply the INTSINT annotation system proposed by Daniel Hirst and Albert Di Cristo to the contrastive analysis of Brazilian Portuguese declarative and yes/no questions. The results confirm a great similarity between the melodic patterns between the two modalities, especially at the beginning of the utterances. Although yes/no questions also end with a low melodic trace, this low value is preceded by a T (top) symbol which mainly distinguishes between the two modalities.

In *Changes in TV news speaking style reading after journalistic broadcasting training* [In Portuguese], Ana C. Constantini from the State University of Campinas, Brazil, analyses two Journalism students to show the effect of formal training on prosodic aspects helping to develop TV news announcement skills. The results show that, although both maintain the same speech rate after training, circa 55 % of the lexical words had their syllable-size duration lengthened by increasing the duration of the segments and/or silent pauses. Besides duration, F0 excursions and peaks are higher in the same words. A perception test indicates a tendency to perceive these words as more emphatic in reading, after formal training.

In *Analysis of the production of yes/no questions in Brazilian learners of Spanish as a foreign language* [In Portuguese], Eva C. O. Dias and Mariane A. Alves from the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil, analyse the realisation of the intonational contours of contextualised isolated yes/no questions in Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) produced by Brazilian learners. Colombian Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese read utterances are used as control groups. The results indicate a similar realisation for all groups when the sentences end with final stress words, although with wider range between prenuclear and nuclear accents in SFL. When the sentence ends with penultimate and antepenultimate stress words, the SFL final tones alternate between HL and H, possibly due to the influence of L1 or other Spanish dialects the learners had contact with.

In *Experimental approach of the prosodic component in the linguistic input of garden-path sentences in Brazilian Portuguese* [In Portuguese], Aline A. Fonseca from the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil, tested the effects of the organization of prosodic constituents in online tasks. She carried out a self-paced listening test, with garden-path sentences in Brazilian Portuguese in two conditions, one with a conflict between prosodic and syntactic boundaries, and the other with no conflict between the two levels. The analyses of the Reaction Times show that listeners are guided by prosody to interpret the sentences they hear.

*Editor's contact: pabarbosa.unicampbr@gmail.com

In Prosodic correlation between the focus particle ozik ‘only’ and focus/GIVENness in Korean, Yong-cheol Lee from the University of Pennsylvania, United States investigates the prosodic correlation between the focusing adverb ozik ‘only’ and focus vs givenness in Korean. A perceptual experiment is carried out for which the focus vs givenness of the associated element is controlled. The results suggest that the condition for which both the adverb and the object have prosodic prominence is the most favoured prosody model when the element associated with ozik is focused in discourse, whereas the condition for which only the adverb has a prosodic prominence is the favoured model when the element associated with it is given. Therefore, the author argues that the element associated with ozik can be either prosodically prominent or dephrased, depending on the discourse.

In Extending Automatic Transcripts in a Unified Data Representation towards a Prosodic-based Metadata Annotation and Evaluation, Fernando Batista, Helena Moniz, Isabel Trancoso, Nuno Mamede and Ana Isabel Mata from INESC-Lisboa describe a framework that extends automatic speech transcripts to accommodate relevant information coming from manual transcripts, the speech signal itself, and resources such as lexica. The processing two main stages combine the integration of the relevant manual annotations in the speech recognition data, and the enrichment of the previous output to accommodate prosodic information. The framework was used for the automatic detection of punctuation marks, for capitalization recovery from speech data, and for studying the characterization of disfluencies in speech. It was applied not only to Portuguese but also to English and Spanish.

In Spontaneous Emotional speech in European Portuguese using Feeltrace system – first approaches [In Portuguese], Ana Nunes and António Teixeira from the University of Aveiro, Portugal analyse the evolution of a set of four acoustic parameters in spontaneous emotional speech in European Portuguese collected from TV shows and news. The values obtained by their analysis of the F0, jitter, shimmer and Harmonic-to-Noise Ratio parameters are compared with those stemming from descriptions of simulated emotions by professional actors. The emotions are dynamically labelled in the Valence/Activation space according to the listeners’ perception by using the Feeltrace system. The authors point out that there are large similarities between the emotions expressed by the actors and the spontaneous one, when emotions with the same labels are compared.

In Open-Source Boundary-Annotated Qur’an Corpus for Arabic and Phrase Breaks Prediction in Classical and Modern Standard Arabic Text, Majdi Shaker Sawalha, Claire Brierley and Eric Atwell from the universities of Jordan (first author) and Leeds propose a novel approach to phrase break prediction for Arabic where the prosodic annotation scheme is derived from Tajwid (recitation) mark-up in the Qur’an. This mark-up is interpreted as an additional text-based data for computational analysis containing prosodic and syntactic pieces of information. The authors use this dataset to compare two probabilistic taggers (trigram and HMM) for Arabic phrase break prediction, where the task is to predict boundary locations in an unseen test set. Preliminary results reveal significant gains in accuracy with a trigram tagger, and significant gains in performance recognition of minority class instances with both taggers via the Balanced Classification Rate metric.

Hoping that this evidence of the vitality of our journal will help spreading the news of the advantages of publishing in an open-access journal in speech sciences, we wish good reading and long life to speech sciences research with JoSS.

This issue was only made possible thanks to all people who worked for the journal, together with an exceptionally good editorial board and ad hoc reviewer’s team.

Gothenburg, 29th of November, 2012