

Abstract

This diploma thesis examines speech rate in three different speech styles – in reading, prepared semi-spontaneous monologue and consecutive interpreting from English into Czech. In the first part of the thesis we summarize previous research, define several types of speech rate, pauses and all three speech styles.

In the second part, dedicated to empirical research, we first describe the material and speakers, and then we continue with information about recording and processing of the recordings, mainly the two ways of segmentation into inter-pause units. The results are summarized in three sub-chapters; one looks at speaking rate, the next deals with articulation rate and the last one is dedicated to pauses. The last subchapter in the Results chapter compares our findings with both Czech and foreign research into the topic.

Altogether we analysed recordings of four female speakers (two students and two professional interpreters) in three speech styles. In each of the styles we calculated speaking rate of the whole text, speaking rate of four linear parts (introduction, main part 1, main part 2 and conclusion) and articulation rate of one chosen unit from each linear part. Our results suggest that the highest speaking rate and articulation rate are in reading; semi-spontaneous speech is somewhat slower and interpreting is the slowest. The speech rate in interpreting is also influenced by proficiency in interpreting; students of interpreting spoke at a lower rate in this task than professional interpreters.

Our comparison of two different methods of sound segmentation into inter-pause units revealed no statistical significance between the methods. The proportion of pauses in all of the speech styles was generally lower than the proportion found in previous studies. A comparison was also carried out to find the ratio between unfilled and filled pauses. Almost no filled pauses were found in reading, yet filled pauses accounted for about one quarter of pauses in interpreting. A surprising result is that the professional interpreters had a greater proportion of filled pauses than the students had.

Keywords: speaking rate, articulation rate, pauses, consecutive interpreting