

Abstract

The present thesis focuses on the study of the influence of two social factors, age and gender, on the frequency and variation of seven different types of dysfluencies (filled pauses, silent pauses, repairs, repetitions, false starts, vowel and consonant lengthening) in the spontaneous speech of native English speakers from England. The speakers were divided into four different social groups according to their age and gender. The first part of the present thesis provides a general characterization of the relevant types of dysfluencies, together with the main issues concerning the production of speech dysfluencies. The empirical part presents the analyses of the recordings of 32 native English speakers from England. The overall results considering general influence of age and gender show that the only significant difference is between age groups, with older speakers producing more dysfluencies than younger speakers. Gender, on the other hand, does not make the difference significant, except for vowel lengthenings that were produced significantly more by female speakers than male speakers, and repetitions, which is the only type of dysfluency where the difference is significant and influenced by both age and gender, with older male speakers producing significantly more dysfluencies than any other group.

Key words: dysfluencies, dysfluent behaviour, native English speakers, sociophonetics, frequency, variation, age, gender