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The influence of social factors on speech production

This project investigates the influence of social factors on various attributes of speech production. Acoustic-phonetic attributes of speech are highly variable, and previous studies have found that interacting talkers become more or less similar on some measures. In particular, the role of a talker and the sex of the pair of talkers have been found to influence the degree of phonetic convergence that a talker exhibits. In the current study, 8 pairs of talkers (4 male and 4 female pairs) participated in a conversational task in which they switched roles multiple times over the course of the recording session. The recordings were transcribed to provide measures of the length of time talking, the frequency of filled pauses, and the articulation rate of the talkers. The role-switching manipulation and the sex of the pair of talkers had significant effects on these measures. This study provides additional evidence that variability in speech production is influenced by multiple aspects of a given situation, including attributes of a talker's identity and nominal role.