Generational Differences in Speech Rate Among Canadian English Speakers

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**Introduction**

- US cross-dialectal study found young adults have faster speech rate than older adults (Jacewics et al., 2009)
- Possibly due to older people's tendency to produce shorter phrases (Jacewics et al., 2009)
- Elderly speak slower than middle-aged (Hooper & Cralidis, 2009)
- Differences found in young adult, middle-aged, and older males in “oral reading, picture description, and conversational speech” (Duchin & Mysak, 1987)

**Hypothesis:**

Younger generations speak faster than older generations

**Rationale:**

To determine if differences in speech rate exist among Canadian English speakers when comparing middle-aged and young adults

**Survey**

- 15 closed-answer questions
- Administered online
- 63 participants
  - 52 younger: avg. age = 20.3 years
  - 11 older: avg. age = 50.5 years

**Oral Reading**

- All read same, short passage; allowed practice, encouraged to speak naturally
- Recorded while reading passage
- 17 participants:
  - 8 younger: avg. age = 18.9 years
  - 9 older: avg. age = 51.2 years

**Conclusions**

- Speech rate differed between generations
  - Older generation (~50 years old) spoke slower than younger generation (~20 years old)
  - Survey indicates people’s awareness of generational differences in speech rate

**Future Directions**

- Examine differences in fluent speech
- Gender differences within and across generations
- Younger age group (i.e. ~13 years old) even faster?

**Results of Oral Reading**

- Mean Length (sec)
  - Time it took to read entire passage
  - Older: 13.5
  - Younger: 12.5

- Mean Length (sec)
  - Time it took to read first phrase
  - Older: 3.3
  - Younger: 3.2

**Results of Survey**

- "Yes" Responses
  - 7. Do you notice that people older than you speak more slowly than you do, or than you would like them to speak?
  - 8. Do you notice that people younger than you speak more quickly than you speak or would like them to speak?
  - 9. Have you ever been told to slow down while speaking?

**Survey Questions**

- "Yes" Responses
  - Older
  - Younger

**References**

  - http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0954394509990093