**Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences**

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# The Reflection of the Characteristics of Spontaneous Speech in the Compositions of Secondary School Students


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**Preface**


      The aim of my dissertation is analysing the spoken and written language of secondary school students from several aspects. For this reason I examined their spontaneous narrative and their written final exam tests. The survey includes not just phonetic and lexical aspects but syntactic ones as well. I establish facts about general characteristic features of the students' spontaneous speech and composing skills, and I try to reveal the main specialities of their language usage on the basis of the data.

      With full knowledge of the results I compare the students' speaking and writing skills in certain respects, comparing for example extent, richness in vocabulary, specialities in sentence construction. Comparing the data of the two corpuses I state spoken language elements detectable in compositions.

      Furthermore, I try to draw conclusions in connection with skills, and I mention differences between sexes.


## 1. Experimentees


      Twenty secondary school students took part in the survey. All of them are in the final year of the same school in Buda. They live in Budapest or nearby, and they have similar social background. 14 students go to the same class, and other 6 students go to a parallel class.

      One aim of my research was the examination of differences in language usage between the two sexes, therefore the numbers of girls and boys are almost the same. There are 11 boys and 9 girls in the group.

## 2. The Material

The examined corpus consists of two parts: sound recordings of spontaneous speech and their written final exam tests in Hungarian grammar and literature, from the same students.

Without the conductor's speech, together with silent breaks, the spoken language corpus takes 1 hour 33 minutes and 12.399 seconds and altogether it consists of 11518 words, the students had a speech of 575.9 words each, on average. The spontaneous narrative includes 947 virtual sentences and 2305 clauses altogether, on average it consists of 47,35 sentences.

The twenty compositions consist of 13096 words, and the average extent is 654,8 words. The written tests consisted of 938 sentences and 2079 clauses, on average one essay consisted of 46,9 sentences.

## 3. Method

The conductor of the experiment recorded the spontaneous narratives with the students during class excursions and conversations after classes.

I used Cool Edit Pro v. 2.0 to write down the narrative, and with the help of it, I could cut out the speech of the interviewer from the recording.

I analysed the narrative in detail, and then the compositions, and after I compared the data considering extent, vocabulary, sentence construction and grammatical correctness.

From acoustic point of view I examined pauses, disfluency, and speed of speech in the narrative. In the compositions I proved spoken language influences on both lexical and syntactic level.

**4. Theses**

My hypotheses proved true to a certain extent, but in several cases because of the big individual differences statistical analysis didn't support the connection which was clear from the diagrams and averages.

I stated that the writing and speaking skill has a strong individual determination from several point of views. This observation can be useful in teaching mother tongue, and you mustn't neglect students with different skills.

- **The Characteristic Features of Extent**

According to my hypothesis, somebody who can produce more words in their speech, they can write more words in their essays, too. The longest composition was written by the student who produced a narrative with the most words. In general, the student whose spontaneous narrative consisted of many words, he could write a similarly long essay, too. But the opposite of the statement is not true. Statistical analysis didn't support this hypothesis, so it was proved just partially.

After comparing the results according to sexes I stated that girls in general wrote more and spoke longer, they produced a narrative including more words than boys did. The data proved the hypothesis regarding sex differences.

- **Connection Between Sex and Individual Speech Production**

My hypothesis was proved, whereas in girls' narratives there are less helping interruption, so they can speak for a long time much more easily.

- **Pausing**

The connection between pausing and sex was proved in all respects and statistical calculations have also supported this deviation.

Pauses in boys' speech reach a higher percentage, on average they speak with several longer breaks in the experiment.

- **Disfluency**

Regarding all disfluencies my hypothesis of sex differences cannot be proved statistically. If we examine the most common disfluencies (hesitation, fillers, repetition, prolongation) we notice 5% difference between sexes. The biggest difference occurs in the usage of fillers, boys use them more often.

Regarding frequent disfluencies my hypothesis has been proved even statistically, whereas the appearances of fillers and hesitation are inversely proportional, uncertainty is expressed with a filler or hesitation.

- **Word Usage Characteristics**

My hypothesis in connection with the most frequenly used words has been proved, particles were used most of the time, and the two corpuses had similar results.

Vulgarism appeared just rearly with boys and girls to the same extent. This hypothesis has not been proved.

Diversity of word usage is not really different according to sexes, but on the basis of vocabulary indicators boys compose less carefully, less diversified.

In the word usage of compositions you can discover spoken language influences, words belonging to lower stylistic layer and also expressions in incorrect context.

My hypothesis regarding egocentric sequences is valid only with the limitation that you mustn't neglect individual differences.

- **Syntactic characteristics**

My hypotheses concerning syntactic characteristics have been proved.

The virtual sentences of the narrative definitely consisted of more clauses than the compositions.

It was statistically demonstrated.

Spoken language influences and syntactic characteristics turned up in the compositions, but it's true, the individual difference was big.

The results of my dissertation can help to improve teaching mother tongue and they can be used in foreign language teaching as well.

Of course I couldn't examine all aspects of characterising speaking and writting skills. Syntactic analysis of the compositions would be necessary and examining all the words which part of speech they are, and checking clauses if they are sub-ordinate or co-ordinate.

It would be worthwhile continuing the examination of the current situation of the spoken and written language on a bigger corpus, including more informants.