

Computer-assisted prosody training: Improving public speakers' vocal charisma with the Web-Pitcher

Oliver Niebuhr

Centre for Industrial Electronics - University of Southern
Denmark (SDU)

Computer-assisted prosody training (CAPT) has so far mainly been used to teach foreign languages, although prosody is still hardly taken into account in language learning. Conversely, prosody receives a lot of attention in studies and activities related to public-speaker training. But, despite that, CAPT tools are practically unknown in this type of training. The present paper addresses this gap and introduces the “Web Pitcher”, a new browser-based version of the feedback and evaluation software “Pitcher” that was developed in 2018 for the prosody-oriented training of charisma - a key characteristic of successful public speakers, which is defined as signaling competence, self-confidence and passion. In an online experiment with 60 test users it is investigated here whether and to what extent the Web Pitcher positively influences the prosodic charisma triggers of its users, and which feedback modes in which order lead to the greatest learning success. An acoustic analysis of before- vs. after-training speeches given by the 60 test users shows that the Web Pitcher improves six key prosodic charisma triggers of its learners by an average of 53 % after one hour of training - and thus performs at eye level with its offline precursor, the Pitcher. With the correct combination of its two feedback modes, the Web Pitcher even outperforms its offline precursor in terms of user improvement. The results are discussed with a view to further R&D steps and the integration of the Web Pitcher in real coaching activities. In this context, the paper also contains a link through which researchers can register and use the Web Pitcher for their own scientific purposes, also beyond questions of public-speaker or charisma training.

Referências