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**EDITORIAL**

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The first issue of Acta Universitatis Carolinae dedicated to phonetics – *Phonetica Pragensia* – was published 55 years ago, in 1967. It was the year when the International Congress of Phonetic Sciences (ICPhS) was organized in Prague because Czech phoneticians were recognized by the International Phonetic Association as significant contributors to the development of the scientific field. The phonetic issue of AUC of that year was dedicated to this world event.

The current issue honours the legacy of the previous generations of Czech phoneticians. After more than a hundred years of its existence, the Prague Institute of Phonetics stands on firm grounds. Its team consists of seven active researchers and educators, who, for the sake of historical comparison, can be listed as follows: one Professor Emeritus, one Full Professor, one Associated Professor, three Assistant Professors with a doctoral degree, and one part-time Assistant with an MA degree. The members of the team maintain many domestic and international friendships and some of the external colleagues contributed to this issue as authors, others performed as reviewers, and many more awaited this issue keenly to read it.

The work of the current team is widely recognized and appreciated, too. This can be documented by the fact that the Institute of Phonetics in Prague was bestowed the honour to organize the 4th International Workshop on the History of Speech Communication Research in 2021 (an ISCA event), the annual conference of the International Association for Forensic Phonetics and Acoustics (IAFPA) in 2022, and the 20th International Congress of Phonetic Sciences in 2023.

The forensic area is represented in the current issue by the first two articles. Tomáš Nechanský and his colleagues investigated the perceptual impact of mismatched recordings. Their large sample (300 recordings from 100 speakers) represented both language and time mismatch, i.e., an identical speaker was recorded speaking two different languages and, also, was repeatedly recorded at different times. The perceptual consequences for human listeners are contrasted in this study with the artificial intelligence achievement in speaker identification. A similar problem is tackled in the contribution by Maral Asiaee and Homa Asadi from Iran. They worked with bilingual users of Persian and Sorani Kurdish to see whether certain salient acoustic features pertinent to speaker's voice characteristics change when an individual switches from one language to another.

The third study in this issue investigated the perceptual effects of the presence or absence of glottal stops before word-initial vowels in Czech conversational speech. The authors, Michaela Svoboda and Pavel Šturm, used authentic political TV debates as the source of their material. In the design of correlated samples, they either removed or added glottal stops into the utterances from the debates and asked listeners to react to the utterances in a reaction-time perception test. The results point at facilitative function of the glottal stop, but also at complex interactions within the linguistic contents.

The article submitted by Lauri Tavi from the University of Eastern Finland is also concerned with the perception of speech, even if it is investigated by proxy. The author is interested in the impact of fast speech on prosodic forms of utterances. Specifically, he is measuring acoustic features reflecting the decrease of accent prominence when a person is compelled to speak faster. The proposed metric – *syllabic prosody index* (SPI) – is definitely worth noting. It could be expected to have further utilization in speech prosody research. Needless to say, fast speech is confirmed to be less intelligible to an automatic speech recognition system.

Speech tempo is the subject matter of the fifth contribution, too. Rather than asking respondents to speak slow and then fast, Jan Volín works with a set of recordings in which some of the speakers are habitually slow or fast. Two speech genres are investigated: news reading and poetry reciting. The author examined four types of variation in articulation and speech rates, and he correlated the measures to prosodic phrasing. One of the research questions was whether the speakers who produce habitually faster speech also make fewer prosodic boundaries than the slower speakers do.

Although the previous two studies focus on speech tempo, they contribute quite significantly to the clarification of methodological issues in phonetics. Indeed, the matter of research methodology is a perpetual concern, and two studies are directly dedicated to it. Alžběta Houzar and Radek Skarnitzl test three methods of extraction of vowel formants in two types of material: spontaneous speech and read-out sentences. They make an effort to determine how the three methods capture inter-speaker and intra-speaker variability. The results indicate quite convincingly that researchers need to be cautious when interpreting formant values obtained by different methods.

Speech melody is a salient phenomenon that has occupied the minds of linguists for a very long time. Yet, even in this area, research methodology is still debatable and a search for more adequate methods is imperative. One of the major concerns here is the clear link between quantitative precision and common linguistic concepts. Michaela Svatošová and Jan Volín are offering their contribution to the problem in the seventh article of the present AUC issue. They explain and advocate the use of Legendre polynomials for the description of traditionally recognized Czech melodemes (nuclear patterns). Their proposal, too, could be of interest to researchers internationally.

Last but not least, the current AUC issue brings two papers concerning speech acquisition. Šárka Šimáčková and Václav Jonáš Podlipský examined the effect of an online general pronunciation course on prosodic skills of adult EFL learners. Those skills were represented by pitch span (standing for liveliness of speech performance) and tempo (standing for professionalism in delivery). The outcome of the experiment is quite encouraging. It suggests that even online courses can have a measurable effect on students.

Learners of foreign languages not only acquire new speech production skills, but they can also lose certain pronunciation patterns of their mother tongue in a process called attrition. This is a topic of the study by Marie Hévrová and Tomáš Bořil. They worked with recordings of late Czech-French bilinguals and performed extensive analyses of various vowels and two fricative consonants. Indeed, late exposure to French influenced the speech characteristics of Czech, the mother tongue of the subjects who participated in the study.

As apparent from the previous paragraphs, the individual contributions in this issue of AUC journal are not alphabetically ordered. We arranged them by topic proximity with the aim to create a thematic flow which could facilitate the reader's appreciation of mutual links between various challenges in phonetic research. It is our sincere desire that the readers enjoy the variety of topics and the quality of research in this issue of AUC journal.

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