

Identification of communicative aspects in television reporters' locution

Identificação de aspectos comunicativos na locução de repórteres de televisão

Identificación de los aspectos comunicativos en la locución de reporteros de televisión

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Abstract

Objective: To identify the possibility of naive people differentiate reporters and non-reporters through communicative aspects in the text reading task. **Methods:** 24 speakers and 12 listeners participated in the research; the speakers were 12 reporters and 12 non-reporters, and non-voice professionals, who made a recording of a pattern piece of news excerpt; the listeners were 12 non-reporters lay people who, by using a numeral ranking of 11 points, assessed the 24 speaking samples in terms of pleasantness, credibility and clarity of speaking articulation, besides identifying whether the recording samples belonged or not to a reporter. **Results:** There was high level of intra-raters reliability, and high degrees of inter-raters reliability, for the three aspects in question (pleasantness; clarity of diction; credibility). Reporters obtained higher average scores for the parameters assessed, when compared to the non-reporters. Credibility was the aspect which best differentiated reporters from non-reporters. As for the aspects of pleasantness and clarity of speaking, the correct identification of the speaking voice professionals fell to 83%. **Conclusions:** The

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Authors' contributions:

CP – Data collection and research analysis.

VPV- Research idealizer, orientation to data collection and analysis, and text correction as well.

FM- Reviewed the manuscript and contributed for the discussion.

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MB- Organization of the experiment framework, observation of all the steps, and text reviewing.

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lay people can differentiate reporters and non-reporters by the communicative aspects of pleasantness, credibility and clarity of diction in the text reading task. Credibility was the parameter that allowed all the lay listeners realized the correct identification of reporters and non-reporters.

Keywords: Voice; Communication; Addresses; Voice Quality; Journalism; Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences

Resumo

Objetivo: Identificar a possibilidade de indivíduos leigos diferenciarem repórteres e não repórteres por meio de aspectos comunicativos em tarefa de leitura de texto. **Métodos:** Participaram da pesquisa 24 sujeitos falantes e 12 sujeitos ouvintes, sendo 12 repórteres em exercício profissional e 12 não repórteres e não profissionais de nenhuma categoria da voz falada. Todos realizaram uma leitura de um trecho de notícia padrão para análise auditiva. Os ouvintes eram 12 indivíduos leigos não repórteres, que avaliaram as 24 amostras de fala quanto à agradabilidade, credibilidade e clareza da articulação da fala por meio de uma escala numérica de 11 pontos, além de assinalar se o trecho ouvido era de repórter ou não repórter. **Resultados:** Houve elevado nível de confiabilidade intra e inter-avaliadores para os três aspectos em questão: agradabilidade, clareza da dicção e credibilidade. Repórteres obtiveram maiores escores médios para os três parâmetros avaliados, quando comparados aos não repórteres. A credibilidade diferenciou perfeitamente (100%) repórteres de não repórteres; em relação à agradabilidade e clareza da dicção, a identificação correta dos indivíduos caiu para 83%. **Conclusão:** Os indivíduos leigos conseguiram diferenciar repórteres e não repórteres pelos aspectos comunicativos de agradabilidade, credibilidade e clareza da dicção na tarefa de leitura de texto. A credibilidade foi o parâmetro que permitiu que todos os ouvintes leigos realizassem a identificação correta de repórteres e não repórteres.

Palavras-chave: Voz; Comunicação; Discursos; Qualidade da Voz; Jornalismo; Fonoaudiologia.

Resumen

Objetivo: Identificar la posibilidad de que individuos legos diferencien reporteros de no reporteros a través de aspectos comunicativos otorgados por medio de la tarea de lectura de texto. **Métodos:** Participaron 24 sujetos hablantes y 12 sujetos oyentes, siendo 12 reporteros en ejercicio profesional y 12 no reporteros y no profesionales de ninguna categoría de la voz hablada. Todos realizaron una lectura de un trecho de una noticia estándar para el análisis auditivo. Los oyentes eran 12 individuos legos no reporteros, que evaluaron las 24 muestras de habla en relación con el nivel de agrado, credibilidad y claridad de la articulación de habla, a través de una escala numérica de 11 puntos, además de señalar si el trecho escuchado era realizado por un reportero o no. **Resultados:** Hubo un elevado nivel de confiabilidad intra e inter-evaluadores para los tres aspectos en cuestión: agrado, claridad de la dicción y credibilidad. Los reporteros obtuvieron mayores puntajes medios para los tres parámetros evaluados al compararlos con los no reporteros. La credibilidad fue el parámetro que diferenció perfectamente (100%) a los reporteros de los no reporteros; en relación con el agrado y a la claridad de la dicción, la identificación correcta de los individuos cayó para un 83%. **Conclusión:** Los individuos legos consiguieron diferenciar a los reporteros de los no reporteros por los aspectos comunicativos de agrado, credibilidad y claridad de la dicción en la tarea de lectura de texto. La credibilidad fue el parámetro que permitió que todos los oyentes legos realizaran la identificación correcta entre reporteros y no reporteros.

Palabras claves: Voz; Comunicación; Discursos; Calidad de la Voz; Periodismo; Fonoaudiología

Introduction

Communication is a valued personal and professional competence. Through it are transmitted impressions of naturalness, credibility and reliability¹, characteristics which are formed by the content of the message, the way it is passed and the emotion involved in the transmission.

The constant search for communicative improvement has become fundamental in the professional environment. Being a good communicator and having assertive speech is essential for good professional performance, especially for voice professionals²⁻⁵.

Television reporters are communication professionals and have a great deal of responsibility in how they will broadcast the news to the public. They make intensive use of voice and speech, always needing to improve vocal, interpretive and expressive aspects so that they can be objective, clear, assertive and persuasive, guaranteeing the attention of the viewers, often with intuitively adjusted communication^{4,6}.

Oral expressiveness is how each transmits ideas and sensations through the body and voice⁷. It consists of vocal and speech aspects, such as vocal quality, articulation, frequency, intensity, fluency, speech velocity and melodic variation, influenced by the intrinsic physical and psychological characteristics of the individual and by the cultural and social context^{3,6}. These vocal and speech aspects are perceptible to the listeners and interpreted by them in a positive or negative way and the voice and speech are not separated from the discursive linguistic resources⁸.

Thus, for the public to have a pleasant, reliable, clear and natural perception of speech, it is necessary that verbal and non-verbal communication resources be adequate^{9,10}.

Pleasantness is an important parameter in location. To convey a message with a pleasant vocal quality and adequacy of prosodic elements of speech is fundamental to keep the listener's attention¹¹⁻¹⁴. The narrated message needs to be clear, which implies precise articulation, controlled breathing and adequate speech speed, and transmitted with a good voice and well-used communicative resources¹⁵⁻¹⁹. A clear, believable, pleasant, and natural narration makes it more attractive to the listener⁴.

However, the television reporter's narration has not always been like this, as it has been changing over the years. In the 1970s, at the beginning of telejournalism, and for subsequent years, the reporter's narration was more distant from the viewer, performed more formally, with more "stereotyped" speech, with emphasis on tonic syllables, excessive use of pauses and low vocal modulation⁷.

Over the years, the approach began to be valued of the television reporter with their target audience through a colloquial narration, expressive and natural, less artificial and stereotyped. The reporter became more spontaneous, using a vocal pattern that marked his style and a language closer to the audience, without losing credibility. This modern format made it possible to approach the reporter with the viewer, making the transmission of the news more attractive^{11,14,17,18}, without losing professional television qualifiers of the television reporter.

Thus, the study had as objective to identify the possibility of lay individuals to differentiate reporters and non-reporters through communicative aspects of pleasantness, credibility and clarity of diction in a reading text task.

Method

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of *Universidade Nove de Julho* (UNINOVE), under nº 665.330 and CAAE: 30748014.3.0000.5511. All subjects involved signed the term of free and informed consent, allowing the realization and dissemination of this research and its results according to Resolution 196/96 (BRAZIL, Resolution MS / CNS / CNEP No. 196/96 of October 10, 1996).

Twenty-four speaking subjects and 12 listening subjects participated. Talking individuals were part of the first stage of the study, of which 12 were reporters from two television stations in São Paulo, Brazil with professional experience ranging from two to four years (six women and six men) and 12 non-reporter and non-professional from any category of spoken voice. Also recruited from the same television stations were employees of operational positions that did not involve the professional use of voice (six men and six women). The average age of the speakers was 29 years. The 12 hearing subjects (six men and six women), lay persons, non-professionals of the spoken voice, non-speech-language pathologist (SLP) therapists,

aged between 18 and 55 years, of varied professions, recruited at the invitation of the researchers through their network of contacts entered the second phase.

In the first stage, the 24 speaking subjects (12 reporters and 12 non-reporters) recorded a report that was taken from the collection of SLP therapy service of a television network: *"It is in this Latin paradise that we begin our journey through Uruguay. A quiet country, an outstanding city. Punta is bustling, glamorous and full of millionaires. They walk the streets, the beaches, parade their imported cars and enjoy life. Come from wherever you come, whoever travels to Punta Del Este, invests in the city: houses, apartments, boats and always the promise of a lot of fun!"*

The reading of the text was performed with habitual voice, frequency and intensity of comfortable vocals. The recording was captured directly on a Dell computer, with Soundblaster audio board, ShureSM58 unidirectional microphone positioned at 45 ° and 5 cm from the mouth through the Fovoview program (CTS Informática, Pato Branco, Brazil). The 24 speaking individuals had free time to familiarize themselves with the reading material and did the recording when they felt certain about the task. If there was an error during the reading, the subject could repeat the recording.

In the second stage, the recordings were edited, randomly ordered and presented to the 12 lay-

listening individuals, with a 25% repetition test for intra-subject reliability. The task of these individuals was to evaluate the edited reading passages as to the pleasantness, credibility and clarity of diction. Each parameter was scored using a numerical scale of 11 points (from 0 to 10) in which zero indicated a worse evaluation in the specific parameter and 10 indicated a better evaluation. The evaluator should also identify the reading as being from a reporter or a non-reporter. The listeners could hear each sample only once, filling out the assessment during and immediately after the task.

The material was sent for statistical analysis, using the following tests: Cronbach's alpha coefficient to verify the degree of inter-rater reliability, Cochran's *Q* test and Wilcoxon signed rank test, to verify the degree of intra-rater reliability. In addition, the Mann-Whitney *U* test was used in order to verify the possible differences between being and not being a reporter for the three variables of pleasantness, credibility and clarity of diction.

Results

The level of intra- and inter-rater reliability was high, as shown in Table 1. There was 97.9% agreement among the listeners, both for pleasantness, credibility and clarity of diction as for the identification of reporter or non-reporter.

Table 1. Inter-rater reliability of the evaluations performed by lay individuals in narration by reporters and non-reporters on the parameters of pleasantness, clarity of diction and credibility and rank among reporters and non-reporters (N = 24)

Aspect	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Reporter classification x non-reporter	0.934
Pleasantness	0.927
Clarity of diction	0.938
Credibility	0.948

Teste Alfa de Cronbach

Reporters obtained higher average scores for the three parameters evaluated (pleasantness, cred-

ibility and clarity of diction), when compared to non-reporters, as shown in Figure 1.

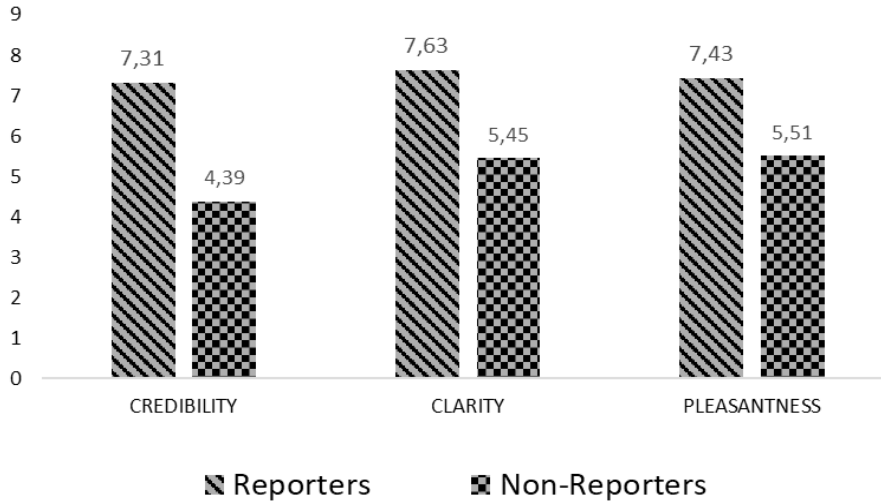


Figure 1. Means of evaluations of parameters credibility, clarity of diction and pleasantness for reporters and non-reporters.

Although the 12 evaluated listeners were concordant (97.9%), only the variable credibility allowed all lay-listening individuals ($N = 12$, 100%) to differentiate reporters from non-reporters. In terms of pleasantness and clarity of speech, agreement was high (83% for both) and significant ($p = 0.001$).

Most lay individuals were able to correctly identify reporters from non-reporters for communicative aspects; however, when analyzing identification errors, more reporters were evaluated as non-reporters (22%) than the inverse (13%), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Identification by lay individuals of reporters and non-reporters

	Evaluation of reporters evaluated as reporters	Evaluation of reporters evaluated as non-reporters	Evaluation of non-reporters evaluated as reporters	Evaluation of non-reporters evaluated as non-reporters
%	78	22	13	87
N	112	32	18	126

The reporters identified had, in the majority, notes above seven in the three parameters evaluated; non-reporters had, for the most part, scores below seven in all three aspects evaluated. Most

non-reporters identified as reporters had scores equal to or greater than seven, and those identified as non-reporters had scores lower than seven, as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

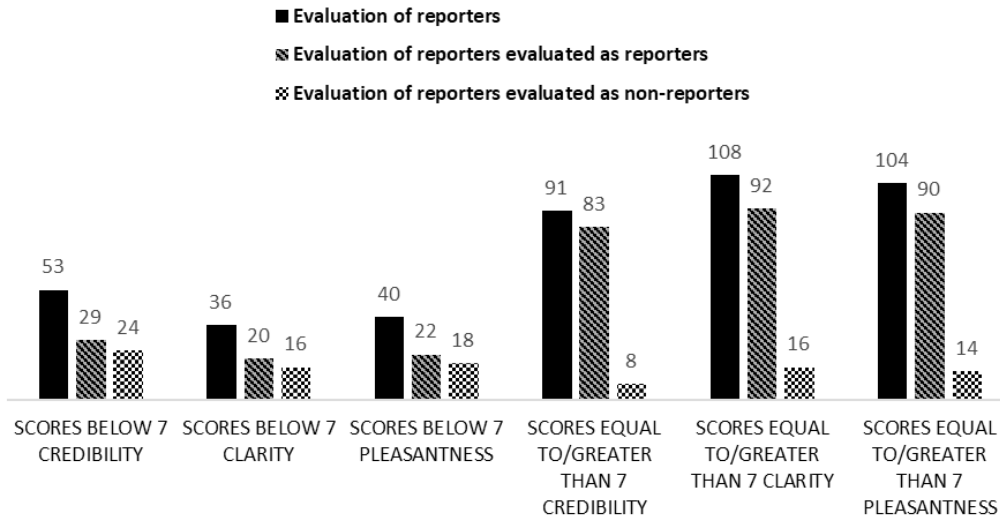


Figure 2. Total of evaluations of credibility, clarity of diction and pleasantness of reporters with scores below seven and equal to/greater than seven.

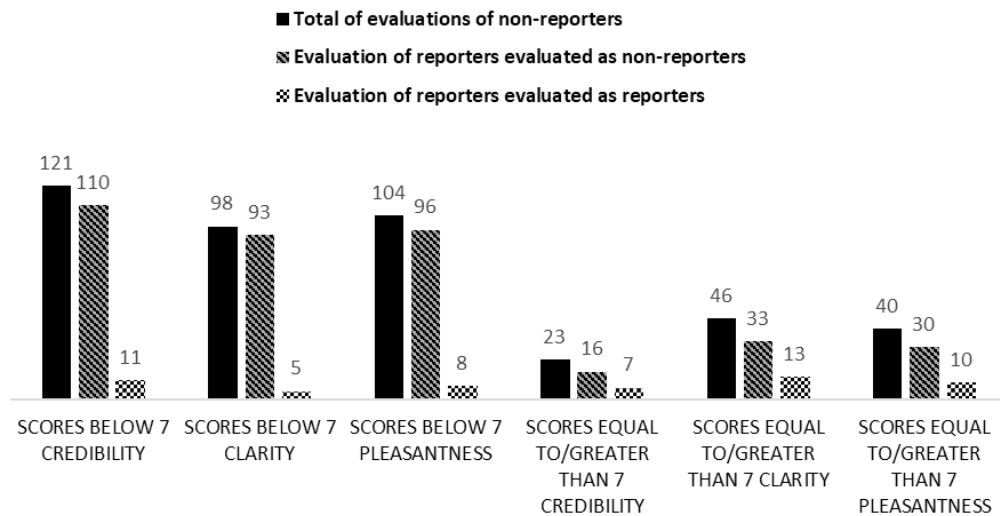


Figure 3. Total of evaluations of credibility, clarity of diction and pleasantness of non-reporters with scores below seven and equal to/greater than seven.

Discussion

Nowadays, the challenge of the television reporter is to present an objective narration, credible and still manage to maintain naturalness and authenticity. During the transmission of the message, the viewer should have the sensation similar to that of a conversation with the reporter, without being artificial, giving the impression of natural speech and colloquial language^{4,18}. Currently, oral

communication in television journalism is closer to the viewer; however, without losing the markers of professional communication. Communicative aspects of pleasantness, credibility and clarity of diction are valued by reporters and important in the listener's perception⁽¹⁾.

Regarding the results of the research, the levels of inter-rater reliability were high, both for the three communicative parameters evaluated: pleasantness, credibility and clarity of diction, as well as

for the identification of reporter and non-reporter. The three characteristics evaluated presented significant differences in the identification of reporters, and the credibility in the transmission of the message was the only variable that allowed all the lay listeners (100%) to differentiate reporters from non-reporters. As for the pleasantness parameters of diction clarity, of the 12 listeners, 10 (83%, $p < 0.001$) differentiated reporters from non-reporters (Table 1). Therefore, the three parameters evaluated differentiated reporters from non-reporters.

Pleasantness and clarity of articulation are central to the listener's reception of the message, which may be positive or negative, depending on how the resources of the pauses, emphases, modulations, articulation, frequency and intensity will be performed by the reporter⁶. The more reporters improve these requirements, the more attractive and credible the news are. A study carried out on radio expressiveness with SLP therapists reported that speech that catches the attention of the listener has confidence and is interpreted more easily by the listeners¹⁵.

Credibility was inherent in the professional communication of television reporters, allowing the identification of all. Moreover, the difference between the means of the scores of reporters and non-reporters was greater for credibility (Figure 1) and was the one that presented the lowest mean for non-reporters, indicating that a credible and assertive message is not easily transmitted (Figure 1).

More than a necessity, credibility is an intrinsic requirement of the reporter's professional activity. Some aspects of communication that promote the perception of speech credibility are vocal quality, articulation of speech sounds, pauses, rhythm, breathing and semantic organization of discourse^{11,15,17,19,20}, associated with its content. The literature also describes that the credibility of reporters is strongly related to acoustic parameters of frequency and intensity in the judgment of lay listeners²¹.

The communicative parameters of pleasantness, credibility and clarity of diction are determining aspects in the construction of an expressive speech for the television reporter and seem to be controlled by the journalists; becoming communication noises when used improperly. When this happens, the understanding of the message is impaired and the viewer needs to work harder

to understand it. Therefore, they must continually improve^{1,4}.

Although these parameters are somewhat independent²¹, each one of them can generate the same perception in the listener, since the better the articulation of the speech sounds, the more credibility is transmitted.

As expected, some reporters were identified as non-reporters and vice versa (Graph 1), most likely because of the naturalness required in the transmission of news these days.

Reporters who were correctly identified had the highest scores in the three parameters evaluated. Reporters who did not present evaluation scores above seven in the parameters evaluated were identified as non-reporters (Figure 2). Likewise, the non-reporters who were identified as reporters were evaluated with high scores in the three parameters of niceness, credibility and clarity of diction (Figure 3). Thus, the perception of credibility, pleasantness and clarity of diction makes the messages identified as being voice professionals; that is, communication of superior, natural and pleasing quality, which consequently facilitates capturing and maintaining the attention of the listener is expected in the professionals of the voice, in this case, the reporters. Professional communication requires adequate use of prosodic speech resources such as emphases, pauses, speech velocity, rhythm, articulation and vocal quality^{22,23}.

Some communicative aspects can positively influence the transmission of discourse when well employed. Emphasis is one of the aspects that positively influences the transmission of the message and can be used as a strategy to convey clarity, highlighting important words according to the context²⁴. The use of pauses is another aspect to be considered in the narration; the adequate distribution of pauses in a discourse and the duration varies according to the locution and its functions, being delimitative and emphatic. It is up to the reporter to know how to use them in the narrated text. The pauses together with other prosodic elements are fundamental in the contextualization of oral expressiveness²⁵. The precise articulation of speech sounds and vocal quality are requirements inherent in the telejournalist profession. This professional is concerned with presenting a pleasant vocal quality and obtaining a conscious mastery of their resources, such as frequency, intensity, modulation and vocal resonance^{6,15,26}. In

a recent study on the judgment of viewers about telejournalists in pre- and post- SLP intervention, vocal quality issues, speech rate, rhythm, pauses, emphasis and articulation were addressed, concluding that the viewers preferred the situation after SLP intervention⁴.

The articulation and the speed of speech with adequate rhythm guarantee greater clarity of the narration, besides presenting more pleasantness; if the speed of speech is accelerated and the number of pauses is smaller, the less pleasing and believable will be the locution for the listener⁶.

The literature also describes that determining factors for the evaluation of the three parameters of pleasantness, credibility and clarity of articulation are the time of speech, the way pauses are performed within that time, being shorter or smaller, besides frequency and intensity²¹.

The reporters of this study made adequate use of these communicative resources, used pauses and emphases appropriate to the text, presented a precise articulation, a vocal quality pleasing to the listener resulting in a more harmonic interpretation with the sensations pertinent to the news section, more credible and attractive to the evaluating listener^{1,5,9,23}.

In general, even with the naturalness demanded by the communication of the reporter nowadays, it is necessary for this professional to develop a better quality communication^{5,21,22}, capable of transmitting pleasantness and credibility, with precision of articulation of the sounds of the speech. It is this communication professional that helps the viewer identify the reporter and make the transmission of the message efficient.

Conclusion

Lay individuals were able to differentiate reporters and non-reporters by the communicative parameters of pleasantness, credibility and clarity of diction in the text reading task. Credibility was the parameter that allowed all lay listeners to correctly identify reporters and non-reporters.

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