

Ethnographic methods at field laboratory: The vowel system of a low prestige geographical dialect in the South of Greece

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The aim of this paper is to argue about the effectiveness of the methods that we followed in order to minimize the negative effects of the unnatural speech production which are triggered in the locus of the speech laboratory (Foulkes et.al. 2010). For this purpose, we compare the results of two acoustic analyses, one on casual and informal speech recorded in natural settings and another on speech produced in field laboratory, in our effort to study the vowel system of a low prestige dialect in Southern Greece.

In order to tackle the 'Observer's Paradox' (Labov 1972), we do not focus on the equipment but on the communicative settings that characterize a casual dialogue. Moreover, we strongly believe that the two most important parameters that determine the spontaneity of speech is the existence of actual social ties between the field-worker and the participants, as well as the appropriate social behavior of the field-worker in relation to these ties.

Therefore, in order to collect our data inside as well as outside the laboratory, we used central members of the speech community who were trained for ethnographic data collection, as well as for conducting lab experiments according to the specifications of the experiments. Lab experiments were held in the informants' houses, which increased the already existing casual relation between the field-worker and her informants. Moreover, the verbal instructions of the lab experiments were pre-recorded with the help of a dialectal speaker, with the hope that their use would bring about an accommodation effect that would increase the use of the dialect through the lab experiments (Kainada & Baltatzani, 2013).

The acoustic analysis from five hours of spontaneous speech and 2800 vowel tokens from controlled speech from ten informants show that there is no significant difference between these two different settings.