

EDITORIAL

Loquens: The Multifaceted Vision of Speech

No other property, no other phenomenon is as intrinsically and exclusively human as speech. If there is one feature that defines man compared to other living beings, it is the faculty of language which allows communication with their fellow human beings through voice and spoken word. Other forms of communication do exist, but none of them have such strong and essential links to human nature.

Perhaps because it is such a familiar phenomenon, and one that accompanies us throughout our entire lives, the enormous complexity of speech goes unnoticed by the casual speaker who can barely understand the large number of factors and variables that need to be combined to form their own expressions and have them perceived correctly, let alone many of the implications the analysis and understanding of these process can have on a wide variety of scientific fields.

However, experts are becoming ever increasingly aware that the study of human communication through speech is a topic that is so rich, so broad, and so important from the theoretical and practical point of view that it can hardly be approached from a single perspective without betraying the identity of the phenomenon being studied. The fact that this newly launched journal includes *Speech Sciences* in its title aims to underscore the interdisciplinary approach it is founded on; the same approach that most scientific work on the subject is currently using. Unquestionably, at the core of the

speech sciences is the study of the production and

perception of sounds and the phonetic sequences that make them up; specifically, the analysis of the physiological, physical, and neurological processes that make spoken communication possible. Over the last few decades this field of study has produced tremendous theoretical and experimental advances that have made it possible to design new explanatory models supported by abundant quantitative data. In the same way, in recent years and from a purely linguistic perspective, a better understanding has been reached of the functional organization of sounds in diverse languages, the laws governing their change, and the patterns underlying the process by which speakers acquire them.

These recent advances have turned out to be transcendent for other fields of knowledge that, in one way or another, have been able to draw on these contributions. There are examples in speech technology and in many of its main subareas such as text-to-speech conversion, speech recognition, and dialogue or conversational systems. But examples also exist in the health sciences, which include studies on different speech and hearing problems and on developmental disorders in oral fluency, as well as their treatment.

Other facets of theoretical or applied scientific activity that require a deeper comprehension of speech should be mentioned: mother tongue instruction, in particular, and

some of its skills such as reading and writing; foreign language instruction, and especially, its pronunciation; voice identification for legal or forensic purposes; the analysis of socio-cultural levels of populations based on the speech of individual members; investigation of the psycholinguistic processes that make message decoding possible; the development of vocal techniques focused on improving professional locution and artistic expression, etc.

For many years and in many countries university training has unfortunately been split into two large opposing fields, humanities and sciences. The phenomenon of speech does not fit in well with either and this separation has made it hard to apply the multifaceted, multidisciplinary approaches the field requires, whether it be in the classroom or in the scientific literature. *Loquens: The Spanish Journal of Speech Sciences* is born with the goal of promoting these multidisciplinary approaches. It aims to eliminate boundaries and build bridges between different disciplines -and mentalities- to foster their mutual benefit. This publication will therefore include not only empirical studies, but also speculative, logical, conceptual, and normative studies and, of course, those that combine several of these perspectives at the same time.

One volume per year will be published and it will be divided into two issues, one released in January and one in July. The

first volume will contain a series of articles on the current state of the field, each authored by prestigious international specialists. They will present an overview of some of the most important areas in speech sciences: what is currently being done, what has been achieved, and what remains to be done. This initial instalment is conceived as both a challenge and an invitation to potential readers who may decide to contribute with their future collaborations to the development of these and other related areas. The fact that the journal will be offered in a digital format makes it more dynamic and provides a scope that can make it especially attractive for researchers.

The CSIC's national and international prestige is indisputable and it seems logical to use its electronic platform to launch a project like this that is inspired by the enthusiasm for innovation in both form and substance, a project that pursues communication between different disciplines and approaches, between the specialists working on them, and between the national and transnational groups they represent. The people who are involved in this new publication would like to sincerely thank the CSIC for the confidence it has shown by putting its name behind this ambitious project.

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