Gender patterns of creak in Estonian dyadic conversations
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Creaky voice has been subject to extensive research in terms of its acoustic correlates and as a typological feature, but also to describe its conversational functions and speakers’ social backgrounds. In particular, in varieties of English it is commonly considered a sociophonetic marker characterising the speech of young women. Several studies have concluded that young females exhibit more creakiness in their speech than equivalent males, especially in American English where it identifies upwardly mobile and educated women [e.g. 1, 2]. As this is highly visible in popular culture, it has been suggested that the popular social trend has caused middle-aged women to start using creaky voice to the same extent as younger women [3].

Creaky voice is also used as a stylistic variable in different social settings [e.g. 4]. Interestingly, although it seems that creakiness signals professionalism, urbanism, authority and high social status, it has been reported that when women use creaky voice, an American listener tends to perceive them as less competent and colder than men with creaky voice [5]. In other languages, the use of creaky voice has mostly been observed within the framework of CA in discourse context, leaving out the social factors influencing its use [e.g. 6].

A previous study briefly looked into the use of creaky voice in spontaneous Estonian and showed that creakiness is expectedly used more in informal settings, but unexpectedly more by young men than other social groups [7]. However, so far there has been no systematic view on this and therefore we take a deeper look into how creaky voice is used in spontaneous Estonian and, more importantly, by whom. We also investigate the properties of the interlocutor towards whom creaky voice is directed at, and whether this is connected to who dominates in the conversations. In addition, we test whether differences in the use of creaky voice can be explained by variations in f0 in social groups. The results are based on the collection of spontaneous dialogues in the Phonetic Corpus of Estonian Spontaneous Speech (50 dialogues with 83 unique speakers, total duration 28.5 hrs).

References