

THE IMPACT OF A TEACHING OR SINGING CAREER ON THE FEMALE VOCAL QUALITY AT THE MEAN AGE OF 67 YEARS

K. Van Lierde^{1,3}, S. Claeys², K. Bettens¹, E. D'haeseleer¹

¹Department of Speech Language and Hearing Sciences, Ghent University, Belgium

²Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Ghent University, Belgium

³Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to measure the objective and subjective vocal quality in women aged between 60 and 75 years. Secondly, the impact of a teaching or singing career on the vocal quality was investigated by comparing the vocal quality of retired women with different careers.

Study design: case control study

Methods: Seventy-three retired women between 60 and 75 years (mean age: 67y, SD: 4.49) participated in the study and were divided into three groups: women with a teaching career (n=21), choir singers with a singing career (n=12) and women with a non-vocal career (n=40). All subjects underwent the same assessment protocol consisting of objective (aerodynamic, maximum performance, vocal range, acoustic measurements and Dysphonia Severity Index) and subjective (Voice Handicap Index, auditory-perceptual evaluations by three listeners) voice measurements.

Results: In all three groups objective and perceptual voice analysis showed a mild dysphonia. No differences in Dysphonia Severity Index were found between the three groups. The voices of choir singers with a singing career were perceived significantly less rough compared to the women with a non-vocal career. Additionally, the lowest frequency of the frequency range was significantly lower in the retired teachers and choir singers compared to the controls.

Conclusion: The results of this study prudently suggest that a singing or teaching career has a positive impact on the vocal frequency range compared to a non-vocal career and that singing has a positive impact on the perceptual vocal quality of the older female voice.

Conclusions. Results suggest that the SOVT training programs resonant voice training and straw phonation may have a positive impact on the vocal quality and vocal capacities of future occupational voice users. The resonant voice training caused an improved dysphonia severity index, and the straw phonation training caused an expansion of the intensity range in this population.