

Preface

This book presents the research of the author on the neural correlates of quality perception for complex speech signals. Two different disciplines will be interconnected here, namely neuroscience and Quality of Experience research, which do not seem to be frequently used in combination for research on speech quality perception. In the five experiments conducted here, standard clinical methods in neurophysiology on the one hand, and on the other hand, methods used in fields of research concerned with speech quality perception, will be applied. Using this combination, it will be shown that speech stimuli with different lengths (phonemes, words, sentences and audiobooks) and different quality impairments (signal-correlated noise, reduced bit rate of a speech codec and reverberation) are accompanied by physiological reactions related to quality variations, e.g. a positive peak in an event-related potential. Furthermore, it will be shown that—in most cases—quality impairment intensity has an impact on the strength of the intensity of physiological reactions (components of event-related potentials in Chaps. 2–4, or alpha frequency band power in Chaps. 5, and 6). This book consists of the following contributions: Implementation of a test set-up combining neurophysiological and subjective quality assessment methods for speech quality perception testing (Chaps. 2–6). The proof that this test set-up successfully functions with short speech stimuli (phonemes) and generic quality impairment, i.e. signal-correlated noise (Chap. 2). A successful application of this test method to longer speech stimuli (words) with a more realistic quality impairment, i.e. reduced bit rate of a speech codec (Chap. 3). The proof that this technique successfully functions in respect to stimuli with lengths for standard quality testing (sentences) and an environment-related quality impairment, i.e. reverberation (Chap. 4). An investigation of the impact of a speech compression algorithm with reduced bit rate on the cognitive state of listeners for speech stimuli of long duration (audiobooks) in constant (Chap. 5) and varying quality conditions (Chap. 6).

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