Abstract

In recent years, the study of rhythm occurs with models defined rhythm metrics (cfr. Ramus *et al.* 1999, Grabe & Low 2002, Dellwo 2006, Bertinetto & Bertini 2008). The majority of studies on rhythm test these metrics on read speech. The experiment of metrics on corpora of spontaneous and semi-spontaneous speech, though, show results that contrast with those of read speech, namely these models give back for these types of speech different rhythmic-typological classification.

The purpose of this research is to verify the classificatory ability of some rhythm metrics (cfr. Ramus *et al.* 1999, Grabe & Low 2002, Dellwo 2006) on a corpus of semi-spontaneous speech. The corpus of the research is extracted of CLIPS (cfr. Albano Leoni 2006, Savy & Cutugno 2009) and it is composed of eight Italian regional varieties. The speech, as mentioned above, is semi-spontaneous and it was acquired with the elicitation methods of map task and test of differences.

In literature, the metrics, above mentioned, are experienced on linguistic units very heterogeneous among them for dimension, structure and parameters. This heterogeneity represents a problem not easy to solve for the studies on rhythm. In order to solve this problem, in this research is defined a domain for the rhythmic analysis that, together with the verification of classification validity of the rhythm metrics, represents an important step of the doctoral thesis. The linguistic unit that in this research represents the domain for the rhythmic analysis is the Tone Unit (T-U).

From experimentation of the metric on the T-U which constitute the corpus reveal some issues that put in serious doubt the utility of these models. In fact, most of the Italian varieties which compose the corpus of the research are not classified on the traditional rhythm classes. The failure classification of the most Italian regional varieties depends of the parameters on which the metrics base the classification of the natural languages: the duration and the number of vocalic segments. In the semi-spontaneous speech, these parameters are very unstable because, as shown by the results of this research, depends by the following factors: speech rate, inter-speaker variability and intra-speaker variability.