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Getting Exercised about Nothing

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The Dynamic Speech Corpus (DSC) being developed at the Dublin Institute of Technology aims at being a learning corpus as well as exemplifying natural, dialogic interaction recorded at industry-standard quality so as to avail of DIT's slow-down technology.

The availability of time-scaling means that materials can be developed which fulfil Richard Cauldwell's ambition of 'spending more time with the signal'. Literally. By slowing the signal down to 40% without tonal distortion, the learner has 2.5 times as long to study ***how*** an utterance was said, not just ***what*** was said.

This makes it possible to create new types of listening exercises based on real, unscripted dialogue, rather than scripted interchanges, which – while necessary to teach lexis in context – are insufficient to prepare students for exposure to a real speech community. These dialogues are characterised by the use of speaker 'blur' in order to highlight citation elements of communicative importance to the speaker.

This presentation will demonstrate how it is possible to construct exercises, using naturalistic materials, aimed at helping learners notice the principled use of elisions and phonetic reductions in native-to-native interchanges, by listening for what was ***not*** said, with the use of the slow-down tool and an orthographic transcription.

Key words: speech corpus, slow-down, listening exercises, phonetic reduction