

# Effect of Language Dominance on Focus Prosody: Evidence from Wu-Mandarin Bilinguals

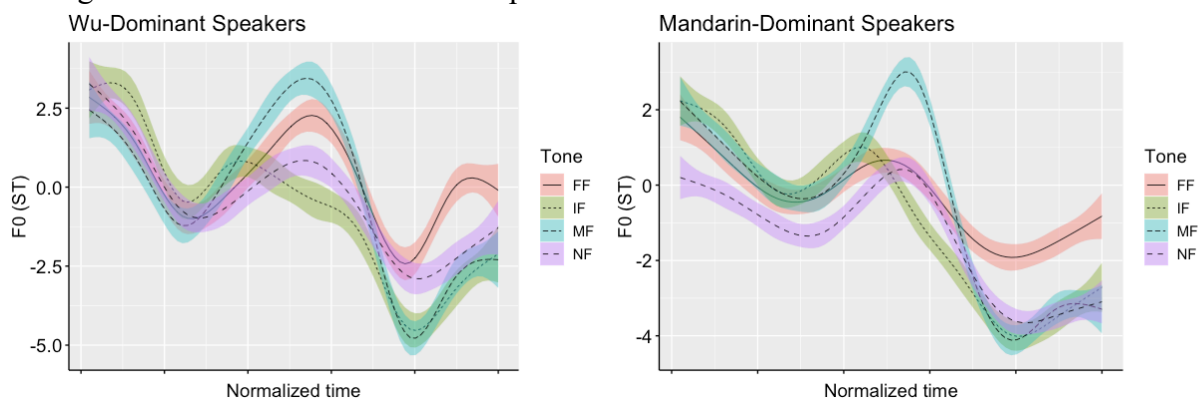
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In the past decade, many languages have been classified in terms of whether post-focus compression of  $f_0$  range (PFC) is used to mark narrow focus or not. Xu, Chen, and Wang (2012) suggested that PFC is easily lost through contact with a –PFC language (Southern Min) in a bilingual society. In Chen, Xu, and Guion-Anderson (2014), Mandarin-dominant young Southern Min-Mandarin bilinguals showed clear PFC in their Mandarin speech while Southern Min-dominant old speakers did not, showing that PFC could be used as an indicator of one's language background. While Chen et al.'s (2014) findings may seem to suggest that language dominance could override the contact effect reported in Xu et al. (2012) for highly proficient speakers, it is unclear how language dominance alone affects PFC. Thus, this study tested Suzhou Wu-Mandarin bilinguals (Wu-dominant vs. Mandarin-dominant), who spoke two +PFC languages on a daily basis. If the Mandarin-dominant speakers do not exhibit PFC in their Wu speech, then one can argue that PFC is not only easy-to-lose (through contact), but also hard-to-acquire in general (regardless of the typological status of the two languages).

We recruited six female Wu-Mandarin bilinguals (age  $M = 22.17$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ) for a production experiment. Four of these participants self-identified as Mandarin-dominant while two considered themselves Suzhou Wu-dominant. Participants were instructed to read aloud a question and a corresponding answer in pair. For narrow focus conditions, the leading question contained one piece of wrong information, which would then elicit contrastive focus in the answer sentence (Neutral Focus, Initiative Focus, Medial Focus, Final Focus). From each speaker, 80 utterances were recorded. Preliminary data from four Mandarin-dominant speakers suggested that PFC was lost while the data of two Wu-dominant speakers showed clear PFC in Suzhou Wu speech, no matter which word was under focus. These findings are taken to indicate that language dominance of bilinguals can influence PFC in their speech.



**Keywords:** Suzhou Wu, Mandarin, prosodic focus, post-focus compression (PFC)

## References

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