

Interviewer effects on speech production in Cantonese: A pilot study

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The interviewer effect is well-documented in the sociolinguistics literature. Research has shown that respondents' choice or behavior can be affected by interviewer characteristics such as race and gender (Bailey & Tillery, 2004).

In this pilot study, we explored how the interviewer's gender may affect Cantonese speakers' speech in laboratory settings. We recruited eight native speakers to complete a production task. They were four males ($M = 22.25$, $SD = 1.48$) and four females ($M = 21.5$, $SD = 1.5$). Participants read aloud 'North Wind and the Sun' three times each, in the presence of a male and a female interviewer respectively (interviewer order counterbalanced). Acoustic data were analyzed using Smoothing Spline (SS) ANOVA (Davidson, 2006) to identify significant differences at particular time points.

Results (see Appendix) indicated that the female participants' (upper panels) did not seem to be affected by the gender of the interviewer, whereas their male counterparts (lower panels) realized Tones 3, 4, and 6 with a significantly lower pitch in the presence of a male interviewer. No other acoustic difference was found.

Our findings have methodological implications for speech production experiments, especially when investigating the pitch dimension. In the next step, a bigger sample will be necessary to verify the current findings.

References

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Appendix

