VARIATION IN FRENCH PARTIAL INTERROGATIVES:
SOCIAL MEANING AS A KEY FACTOR TO UNDERSTAND SOCIOLINGUISTIC NORM VIOLATIONS
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VARIATION IN FRENCH PARTIAL INTERROGATIVES

MANY VARIANTS OF PARTIAL QUESTIONS IN FRENCH, WELL STUDIED PHENOMENON
3 CONSTRUCTIONS UNDER INVESTIGATION HERE:

- IN SITU (<u>IS</u>)   TU VOIS QUI ?   (*YOU SEE WHO?*)   S – V – WH
- FRONTING
  - V-S INVERSION (<u>FINV</u>)   QUI VOIS-TU ?   (*WHO SEE YOU?*)   WH – V – S
  - NO V-S INVERSION (<u>F</u>)   QUI TU VOIS ?   (*WHO YOU SEE?*)   WH – S – V

= 'WHO DO YOU SEE?'

POSSIBLE FACTORS AT WORK IN THE VARIATION

- SYNTAX   → E.G. 'FRONTING = MOVEMENT = COMPLEXITY' (JAKUBOWICZ 2011)
- PRAGMATICS   → E.G. 'IS = FOCUS POSITION' (BEYSSADE 2007, BOECKX 1999...)
- PHONOLOGY   → E.G. 'LONG NON-WH PART → FRONTING LIKELY' (HAMLAOUI 2010)
- ...
- SOCIOLINGUISTICS (HERE: 'VARIATION REFLECTS A SOCIOLECT;
                                        ONE SOCIAL GROUP = ONE PREFERRED STRUCTURE')
  → E.G. 'WORKING-CLASS PEOPLE USE MORE IS (>60%) THAN UPPER-CLASS PEOPLE (<45%)' (QUILLARD 2001) /// 'ACADEMICS, INTELLECTUALS USE MORE FINV THAN OTHER PEOPLE'(ASHBY 1977) ...

GOALS
INVESTIGATE OTHER SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTORS:
'DIFFERENT VARIANTS CONVEY DIFFERENT SOCIAL CUES'

→ LONGTERM GOAL: MODEL THESE FACTOR IN SOCIAL MEANING GAMES (BURNETT 2017)

EARLIER CORPUS STUDIES

- *Repartition of variants by social groups (often written French)*
  → OLD CORPUS STUDIES (COVENEY 2011, FOR AN OVERVIEW OF 1960's-1980's DATA)
  → WRITTEN CORPORA OR CORPORA OF VERBALIZED WRITTEN FRENCH (THEATER)
  → IS < 33% IN STUDIES MENTIONED BY COVENEY 2011, <40% IN ASHBY 1977
→ CALLS FOR A MORE MODERN & REFINED VIEW

RECENT CORPUS STUDIES

- *Modern corpora show a more complex picture (mostly spoken French)*
  → *LÀ-BAS* (HAMLAOUI 2010):   AT LEAST 50/50 IS/F, ~0% FINV (ADULTS)
  → *CHILDES* SUB-CORPUS (THIBERGE 2017):   AT LEAST 50/50 IS/F, ~0% FINV (ADULTS)
  + *EPAC* SUB-CORPUS (THIBERGE & HEMFORTH, FORTHCOMING):   FINV BELONG TO RHETORICS, IS IS THE WAY ONE CAN 'CONNECT' WITH ONE'S EVERYDAY, POPULAR AUDIENCE

EXPERIMENT 1A (AJT 1)
ACCEPTABILITY JUDGMENTS WITH NEUTRAL CONTEXT

General goal
ASSESS FRENCH NATIVE SPEAKERS' PREFERENCES IN PARTIAL INTERROGATIVES

→ PARTICIPANTS & PROCEDURE: 57 PARTICIPANTS, 42/15 FEM/MALE, MEDIAN 28 Y.O.
ONLINE RATINGS OF INTERROGATIVES WITH A SHORT CONTEXT (SCALE 1-10)
→ ITEMS: 3 CONDITIONS
        5 ITEMS BY CONDITION
        15 UNRELATED FILLERS

Context	Sentence to judge	Condition
Jean arrive demain.	a. Il arrive à quelle heure ?	In situ (IS)
	b. À quelle heure arrive-t-il ?	Fronting with SV inversion (FINV)
	c. À quelle heure il arrive ?	Fronted without inversion (F)

RESULTS:
LINEAR
MIXED
MODELS
ANALYSIS

→ FINV ARE JUDGED SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER THAN IS AND F (T=7.12,P<10^{-6})
→ STRONG AGE EFFECT (NO PREFERENCE IN <30 YO. (T=-0.84, P>0.4),
   SIGNIFICANT PREFERENCE IN >30 YO., T=-3.32, P<0.003)

EXPERIMENT 2
MATCHED-GUISE TASK   (LAMBERT & AL. 1960)

General goal
EXPLORE THE SOCIAL CUES ASSOCIATED WITH INTERROGATIVE VARIANTS

PARTICIPANTS & PROCEDURE: 58 PARTICIPANTS, 47/11 FEMALE/MALE, MEDIAN 34 Y.O.
READ INTERVIEWS WHERE ALL THE JOURNALIST'S QUESTIONS WERE BUILT WITH ONLY ONE OF THE THREE VARIANTS, THEN ANSWER 9 QUESTIONS ABOUT THE JOURNALIST
MATERIAL: 4 INTERVIEWS (1 FILLER)
        6-9 WH- QUESTIONS
        BY INTERVIEW

		Condition
Question	(...) Aa. Vous êtes donc maire de Saint-Laurent. Vous décririez cette ville comment ?	IS
	Ab. Vous êtes donc maire de Saint-Laurent. Comment vous décririez cette ville ?	F
	Ac. Vous êtes donc maire de Saint-Laurent. Comment décririez-vous cette ville ?	FINV
Answer	B : C'est une petite bourgade tranquille, mais qui n'est en rien déconnectée des grands problèmes traversés par la société française au niveau national. (...)	

RESULTS:
LINEAR
MIXED
MODELS
ANALYSIS

→ PERCEPTUAL CUES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONSTRUCTIONS USED:
   FINV → FRENCH NS +, WEALTHY +, EDUCATED +, READER +, PARISIAN +, RELAXED -
   FINV = 'IDEALIZED' FRENCH / ELITE FRENCH
+ INTERNAL FACTORS STILL PLAY A ROLE: AGE FACTOR CONFIRMED AGAIN
   & GROUP OF ORIGIN (E.G. FOR NATIVE PARISIANS (N=19), FINV→ WEALTHY, AND MORE SO THAN FOR NON-PARISIANS (T=3.15, P<0.004)

EXPERIMENT 1B (AJT 2)
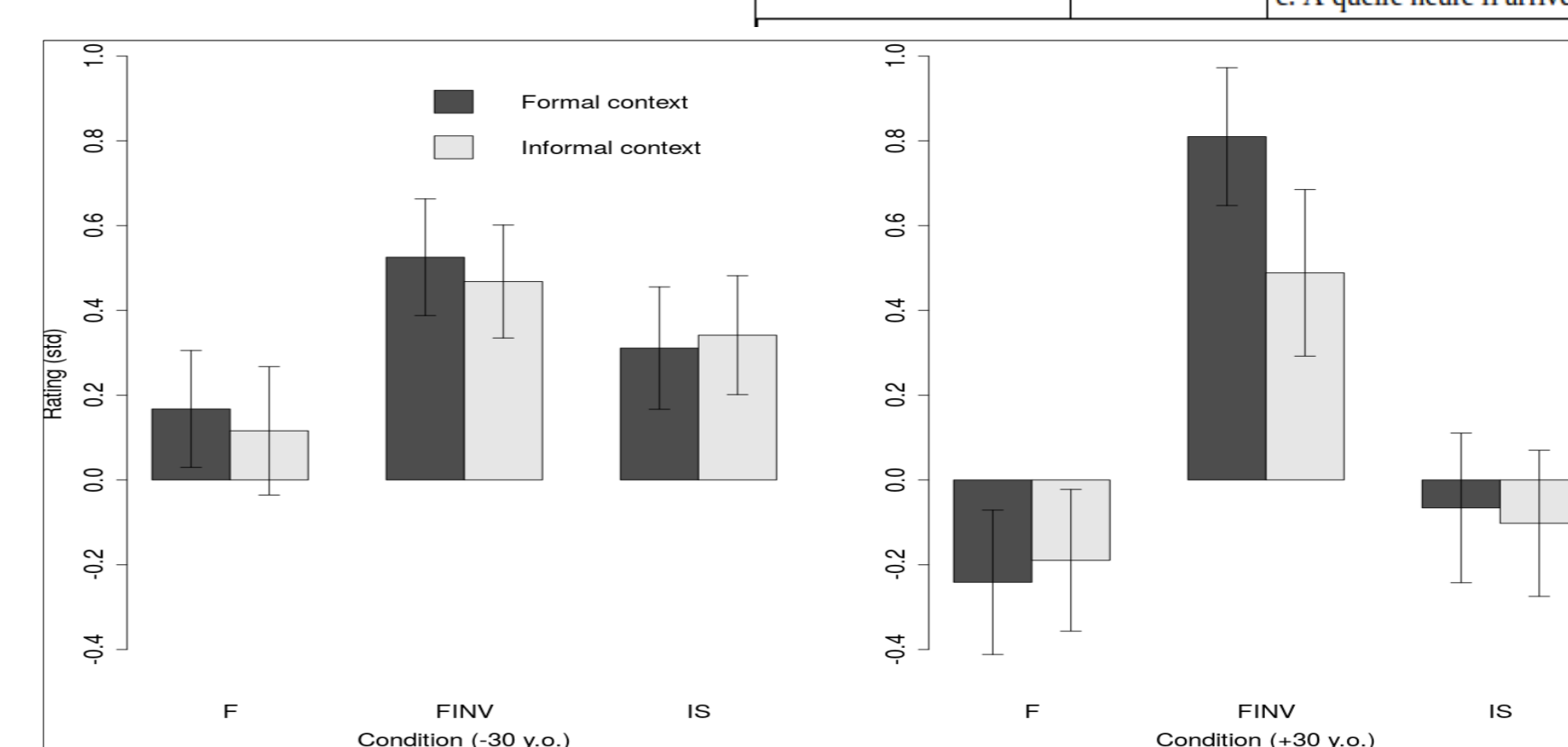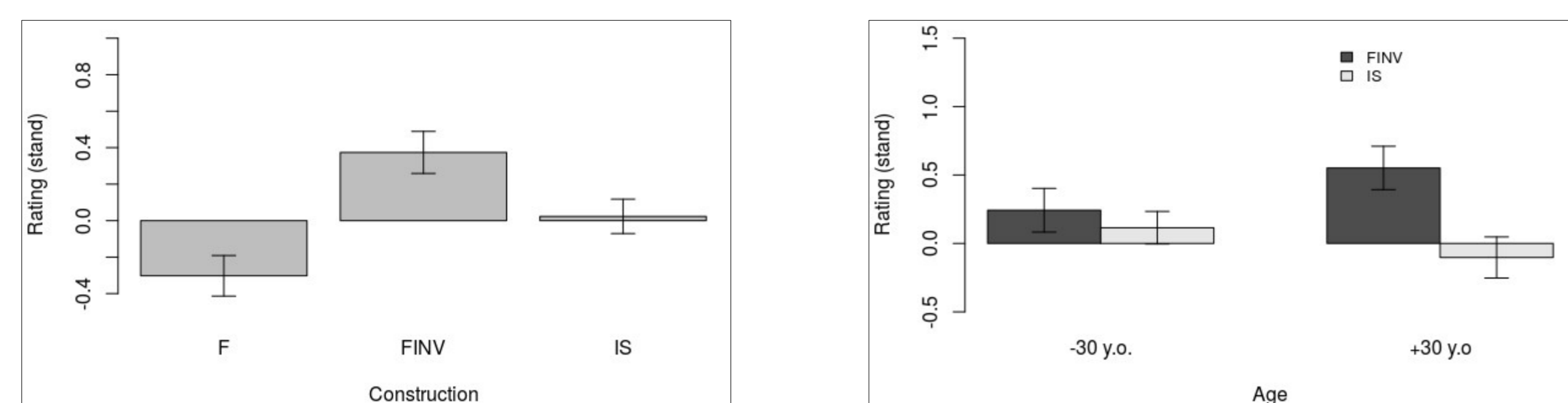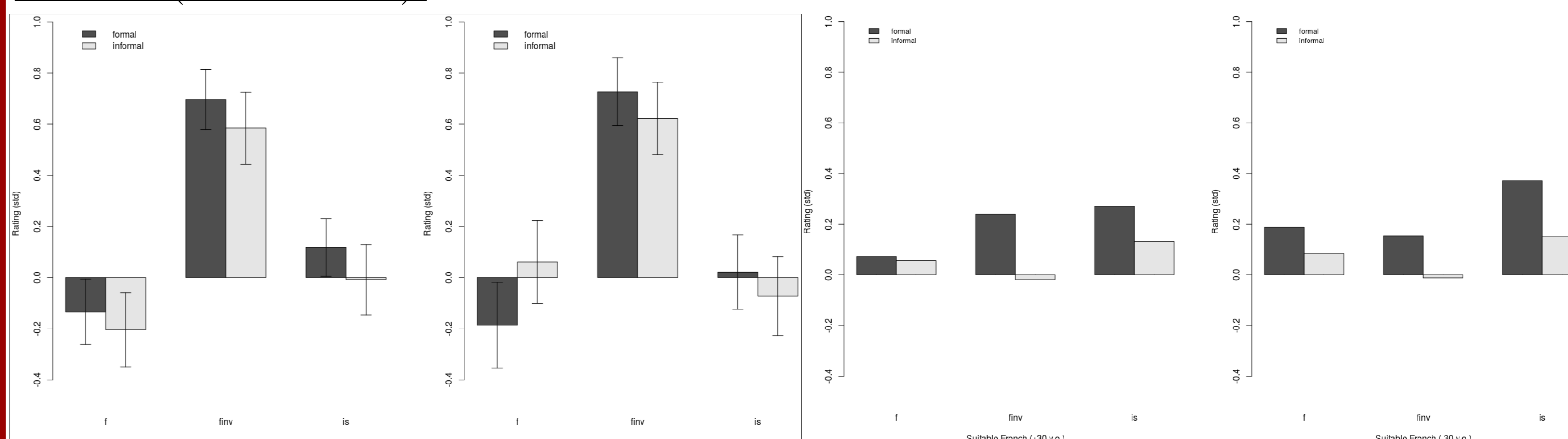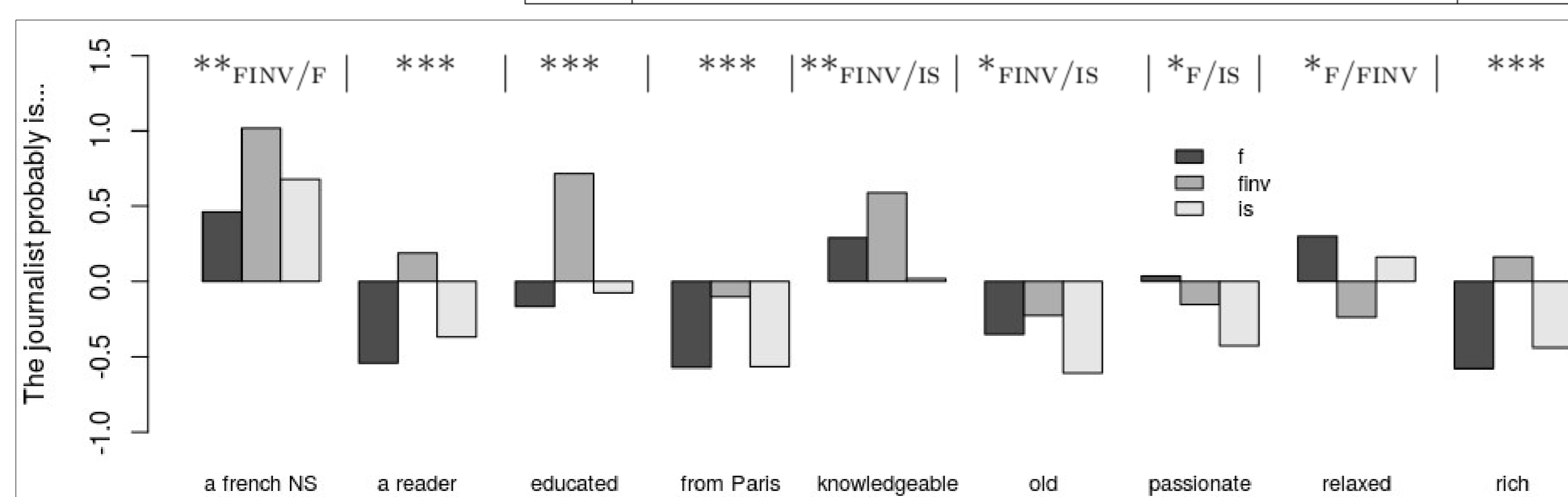### ACCEPTABILITY JUDGMENTS WITH INFORMAL/FORMAL CONTEXT

→ PARTICIPANTS & PROCEDURE: 44 PARTICIPANTS, 30/13/1 FEM/MALE/ND, MEDIAN 27 Y.O.
ONLINE RATINGS OF INTERROGATIVES WITH A SHORT FORMAL/INFORMAL CONTEXT
(SCALE 0-10, 'ACCEPTABILITY' DEFINITION SLIGHTLY REFINED)
→ ITEMS: 3X2 CONDITIONS X 5 ITEMS
        = 30 ITEMS + 30 FILLERS

Context	Condition 1	Sentence to judge	Condition 2
Eh, Jean arrive demain.	INFORMAL	a. Il arrive à quelle heure ?	IS
		b. À quelle heure arrive-t-il ?	FINV
		c. À quelle heure il arrive ?	F
Jean arrive demain.	FORMAL	a. Il arrive à quelle heure ?	IS
		b. À quelle heure arrive-t-il ?	FINV
		c. À quelle heure il arrive ?	F

→ RESULTS:
LINEAR
MIXED
MODELS
ANALYSIS

→ CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS AJT1 OVERALL RESULTS
→ SUBJECTS SENSITIVE TO 'TYPE' ARE SENSITIVE TO 'CONTEXT FORMALITY'
   (INTERACTION TYPE*AGE_GROUPE(>30), T=2.075, P<0.05)

EXPERIMENT 1C (AJT 3)   *PRELIMINARY RESULTS*
ACCEPTABILITY JUDGMENTS WITH AUDIO STIMULI

PARTICIPANTS & PROCEDURE: 46 PARTICIPANTS, 28/8 FEM/MALE, MEDIAN 37 Y.O.
RATINGS OF <u>SPOKEN</u> INTERROGATIVES WITH A SHORT FORMAL/INFORMAL CONTEXT
(SCALE 0-10, 2 QUESTIONS: IS THIS 'GOOD' FRENCH? IS THIS 'SUITABLE' FRENCH?)
ITEMS: SAME CONDITIONS & ITEMS AS IN AJT 2, 30 ITEMS + 30 FILLERS
        BUT IN <u>AUDIO</u> FORM (4 SPEAKERS, 2 MALES/2 FEMALES)
RESULTS (PRELIMINARY):

→ FINV IS 'GOOD' FRENCH BUT <u>NOT</u> 'MOST SUITABLE' FRENCH IN AUDIO STIMULI
→ FINV IS ESPECIALLY NOT SUITABLE IN AUDIO <u>INFORMAL</u> CONTEXTS
→ F IS <u>NOT</u> CONSIDERED 'UNSUITABLE FRENCH'
→ CONFIRMS WRITTEN BIAS IN PERCEPTION OF OVERALL 'CORRECTNESS'
→ SUBJECTS DO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN 'GOOD' FRENCH VS. 'SUITABLE' FRENCH

CONCLUSIONS

- SPEAKERS' PERCEPTION OF CONSTRUCTIONS → "OF COURSE FINV IS BETTER FRENCH!"
  SOMETIMES DIFFERS FROM THEIR USE   → "FINV IS WEIRD SPOKEN FRENCH, THOUGH"
+ THE 'GENERATION GAP' IS A REAL THING   → AGE GAP AROUND ~ 30-40 Y.O.

- SOCIAL MEANING GAMES MAY BE AT STAKE HERE:
  → SPEAKERS PERCEIVE VARIATION BASED ON THE STANDARDS OF THEIR SOCIAL GROUP
  → THE WAY SPEAKERS FORM QUESTIONS IN FRENCH AFFECTS HOW THEY ARE PERCEIVED

PERSPECTIVES

- AJT2 WITH AUDIO STIMULI: ANALYSIS UNDERWAY, BIG INFLUENCE OF MODALITY
- MGT WITH AUDIO STIMULI: NORMING OF ITEMS DONE; RUNNING UNDERWAY
- ACQUISITION OF THOSE SOCIAL CUES ASSOCIATED WITH FRENCH WH- VARIANTS?

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