

VARIATION IN FRENCH PARTIAL INTERROGATIVES

WELL DOCUMENTED, STUDIED FOR A LONG TIME, REALLY LONG LISTS OF VARIANTS, BUT 3 MAIN CONSTRUCTIONS:

- IN SITU (**IS**) Tu vois qui ? (You see who?) S - V - WH
 - FRONTING
 - WITH V-S INVERSION (**FINV**) QUI VOIS-TU ? (Who see you?) WH - V - S
 - WITHOUT V-S INVERSION (**F**) QUI TU VOIS ? (Who you see?) WH - S - V
- = 'WHO DO YOU SEE?'

POSSIBLE FACTORS AT WORK IN THE VARIATION

- SYNTAX → E.G. 'FRONTING = UNDERLYING MOVEMENT = COMPLEXITY' (JAKUBOWICZ 2011)
- INFORMATION STRUCTURE → E.G. 'IS = FOCUS POSITION' (BEYSSADE 2007, BOECKX 1999...)
- PHONOLOGY → E.G. 'THE LONGER THE NON-WH PART → FRONTING MORE LIKELY' (HAMLAOUI 2010)
- ...
- SOCIOLINGUISTICS (HERE: 'VARIATION REFLECTS A SOCIOLECT; ONE SOCIAL GROUP = ONE PREFERRED STRUCTURE')
 - E.G. 'WORKING-CLASS PEOPLE USE MORE (>60%) IS 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 TEXTS)
 - IS < 33% IN STUDIES MENTIONED BY COVENEY 2011, <40% IN ASHBY 1977
- CALLS FOR A MORE MODERN & REFINED VIEW

NEWER CORPUS STUDIES

- MODERN CORPORA SHOW A MORE COMPLEX PICTURE (MOSTLY SPOKEN FRENCH)
 - LÂ-BAS (HAMLAOUI 2010): AT LEAST 50/50 IS/F, ~0% FINV (ADULTS)
 - CHILDES SUB-CORPUS : AT LEAST 50/50 IS/F, ~0% FINV (ADULTS)
 - EPAC SUB-CORPUS (RADIO): 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

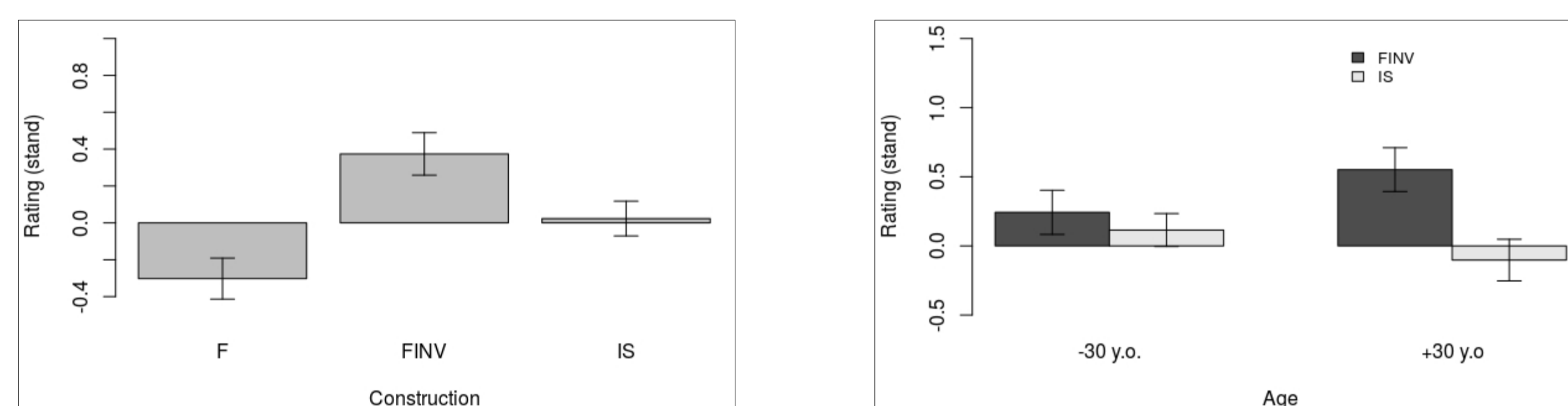
5 ITEMS BY CONDITION

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 1B (AJT 2)

ACCEPTABILITY JUDGMENTS WITH INFORMAL/FORMAL CONTEXT

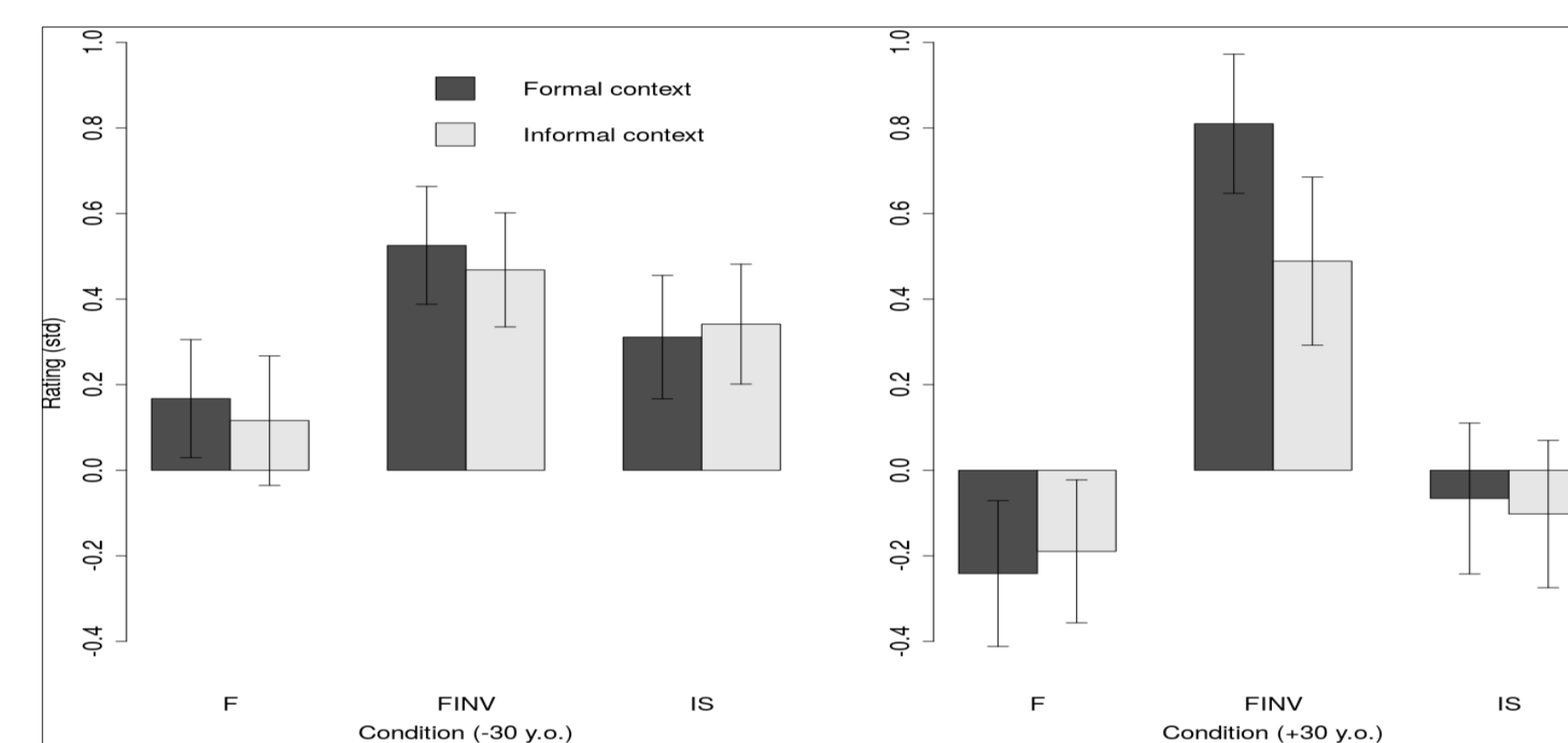
→ PARTICIPANTS & PROCEDURE: 44 PARTICIPANTS, 30/13/1 FEM/MALE/ND, MEDIAN 27 Y.O.
 ONLINE RATINGS OF INTERROGATIVES WITH A SHORT FORMAL/INFORMAL CONTEXT (SCALE 0-10)

→ 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. A quelle heure arrive-t-il ?	FINV
		c. A quelle heure il arrive ?	F
Jean arrive demain.	FORMAL	a. Il arrive à quelle heure ?	IS
		b. A quelle heure arrive-t-il ?	FINV
		c. A 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

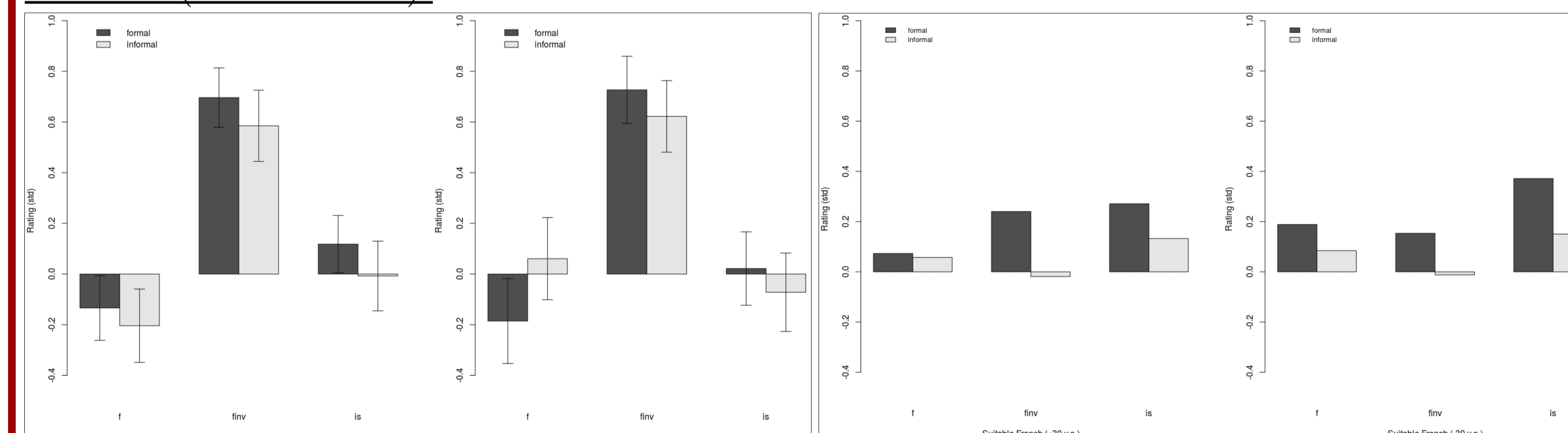
PARTICIPANTS & PROCEDURE: 46 PARTICIPANTS, 28/8 FEM/MALE, MEDIAN 37 Y.O.

ONLINE/INLAB RATINGS OF SPOKEN 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 AUDIO FORM (4 SPEAKERS, 2 MALES/2 FEMALES)

RESULTS (PRELIMINARY):



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

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)

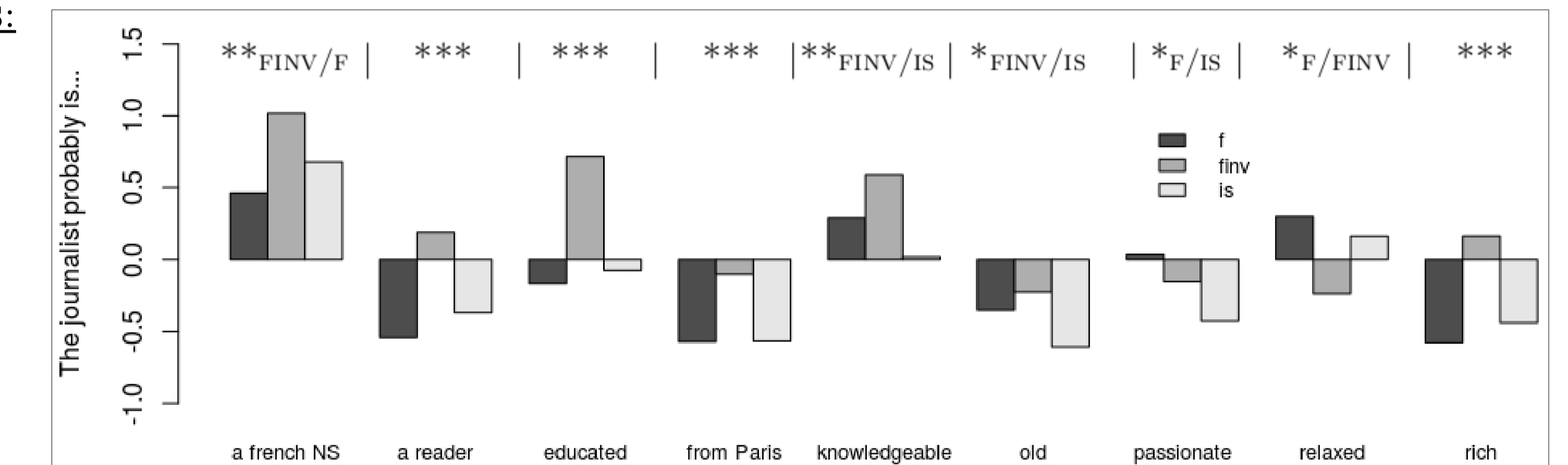
6-9 WH- QUESTIONS

BY INTERVIEW

Question	Condition
(...)	
Aa. Vous êtes donc maire de Saint-Laurent. Vous décriez cette ville comment ?	IS
Ab. Vous êtes donc maire de Saint-Laurent. Comment vous décriez cette ville ?	F
Ac. Vous êtes donc maire de Saint-Laurent. Comment décriez-vous cette ville ?	FINV
Answer	B : C'est une petite bougade 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))

CONCLUSIONS

- SPEAKERS' PERCEPTION OF CONSTRUCTIONS → "OF COURSE FINV IS BETTER FRENCH!" NOT ALWAYS CORRESPOND TO THEIR USE → "FINV IS WEIRD IN 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 INTERROGATIVES 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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