

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

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## Chapter 2

# The SpiCE Corpus

### 2.1 Introduction

Most of our knowledge about spoken language and speech processing comes from monolingual individuals producing scripted speech in laboratory settings. Monolingual lab speech allows for researchers to exercise tight control over the linguistic backgrounds of the speakers and the linguistic material (e.g. reading or repeating sounds, words, or sentences). While highly informative, these controlled monolingual speech samples are not representative of spoken language in the real world. Multilingualism is the norm, not the exception, and individuals regularly make creative linguistic choices in their spontaneous speech.

Conversational speech allows for richer and more accurate empirical description of spoken language, as it represents more realistic and natural productions than scripted laboratory speech, whether compared to isolated word production or scripted connected speech. It enables the study of speech style, style shifting, and more. Conversational speech also crucially permits for field testing of speech production theories in their natural habitats. Corpus-based research with conversational or spontaneous speech is important in the fields of phonetics and psycholinguistics, as the research conclusions drawn from corpus and lab-based experiments do not always coincide, given the differences in communicative contexts, attentional demands, and speaking rate variability (e.g. Gahl et al., 2012; Johnson and Babel, 2021).

The discrepancies between results for conversational and lab speech have been found for monolingual (English) speech, but are likely to be found with bilingual speech as well. Resources to query bilingual conversational speech are limited, however, as the necessary resources permitting this type of inquiry are relatively rare. Table 2.1 provides a sample of prominent bilingual speech corpora, summarizing key information such as the title, balance of languages, speech style, and suitability for within-talker and phonetic research questions. While Table 2.1 is far from a comprehensive list, it nonetheless represents the focus on bilinguals of two European languages.

As a step towards filling this gap, this chapter introduces the **SpiCE** corpus of conversational bilingual **S**peech in **C**antonese and **E**nglish (Johnson, 2021). As will become apparent later in this chapter, the SpiCE corpus focuses on early bilingualism. In light of this, Table 2.1 only includes speech corpora that involve similar populations (as opposed to late bilinguals and language learners).

Corpus	Language balance	Size	Style	Within-talker	Phonetic analysis
Bangor Miami (Deuchar et al., 2014)	63% English 34% Spanish	CHECK	Conversational, code-switching	Yes, most talkers	Limited
Bangor Patagonia (Deuchar et al., 2014)	78% Welsh 17% Spanish <0.5% English	CHECK	Conversational, code-switching	CHECK	Limited
Bangor Siarad (Deuchar et al., 2014)	84% Welsh 4% English	CHECK	Conversational, code-switching	CHECK	Limited

**Table 2.1:** A selection of prominent bilingual speech corpora, with summary information for the balance of languages and speaking styles produced by the bilinguals in the corpus. [More will be added here! There are a number of Spanish-English bilingual corpora I could dig up info on! Also: <https://biling.talkbank.org/access> ]

The corpus design is based on key aspects of widely used existing corpora, such as the Buckeye corpus of conversational speech (Pitt et al., 2005). In many ways, the Buckeye corpus is treated as a gold standard in the field of corpus phonetics. And while the SpiCE corpus does not copy its structure and level of detail exactly, the Buckeye corpus nonetheless serves as inspiration, particularly with respect to interview style and recording quality.

Given the bilingual design, SpiCE crucially includes speech from the same individual in more than one language. Inspiration in this regard is drawn from the Bangor corpora of Spanish-English, Welsh-English, and Welsh-Spanish bilingual speech (Deuchar et al., 2014). The Bangor corpora include speech from the same individual in more than one language, but largely comprise field recordings—limiting the scope of phonetics research using the corpora. Additionally, the Bangor corpora were designed for understanding code-switching in everyday situations. While this facilitates understanding broad patterns of language use, it also means that the corpora are not balanced for the languages involved. So while these corpora are incredibly valuable for linguistics research, there are nonetheless limitations. Compared to these corpora (and those listed in Table 2.1), SpiCE uses a more controlled and balanced recording setup, which allows for more nuanced acoustic-phonetic measurements. This is, however, at the expense of other criteria, in which the Bangor corpora excel.

SpiCE is also unique in the population it represents. Many of the resources available to researchers on sites like BilingBank, ELRA, and elsewhere feature late bilinguals and second language learners, and vary widely in task and recording quality. One example of a Cantonese-English resource that fits this description is the ShefCE corpus (Ng et al., 2017). ShefCE is a parallel corpus featuring L1 Hong Kong Cantonese and L2 English read speech, with samples in both languages from the same set of individuals. Again, there are similarities in what SpiCE aims to accomplish, but it nonetheless occupies a different niche in the speech sciences.

The primary motivation for collecting this corpus was to have comparable high-quality recordings of conversational speech from early bilinguals in two languages, which in turn enables large scale phonetic analysis on a within-speaker basis. It is worth noting that corpus size is a subjective measure, as different fields have different standards in this respect. For the type of corpus, SpiCE is relatively large,

being slightly smaller in size than the Buckeye corpus (Pitt et al., 2005). Both of these are purpose-built corpora that are recorded in person. Truly large corpora tend to be collected from existing recordings (radio, YouTube, audiobooks, etc.; e.g., Librispeech: Panayotov et al., 2015), crowdsourced online (e.g. Mozilla Common Voice: Ardila et al., 2020), via phone (e.g., SWITCHBOARD: Godfrey et al., 1992), and other similar more scalable methods. The reason? High-quality purpose-built corpora are expensive and time-consuming to create.

To our knowledge, this type of resource does not yet exist for any pair of languages, much less for a typologically distinct pair like Cantonese (Sino-Tibetan) and English (Indo-European). Furthermore, Cantonese is a relatively understudied language, despite there being approximately 85 million speakers around the world (Ethnologue, 2021), though this is changing with new Cantonese language corpora (Luke and Wong, 2015; Leung and Law, 2001; Winterstein et al., 2020; Alderete et al., 2019), natural language processing tools (Lee, 2018; Yau, 2019), and support in speech technology applications (Google, 2019).

While some of the design choices have been touched upon already, the remainder of this chapter provides a detailed overview of the corpus design and collection procedures, a description of the speakers, and the transcription and annotation pipeline. It concludes with descriptive statistics.

## **2.2 Corpus design and creation**

This section provides detail about the speakers (Section 2.2.2), the procedures used to ensure high-quality recordings (Section 2.2.3), and the three tasks that each participant completed in both Cantonese and English (Section 2.2.4).

Data collection took place between November 2018 and March 2020. Orthographic transcription began shortly after the first interview was recorded, and was completed in April 2021. The corpus was made available to the public in May 2021.

### **2.2.1 Recruitment**

Participants were recruited for the SpiCE corpus through a variety of methods at the University of British Columbia. This included word of mouth, the Linguistics Human Subject Pool, the Psychology Paid Studies list, advertisements in depart-

ment email lists, advertisements in linguistics courses, printed flyers, and posts on various club forums.

The recruitment process focused on fluent speakers of Cantonese and English, between the ages of 19 and 35, with normal speech and hearing, who began learning both languages from early childhood (age 5 or earlier). One goal of recruitment was to maintain a balance of male and female identifying speakers, and as a result, once 17 females had participated, the recruitment language was adjusted to focus on male or nonbinary identifying participants.

Prior to scheduling a session, participants first completed a language background survey. If an individual signed up to participate but did not meet the criteria for participation, their session was cancelled and they were contacted with an explanation.

All participants who came into the lab were compensated for their time with partial course credit or \$15 CAD.

### **2.2.2 Participants**

The recordings in SpiCE comprise the speech of 34 early Cantonese-English bilinguals, 17 of which are female, and 17 of which are male. Apart from one talker who reported mild high frequency hearing loss (VM25A), all participants reported normal speech and hearing. Additionally, all participants resided in the Metro Vancouver, Canada area at the time of recording. The SpiCE corpus also includes a detailed summary extracted from an extensive language background survey administered prior to the recording session, as well as a copy of the survey itself. Basic summary information is included in Table 2.2, and in visualizations throughout this chapter.

There were a handful of additional individuals who participated in the study but were ultimately excluded from the published SpiCE corpus due to missing language background questionnaire information ( $n=1$ ), recording issues ( $n=2$ ), or not starting learning Cantonese until age eight ( $n=1$ ).

Definitions of bilingualism are highly variable in the literature, as there are many different types of bilinguals (Amengual, 2017). For the purposes of this corpus, an early bilingual is someone who began learning both Cantonese and English

No.	ID	Order	Age	Gender	Age Began Learning	
					English	Cantonese
1	VF19A	$E \rightarrow C$	19	F	0	0
2	VF19B	$E \rightarrow C$	19	F	0	0
3	VF19C	$E \rightarrow C$	19	F	3	0
4	VF19D	$C \rightarrow E$	19	F	2	0
5	VF20A	$C \rightarrow E$	20	F	4	0
6	VF20B	$C \rightarrow E$	20	F	5	0
7	VF21A	$E \rightarrow C$	21	F	0	0
8	VF21B	$C \rightarrow E$	21	F	3	0
9	VF21C	$C \rightarrow E$	21	F	4	0
10	VF21D	$E \rightarrow C$	21	F	0	0
11	VF22A	$C \rightarrow E$	22	F	0	0
12	VF23B	$E \rightarrow C$	23	F	2	0
13	VF23C	$C \rightarrow E$	23	F	0	0
14	VF26A	$C \rightarrow E$	26	F	0	0
15	VF27A	$E \rightarrow C$	27	F	0	0
16	VF32A	$C \rightarrow E$	32	F	3	0
17	VF33B	$C \rightarrow E$	33	F	0	0
18	VM19A	$E \rightarrow C$	19	M	0	0
19	VM19B	$C \rightarrow E$	19	M	2	0
20	VM19C	$E \rightarrow C$	19	M	0	0
21	VM19D	$C \rightarrow E$	18	M	1	1
22	VM20B	$E \rightarrow C$	20	M	0	0
23	VM21A	$E \rightarrow C$	21	M	0	0
24	VM21B	$E \rightarrow C$	21	M	0	0
25	VM21C	$C \rightarrow E$	21	M	0	0
26	VM21D	$C \rightarrow E$	21	M	0	0
27	VM21E	$C \rightarrow E$	21	M	5	0
28	VM22A	$C \rightarrow E$	22	M	4	0
29	VM22B	$E \rightarrow C$	22	M	0	0
30	VM23A	$E \rightarrow C$	23	M	0	0
31	VM24A	$E \rightarrow C$	24	M	3	0
32	VM25A	$E \rightarrow C$	25	M	4	0
33	VM25B	$E \rightarrow C$	25	M	0	0
34	VM34A	$C \rightarrow E$	34	M	0	0

**Table 2.2:** Basic participant information, including age, gender, age of acquisition (AoA), and the order the interviews occurred.

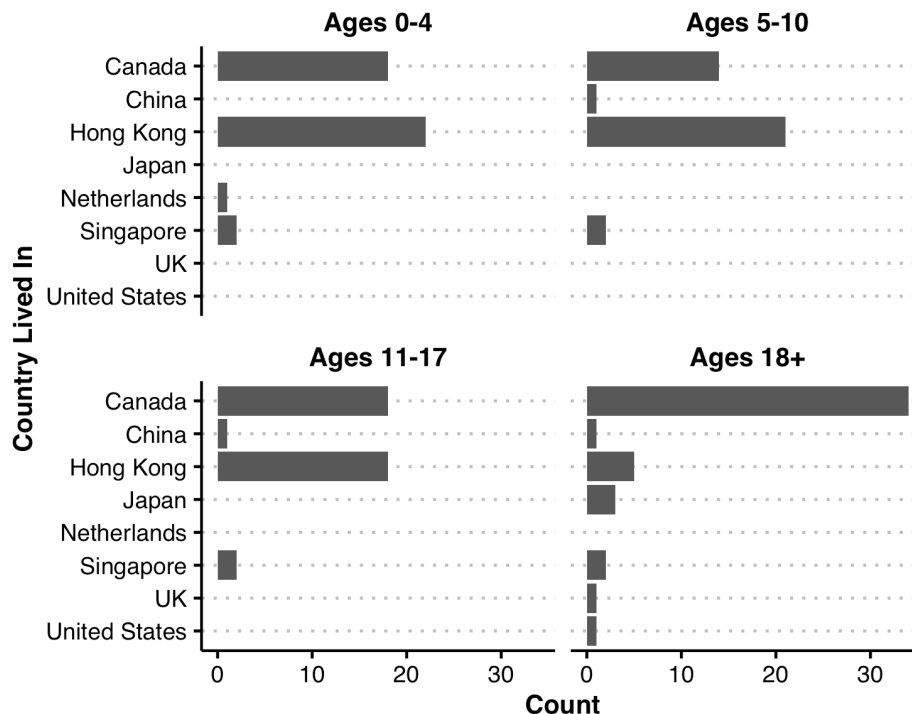
before starting primary school (approximately age 5), reports consistent use of both languages since that time, and self-selected to participate in a research study involving an interview in each language. It is important to highlight that the Cantonese-English bilingual community in Vancouver (and Canada more generally) is incredibly diverse, both in terms of dialects or varieties spoken, as well as in the regions from which families originally emigrated (Yu, 2013). Furthermore, given the prevalence of Cantonese in Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2017), and longevity of the community (Yu, 2013), immigration from other Cantonese-speaking areas continues today.

This corpus reflects the diverse nature of Cantonese-English bilingualism in Vancouver, as it includes Canadian-born heritage speakers, recent immigrants from Hong Kong, Cantonese speakers from other parts of the Cantonese diaspora, and individuals who do not neatly fit into these particular categories. As a result, while all speakers are early bilinguals, various dialects are represented. Figure 2.1 depicts where SpiCE participants reported living during different age intervals.

Soliciting Cantonese dialect information directly would have been challenging, as many of the participants in the corpus would not have straightforward dialect classifications. This is especially true for individual who were born and/or raised in the Cantonese diaspora, but to Hong Kongers as well, given the extent of globalization in Hong Kong (cite). In light of this, it is useful to summarize where the SpiCE participants' caretakers were born and raised. Figure 2.2 does exactly this. The most well-represented group is Hong Kong, as 29 of 34 participants report having at least one caretaker who was primarily raised in Hong Kong. Of these, 20 report only having caretakers raised in Hong Kong. If caretakers birth location is considered instead (as in Figure 2.2), the numbers are 27 and 18, respectively.

Additionally, calling an individual a bilingual does not preclude knowledge of additional languages. In fact, all but one of the individuals represented in the SpiCE corpus report some degree of proficiency in a language other than Cantonese or English. The most common by far is Mandarin. The age SpiCE talkers began learning other language varies widely, but is consistently later than (or simultaneous with) Cantonese and English. This information is depicted in Figures 2.3 and 2.4, with a panel for each participant.

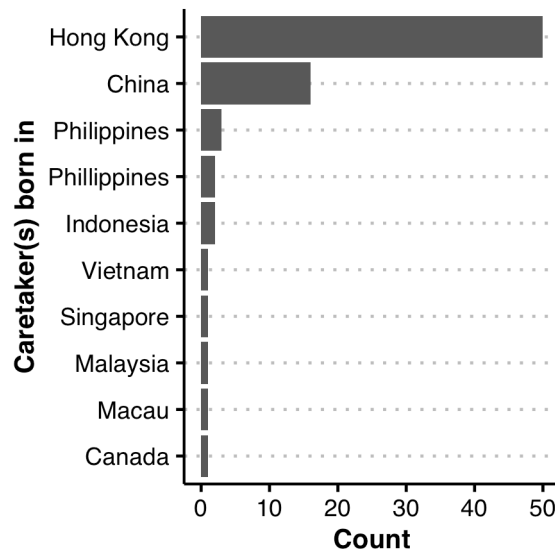




**Figure 2.1:** This four panel bar chart summarizes where the SpiCE participants lived during different portions of their lives.

### 2.2.3 Recording Setup

Recording took place in a quiet room in the linguistics laboratory building at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. Two Cantonese-English undergraduate bilingual research assistants and the participant were seated around a table. The interviewer was a female Cantonese-English bilingual from Metro Vancouver. The recording process was monitored by a male Cantonese-English bilingual from Hong Kong, who moved to Vancouver to attend university. The interviewer and participant were outfitted with AKG C520 head-mounted microphones positioned approximately 3 cm from the corner of the mouth. The microphones were connected to separate channels on a Sound Devices USBPre2 Portable Audio Interface. Stereo recordings were made with Audacity 2.2.2 (Audacity Team, 2018)



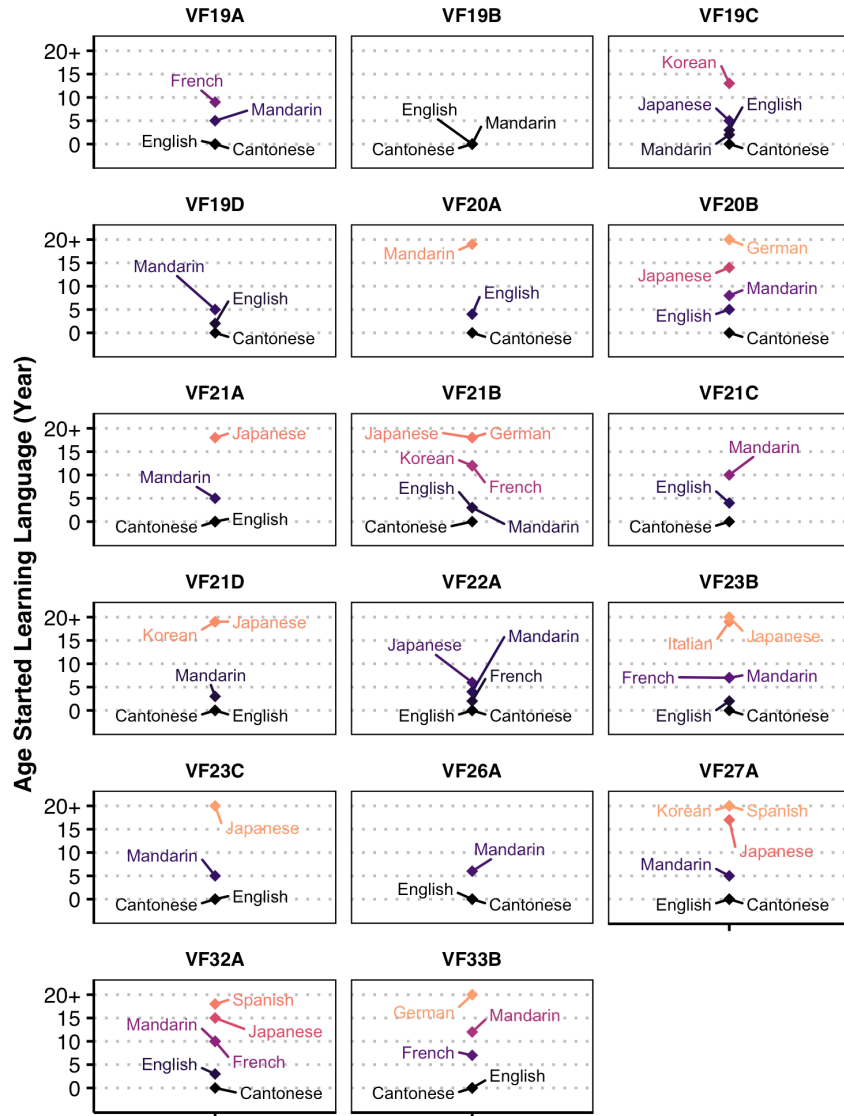
**Figure 2.2:** This bar chart summarizes the number of caretakers who were born in various locations. Note that the number of caretakers reported by individual participants varies.

on a PC laptop, and saved with a 44.1 kHz sampling rate, and 16-bit resolution.<sup>1</sup>

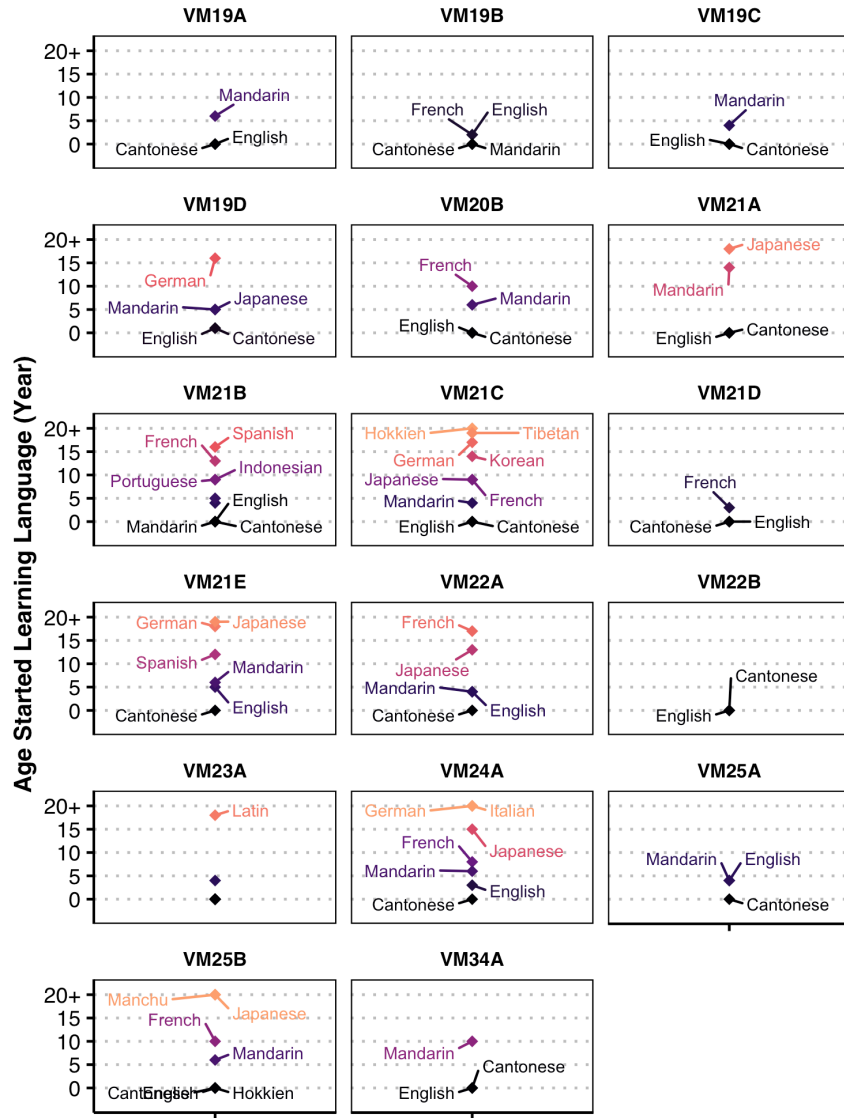
#### 2.2.4 Recording Procedure

Upon arrival, participants were provided with an overview of the recording session procedures, and informed of the corpus publication process. This included informing participants of the window of time in which they would be able to withdraw their data. Subsequently, participants were asked to provide written consent. Upon consent, participants completed a session in English, and a session in Cantonese. The order of languages was counterbalanced across participants (see Table 2.2). Each session consisted of three tasks—sentence reading, storyboard narration, and a conversational interview—described in the following sections. Each of these three tasks were recorded in the same audio file, though there are separate recordings

<sup>1</sup>Many files were originally recorded with 24-bit or 32-bit depth, but were converted to 16-bit depth prior to the publication of the SpiCE corpus, for the purpose of consistency and maintaining a reasonable file size while still providing high-quality audio.



**Figure 2.3:** Multilingualism for the female participants in the SpiCE corpus. Points represent the age that a participant began learning the language indicated in the label. Color is redundant with age, such that earlier ages are darker in color.



**Figure 2.4:** Multilingualism for the male participants in the SpiCE corpus. Points represent the age that a participant began learning the language indicated in the label. Color is redundant with age, such that earlier ages are darker in color.

for each of the sessions. That is, each participant has a Cantonese session and an English session. Together, these three tasks took approximately 30 minutes in each language. Along with the consent process, recording setup, and a break between interviews, participants spent up to 90 minutes in the lab.

### **Sentence Reading**

Participants first read the sentences listed in Table 2.4 and Table 2.3 aloud, pausing between sentences. Participants completed a single repetition and were not instructed to speak in a particular style. As participants had varying levels of Cantonese reading ability, they were simultaneously presented with both Cantonese characters and the Jyutping romanization.<sup>2</sup> If necessary, participants could make use of the phrase’s English translation. The Cantonese sentences are well-known declarative phrases, typically associated with Chinese New Year. While a more explicitly balanced set of sentences could have been used, participants’ familiarity was deemed more important, as many Cantonese-English bilinguals in Canada are not literate in Cantonese. The English sentences included the Harvard Sentences list number 60 (IEEE, 1969), as well as series of holiday-themed declarative sentences to better match the content of the Cantonese sentences. This task was relatively formal, and typically lasted less than one minute.

Sentence reading was included in the session to insure that different participants produced a set of identical items, considering the core of the session was unscripted conversational interview (described in Section 2.2.4). While these sentences do not exhaustively reflect the sound systems of Cantonese and English, they provide samples of identical items for all individuals, which is advantageous for future analyses or projects that require matched utterances.

In practice, the utility of these sentences may be somewhat limited, as sentences with speech errors were not necessarily repeated, and some Cantonese sentences were skipped altogether. In any case, the sentence reading task also served the purpose of getting participants into the appropriate language mode prior to the upcoming interview. As such, they can be considered a warmup task.

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<sup>2</sup>Jyutping is one of the primary Cantonese romanization systems (Matthews et al., 2013), and is widely used in Cantonese corpus research (Nagy, 2011; Tse, 2019)

No.	English
1	Stop whistling and watch the boys march
2	Jerk the cord, and out tumbles the gold
3	Slide the tray across the glass top
4	The cloud moved in a stately way and was gone
5	Light maple makes for a swell room
6	Set the piece here and say nothing
7	Dull stories make her laugh
8	A stiff cord will do to fasten your shoe
9	Get the trust fund to the bank early
10	Choose between the high road and the low
11	Wish on every candle for your birthday
12	Deck the halls with boughs of holly
13	Ring in the new year with a kiss
14	Have a spooky Halloween
15	Enjoy the vacation with your loved ones
16	Be filled with joy and peace during this time
17	Relax on your holiday break

**Table 2.3:** Sentences 1–10 comprise the Harvard Sentences List 60. Sentences 11–17 are holiday-themed original imperatives, designed to thematically match the Cantonese sentences.

No.	Cantonese	Jyutping	English translation
1	新年快樂	<i>san1 lin4 faai3 lok6</i>	Happy New Year
2	恭喜發財	<i>gung1 hei2 faat3 choi4</i>	Congratulations on happiness and prosperity
3	身體健康	<i>san1 tai2 gin6 hong1</i>	May your health be well
4	快高長大	<i>faai3 gou1 zoeng2 dai6</i>	Grow quickly
5	龍馬精神	<i>lung4 ma5 zing1 san4</i>	Have the spirit of the horse and dragon
6	學業進步	<i>hok6 yip6 zeon3 bou6</i>	Progress in your education
7	年年有餘	<i>lin4 lin4 yau5 yue4</i>	Excess in each year
8	出入平安	<i>cut1 yap6 ping4 on1</i>	Leave and enter in safety
9	心想事成	<i>sam1 soeng2 si6 sing4</i>	Accomplish that which is in your heart
10	生意興隆	<i>saang1 yi3 hing1 lung4</i>	Have a prosperous business
11	萬事如意	<i>maan6 si6 yu4 yi3</i>	A thousand things according to your will
12	天天向上	<i>tin1 tin1 hoeng3 soeng6</i>	Upwards and onwards every day
13	笑口常開	<i>siu3 hau2 soeng4 hoi1</i>	Laugh with an open mouth frequently
14	大吉大利	<i>daai6 gat1 daai6 lei6</i>	Much luck and much prosperity
15	五福臨門	<i>mm5 fuk1 lam4 mun4</i>	Five blessings for your household
16	招財進寶	<i>ziu1 coi4 zeon3 bou2</i>	Seek wealth welcome in the precious
17	盤滿鉢滿	<i>pun4 mun5 but3 mun5</i>	Basins full of wealth

**Table 2.4:** All Cantonese sentences are widely-known imperatives associated with Chinese New Year.

### **Storyboard Narration**

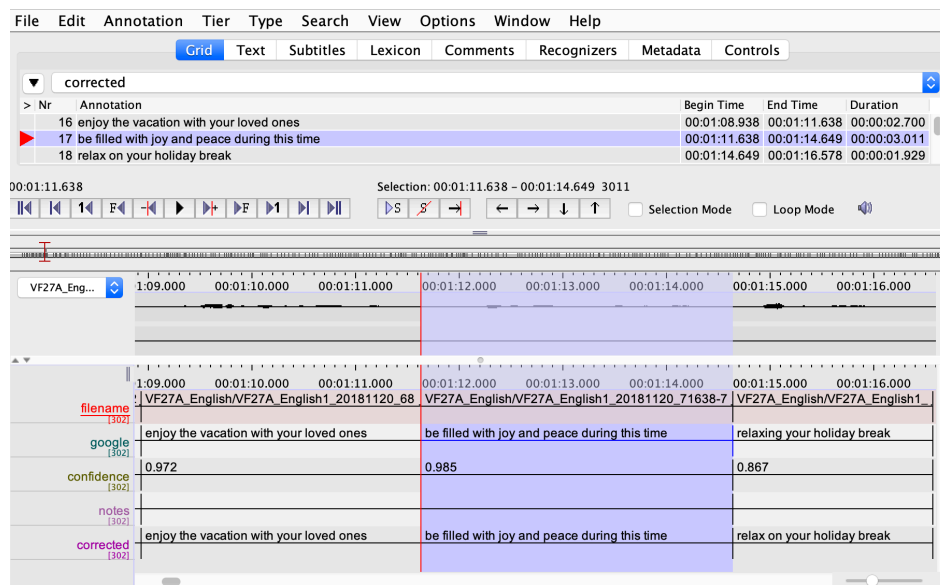
For the second task, participants narrated a short story from a cartoon storyboard originally developed for linguistic field work (Littell, 2010). The storyboard followed a simple plot about receiving gifts and writing thank you notes to family members and friends—a topic that Cantonese-English bilinguals in the corpus were expected to be familiar with in both languages. This task was less formal than the sentence reading task, and ensured that different participants produced some of the same words in a more spontaneous context. Participants varied in how they approached this task, with some treating it like a series of picture description tasks, and others taking a more narrative approach. Despite this difference, this task may be useful for future analyses or projects that require matched utterances, as participants narrated the same cartoon in each language. This ensured that some of the same content was conveyed in each language (e.g., productions of *mother* in both languages). The storyboard narration lasted 4–5 minutes in each session, and allowed participants time to continue getting used to the recording setup. As with the sentences, the storyboard narration also facilitated participants getting into the language mode of the session prior to the conversational interview. This is important, because language mode is known to affect the degree of crosslinguistic influence in speech production (Simonet and Amengual, 2019).

### **Conversational Interviews**

The conversational interviews formed the bulk of the recording time for each participant, lasting around 25 minutes. Participants were informed of the general interview structure ahead of time. The casual interview format was inspired by the Buckeye corpus of conversational speech (Pitt et al., 2005), and included everyday topics such as family, school, culture, hobbies, and food. These topics were selected to be relevant, interesting, and encourage storytelling, but to not delve into the personal details typically elicited in a sociolinguistic interview (Nagy, 2011). A major goal was for participants—who knew they were being recorded for linguistic inquiry—to feel at ease and freely discuss the questions. Questions were loosely laid out under general topic headings, with optional follow-up questions. While the English and Cantonese interviews had the same structure and general topic areas,

the particular questions differed. Furthermore, each interview took its own shape, and was guided by what the participant wanted to talk about, anywhere from three to six topic areas covered—the planned sequence of questions is included in the Appendix. As a result, the speech samples from each language are comparable, but the specific questions differ between interviews and across participants.

Participants were encouraged to code-switch between languages by the interviewer, who included code-switches in some of her questions, and asked about topics that encouraged switches (e.g., Chinese foods in English; university course work in Cantonese). While code-switching was encouraged, it was not a primary focus for the session. As will become apparent later in this chapter, there was substantially more code-switching in the Cantonese part of the session.



**Figure 2.5:** This screenshot from ELAN shows a sample of hand-corrected English from the sentence reading task for participant VF27A. The audio waveform is displayed in two channels, with one for the participant (top) and the other for the interviewer (bottom). The annotation tiers include (1) the short audio chunk’s filename, (2) the raw speech-to-text transcript, (3) the speech-to-text confidence rating, (4) space for transcriber notes, if any, and (5) the corrected transcript. Note that “relaxing” was corrected to “relax on” in the rightmost section displayed.



## 2.3 Annotation

All recordings were processed according to the pipeline outlined in this section. As much as possible, automatic tools were leveraged to expedite hand correction.

### 2.3.1 Cloud Speech-to-Text

Google Cloud Speech-to-Text was used to produce an initial transcript of the interviews (Google, 2019). This was done using the Short Audio option, with the language variety set to Canadian English (en-CA) or Hong Kong Cantonese (yue-Hant-HK). In order to use this speech recognition product, the participant’s speech was extracted from the participant’s channel and segmented into short chunks, typically under 15 seconds in duration.<sup>3</sup> No attention was paid to constituents at this point; rather, breaks were placed at breaths and other pauses. Short chunks were necessary in order to use the speech recognition product with locally stored files, which was important for data privacy reasons. The short chunks would also prove useful for transcribers in the subsequent hand correction phase. With the audio files prepared in this way, speech recognition was completed using the Python client library for Google Cloud Speech-to-Text. The output included both a transcript and a confidence rating for each audio chunk. While the transcripts generated in this fashion were far from perfect, they served the function of expediting the hand-correction process.

### 2.3.2 Orthographic Transcription Hand-Correction

The automatically generated transcripts were converted into multi-tiered ELAN transcription files (Sloetjes and Wittenburg, 2008), with tiers for the automatically generated transcript, phrase transcription confidence, notes, and corrected transcript. During hand-correction, research assistants adjusted the transcript in the corrected tier, and took note of anything pertinent to the given audio chunk. Figure 2.5 depicts an example of corrected English transcriptions in ELAN (Sloetjes and Wittenburg, 2008). Direct identifiers (e.g., names) were marked during this phase, and silenced from the recordings prior to release. Transcriber guidelines

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<sup>3</sup>The interviewer’s speech is included in the SpiCE corpus recordings for the purpose of context, but is not transcribed.

were adapted from the multilingual Heritage Language Variation and Change corpus, which includes Cantonese (Nagy, 2011). Guidelines for Cantonese were developed in collaboration with the bilingual research assistant team.

In both languages, the following conventions were used:

- The placeholder “xxx” denotes unintelligible speech.
- Fragments are transcribed using “&” followed by the fragment produced (e.g., “&s”).
- The “?” symbol marks questions but is not used consistently; other punctuation is not used.
- Words produced in a language other than English or Cantonese are transcribed in the language with, for example, “@m” appended to the end of each form for Mandarin (simplified characters), “@j” for Japanese, and similar.

Cantonese-specific conventions include:

- Where possible, transcription is in characters.
- Words without a standard character are transcribed in the Jyutping romanization system (e.g., *jyut6ping3*).
- Fully-lexicalized syllable fusion is transcribed with the typical smaller number of characters (e.g., 咩 *me1* is a fully fused version of 乜嘢 *mat1 ye5*, and intermediate version 咩嘢 *me1 ye5*—all translate to “what”).<sup>4</sup>
- Non-lexicalized (or ambiguous) cases of syllable fusion are transcribed with the full number of characters fused (e.g., 朝頭早, “morning,” is fully pronounced as *ziu1 tau4 zou2*, but can be fused to 【朝頭】早 *ziau14 zou2*. Brackets indicate the fused syllables).
- Filled pauses are transcribed with the character 㗎 (*e6*), or using Jyutping if different (e.g., *m6*).

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<sup>4</sup>Syllable fusion is a phenomenon in which adjacent syllables in Cantonese are blended together. It ranges from assimilation at the syllable boundary to segment deletion and re-syllabification (Wong, 2006). Syllable fusion is common in Cantonese, though its frequency of occurrence and degree varies.

- Transcribers followed a shared set of guidelines for transcribing sentence final particles.

English-specific conventions include:

- Standard spelling is used.
- Proper nouns are capitalized (e.g., “British Columbia”).
- Filled pauses are transcribed with “um”, “er”, “uh”, and other similar, non-elongated forms.
- Numbers are written out in word form (e.g., “one hundred”).

### 2.3.3 Forced Alignment

Force-aligned transcripts were produced with the Montreal Forced Aligner (McAuliffe et al., 2017), using the hand-corrected orthographic transcripts.

In Cantonese, forced alignment was completed with the Train-and-Align option, as there was no pretrained model available for Cantonese. As Cantonese orthography does not separate words with spaces, words segmentation was done using the *jieba* Python library (Sun, 2020), along with a Cantonese dictionary.<sup>5</sup> While using an automated tool such as this is likely an imperfect solution, it has the benefit of reproducibility and consistency. This is important, as it can be difficult to define wordhood in Cantonese (e.g., see Wong, 2006).

The Cantonese pronunciation dictionary was generated using the *PyCantonese* Python library (Lee, 2018). Pronunciations were identified by getting the Jyutping romanization from each character (or using the Jyutping transcribed), separating it into segments, and appending the tone number to the syllable nucleus (i.e., vowel or syllabic nasal). Research assistants supplemented the dictionary with alternative pronunciations for words that participated in syllable fusion. This approach bears some similarity to that of Tse (2019), but differs in that it also includes tonal information—which has been shown to improve forced alignment as long as there are not too many tone-nucleus combinations (Ćavar et al., 2016; Yuan et al., 2014).

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<sup>5</sup>The Cantonese Word Segmentation GitHub page: [https://github.com/wchan757/Cantonese\\_Word\\_Segmentation](https://github.com/wchan757/Cantonese_Word_Segmentation).

Forced alignment in English took advantage of the Montreal Forced Aligner’s pretrained English model and pronunciation dictionary, which broadly reflects North American English varieties. The dictionary was supplemented with manual additions, in order to minimize the number of out-of-vocabulary items.

The word and phone output of the forced alignment process was included in a TextGrid for each audio recording, along with annotation tiers for task (sentences, storyboard, or interview), utterance (the short chunks). In both sessions, any material not in the main language of the session was not force aligned, and appears as “<unk>” for unknown in the word tier and “spn” in the phone tier. The force-aligned transcripts were not manually corrected or checked. This means that any short chunk with code-switching or unintelligible speech will likely have poorer alignment. As a result, it is advisable to use stringent exclusionary criteria or perform checks prior to analyzing data from the corpus.

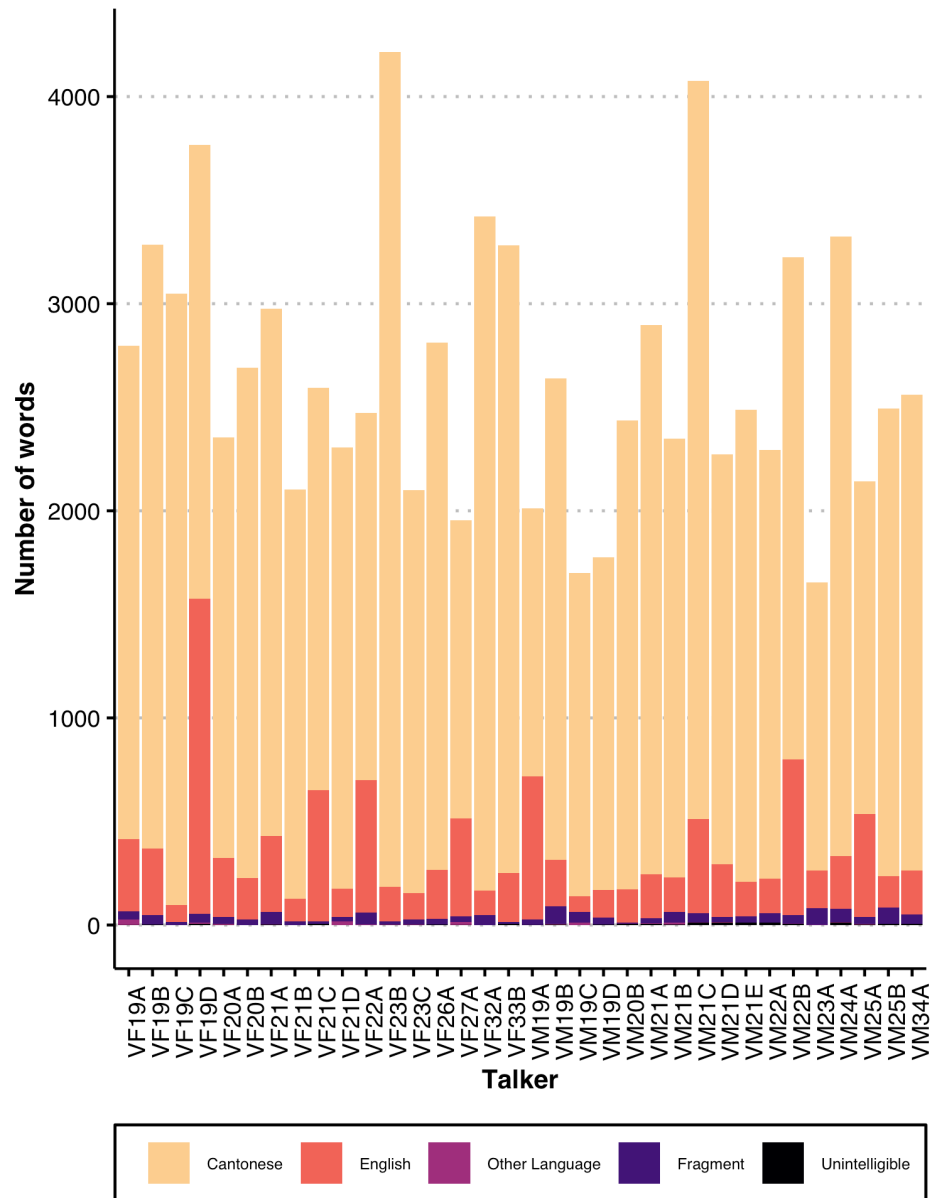
## 2.4 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics in this section are intended to give a general sense of the quantity and quality of the data in the corpus. They are based on the transcript data as described in the previous section, specifically the hand-corrected utterance tier, and the force-aligned phone tier. Additionally, this section only reports on participant speech, though the interviewer’s speech is included in its own channel in the stereo audio files.

### 2.4.1 Cantonese Interviews

The Cantonese recordings include 8.3 hours of speech: 13.6 minutes of sentences, 44.0 minutes of storyboard narration, and 7.4 hours of conversational interview. These estimates are calculated from the summed duration of all non-silent intervals in the phone tier of the transcripts, and as such, do not include interviewer questions or any pauses in the participant’s speech.

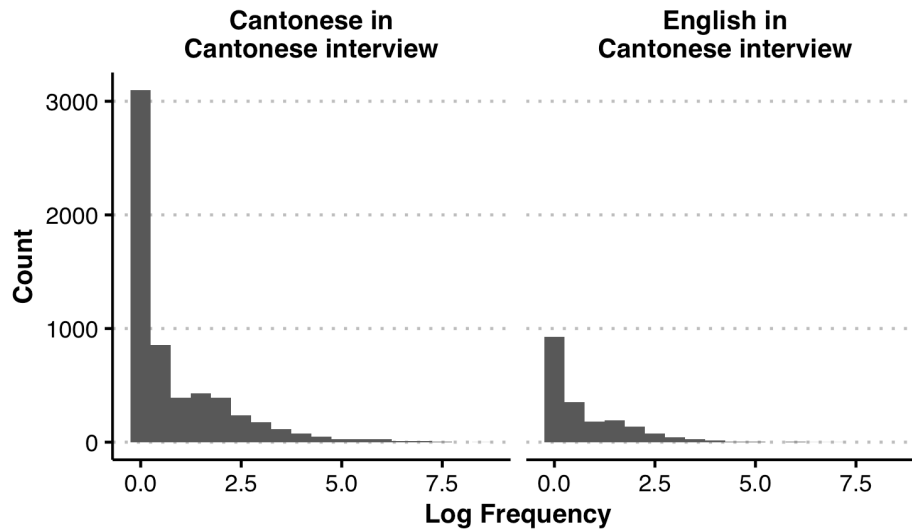
In the Cantonese interview sessions, there were a total of 8,112 word types, and 90,512 word tokens. The number of words varies substantially by participant, with a mean of 2,662 word tokens per interview ( $SD=637$ , minimum=1,654, maximum=4,212), and 749 word types ( $SD=157$ , minimum=483, maximum=1081).



**Figure 2.6:** The total word count for each participant’s Cantonese interview task is represented by bar height. Color indicates the kind of item counted.

The numbers reported here include all types of “words”—Cantonese words, English words, words in other languages, phonological fragments, and unintelligible stretches of speech. Figure 2.6 shows split of these categories on a by-participant basis within the Cantonese interview sessions. Figure 2.6 indicates that all participants switch into English during the Cantonese interview sessions. The amount of switching varies across participants, with VF19D producing an especially large number of English words. While the other three categories also vary, they are comparatively small in number.

The overall distribution of word frequency in the Cantonese interviews is depicted in Figure 2.7. As expected, there are a relatively small number of words occurring frequently (e.g. pronouns, function words, etc.), while a majority are mid and low frequency. This pattern follows what is expected in a word frequency distribution, and is reassuring given the automated method of segmenting the Cantonese transcripts into words.



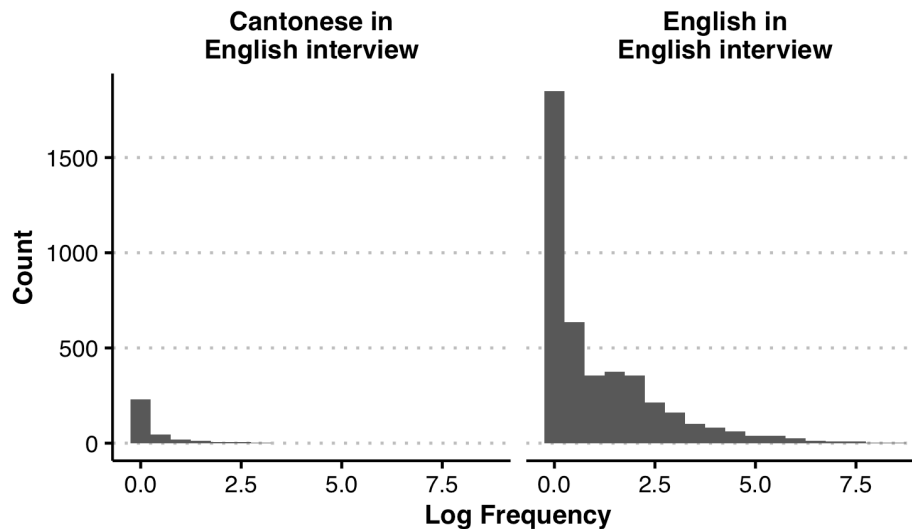
**Figure 2.7:** The distribution of log word frequency for English and Cantonese words in the Cantonese interviews.

### 2.4.2 English Interviews

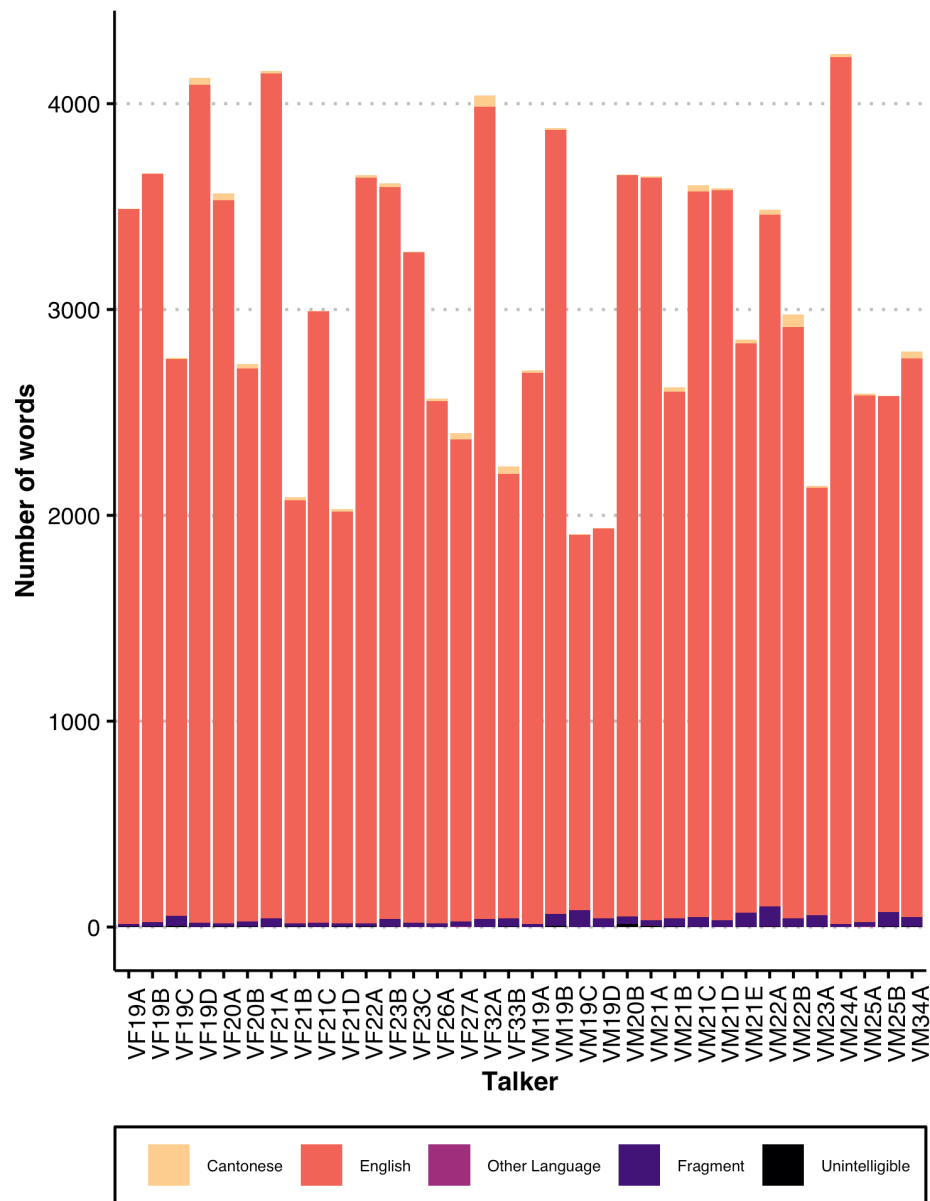
Using the same estimation technique as used for Cantonese, the English recordings include 8.9 hours of speech: 21.9 minutes of sentences, 45.7 minutes of storyboard narration, and 7.7 hours of conversational interview speech.

The English interviews include a total of 4,972 word types and 104,618 word tokens. As in the Cantonese interviews, the number of words varies substantially by participant, with a mean word token count of 3,077 (SD=701, minimum=1,907, maximum=4,240), and word type count of 609 (SD=119, minimum=434, maximum=904). Figure 2.9 shows split of these categories on a by-participant basis within the English interview sessions. Unlike the Cantonese interviews, there were relatively few switches into Cantonese, with 12 of the 34 participants producing fewer than 10 Cantonese words during the English sessions.

The distribution of log word frequency for both Cantonese and English words in the English interviews is portrayed in Figure 2.8. Word frequency follows a similar pattern to Cantonese word frequency, with most words occurring infrequently, and a smaller proportion occurring very frequently.



**Figure 2.8:** The distribution of log word frequency for English and Cantonese words in the Cantonese interviews.



**Figure 2.9:** The total word count for each participant’s English interview task is represented by bar height. Color indicates the kind of item counted.



## 2.5 SpiCE Corpus Release

The SpiCE corpus was publicly released in May 2021 through the Scholars Portal Dataverse platform under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the corpus itself, documentation is available online.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.6 Discussion & Conclusion

While various bilingual corpora exist, they lack in different ways. The SpiCE corpus described here enables within-speaker phonetic comparisons across languages. While this would be possible with some of the bilingual speakers in resources like the Bangor corpora (Deuchar et al., 2014), the recording quality in such resources limits the scope of phonetic research. With the release of SpiCE and its high-quality recordings, scholars have the ability to ask and answer empirically and theoretically motivated research questions within the speech and language sciences using more sophisticated phonetic measurement techniques (e.g., spectral measures, in addition to temporal measures). This offers substantial potential for increasing our understanding of bilingual spoken language from both phonetic and psycholinguistic perspectives. While the recording quality of this corpus offers these particular advantages, SpiCE is also suitable for any other standard corpus-based inquiry with conversational speech, whether linguistic or paralinguistic in nature. The opportunities made available with SpiCE are especially important given the typological difference between the languages under consideration, and the fact that Cantonese is an understudied language.

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<sup>6</sup><https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

<sup>7</sup><https://spice-corpus.readthedocs.io/>

## **Chapter 3**

# **The structure of acoustic voice variation in bilingual speech**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Voices provide a lot of information about the person talking, ranging from their current physical and emotional state to talker indexical features that help listeners identify who they are. In this context, voices can be described as auditory faces, in that they are uniquely individual, yet share basic characteristics with the broader population (Belin et al., 2004). Voices convey this rich array of information along with the message being communicated. Understanding the structure of a voice is no small feat, as it means understanding how listeners leverage different vocal dimensions to process talker-indexical, affective, social, and linguistic information. The processing challenge arises from the sheer variability across voices.

Though voices share some attributes, they also vary in unique ways (Lee et al., 2019). From the perspective of voice perception, the balance between shared and idiosyncratic characteristics makes sense. The shared dimensions allow listeners to recognize the sound they hear as a voice; and they also help listeners to perceive, classify, and understand new voices. Idiosyncrasies, on the other hand, enable identification and discrimination between voices. While this makes sense conceptually, understanding the structure of voice variation in speech production and its complement in listeners' ability to process that information remains an active area of re-

search. The focus of this chapter is acoustic voice variability, and the emphasis on describing and processing variation echoes one of the big puzzles in phonetics: the “lack of invariance” problem (Liberman et al., 1967). That is, given the ubiquity of variation, how do perceivers efficiently extract relevant and important information from the communicative signal? This chapter foregrounds the signal itself, asking what is available in the speech production for listeners to use.

While variation is indeed wide-ranging, it remains far from random. Some of the most prevalent accounts of how individuals understand and process variation emphasize its structure. While this chapter looks at the structure of voices and the following chapter examines sound category structure, both attempt to elucidate what structure exists in the signal, that may be beneficial for listeners in processing new talkers.

In the domain of voice, Kreiman and colleagues have synthesized work from various areas and put forth a psychoacoustic model of voice quality (Kreiman et al., 2014). This model features a minimal set of acoustic dimensions necessary to encode and thus reproduce voice quality. While there are numerous dimensions in the model, extensive experimental work has validated the inclusion of each one (Kreiman et al., 2021, and references therein). As a result, Kreiman and colleagues argue that this set of dimensions is both sufficient and necessary to capture a wide range of normal and disordered voices. The psychoacoustic model of voice quality includes acoustic dimensions that capture vocal tract anatomy, pitch, loudness, harmonic voice source, and inharmonic voice source characteristics. While each dimension in the model could be considered independently by researchers—some of which are studied in isolation—Kreiman and colleagues argue that these dimensions are more than the sum of their parts. The measures covary and conspire together to form a multidimensional percept of voice. While this model establishes a set of acoustic dimensions, it does not arbitrate between them in a way that establishes what matters for perceiving and processing a particular voice in a particular language.

There is a large body of literature focused on understanding differences in variability across populations for a small set of acoustic measurements. Such studies typically compare summary statistics for fundamental frequency (F0) and a handful of spectral measures. This body of work is summarized below in the context

of crosslinguistic comparisons. Before summarizing this work, it is important to highlight that very little of it dives into the structure of voice variability, which is a relatively new area spearheaded by Lee and colleagues (Lee et al., 2019; Lee and Kreiman, 2019, 2020). In this set of studies examining acoustic voice variation in different languages and speech styles, Lee and colleagues leverage the psychoacoustic model of voice quality (Kreiman et al., 2014) and adapt methods from the domain of face variability and perception (Burton et al., 2016). Their driving question is one of understanding the structure of acoustic information in the speech signal. In many ways, this is the first step towards understanding which aspects of voice are available to listeners and thus useable in perceptual processes, particularly when coarse summary statistics do not indicate cross-talker differences.

To drill down into the structure of voice variability, Lee et al. (2019) use a series of principal components analyses to investigate how acoustic measurements pattern with one another. The techniques used in this study will be described in greater detail in the Methods section of this chapter. In their original paper, Lee examines the structure of variability on a within-talker basis as well as across the larger speech community represented within the University of California, Los Angeles Speaker Variability Database (Keating et al., 2019). Crucially for the comparison with their later work, this study focused on relatively small samples of sentence reading.

The takeaway from this work is that different voices share a handful of dimensions with one another and the group as a whole. Despite this shared structure, however, much of the way a voice varies is idiosyncratic. Commonly shared dimensions were spectral shape and noise parameters in the higher frequencies, the fourth formant, and formant dispersion. These spectral measures are associated with vocal breathiness or brightness. The formant-based measures are typically associated with speaker identity and vocal tract size. Lee and Kreiman (2019) replicates this work with short samples of spontaneous speech from the same database. The results were similar, with the exception that F0 emerges as a shared relevant dimension. This result arguably reflects the difference between reading and spontaneous spoken English, with reading tending to be more monotonous and spontaneous speech exhibiting more affective qualities. Lee and Kreiman (2020) replicates this work again with sentence reading in Seoul Korean, again finding minimal differences that are explained readily by typological differences from English. Unlike English,

F0 and variability in the lower formants emerged as relevant dimensions in read Korean speech. The authors argue that this reflects phrasal intonation patterns that occur in Korean reading.

Conceptualizing what these dimensions mean and how to think about acoustic voice variability in this way is challenging, as many of the acoustic dimensions considered do not map neatly onto a single percept. F0 is a straightforward example, given its clear relationship to pitch. Many of the spectral measures, both harmonic and noise-based, are much more challenging to interpret without considering multiple measures simultaneously. The domain of faces thus provides a useful analogy for thinking about what shared structure looks like compared to idiosyncratic aspects of the structure. Burton et al. (2016) found that all faces share dimensions of variability related to things like lighting and viewing angle (i.e., looking up, down, or to the side). Idiosyncratic variation in face structure arose from things like facial hairstyle, makeup, and expressions. Burton et al. (2016) discuss their results as supporting a prototype model of faces. As with the face literature, Lee and colleagues argue that the structure of voice spaces supports a prototype model of voice perception (Lavner et al., 2001; Latinus and Belin, 2011), in which novel individual voices are perceived in relation to a speech community average, or prototype. Their results add to the argument that faces and voices share processing mechanisms (Yovel and Belin, 2013).

In any case, Lee et al. (2019) argue that familiarity with a voice arises from learning how that voice varies across time and space, whether within an utterance or across environments, physical states, and emotions. And indeed, familiarity with a voice pays off—listeners are good at identifying familiar voices but perform poorly on the same tasks with unfamiliar voices (Nygaard and Pisoni, 1998). The prototype model merely proposes a mechanism by which listeners learn a novel talker’s voice.

The literature on voice perception has approached the question of what listeners use in voice identification, discrimination, and learning through the lens of familiarity (Levi, 2019; Perrachione, 2018). This body of experimental work pairs different combinations of listeners, talkers, languages, and stimuli manipulations to probe how listeners identify and discriminate among talkers. While identification and discrimination are often talked about in conjunction with one another, the processes are likely supported by different perceptual mechanisms (Perrachione et al.,

2019). One of the biggest takeaway points from this literature is the Language Familiarity Effect (LFE), which encompasses a broad range of findings where listeners are better at identifying talkers in a familiar language (for a recent review, see Perrachione, 2018). Bilinguals are especially good at this kind of task and show evidence of generalizing across languages (Orena et al., 2019).

Very little of this work identifies what listeners use in the signal, and as such, claims about the relative importance of linguistic or talker-indexical information should be tempered. However, there are exceptions to this. For example, Perrachione et al. (2019) collected perceptual voice (dis)similarity ratings for Mandarin and English voices by Mandarin and English native listeners and report on the relationship between several acoustic measurements and rating data. Perrachione et al. (2019) found that when the talker was the same, regardless of the manipulations used in the study (language and time-reversal), all listeners rated stimuli pairs as highly similar. This result highlights that listeners are sensitive to low-level acoustic information present in voices, regardless of whether they know the language or understand the stimuli. Additionally, Perrachione et al. (2019) found that some acoustic measurements predict similarity ratings, while others do not. F0 was the most prominent measure, which is unsurprising given its salience, and how much the voice variability literature has focused on it (e.g., Keating and Kuo, 2012). Other measures predicting similarity were the harmonics-to-noise ratio and formant dispersion, which are associated with voice quality and vocal tract size, respectively. That listeners appear to use these measures is of direct relevance to the study presented in this chapter, and represents a point that will be returned to in this chapter's discussion.

In light of this perceptual work on the language familiarity effect and the complicated interactions that abound between different listener and talker populations, it makes sense that Lee et al. (2019) restricted variability while introducing a novel set of methods. Their extension to spontaneous English and Seoul Korean demonstrates that this method replicates well and that it also presumably allows for observing typological differences across languages that can affect voice quality. This chapter builds on Lee and colleagues' body of work by extending their methods to the case of spontaneous bilingual speech.

Describing and analyzing acoustic voice variation in bilingual speech has moti-

vation in both perception and production. As apparent from the language familiarity effect literature, listeners are capable of learning and identifying voices in one language and then generalizing across languages. Listeners are better at identification and discrimination when they have more familiarity with the language, but performance on such tasks tends to be well above chance (e.g., Orena et al., 2019). In cases where listeners cannot rely on linguistic information, they must be tracking non-linguistic information in the voice—or so the argument goes (Perrachione et al., 2019). Understanding the structure of that variability brings us one step closer to understanding what listeners are using from the signal to process speech, as it limits the hypothesis space. On the production side of things, bilingual speech presents an ideal test case for the argument that voices function like auditory faces. If the structure of variability from each of a bilingual’s languages is matched, then voices can be straightforwardly thought of as auditory faces.

Additionally, examining the structure of the same talker’s voice in each language lends additional validation to the arguments made by Lee and Kreiman (2020) for the differences between English and Seoul Korean sentence reading. In comparing these studies, Lee and colleagues argue that both language and biological factors contribute to the structure of voice variation. Bilingual speech, again, presents an ideal test ground for disentangling biological and linguistic factors from one another. While common in the literature, this dichotomy is somewhat misleading. Voices ultimately have biological constraints, such as vocal tract lengths or pathologies. Yet at the same time, individuals nonetheless exert remarkable and wide-ranging control over their voice space and are highly capable of manipulating factors that are not linguistically important but which signal social and contextual information. This applies across all aspects of an individual’s linguistic repertoire (Bullock and Toribio, 2009; Wei, 2018). Thus in the case of bilinguals, the only aspect we can be truly confident in being held constant across languages is the biological part. The same “hardware” can be used for drastically different ends.

In this chapter, I examine how voice varies across a bilingual’s two languages. Some differences are expected, despite the characterization of voices as auditory faces. While all languages have consonants and vowels, they differ in distribution, articulation, and acoustics (e.g., Munson et al., 2010). Suprasegmental and prosodic properties also vary. Languages differ in terms of whether a suprasegmental di-

mension is made use of at all. For example, does a language encode lexical tone contrastively? Another way languages vary in this respect is in how they carve up the suprasegmental space. For example, how many lexical tones are there? What shapes of tone are present? This particular question is relevant in the present case, where the languages considered are Cantonese (a language with lexical tone) and English (a language without lexical tone). Segmental and suprasegmental differences both have cascading effects on voice quality.

The following paragraphs detail comparisons that have been made between English and Cantonese in the literature thus far. As there is an additional body of work comparing English and Mandarin Chinese—typologically similar to Cantonese—comparisons between English and Mandarin are also summarized. While the most relevant comparisons for the present work are those made within bilinguals, some of the relevant literature compares separate populations. What this work has in common, is that it paints with relatively broad strokes—crosslinguistic comparisons are often made with summary statistics for a small set of spectral measurements. Results have been decidedly mixed.

In a small study of Cantonese-English bilingual ( $n=9$ ), Russian-English bilingual ( $n=9$ ), and English monolingual ( $n=10$ ) young women, Altenberg and Ferrand (2006) examined F0 patterns in conversational speech across the different languages and populations. As some languages reportedly have different mean F0 (e.g., Keating and Kuo, 2012), Altenberg and Ferrand (2006) focused on whether F0 shifts when an individual switches languages and whether different languages have different baselines. Ultimately, Russian-English bilinguals exhibited differences in mean F0, and Cantonese-English bilinguals did not. Though, they did produce a wider F0 range in Cantonese compared to their English. While the results in Altenberg and Ferrand (2006) ultimately paint a coarse picture of bilingual F0 production with a small sample size, they highlight an important point of departure—bilinguals can differ in F0 across languages.

In a larger study of Cantonese-English bilinguals reading passages ( $n=40$ ), Ng et al. (2012) examined a variety of different voice measures with both male and female talkers. Results were based on Long-Term Average Spectral (LTAS) measures. Female talkers exhibited higher F0 in English than Cantonese, but males did not. In the same study, all participants had greater mean spectral energy values



(mean amplitude of energy between 0–8 kHz) and lower spectral tilt (ratio of energy between 0–1 kHz and 1–5 kHz) in Cantonese (Ng et al., 2012). Respectively, these findings suggest a greater degree of laryngeal tension and breathier voice quality in Cantonese compared to English. The LTAS measure of the first spectral peak did not differ across languages, suggesting that vocal stiffness remained consistent in the bilinguals’ two languages.

Ng et al. (2010) examined F0 in spontaneous speech from 86 Cantonese-English bilingual children and found it to be lower in Cantonese compared to English. This corroborates Ng et al. (2012), and goes against the nonsignificant difference in (Altenberg and Ferrand, 2006). This mixed bag of results could ultimately be attributed to differences in sample sizes, the quantity of speech analyzed, or in language backgrounds of the bilinguals studied. While the picture regarding voice quality measures appears clearer and more consistent, those conclusions arise from a single study. In any case, these three studies offer reason to expect that Cantonese and English might differ in measures associated with pitch and phonation type.

The authors of these studies speculate that Cantonese’s status as a tone language may account for some of these differences compared to English. Though it is important to emphasize that this explanation is pure speculation. In this light, it is also relevant to consider the larger body of research comparing voice quality for Mandarin and English. Lee and Sidtis (2017) compare F0, speech rate, and intensity in a small group of Mandarin-English bilinguals ( $n=11$ ) across three different tasks. They report a higher mean F0 for Mandarin reading compared to English, but no differences in the other tasks (picture description and monologue). Additionally, there were no differences in F0 variability across languages or tasks. Lastly, while there were no differences in intensity, the bilinguals spoke faster in Mandarin. Lee and Sidtis (2017) speculate that Mandarin’s status as a tone language may account for the higher mean F0 in reading, as it echoes some prior work with separate populations of English and Mandarin speakers, in which Mandarin tends to have higher and more variable F0 (Keating and Kuo, 2012). This finding may be strongly associated with the type of bilinguals studied. Xue et al. (2002) found that Mandarin-English bilinguals aged 22-35 produced higher F0 in English than Mandarin. This group differed from the participants in Lee and Sidtis (2017), in that they are described as non-native English speakers. Producing higher F0 in a

non-native language arguably reflects factors like stress or confidence (Järvinen et al., 2013; Lee and Sidtis, 2017).

The speculation that higher F0 is a feature of tone languages does not align with the observation in Ng et al. (2012), who argued the opposite for Cantonese: that lower F0 could be accounted for by lexical tone. While the tone inventories for Cantonese and Mandarin have substantial differences, it seems clear that appealing to the presence or absence of lexical tone is too simplistic of an account. Alternatively—or perhaps, concurrently—talkers may be expressing different social and cultural identities in each of their languages (Loveday, 1981; Voigt et al., 2016). Regardless of whether language, experiential, or social factors drive differences across languages, this body of work highlights the importance of comparing within the same task.

Treating Mandarin and Cantonese as similar just because they are both tone languages may not be appropriate, though there is little in the way of conclusive research on the topic. In a study with 12 Cantonese-Mandarin bilinguals who are Cantonese-dominant, Yang et al. (2020) found no differences in their F0 profiles across languages. F0 profiles were characterized by F0 minimum, maximum, range, and mean. The authors also examined a Mandarin-dominant group and reported clear differences between the two populations' F0 profiles in Mandarin. The Mandarin-dominant individuals produced higher F0 with a narrower range. While the conclusions from this study are tenuous given the small sample size, it nonetheless highlights an important point: that typologically related tone languages may not necessarily behave comparably.

While the studies reviewed thus far provide a mixed picture of voice differences across language pairs, there is a strong focus on F0. Both the F0-centricity and variable outcomes are apparent in work on other language pairs as well. For example, Cheng (2020) finds that Korean has consistently higher F0 than English, regardless of whether they were early sequential or simultaneous bilinguals, but that differences in F0 range differed for cisgender males and females. This result builds on the findings for Korean-English bilinguals (Lee and Sidtis, 2017). While the results for Korean-English bilinguals seem to be straightforward, the same cannot be said for other language pairs. For example, Ryabov et al. (2016) look at rate, duration, and F0 for Russian-English bilinguals, finding no F0 differences, but that

Russian was faster. This result goes against the findings for the bilinguals studied in Altenberg and Ferrand (2006), where Russian exhibited consistently higher F0 than English. While higher F0 and slower speech rates can be characteristics of speech by non-native or non-dominant speakers (Järvinen et al., 2013), such an explanation cannot account for both outcomes.

Another example of less than clear-cut results comes from Ordin and Mennen (2017). They demonstrate differences in F0 range and level across languages for female Welsh-English bilinguals in a reading task, for whom Welsh had a higher and wider F0 range. This result did not hold for males from the same population, who varied more in their F0 level and range. The authors argue that the cross-linguistic difference is likely to be sociocultural in this case, as different patterns were observed for male and female speakers on a within-speaker basis. This gender difference means that the result is unlikely to be due to anatomical or purely linguistic reasons.

Considering these studies together, a few key observations are especially relevant to the present chapter. While studying bilingual talkers provides a clear path to disambiguating the role of anatomical differences in voices, it does not necessarily facilitate disentangling linguistic and sociocultural factors from one another. Most likely, both contribute simultaneously to the differences in voice patterns across languages. For example, there is clear evidence that Korean has a higher F0 than English, given results from two studies with different populations of bilinguals Cheng (2020); Lee and Sidtis (2017). Conversely, Ordin and Mennen (2017) show social rather than linguistic stratification.

This body of work mostly focuses on linguistic and social differences. While some of it dives into individual differences, between-talker variability should perhaps be given more of a spotlight. In work with speech rate, Bradlow et al. (2017) found that some talkers are fast and others are slow and that some languages are fast while others are slower. Crucially, these relationships held across talkers in various languages. That is, if someone was a fast talker in their dominant language, they were also a fast talker in their non-dominant language, and likewise for slow talkers. In this sense, both talker-indexical and linguistic (or sociocultural) factors contribute to speech rate behavior. It is not a particularly big leap to suggest that other speech signal variables might pattern in the same way. Adding to this picture

of variability across individuals, it is important to remember that bilinguals are sophisticated social actors and are fully capable of tailoring their speech behavior to a wide variety of contexts (Bullock and Toribio, 2009).

While this body of work highlights important points, it is limited by its laser focus on F0, with occasional forays into speech rate, intensity, and other spectral measures. The focus on F0 is not without reason—Perrachione et al. (2019) found it to be the most important perceptual dimension for voice similarity ratings. Yet at the same time, there is so much more to voice than pitch, particularly if the characterization of voices as auditory faces holds up.

This chapter brings together work describing crosslinguistic voice differences and work describing the structure of acoustic voice variation, to provide a more comprehensive picture of how voices vary across languages. Using the corpus introduced in 2, I describe various spectral properties Ng et al. (e.g. 2012), and also examine how acoustic variation is structured, following the work of Kreiman, Lee, and colleagues (Kreiman et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2019). This chapter builds on Lee et al. (2019) in a handful of ways: it extends the methods to the case of bilinguals, considers longer samples, and addresses the role of sample duration both within and across talkers and languages. I also extend their methods by introducing a mechanism to assess structural similarity within and between individuals and languages.

## 3.2 Methods & Results

### 3.2.1 Data

The data used in this analysis comes from the conversational interviews in the SpiCE corpus described in Chapter 2. The analysis uses both Cantonese and English interviews. As noted before, the 34 talkers studied here are all early Cantonese-English bilinguals from a heterogeneous speech community (Liang, 2015). For additional information about the participants, please refer to sections 2.2.2 and 2.4 in the previous chapter.

While prior work by Lee and colleagues (e.g., Lee et al., 2019) uses relatively short chunks of speech, the present analysis is focused on longer stretches of spontaneous speech. While it would have been possible to include the sentence reading

and storyboard task recordings from each participant, there are practical reasons for excluding them from the analysis. The sentence sets were overall quite short and thus unlikely to be sufficiently representative on their own. Additionally, as many of the SpiCE talkers were not confident in their Cantonese reading, there was a wide range of familiarity with the materials represented. Some talkers knew all of the sentences, and others struggled with some of them. This renders the sentences less comparable to their English counterparts in the SpiCE corpus. There are also imbalances in the storyboard task. As talkers narrated the same story in both languages, they were often more confident the second time around. Excluding both of these tasks is motivated by prior work that highlights how confidence (Järvinen et al., 2013) and speaking style (Lee and Sidtis, 2017) impact voice quality.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the recordings are high-quality, with a 44.1 kHz sampling rate, 16-bit resolution, and minimal background noise. Recall that both the participant and interviewer wore head-mounted microphones connected to separate channels, and levels were adjusted to minimize speech from the other talker. For the analysis in this chapter, the participant channel was extracted from the stereo recordings, including any code-switches they made during the interview. While it would be possible to exclude items not produced in the primary language of the interview, this was not done. The driving reason for keeping code-switches in the analysis is that such code-switches are representative of the particular talker’s language behavior. Further, just because someone switches languages, does not mean that they fully and immediately switch language modes (e.g., Fricke et al., 2016). For example, individual words may be borrowed and pronounced with the phonology of the interview’s primary language (c.f., the matrix language in code-switching Myers-Scotton, 2011).

All voiced segments were identified with the *Point Process (periodic, cc)* and *To TextGrid (vuv)* Praat algorithms (Boersma and Weenink, 2021), implemented with the Parselmouth Python package (Jadoul et al., 2018). The pitch range settings used with *Point Process (periodic, cc)* were 100–500 Hz for female talkers and 75–300 for male talkers. While speech from the interviewer can occasionally be heard in the participant channel, it is quiet enough to have been ignored by the Praat algorithms, and likely exerted little to no influence on the results. This method of identifying voiced portions of the speech signal captures vowels, approximants, and

some voiced obstruents. This result of this process differs slightly from the methods described in Lee et al. (2019), the paper on which the methods of this chapter were modeled. Lee et al. (2019) examined only vowels and approximants.

### 3.2.2 Acoustic measurements

All voiced segments were subjected to the same set of acoustic measurements of voice quality made by Lee et al. (2019), except formant dispersion, which was excluded given its near-perfect correlation with the measured value of F4. The choice of measurements in Lee et al. (2019) is based on the psychoacoustic voice quality model described in the introduction to this chapter (Kreiman et al., 2014), as well as the availability of algorithms in the software used to extract measurements. Measurements were made every 5 ms during voiced segments in VoiceSauce **Version 1.28?** (Shue et al., 2011). The measurements are described below. Note that the shorthand name for each measurement is presented in boldface, and will be used throughout the rest of the chapter.

**F0** Fundamental frequency is a correlate of pitch and is associated with linguistic (e.g., lexical tone), prosodic, and talker characteristics. F0 was measured in Hertz using the STRAIGHT algorithm (Kawahara et al., 2016), which is regarded to be more accurate than the alternative choices in VoiceSauce. It is one of the more widely studied variables on this list, as evidenced by the literature cited in the introduction.

**F1, F2, and F3** The first three formant frequencies—also measured in Hertz—are typically discussed for linguistic contrasts, particularly with vowels and sonorant consonants. A total of four formants were estimated using the Snack Sound Toolkit method Sjölander (2004), with the default settings of 0.96 pre-emphasis, 25 ms window length, and 1 ms frameshift.

**F4** The fourth formant frequency is not typically discussed in linguistic contexts and is instead associated with talker characteristics, such as vocal tract length. In this light, it is not particularly surprising that it was highly correlated with formant dispersion. F4 is also measured in Hertz. It was calculated along with the first three formants, using the same settings.

**H1\*–H2\*** The corrected amplitude difference between the first two harmonics is one of four primary measures used to characterize source spectral shape—also called spectral tilt—in the psychoacoustic model of voice quality (Kreiman et al., 2014). It is typically associated with phonation type but can be confounded by nasality (Garellek, 2019; Munson and Babel, 2019). The asterisks here—and in the following spectral shape measures—indicate that the value has been corrected (Iseli et al., 2007), to account for the amplifying impact of nearby formants on the amplitudes of harmonics. This allows for different vowels and other voiced segments to be compared with one another. This amplitude difference is measured in dB. Note that this measure—along with the following three spectral shape measures—depends on an accurate F0 measurement.

**H2\*–H4\*** The corrected amplitude difference between the second and fourth harmonics is the second of four measures capturing spectral shape. It is associated with phonation type and is measured in dB.

**H4\*–H2kHz\*** The corrected amplitude difference between the fourth harmonic and the harmonic closest to 2000 Hz is the third spectral shape measure. Unlike the previous two, one of the harmonics depends on F0, while the other does not. It captures shape in a higher frequency range and is also associated with phonation type. Like the other spectral shape measures, it is in dB.

**H2kHz\*–H5kHz\*** The amplitude difference between the harmonics closest to 2000 Hz (corrected) and 5000 Hz (uncorrected) is a measure of harmonic spectral shape that does not depend on F0. The amplitude of the harmonic nearest 5000 Hz is not corrected by VoiceSauce, given inaccuracies in the correction algorithm at higher amplitudes. It captures the highest frequency band of the four shape measures, reflects phonation type and is measured in dB.

**CPP** Cepstral Peak Prominence measures the degree of harmonic regularity in voicing, and as such, it is associated with non-modal phonation types. VoiceSauce computes CPP according to the algorithm in Hillenbrand et al. (1994). Specifically, CPP measures the difference between the amplitude of the peak

in a cepstrum and the value at the same quefrency on the regression line for that cepstrum. It is measured in dB.

**Energy** Root Mean Square (RMS) Energy is a measure of spectral noise that reflects overall amplitude and is calculated over a window comprising five pitch periods. Energy is measured in dB.

**SHR** The subharmonics-harmonics amplitude ratio is a measure of spectral noise associated with period-doubling or irregularities in phonation. VoiceSauce’s implementation is based on the algorithm described in Sun (2002). While based on amplitude, this ratio is unitless.

The raw VoiceSauce output used in this chapter is available in a repository on the Open Science Framework, in the data subfolder at <https://osf.io/9ptk4/>. The analysis code used for the following sections is available on GitHub, at <https://github.com/khiajohnson/dissertation>. **Note that the diss repo is currently private!**

### 3.2.3 Exclusionary criteria and post-processing

Given the nature of the corpus and the level of automation in the methods thus far, there is reason to expect a sizable number of erroneous measurements. To filter these out before analysis, measurements were subjected to exclusionary criteria focused on identifying impossible values. Observations were excluded in cases where any of the following measurements had a value of zero: F0, F1, F2, F3, F4, CPP, or uncorrected H5kHz. Observations were also excluded if Energy was more than three standard deviations above the mean. This may exclude some valid measurements but removes the long right tail of likely erroneous measures, as humans can only produce speech so loud.

Filtering based on F0 and the four formant frequencies reflects the observation that zero measurements are not possible for voiced portions of the speech signal. The interpretation for zero in CPP would indicate there is no cepstral peak, that is, no regularity in the voicing. In this sense, a zero for CPP likely also reflects either a lack of voicing or an erroneous F0 measurement. Lastly, only the uncorrected spectral measure for H5kHz was used in filtering, as erroneous values tended to co-occur on the same observation. The distribution of H5kHz did not span zero, except



for a spike of erroneous values equal to zero. This operationalization minimizes the removal of correctly measured zero values, which occurred with all of the other spectral shape parameters, whether corrected or uncorrected.

Moving standard deviations were calculated for each of the 12 measures using a centered 50 ms window, such that each window includes approximately ten observations. The moving standard deviations capture dynamic changes for each of the voice quality measures, which is important, as they may better reflect what listeners attend to in talker identification and discrimination tasks (Lee et al., 2019). This analysis uses moving standard deviations, as opposed to the coefficients of variation used by Lee et al. (2019). This should not have any undue effect on the outcome, as all variables were scaled before inclusion in the principal components analysis described in the next section. The last round of exclusionary criteria uses these moving standard deviations. If an observation was missing a moving standard deviation value, it was removed. Given the centered window, this means that observations falling less than 25 ms away from a voicing boundary were not included.

There were 24 total measures, with a measured value and a moving standard deviation for each of the acoustic measurements listed above. These 24 measures were used in the analyses described in the following sections. Across the 34 talkers, there were 3,071,736 observations after winnowing the data from an initial count of 6,560,403 observations. These observations were not evenly distributed across talkers and languages. While this full set of observations is perfectly valid for the crosslinguistic comparison in Section 3.2.4 and is used there, sample size is likely to have an impact on the principal components based analysis in Sections 3.2.5 and 3.2.7.

To control for the impact of sample size in that part of the analysis, the number of samples for each talker was capped to include only the first 20,124 samples for each interview. This value was selected as it represents the interview with the fewest observations. Put simply, differences in sample size reflect the variability in how much different individuals in the corpus talked. Those who produced longer passages of speech ultimately had more observations of voiced speech. Passage length was expected to impact the analysis, given how much affect and style can vary within a single conversation. Over time, individuals cover more of their range of variation, and as such, a regression to the mean is expected over time. To level

the playing field in this first analysis, the sample size was controlled. At the end of this chapter, in Section 3.3, a follow-up analysis validates this assumption. To preview those results, 20,000 samples appear sufficient for capturing the range of variability in acoustic voice variation.

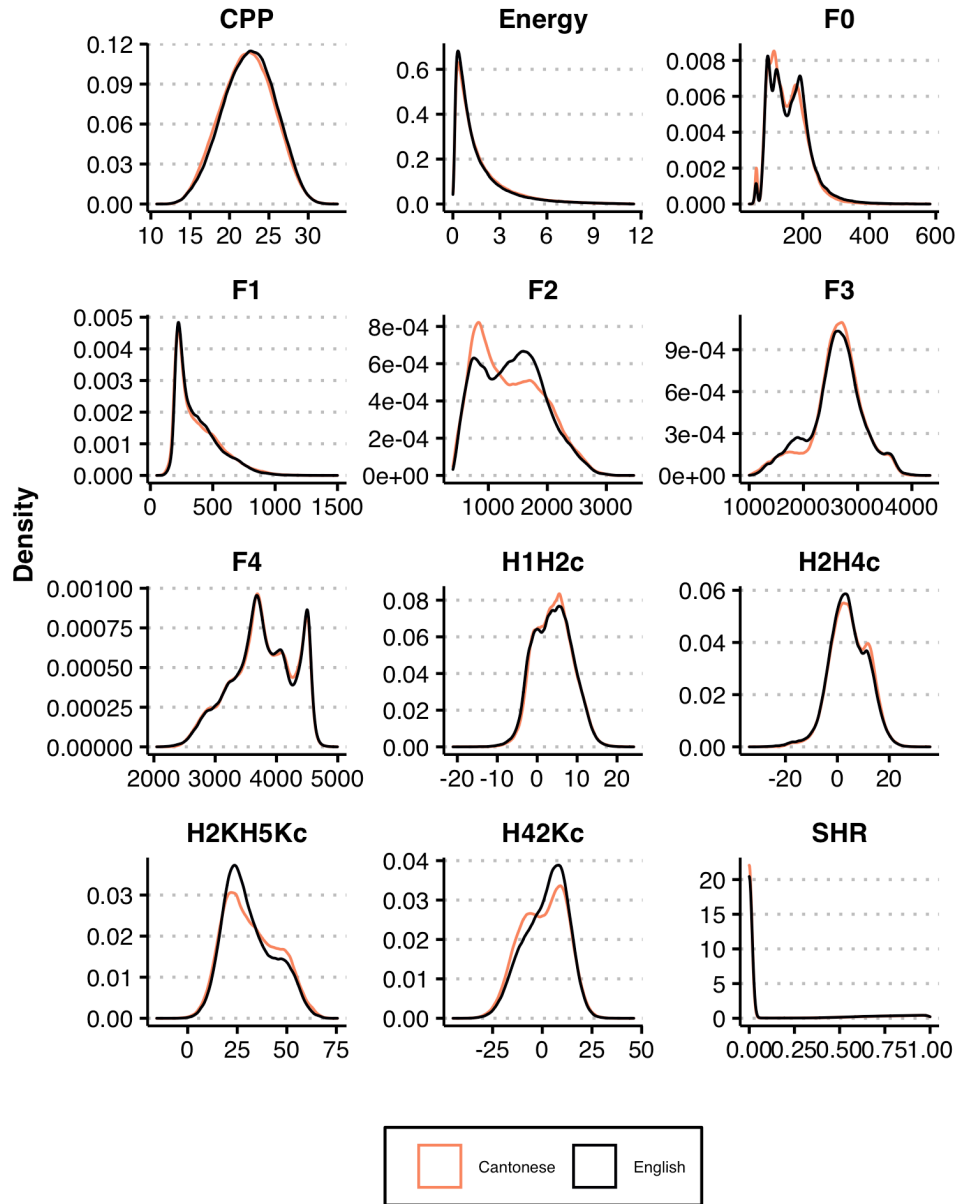
Following this last winnowing step, there were 1,368,432 total observations. While the winnowing process removed a substantial amount of the data, the total number of samples per talker is still much larger than the approximate 5,000 used in Lee et al. (2019).

### 3.2.4 Crosslinguistic comparison of acoustic measurements

Following prior work, the first step in this analysis is a crosslinguistic comparison for each talker and measure. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, there are some commonly found—though inconsistent—differences between Cantonese and English. Prior work has found that speakers sometimes produce lower and more variable F0 in Cantonese (Altenberg and Ferrand, 2006; Ng et al., 2012, 2010). Additionally, Ng et al. (2012) also report on spectral measurements that indicate Cantonese has a generally more breathy (or less creaky) phonation quality compared to English. Other measures were either inconclusive, non-significant, or not considered by the researchers. Figure 3.1 depicts the distribution of values for each of the acoustic measurements across languages, with all talkers pooled together.

For each acoustic measurement and talker, I conducted a Student’s *t*-test and calculated Cohen’s *d* using the *lsr* package (Navarro, 2015) in R (R Core Team, 2020); this provides a high-level assessment of whether variable means differed across the two languages. These comparisons have no bearing on how a given variable *varies*. Table 3.1 reports counts of talkers by effect size. Notably, across all talkers and variables, only 21.1% yielded non-trivial Cohen’s *d* values, though most talkers (32/34) had at least one non-trivial comparison. The distribution of these counts is depicted in Figure 3.2.

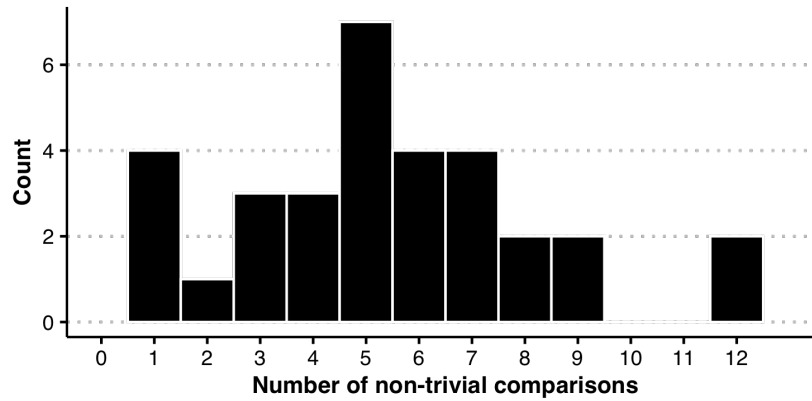
For the non-trivial comparisons, there were consistent patterns across languages for a handful of the variables, including F0, H4\*–H2kHz, and to a lesser extent, H1\*–H2\*\*. If there was a non-trivial difference in F0 across languages, then Can-



**Figure 3.1:** Each panel depicts a density plot that pool measurements from all talkers together to show the range of values for that measure. The x-axes each have their own scale. Language is separated out by color.

**Table 3.1:** This table reports counts of Cohen’s  $d$  for crosslinguistic comparisons of each of the acoustic measurements by talker. Degrees of freedom ranged between 49,274–136,644 across t-tests. For most talkers and variables, the difference in means was trivial, which is reflected in that column’s high counts.

Variable	Cohen’s $d$		
	Trivial <i>0.0–0.2</i>	Small <i>0.2–0.5</i>	Medium <i>0.5–0.8</i>
F0	21	10	3
F0 s.d.	34	-	-
F1	24	9	1
F1 s.d.	29	5	-
F2	26	8	-
F2 s.d.	32	2	-
F3	24	9	1
F3 s.d.	29	5	-
F4	30	3	1
F4 s.d.	28	6	-
H1*–H2*	18	15	1
H1*–H2* s.d.	32	2	-
H2*–H4*	25	9	-
H2*–H4* s.d.	31	3	-
H4*–H2kHz*	25	8	1
H4*–H2kHz* s.d.	34	-	-
H2kHz*–5kHz*	23	10	1
H2kHz*–5kHz* s.d.	31	3	-
CPP	21	10	3
CPP s.d.	32	2	-
Energy	17	14	3
Energy s.d.	18	16	-
SHR	31	3	-
SHR s.d.	29	5	-



**Figure 3.2:** A histogram summary of the number of non-trivial comparisons from Table 3.1 across the 34 talkers.

tonese had a lower mean F0 than English (13/34; Female = 7), though most talkers did not exhibit a difference (21/34). This is consistent with prior findings that when a difference between English and Cantonese was found, Cantonese had a lower mean F0 for females (Ng et al., 2012; Altenberg and Ferrand, 2006). I also observe this difference for a small number of males.

As for the two spectral shape measures,  $H4^*-H2kHz$  was consistently lower in Cantonese when the comparison was not trivial ( $n=9$ ), though most talkers did not exhibit a difference on this measure.  $H1^*-H2^*$  was significantly higher in Cantonese for a relatively large subset of the talkers (13/34), lower for a small number (3/34), but trivial for most (18/34). While based on a different measure than (Ng et al., 2012), this is consistent with the finding that Cantonese tends to be breathier, or English creakier—the current analysis does not distinguish between these interpretations.

For the remaining variables, while some talkers exhibited a difference in mean values, the direction of the difference varied, or relatively few talkers exhibited the difference. For example, a variable like F4 would be unlikely to vary across languages, given its association with vocal tract size. This is reflected in the relatively low count of talkers with a non-trivial difference across languages for F4.

Other measures, such as Energy, have a high number of nontrivial comparisons

but show a relatively even split for direction (Positive = 7, Negative = 10). The large spread for Energy may reflect things like speaking confidence in the two languages, which likely varies by individual (Järvinen et al., 2013).

CPP also exhibits a split between positive ( $n=6$ ) and negative (7). Higher CPP values are associated with both breathy or creaky non-modal phonation types. In this sense, a positive difference would indicate that Cantonese was more non-modal, while a negative difference would indicate that English was more non-modal. Interpreting CPP is not so straightforward, however, as it is not immediately clear which type of non-modal phonation the measure entails. Given the results of  $H1^*-H2^{**}$ , it seems clear that knowing where on the creaky-modal-breathy spectrum a given speaker falls is pertinent to interpreting this measure. CPP would likely corroborate that outcome. **How much more interpretation should I add in here?**

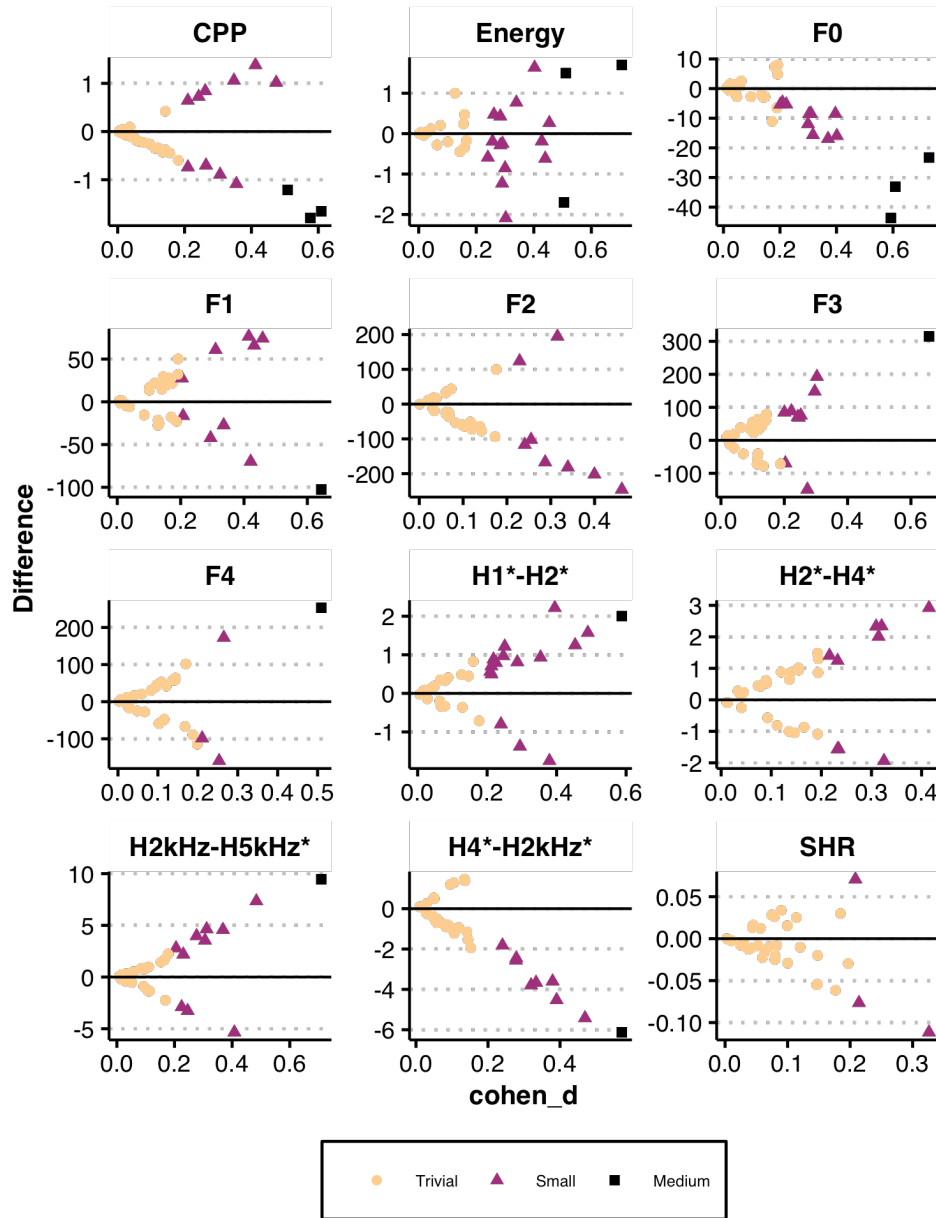
Overall, while talkers show some clear across-language differences, these are far outnumbered by instances with no difference. The variability observed here fits in with the variable outcomes of previous work but does not necessarily fall neatly along the lines prior work would suggest that male and female talkers fall along.

### 3.2.5 Principal components analysis

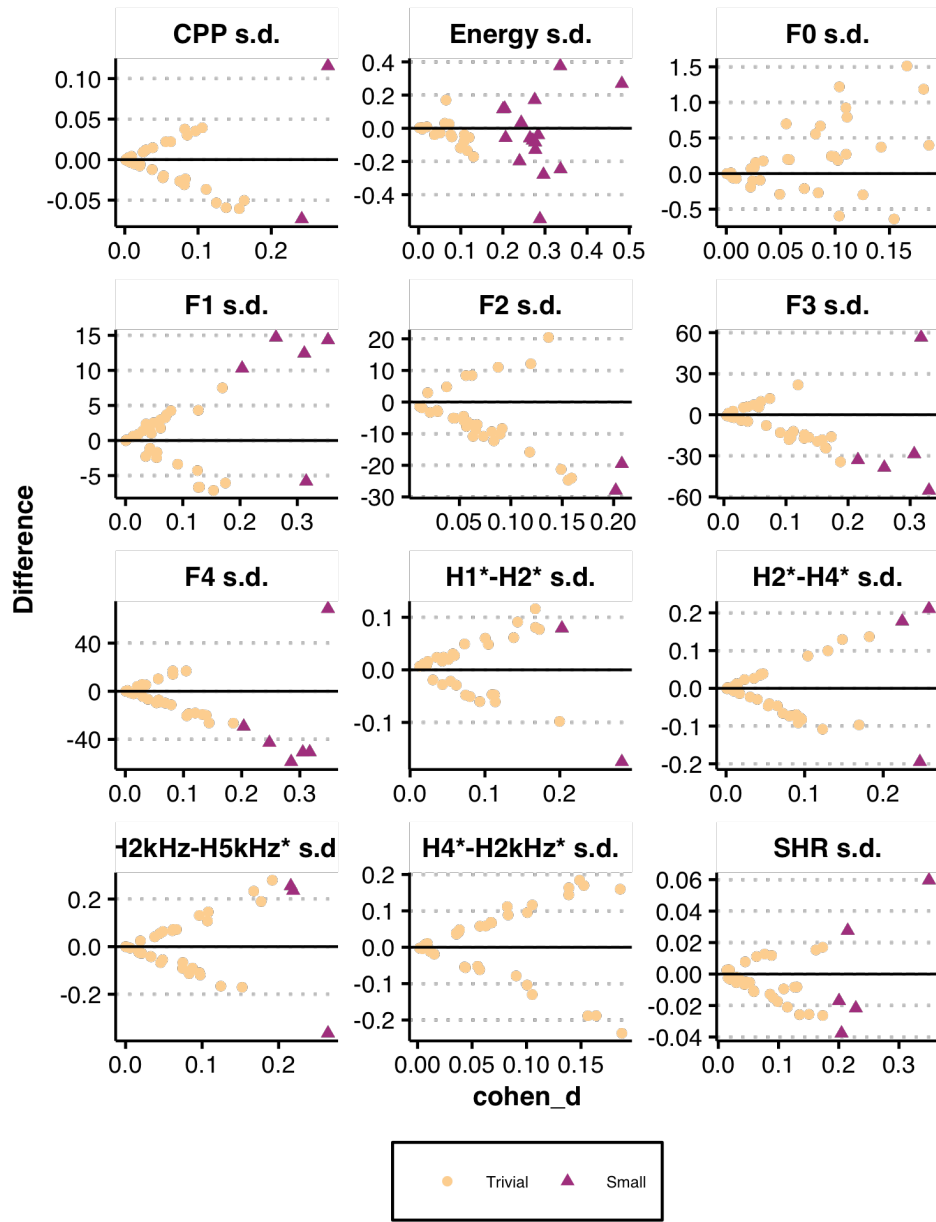
#### Methods

Principal components analysis (PCA) is a dimensionality reduction technique appropriate for data with many potentially correlated variables. In the case of voices, distilling numerous acoustic dimensions into a smaller number of components facilitates identifying and describing the structure of voice variability. PCA provides insight into how variables pattern together in a data set. This feature of PCA is especially relevant here, as voice perception research has made it clear that individual acoustic measurements may be necessary to capture and encode a voice but may not be perceptually meaningful to listeners. What matters is how the different pieces conspire together to form a percept.

Often, the goal of PCA is to take a large number of dimensions and extract a much smaller set to use for some additional purpose (e.g., linear regression). The



**Figure 3.3:** Each panel plots Cohen's  $d$  on the x-axis, and the difference between means from the t-tests on the y-axis. Positive values indicate a higher mean in Cantonese than English. The color reflect the levels of interpretations for Cohen's  $d$ .



**Figure 3.4:** This figure is a continuation of 3.3.



focus in this chapter is on the internal structure of the components. That is, I examine what makes up components for different talkers and whether an individual's voice structure varies (or not) across languages.

I adapt methods from work on voices (Lee et al., 2019; Lee and Kreiman, 2020) and faces (Burton et al., 2016; Turk and Pentland, 1991). The goal of this analysis is to capture similarities or differences in the structure of each talker's voice across languages. As such, I conducted PCAs separately for each talker-language pair and compared the results of each talker's English and Cantonese PCAs. All 24 measures were standardized on a by-PCA basis before the analysis. PCAs were implemented with the *parameters* package (Makowski et al., 2019) in R (R Core Team, 2020), using an oblique *promax* rotation to simplify the factor structure, as the measurements reported in the previous section were expected to be somewhat correlated given prior findings (Lee et al., 2019) and a broader understanding of how different acoustic measures align with one another (Kreiman et al., 2014, 2021).

Each PCA included the number of components for which all resulting eigenvalues were greater than 0.7 times the mean eigenvalue, following Jolliffe's (2002) recommended adjustment to the Kaiser-Guttman rule. This rule was used in place of a more sophisticated test (e.g., broken sticks), as it is not detrimental to this exploratory analysis to err on the side of including marginal components. Additionally, across each of the components, only loadings with an absolute value of 0.45 or higher were interpreted (Lee et al., 2019; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). While Lee et al. (2019) use a threshold of 0.32, Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) note that higher loadings indicate that a particular variable is a better measure of the component, with 0.32 corresponding to poor (but still interpretable) overlap between the variable and the component. The guidelines in Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) indicate that loadings of 0.45 correspond to fair, 0.55 to good, 0.63 to very good, and 0.71 and above to excellent. Given the large number of components and loadings in this analysis, only loadings over the fair threshold are interpreted.

### 3.2.6 PCA results

The PCAs across both languages for all 34 talkers resulted in 10–14 components and accounted for 74.9–82.7% of the total variation. Half of the talkers had the

same number of components for each language (17 of 34). Of the remainder, 16 of the 34 talkers had a difference of one in the number components, and only one had a difference of two. Talkers had 4–11 identical component configurations across their languages ( $M=7.82$ ). These shared components represent 33.3%–91.7% of the total components for talkers ( $M=66.7\%$ ). The numbers comprising these summary statistics are provided in Table 3.2. While this already indicates a substantial amount of shared lower-dimensional structure across languages, it likely underestimates the actual shared structure. The reason is that similarity of component structure is not taken into account (i.e., a component of F2, F3, and F4 versus a component with just F2 and F3), as is the case in Section 3.2.7.

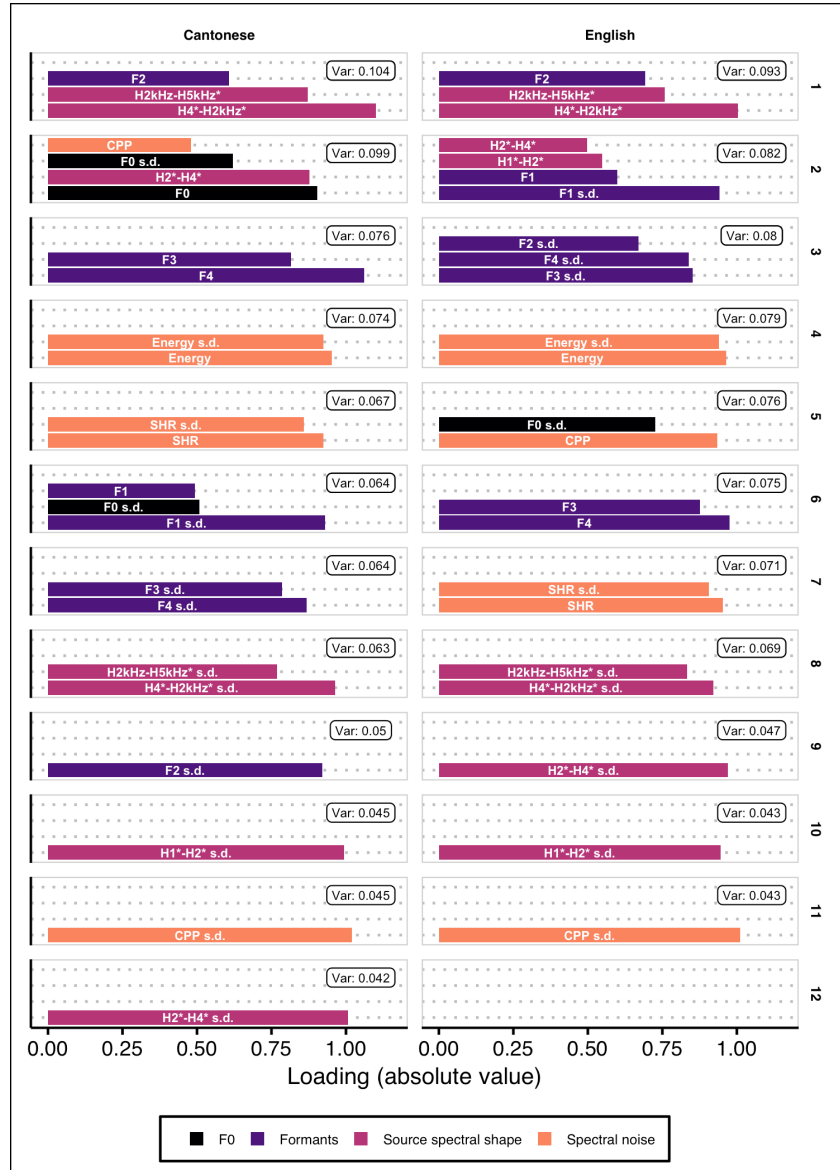
To assess whether talkers exhibit the same structure in voice variability across their languages, I first consider the patterns present across the different PCAs. This provides context for understating what unique structural characteristics in talkers’ voices looks like. To this end, I briefly summarize common patterns across PCA components, regardless of how much variance they account for, as the difference is often quite small. Figure 3.5 shows all of the components of participant VF32A’s Cantonese and English PCAs, illustrating some examples of how components can vary (or not) across languages. It also highlights the importance of not attributing too much value to the ordering of components, but rather to their composition and variance accounted for.

Broadly, there were many similarities in component composition across talkers and languages. The following paragraphs summarize the components that were present in every PCA, regardless of talker or language. The shared component accounting for the most variation across talkers had a core structure consisting of F2 and H4\*-H2kHz. These usually went along with H2kHz\*-H5kHz\* (Cantonese = 34, English = 31), and occasionally with F3 and F4 (Cantonese = 3, English = 3). In a similar vein, all talkers had a component consisting of H4\*-H2kHz\* s.d. and H2kHz\*-H5kHz\* s.d., though it accounted for a smaller proportion of the total variation. **Should I describe what these mean here? Or in the discussion?**

In the case of moving standard deviation parameters, there were a few common configurations. Formant s.d. parameters often co-occured. In both languages, the components typically consisted of F3 s.d. and F4 s.d. (Cantonese = 32, English = 26), and in many cases this also included F2 s.d. (Cantonese = 6, English = 10). In

**Table 3.2:** The number of components and the variance accounted for is listed for each PCA. The last column indicates the number of identical components across languages.

Talker	Cantonese		English		Identical N
	N	Variance	N	Variance	
VF19A	11	0.77	12	0.80	8
VF19B	12	0.78	12	0.78	8
VF19C	12	0.78	12	0.79	9
VF19D	13	0.81	13	0.78	9
VF20A	11	0.78	12	0.79	6
VF20B	13	0.81	12	0.82	8
VF21A	12	0.78	12	0.80	6
VF21B	12	0.78	12	0.80	8
VF21C	14	0.83	13	0.83	10
VF21D	12	0.79	12	0.81	9
VF22A	11	0.78	12	0.80	7
VF23B	12	0.78	12	0.78	8
VF23C	12	0.79	12	0.80	7
VF26A	12	0.78	13	0.80	7
VF27A	11	0.79	11	0.77	8
VF32A	12	0.78	11	0.76	8
VF33B	12	0.77	12	0.79	9
VM19A	12	0.78	11	0.76	5
VM19B	11	0.80	12	0.80	6
VM19C	11	0.76	11	0.78	6
VM19D	13	0.80	14	0.82	10
VM20B	12	0.80	11	0.76	9
VM21A	10	0.78	11	0.79	5
VM21B	11	0.79	11	0.76	9
VM21C	12	0.80	12	0.77	9
VM21D	11	0.75	12	0.77	7
VM21E	10	0.74	12	0.80	7
VM22A	12	0.77	13	0.83	11
VM22B	12	0.79	12	0.79	7
VM23A	12	0.81	12	0.79	4
VM24A	11	0.77	11	0.76	8
VM25A	12	0.81	12	0.77	11
VM25B	11	0.74	12	0.76	7
VM34A	11	0.77	12	0.81	10



**Figure 3.5:** In this depiction of the components of VF32A's Cantonese and English PCAs, loadings are represented by bar height and are labelled with the variable name; color represents conceptual groupings; and, the component's variance is superimposed.

the case of spectral tilt, the variable for H2\*-H4\* s.d. commonly occurred alone (Cantonese = 18, English = 18) or in combination with H1\*-H2\* s.d. (Cantonese = 13, English = 14). While these two categories of variables exhibited these common patterns, the formant and spectral tilt moving standard deviations often patterned in more idiosyncratic ways, loading along side each other, F0, formants, and spectral measures. This kind of variability does not summarize easily.

The spectral noise parameters had relatively consistent component patterns across talkers and languages. Energy and Energy s.d. consistently loaded on the same component, and were sometimes accompanied by F0 (Cantonese = 6, English = 2) and F0 s.d. (Cantonese = 1). CPP s.d. occurred consistently on its own component for all English PCAs, and 31 of the Cantonese PCAs. In the remaining three cases, it was accompanied by CPP (n=1) or H1\*-H2\* s.d. (n=2). CPP patterned less consistently but was most often accompanied by F0 s.d. (Cantonese = 19, English = 14). SHR and SHR s.d. exclusively loaded together for 31 talkers in each language and SHR by itself for a single talker per language. The pair was sometimes accompanied by H1\*-H2\* (Cantonese = 2, English = 2), H2\*-H4\* (English = 1), or F0 (English = 3).

While this covers a lot of the variables included in the PCAs, F0 is notably sparse in the above paragraphs. This is because F0 patterned very inconsistently across talkers, perhaps reflecting idiosyncrasies. This is notable, because Lee and colleagues found differences in F0 behavior across styles and languages (Lee et al., 2019; Lee and Kreiman, 2019, 2020).

There were additional components (not reported here) that were shared by less than half of talkers. In summary, despite the greater amount of shared structure across PCAs than found in Lee et al. (2019), there is still ample room for idiosyncratic variation, both in terms of which variables co-occur, as well as in how much variance different components account for.

### 3.2.7 Canonical redundancy analysis

## Methods

In order to assess whether variation in a talker's voice is structurally similar across both languages, I compare PCA output from both languages by calculating redundancy indices in a canonical correlation analysis (CCA Stewart and Love, 1968; Jolliffe, 2002). CCA is a statistical method used to explore how groups of variables are related to one another. The two sets of variables are transformed such that the correlation between the rotated versions is maximized. This is useful here, as a talker may have similar components in their English PCA and Cantonese PCA, but these components might not necessarily be in the same order, even if they account for comparable amounts of variance.

Redundancy is a relatively simple way to characterize the relationship between the loadings matrices of two PCAs—the two sets of variables under consideration here. For example, the two indices represent the amount of variation in a talker's Cantonese PCA output that can be accounted for via canonical variates by their English PCA output, and vice versa. Notably, the two redundancy indices are not symmetrical (Stewart and Love, 1968). This is particularly relevant in cases where the PCAs comprise different numbers of components, as determined by the stopping rule described above.

I computed redundancy indices for all pairwise combinations, including cases where similar values were expected (same talker, different language), and cases where I expected dissimilarity (different talker and language). Considering that the PCA analyses retain the lower-dimensional structure within each language, these redundancy indices effectively reflect the degree to which the lower-dimensional structure of the voice variability is retained across a talker's two languages.

## Results

Redundancy indices for within-talker comparisons ranged from 0.80 to 0.97, ( $Mdn = 0.92$ ,  $M = 0.91$ ,  $SD = 0.04$ ), and are displayed in Figure 3.6, with the two redundancy indices for a given pair plotted against one another. Comparisons across talkers within-language ranged from 0.64 to 0.96 ( $Mdn = 0.83$ ,  $M = 0.83$ ,  $SD = 0.5$ ). Comparisons across both talkers and languages ranged from 0.64 to 0.97 ( $Mdn = 0.83$ ,  $M = 0.83$ ,  $SD = 0.5$ ). While the across talker comparisons were generally

lower, the redundancy indices are overall still relatively high.

Within-talker values were confirmed to be higher than across-talker comparisons, per a Welch's t-test ( $t(70.93) = -17.35, p < 0.001, d = 1.77$ ). A second Welch's t-test testing the same versus different language for the across talker comparisons did not find a difference between those groups ( $t(4485.9) = -1.53, p = 0.13, d = 0.05$ ).

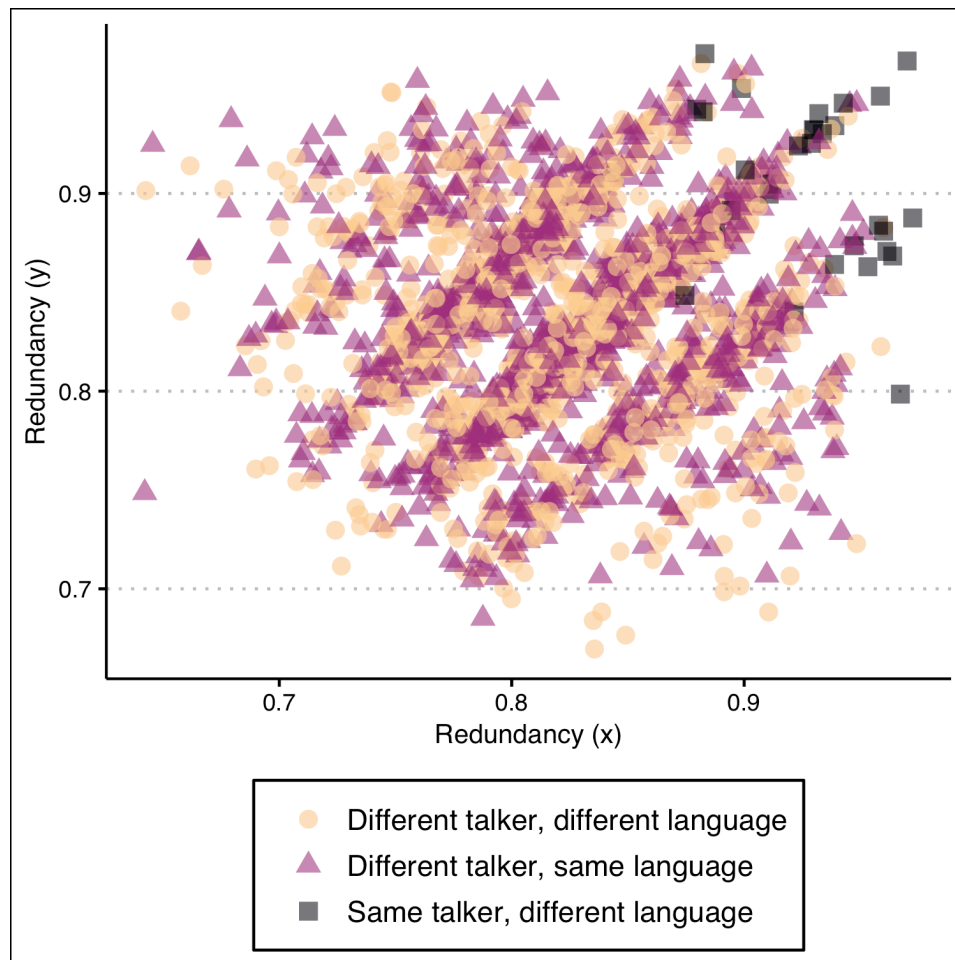
The high values are not unexpected. As PCA is a dimensionality reduction technique, the discarded components almost certainly contain idiosyncratic variation. Moreover, and following from Section 3.2.6, there were a substantial number of commonly occurring patterns across talkers and languages.

### 3.3 Passage length analysis

As previewed in the introduction, passage length is an important factor to consider in the principal components and canonical redundancy analyses. It represents one possible reason why the results presented thus far differ from prior work by Lee and colleagues. To examine the role of passage length, I conducted multiple PCAs for each talker and language combination, such that each PCA captured a progressively larger portion of the overall interview, using passage lengths comprising sample sizes of 500, 2000, 4500, 8000, 12500, 18000, 24500, 32000, 40500, 50000, 60500, and 72000. As the total number of samples per talker varied between 21024 and 74XXX, there were six to 12 total PCAs per interview. These step sizes were selected to give a more granular perspective on the lower end, while still covering the longest passage lengths. Redundancy was expected to level off somewhere in the middle, as talkers should eventually cover their range of variability in a given style.

In these PCAs, the number of components was fixed to 10, the lowest number found in Section X. This was done to put the PCAs on more equal footing in the subsequent analysis. For each interview, the canonical redundancy indices were calculated for each talker and language combination, comparing PCAs for each passage length to the PCA for the longest passage length. The final comparison thus has perfect redundancy, as the longest PCA is compared to itself.

Figure X plots polynomial smooths for each interview, with superimposed mean



**Figure 3.6:** The relationship between the two redundancy indices for three different types of comparisons. Within-talker comparisons are clustered at the top right.



smooths. The x-axis represents the sample size of the shorter passage length in the comparison. The y-axis represents an average of the two redundancy indices. The vertical line at 5,000 represents the average sample size from Lee et al. (2019). The vertical line at 20,124 represents the sample size used in Section X.

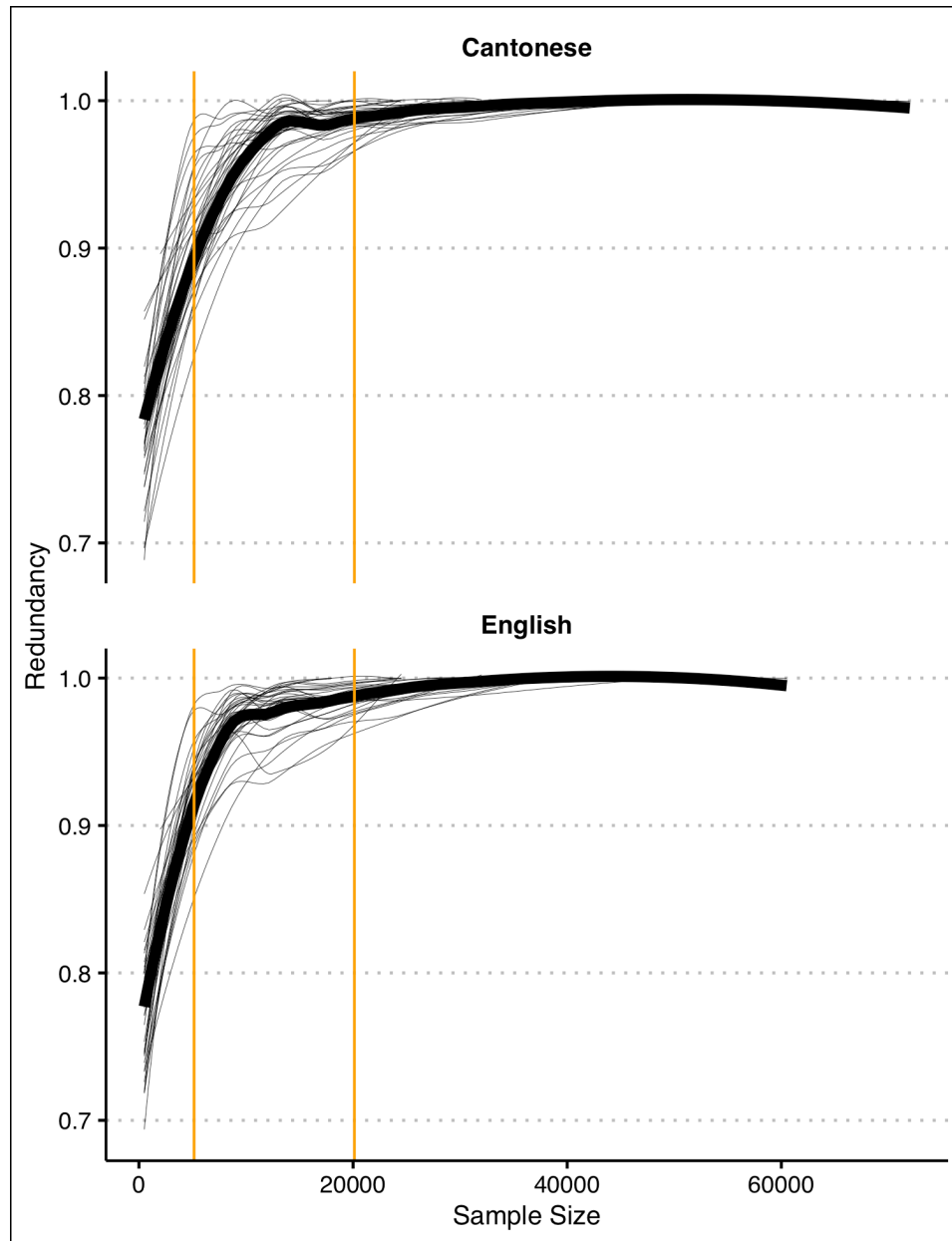
While there are some gains to be had in the higher sample sizes, it is readily apparent from this plot that the sample size used for PCAs in this chapter was sufficient to capture the range of talkers' within-interview variability. As the leveling-off point likely varies across speech styles, it is not immediately apparent whether the sample size in Lee et al. (2019) sufficiently captured the range of talker variability and thus may not adequately capture the structure of their variability.

### **3.4 Discussion and conclusion**

This study examines spectral properties and structural similarities in an individual's voice in two languages. A clear result is that most of the bilinguals studied here exhibit similar spectral properties, and similar lower-dimensional structure in voice variation, despite substantial segmental and suprasegmental differences across English and Cantonese (Matthews et al., 2013). In this sense, a majority appear to have the same “voice” across languages, which renders voice-as-an-auditory-face an apt comparison.

The comparison of these 34 Cantonese-English bilinguals' voices across languages suggest more similarity for an individual across languages than found within a more tightly controlled group of monolingual English speakers (Lee et al., 2019)—several analysis decisions may have contributed to this. I compared similar components independent of order, which ignores the fact that similar components may account for different amounts of variance, but ensures that any comparisons made are among like items. Any downside to this methodological decision is mitigated by the fact that most components made relatively small contributions, accounting for 4.2–10.3% (95% highest density interval) of the PCA's total variance.

While statistical choices may have affected these results, the data differences between the current and previous studies are also important to note. This study uses substantially longer passages than the short samples in Lee et al. (2019). The larger speech sample may allow for a more stable underlying structure to showcase



**Figure 3.7:** Passage length redundancy indices.

itself, as opposed to the potential for ephemeral variation in a shorter sample. This possibility is easily testable by manipulating the length of the speech sample in the analysis.

Ultimately, the goal is to understand how the acoustic variability and structure of talkers' voices maps onto listeners' organization of a voice space for use in talker recognition and discrimination. Turning to listener and behavioural data will help in deciphering what is meaningful variation within a voice from low level noise that cannot be attributed to a particular vocal signature. Verification from listener performance will help adjudicate which statistical choices present an acoustic voice space that matches listener organization.

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