

Gendered L1 attrition and L2 acquisition of pitch range in Japanese-English sequential bilinguals

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In this talk I will present findings from my PhD research, which investigated the effects of bilingualism on socially constrained attributes of pitch range in female *and* male Japanese-English bilinguals. This language combination was chosen because high pitch level has been claimed to index *female gender* in Japanese (Ohara, 2019), whereas, in English, an increase in pitch level is used by both females and males to index *friendliness* (Loveday, 1981).

Data were collected through a reading task and voicemail task from 19 bilinguals in London (UK), 21 bilinguals in Tokyo (JP), 15 Japanese monolinguals in Tokyo and 16 English monolinguals in London (for a total of 49 females vs 21 males). In both tasks, speech was directed to an imaginary addressee varying in formality and sex.

Gender-specific patterns of L1 attrition and L2 acquisition were evidenced at group and individual level with regard to read speech, but not semi-spontaneous speech. This suggests that the formality of read speech might enhance the production of language and gender normative pitch range and that individual gender identity might have been expressed alternatively in semi-spontaneous speech.