

# Length affects the positioning of French attributive adjectives- Evidence from perception and production

## I Adjective word order in French

- [illegible]

## II Effect of prosody on word order

- prosody affects word order at the level of the utterance in diverse languages [7, 8, 9, 10, 11]
- length affects the order of constituents at the sentence-level [12, 13, 14] and words at the phrase-level [15] in several languages
- SVO languages like French or English prefer short-before-long ordering [5, 16]
- most of the above-mentioned studies examine linearization at the sentence-level,
- see [4] as a pilot study for the ordering inside the Noun Phrase

### III Research question




- I. Does relative length affect the positioning of attributive adjectives in French?  
Hypothesis: adjective-noun pairs are preferred in **short-before-long order** in terms of n° of syllables and duration

## IV Methods

1. Forced-choice acceptability judgment task with written material
    - choice between prenominal and postnominal version
  2. Elicited production task using spoken material
    - participants listened to short audio files consisting of two sentences (2a.) and were asked to summarize the sentences in one sentence (2b.)
- (2) a. J'ai apprécié un randonné à la campagne. C'était agréable.  
I.hav enjoyed e e at the countryside it.was pleasant  
e a hike  
'I enjoyed a hike in the countryside. It was pleasant.'
- b. J'ai apprécié une agréable randonnee à la campagne.  
I.have enjoyed a pleasant hike at the countryside  
'I enjoyed a pleasant hike in the countryside.'

## Material

- 24 experimental items each containing a distinct adjective
- factors: **RELATIVE LENGTH** of adjective and noun (in n° of syllables) and **POSITION** of the adjective (see example for prenominal versions below)

Condition	Example
 longer adjective	un a.gré.able gîte a pleasant shelter
 equal adjective	une a.gré.able ran.do.nnée a pleasant hike
 shorter adjective	une a.gré.able con.vi.via.li.té a pleasant conviviality

- experimental items embedded in structurally identical sentences, such as (6)
- (3) Léna a apprécié un gîte agréable à la campagne  
 Lena has enjoyed a shelter pleasant at the countryside  
 'Lena enjoyed a pleasant shelter in the countryside.'

## Participants

- native speakers of European French without hearing or speaking disorders
- 1. 89 participants (41f, 47m, 1d), aged 18-74 (mean age= 33,4)
  - received an equivalent of 2€ via Prolific
- 2. 59 participants (52f, 7m), aged 18-66 (mean age= 26,4)
  - received 8€ for participation

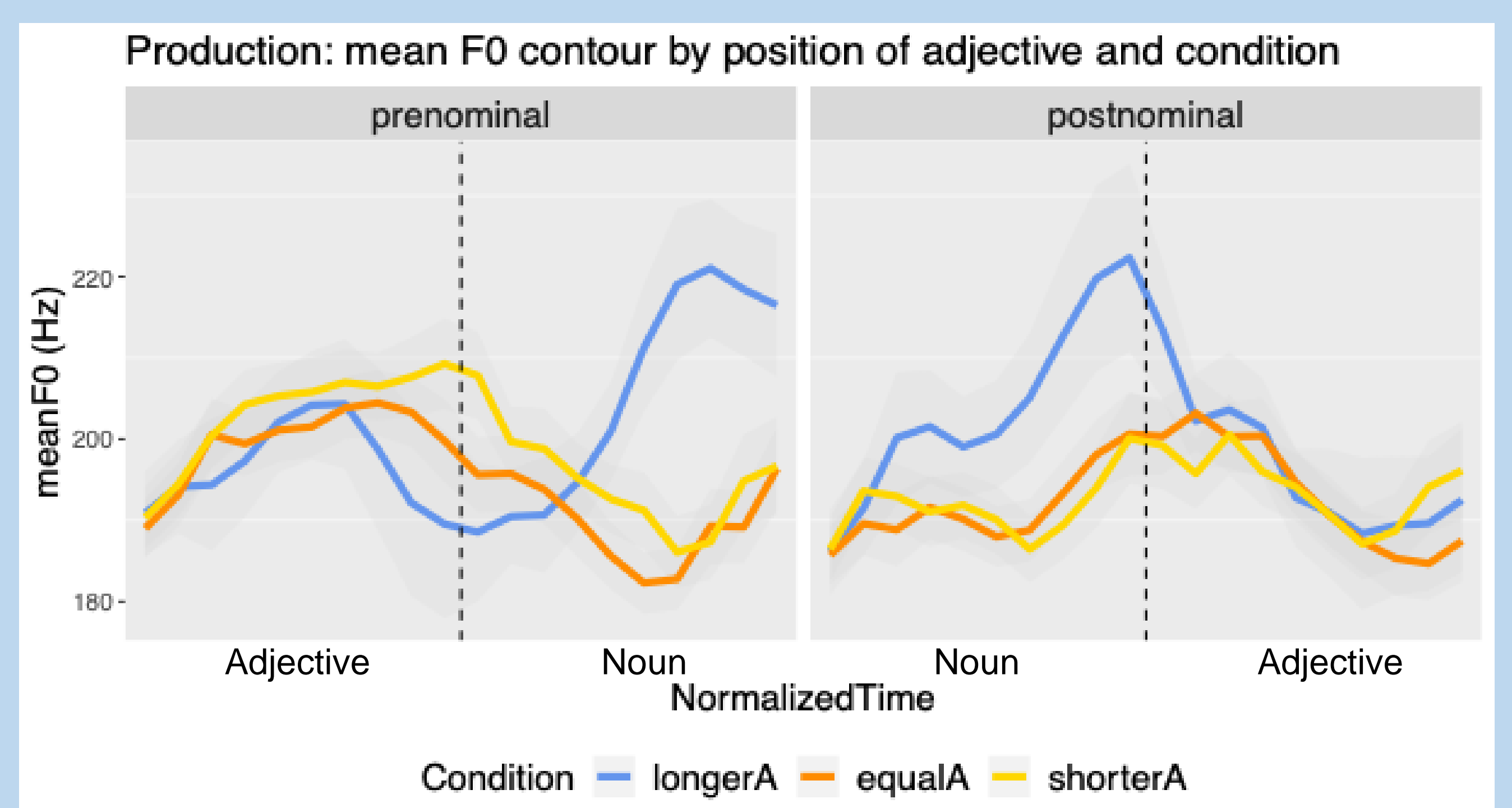
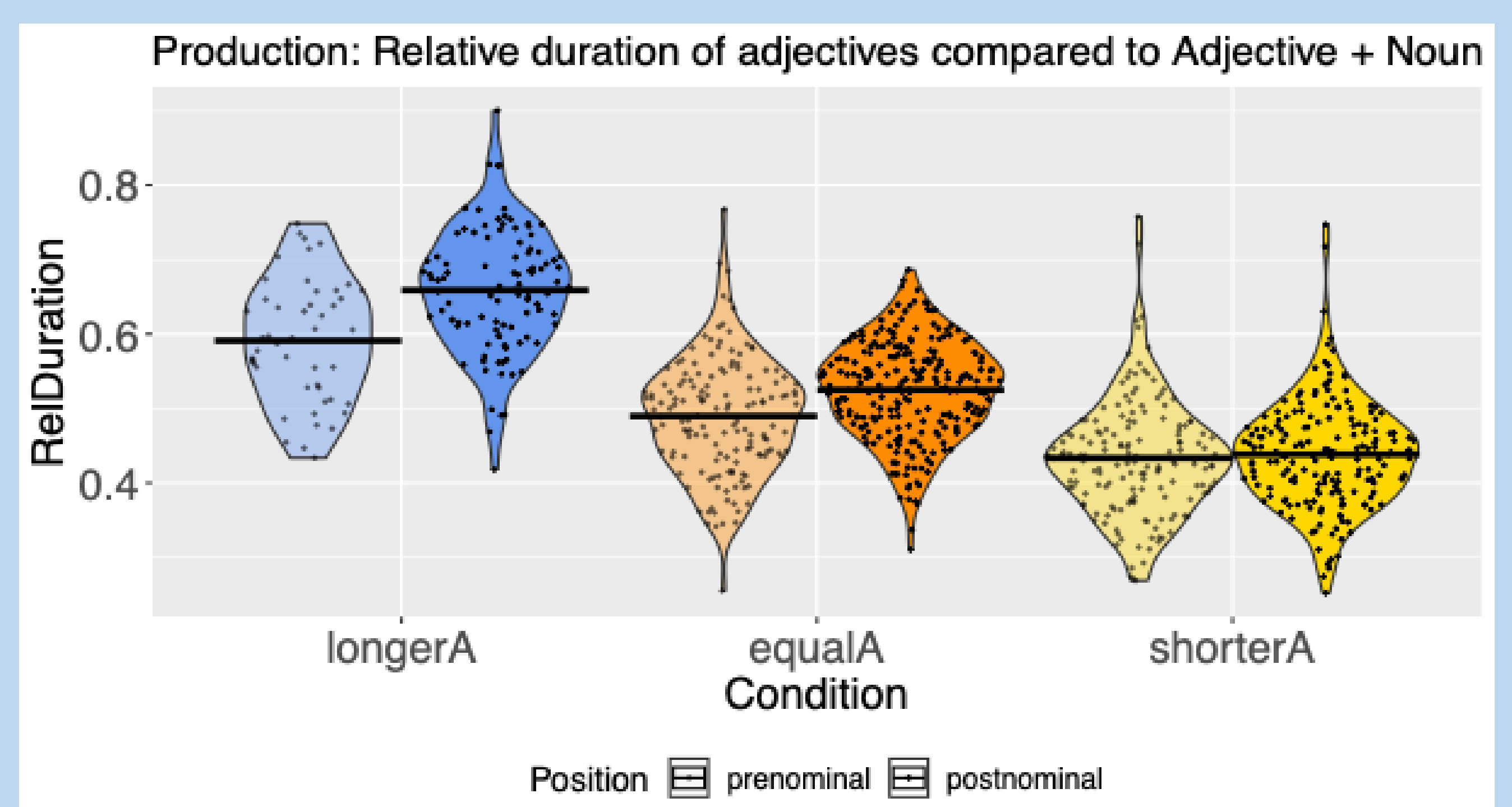
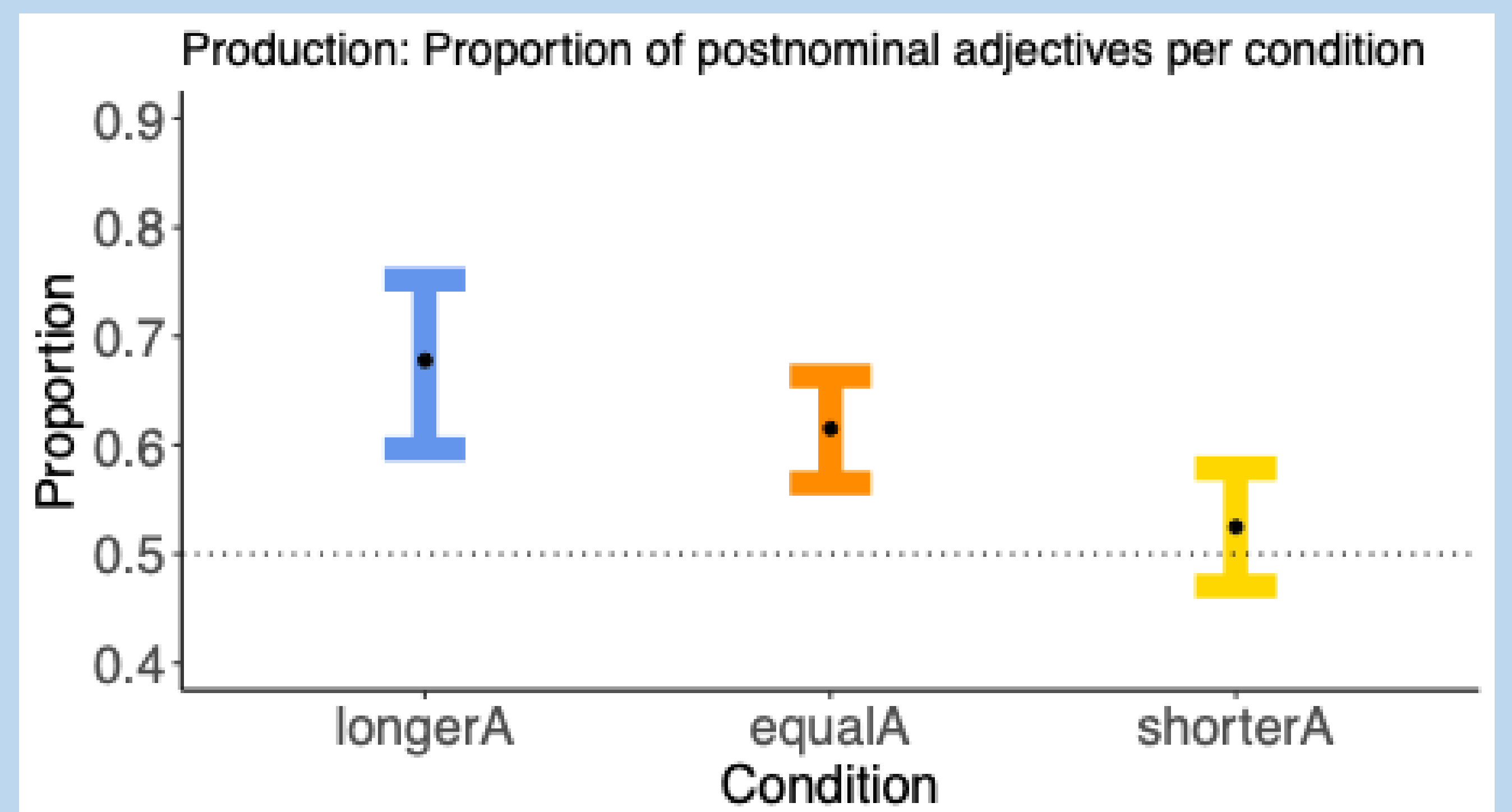
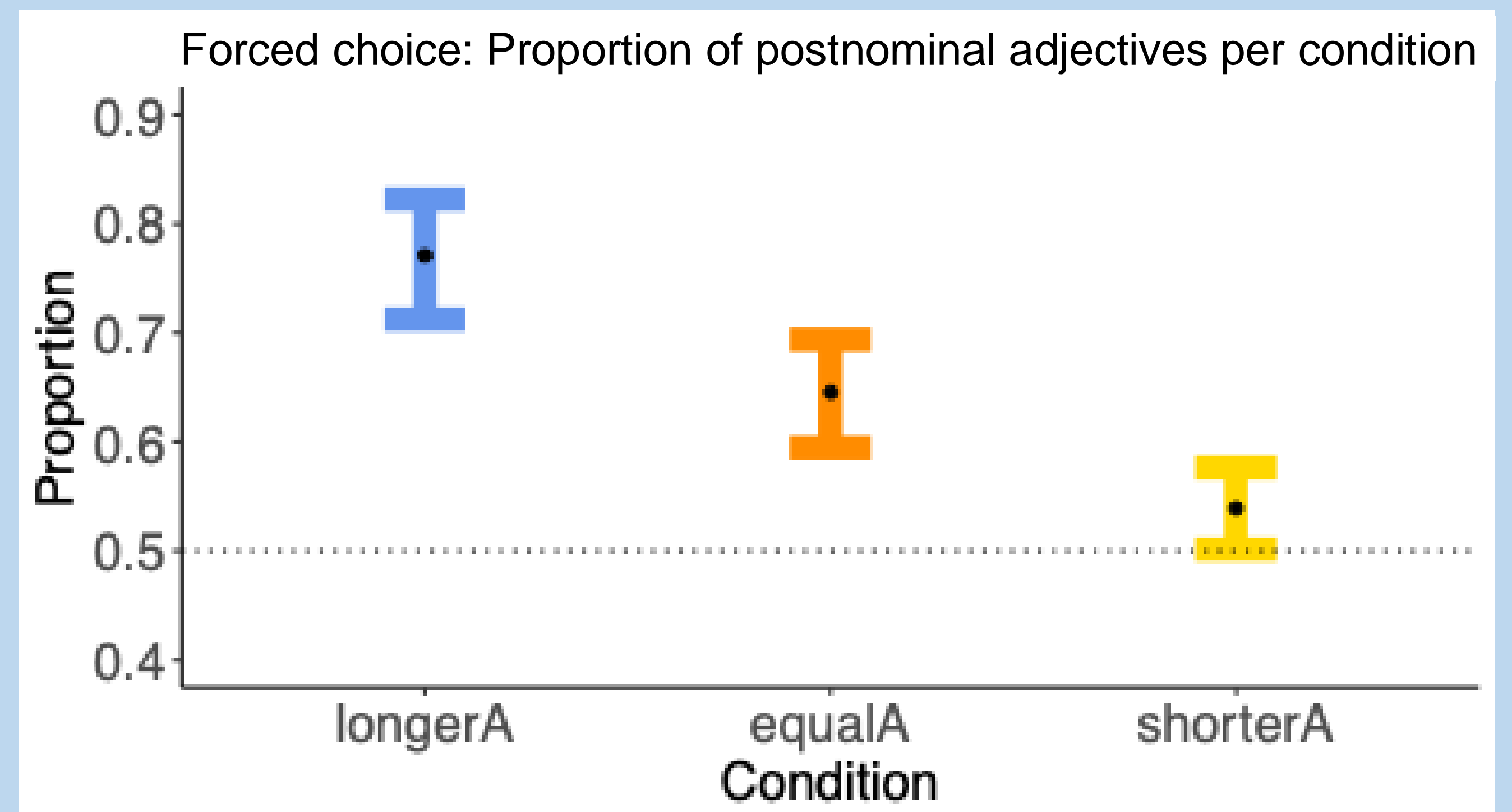
## Data Processing

- forced choice data consists of 2136 adjective-noun pairs
- our production data consists of 1133 adjective-noun pairs

## VII Conclusions

- discernible impact of relative length on the positioning of attributive adjectives
- short-before-long extends to phrasal level, shown in both studies
- short-before-long also represented in duration of adjectives
- relative length affects F0 contours of adjective-noun pairs

## V Results



## VI Discussion

- preference for postnominal position supported
- longer adjectives attain highest rate in postnominal position in both studies
- shorter adjectives preposed significantly more often than longer and equally long adjectives
- longer and equally long adjectives have a longer duration in postnominal position compared to prenominal position
- nouns modified by longer adjectives receive high peak irrespective of position of adjective

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## Appendix

