

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

I Adjective word order in French

- subgroup of attributive adjectives allowing prenominal and postnominal positioning
- no apparent semantic difference associated with the position of the adjective (1)

(1) a. un charmant garçon b. un garçon charmant
a charming boy a boy charming
'a charming boy' ([1]:289)

- postnominal position generally considered the canonical position for attributive adjectives [1, 2, 3]
- monosyllabic and frequently occurring adjectives generally preferred in prenominal position [1, 2, 3]
- adjectives that are variable, occur prenominally more frequently [1, 3, 4, 5, 6]

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

- Forced-choice acceptability judgment task with written material
 - choice between prenominal and postnominal version
- 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 apprécier 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 apprécier 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 apprécier 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

- 89 participants (41f, 47m, 1d), aged 18-74 (mean age= 33,4)
 - received an equivalent of 2€ via Prolific
- 59 participants (52f, 7m), aged 18-66 (mean age= 26,4)
 - received 8€ for participation

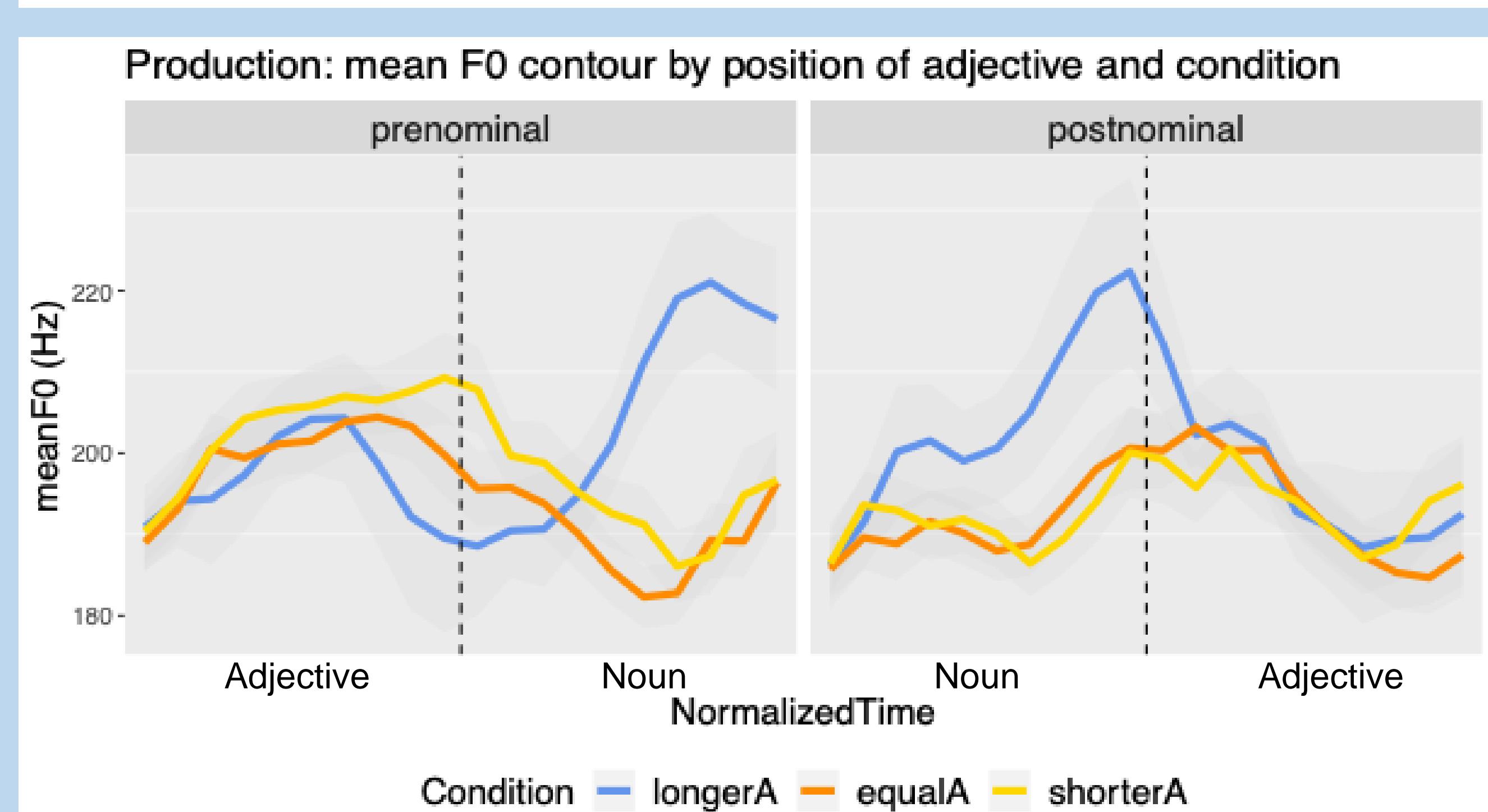
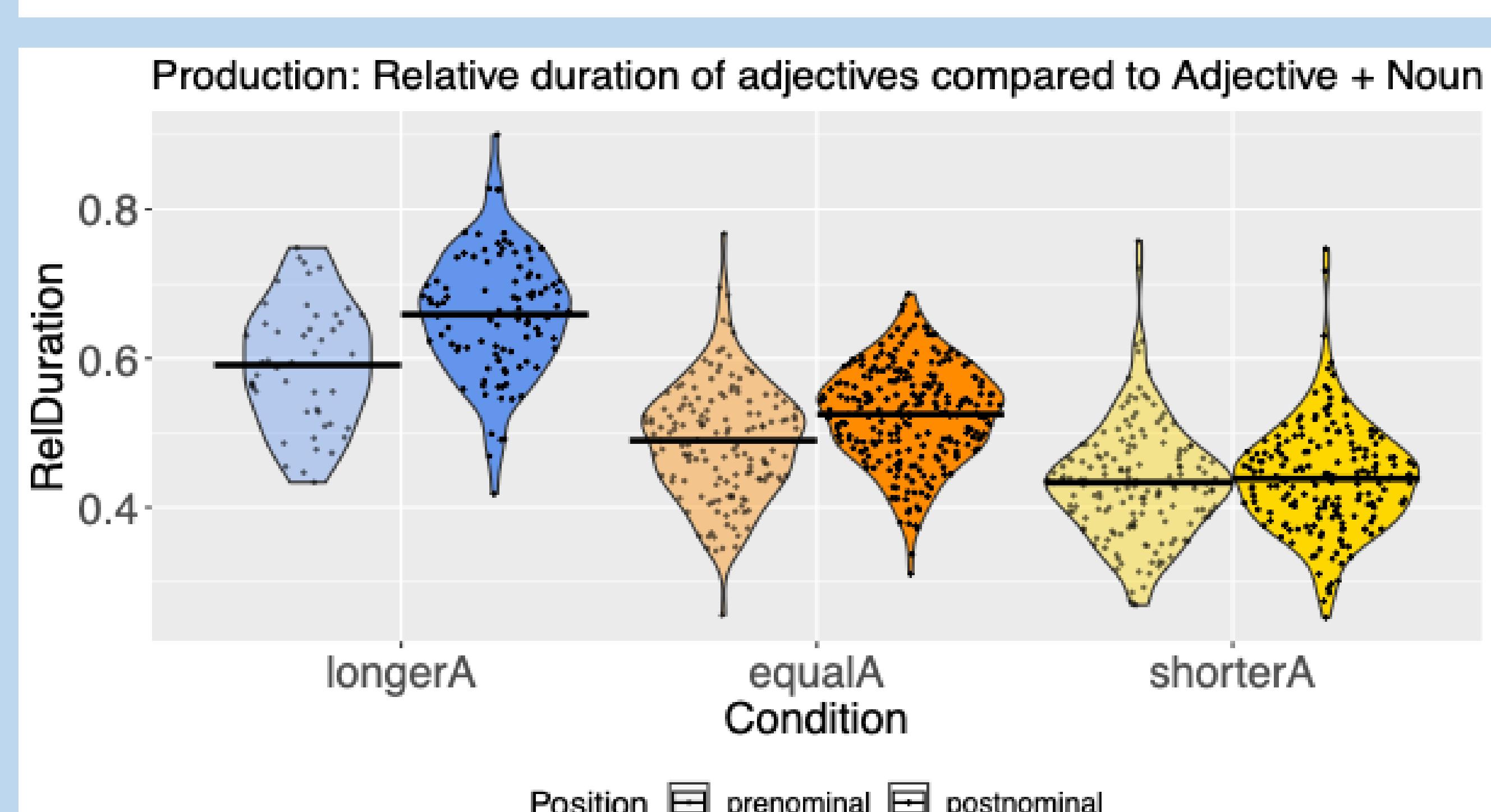
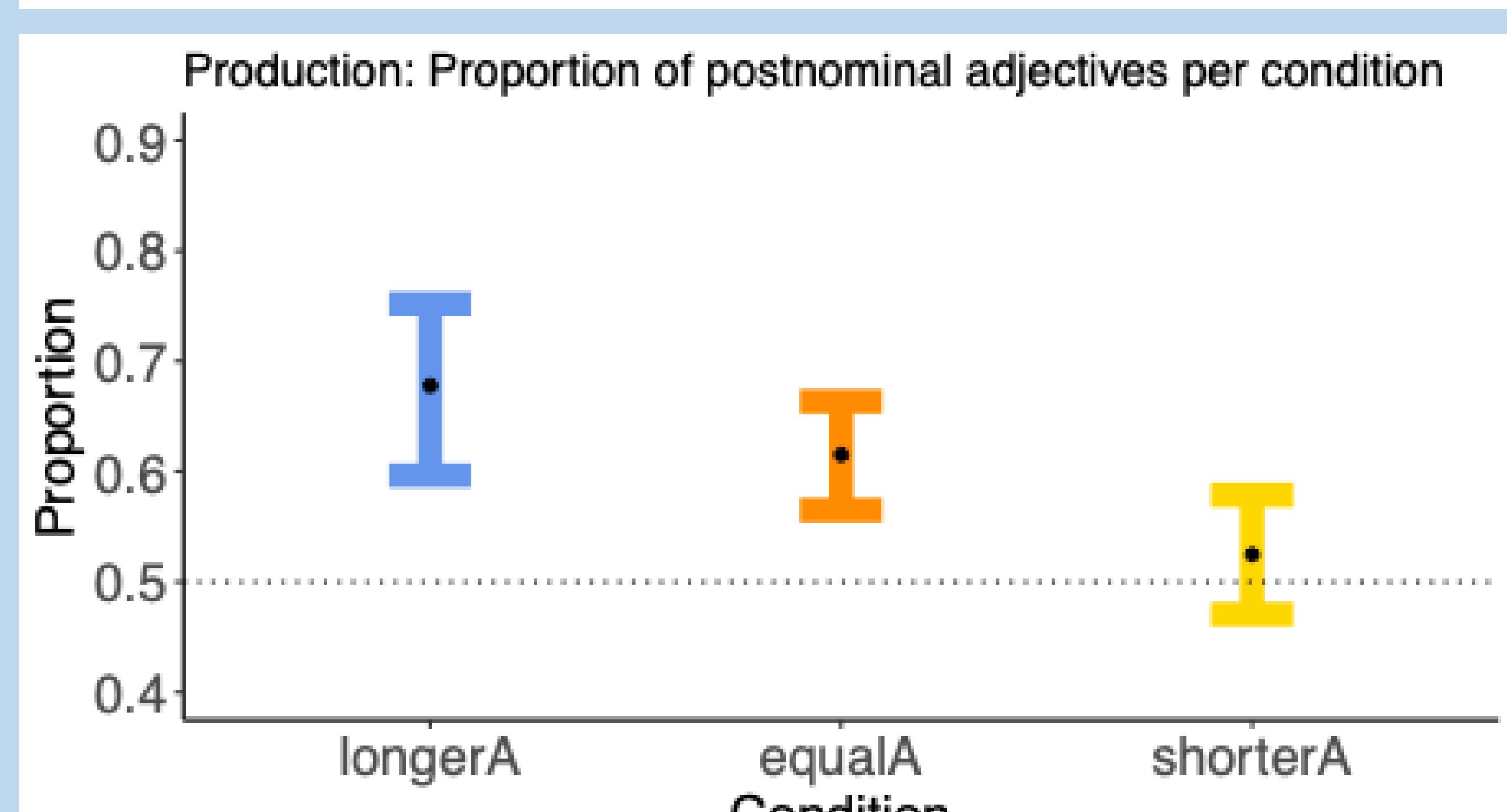
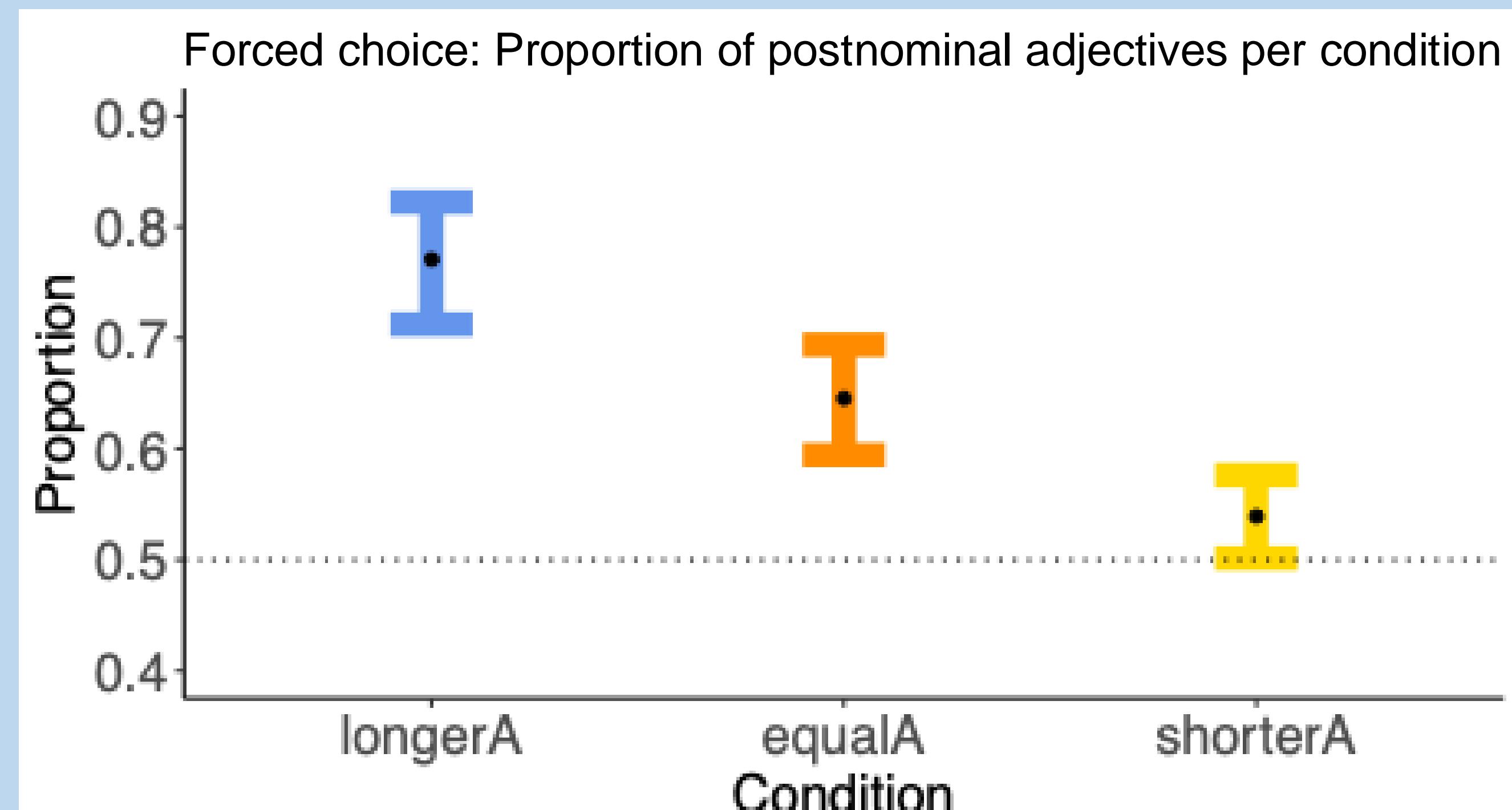
Data Processing

- 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

