

A Comparison of Heritage vs Native Taiwanese Mandarin Speaker Attitudes Towards *sajiao*

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This study investigates the language attitudes and perceptions of Taiwanese Mandarin heritage and native listeners towards the use of *sajiao*, a stylized speech type described as sounding like a spoiled child, in two varieties of Mandarin. Previous research has only focused on perceptions of Taiwanese Mandarin *sajiao* by Beijing Mandarin speakers, but not vice versa. This research explores the interaction between speech style, gender, and regional variety and how these interactions are perceived differently by heritage and native listeners.

Previous research investigates how *sajiao* in Taiwanese Mandarin is perceived differently by native listeners and L2 listeners. Hardeman Guthrie (2016) found that L2 listeners rated speakers who used *sajiao* as less pleasant and friendly compared to native listeners suggesting L2 listeners have a weaker association with *sajiao* and friendliness compared to native speakers. This leads to the question of whether heritage speakers acquire these same associations outside of Mandarin-dominant countries, or whether heritage speakers develop weaker connections to speech styles and thus pattern more similarly to L2 learners.

To test this, a matched guise experiment was conducted via Qualtrics. 13 participants (heritage speakers, $n = 6$; native speakers, $n = 7$) listened to a recording and rated their perceived social constructions of the speakers in terms of their cuteness, pleasantness, femininity, masculinity, and professionalism on a scale from one to seven. In total, participants listened to 130 recordings, 64 target and 66 filler, of 4 different sentences with both *sajiao* and non-*sajiao* forms.

Heritage listeners' ratings of these different categories generally patterned similarly to those of native speakers. Heritage and native listeners overall found those who used *sajiao* as cuter, less professional, friendlier, more feminine, and less masculine than those who did not use *sajiao*. The only exceptions were for cuteness, where heritage speakers rated male Beijing Mandarin speech as less cute with *sajiao*, and for femininity, where heritage speakers rated male Beijing Mandarin speech as slightly less feminine with *sajiao*.

The overall trends were reflected to a different extent by native and heritage participants. In general, native speakers had greater changes in rating from non-*sajiao* to *sajiao* forms than heritage speakers had. Native speakers rated *sajiao* forms by all speakers as more feminine, less masculine, and overall friendlier than their heritage counterparts. The main exception to this trend is professionalism, where heritage speakers found Taiwanese Mandarin *sajiao* to be less professional and native speakers found Taiwanese Mandarin non-*sajiao* as less professional than their respective counterparts.

This study finds that heritage speakers pattern similarly to native speakers, although not to the same extent. This positions heritage speakers in their own category, where they have acquired the social associations with this specialized speech style, but not to the same degree as native speakers. This research sheds new light on heritage perceptions of language variation, namely two varieties of Mandarin and speech style, and how this variation affects judgments on the locutor. Further research is needed to investigate how Beijing Mandarin heritage speakers would perform in this same task.

References:

Hardeman Guthrie, K. (2016). Gender and Second Language Style: American Learner Perceptions and Use of Mandarin sajjiao. *Asia-Pacific Language Variation* 2(2). pp. 157-187.
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