

Forget the cologne and witty one-liners, it's all about how men speak that attracts women

- **Most desirable male voice for British women is 'deep, rumbling and breathy'**
- **Different vocal traits are associated with size, attractiveness, friendliness**

By Nick Mcdermott

Chaps, forget the expensive cologne and witty one-liners, the way to a woman's heart could be as simple as lowering your voice.

Scientists have found different vocal traits are instinctively associated with body size, attractiveness and friendliness. They discovered the most desirable male voice for British women is deep, rumbling and breathy, indicating the ideal blend of masculinity, strength, with a hint of tenderness.

Which may explain Joey's success with the ladies in the sitcom Friends, with his catchphrase "How you doin'" perfectly encapsulating all these characteristics.



Charming the ladies could be as simple as lowering your voice, explaining Joey's success with the ladies in the sitcom Friends

While for women wanting to attract a British man, their delivery should be high-pitched and breathy, which signals to the male psyche they are petite and, controversially, open and submissive. 'For women, it is a bit of a sexist prototype. The research suggests that subconsciously, men are more attracted to a female voice that indicates friendliness and submission,' said lead researcher Dr Yi Xu, a reader in speech sciences at UCL.

'Men prefer a voice which projects a small body size, which is higher pitched and breathy. Marilyn Monroe is a good example.' Politicians have long been aware of the impact of their voice.



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Margaret Thatcher famously underwent vocal training to lower her tone and make her sound more statesmanlike. According to Dr Xu, breathiness as seen as sultry in women, and tender in men. It is also more common in younger women, which may add to its appeal.

'Even for males, if you want to be attractive to females, it is better to be breathy than aggressive in terms of voice quality. But in pitch, we found it is more attractive to be low, which indicates masculinity,' he said. 'For a man, the perfect combination is both masculinity and tenderness - that was the preferred voice type.' In the animal world, listeners can perceive a caller's body size based on the noise they make.

For example, low frequency growls suggest a larger body size, dominance or a potential attack, while higher frequency and pure-tone-like sounds indicate a smaller size, submissiveness and fear.

The research, published in journal PLOS ONE, carried out several experiments where both men and women listened to recordings of the opposite sex speaking a sentence to test vocal attractiveness. The results showed male listeners preferred breathy female voices with high pitch - although not too high - correlating with a petite size, while women preferred to hear low-pitched men that suggested they were larger, stronger specimens.

But surprisingly, female listeners also preferred breathy male voices, which signals they prefer the aggressiveness associated with a large body to be somewhat tempered.

The study also explains why distinctive voices are also often deemed less appealing. The report concluded: 'These results suggest that what make the voice attractive are mostly properties that enhance characteristics already in the averaged voice of the sex - high pitch ... and breathiness in [the] female voice, and low pitch and long vocal tract in the male voice.'

'These findings may therefore explain why averaged voices are more attractive than certain individual voices.'