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On heritage speakers as native speakers: description, identity, ideology

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ILLINOIS

**Birmingham-Illinois Partnership for
Discovery, Engagement and Education
(BRIDGE)**

Heritage speakers

- Term used in North America to refer to *bilingual speakers of minority languages*.
- Immigrants, aboriginal people, historical languages in many territories (Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Basque, Catalan, Quechua, Guaraní, etc.)

Are heritage speakers native speakers?



SILVINA MONTRUL

El bilingüismo en el mundo hispanohablante

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

Bilingualism

Part 1

**Bilingualism as a historical,
political and social
phenomenon.**

Part 2

**Bilingualism as an individual
phenomenon in the mind
Language acquisition**

Part 3

**Bilingualism in education
Language revitalization
Standardization**

The Native Speaker

- Who is a native speaker?
- What makes you a native speaker?
- Are you born a native speaker or do you become one?
- And if you are born in an environment that is likely to make you a native speaker, can you lose your status later on?
- How do you know?

Students' answers

Who is a native speaker?

- Someone who speaks the language of the country where he/she was born from birth
- Someone who acquired a language since birth and spoke that language growing up
- Someone who only speaks one language

Students' answers

How do you know your classmate is or is not a native speaker of English?

- Fluency
- Accent
- Pronunciation
- Vocabulary
- Slang
- Because of the place where he/she was born

The Native Speaker

- Social and political construction (Bonfiglio 2010)
- Differs from native users depending on command of the standard language (Davies 2003)
- Linguistically real and measurable (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam 2009)

Mother Tongues and Nations

Bonfiglio (2010)

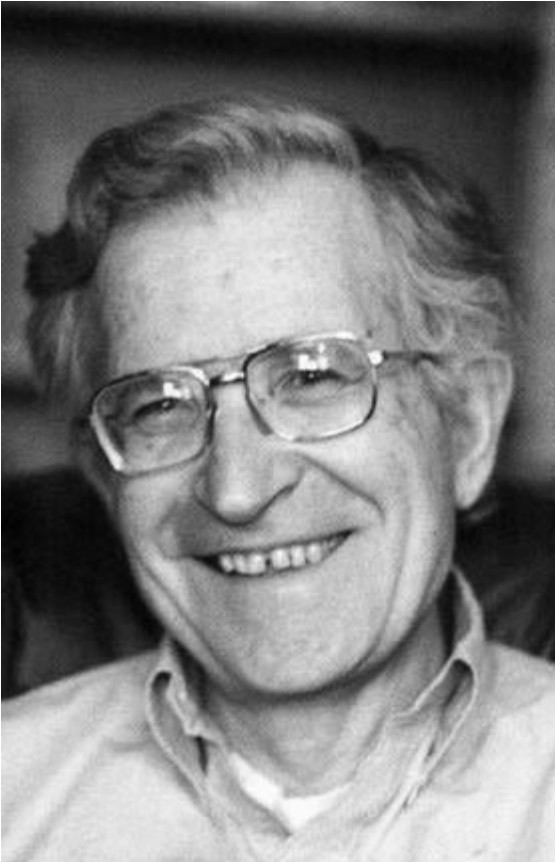
- Explores the history of the submerged racial, ethnic and gender ideologies present in the concept of the mother tongue and the native speaker, especially vis-à-vis the perceived authority of that speaker.

Bonfiglio (2010)

- “The person born into the matrix of nation and language can often invoke in conversations with someone foreign to the matrix, the notion of birthright of linguistic authority” (p. 218).
- But there is nothing intrinsically linguistic about place of birth.

Linguistics

Chomsky 1965, p. 3



“Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an **ideal speaker-listener**, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its (the speech community's) language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of this language in actual performance.”

Is Chomsky alone?

Dorian (1981, p. 3)

Looking for the “best speakers” who will provide evidence of the most “unadulterated” form of the language has been common practice in anthropological linguistics, in European dialectology, and in national folklore.

Dilemma

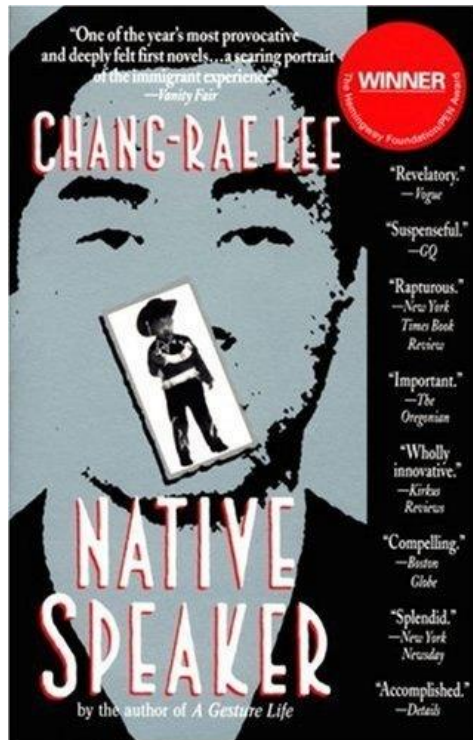
- What happens with people who are born in a place and speak a language and then they move to another place where another language is spoken?
- Do they lose status as native speakers?
- What happens with those who are born in a place where a different language from the native language is spoken?
- Are they native speakers of their language?

My position

- There are different ways of being a native speaker
- Heritage speakers are a type of native speakers
- Place and language can be dissociated
- Language and education can be dissociated
- Native ability/proficiency can be dissociated in different components of language

Place and Language

Heritage speakers are “displaced” native speakers.



- In *Native Speaker*, author Chang-rae Lee introduces readers to Henry Park. Park has spent his entire life trying to become a true American—a native speaker. But even as the essence of his adopted country continues to elude him, his Korean heritage seems to drift further and further away.
- Park's harsh Korean upbringing has taught him to hide his emotions, to remember everything he learns, and most of all to feel an overwhelming sense of alienation. In other words, it has shaped him as a natural spy.

Linguistic Exile

Jhumpa Lahiri

- Indian-Bengali American author
Born in London and raised in Rhode Island.
- Daughter of Indian Bengali parents
- Her family moved to the United States when she was two
- Lahiri's mother wanted her children to grow up knowing their Bengali heritage, and her family often visited relatives in Calcutta

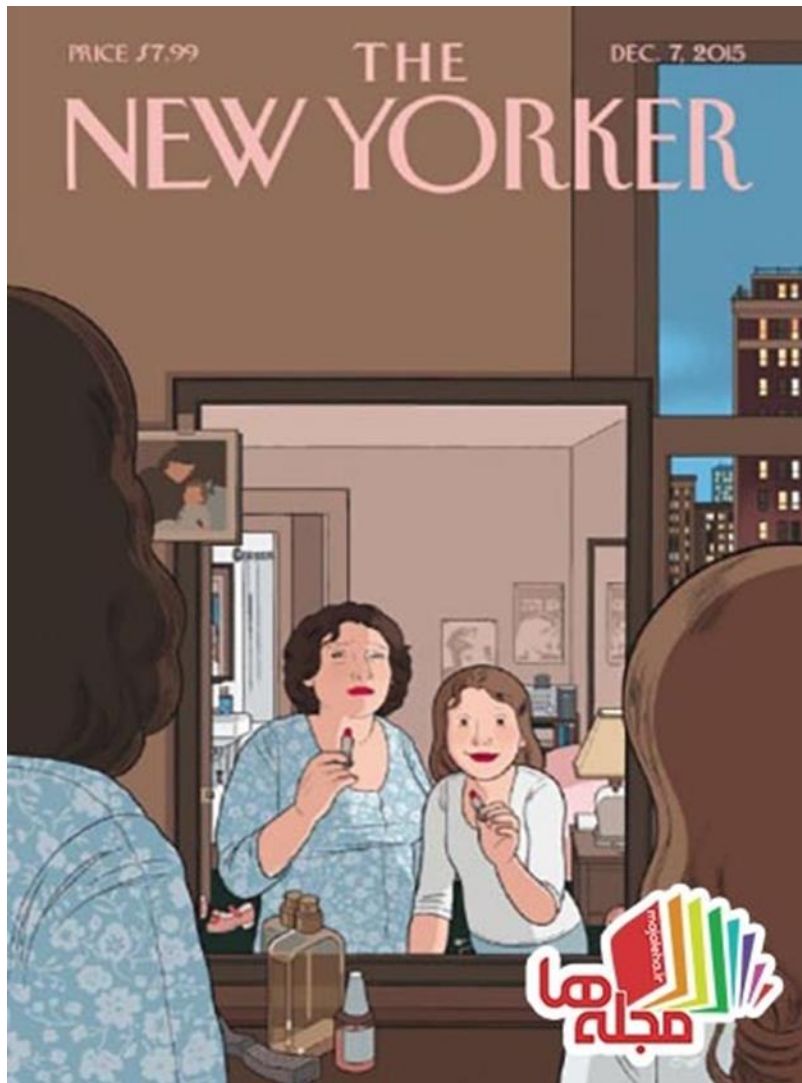


The New Yorker, December 7, 2015



- “Every language belongs to a specific place. It can migrate, it can spread. (p. 30)”
- “In a sense I am used to a kind of linguistic exile. My mother tongue, Bengali, is foreign in America. When you live in a country where your own language is considered foreign, you can feel a continuous sense of estrangement. (p. 30)”

The New Yorker, December 7, 2015



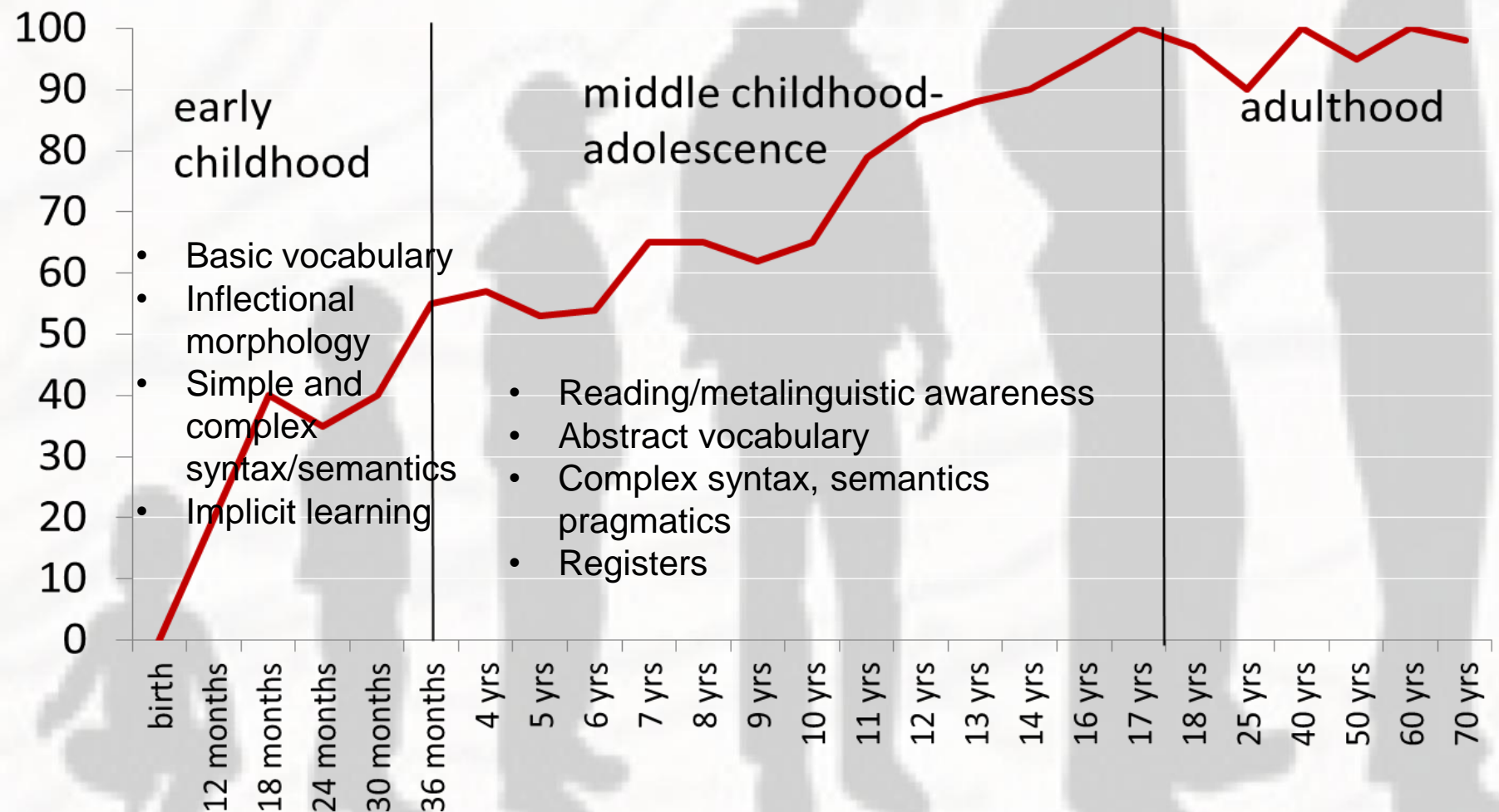
“In my case there is another distance, another schism. I don’t know Bengali perfectly. I don’t know how to write it or even read it. I have an accent, I speak without authority, and so I’ve always perceived a disjunction between it and me. As a result I consider my mother tongue, paradoxically, a foreign language.”

Language Learning

During the pre-school years, children **acquire** their native language(s), and the basic structural foundation is assumed to be in place.

To achieve native language **proficiency or mastery** is a long process of development from birth to adulthood (Berman 2004).

Idealized Route of Native Language Development



Key variables that affect the mature native speaker

- Socioeconomic status (SES)
- Level of education
- Geographical region
- Individual differences in language processing
- Pathology (aphasia, dementia, cognitive decline with aging)

Individual Differences by SES

(Dabrowska 1997)

- All subjects were recruited at the University of Glasgow
- 10 cleaners and 10 janitors (10 years of formal education, no schooling after age 16)
- 10 undergraduate students from different faculties (elementary, high-school = 1 year of university education)
- 10 graduate students from Arts and Social Sciences (at least 6 years of university study)
- 10 university lecturers who taught English (but were not linguists)

Comprehension of complex sentences

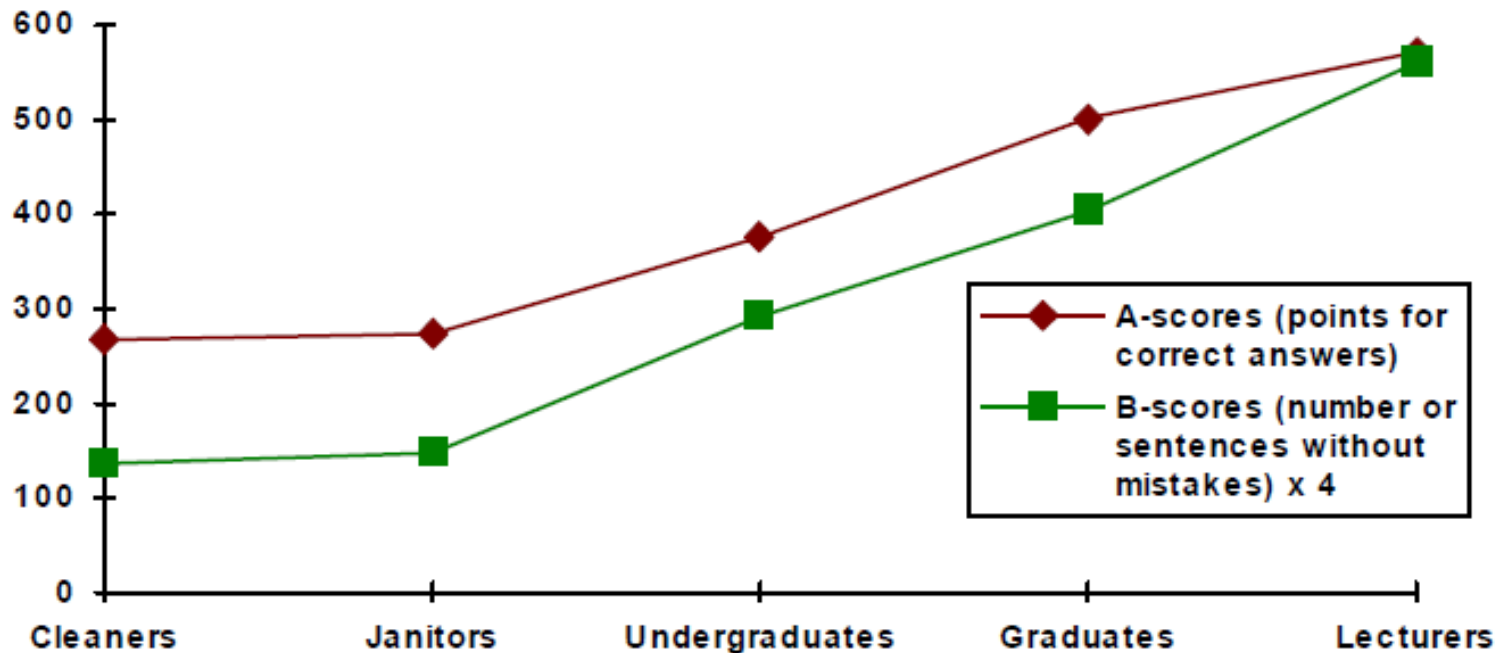


Figure 1: Total scores

Types of Complex Sentences

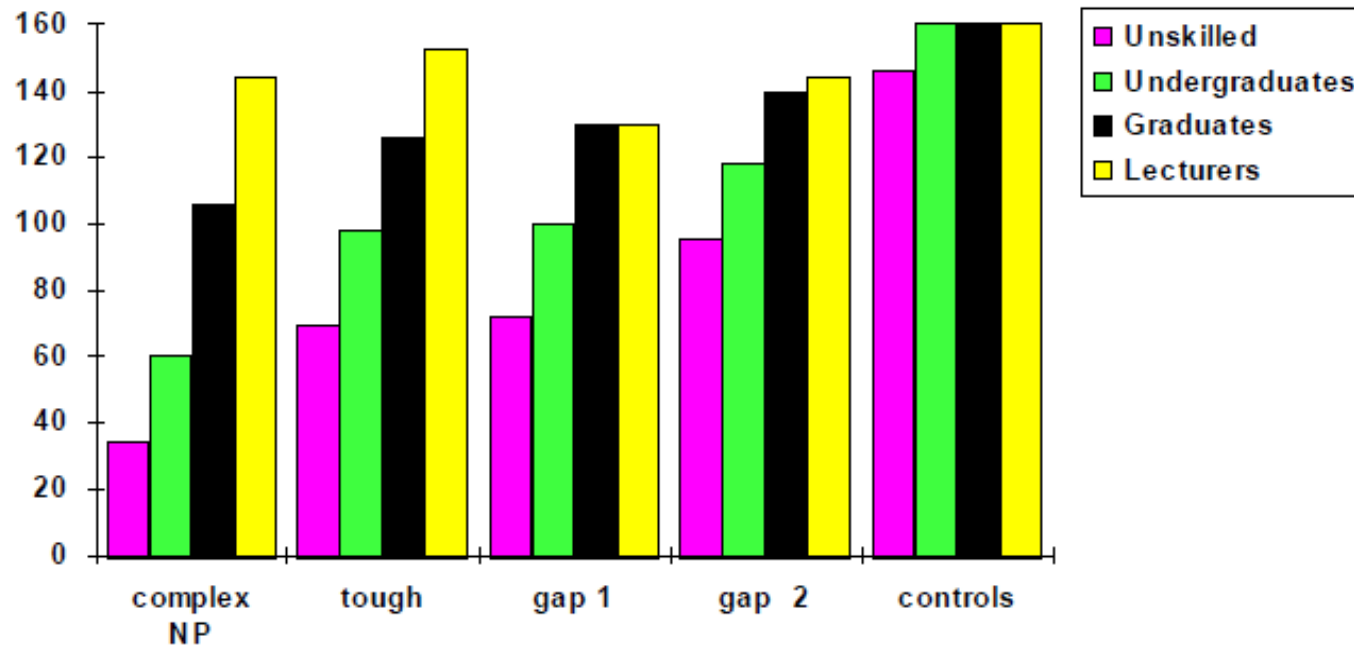


Figure 2: A-Scores on each sentence type

Conclusion

Education seems to play a role in level of syntactic competence and language processing in (monolingual) native speakers.

Native or non-native?

(Dabrowska & Street 2005)

They challenge the widely held assumption in linguistics – that all normal speakers master the basic constructions of their language –

They argue that proficiency with a particular structure depends on individual speakers' linguistic experience.

Interpretation of passive sentences

Method

Participants	Materials	Task and procedure
10 graduate native 10 graduate non-native 10 non-graduate native 10 non-graduate non-native Ages 18-50 Graduates had at least 15 years of formal education (MA and PhD students) Non-graduates had no more than highschool Non-graduates non natives were Arabic speaking asylum seekers	20 sentences active plausible <i>The dog bit the man</i> 20 active implausible <i>The man bit the dog</i> 20 passive plausible <i>The man was bitten by the dog</i> 20 passive impossible <i>The dog was bitten by the man</i>	Participants were asked to listen carefully to each sentence and indicate who was the doer of the action. Task was conducted as an interview. Some participants were explained what “doer of the action” meant

Results

Group	Plausible actives	Implausible actives	Plausible passives	Implausible passives
Graduate native	100	100	100	99
Graduate non-native	98	100	100	99
Non-graduate native	98	64	98	74
Non-graduate non-native	94	90	98	94

Non-educated natives use semantic and pragmatic knowledge and not syntactic knowledge to process syntactic cues.

Non-educated non-natives are better than monolingual non-educated natives because they may have enhanced metalinguistic skills as L2 learners.

Measuring Native Ability

Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam (2008, 2009)

Most comprehensive to date study of Age effects:

- Large pool of participants (Spanish-speaking immigrants in Stockholm)
- Very thorough screening process
- Examination of “challenging” areas of morphosyntax (and phonology)
- Examination of 10 linguistic structures in Swedish

Listener Perception vs Linguistic Scrutiny (2009)

Concept of nativelikeness

1. self-identify as nativelike speaker of the L2
2. To be perceived as a nativelike speaker by native speakers of the target language
3. To BE a nativelike speaker of the target language

“Whether someone is perceived as a native speaker by actual native speakers is a central aspect of nativelikeness.” (p. 259)

Instruments

Interview and Speech Elicitations over a 20 minute phone interview

- First 20-30s of 1 min speech samples were extracted and used as stimuli in three separate listening sessions with native judges

Native judges

Native speakers of Swedish with no knowledge of linguistics who did not know any Spanish

They were asked to give an overall impression of the speakers as a native speaker of Stockholm Swedish, a native speaker of other regional variety of Swedish, or as a non-native speaker of Swedish.

RESULTS: Listener Perceptions

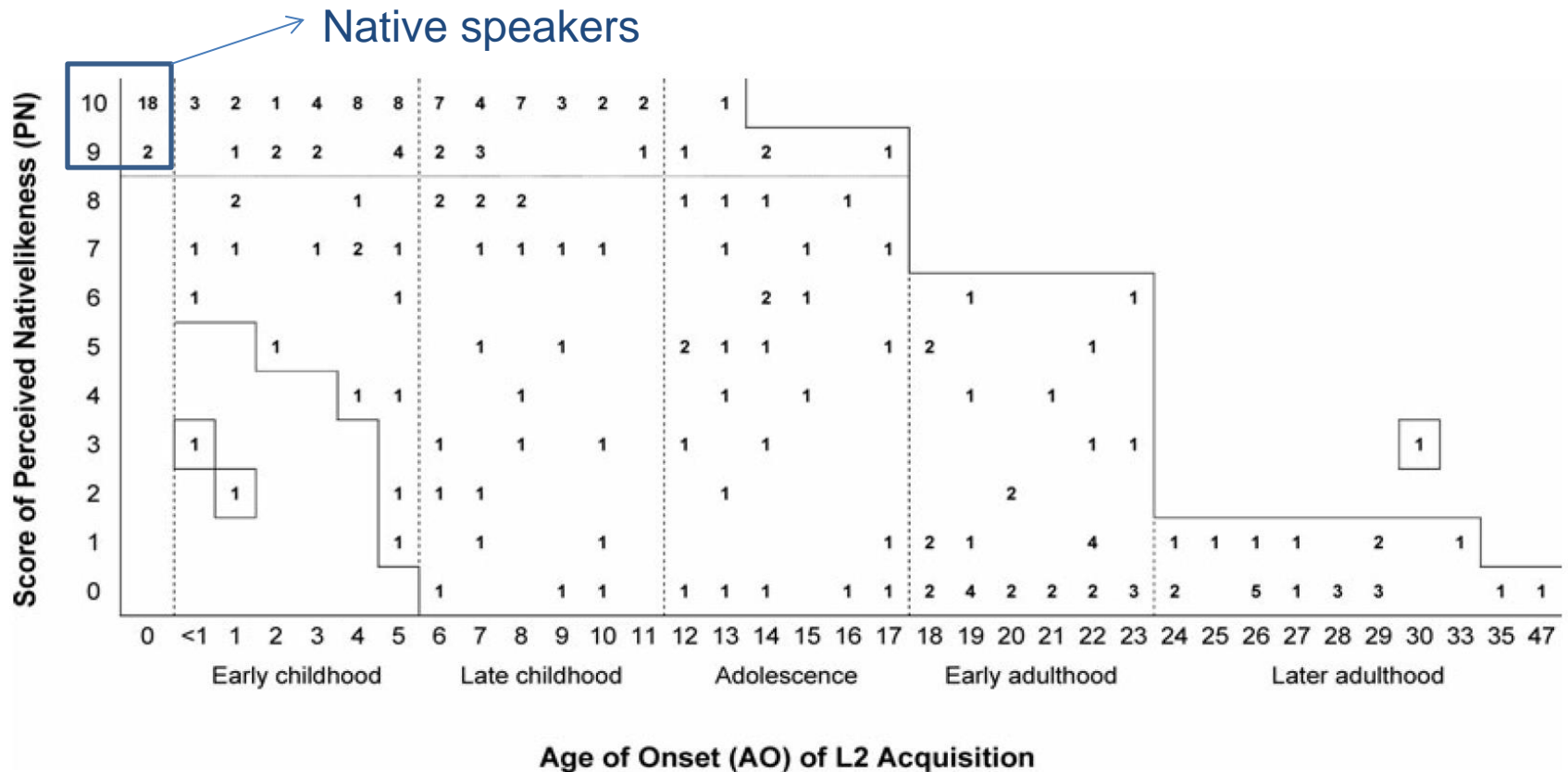


Figure 1 Scatter plot of PN scores versus AO for all 195 participants and the 20 native controls (AO 0 years).

RESULTS: Tests of Phonological and Morphosyntactic Ability

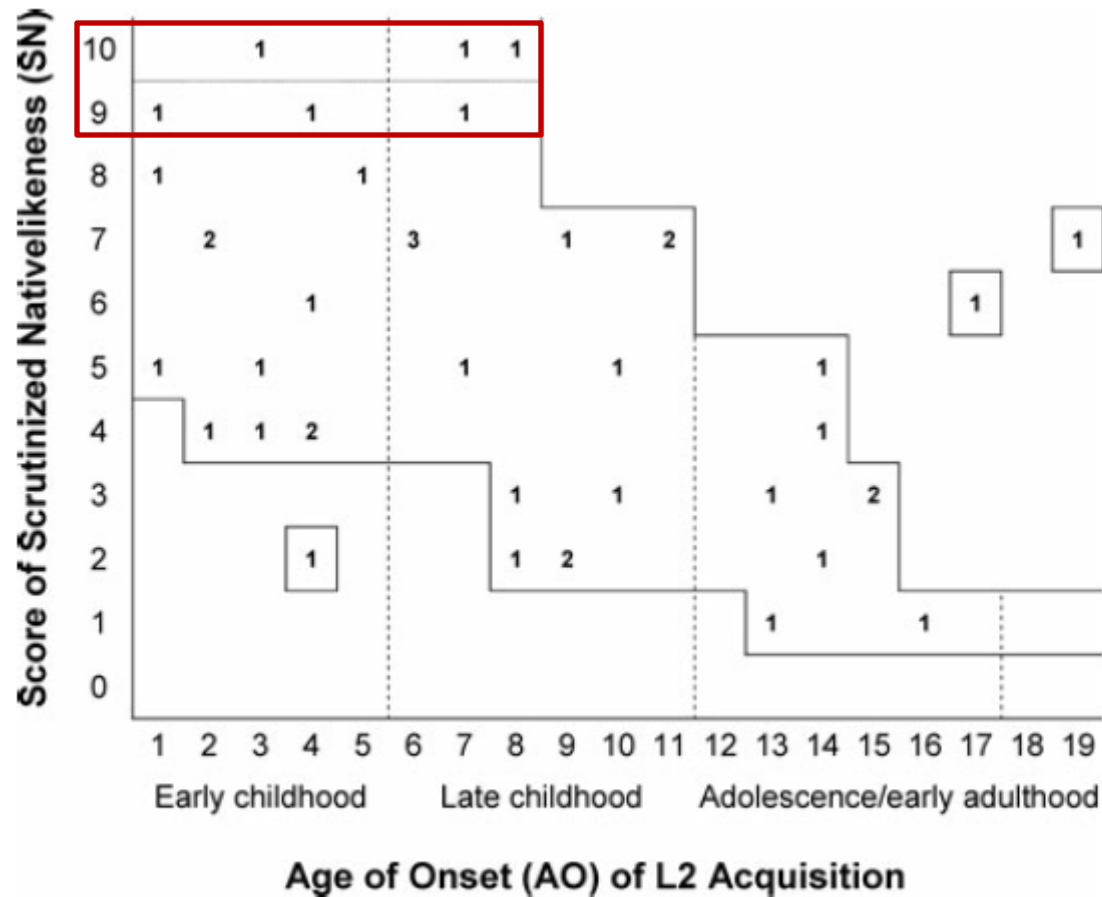


Figure 3 Scatter plot of SN scores versus AO for the 41 selected participants; all 10 linguistic instruments.

Does native speaker = monolingual?

NO

- Monolingual native speakers
- Bilingual/multilingual native speakers
- Some languages no longer have monolingual native speakers (e.g., Euskera, Catalan)
- All the native speakers remaining in the Basque Country and in Catalonia are bilingual.

“Native” ability

- Can also be dissociated in bilinguals
- E.g., **native or near-native in phonology and non-native in morphosyntax** (heritage speakers in Au et al. 2002)
- **Or native/near native in morphosyntax and non-native in phonology** (near-natives in White & Genesee 1996)
- Very few L2 speakers are “native” on all linguistic dimensions (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam 2009)

Are Heritage Speakers Native Speakers?

Despite exhibiting high degree of variability in **degree of ultimate attainment** like L2 learners, heritage speakers show a much higher incidence of **native ability** in morphosyntactic and lexical aspects of language that are extremely hard for L2 learners to master at **native levels, even after significant amounts of input.**

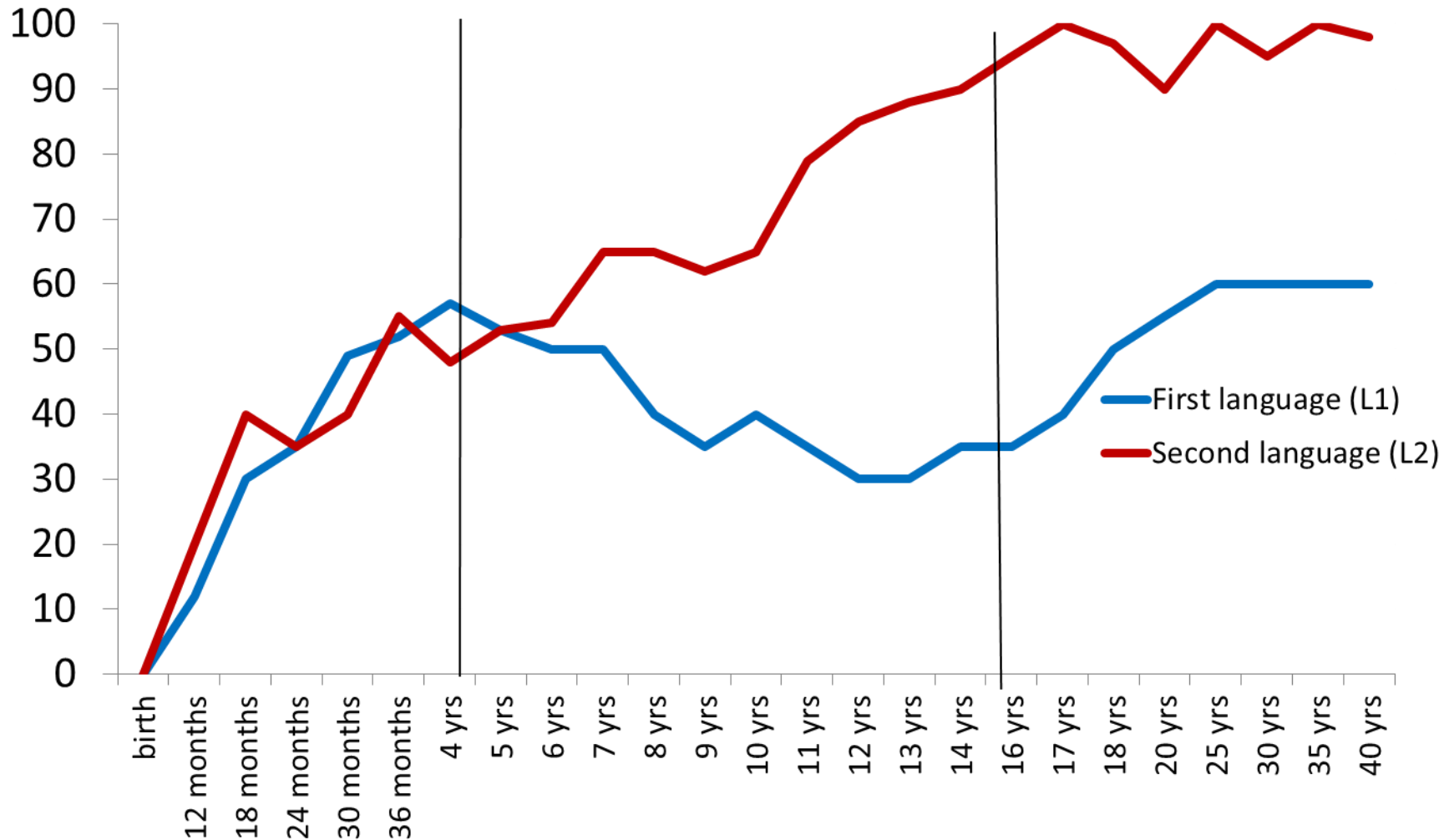
Typical Stories

Carlos (29), Alicia (24) and Beatriz (22)

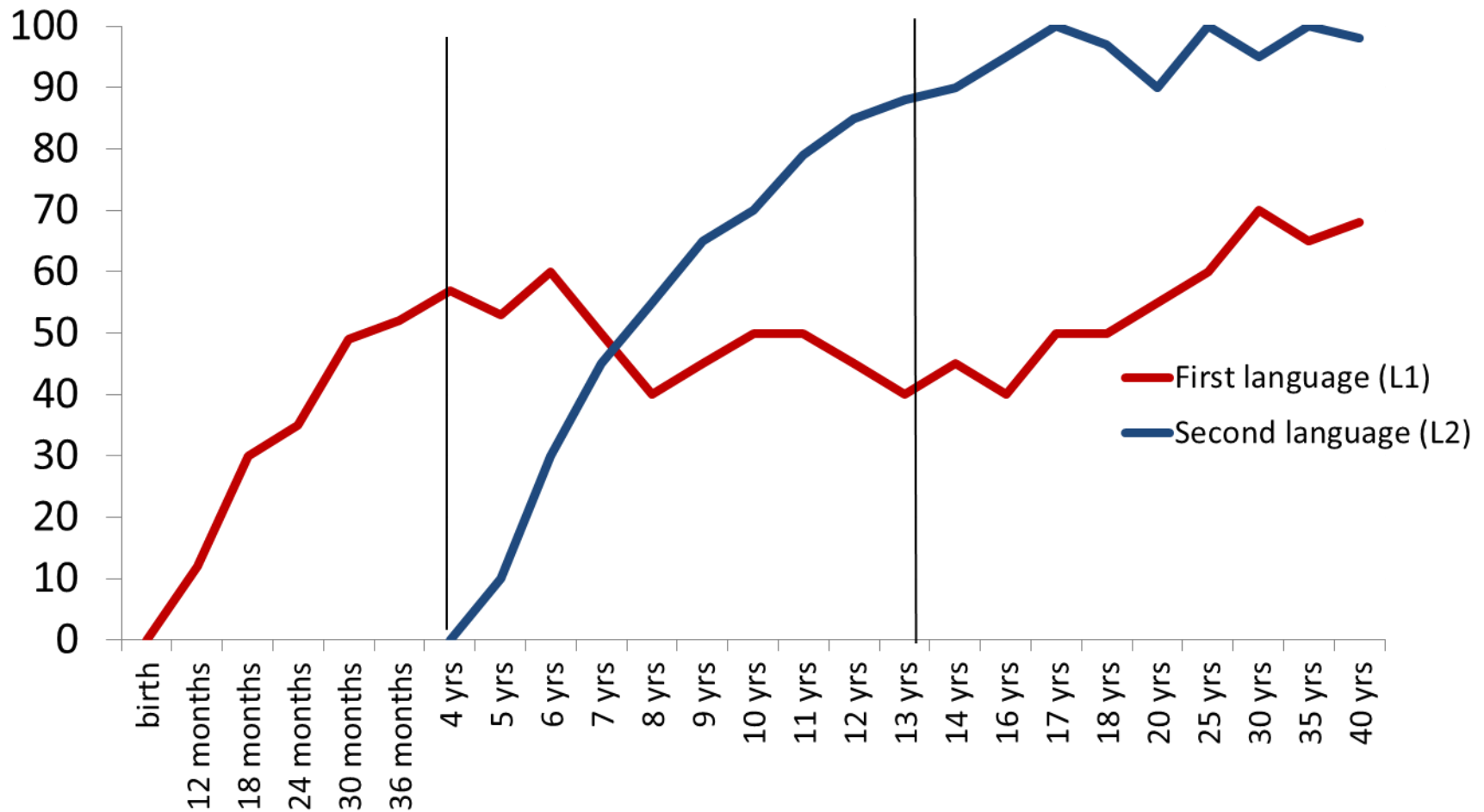


- Born in Northern Mexico.
- Immigrated to the US at ages 2 (Beatriz), 4 (Alicia) and 9 (Carlos).
- Carlos went up to 3rd grade in Mexico and then was enrolled in English-only school in the US. Had to take ESL classes.
- Alicia spoke Spanish when she arrived, while Beatriz was learning Spanish. They were both enrolled in full-time English daycare.
- At home, parents spoke Spanish with the children.

Unbalanced development in simultaneous bilinguals



Language shift in sequential bilinguals

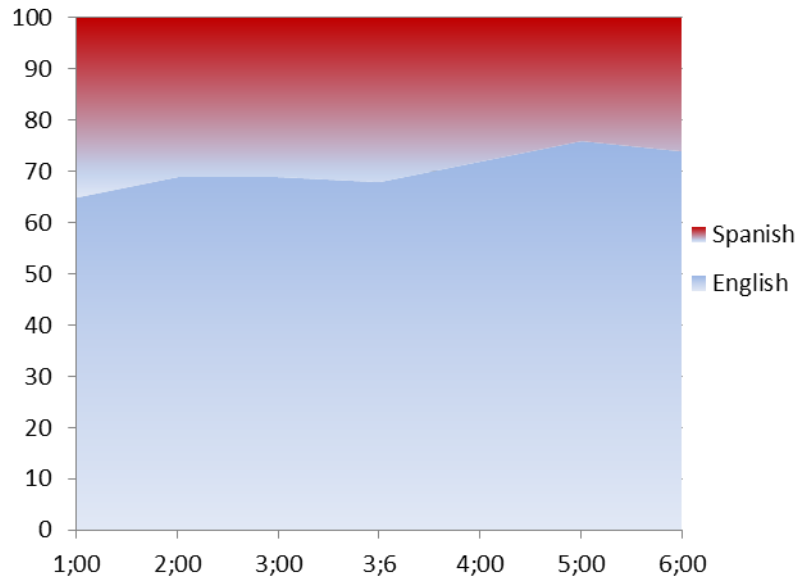


Silva-Corvalán (2014)

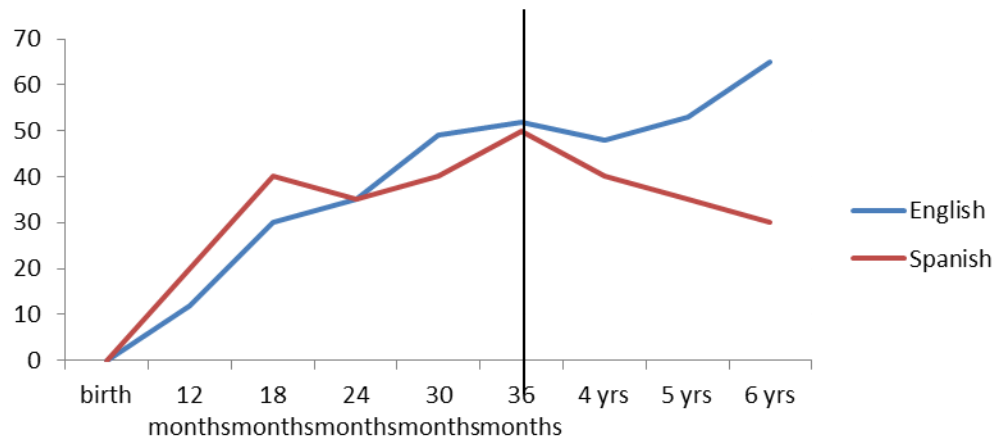
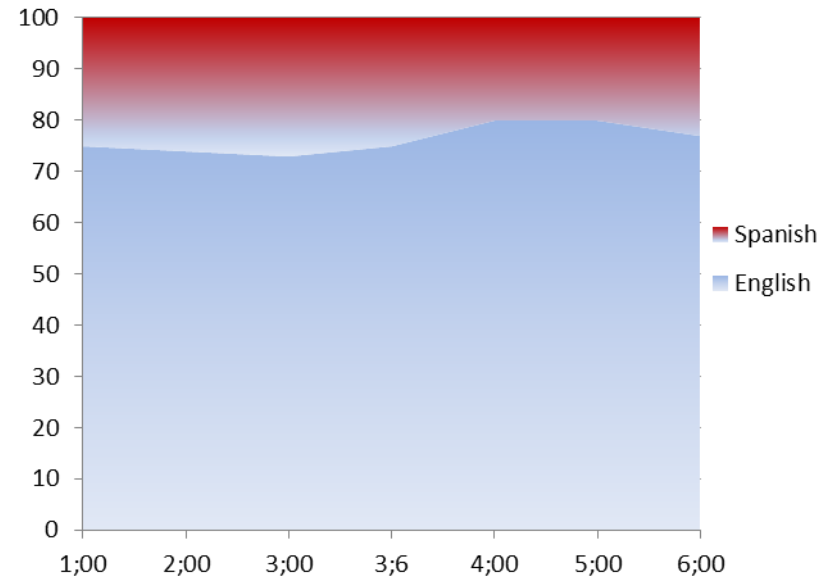
- Study of two simultaneous Spanish-English bilingual siblings from age 1-6. (her grandchildren)
- Only one parent spoke Spanish (father) and always addressed the children in Spanish.
- TAM system
- Copulas
- Subject expression

Amount of Input in the Two Languages

Nico



Bren



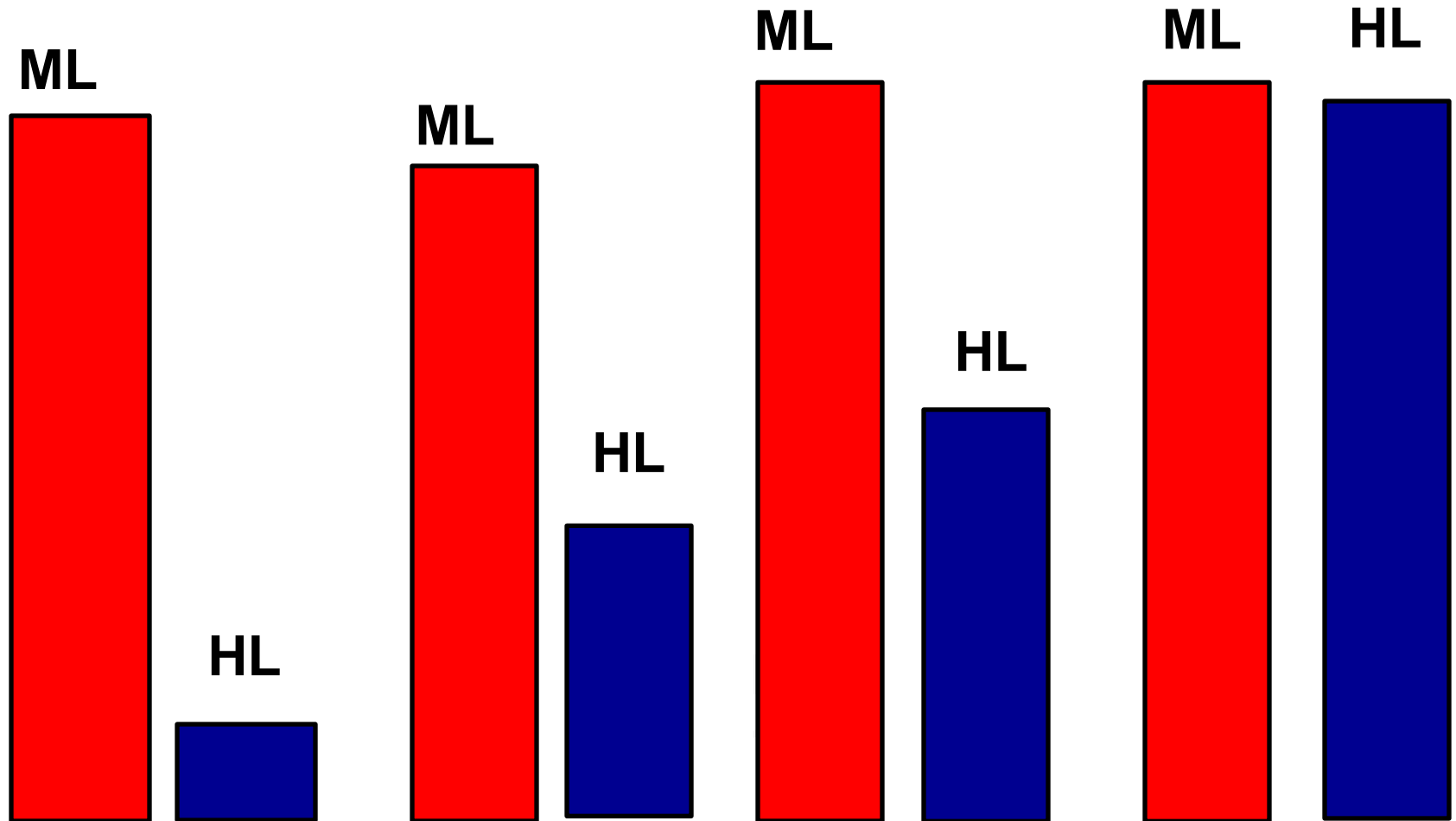
Findings

- The siblings' developing knowledge of verbs and verb tenses up to about the age of 4;0 is comparable to that of monolingual children in their respective languages.
- The siblings show full development of English complex tenses by age 6.
- Complex tenses (perfect tenses, conditional, subjunctive) do not develop in Spanish, the weaker language after age 3.
- The siblings show incomplete acquisition of the verbal system of Spanish by age 6: the older sibling is more proficient than the younger sibling.

Adult Heritage Speakers

- Cases of unbalanced early bilingualism (even when the two parents speak the majority language at home).
- Cases of successful L2 acquisition but of incomplete L1 acquisition.
- They display non-uniform levels of proficiency and many of the patterns found in L2 acquisition

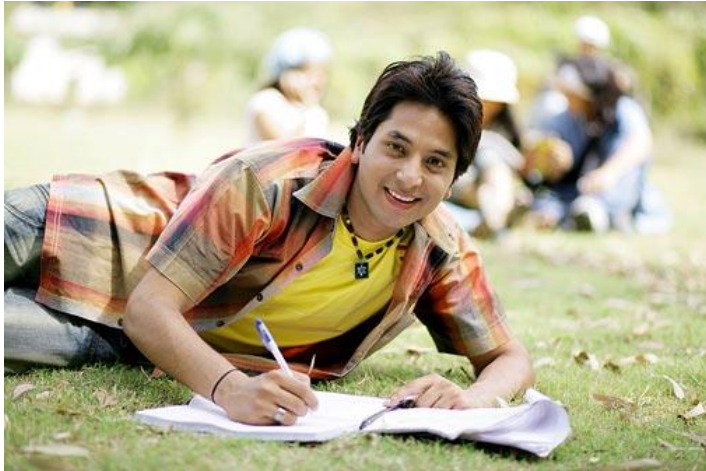
Variation in HL proficiency in heritage speakers in the United States



ML = English

HL = Spanish/Japanese/Russian/Hindi . . .

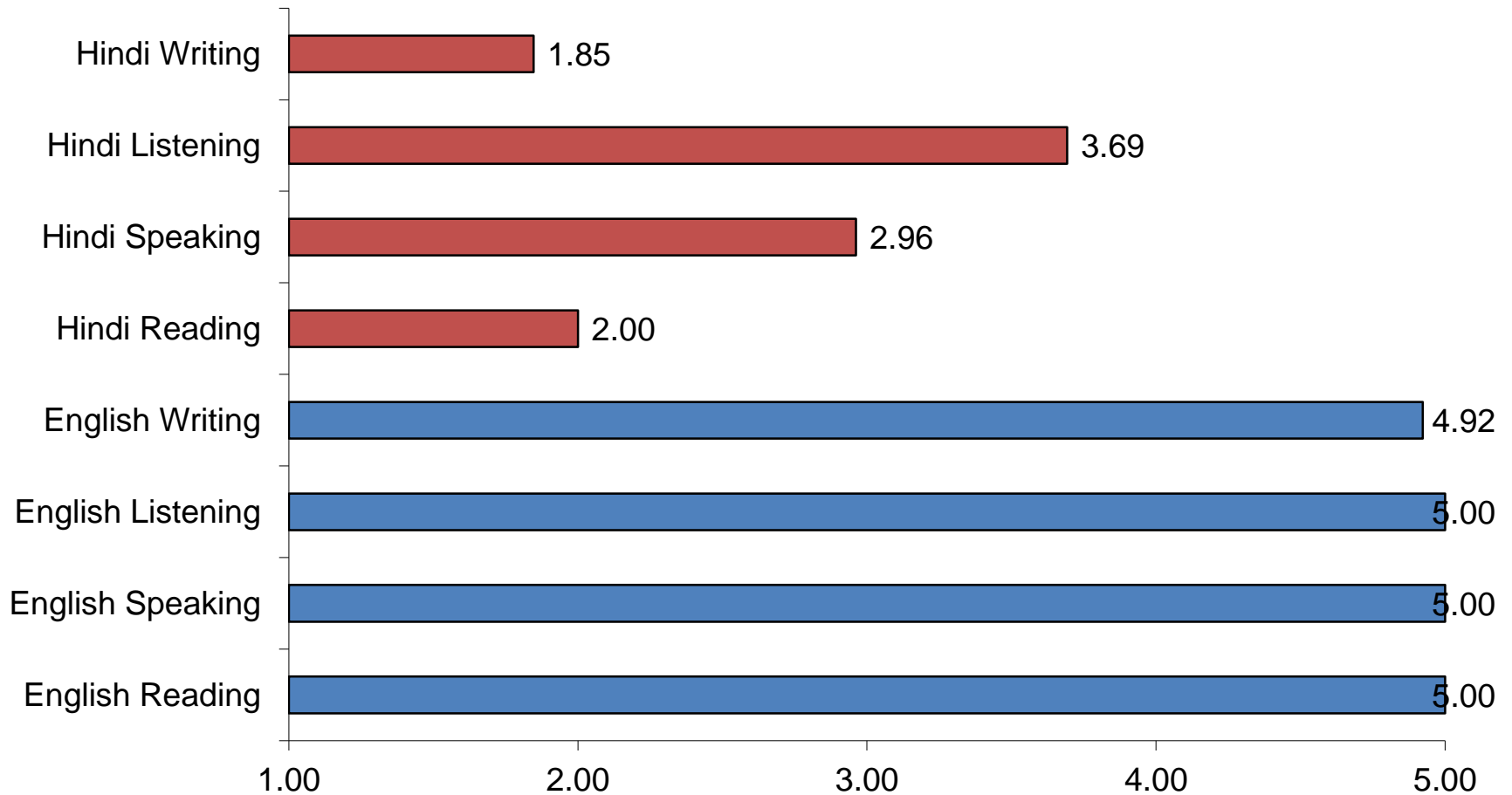
Hindi: Rakesh, 22 years old



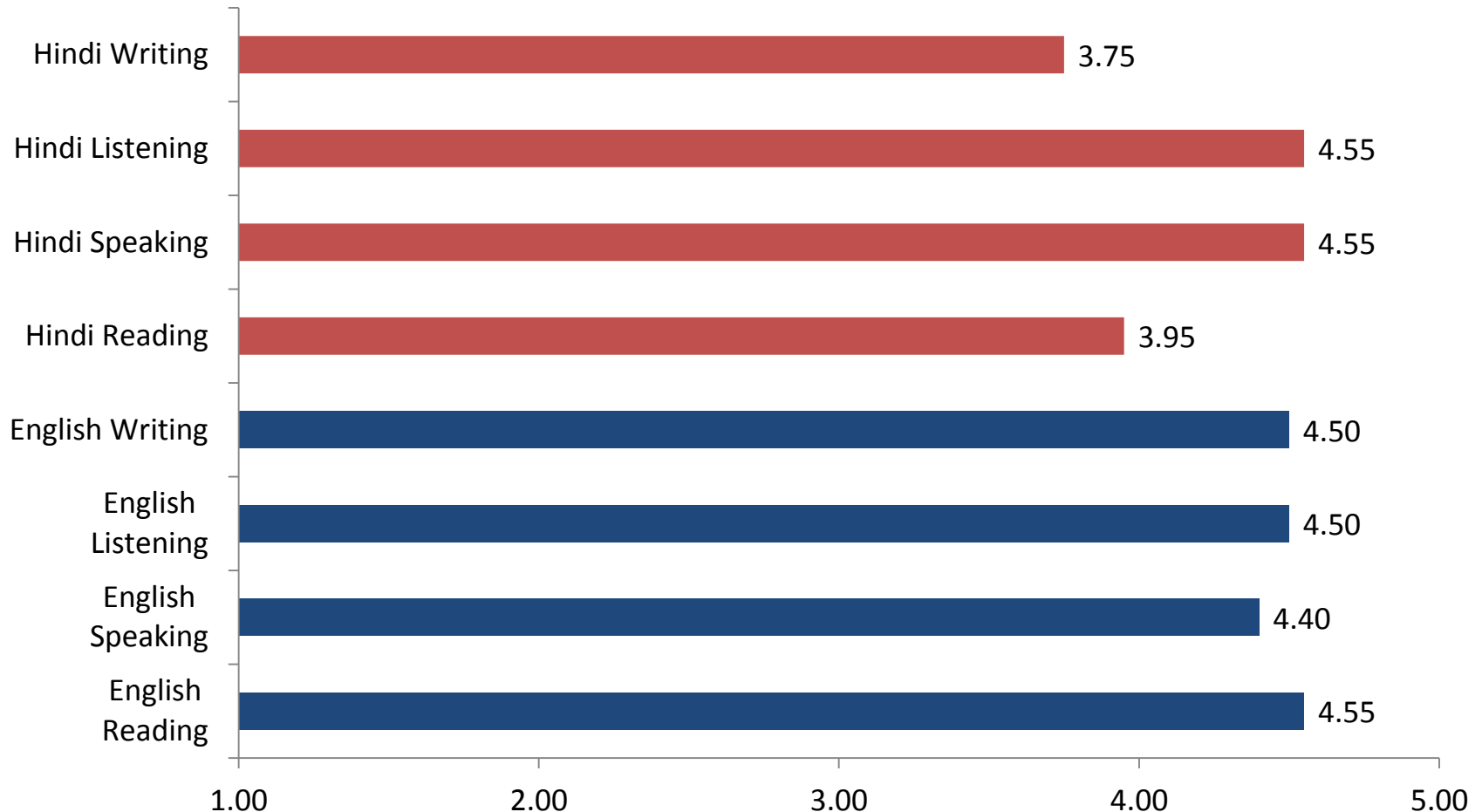
Born in the United States

- ☐ Hindi speaking parents
- ☐ High SES (parents are doctors or engineers)
- ☐ Schooled in English
- ☐ Spoke Hindi at home with parents
- ☐ Parents spoke Hindi, Rakesh used some Hindi but often responded in English
- ☐ **Knowledge of English:** native in all skills
- ☐ **Knowledge of Hindi:** intermediate in spoken and aural comprehension, **cannot read/write the language (illiterate)**

US-born Hindi Heritage Speakers: self-ratings by skill (Montrul, Bhatt, Girju 2015)



Hindi native speakers from India (older cohort): self ratings by skill (Montrul, Bhatt, Girju 2015)



Why do heritage speakers come to the classroom?

- *“I want to be just as comfortable writing, speaking, reading, and listening in Spanish as I am in English.”*
- *“I would like to improve my writing skills as well as reading. Also my speech needs work and my vocabulary is very limited.”*
- *“I want to be grammatically correct.”*
- *“Because I am weaker at my native language.”*

Why do heritage speakers come to the classroom?

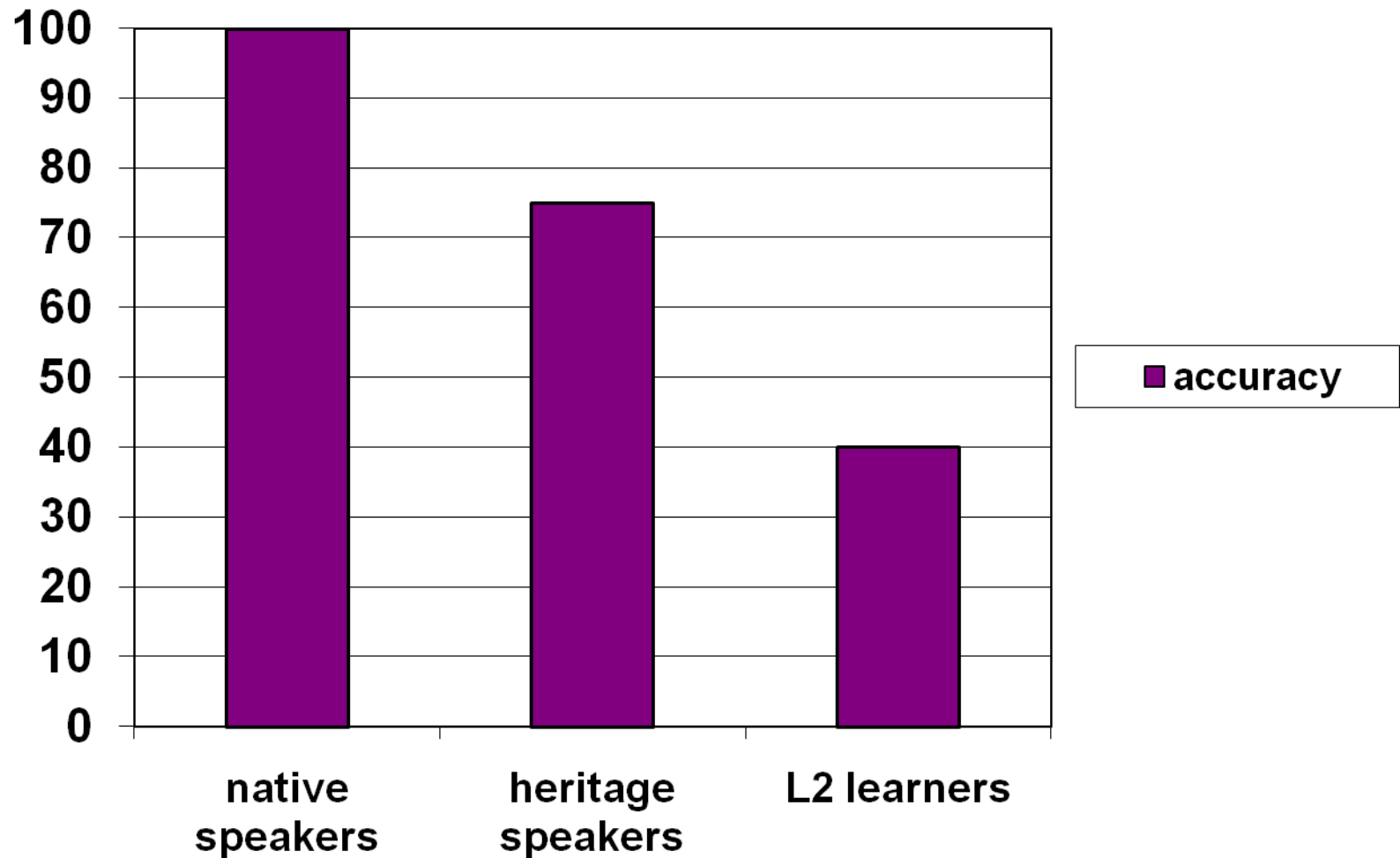
- *“I want to embrace my culture as much as possible and I feel that I lost a vital part of speaking it while I was growing up.”*
- *“I don't want to start talking in English when speaking in Hindi.”*
- *“I don't know how to read or write so I would like to improve that. I also want to improve my speaking abilities so that I can be confident if I ever have to speak with a stranger in India.”*

Heritage speakers and L2 learners

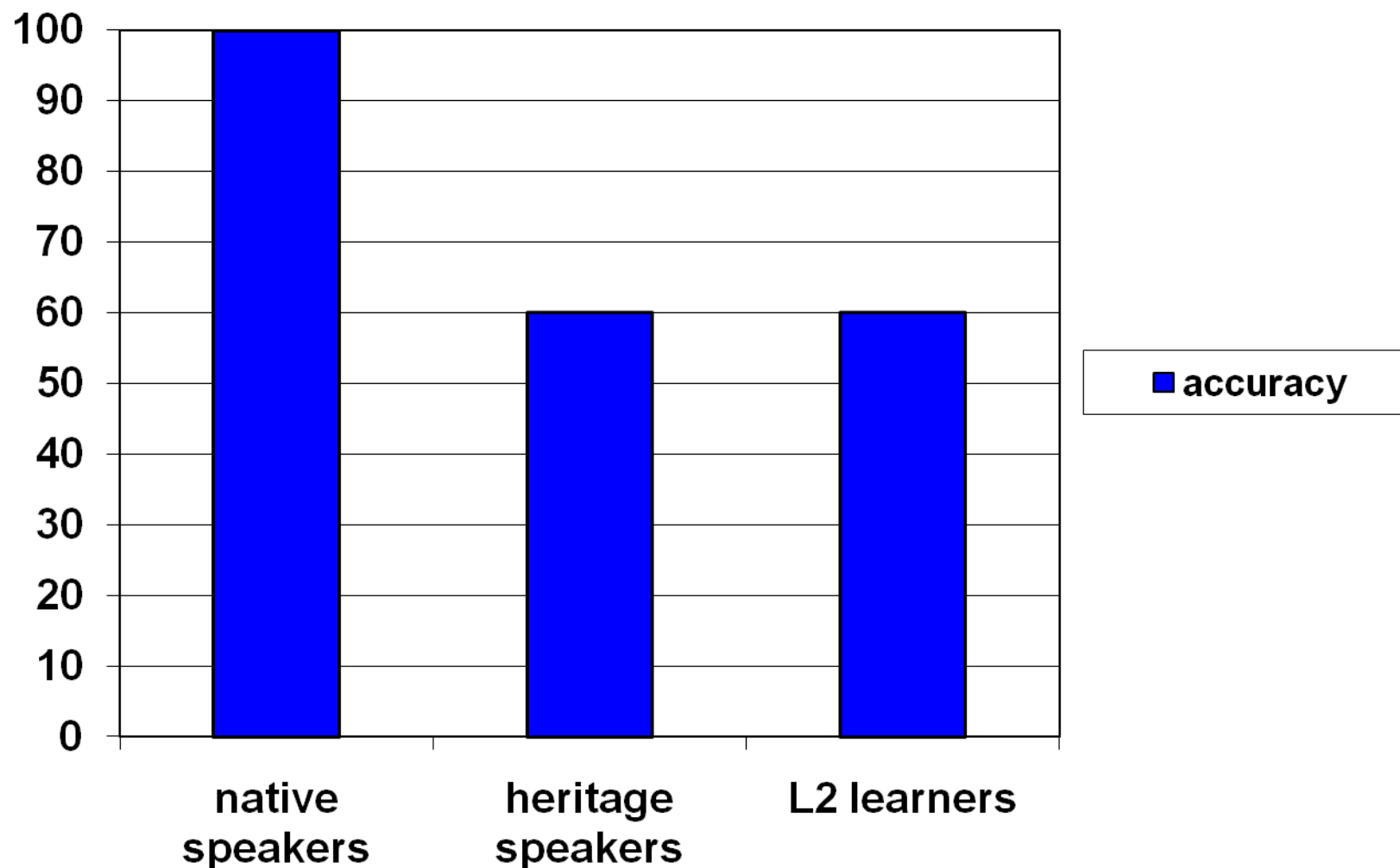
If we control for proficiency, does early language experience bring advantages to Spanish heritage speakers in their knowledge of early acquired aspects of morphosyntax when compared to late L2 learners of Spanish?

Advantage = more native-like performance

Phonology (Au et al. 2002)



Morphosyntax (Au et al. 2002)



Gender Agreement

- Mastered by monolingual Spanish-speaking children error free (100% accuracy) by age 3 (Montrul 2004) in oral production.
- Yet, full mastery of gender agreement in production is **highly unlikely in L2 acquisition**, even in so called *near natives*, with the highest amount of exposure in the language for several years and proficiency scores on global measures that fall within the range of variation of native speakers.

Examples

Franceschina (2001): Case study of Martin (British guy who had been living in Argentina for more than 30 years)

Almost 10% of gender agreement errors in production, especially with adjectives, articles and demonstratives.

Grüter, Lew-Williams & Fernald 2012: 19 near native speakers of Spanish exhibited 20% errors in an oral production task (17.2% assignment, 2.8% agreement)

Spanish Masculine Nouns

canonical -o	non- canonical -e	non- canonical -cons	non- canonical -a
libro 'book'	punte 'bridge'	lápiz 'pencil'	problema 'problem'
ojo 'eye'	coche 'car'	mantel 'tablecloth'	mapa 'map'
suelo 'floor'	cable 'wire'	reloj 'clock'	planeta 'planet'

Spanish Feminine Nouns

canonical -a	non- canonical -e	non- canonical -cons	non- canonical -o
casa 'house'	leche 'milk'	nariz 'nose'	mano 'hand'
mesa 'table'	fuelle 'fountain'	piel 'skin'	foto 'picture'
manzana 'apple'	llave 'key'	canción 'song'	moto 'motorcycle'

Conditions used in the three tasks

Conditions	Gender	Noun ending	
		canonical	Non-canonical
grammatical	feminine	la gran casa	la gran calle
	masculine	el peor texto	el peor viaje
ungrammatical	feminine	*el gran casa	*el gran calle
	masculine	*la peor texto	*la peor viaje
neutral (control)*	feminine	su gran casa	su gran calle
	masculine	su peor texto	su peor viaje

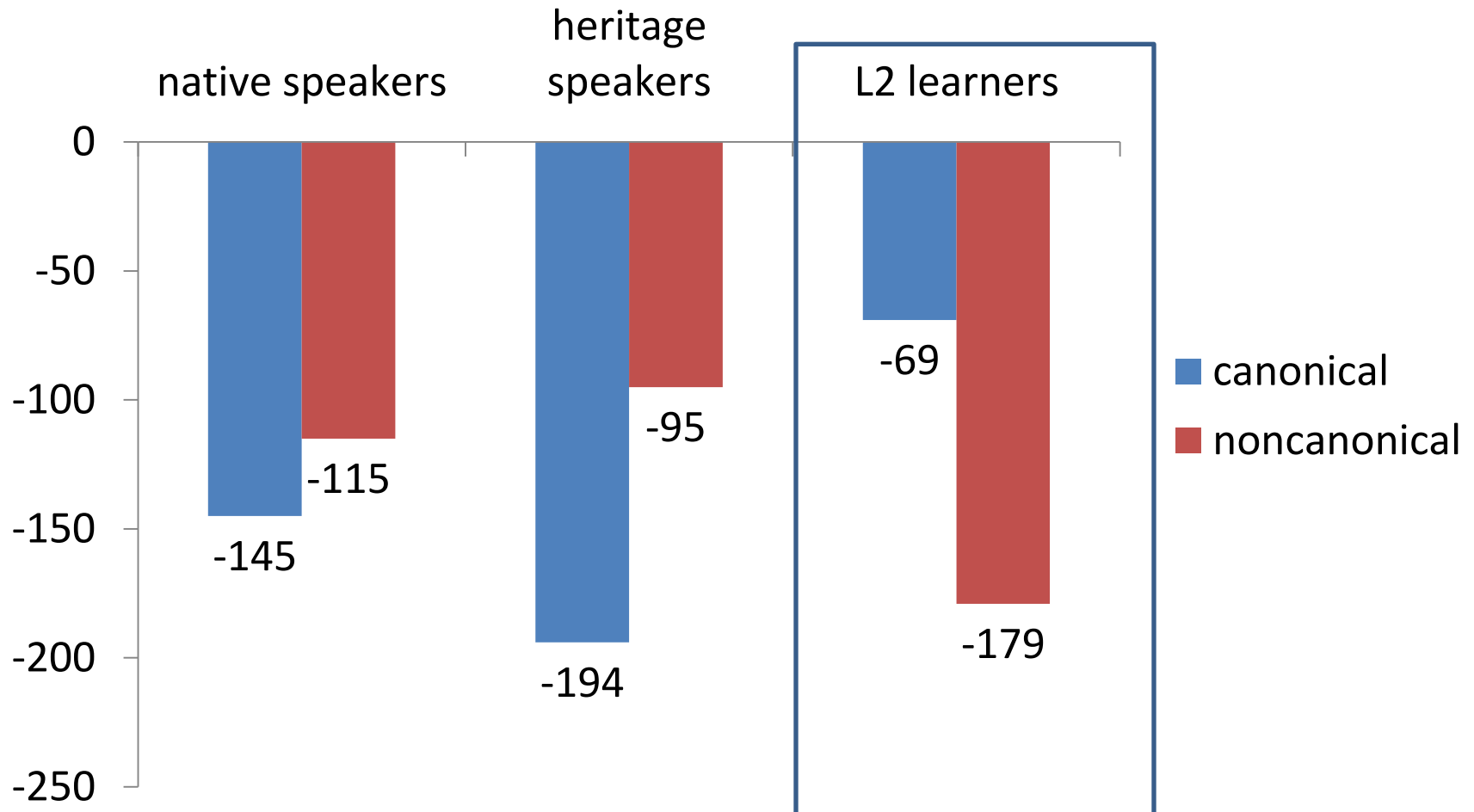
NOTE: only the GMT and the RT had a neutral condition, the GJT did not.

Predictions

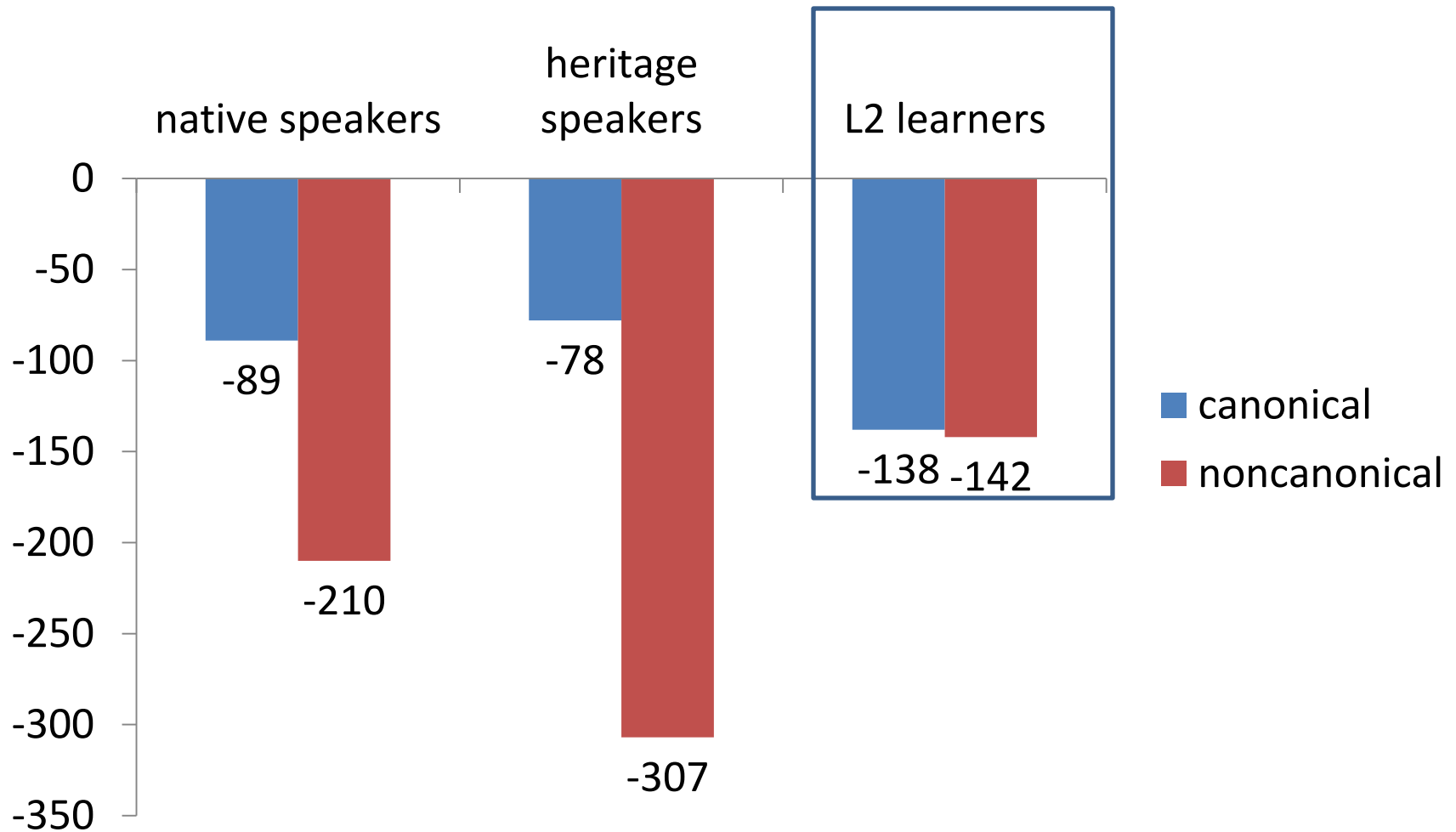
Task	Type of response	Degree of explicitness	Advantages for HS over L2 learners?
GMT	Decide whether a noun is feminine or masculine	very explicit focus on gender	no
GJT	Decide whether a noun phrase is grammatical or ungrammatical	Explicit, but indirect focus on gender	no
WRP	Repeat the last word in the phrase	implicit	yes

Summary Speed Effects GMT

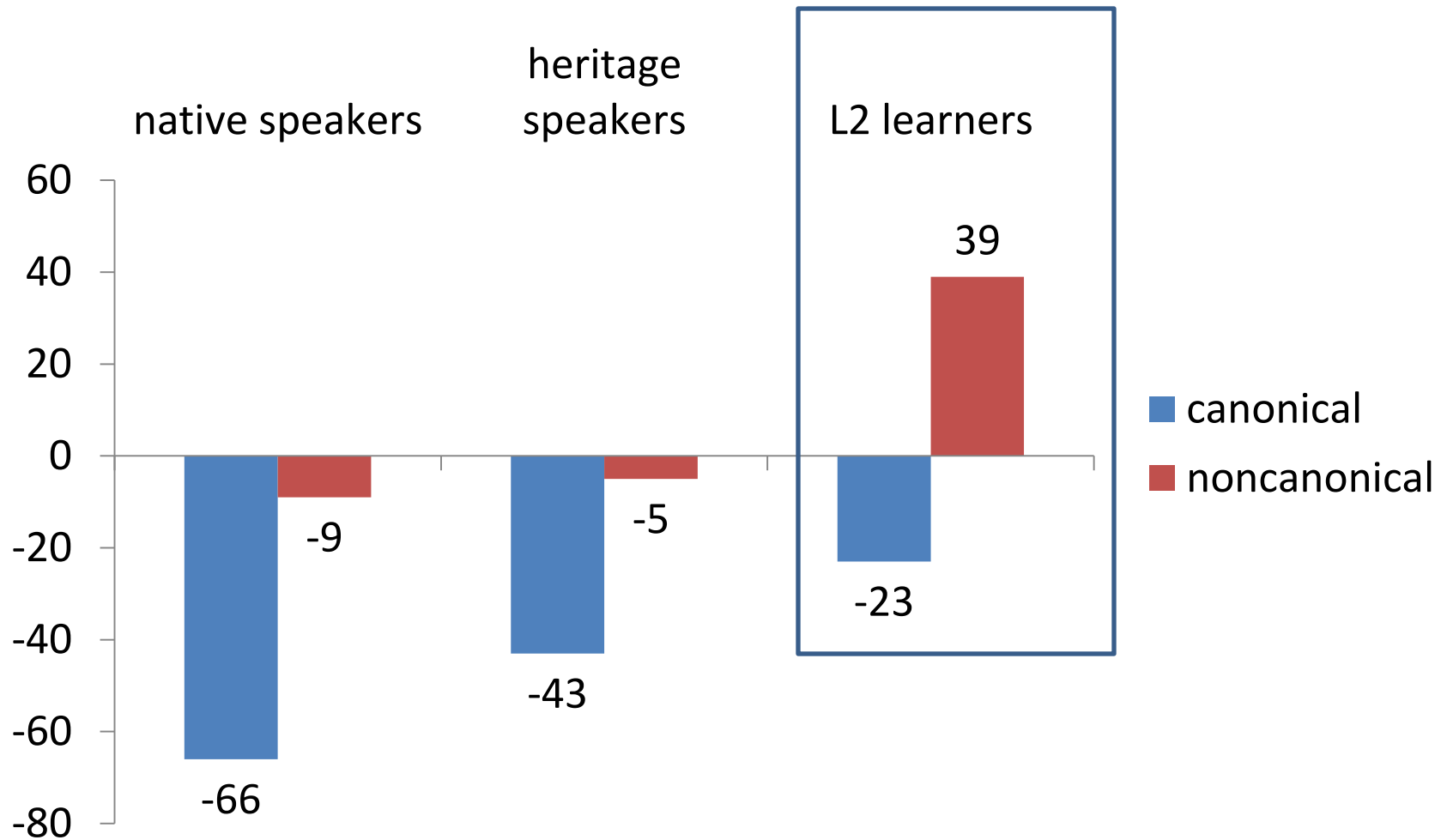
(grammatical - ungrammatical RTs)



Summary Speed Effect GJT



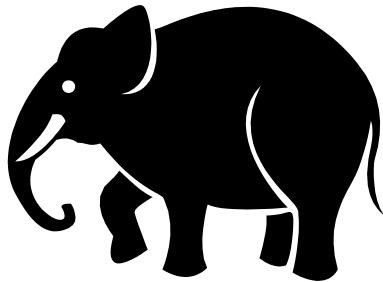
Summary Speed Effect WRT



The Role of Experience

- **Elicited Oral Production Task (untimed)**
- Elicitation of simplex and diminutive nouns with gender agreement.

elefante



simplex

elefantito



diminutive

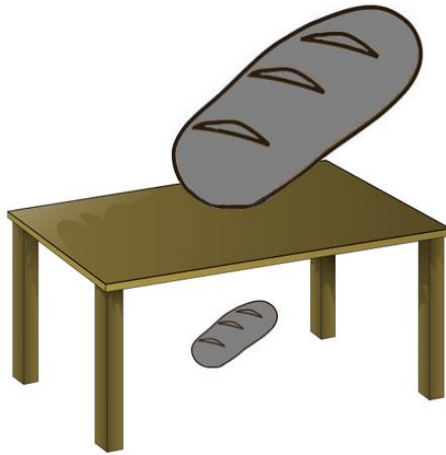
Diminutives in Child Language

- They are acquired early due both to their frequency in the input (in Child Directed Speech) and their morphological characteristics in many languages.
- In Spanish, they are acquired/used productively between the ages of 1;9 and 1;10 (Marrero, Aguirre and Albalá, 2007)

Elicited Oral Production Task

Stimulus Samples

Pan



un pan gris
un pancito gris

“a gray
bread(dim.)”



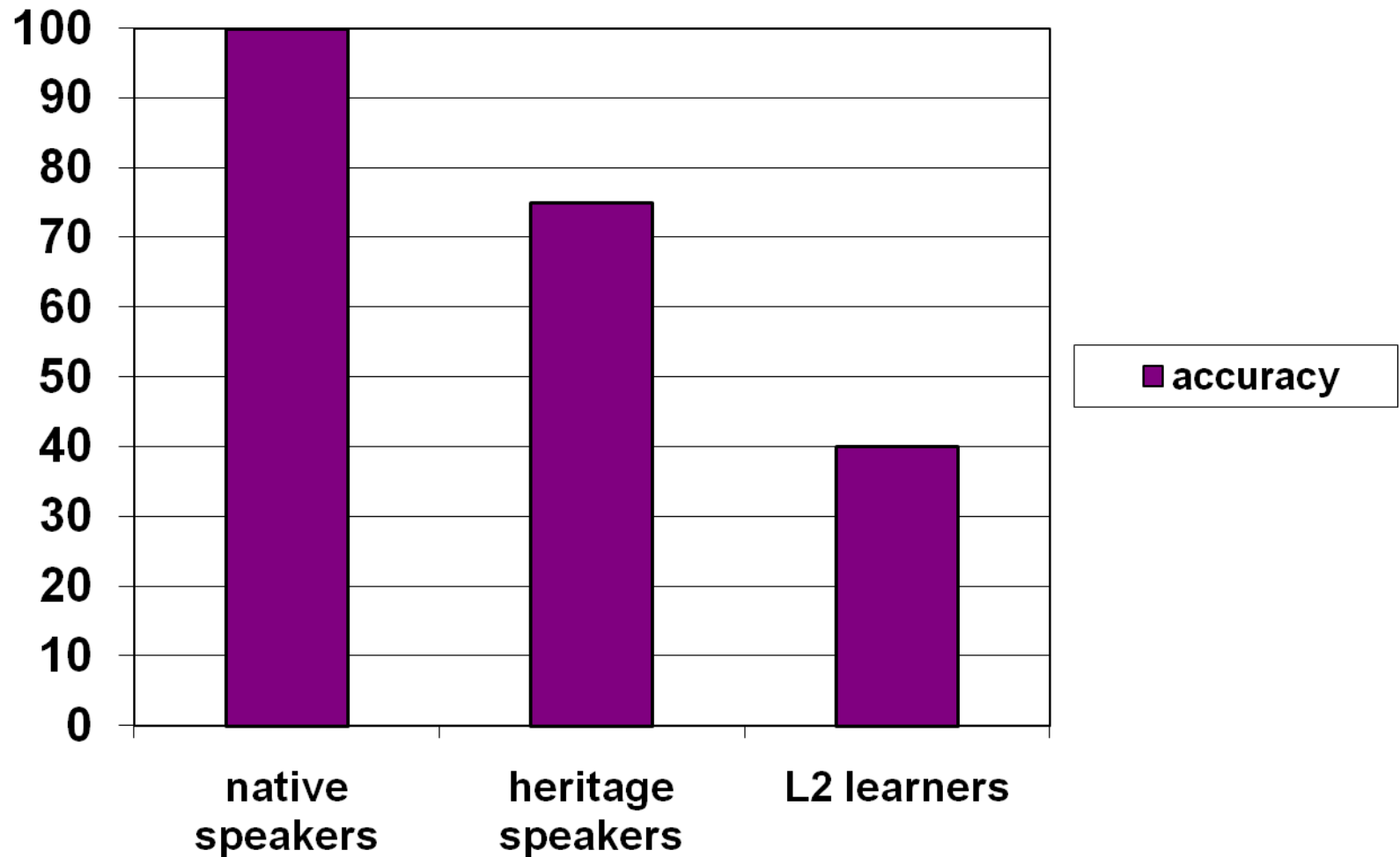
una cruz negra
una crucecita negra

“a black
cross(dim.)”

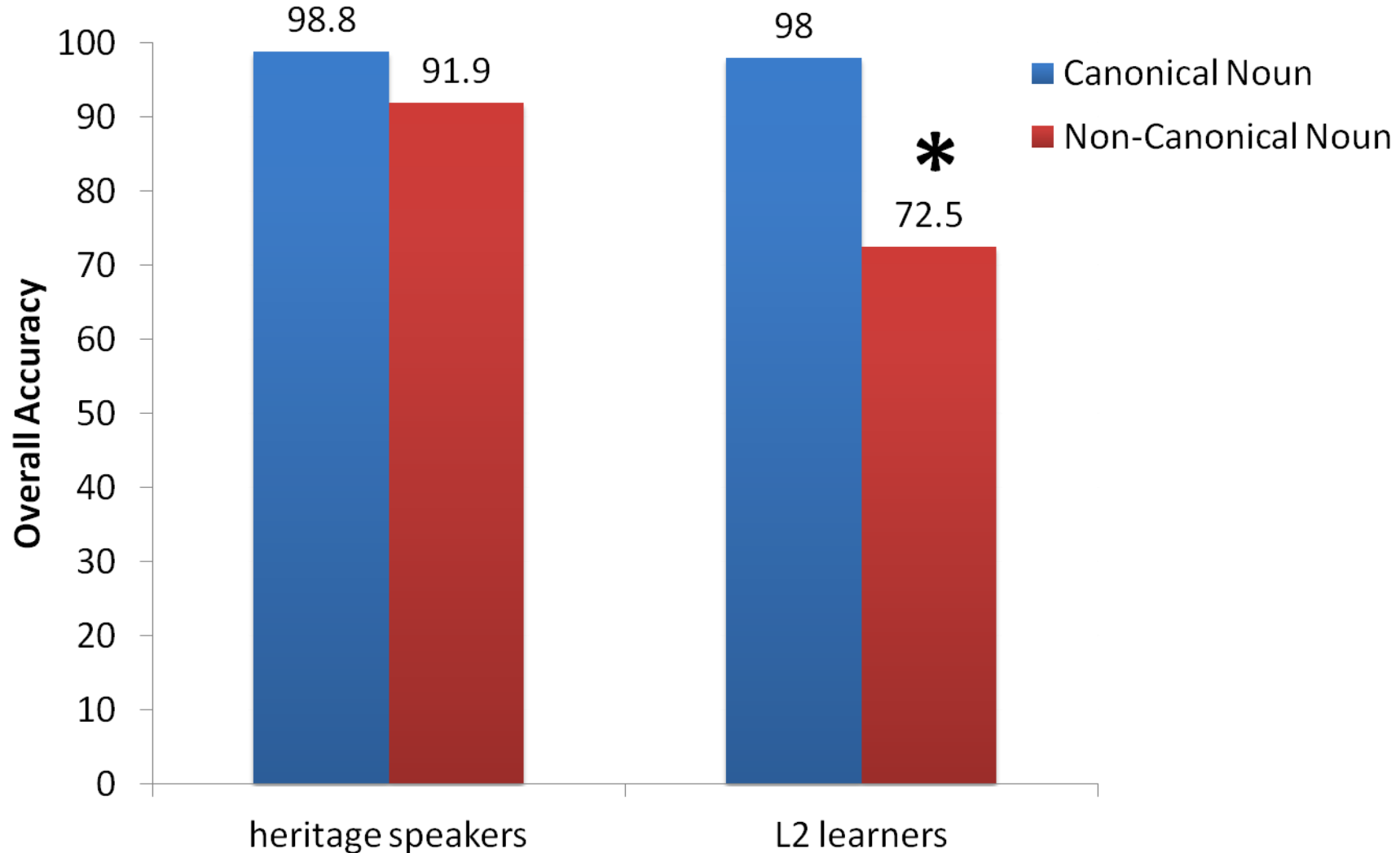


Cruz

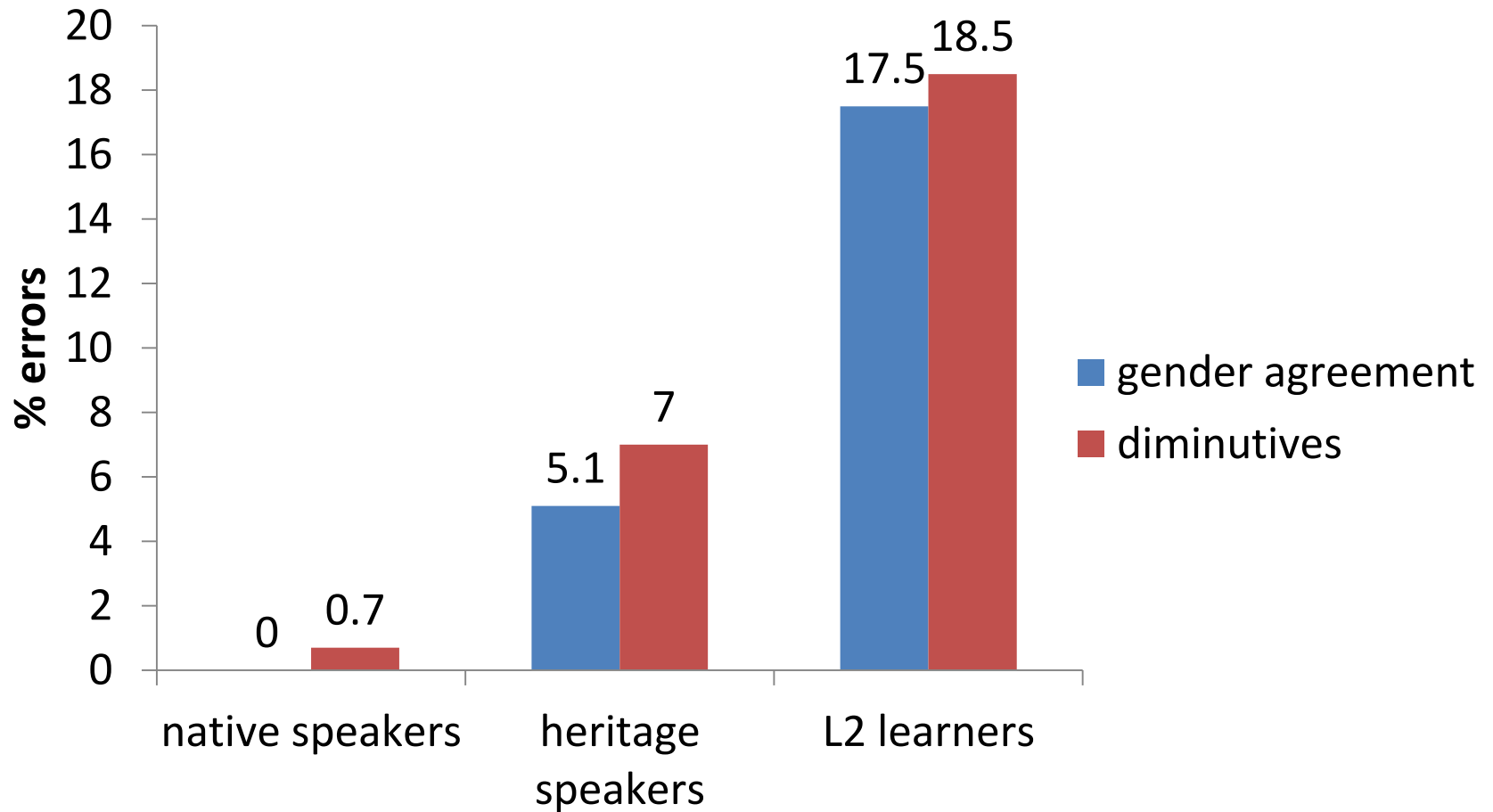
Gender agreement in oral production



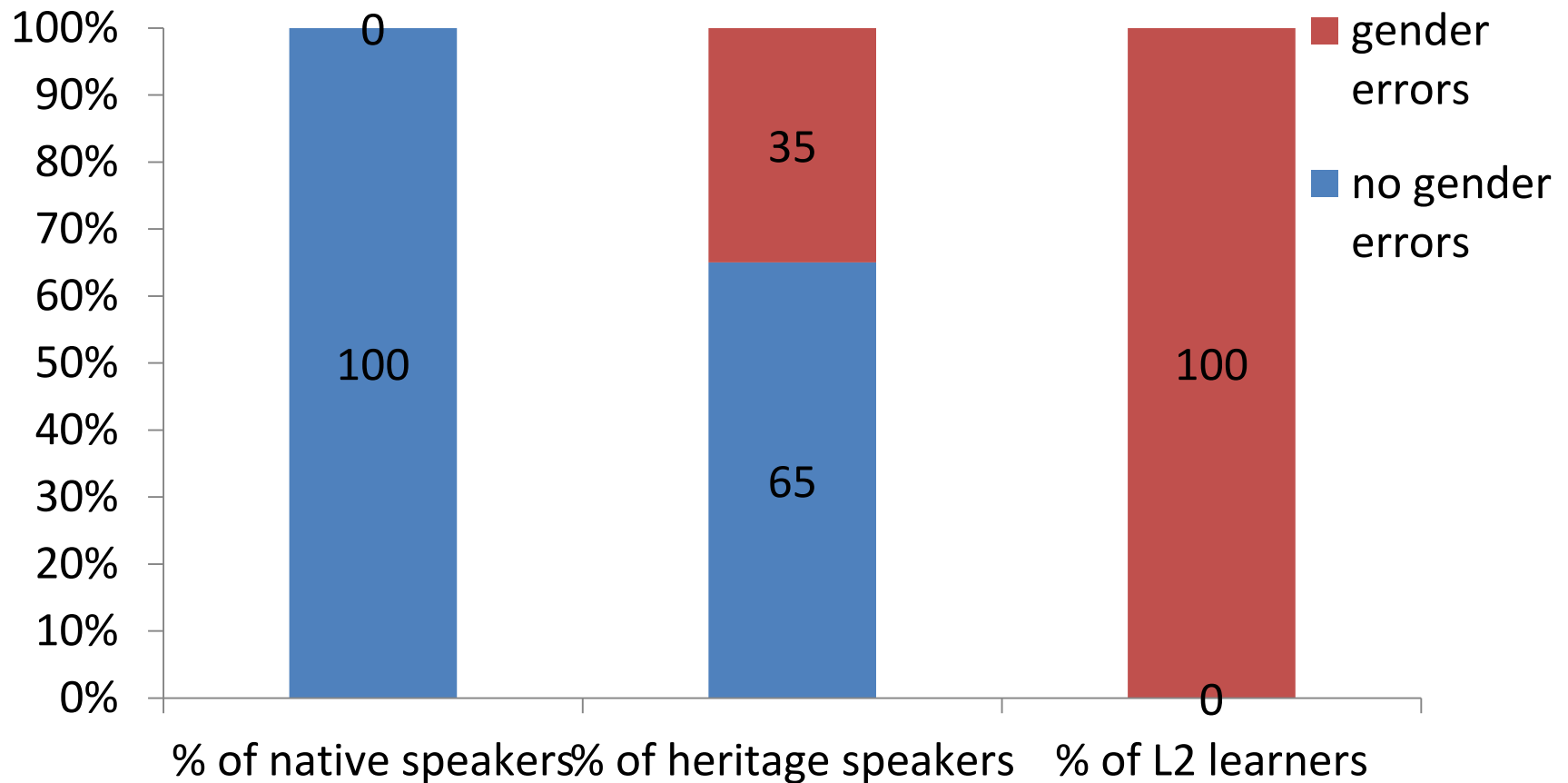
Results: Canonicity by Group



Percentage of errors by group



Percentage of individuals who made gender errors in each group



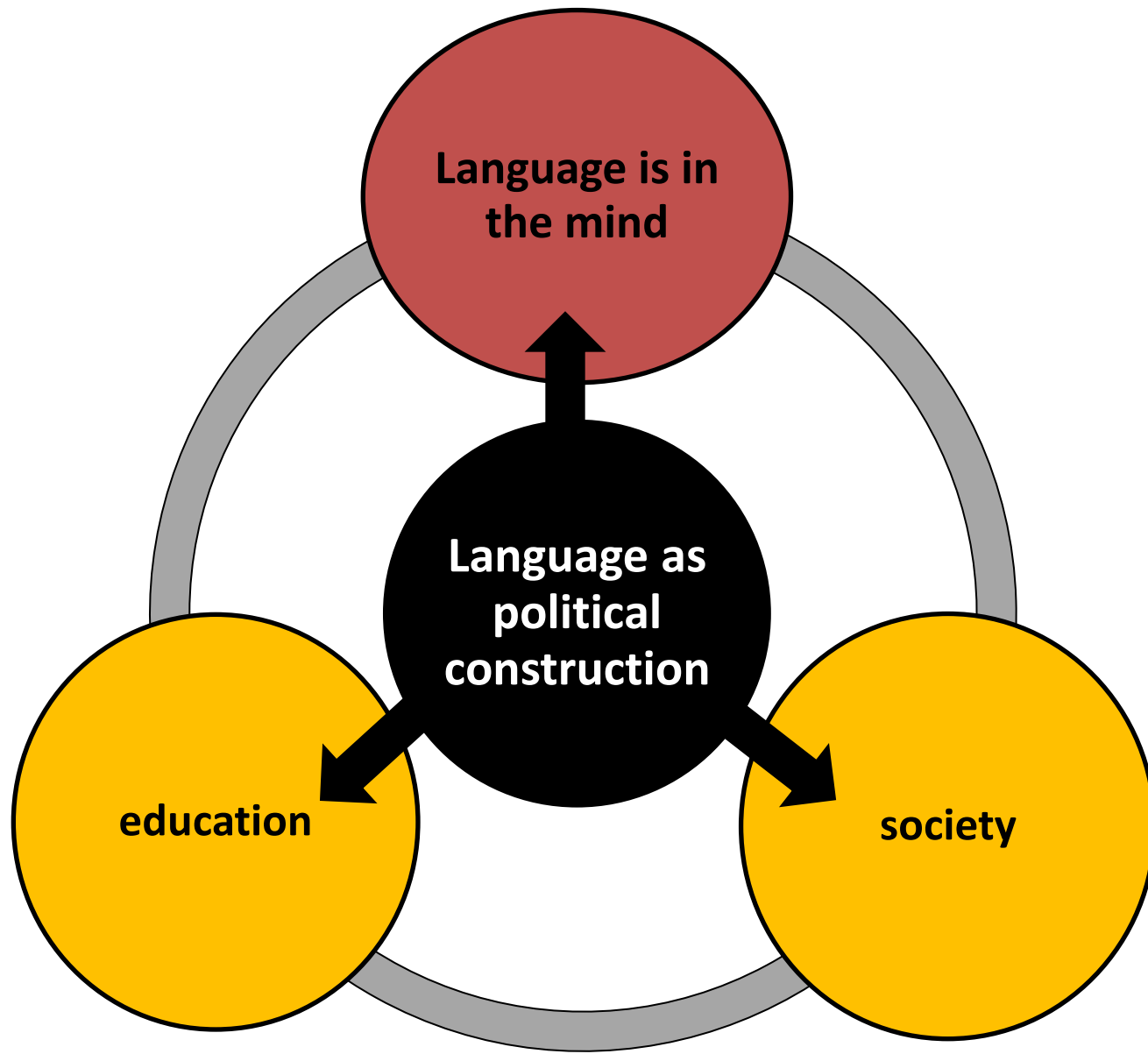
Conclusions

- Early language experience confers some advantages to heritage language learners with early acquired aspects of language and in oral production, like gender agreement.

Heritage speakers ARE native speakers

Heritage speakers are in principle born with the capacity to learn two languages.

The extent to which they develop the two languages, and the heritage language in particular, depends on environmental circumstances, including access to education in their language.



Implications

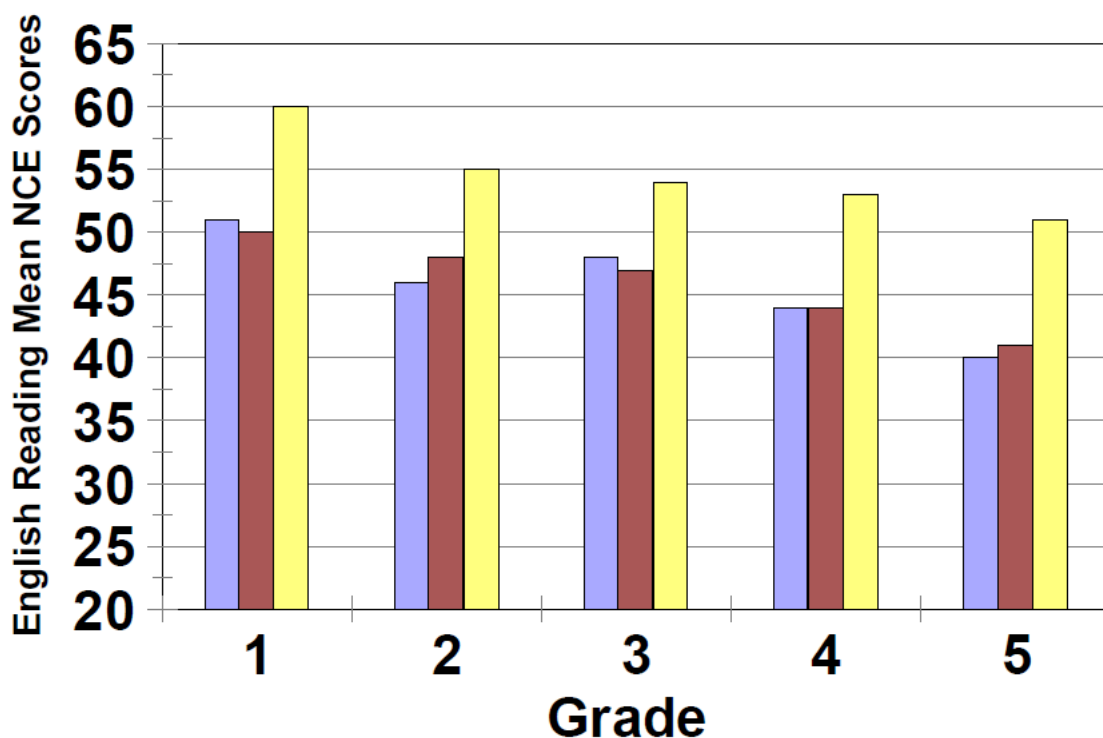
- Exclusive focus on the majority language, especially at school, interferes with the healthy development of the family language.
- Maintaining proficiency in the L1 is beneficial for both psychosocial and cognitive/educational reasons, in particular for children of immigrants and immigrant children in the United States.

Implications

- Extending exposure to the minority language at school provides bilingual children with greater opportunities to develop high levels of bilingual proficiency at a time when it is crucial for their development.
- Extending exposure to the minority language **DOES NOT DETRACT** from their development of English.

Figure 2

Houston ISD ELL Achievement by Program On the 2000 Stanford 9 in English Reading



- 90:10 Transitional Bilingual Ed.**
- 90:10 Developmental Bilingual Ed.**
- 90:10 Two-way Bilingual Immersion**

Total ELLs in 90:10 Transitional Bilingual Education

N= 9314

Total ELLs in 90:10 Developmental Bilingual Education

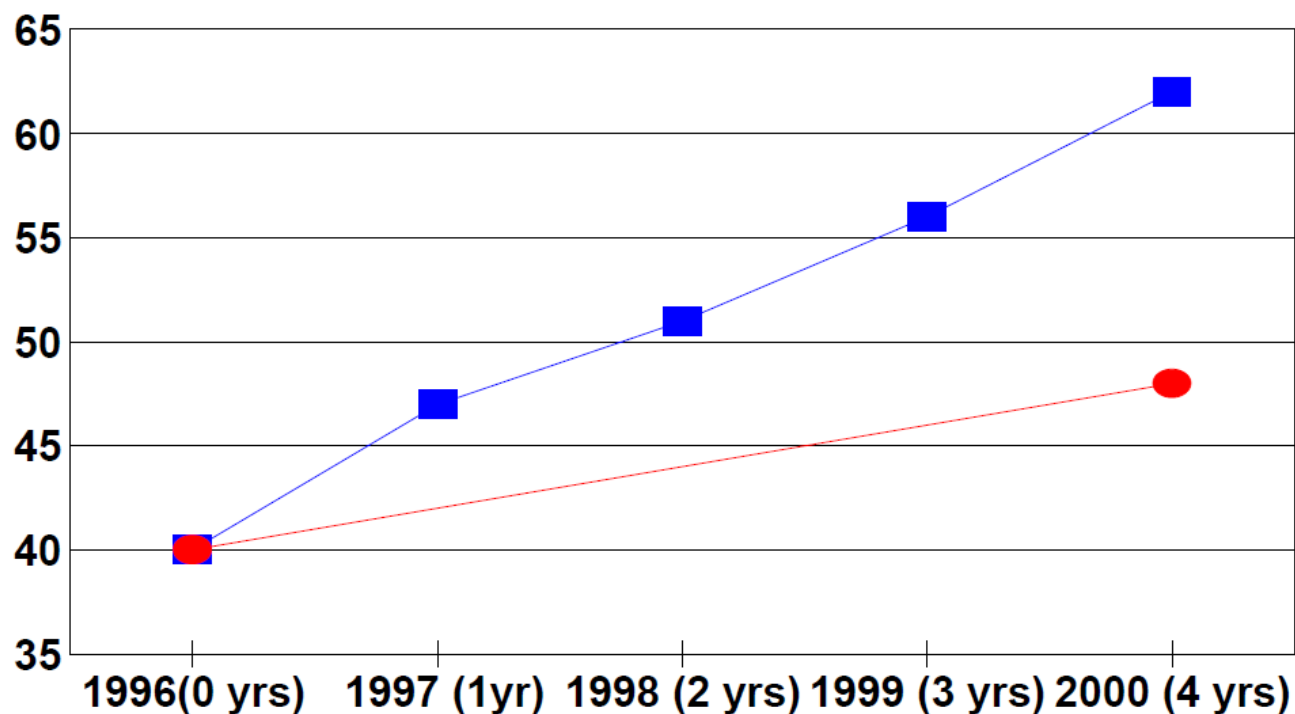
N= 7391

Total ELLs in 90:10 Two-way Bilingual Immersion

N= 2158

Figure 3

Northern Maine ELL Achievement by Program On the Terra Nova in English Reading



■ Former ELLs in Bilingual Immersion

● Former ELLs in English Mainstream

Total Former ELLs in 50:50 Bilingual Immersion

N=101

Total Former ELLs in English Mainstream

N=59

Conclusion

- Native speakers and non-native speakers are socially constructed
- The status as a native or non-native speaker is also a self-evaluation of identity
- The social and identity dimensions of linguistic competence are constructed on the basis of linguistic and supralinguistic facts

Conclusion

Psycholinguists can measure in detail several fine-grained aspects of linguistic performance that native speakers and non-native speakers are unconsciously sensitive to.

Together with knowledge of place and origin, these linguistic facts contribute to the creation of the notion of native speaker.

Thank you very much!