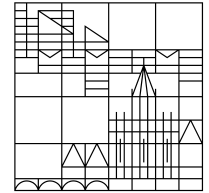




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The role of language dominance for syntactic and phonological transfer into L3 English

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Overview

1. Background:
 - Heritage speakers in L3
 - Language dominance
2. Our study
3. Results
4. Discussion

Our focus

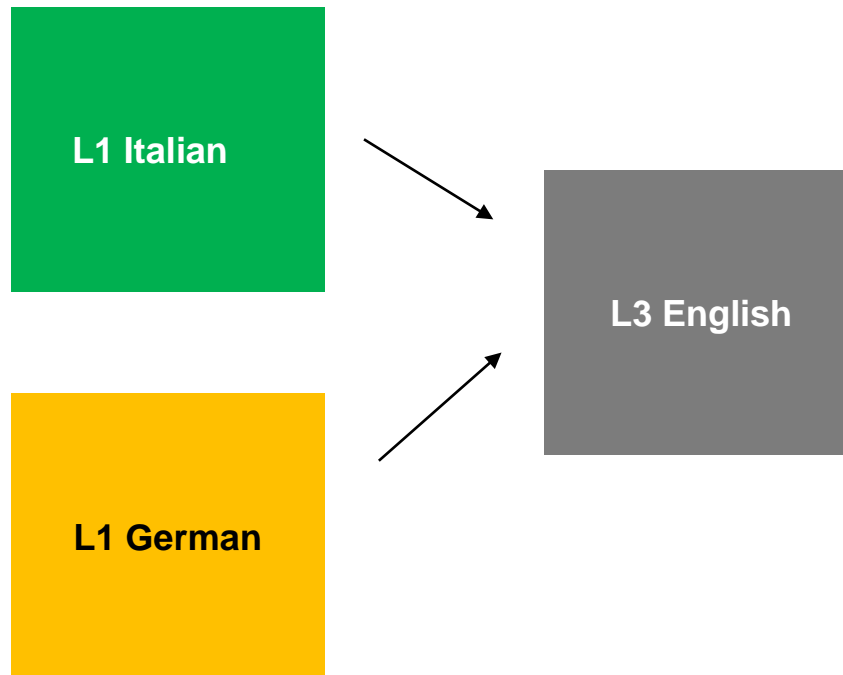


L3 transfer in **early bilinguals** (Italian-German)

Comparing transfer across domains (**syntax** vs. **phonology**)

The potential role of **language dominance**

L3 in heritage speakers (HSs)



What is a heritage language?

“A language qualifies as a heritage language if it is a **language spoken at home** or otherwise readily available to young children, and crucially this language is **not a dominant language of the larger (national) society**. Like the acquisition of a primary language in monolingual situations and the acquisition of two or more languages in situations of societal bilingualism/multilingualism, the heritage language is acquired on the basis of an **interaction with naturalistic input** and whatever in-born linguistic mechanisms are at play in any instance of child language acquisition.”

(Rothman 2009: 156)

Some L3 studies using heritage speakers

Main observations:

- Transfer often seems to occur from **typologically closest** and **dominant** language (e.g.: Sağın Şimşek 2006, Iverson 2009, Kupisch et al. 2013, Giancaspro et al. 2015, Lloyd-Smith et al. 2016)
- Positive transfer from **HL** has been related to **bilingual balance** or **use** (e.g., González-Ardeo 2001, Gabriel et al. 2014, 2015)
- Transfer may occur from both L1s **depending on phenomenon** (Westergaard et al. 2016)

L3 studies using HSs

Possible assumptions for HSs:

- 1) **Language dominance** may be the driving force for transfer
- 2) The source may depend on the **domain** of investigation

Measuring language dominance

Consensus

- Proficiency should be measured in both L1s
- Dominance measure should provide “**relative weight**” between languages (Montrul 2015)

Varied approaches

- Use of **objective proficiency measures**, or
- Self-reported aspects of **exposure/use** (e.g. BLP, Birdsong 2012)
- **Both?**

In this study, we use a an **objective proficiency measure** (vocab task)

Transfer across domains

“[T]he mechanisms underlying crosslinguistic influence will vary according to the linguistic domain under investigation [...] For example, it is obvious that **syntactic CLI** may require at least some explanatory principles that are quite **different** for those operating in **phonological CLI**”

(Sharwood Smith and Kellerman 1986: 7)

Domains of investigation

(I) Syntax: Embedded wh-questions

- Displays asymmetry across the 3 languages

(II) Phonetics-phonology: Accent rating

- Phonetic-phonological CLI is operationalized as perceived accentedness (Wrembel 2012; Lloyd-Smith, Gyllstad & Kupisch 2016)

Research questions

- 1) Does transfer stem from one or both languages?
- 2) Is this the same for the domains of syntax and phonology?
- 3) Does the transfer source relate to degree of bilingual balance?

Selected L3 models

	Prediction
Typological Primacy Model (Rothman 2009, 2011, 2015)	Wholesale transfer from one language at initial state
Linguistic Proximity Model (Westergaard et al. 2016)	Selective, structurally-based transfer from either/both languages
Scalpel Model (Slabakova 2016)	Selective transfer from either/both languages (affected also by, e.g., input, use, complexity).

2. OUR STUDY: Participants

Bilinguals

- 21 Italian-German bilingual university students (mean age=23)
 - Simultaneous (n=7)
 - Successive (n=14)

Controls

- 10 monolingual English NS students (mean age = 30)
- 10 monolingual German NS students (mean age = 23)
- 10 monolingual Italian NS students (mean age = 23)

Methods

1. Dominance measure:

- Y/N vocabulary task in Italian & German (50 real words, 25 non-words)
- Words appear on screen, participants vote by mouse click

2. Syntactic transfer measure:

- Acceptability judgement task (48 stimuli)
- Stimuli presented acoustically, participants vote by mouse click

3. Foreign accent measure:

- 51 speech samples à 10 seconds (21 bilinguals + 30 monolingual controls)
- Rated for accent strength and accent origin (32 NS raters)

Syntax task: main test conditions

(1) Italian transfer condition (ITC) (n=6)

* Julia	doesn't	know	where	went		Lukas
<i>Giulia</i>	<i>non</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>dove</i>	<i>è andato</i>		<i>Luca.</i>
G.	NEG	know-3SG	where	AUX.3SG go-PTCP-MSG		L.

(2) German transfer condition (GTC) (n=6)

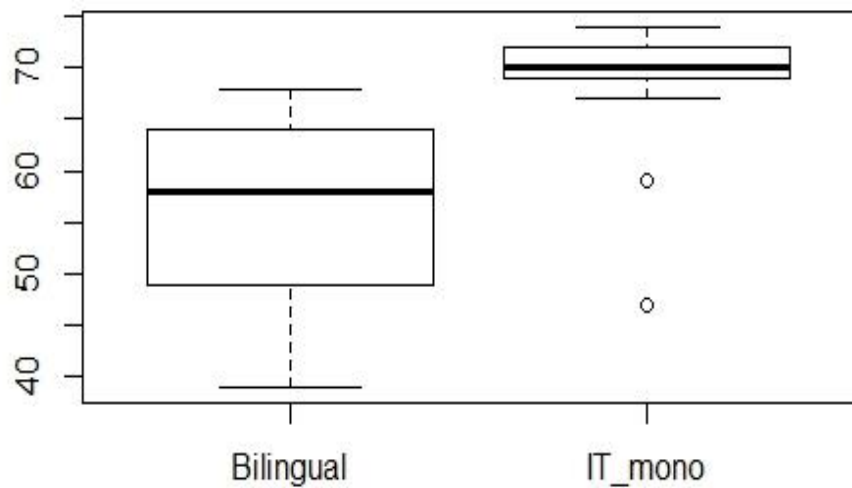
* Julia	doesn't	know	where	Albert	last	week	was
<i>Julia</i>	<i>weiß</i>	<i>nicht,</i>	<i>wo</i>	<i>Albert</i>	<i>letzte</i>	<i>Woche</i>	<i>war</i>
J.	know-3SG	NEG	where	A.	last-ACC.FSG	week-ACC.FSG	be-IMPF-3SG

(3) Control items and fillers (n=36)

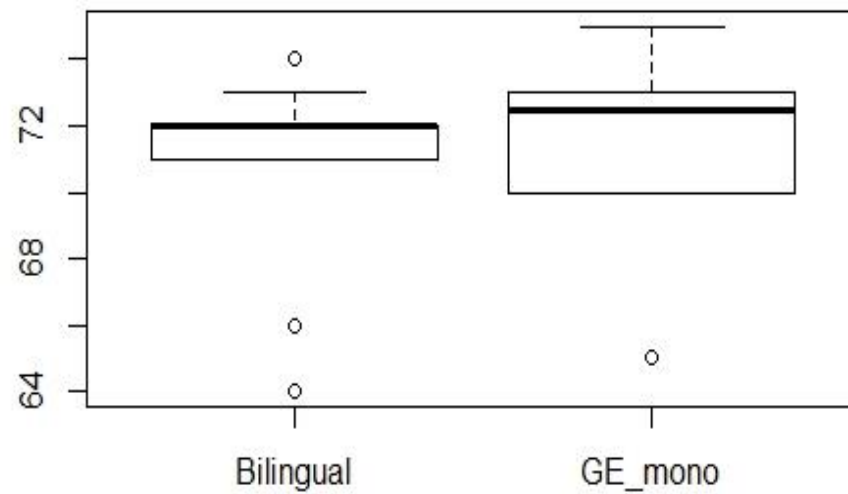
- Grammatical in English, ungrammatical in Italian
- Grammatical in English, ungrammatical in German
- Ungrammatical in all languages

3. Results: Y/N vocabulary task

Italian vocabulary

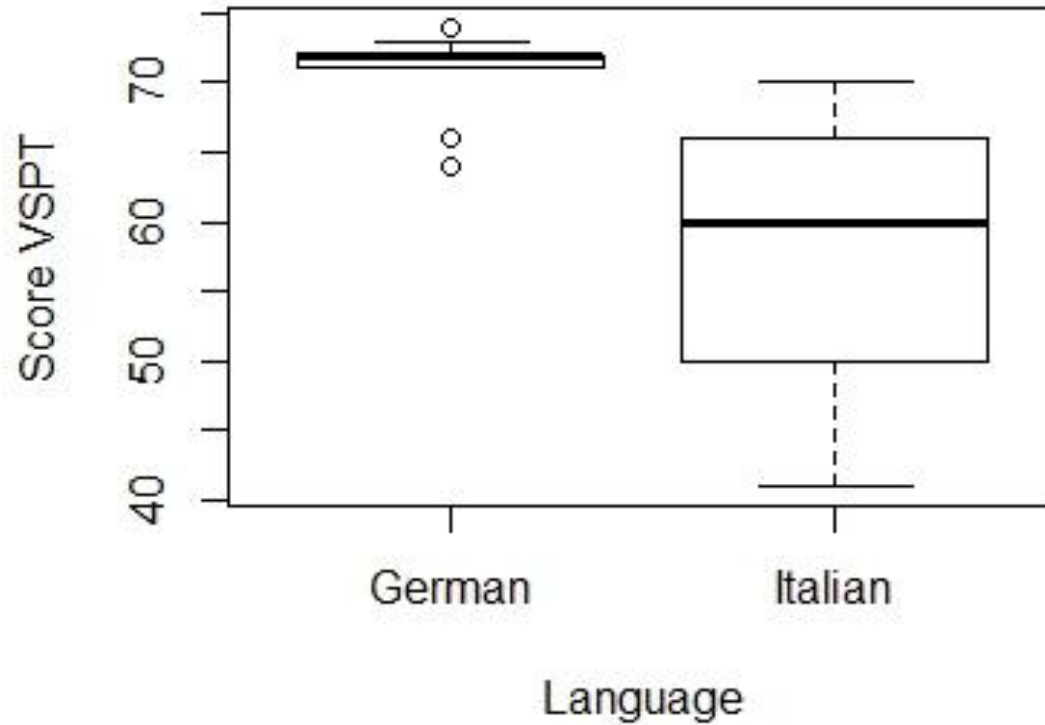


German vocabulary



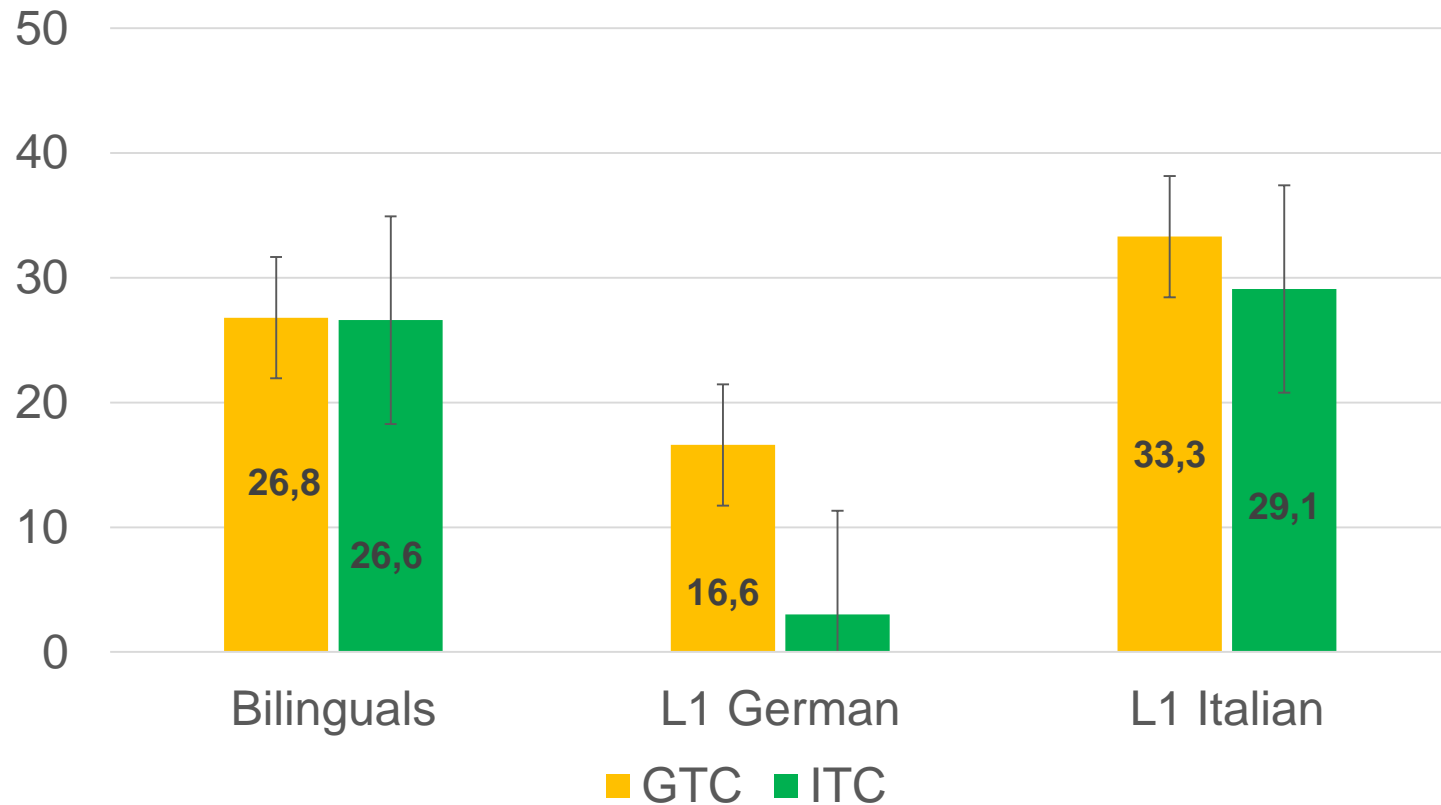
Results: Y/N vocabulary task

Bilingual dominance

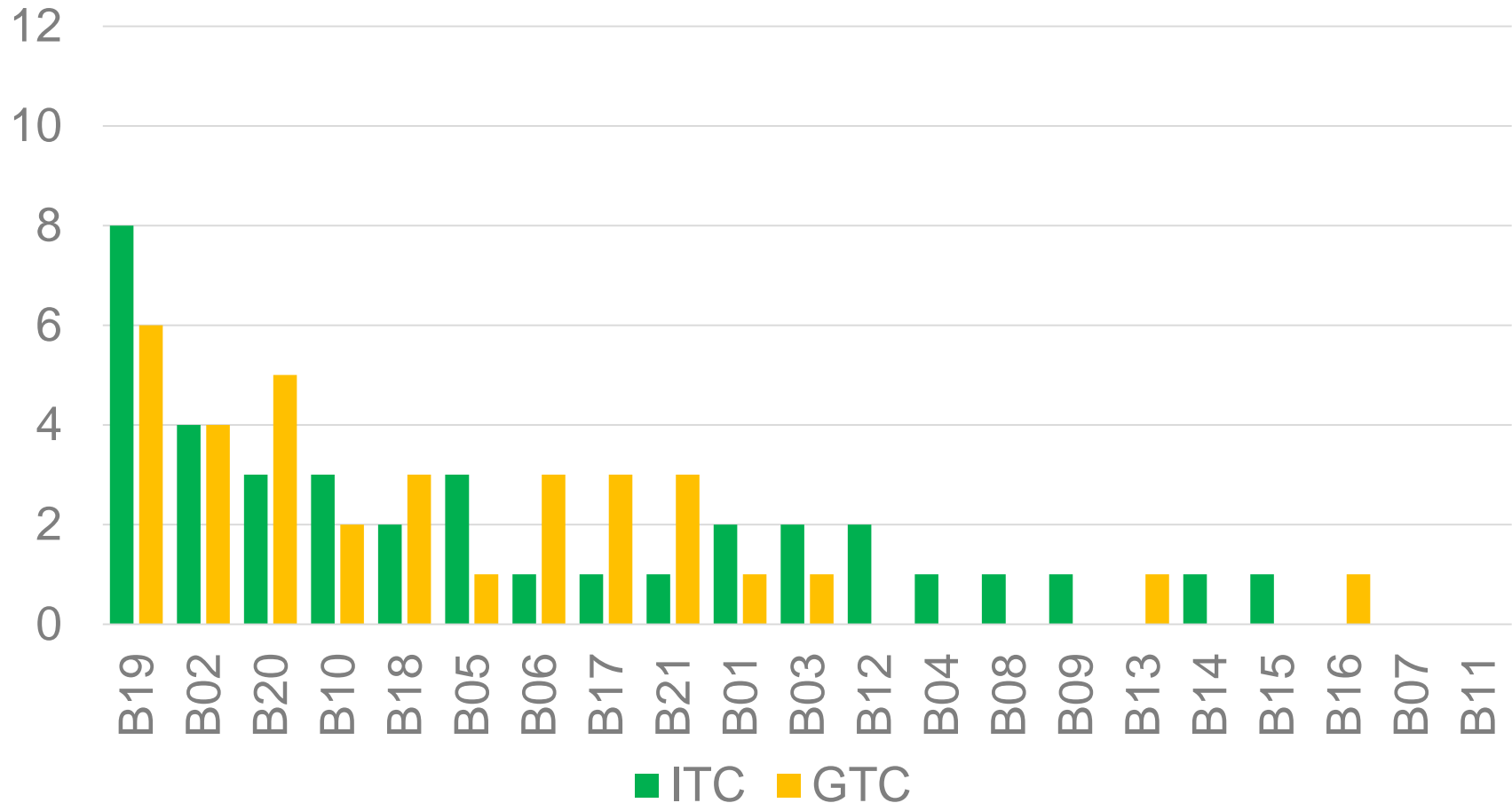


Results: Syntax

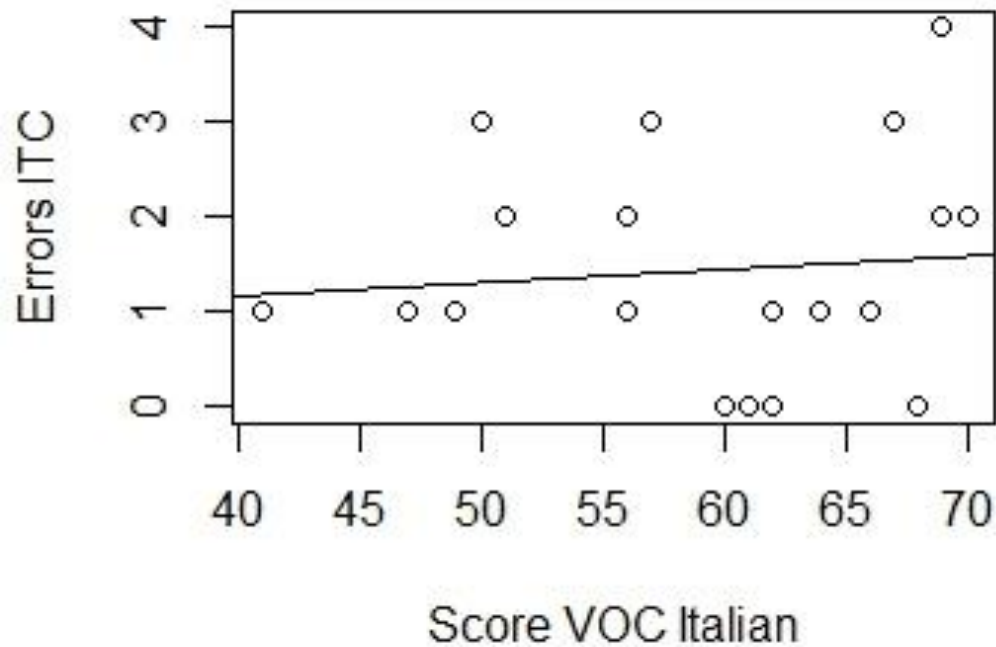
% errors per condition



Errors per condition (bilinguals)

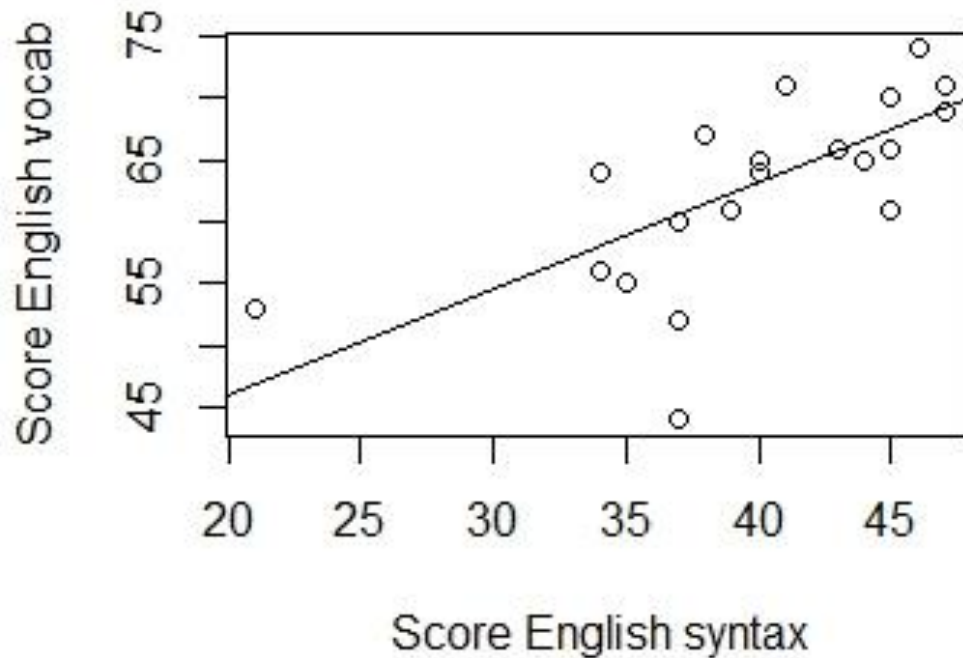


Dominance and ITC



- No relation between dominance and transfer from Italian (ITC)

English Vocab vs. English Syntax



Highly significant relation between vocab and overall syntax scores in English

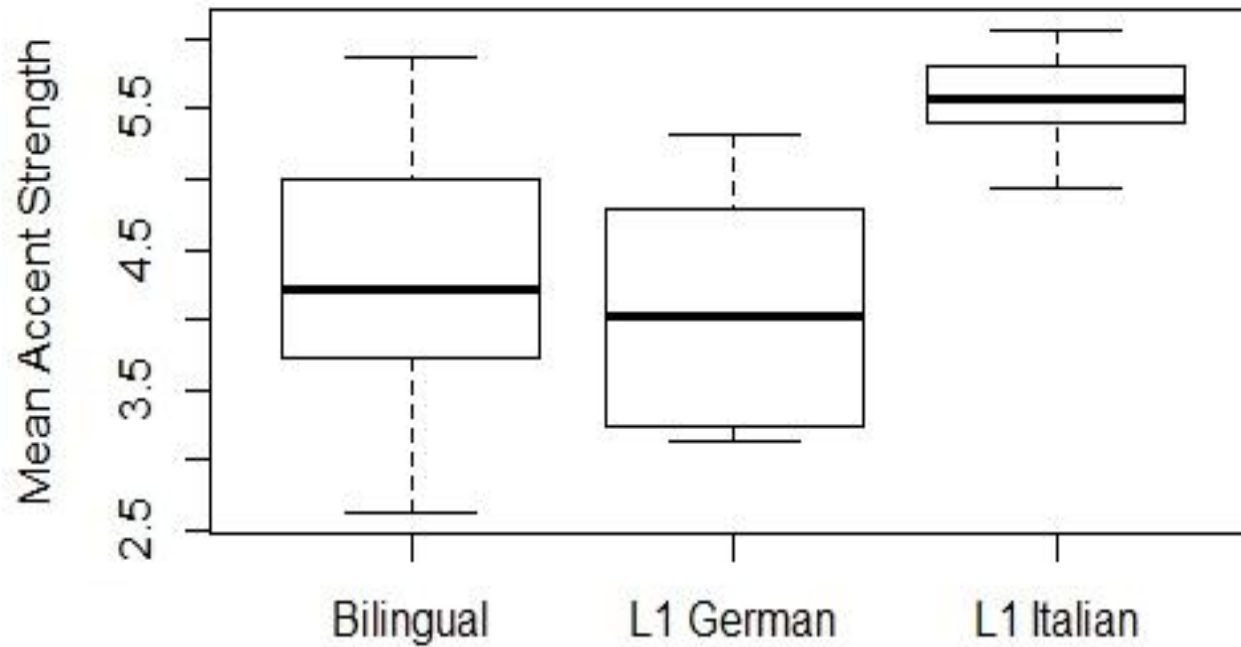
($\beta=0.85$, $SE=0.21$, $t=4.05$, $p<0.005$)

Results (II): Foreign accent

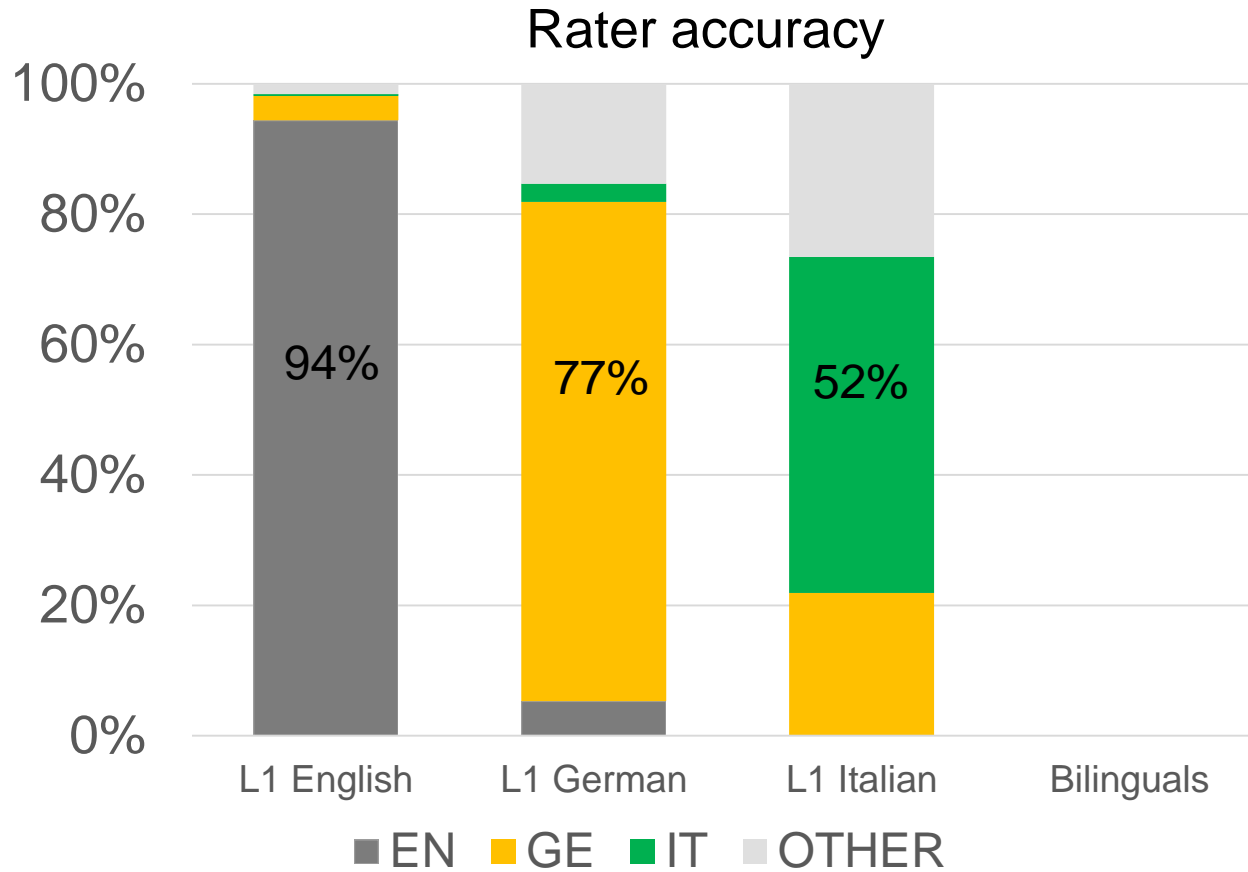
Accent rating task

- 51 samples (21 bilinguals + 30 monolingual controls)
- Rated by 32 English NSs for:
 - 1) Foreign accent strength (1=No foreign accent; 7=Strong foreign accent)
 - 2) Origin of accent (**German**, **Italian**, **English**, **Other**)

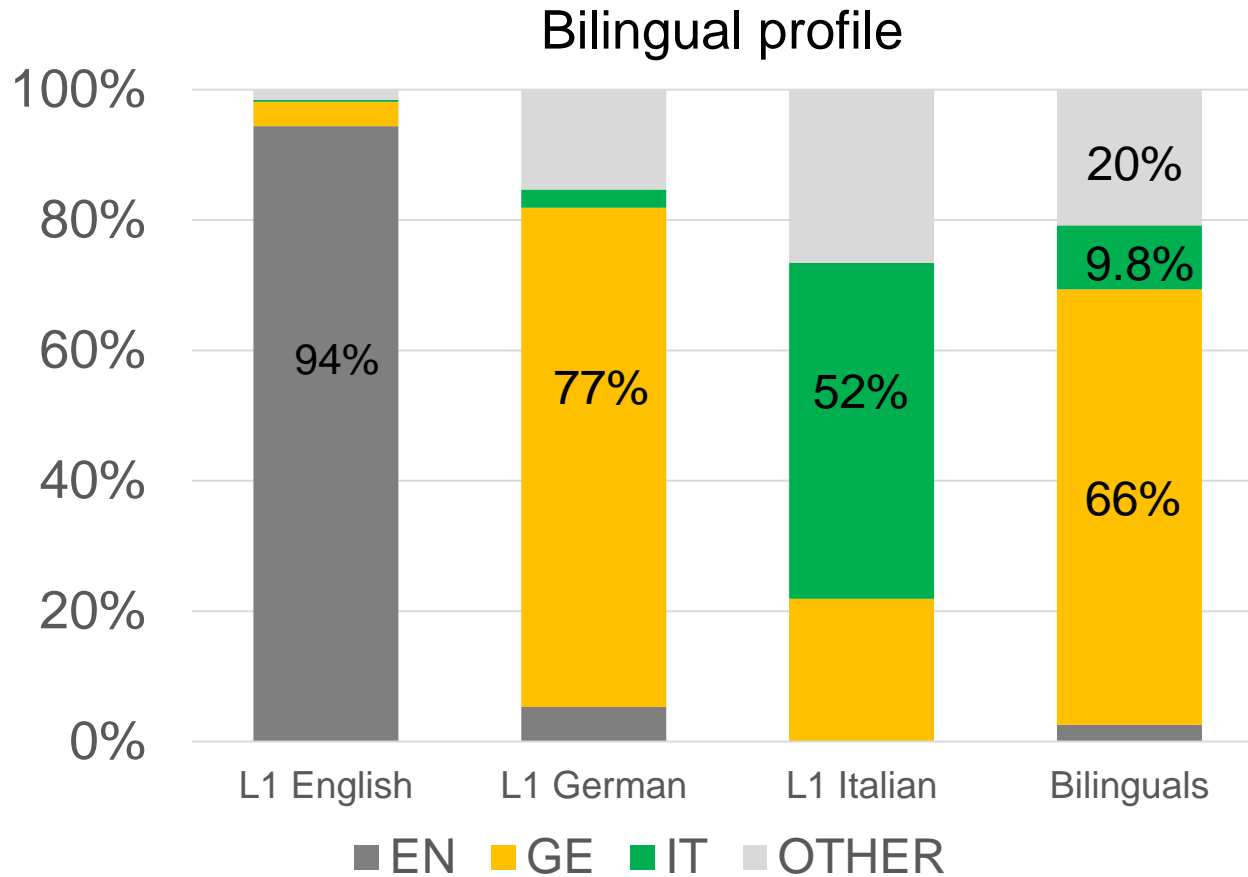
Mean accent strength (1=no FA; 7 = strong FA)



Determine the speaker's L1



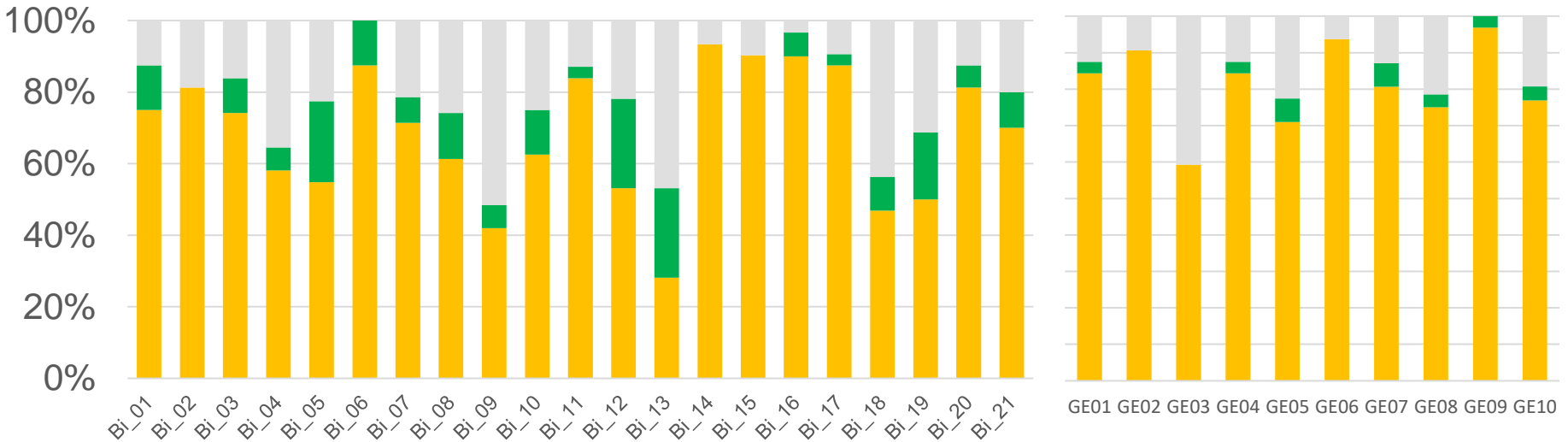
Determine the speaker's L1



Origin of accent: Bilinguals vs. Germans

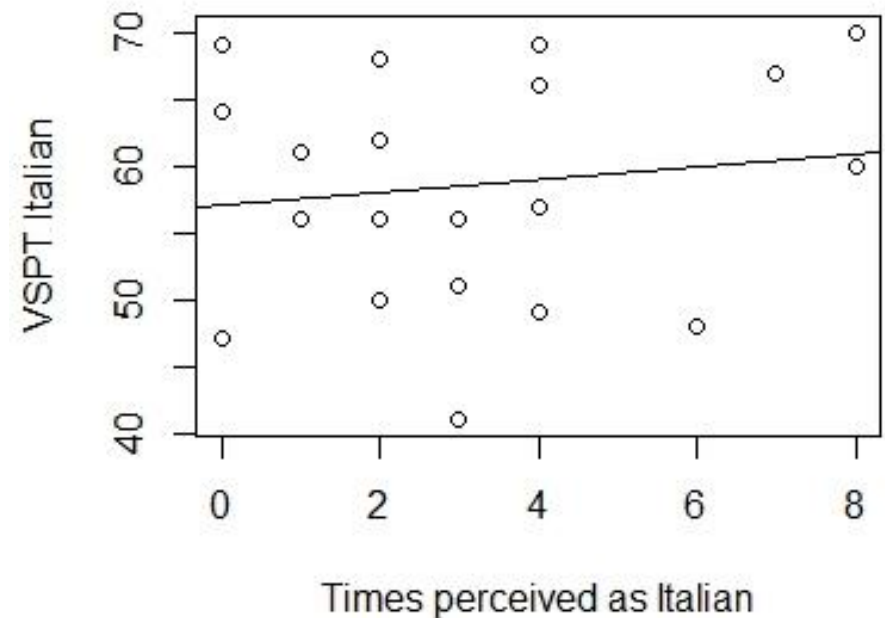
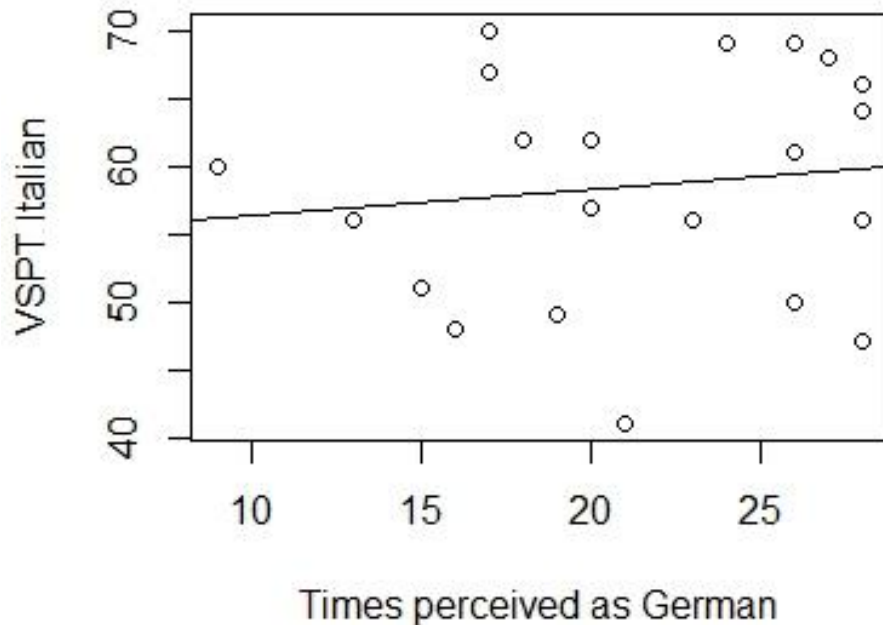
Bilinguals

L1 Germans



	L1 German	L1 Italian	Other
Bilinguals	66%	9.8%	20.8%
L1 Germans	77%	2.6%	15.3%

Dominance and perceived accent source

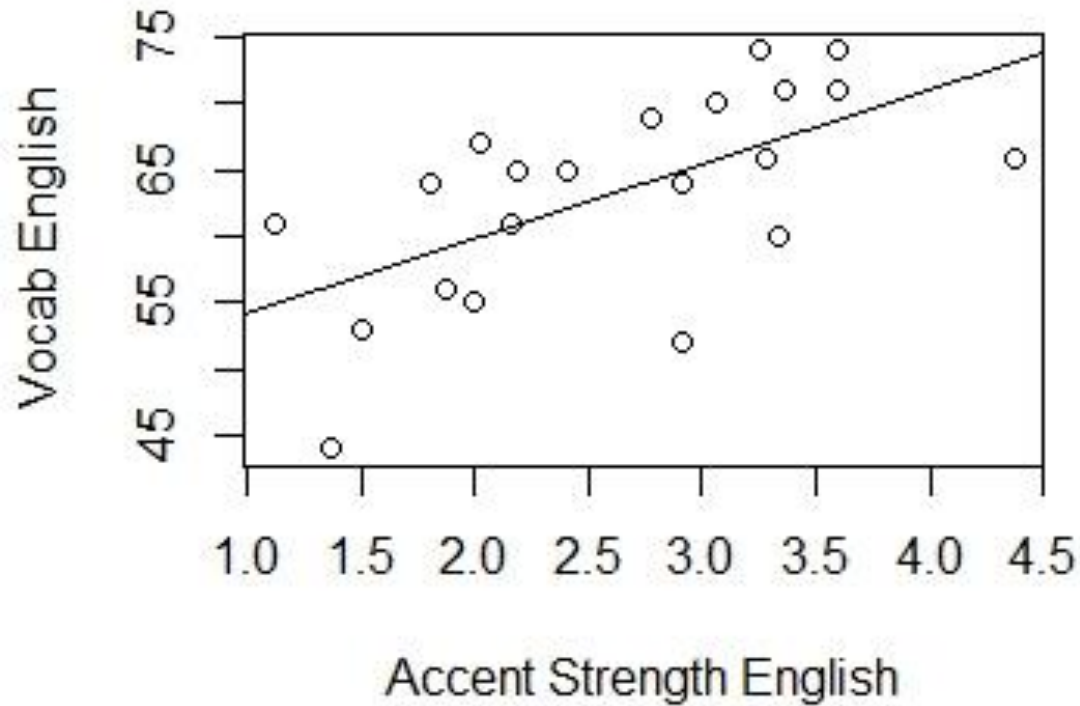


- No relation between dominance measure (Italian vocab) and source of accent

Dominance profiles



English vocab and accent strength



Highly significant correlation between English vocab and accent strength ($t=3.41$, $df=19$, $p<0.005$)

(cf. Wrembel 2012)

Summary of results

Syntax

- Syntactic transfer appears to stem from **both L1s** in equal measure
- Bilinguals behave like L1 Italians
- **Unrelated** to dominance

Foreign accent

- Phonetic-phonological transfer is **predominantly German**
- **Related** to dominance on a group level
- **Unrelated** to dominance on an individual level

Research questions

1) Does transfer stem from one or both languages?

- From **both languages**

2) Is this the same for the domains of syntax and phonology?

- It doesn't appear to be:
- **Syntax**: transfer occurs in equal measure from **both languages**
- **Foreign accent**: predominantly from **German** (cf. Lloyd-Smith et al. 2016)

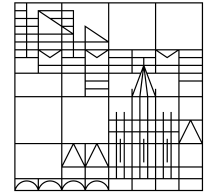
3) Does this relate to degree of bilingual balance?

- Not for **syntax**
- Only on a group level for **foreign accent**

Discussion

Why the difference between domains?

- **Syntactic representations** are active and **equally available** in both languages, irrespective of dominance/relative balance
- For **foreign accent** it could be that dominance of one language has an impact on the other language
- This is consistent with findings in early bilingual acquisition, where **phonology** seems to be **more affected by acceleration, delay and transfer** (see Kehoe 2015 for an overview) than syntax (see Kupisch, forthcoming for a comparison)



**Thank
you!**

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