Grammatical gender acquisition in sequential trilinguals

Influence of a gendered L1 vs. L2

Megan Brown

Boston University

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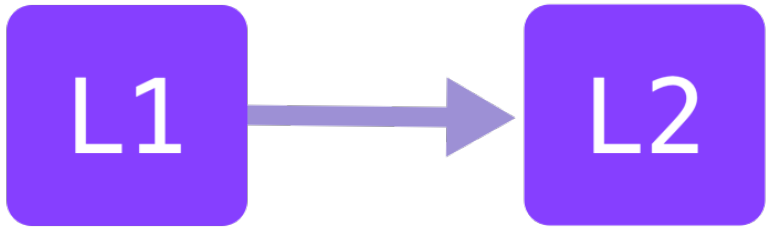
Saturday, January 4th 2020

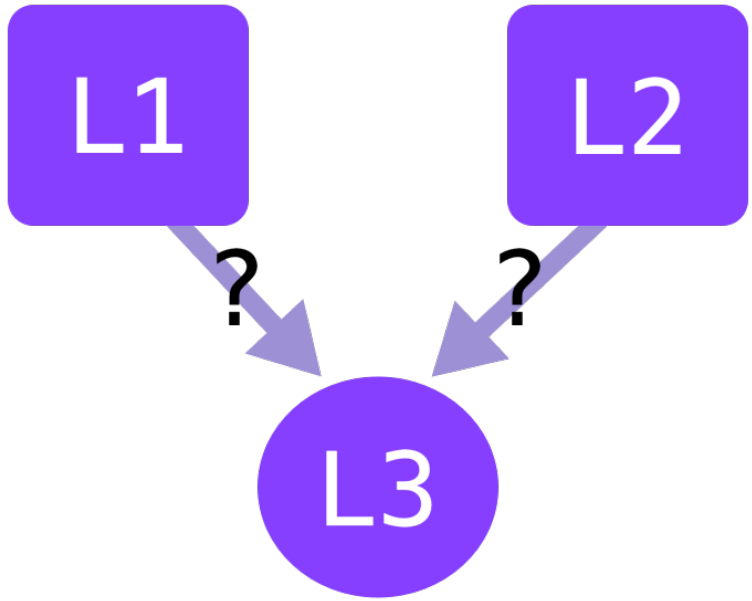
Multiple Potential Sources of Transfer

In L2 acquisition the L1 is the only source of transfer.



Multiple Potential Sources of Transfer

L3 learners have 2 potential transfer sources, the L1 and the L2.



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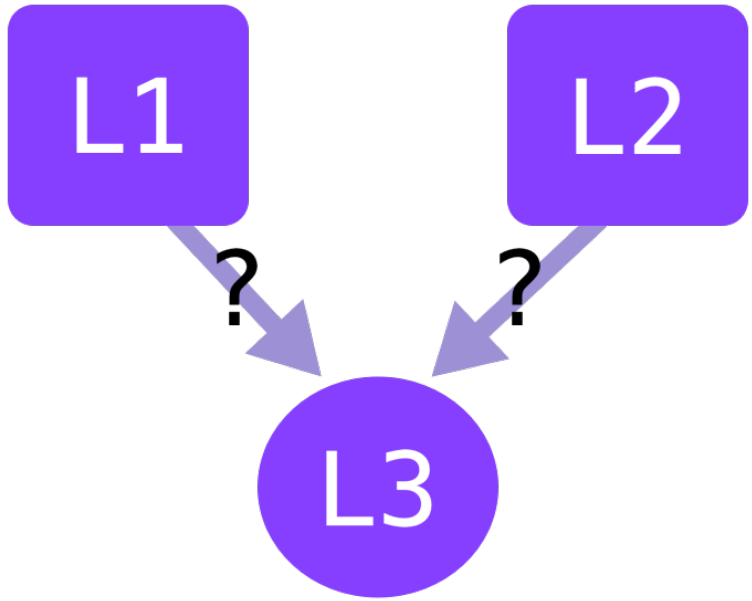

Which language or langauge(s) transfer and why?

Models of L3 Acquisition

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Whole-Transfer Models

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L1 Transfer
Hermas, 2010

L2 Status
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Typological Primacy
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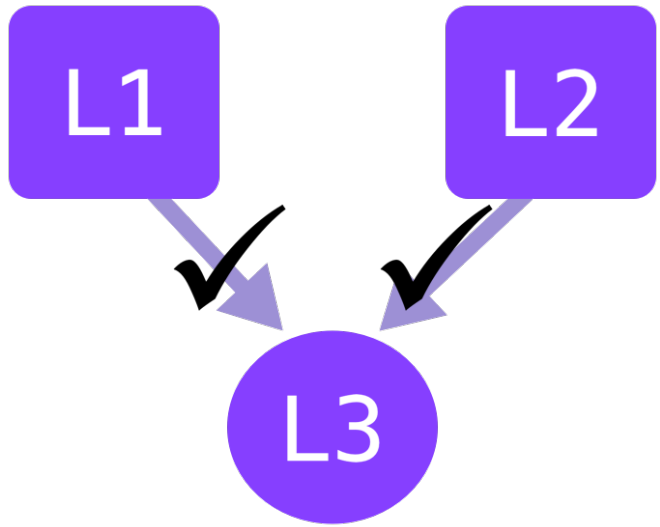

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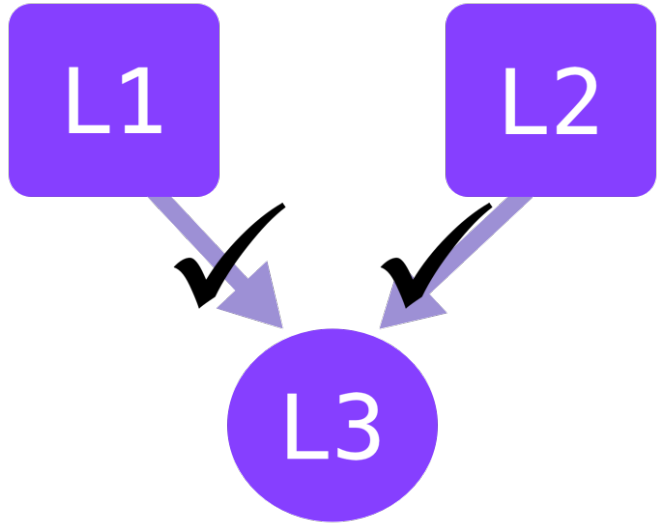

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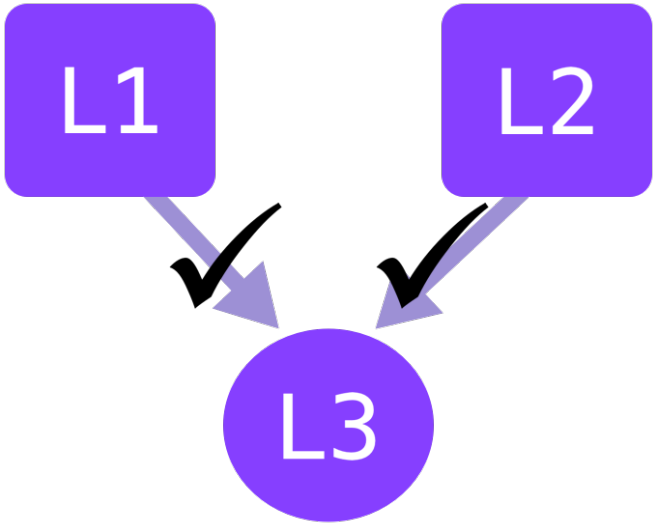
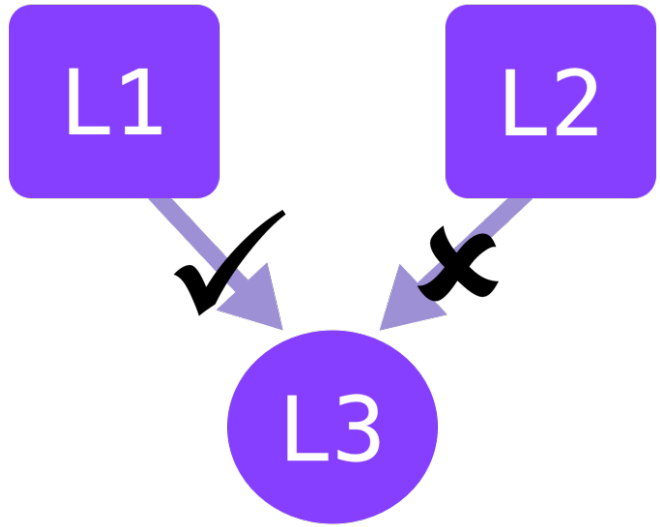
All beneficial grammatical knowledge is accessable.

Language learning is **cumulative**.

(Flynn et al., 2004; Berkes & Flynn, 2012)

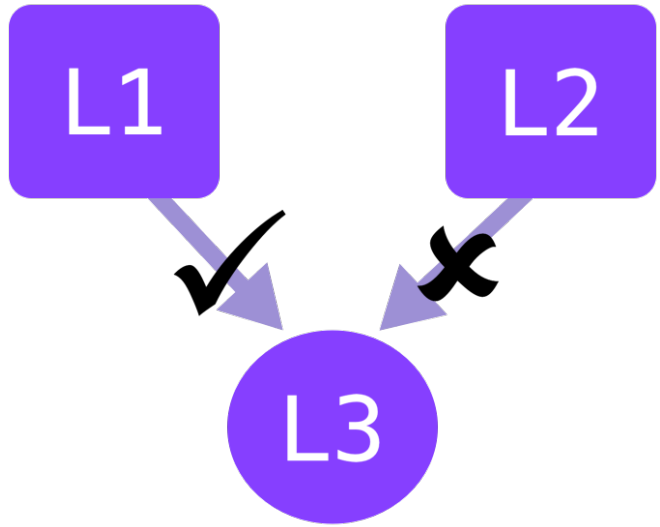


The L1 Transfer Proposal



The L1 Transfer Proposal

L1 grammar serves the initial state for new languages.



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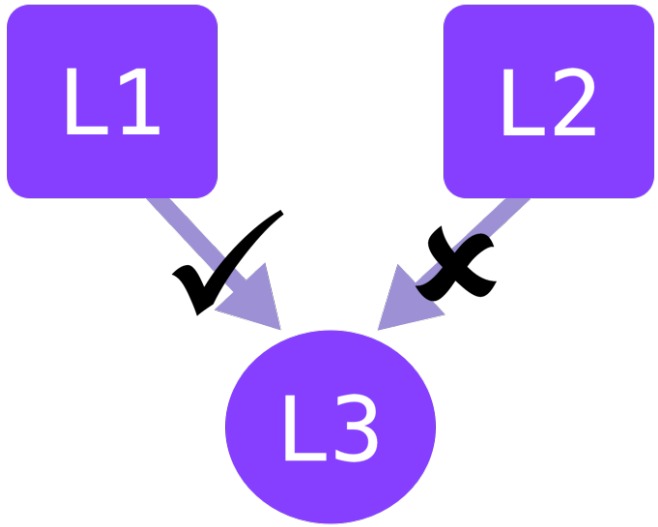
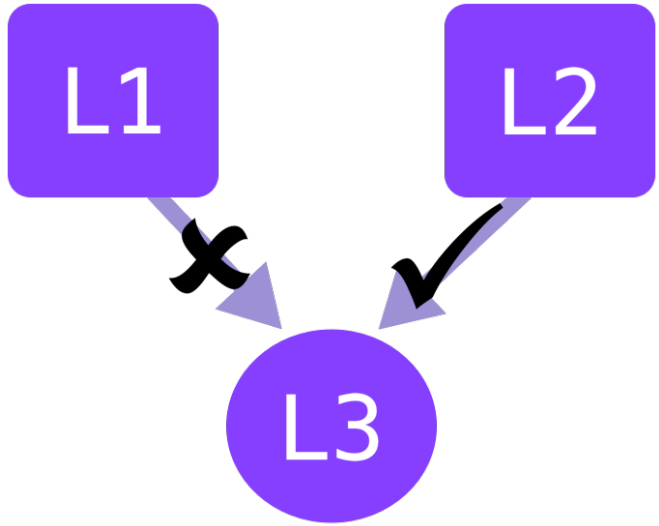
Transfer can be facilitative or non-facilitative. (Hermas,2010)



The L2 Status Factor Model



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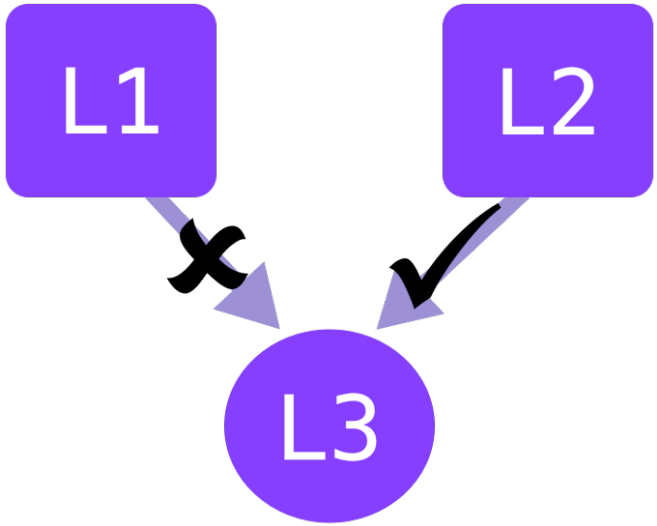
The L2 grammar serves as the initial state for L3.



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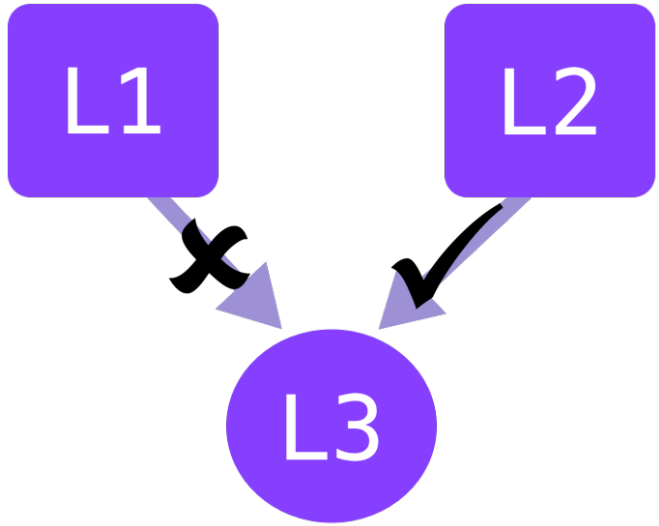
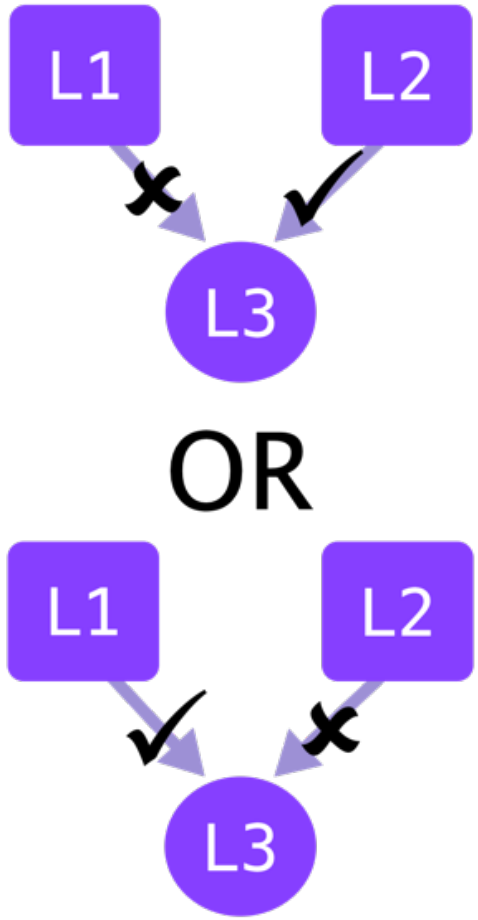


The Typological Primacy Model



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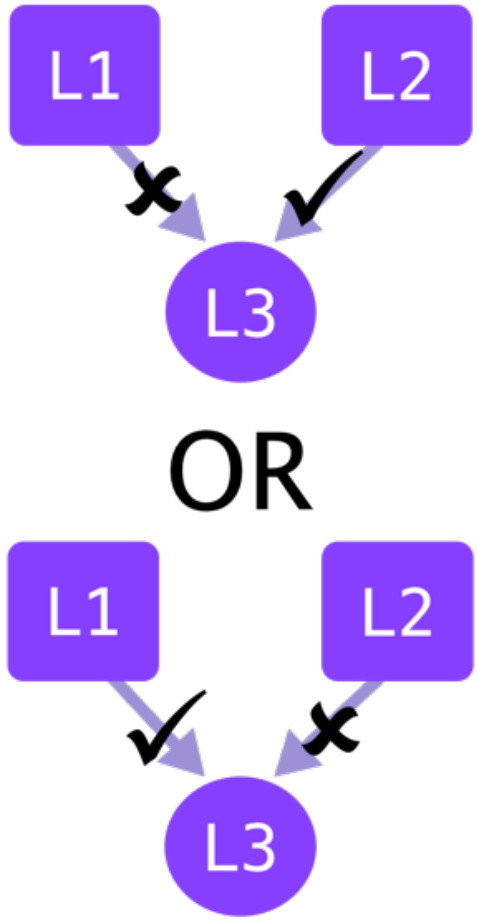

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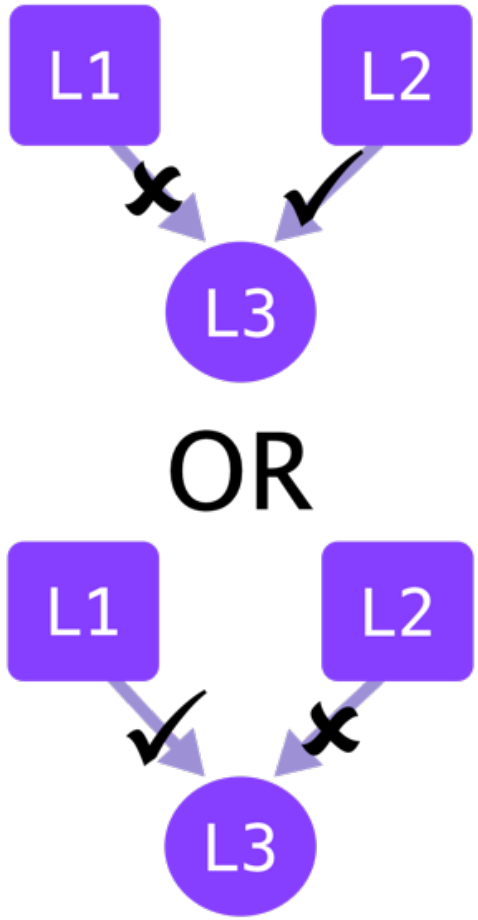
1. Lexicon
2. Phonological/Phonetic Cues
3. Functional Morphology
4. Syntactic Structure

(Rothman, 2010 et. seq)



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Der Mann	**Die** Frau	**Das** Mädchen
The man **Masculine**	The woman **Feminine**	The girl **Neuter**

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How do L1 vs L2 gender systems transfer to L3?

Current Project

English

Spanish

Current Project

English

Spanish

L3 German

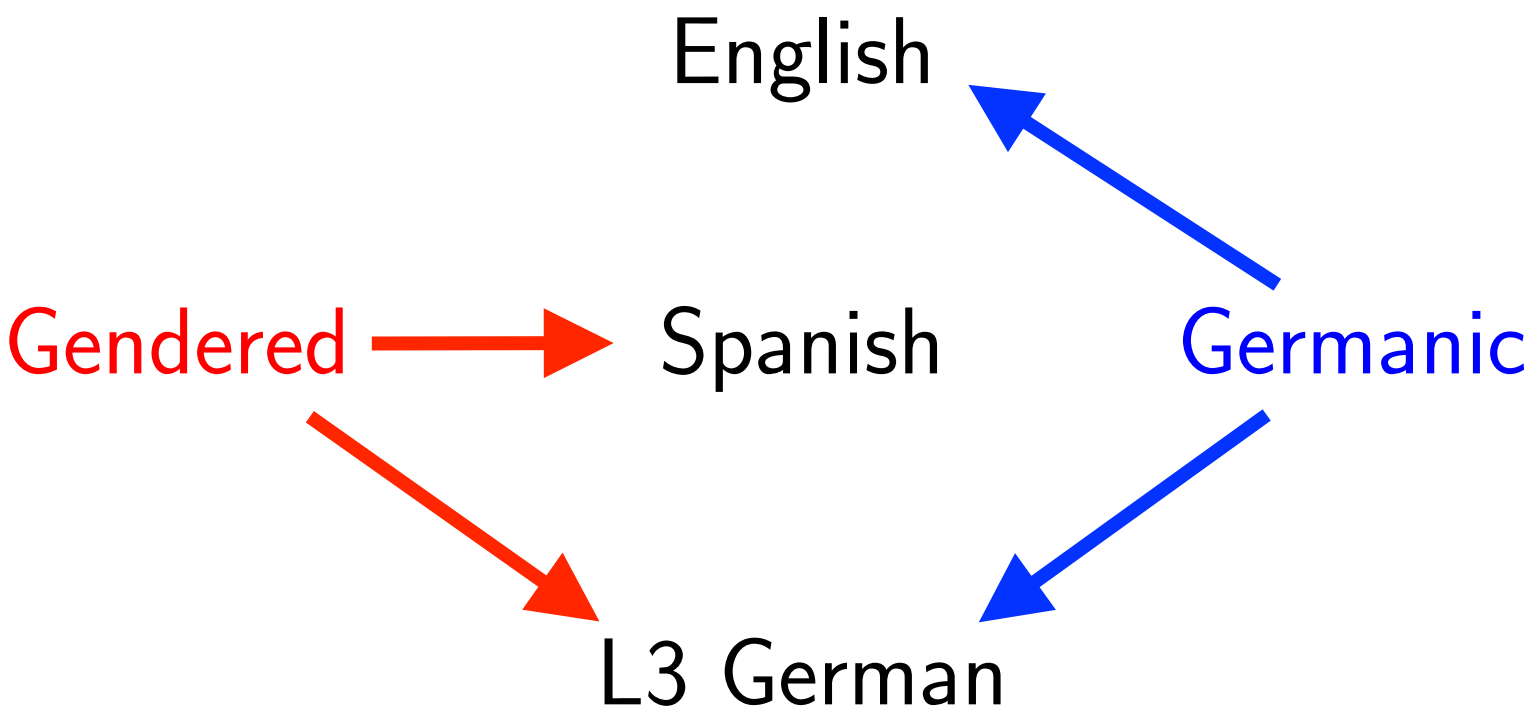
Current Project

English

Gendered → Spanish

↘ L3 German

Current Project



Predictions of L3 Models

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Will L3 learners transfer their Spanish grammatical gender knowledge to L3 German?

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	L1 English L2 Spanish	L1 Spanish L2 English
Cumulative Enhancement Model	**Yes**	**Yes**
L1 Transfer	**No**	**Yes**
L2 Status Factor Model	**Yes**	**No**
Typological Primacy Model	**No**	**No**

Participants

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Sequential Spanish/English bilinguals

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L3 German was being learned as a foreign language

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Online survey-style task

Participants

Language Background	Abbreviation	German Level	Number of Participants

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L1 English L2 Spanish L3 German	E-S-G	Beginner	11

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Native German	N-G	Native	7

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German Grammaticality Judgement Task

Gender Mismatch

*Das Baum ist groß
The$_{[N]}$ tree$_{[M]}$ is tall

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Words reflecting biological gender were not included

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Error questions were balanced in terms of:
- German Gender
- Error Type
- Spanish Gender

Scoring

Lexical vs. Grammatical Gender

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Grammatical Gender Task

Scoring

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Grammatical Gender Task

Tür (Door$_F$)

Scoring

Lexical vs. Grammatical Gender

Grammatical Gender Task

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Der$_M$ Die$_F$ Das$_N$

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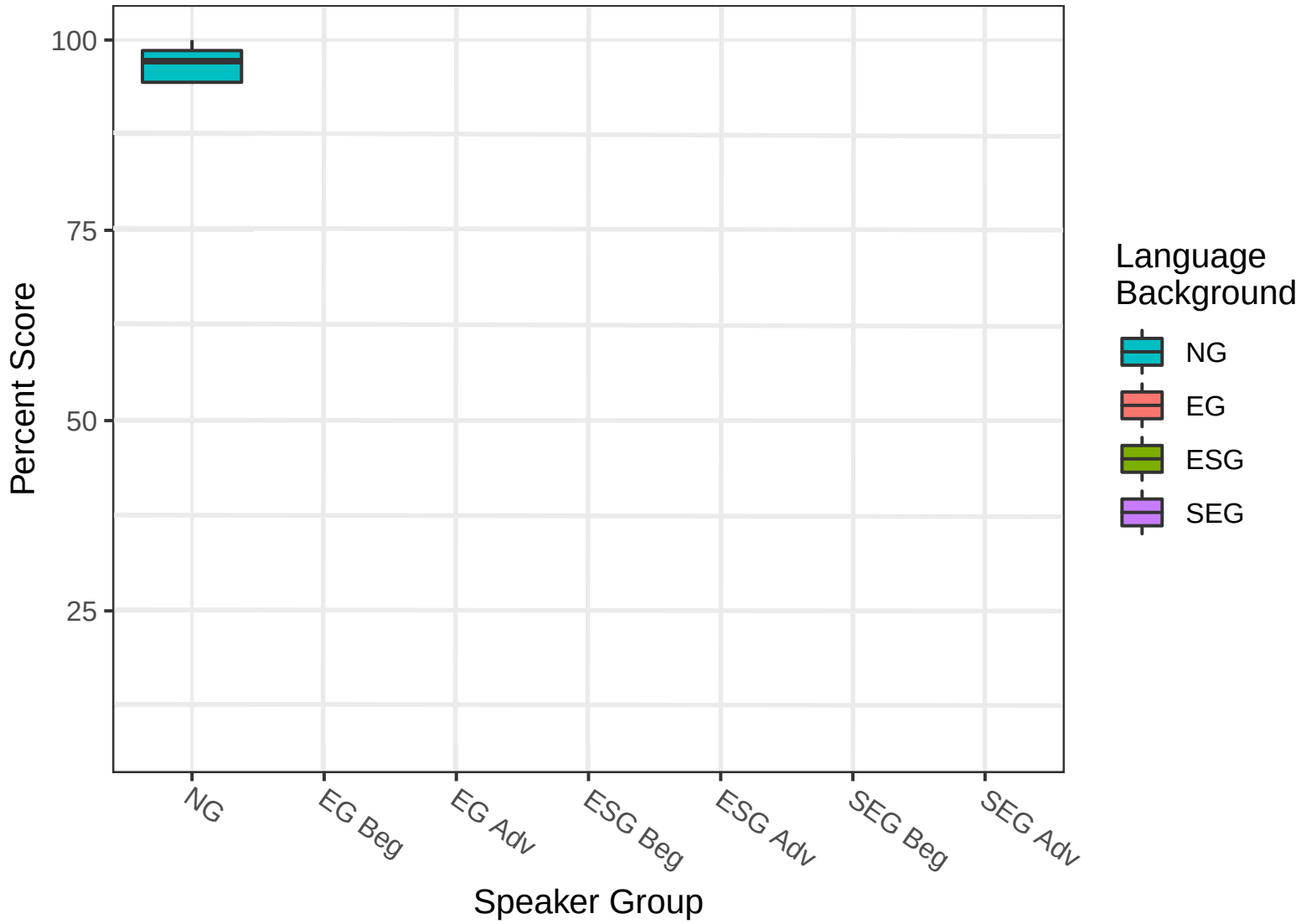
Grammaticality judgement tasks were graded based on participants' perceived gender of individual lexical items.

Results: Native German Speakers

Figure 1: Participant scores between language groups



Results: Advanced German Learners

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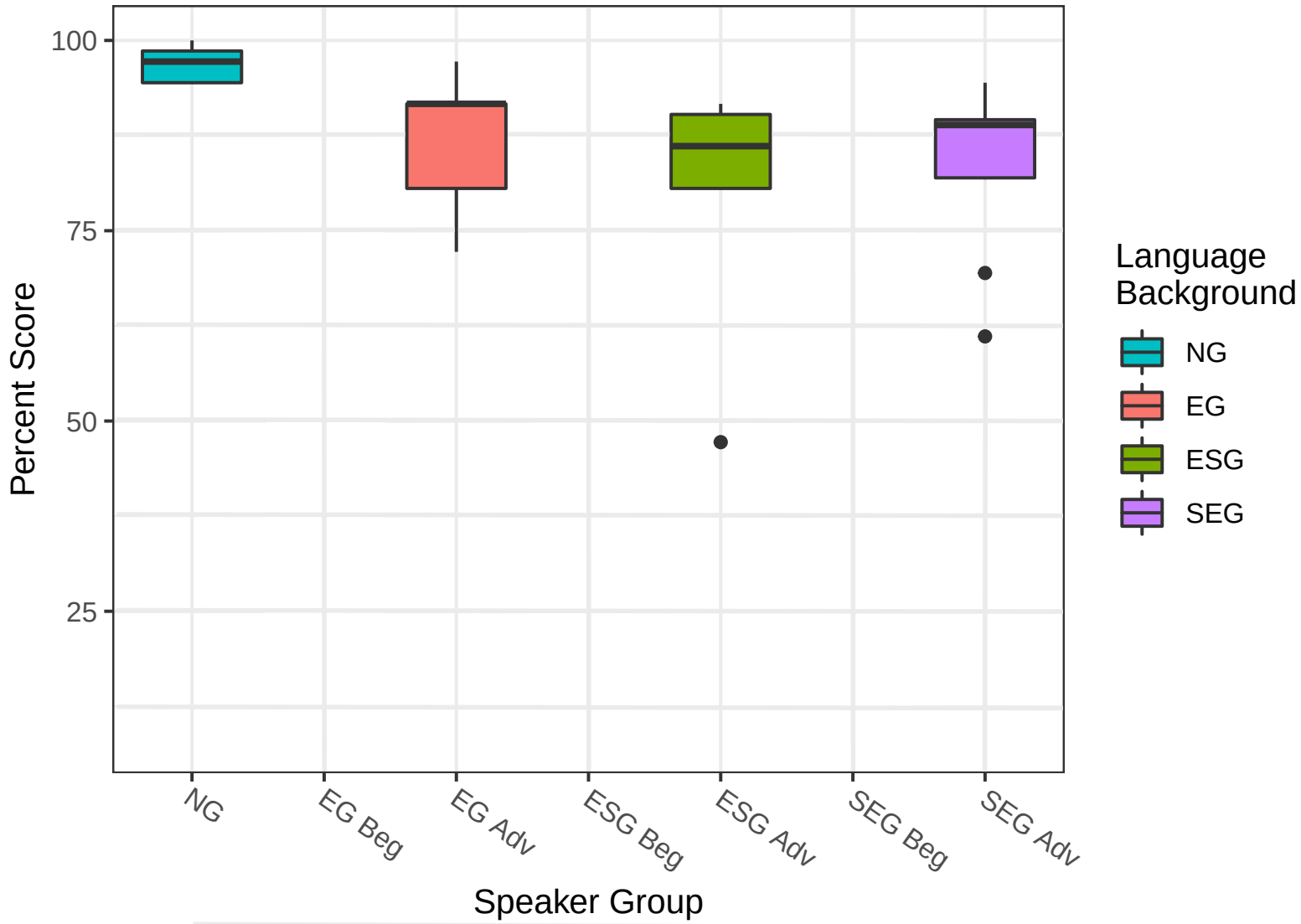

Results: E-G Beginners

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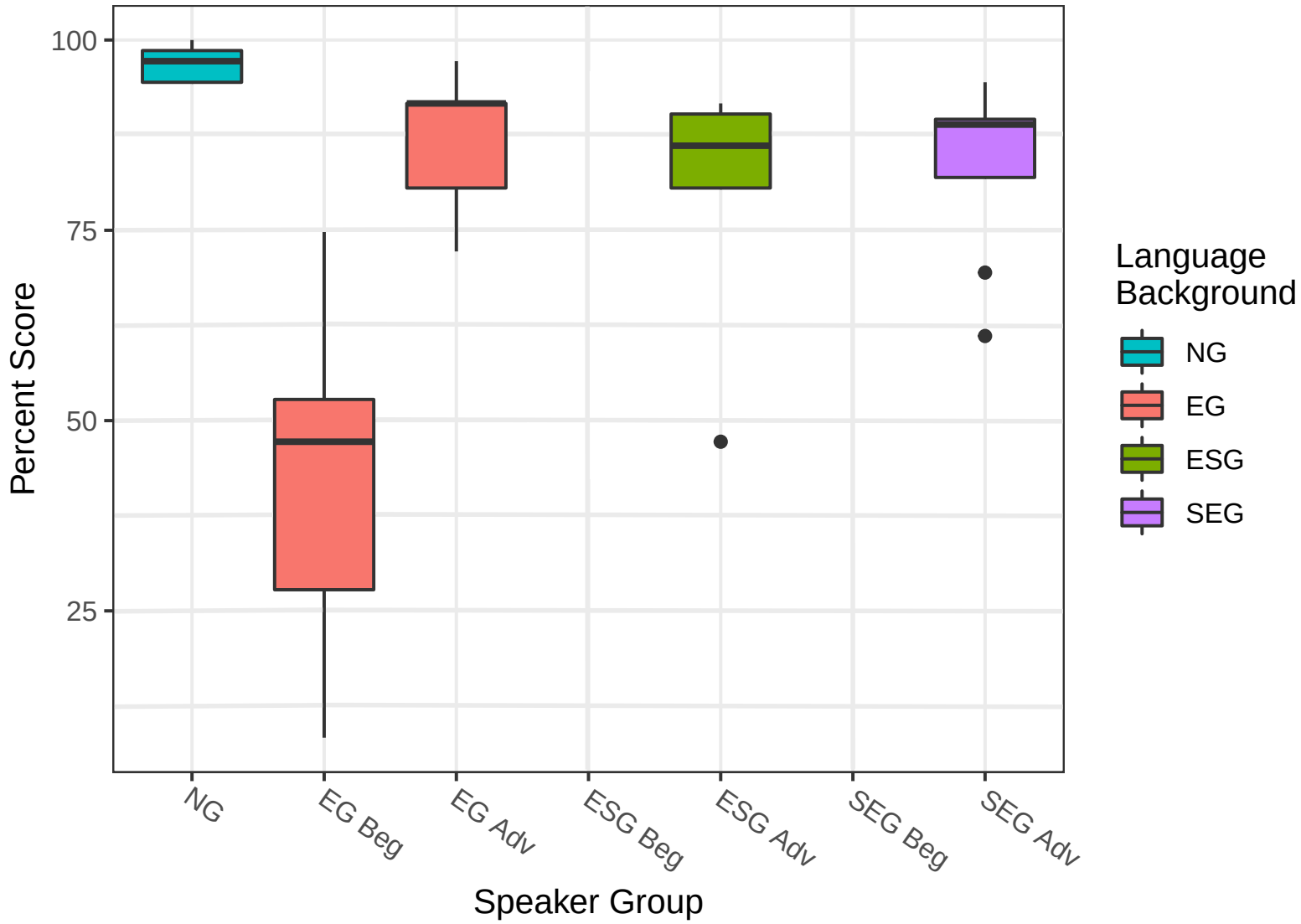

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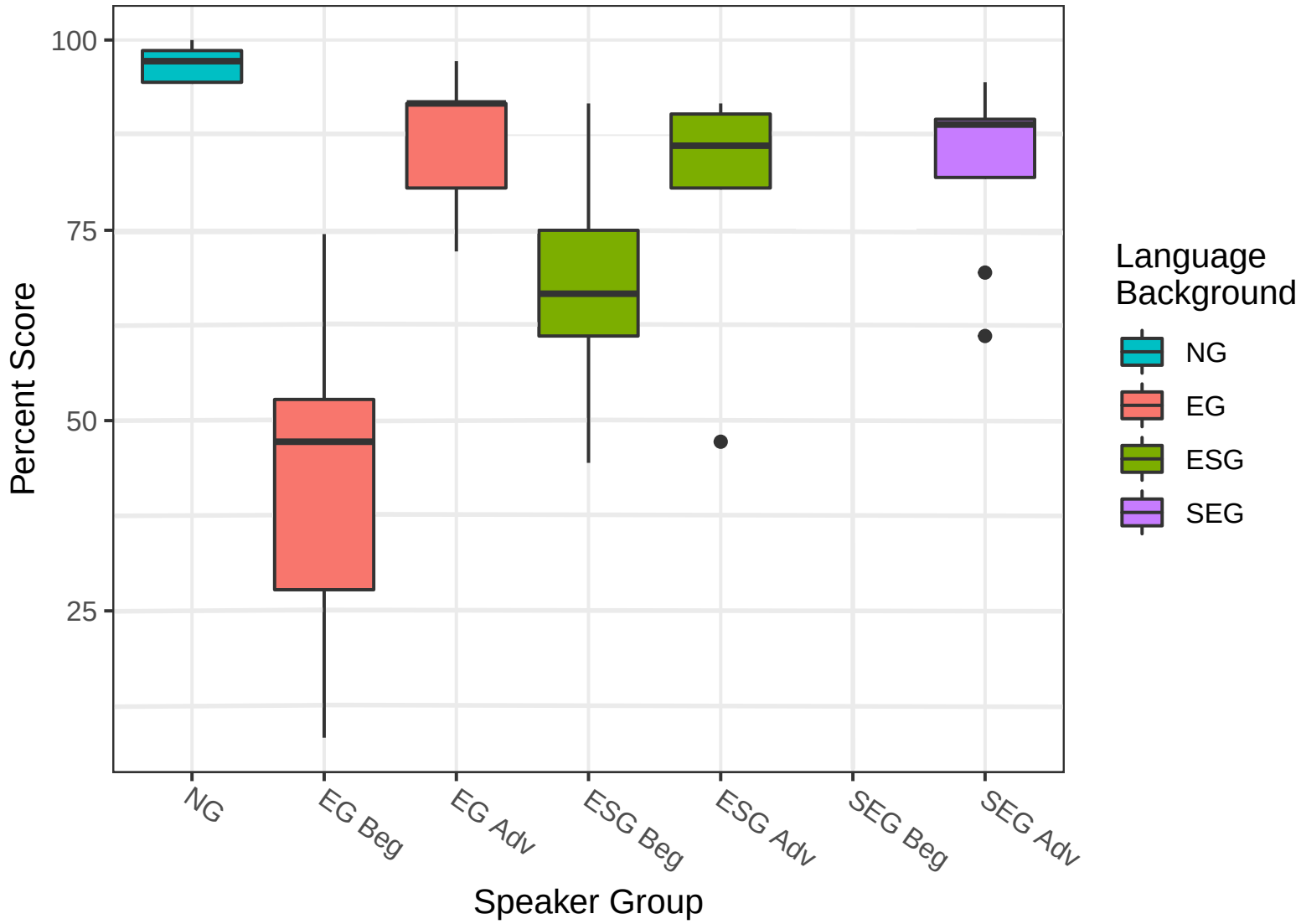

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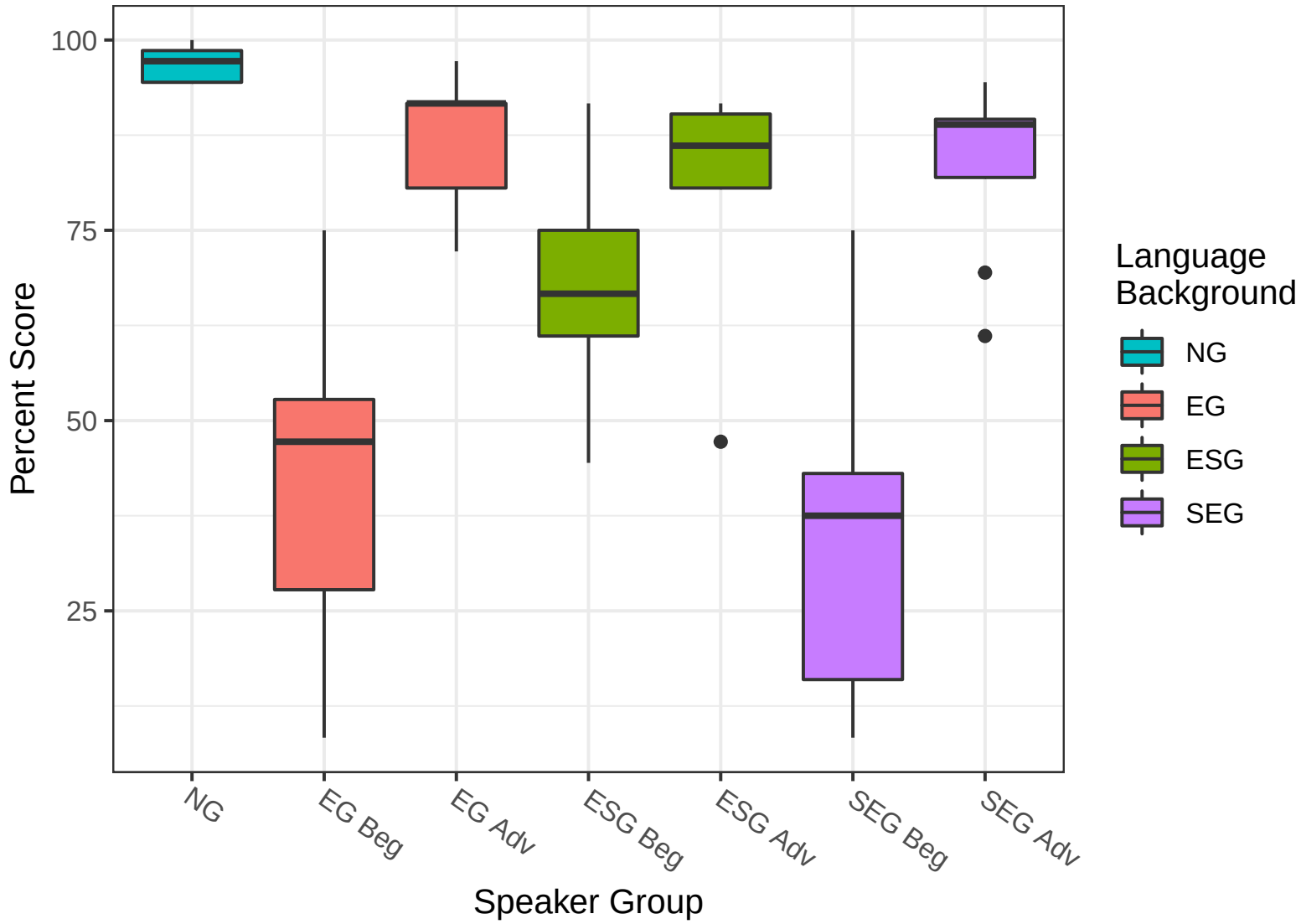

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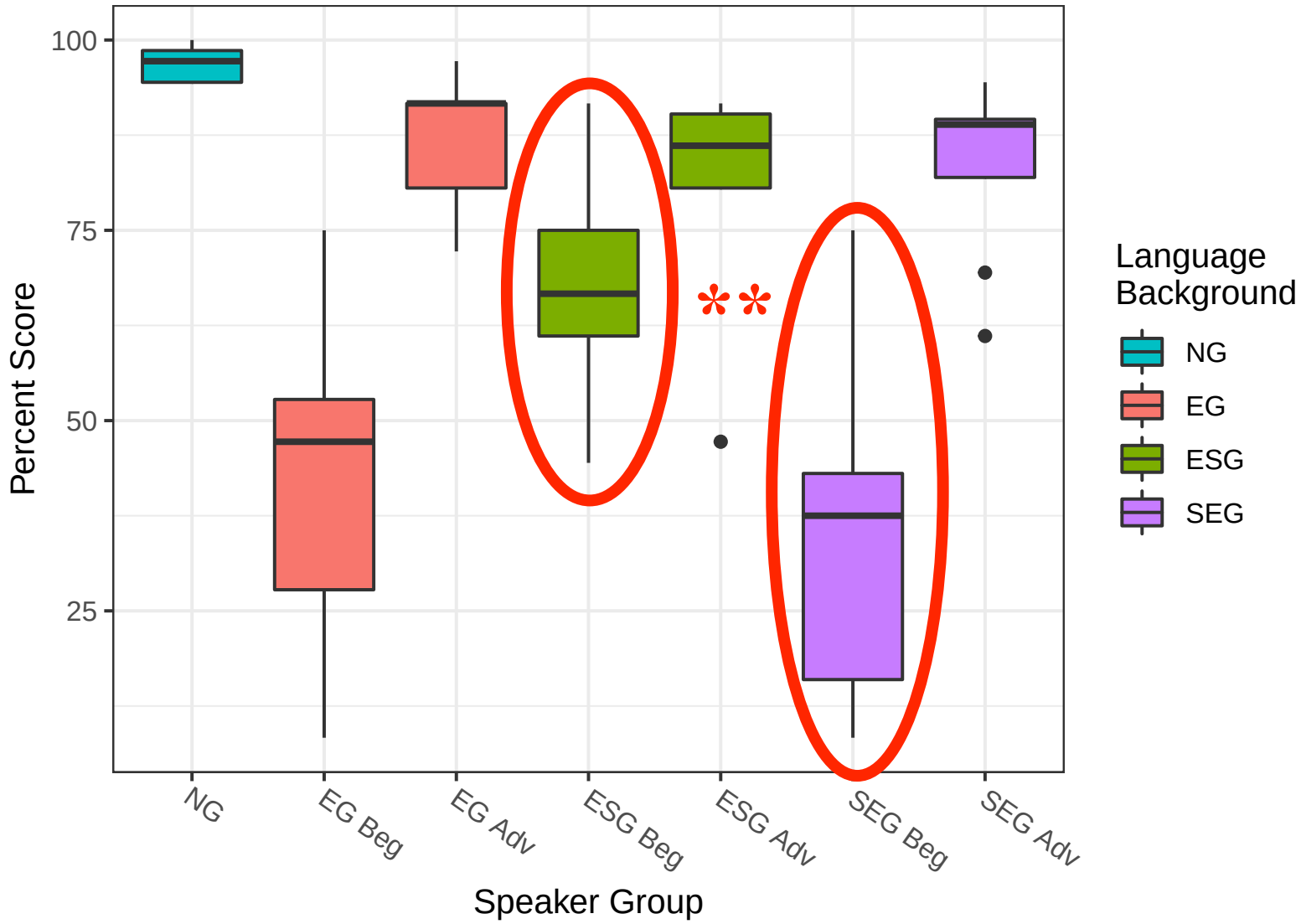

Logistic Regression

Overall Group Average = 42.88%

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	Variable	Model Estimates
Intercept		
Language Background		
Spanish Gender		
Random Effects		
R^2		

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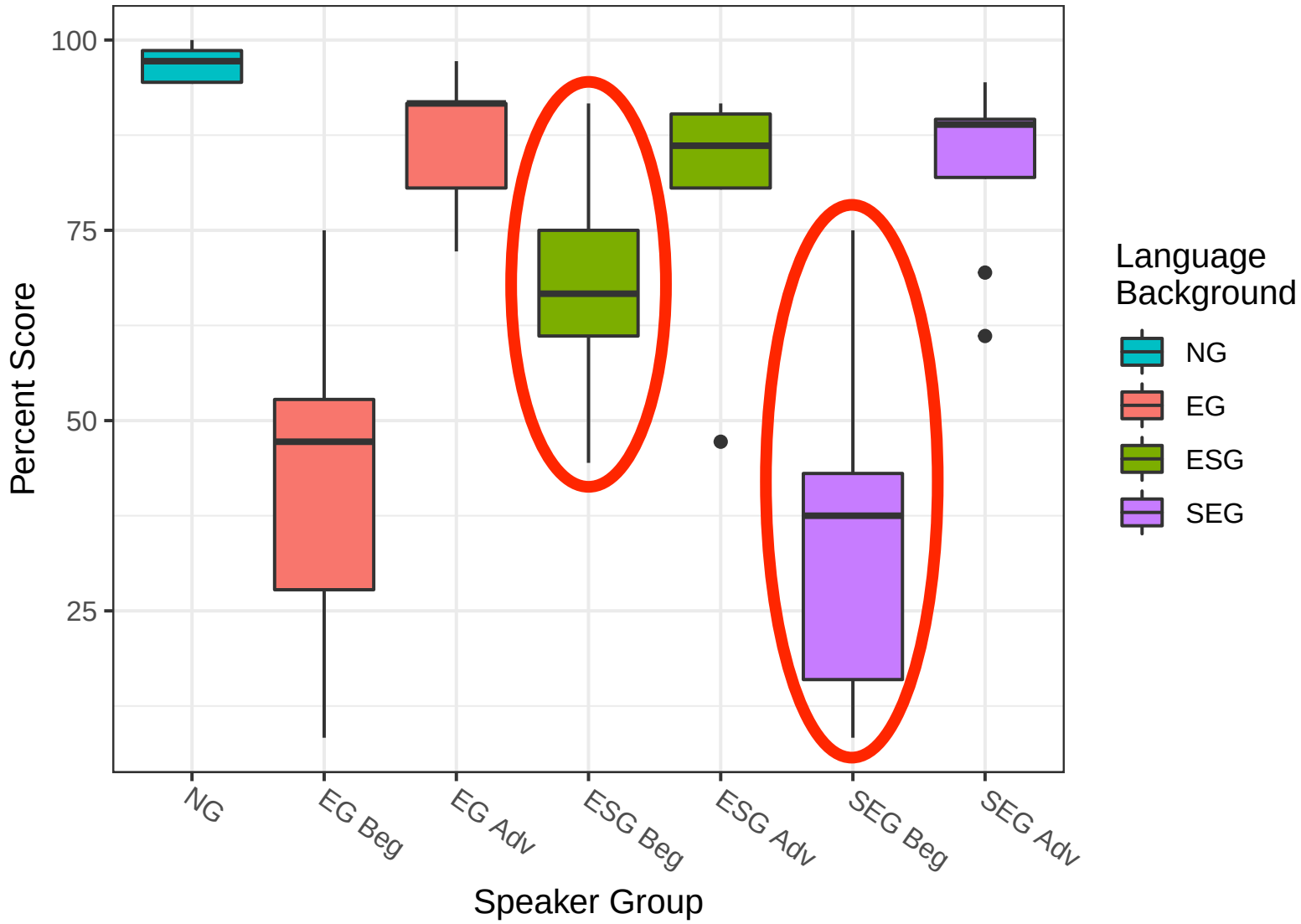

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Current follow-up work

Thank You!

Questions?

Contact:
mbrown14@bu.edu

Slides available at
meganmbrown.com

Works Cited

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