

Do we learn community-level linguistic norms based on beliefs about our partner's linguistic community?

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In a nutshell

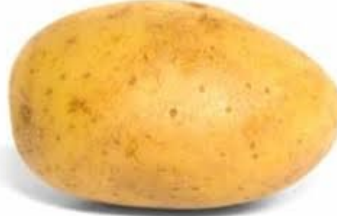
- **Background:** During dialogue, we use words that we believe to be familiar to our addressee (linguistic common ground). We assess this based on personal history with a partner (**linguistic personal common ground**; Clark, 1996). For example, if an object was named as *brolly* during conversation, then speakers will tend to **maintain that referential expression** in future references to that object, instead of using another name, e.g., *umbrella* (Brennan & Clark, 1996; Branigan et al, 2011). Critically, this tendency is modulated by beliefs about the partner's competence (Branigan et al., 2011), which suggests that beliefs affect how we learn partner-specific referential expressions. Moreover, we also assess linguistic common ground based on beliefs about community membership and community-level linguistic norms (**linguistic communal common ground**; Clark, 1996). For example, a New Yorker might describe the Rockefeller Centre as *the building with the flags outside* when conversing with someone from outside the tri-state area, but use its proper name when their conversational partner is also from New York (Isaacs & Clark, 1987). But how do we learn which words to use with a partner from another speech community and what is the role of beliefs in this process?
- **Research question:** Do we extrapolate community-level norms from linguistic personal common ground based on our beliefs about a partner's community membership?
- **Measure and predictions:** We used looked at participants' tendency to **maintain a low-frequency label** across two conversational partners, and tested whether this tendency varied depending on beliefs about the **partners' community membership**. If we generalise personal common ground based on community membership: a) participants should maintain an outsider's label with another outsider more often than with an insider, and b) previous linguistic experience with insiders should prevent generalisation across insiders.
- **Key finding:** Speakers generalise from linguistic personal common ground based on their beliefs about their partners' speech communities. In particular, they generalise from an outsider to another outsider, but not from an insider to another insider.

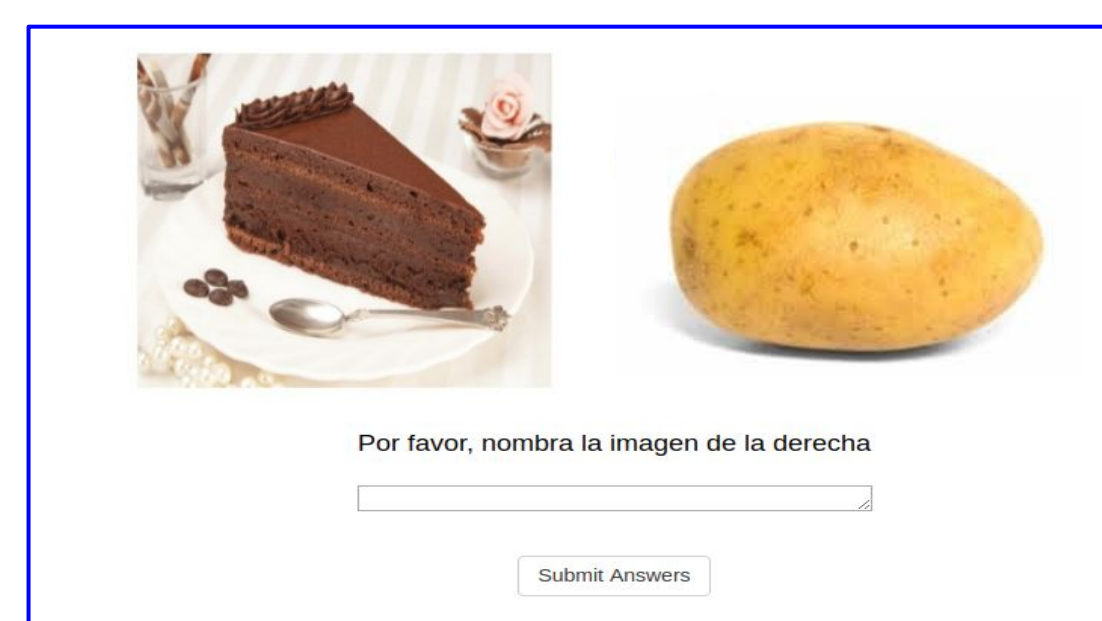
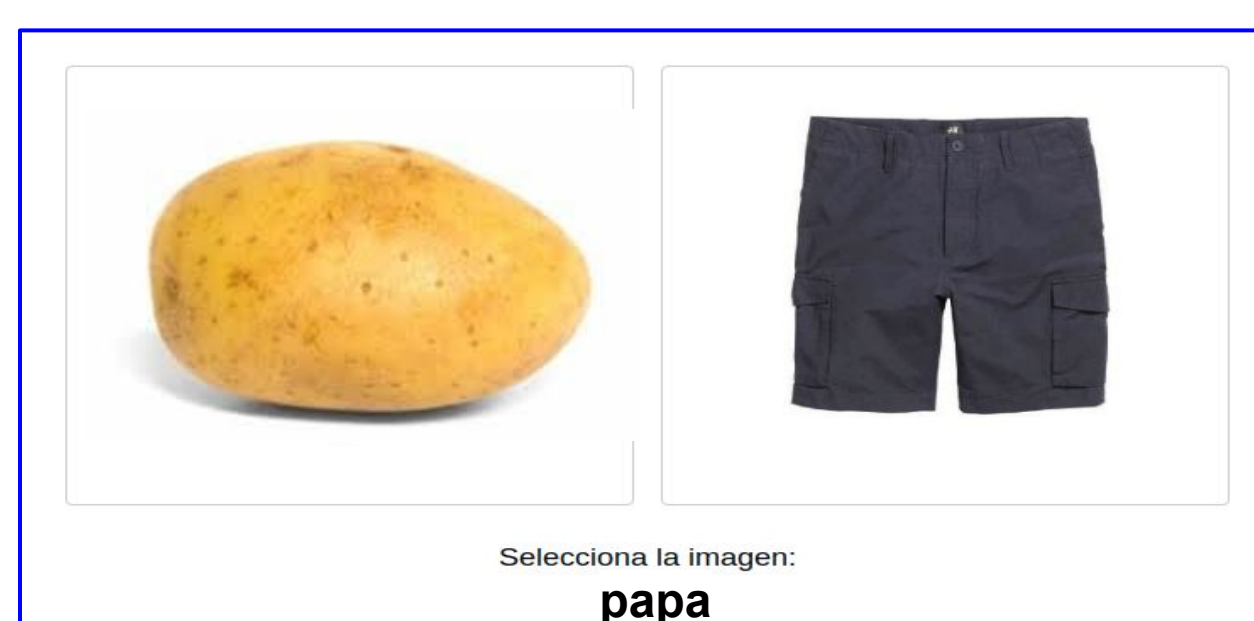
Method:

Online participants

- Exp 1: 160 Spanish individuals (18-50)
- Exp 2: 160 Mexicans (18-50)
- Exp 3: 80 Mexicans (18-50)

Materials: Picture Naming-Task

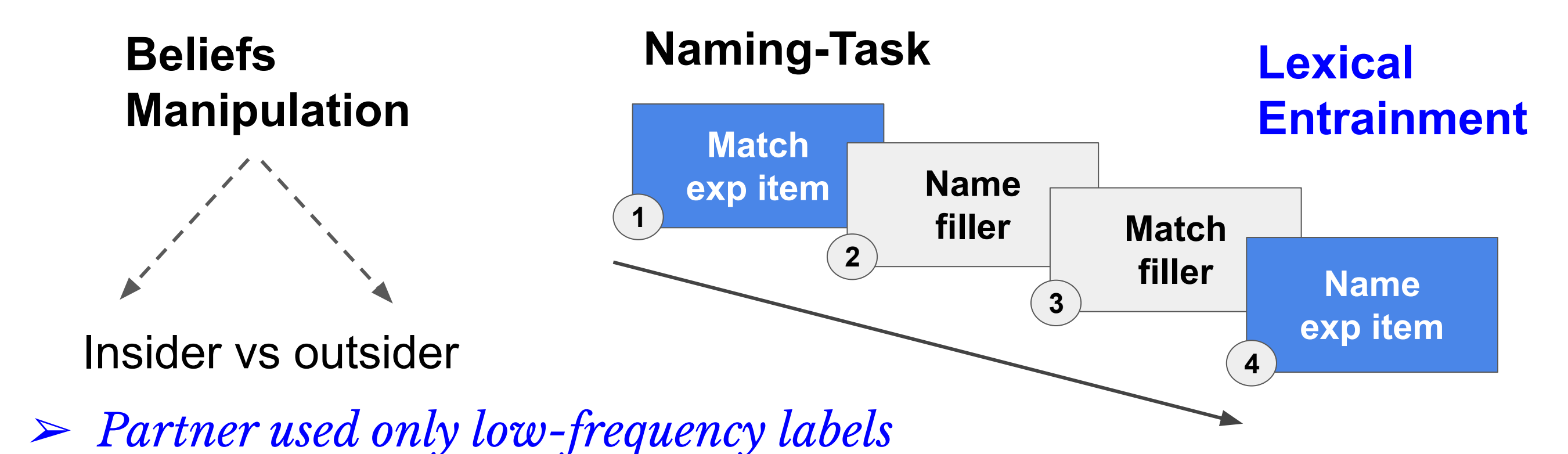
- Lexical Entrainment (Branigan et al, 2011) + Maintenance of Referential Expressions (Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs, 1986)
- Experimental Items:  **High-frequency label: *patata***
Low-frequency label: *papa*
- 21 matching trials
- 21 naming trials



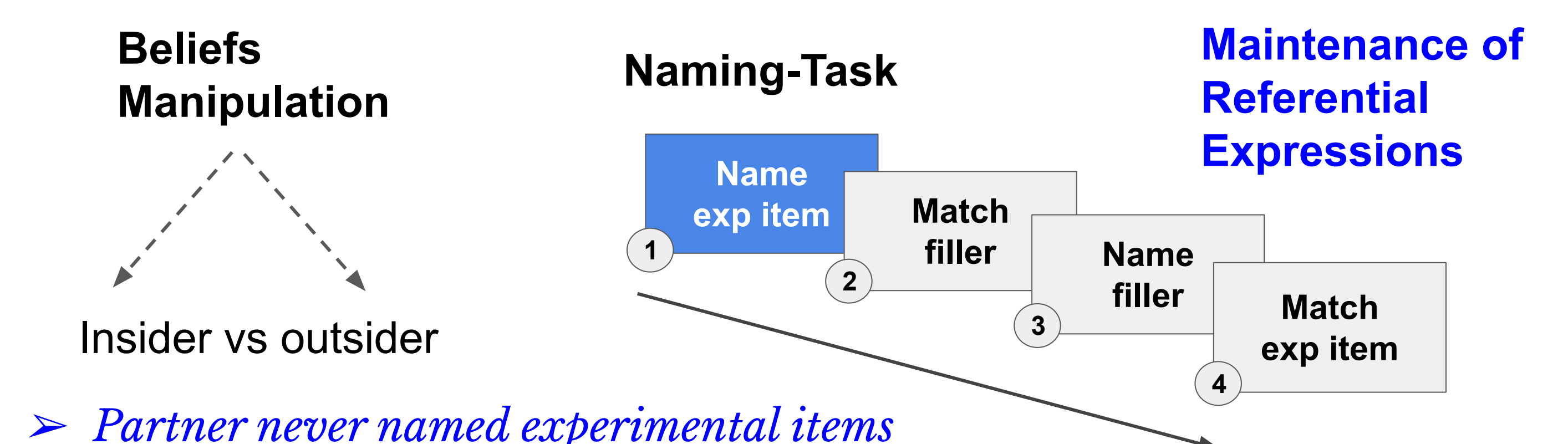
- Pre-testing for each population: low-frequency labels and acceptability

Procedure: Beliefs Manipulation and Naming-Task

Session 1: Do they accept the low-frequency label?



Session 2: Do they maintain the low-frequency label?



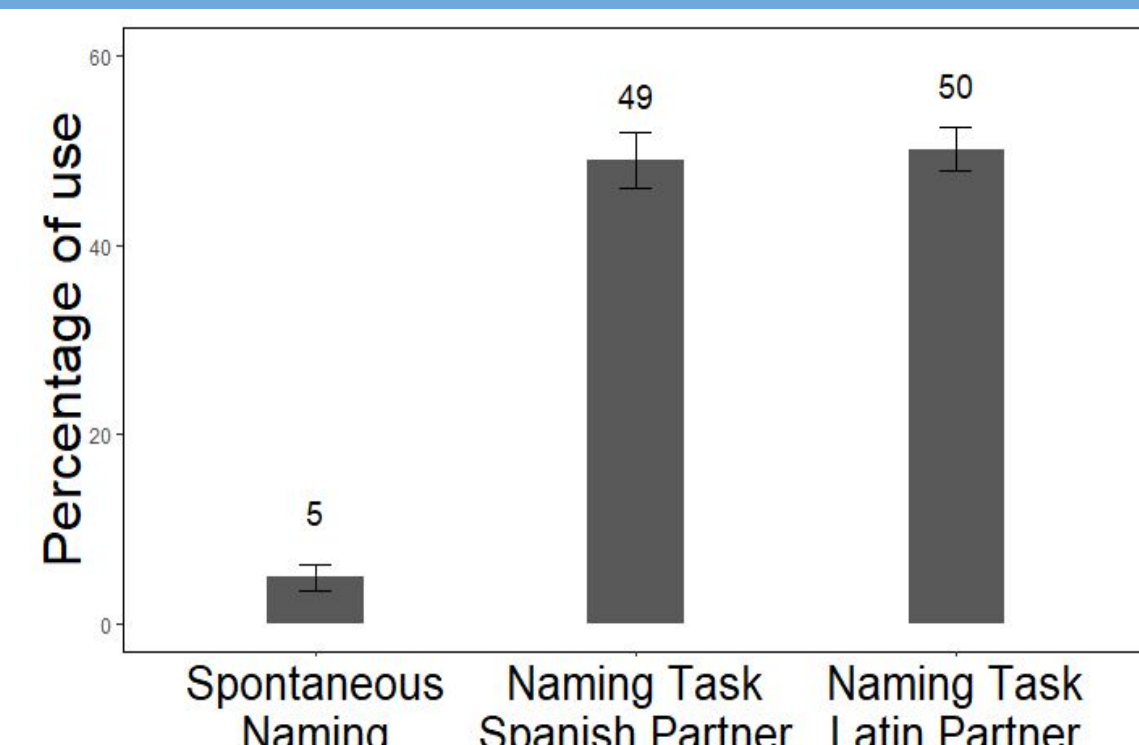
Results: Acceptance and maintenance of low-frequency label

Exp 1: Spanish sample (2*2 design)

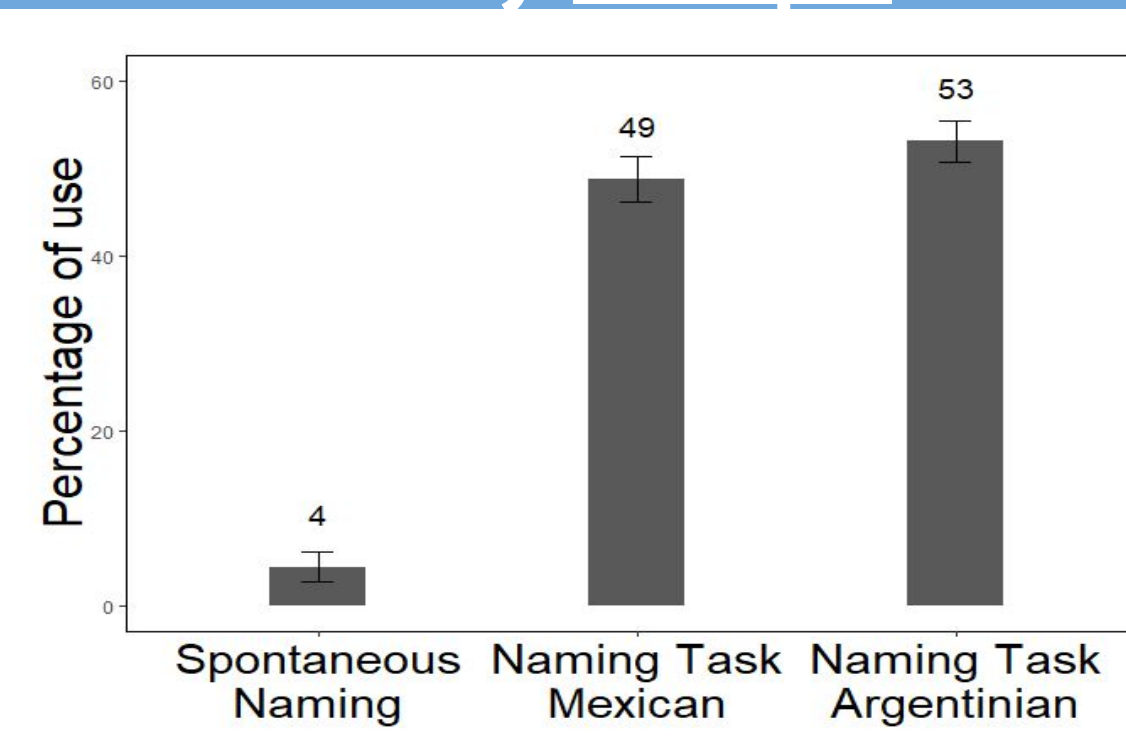
Exp 2: Mexican sample (2*2 design)

Exp 3: Linguistic Status (2)

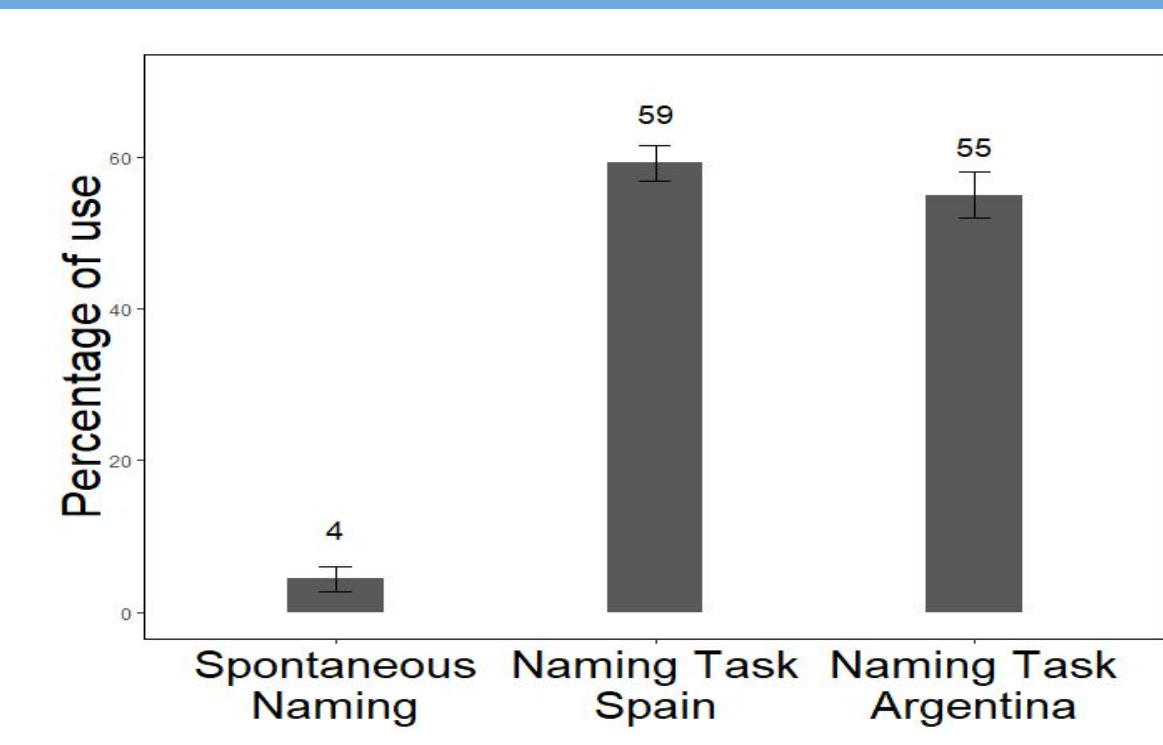
Session 1: Do they accept the low-frequency label?



- Lexical Entrainment Effect
- No effect of beliefs on Entrainment

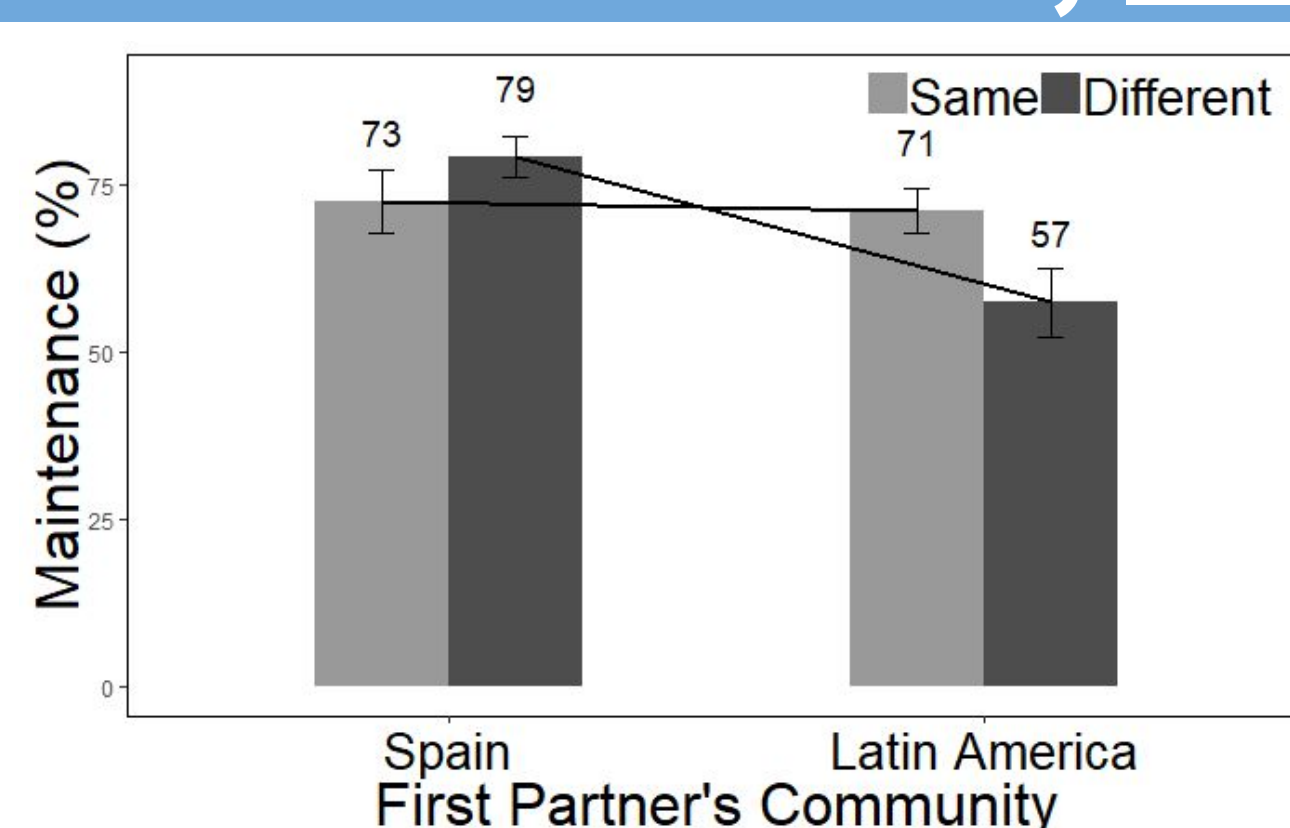


- Lexical Entrainment Effect
- No effect of beliefs on Entrainment

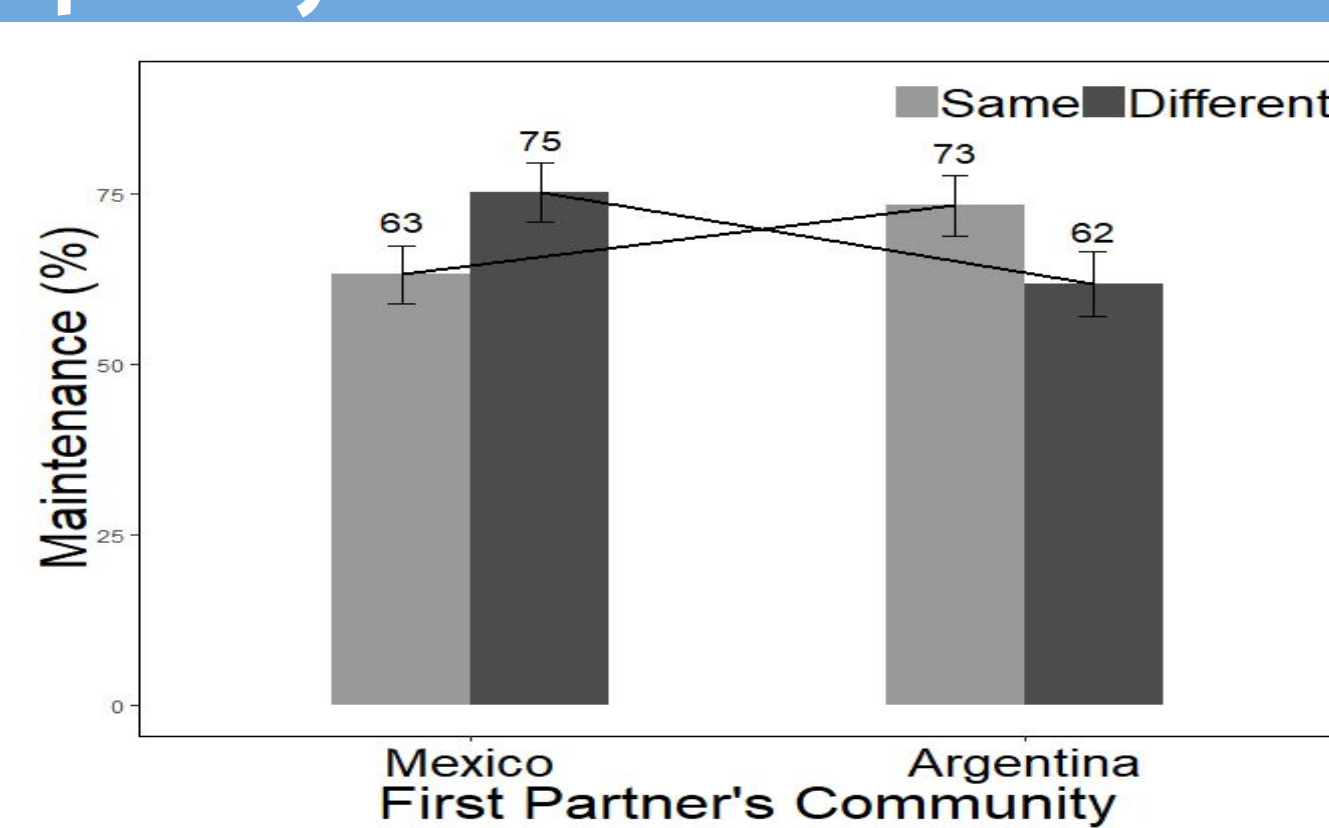


- Lexical Entrainment Effect
- No effect of beliefs on Entrainment

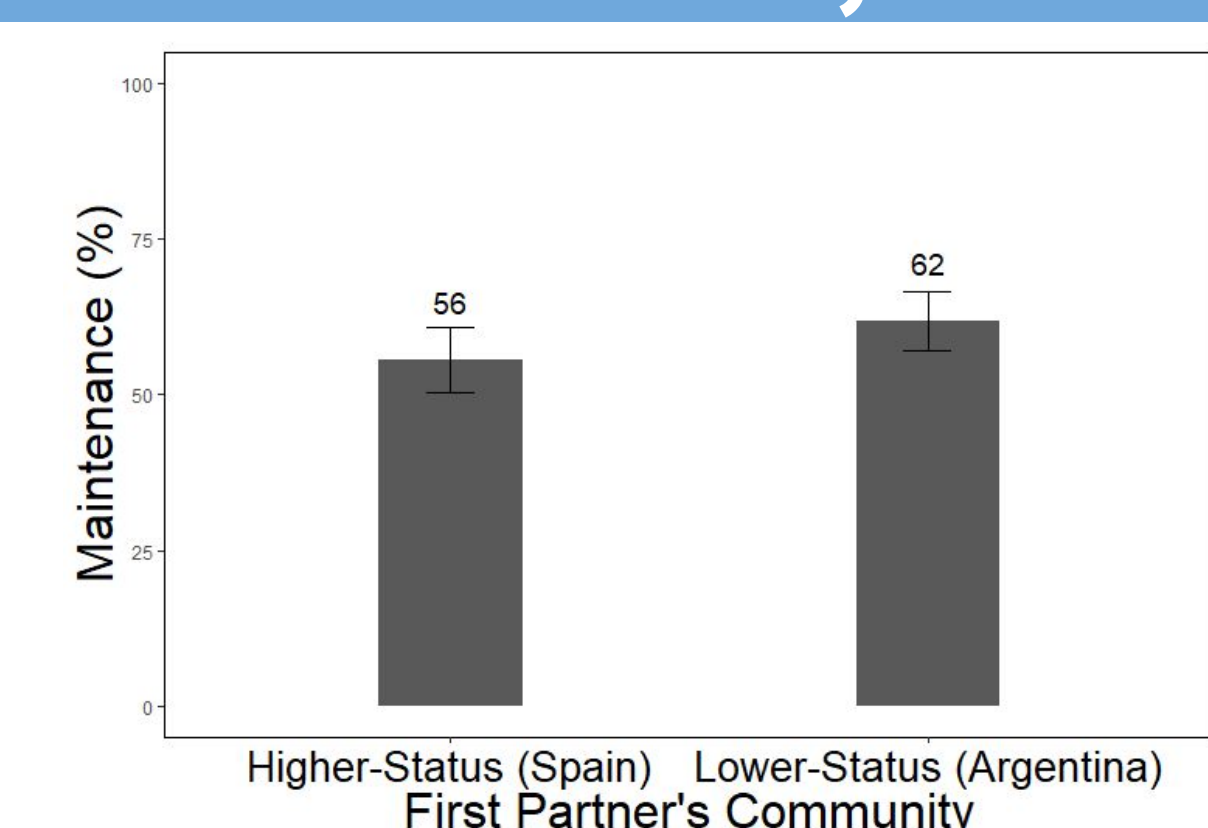
Session 2: Do they maintain the low-frequency label based on their beliefs about partners' community membership?



- Significant interaction



- Significant interaction



- No effect
- Morett (2014)

Conclusions

- These findings demonstrate that maintenance of referential expressions is affected by beliefs about community membership.
- In particular, they suggest that speakers learn other speech communities' lexical preferences by generalising linguistic personal common ground based on their beliefs about their partners' community membership.

References

Branigan, H. P., Pickering, M. J., Pearson, J., McLean, J. F., & Brown, A. (2011). The role of beliefs in lexical alignment: Evidence from dialogs with humans and computers. *Cognition*, 121(1), 41-57; Brennan, S. E., & Clark, H. H. (1996). Conceptual pacts and lexical choice in conversation. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 22(6), 1482; Clark, H. H. (1996). *Using language*. Cambridge university press; Clark, H. H., & Wilkes-Gibbs, D. (1986). Referring as a collaborative process. *Cognition*, 22(1), 1-39; Isaacs, E. A., & Clark, H. H. (1987). References in conversation between experts and novices. *Journal of experimental psychology: general*, 116(1), 26.