

# ACCEPTABILITY JUDGEMENTS ON CONTRASTIVE DIALOGUES INVOLVING ELLIPSIS

Master's thesis

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# CONTRASTIVE DIALOGUES INVOLVING ELLIPSIS



Fragment theory



Research question & hypotheses



Study design



Participants



Results



Conclusions



Discussion

# FRAGMENT THEORY

A: Mary stole the cookie.

B: No, Peter.

# FRAGMENT THEORY

A: Mary stole the cookie.

B: No, Peter ~~stole the cookie~~.

# FRAGMENT THEORY

A: Mary stole the cookie.

B: No, Peter ~~stole the cookie~~.

Fragment

remnant of ellipsis

# FRAGMENT THEORY

A: Mary stole the cookie.

B: No, [Peter]<sub>F</sub>

## Contrastive focus F

- given alternative element for which the predicate actually holds
- must bear pitch accent

# FRAGMENT THEORY

A: Mary stole the cookie.

B: No, Peter.

assign  
category to  
remnant



find correlate  
in antecedent  
clause



construct  
elided phrase

# FRAGMENT THEORY

A: Mary stole the cookie.

B: No, Peter **DP=Remnant**

assign  
category to  
remnant



find correlate  
in antecedent  
clause



construct  
elided phrase



# FRAGMENT THEORY

A: **Mary**<sub>DP=Correlate</sub> stole the cookie.

B: No, Peter<sub>DP=Remnant</sub>

assign  
category to  
remnant



find correlate  
in antecedent  
clause



construct  
elided phrase

# FRAGMENT THEORY

A: Mary<sub>DP=Correlate</sub> stole the cookie.

B: No, Peter<sub>DP=Remnant</sub> ~~stole the cookie.~~

assign  
category to  
remnant




find correlate  
in antecedent  
clause



**construct  
elided phrase**

# RESEARCH QUESTION



What is the most effective medium  
for obtaining acceptability  
judgements about dialogues  
involving contrastive focus?

# FACTORS



**Modality**



**Emphasis**



**Fragment type**

# FACTORS



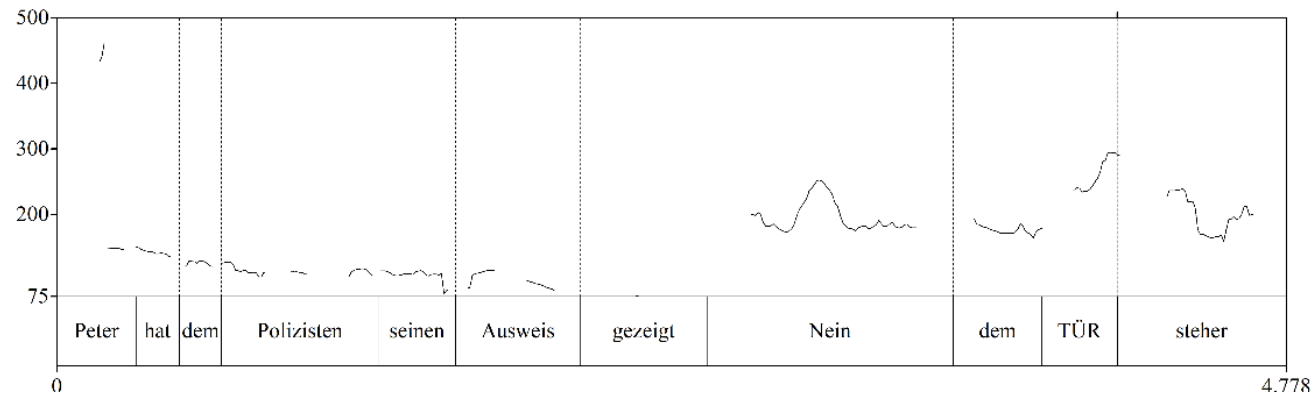
Modality

written

A: Peter showed his identity card to the police officer.

B: No, the bouncer.

auditory



# FACTORS



Modality

written

fragments are less common in  
written language

auditory

fragments are more common in  
spoken language

# HYPOTHESES



**Modality**  
auditory > written

# FACTORS



Emphasis

with  
emphasis

A: Peter showed his identity card to the POLICE OFFICER.

B: No, the BOUNCER.

without  
emphasis

A: Peter showed his identity card to the police officer.

B: No, the bouncer.

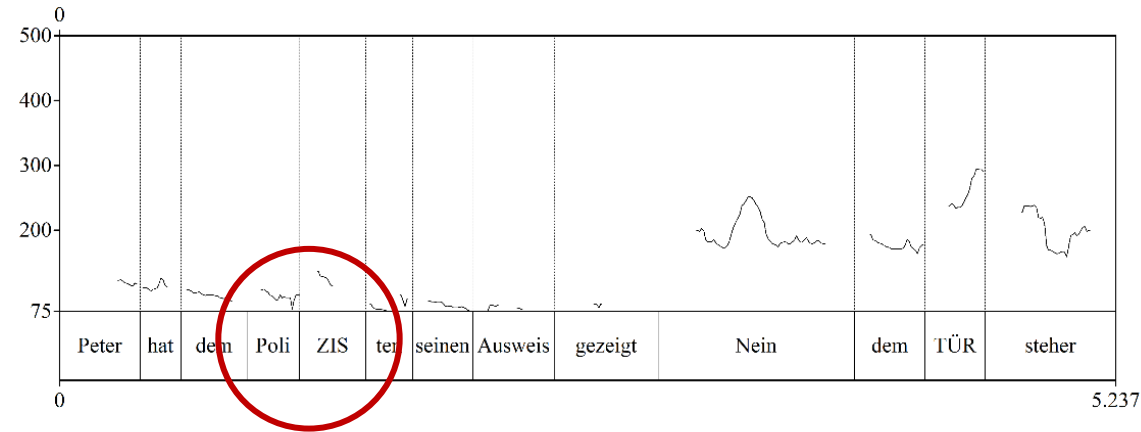


# FACTORS

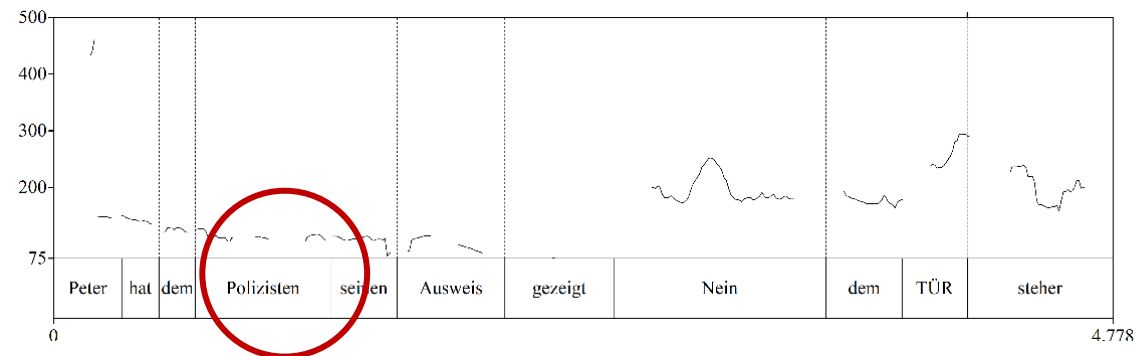


## Emphasis

with  
emphasis



without  
emphasis



# FACTORS



Emphasis

with  
emphasis

easier to identify  
correlate-remnant pairing

without  
emphasis

more difficult to identify  
correlate-remnant pairing

# HYPOTHESES



## **Modality**

auditory > written



## **Emphasis**

emphasis on contrasting words > lacking emphasis

# FACTORS



Fragment  
type

lexical

A: Peter showed his identity card to the POLICE OFFICER.  
B: No, the BOUNCER.

functional

A: Peter worked at the cinema FROM 6pm.  
B: No, UNTIL 6pm.

# FACTORS



Fragment  
type

lexical

- bear stress
- more focussed on in reading

functional

- do not bear stress
- less focussed on in reading

# HYPOTHESES



## **Modality**

auditory > written



## **Emphasis**

emphasis on contrasting words > lacking emphasis



## **Fragment type**

lexical fragments > functional fragments

# STUDY DESIGN

## Modality

- written
- auditory

## Emphasis

- with
- without

## Fragment type

- lexical
- functional

# STUDY DESIGN

## Modality

- written
- auditory

between-subject

## Emphasis

- with
- without

within-subject

## Fragment type

- lexical
- functional



# STUDY DESIGN

## Acceptability Judgement Task

- rate naturalness of speaker B's answer
- 7-point Likert scale
- forced choice
- no time limit

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## Acceptability Judgement Task

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- forced choice
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### Ihre Bewertung

In der Studie werden Ihnen die Dialoge als Text präsentiert. Großbuchstaben stellen dar, welche Wörter von den Sprecher:innen betont werden. Bitte lesen Sie sich den Dialog durch.

Wie natürlich wirkt die Aussage der Sprecherin B auf Sie?

A: Peter hat BIS August Miete gezahlt.

B: Nein, AB August.

völlig unnatürlich   ☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5   ☐ 6   ☐ 7   völlig natürlich

Bitte geben Sie eine Bewertung ab.

# STUDY DESIGN

## Acceptability Judgement Task

- rate naturalness of speaker B's answer
- 7-point Likert scale
- forced choice
- no time limit

Ihre Bewertung

In der Studie werden Ihnen die Dialoge als Text präsentiert. Großbuchstaben stellen dar, welche Wörter von den Sprecher:innen betont werden. Bitte lesen Sie sich den Dialog durch.

Wie natürlich wirkt die Aussage der Sprecherin B auf Sie?

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völlig unnatürlich   ☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☒ 5   ☐ 6   ☐ 7   völlig natürlich

WEITER

# PARTICIPANTS



n = 100



crowdsourced from Prolific



German native speakers



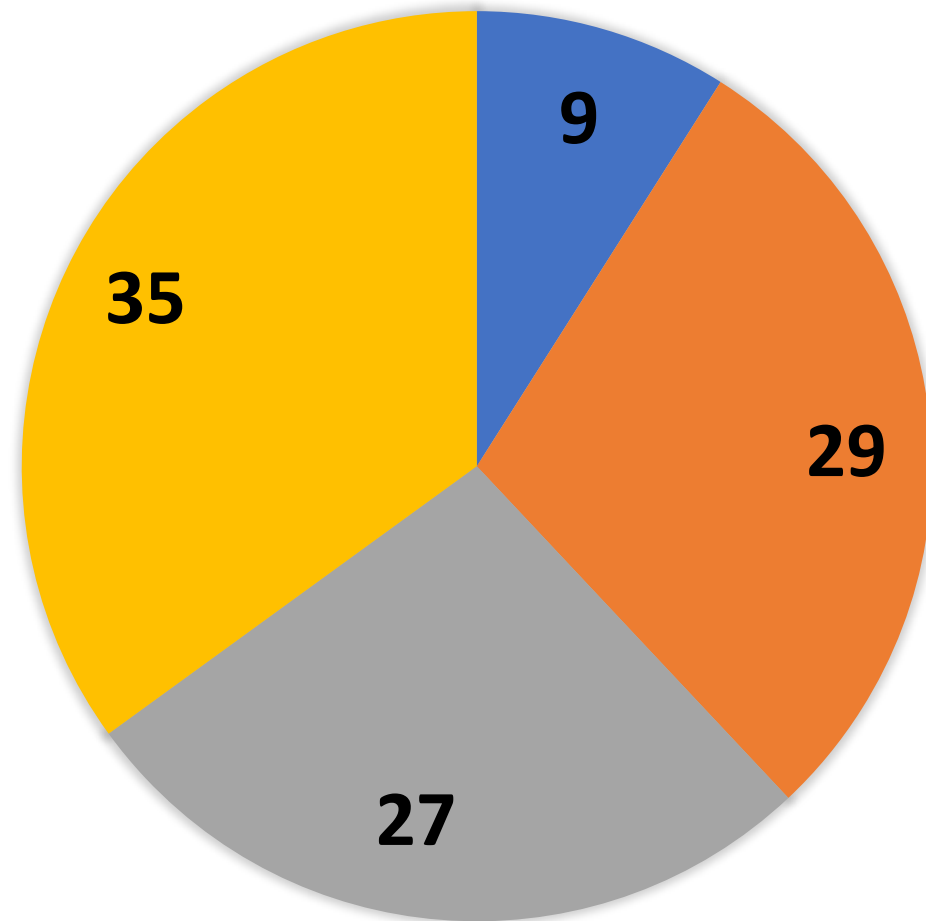
age between 19-73 years (m = 35.5)



69 males, 29 females, 2 diverse

# PARTICIPANTS' HIGHEST DEGREE

- without high school diploma
- completed high school
- with bachelor's degree
- with higher degree



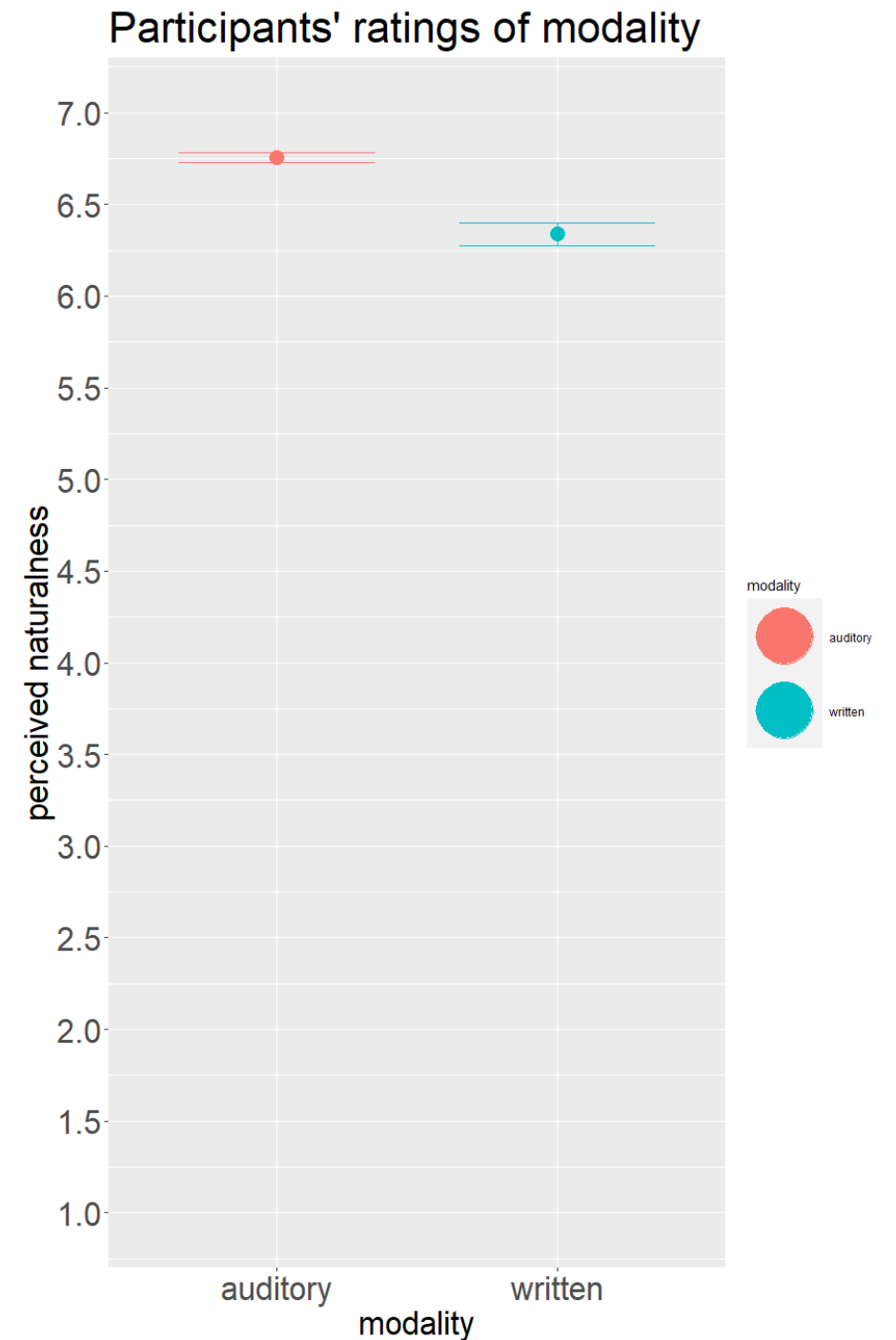


# RESULTS

# RESULTS

## Modality

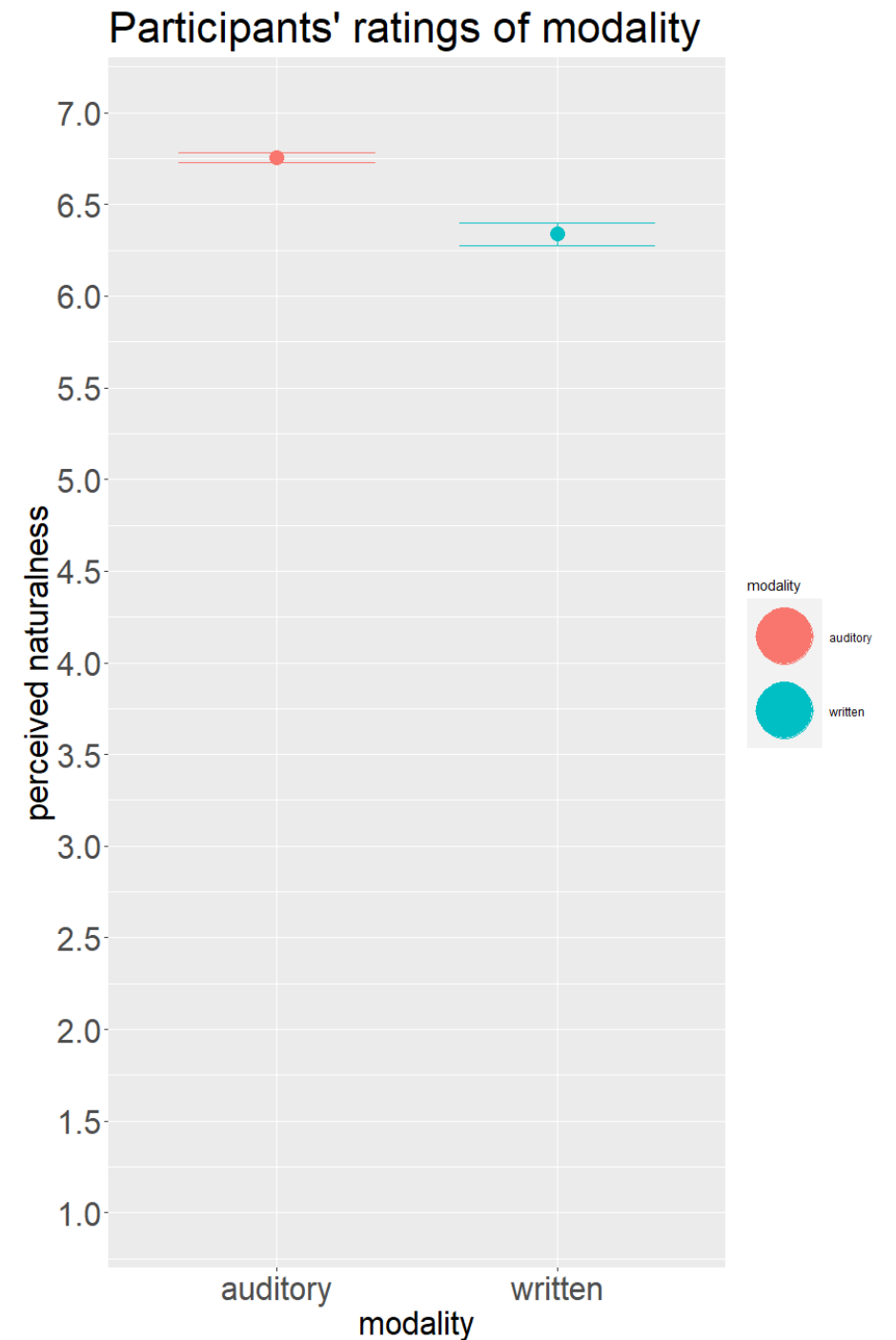
- **auditory:**  
 $m = 6.76, sd = 0.53$
- **written:**  
 $m = 6.34, sd = 1.11$



# RESULTS

## Modality

- **written:**  
 $\beta_1 = -1.99$
- as hypothesised
- significant effect:  
 $p = 0.016$

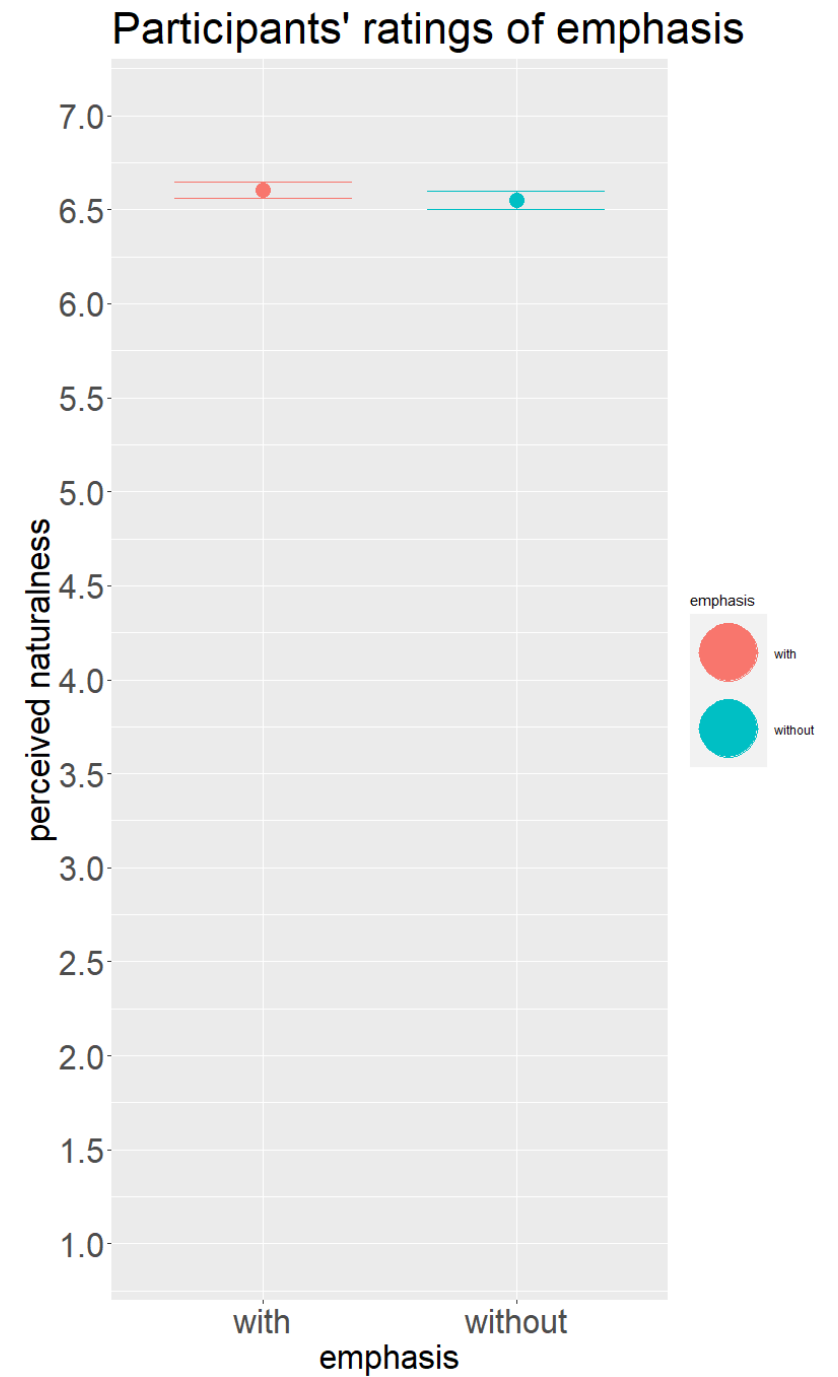




# RESULTS

## Emphasis

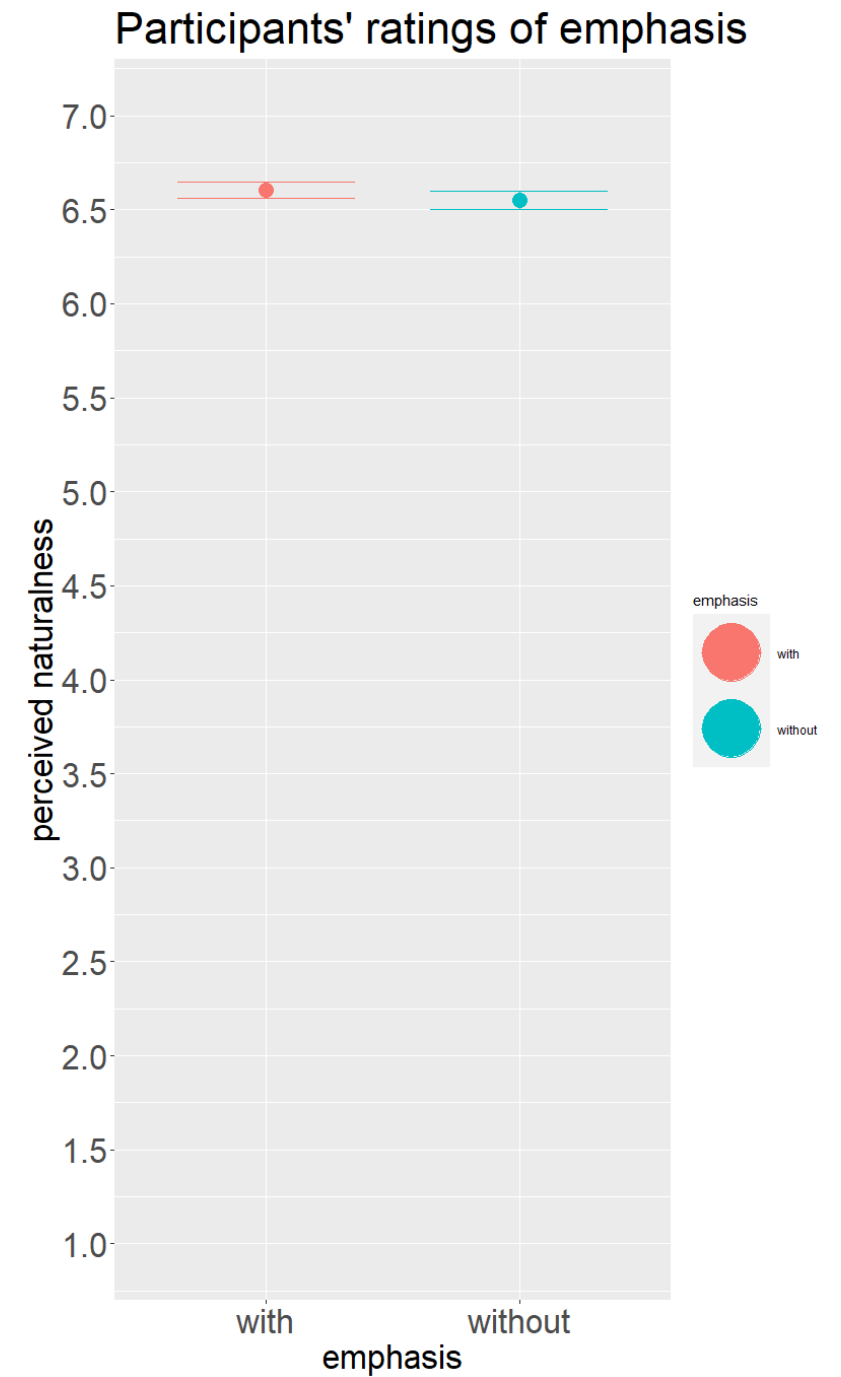
- **with emphasis:**  
 $m = 6.60, sd = 0.80$
- **without emphasis:**  
 $m = 6.55, sd = 0.91$



# RESULTS

## Emphasis

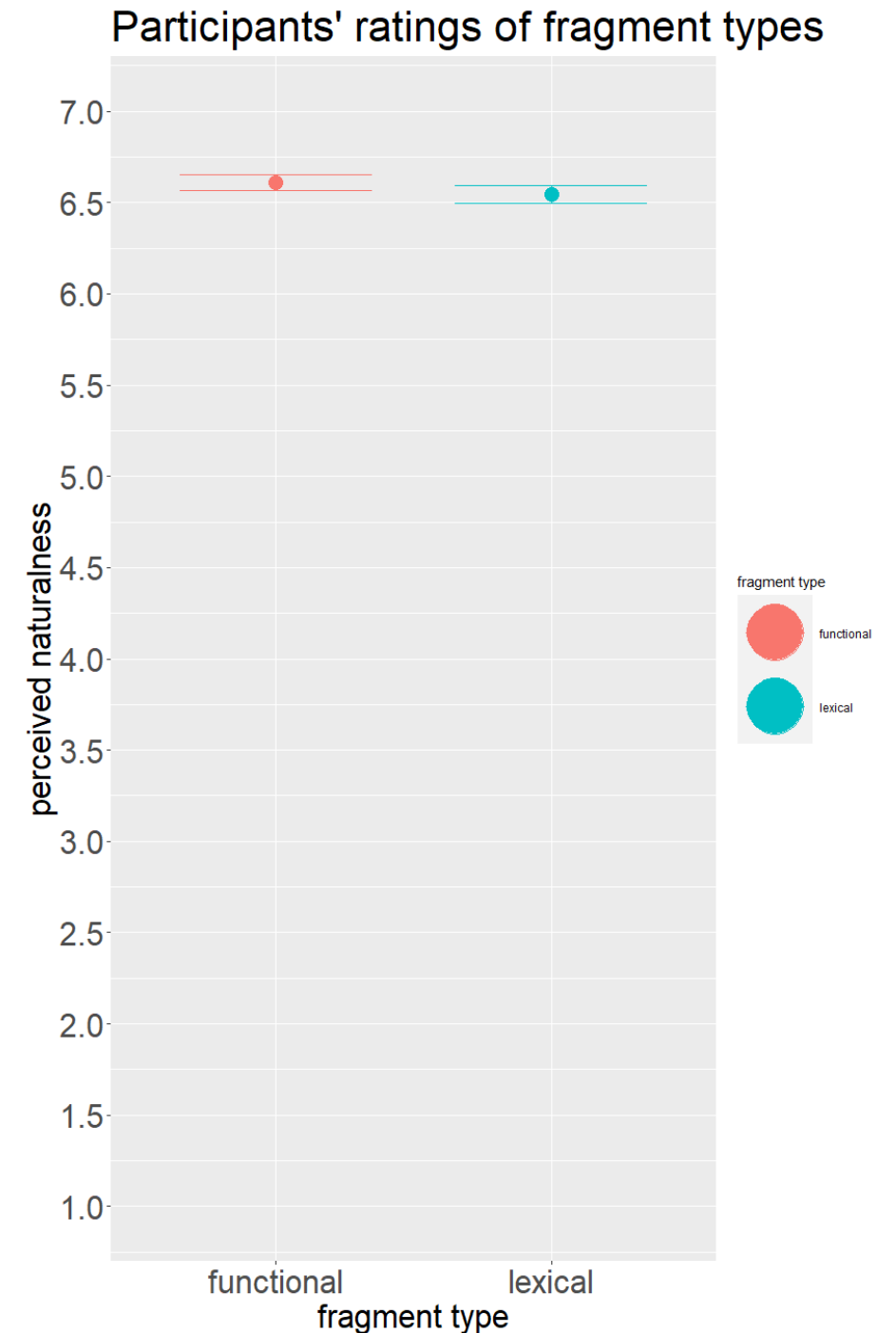
- without:  
 $\beta_1 = -0.25$
- as hypothesised
- significant effect:  
 $p = 0.027$



# RESULTS

## Fragment type

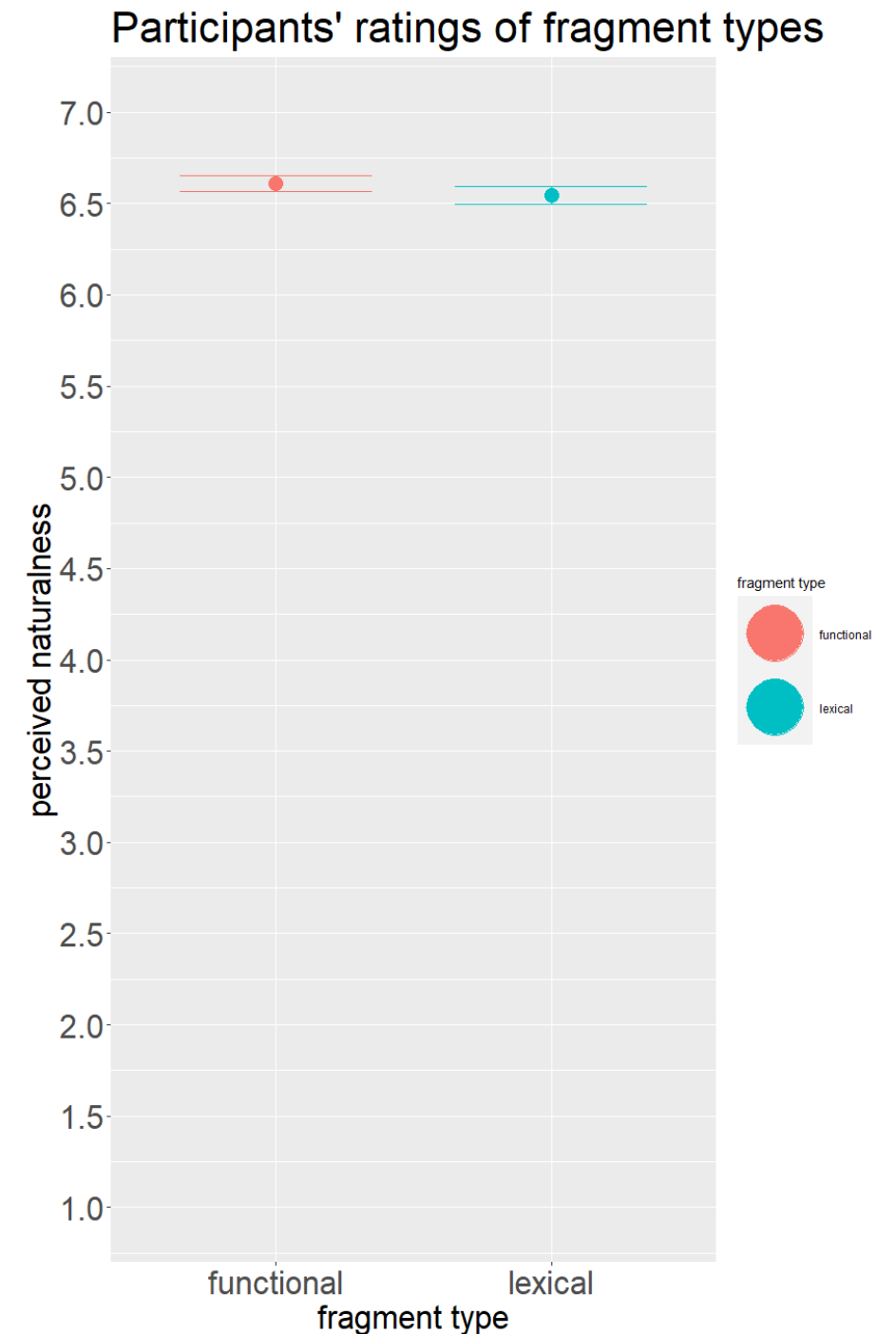
- **functional:**  
 $m = 6.61, sd = 0.82$
- **lexical:**  
 $m = 6.55, sd = 0.90$



# RESULTS

## Fragment type

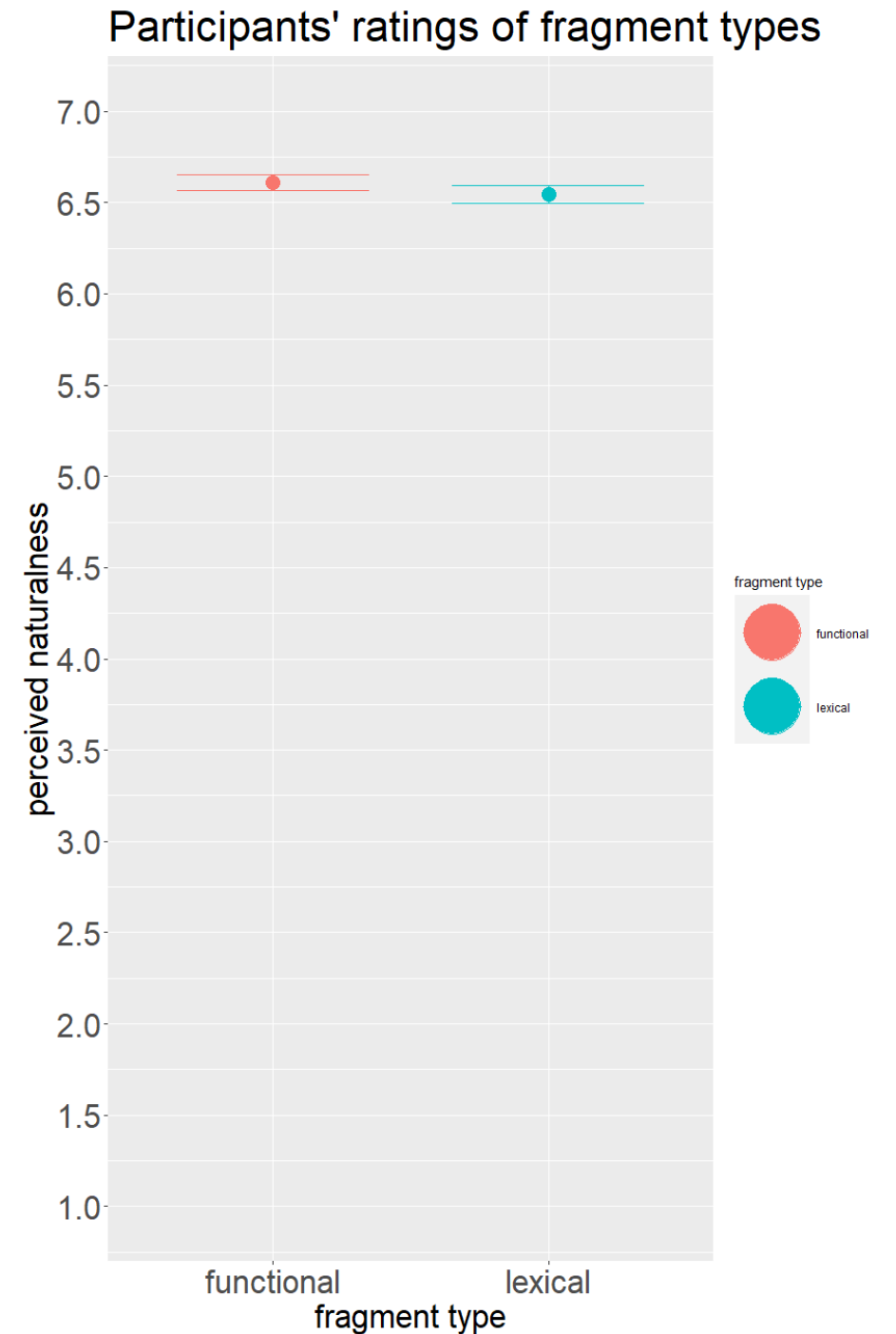
- **lexical:**  
 $\beta_1 = -0.49$
- **inverse** to hypothesis
- **significantly effect:**  
 $p < 0.01$



# RESULTS

Fragment type

Potential explanation for  
inverse trend?



# INVERSE TREND

**functional**

A: Peter worked at the cinema FROM 6pm.

B: No, UNTIL 6pm.

**lexical**

A: Peter showed his identity card to the POLICE OFFICER.

B: No, the BOUNCER.

# INVERSE TREND

## functional

A: Peter worked at the cinema FROM 6pm.

B: No, UNTIL 6pm.

prepositions have  
opposing meaning:  
**binary contrast**

## lexical

A: Peter showed his identity card to the POLICE OFFICER.

B: No, the BOUNCER.

# INVERSE TREND

## functional

A: Peter worked at the cinema FROM 6pm.

B: No, UNTIL 6pm.

prepositions have  
opposing meaning:  
**binary contrast**

## lexical

A: Peter showed his identity card to the POLICE OFFICER.

B: No, the BOUNCER.


nouns denote  
alternative referents:  
**non-binary contrast**



# INVERSE TREND

prepositions have  
opposing meaning:  
**binary contrast**

nouns denote  
alternative referents:  
**non-binary contrast**



The clearer the contrast, the  
more natural the dialogue?

# CONCLUSIONS

accepted hypotheses

emphasis and  
modality affect  
judgements on con-  
trastive fragments

# CONCLUSIONS

## accepted hypotheses

emphasis and  
modality affect  
judgements on con-  
trastive fragments

## inverse trend

- functional  
fragments rated  
more natural
- perhaps due to  
clearer contrast?

# CONCLUSIONS

## accepted hypotheses

emphasis and modality affect judgements on contrastive fragments

## inverse trend

- functional fragments rated more natural
- perhaps due to clearer contrast?

## further research

- influence of clarity of contrast
- compare phrasal answers to one-word answers

Thank you for listening!

# DISCUSSION



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# FRAGMENT THEORY

A: Mary stole the cookie.

B: No, Peter ~~stole the cookie~~.

Licensing condition

only given material can be omitted

# PREVIOUS STUDIES



## Parallelism

A: Marie stellt **ihrem** **Vater** ihren Freund vor.

Mary introduces her.**SG.DAT** father.**SG.DAT** her friend PART

‘Mary introduces her friend to her father.’

B: Nein, **ihrem** **Bruder**.

no her.**SG.DAT** brother.**SG.DAT**

‘No, her brother.’

- category
- case
- number
- thematic role
- prosodic weight



# PREVIOUS STUDIES



## Locality

H1

Local contrasts (B) are preferred over nonlocal contrasts (B')

stimuli

A: John took the poodle to the park.

B: No, the zoo. (local contrast with *the park*)

B': No, the pug. (nonlocal contrast with *the poodle*)

result

processors rate local contrasts as more natural

# PREVIOUS STUDIES



**Emphasis:**  
Pitch accent

**H1**

Does pitch accent influence the interpretation of ambiguous replacives?

**stimuli**

- (1) ROGER insisted that Alice was reliable, not ANDREW
- (2) Roger insisted that ALICE was reliable, not ANDREW

**result**

Pitch accent significantly affects the choice of the correlate

# PREVIOUS STUDIES



**Emphasis:**  
Orthography

## capitalisation

- nouns are capitalised in German
- L1 and L2 speakers use orthography to process word-class information

## colour highlighting

- input enhancement for second language learning
- orthographic marking facilitates noticing and understanding of L2 patterns

# PREVIOUS STUDIES



## Modality

**H1**

“Spoken constructions” receive higher ratings in an auditory questionnaire

**stimuli**

Their being unaware of the situation annoyed Rob

**result**

modality had no significant effect

# PREVIOUS STUDIES



## Modality

H1

Do orthographic cues influence subject-verb agreement?

stimuli

*chanson* 'song' / *chansons* 'songs' vs. *refus* 'refusal-S,P'

result

- less errors if number is marked orthographically
- orthographic marking is irrelevant in speaking
- suggests modality-specific effects of orthography

# PREVIOUS STUDIES



## Meaning

### types

lexical vs. functional words

### spoken

stress is usually placed on lexical words

### textual

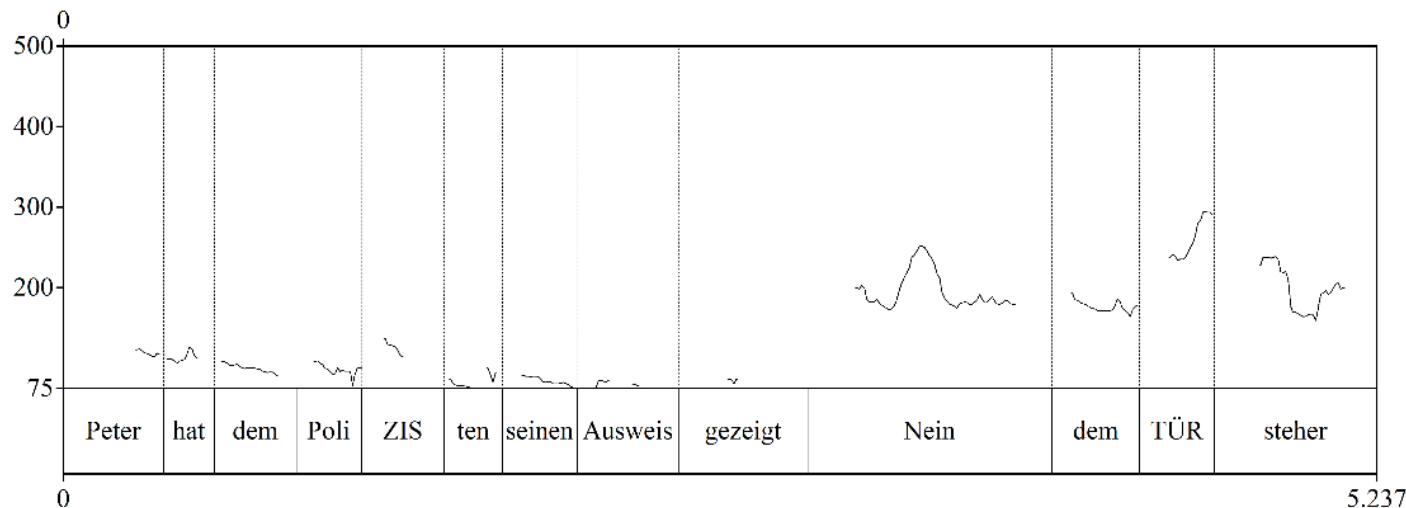
- functional words are more likely to be eluded
- functional words are fixated less often and with shorter gaze durations

# STUDY DESIGN: STIMULI

A: Peter showed his ID to the POLICE OFFICER.

B: No, the BOUNCER.

written



auditory

# STUDY DESIGN: STIMULI

A: Peter showed his identity card to the POLICE OFFICER.

B: No, the BOUNCER.

**with  
emphasis**

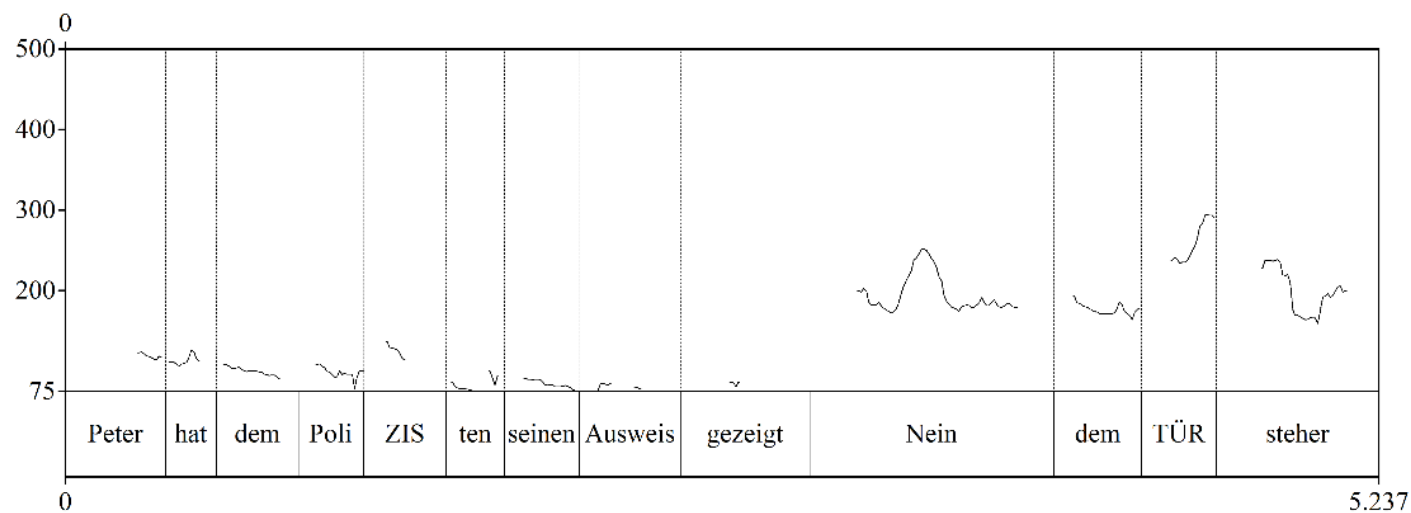
A: Peter showed his identity card to the police officer.

B: No, the bouncer.

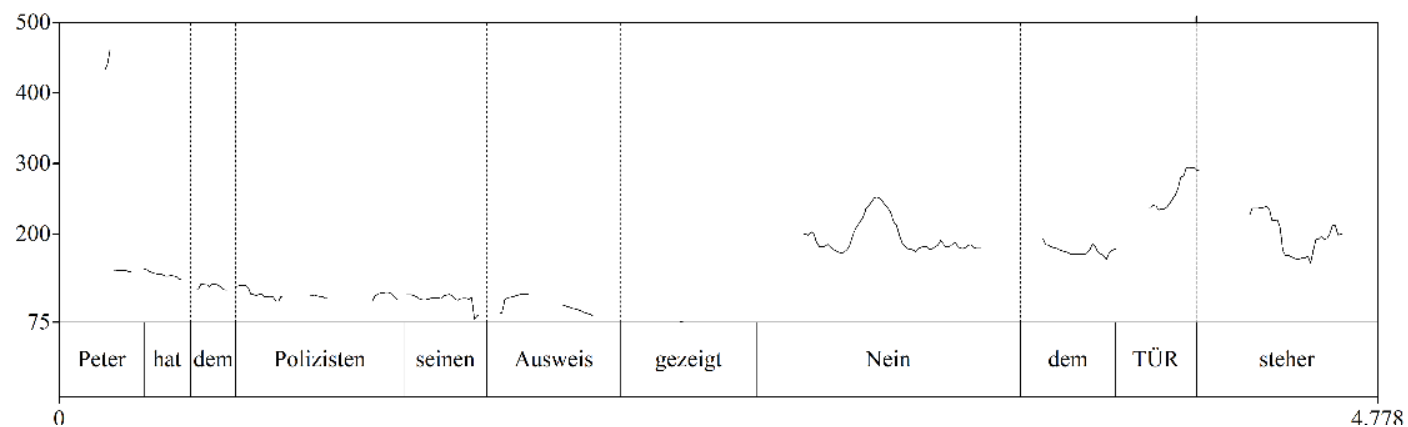
**without  
emphasis**



# STUDY DESIGN: STIMULI

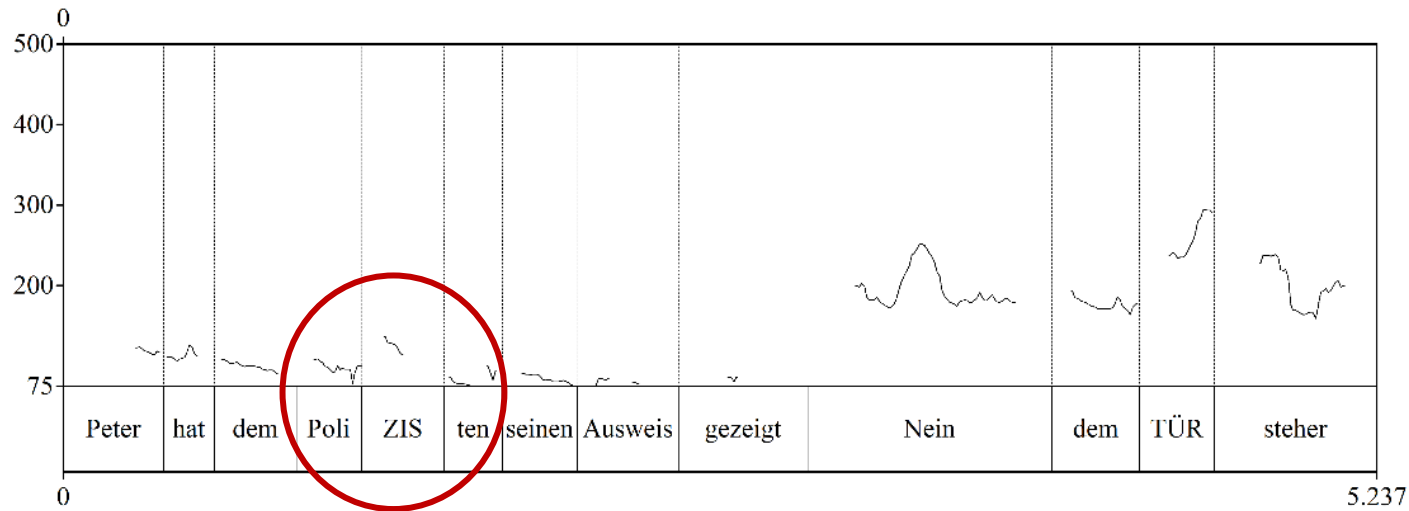


**with  
emphasis**

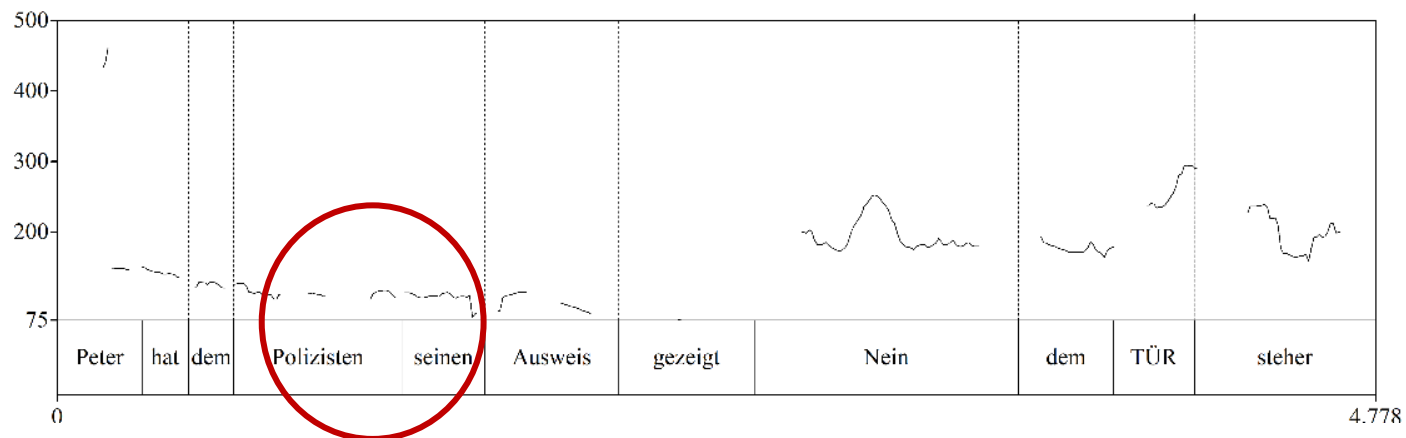


**without  
emphasis**

# STUDY DESIGN: STIMULI



**with  
emphasis**



**without  
emphasis**

# STUDY DESIGN: STIMULI

A: Peter showed his identity card to the POLICE OFFICER.

B: No, the BOUNCER.

**lexical**

---

A: Peter worked at the cinema FROM 6pm.

B: No, UNTIL 6pm.

**functional**

# ANALYSIS

## z-score

- $X$  = individual data point
- $\mu$  = mean
- $\sigma$  = standard deviation

$$Z = \frac{X - \mu}{\sigma}$$

## CLMM

- Emphasis: without  $\beta_1 = -0.25$ ,  $p = 0.03$
- Modality: written  $\beta_1 = -1.99$ ,  $p = 0.02$
- Fragment type: lexical  $\beta_1 = -0.4486$ ,  $p < 0.01$

# ANALYSIS

## AIC

- difference: -28
- Lower AIC for null model

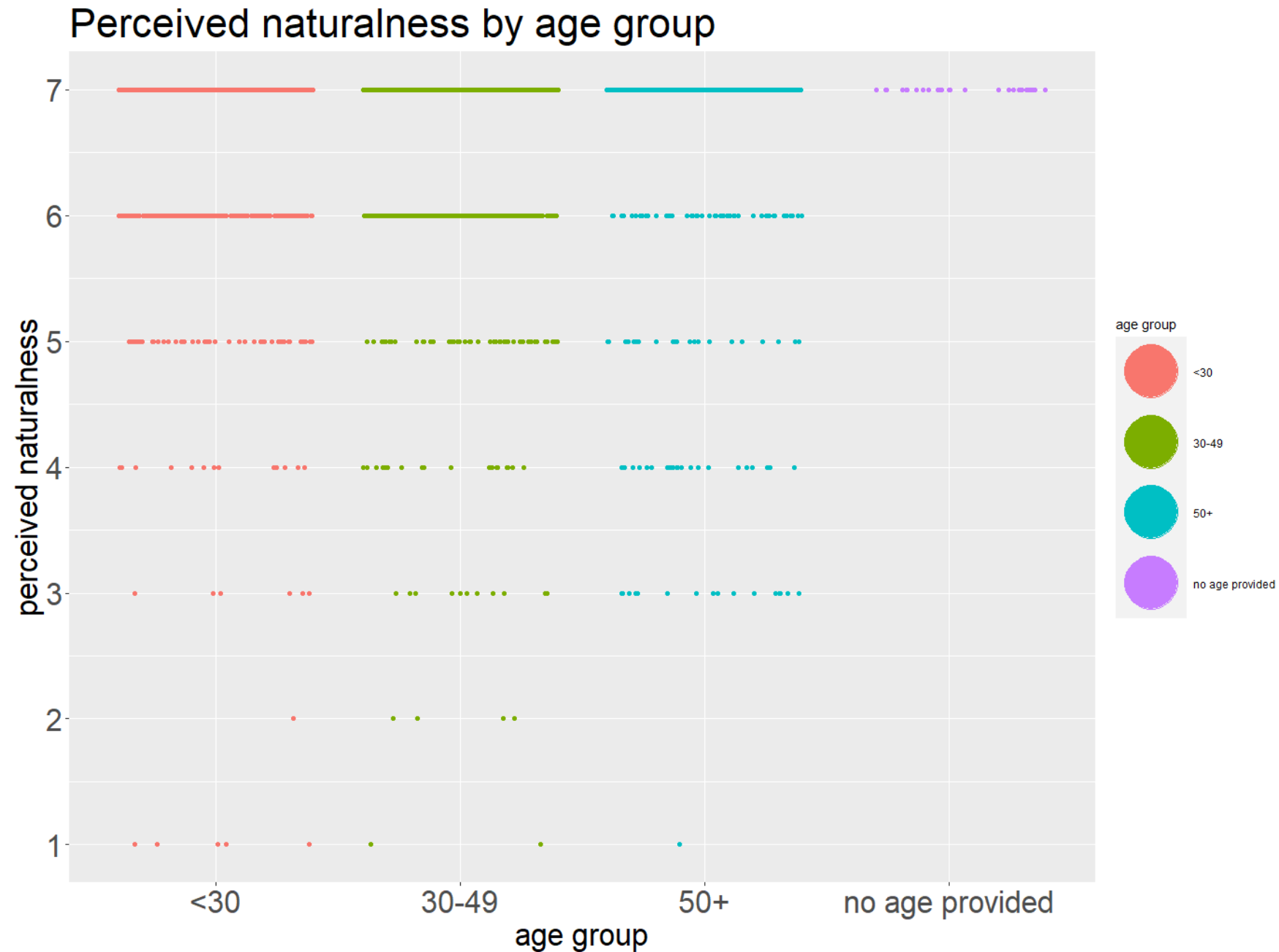
## ANOVA

- $p < 0.01$
- significantly better model fit

# RESULTS

## age

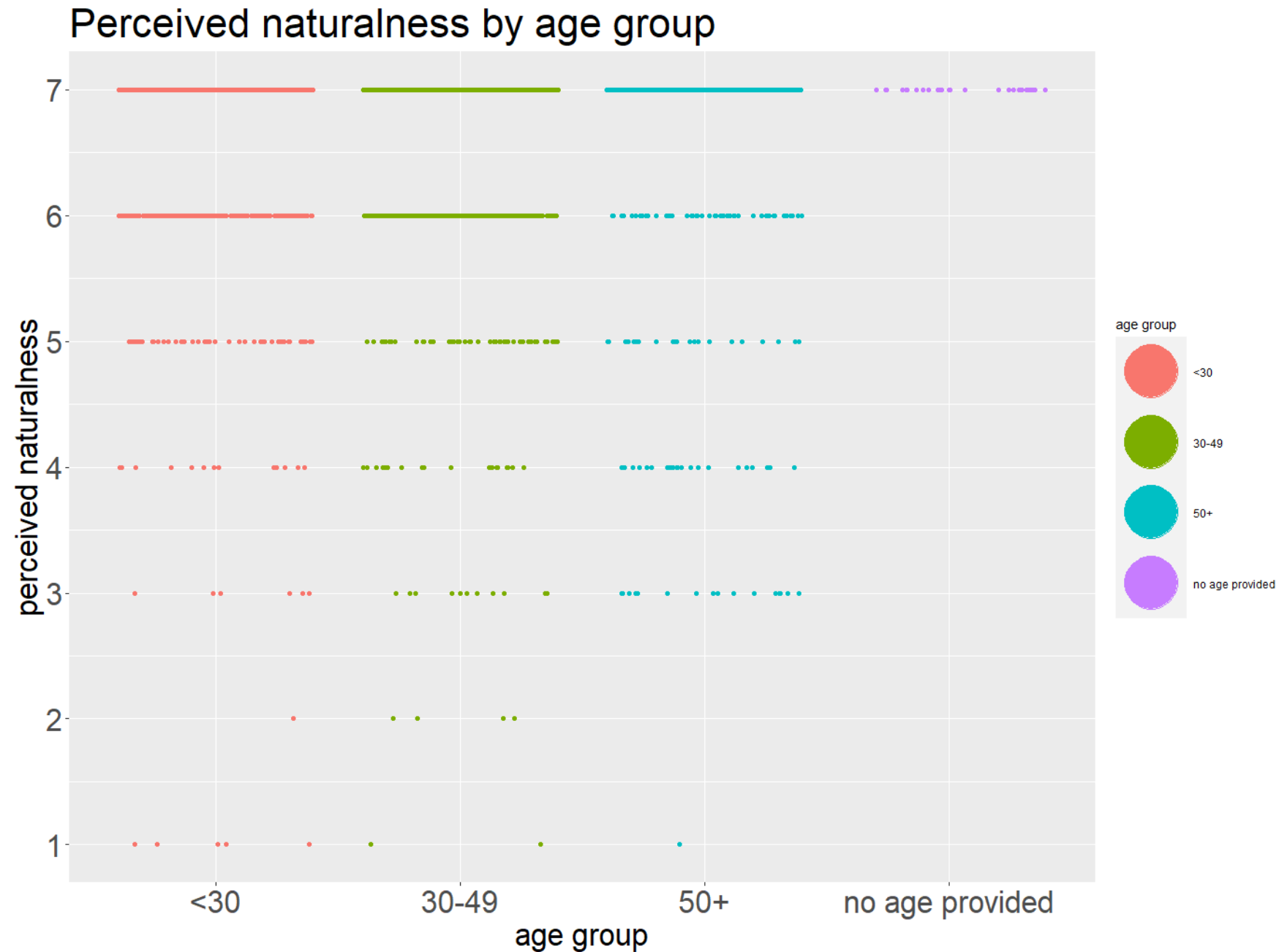
- <30 years:  
m = 6.66
- 30-49 years:  
m = 6.54
- 50+ years:  
m = 6.43



# RESULTS

## age

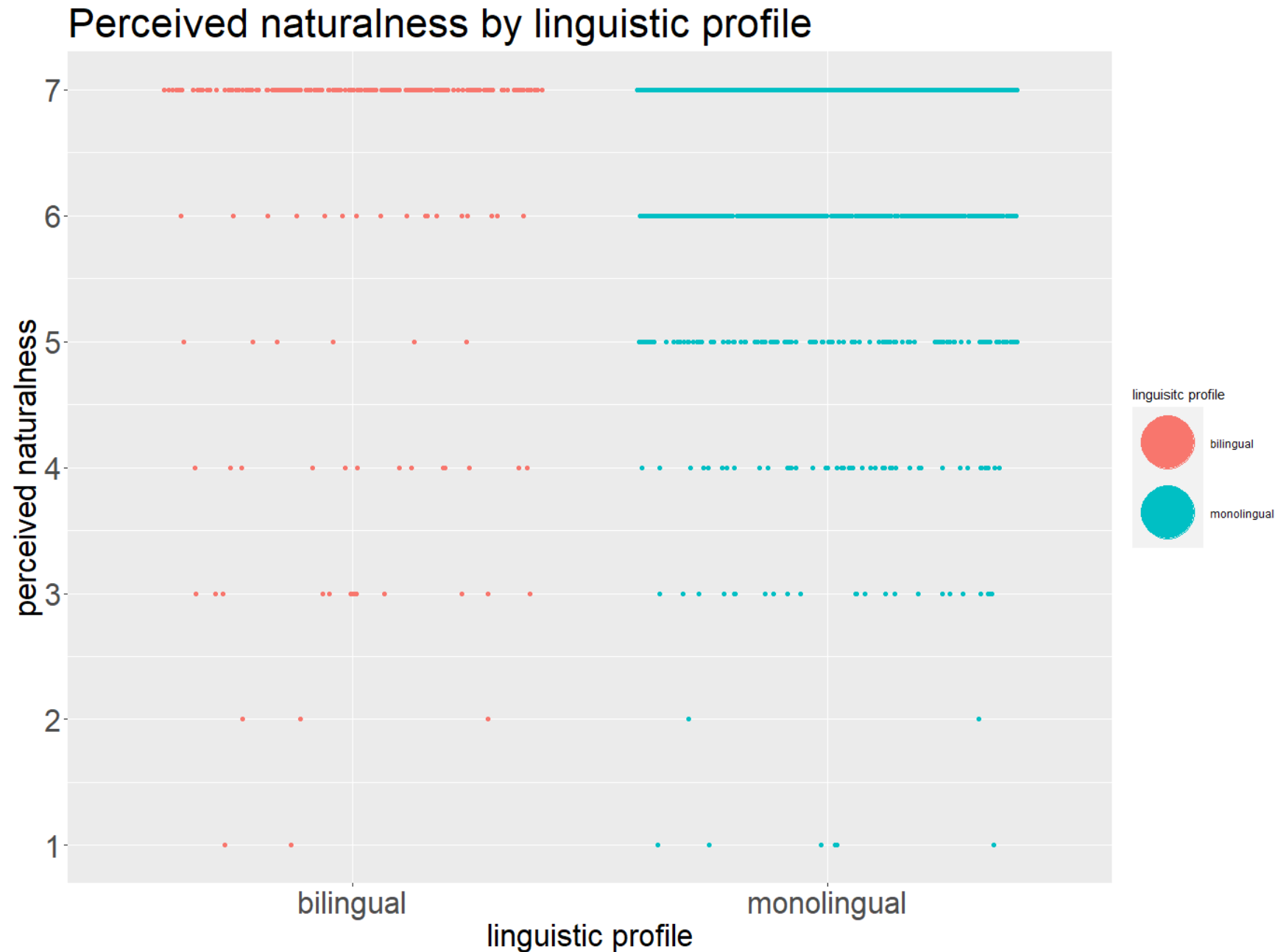
- <30 years:  
42 pps
- 30-49 years:  
41 pps
- 50+ years:  
16 pps



# RESULTS

## linguistic profile

- bilingual:  
 $m = 6.43$ ,  
 $sd = 1.29$
- monolingual:  
 $m = 6.59$ ,  
 $sd = 0.80$





## linguistic profile

- 9 bilinguals
- 91 mono-linguals

