

Swiss German 1–2-year-olds' word form recognition of Swiss Standard German

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This poster & more



Background & Objective

Infants' word form recognition

- The nature of phonological representations in infants exposed to the standard variety and regiolectal input is unclear: Do they build single storage, double storage, underspecified or fuzzy lexical representations? [1-4] (see **Fig. 1**)
- Bilectal input (standard variety + regiolectal variants) might lead to more flexible lexical representations [3]
- Braun et al. compared looking times towards Standard German words vs. non-words in 12–18-month-old mono- vs. bilectal German children [5]
 - Familiarity preference in monolectal vs. novelty preference in bilectal children
 - Novelty preference also for older (18–24 months) monolectal group
- More mature linguistic processing in bilectal children?

Differing Dialect-Standard situations

- Germany: **Dialect-Standard-continuum** (middle and south) or **dialect attrition** (north)
→ in-between variants can be used
- German-speaking Switzerland: **diglossia**
→ one cannot gradually vary between the two poles but code-switching is possible
- Alemannic (branch of Upper German) includes Low Alemannic, High Alemannic, Highest Alemannic + Swabian [6]
- Swiss German = umbrella term for Alemannic dialects spoken in German-speaking Switzerland
- Division of High- & Highest Alemannic in German-speaking Switzerland into four quadrants [7]: Northwest and –east, Southwest- and east and Basel (see **Fig. 2**)

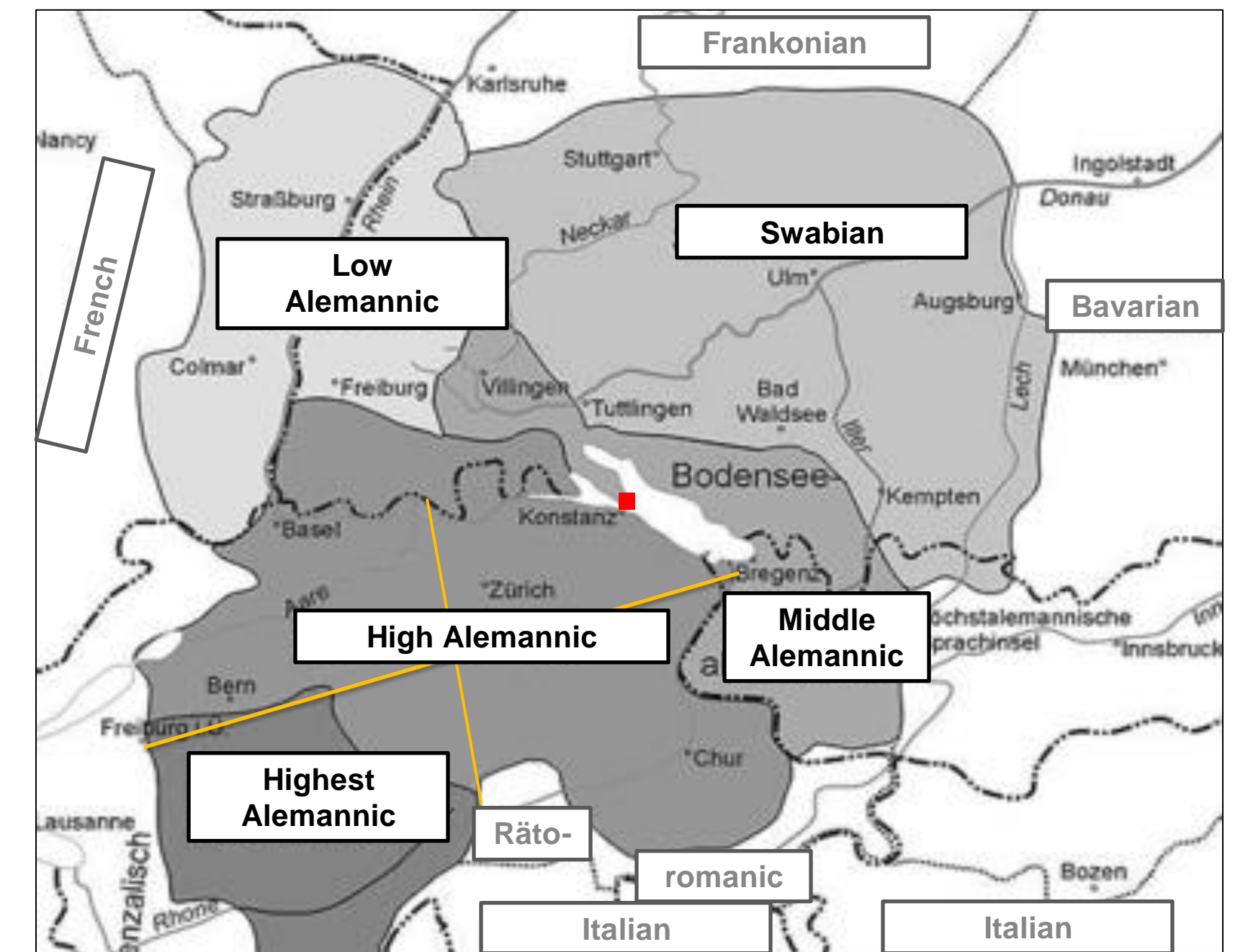


Figure 2. Overview of Alemannic dialects around Lake Constance, adapted from [8]; Approximate quadrants (orange solid lines) separate Northwest and –east and Southwest and –east of German-speaking Switzerland

Current project

Extending Braun et al. [5] (App)

Investigating familiarity vs. novelty preferences based on looking times towards word- and non-word lists in Swiss and German infants

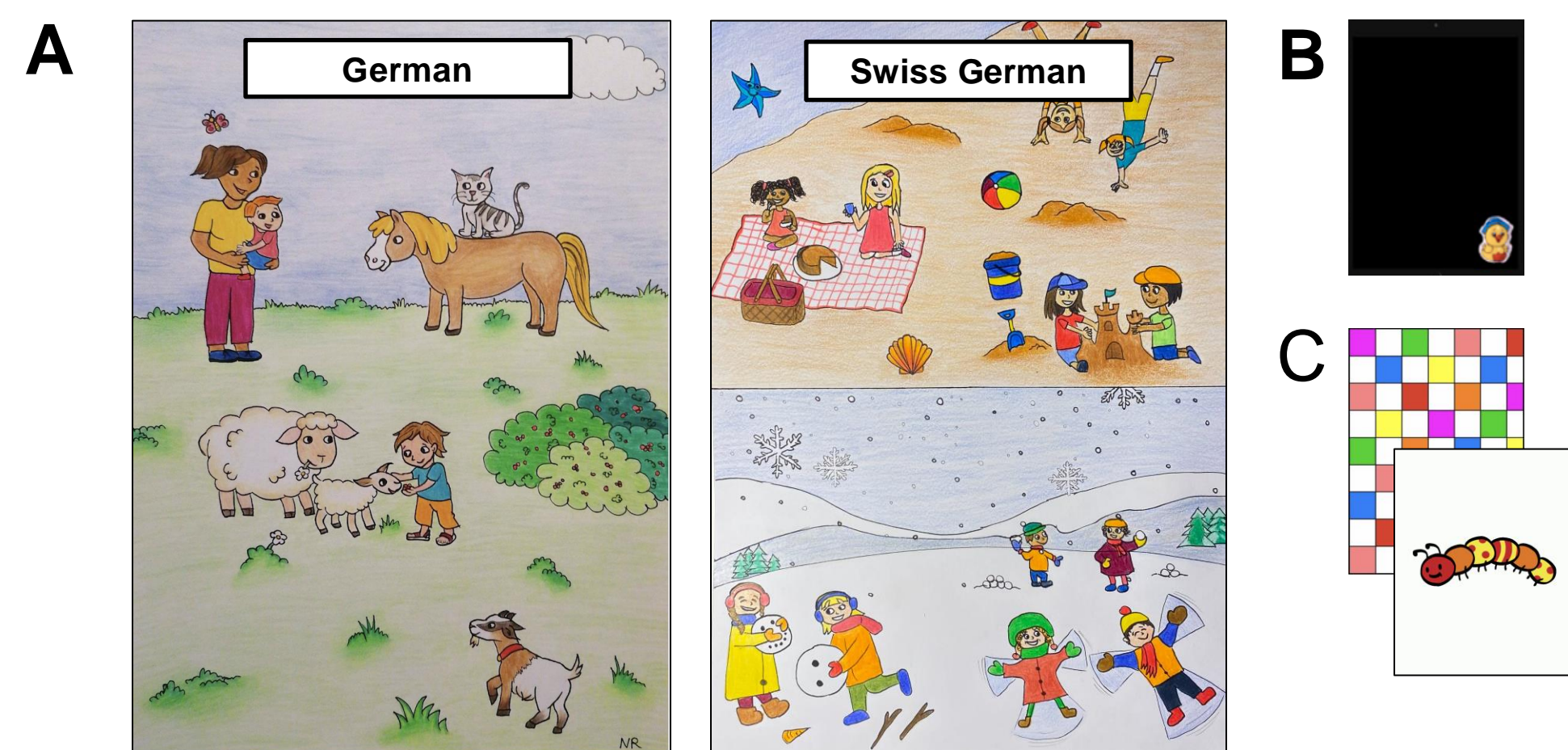


Figure 3. Experimental steps in the app, including **A: elicitation for parents** (1 min.) different for German and Swiss version, **B: the calibration** phase with jingling ducks in each corner and **C: trials** (checkerboard) and attention getter (moving caterpillar).

What is the nature of
phonological & lexical representations
in infants growing up with
standard & regiolectal word forms?
Are there differences between the two
countries?

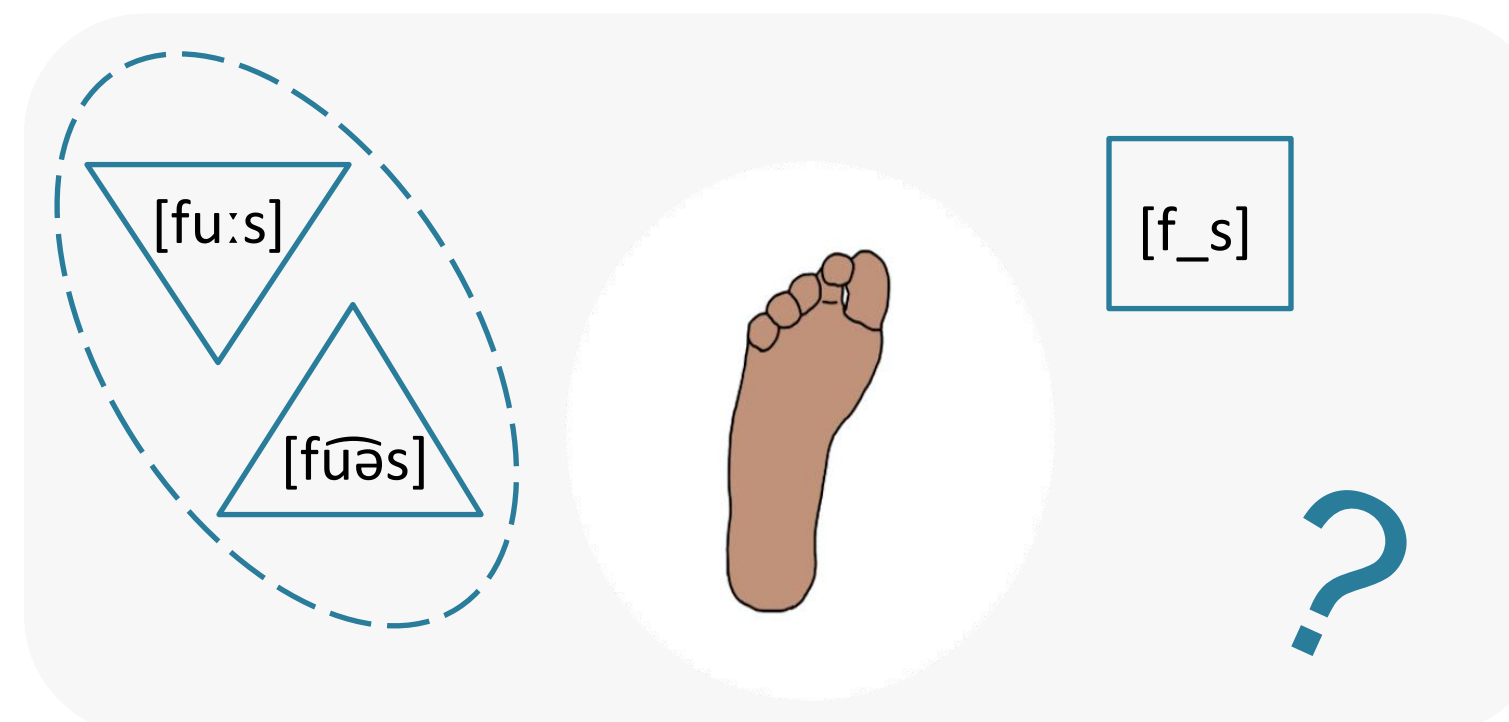


Figure 1. Simplified possible representations: single storage (triangles), double storage (dashed oval), underspecified (rectangle) and fuzzy representation (question mark)

Categorizing input

- **Option 1:** Based on **self-assessment** of parents:
 - Does the child hear dialects?
If yes, which one(s)?
 - Do the parents speak the named dialect (with the child) and if so, how strong?
- **Option 2:** Dialect strength ratings by 4 raters based on parental speech (**Tab. 1**) in a ~1-minute-long **audio recording** (elicited by drawing, **Fig. 3**)

Strength	Germany	Switzerland
1	Citation form	(Standard) Swiss German
2	Few/weak dialectal features	-
3	More/strong dialectal features	-
4	Strong dialect	Swiss German

Table 1. Perceptual dialect strength rating scales

- **Option 3:** Based on size of zip-code **area**: more rural area ≈ more regional input?

Dialectal/regional realizations in children's input

German child (12 months old)

oh schau mal, da **isch** ein Schaf. Hm? Und ein Babyschaf und eine Ziege. ja. Und die Katze, wo sitzt denn die? Hm? Auf dem **Pferd**. Hm? Und ein Schmetterling. Hm? Ja. Was **isch** da noch. Den Schmetterling, **siehst** den? Ja, oh ja und ein Baby, **gä**? Hm? Mhm. Und **da** läuft eine Ziege da unten, wie macht die. Hm? Ja. Ja so viele Sachen, so viele Tiere, mhm. Ja. Die Katze **isch** witzig, **ha**, die sich einfach auf dem- auf des Pf-

Mhm [name] was **isch** denn da, **ha**? Ja, was **isch** da **drauf** oben am Himmel. Was **isch** **do**? Eine Wolke. Ja und was sieht **ma**- was sieht **ma** **do** für Tiere? Ja **Schäfle** **sin** **des**, **Schäfle**. Was **isch** oben? Ein? **Pferd**. Ja? Doch doch. Und wie macht des **Pferd**? **Ja** wie macht **des** und was sitzt **auf** dem **Pferd**, eine- was sitzt da? Eine Katze, hm. **Isch** **do** ein kleiner Junge. Wo **isch** **der**? Wo **isch** **der** kleine Junge. **Ha**? Bei **de** **Schäfle**, **ha**? (...) was **isch** ganz unten? **Ha**? **Isch** **do** a Ziege. Ja, **wo** **isch** die Ziege. **Ha**, **wo** **isch** die Ziege.

Swiss German child (19 months old)

Oh, **gsehsch** du **da** **döt**? **De** **Balle**? Ja und **wa** **gsehsch** **no**? **Chinder**? **Ou** **de** **Schnee**, [name]. [Sch]nee. Ganz **viel** **Schnee** **gseh**, **gell**? Sie sind **da** wie **d'Kita**, **lueg** **emal**. **Wie** **ide** **Kita** am **Spile**. **Gell**? **Gsehsch** **de** **Baum** **döt**? **Jo**. Ganz **viel** **Bäum** **do**. **He**? Sind **d'Chind** am **Spile**? **Ja**. **Unne** **hät**s **Schnee**, **häs** **sch** **gseh**? **Ja**, und **obe** **hät**s **Sand**. **S'isch** **Winter**, **Summer**. **He**? **Balle**, **ja**. Und [name] **isch** **im** **Summer** **gebore**. **Ja**, mit **Sunne** und **Wasser**, **Bädele**. **Ja**.

Lueg **emal** **do**, **de** **Strand**. Sind's am **Bädele**? **Do** **unne** **de** **Schnee**, **lueg** **emal**. **He**? **De** **Schnee**. **Mached's** **Schneeballschlacht**? Hm? Und **lueg**, **die** sind am **Chueche** **esse** **do**. **He**? Sind's **do** am **Chueche** **esse**? **Do** am **Sandburg** **baue**. **Wo** **isch** **de** **Ball**? **Jo** **de** **Balle** **isch** **döte**. **He**? Und **wo** **isch** **de** **Baum**? **De** **Baum**. Und **de** **Schnee**? **He**? Sind's am **Spile**, **d'Chinder**? **Jo**, am **Spile** sind's. **He**? **Cool**!

Discussion

- Bilectal infants in Germany are difficult to classify: a combined variable consisting of parental input and place of residence may capture their language exposure best
→ testing Swiss German infants to ensure strong(er) dialectal features in input and a more homogeneous sample
- Swiss German infants seem to be bilectal by nature (given the isoglossic situation): strongest case for bilectal input when one caregiver speaks Standard German, the other Swiss German
- **RQ:** Is it stronger dialectal features OR distinct input from two caregivers that predict looking time differences (novelty vs. familiarity preference) better?