

# **CLI in possessive constructions of Norwegian-Italian bilinguals production and judgment data**

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# What is the study about?

This study investigates cross-linguistic influence (CLI) in Norwegian-Italian bilingual children, specifically in possessive structures where both languages feature two syntactic variants with contrasting pragmatic functions.

# Cross-linguistic influence (CLI)

- Cross-linguistic influence (CLI) in simultaneous bilingual children refers to the ways in which the two languages interact, with features of one language affecting the development or use of the other.
- It is prone to occur when
  1. There is surface structure overlap
  2. When a structure is at a language interface

# Possessives in Norwegian and Italian

	Norwegian		Italian	
	Pre-nominal	Post-nominal	Pre-nominal	Post-nominal
<b>Example</b>	Min bil My car	Bilen min Car-the my	La mia macchina The my car	La macchina mia The car my
<b>Markedness (contextual)</b>	Marked	Unmarked	Unmarked	Marked
<b>Derivation</b>	Basic	Derived	Derived	Basic
<b>Frequency (from corpora)</b>	Less	More (73%)	More (86%)	Less

In both languages it is possible to use the unmarked variants in marked contexts, in that case contrast is marked by emphasis

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Is there structural overlap?

# Possessives in Norwegian and Italian

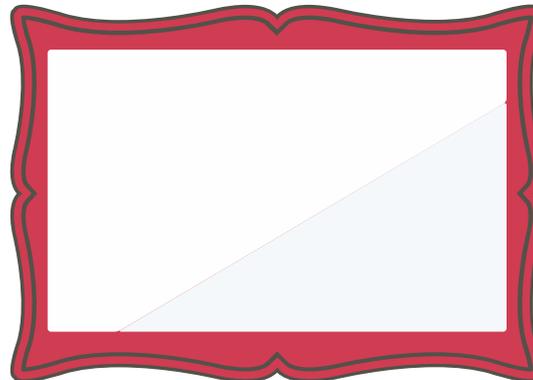
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Is there structural overlap?

Is this at the interface level of two modules of grammar?

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# Previous studies

- For monolingual children, the acquisition process seems to be easier in Italian than in Norwegian (Velnić, 2024)
- Robust body of work for CLI effects in production
- Effect of overlap of the two languages: the overlapping structure is used more in the language that has both structures available, even when it is pragmatically infelicitous (Anderssen 2018 , Kupisch 2007, Liceras 2012, Müller & Hulk 2001, 2007, Nicoladis 2006, Serratrice 2004, Westergaard 2015)
- CLI was found to affect acceptability : the overlapping structure is accepted in contexts where the non-overlapping structure is more appropriate (Sorace 2009)

# Research questions

- Is CLI manifested in the possessive structures of Italian and Norwegian bilinguals?
- If yes, what is the direction?
- Are there any differences in production and acceptability?

# Participants

- 28 Norwegian-Italian bilingual children (15 female) aged 4-10 (mean=6;5), all residing in Norway
- Italian is the heritage language (HL)
- 27 bilingual controls: 12 Italian English (ages 4;0-7;5), and 15 Norwegian-English (ages 4;4-9;8).
- Recruited in the UK or in Norway
- Italian kept constant as the HL
- Norwegian was either the HL or the majority language

# The tasks

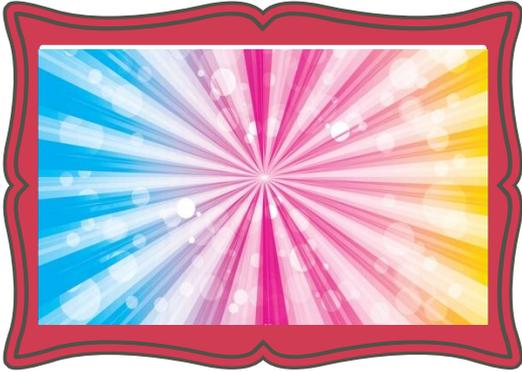
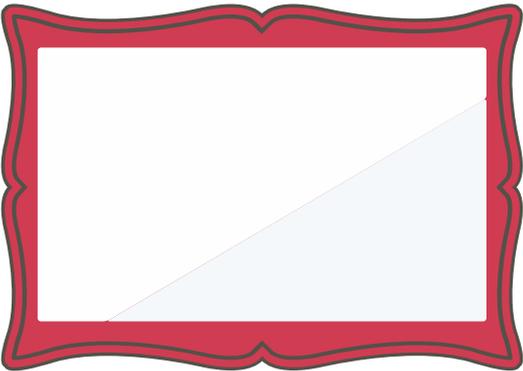
## Elicitation

- 2 sets of animations (One for each language)
- Designed in ppt
- Delivered via Zoom (on different days for each language)
- The child and the experimenter were assigned drawn characters
- One additional characters for Italian, 2 for Norwegian (gender distinction in 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular)
- Scenes depicted the characters interacting with their own object (neutral condition), or somebody else's object (contrast condition)
  
- Fillers: situations in which two characters collaborated on a task, no possession

## AJT

- **2 forced-choice (one for each language)** acceptability judgment tasks in OpenSesame Web (Mathôt et al., 2012 ).
- The task consisted of short animations in which a character either interacted with their own object (**neutral condition**) or with someone else's object (**contrast condition**).
- Two characters described the situation
- The child had to choose who said it best
  
- Fillers: contrast between grammatical and ungrammatical sentences

# Elicitation task: storyline



# Elicitation task

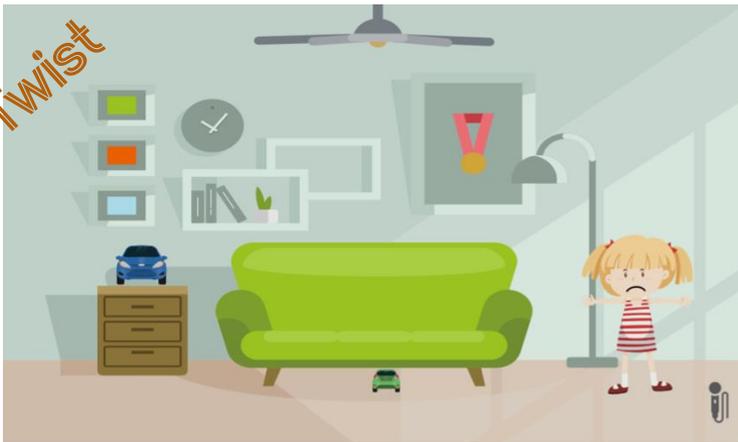
Intro



Neutral



Twist

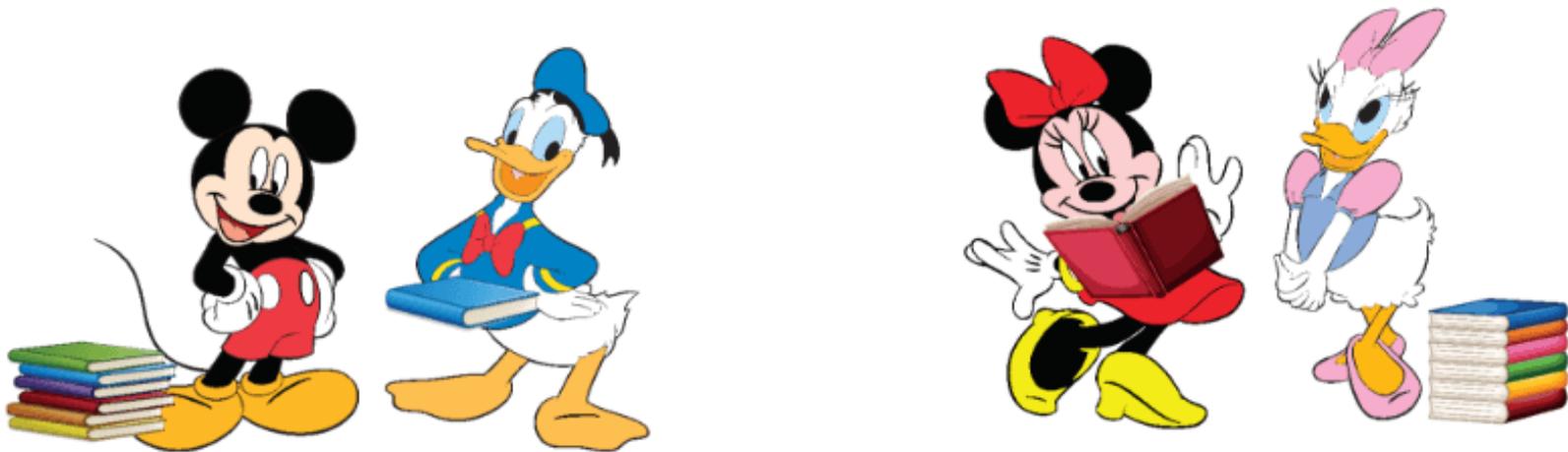


Contrast



# Acceptability judgment task: storyline

- Disney characters were learning Norwegian/Italian
- They described what was happening
- The child had to choose who said it better



# Neutral condition - Italian



Guarda qui! Topolina ha una  
tazza rossa.

(Look! Minnie has a red cup)

# Neutral condition -Italian



Guarda qui! Topolina ha una  
tazza rossa.

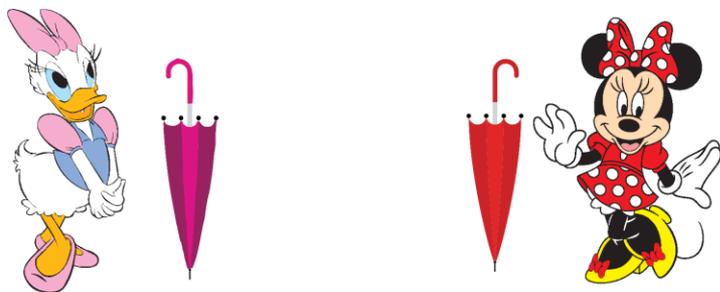
(Look! Minnie has a red cup)



Topolina beve dalla **sua** tazza.  
Topolina beve dalla **tazza sua**.

Minni is drinking from **her cup/cup her**.

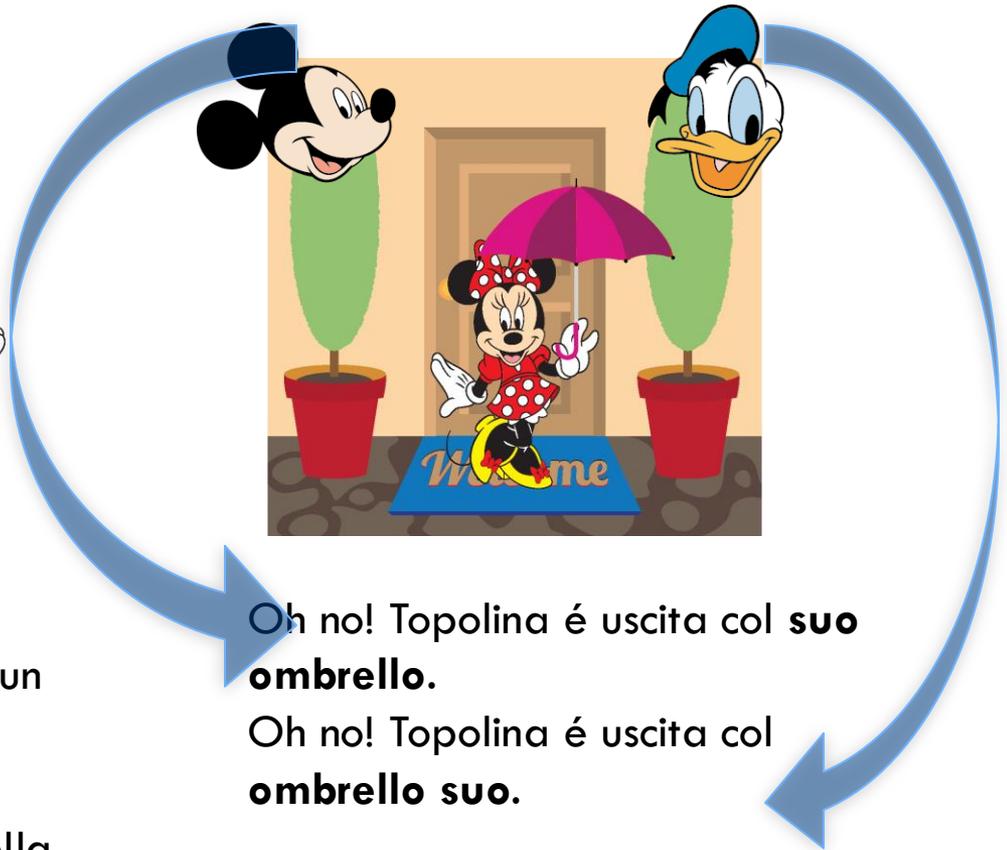
# Contrast condition- Italian



Guarda qui! Paperina ha un ombrello rosa, e topolina ha un ombrello rosso.

Look! Daisy has a pink umbrella, and Minnie has a red umbrella.

# Contrast condition -Italian



Guarda qui! Paperina ha un ombrello rosa, e topolina ha un ombrello rosso.

Look! Daisy has a pink umbrella, and Minnie has a red umbrella.

Oh no! Topolina é uscita col **suo ombrello.**

Oh no! Topolina é uscita col **ombrello suo.**

Oh no! Minnie went out with **her umbrella/umbrella her.**

# Language adjustments

- Norwegian has reflexive pronouns which always refer to the subject

Minnie<sub>i</sub> sover i sengen *sin*<sub>i</sub>/ sengen *hennes*<sub>i</sub>

Minnie is sleeping in bed-the her-refl. / bed-the her.

- The target sentences in the two language tasks were slightly different to accommodate for this difference

# Norwegian task

## Intro

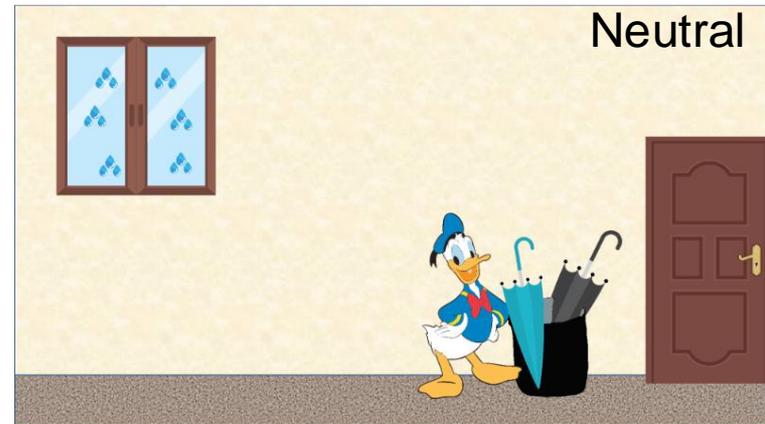


Se. Donald har en blå paraply og Mikke har en svart paraply.

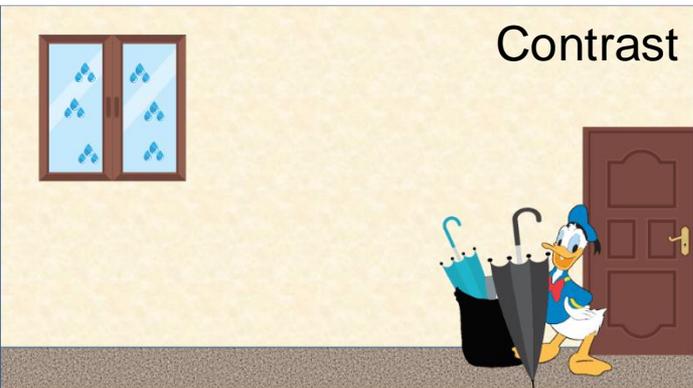
Look, Donald has a blue umbrella and Mickey has a black umbrella

Se. Donald går ut. **Paraplyen hans** er stor/  
**hans paraply** er stor.

Look. Donald is going out. **Umbrella his/ his umbrella** is big.



## Contrast



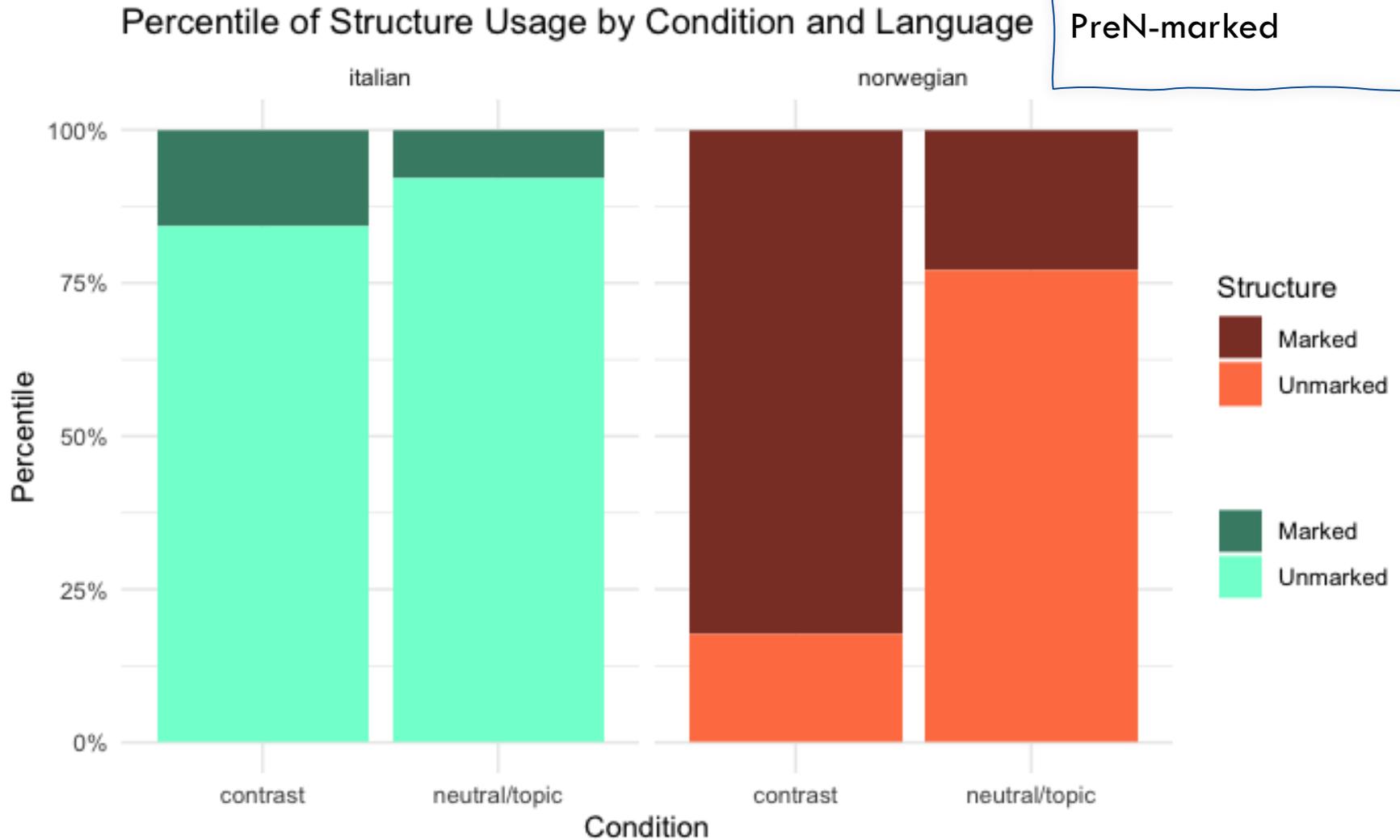
Se nå! Donald tar Mikke sin paraply. **Paraplyen hans** er større/  
**hans paraply** er større.

Look now! Donald is taking Mickey's umbrella.  
**Umbrella his/ his umbrella** is bigger.

# Results: Elicitation

It: PreN-unmarked, PostN-marked

Nor: PostN-unmarked, PreN-marked

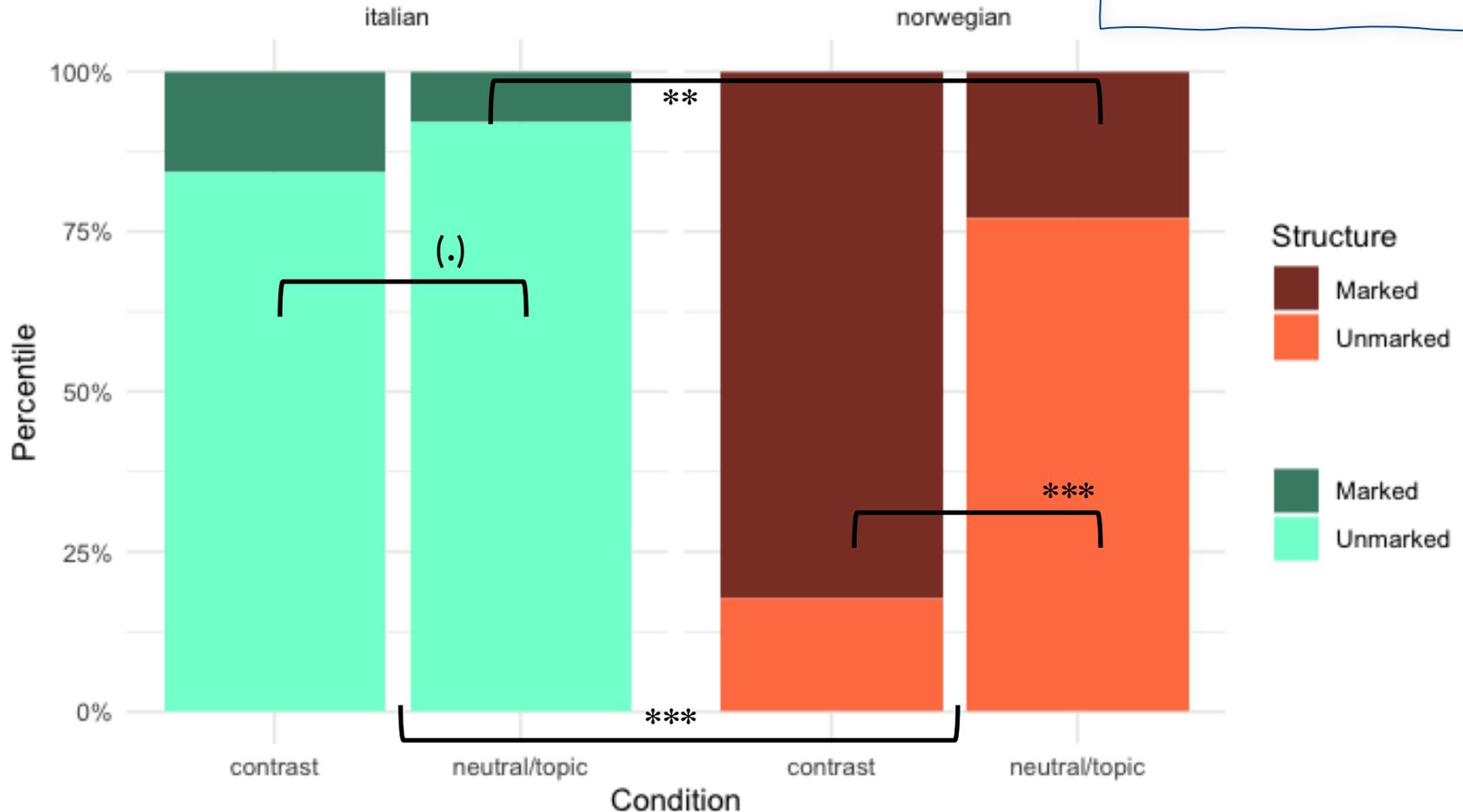


# Results: Elicitation

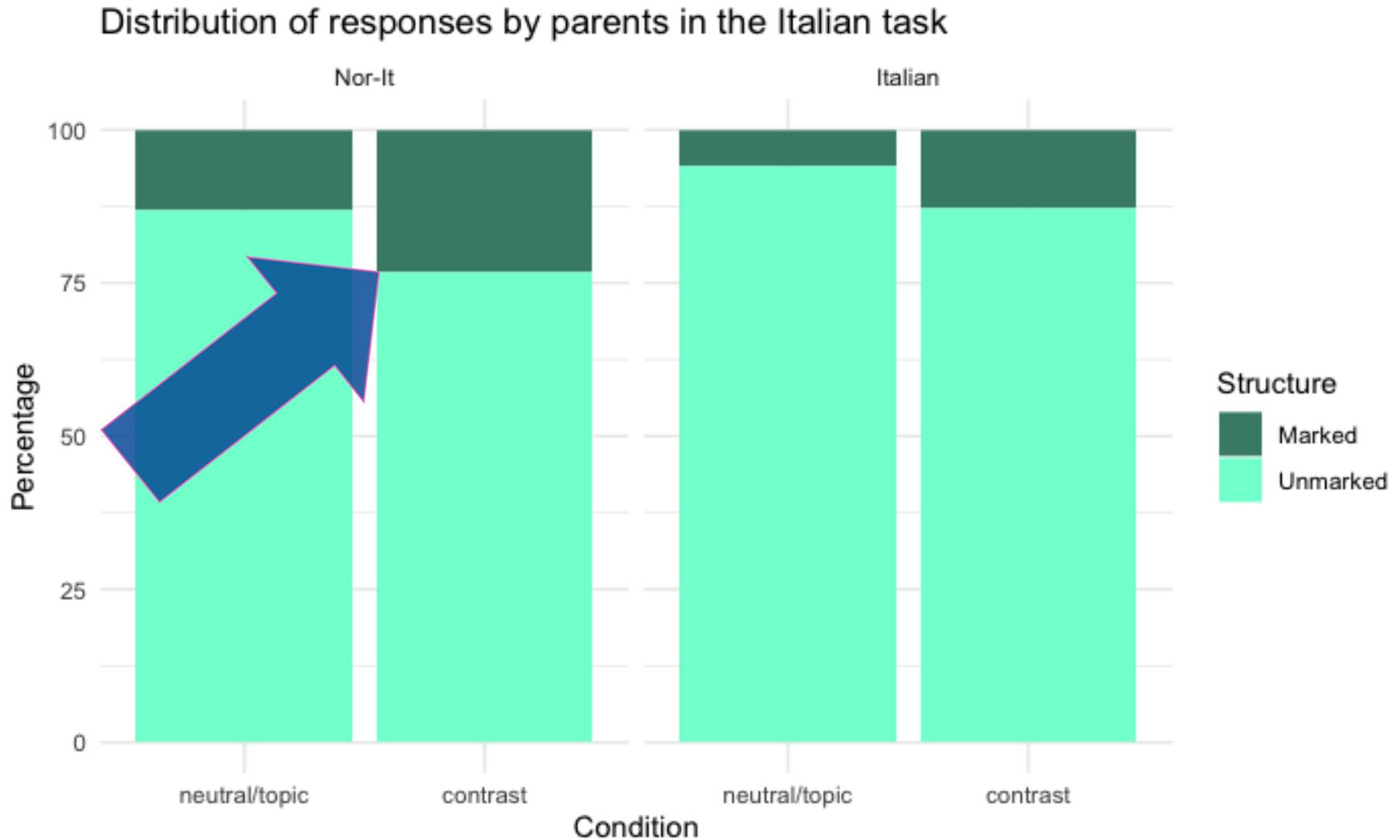
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Nor: PostN-unmarked, PreN-marked

Percentile of Structure Usage by Condition and Language

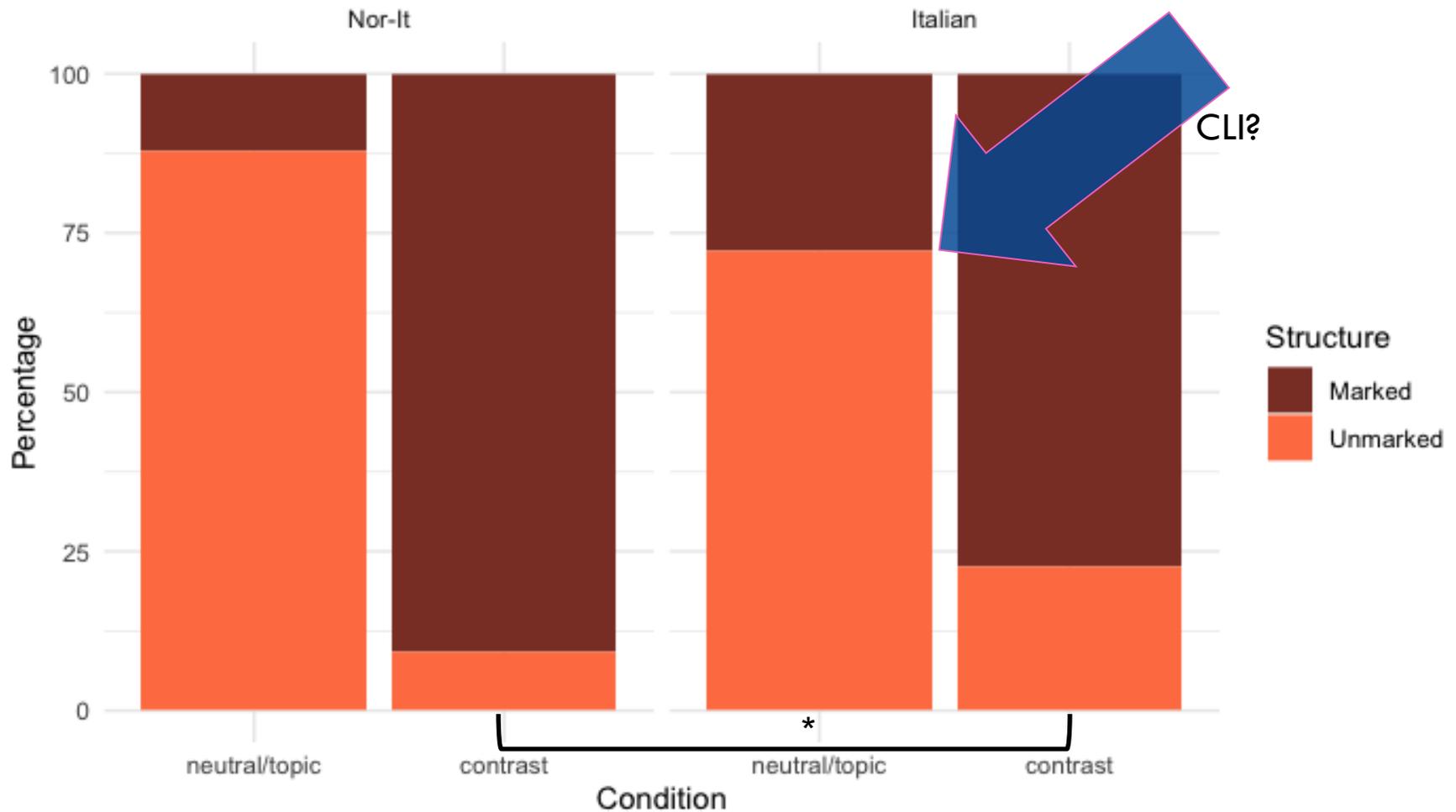


# Italian task: the role of parents



# Norwegian task: the role of parents

Distribution of responses by parents in the Norwegian task

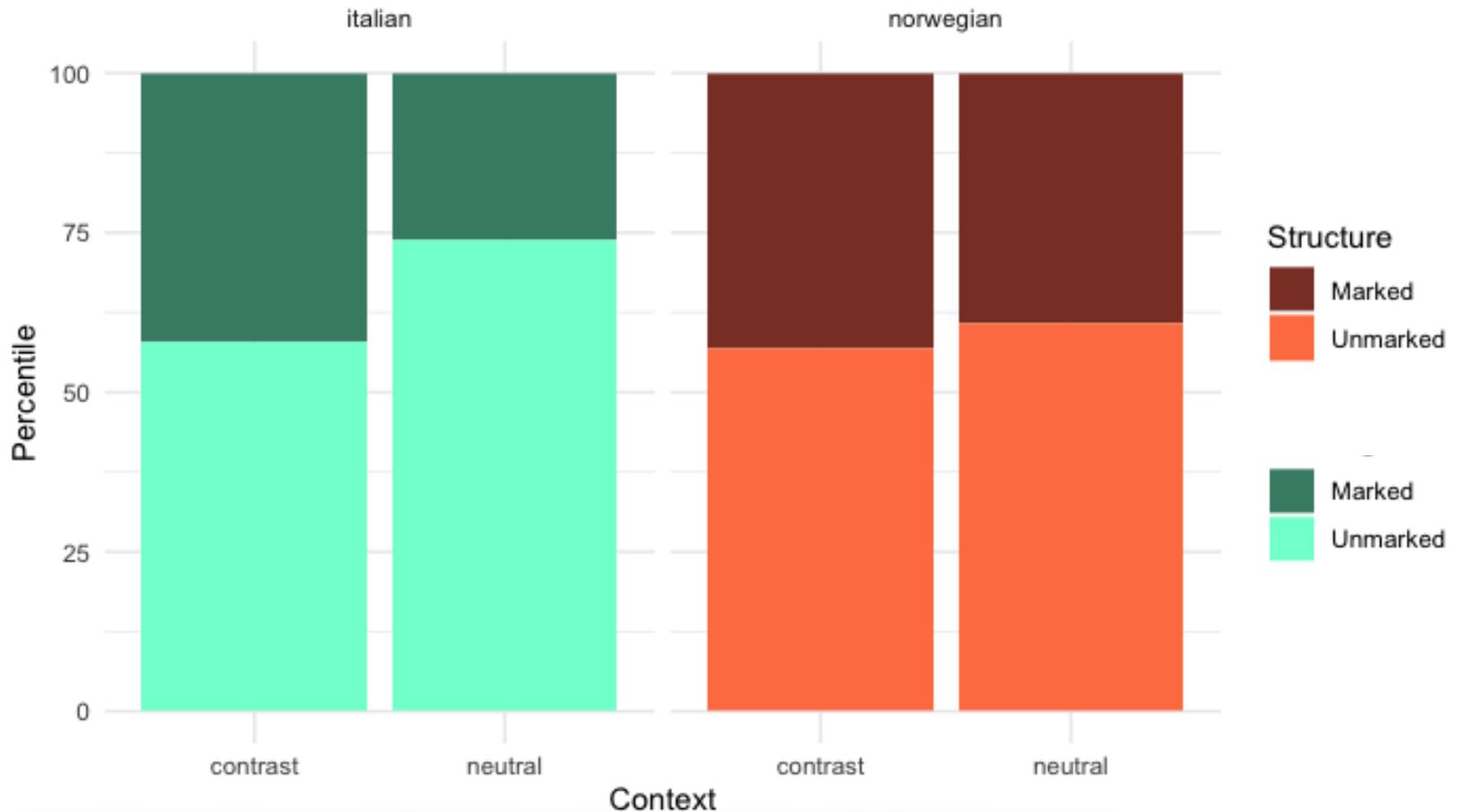


# Interim summary

- The children are more target-like in using the two variants contextually in Norwegian (majority language)
- In Italian they use the PreN almost exclusively
- Simplification of a system?
- Receiving Norwegian input in the home correlates positively with the use of the variants
- Receiving more Italian input does not correlate with a higher use of marked variants in Italian

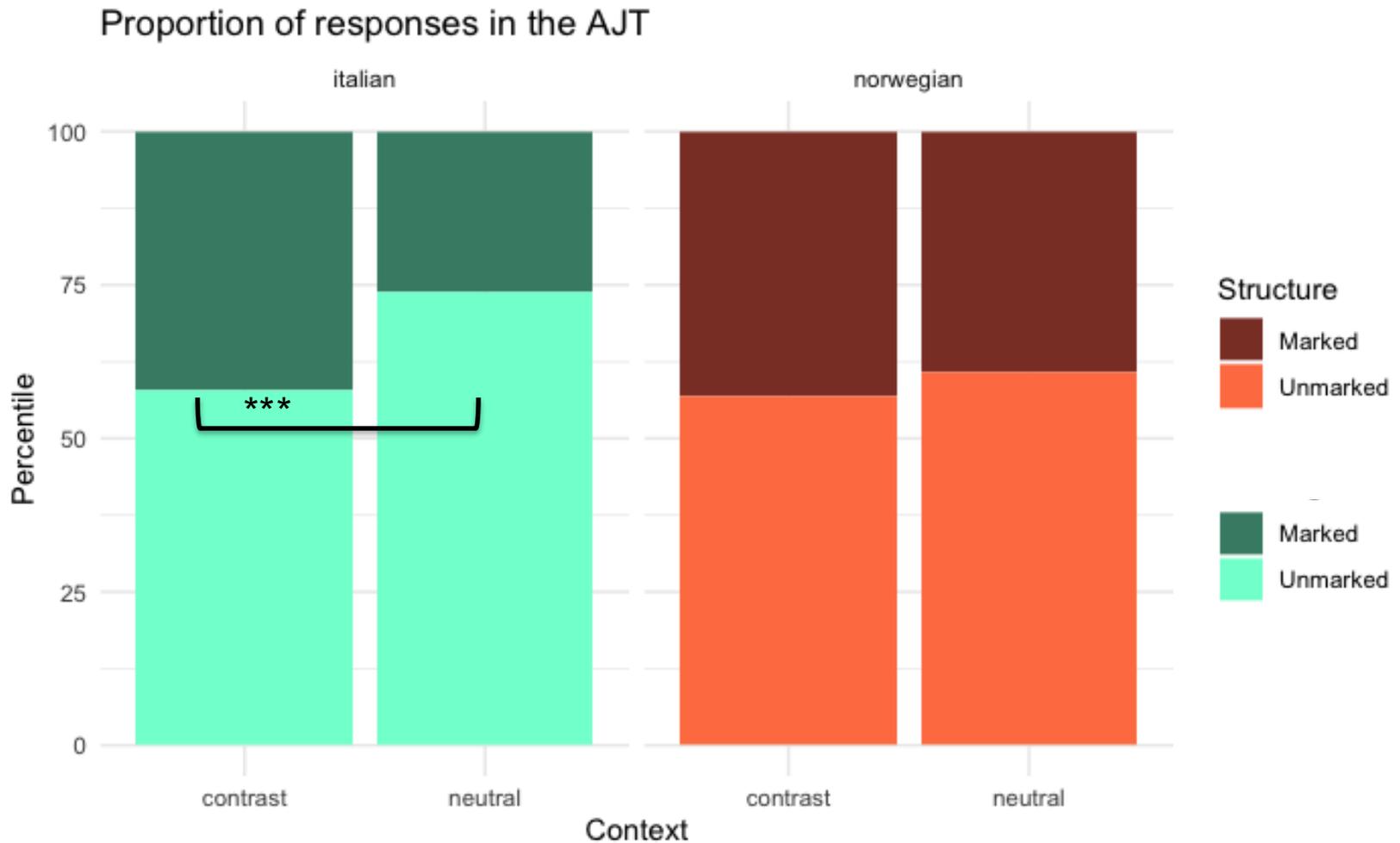
# Results- AJT

Proportion of responses in the AJT



```
glmer -> response ~ condition* + (1 | id) + (1 | item), data = "Italian"
```

# Results- AJT



# Discussion: task effects

- Task differences: in Italian the children use the PreN also exclusively; but in the AJT they choose the PostN significantly more in the contrast condition
- Even though the children do not produce the PreN in Italian, there is awareness of the context in which the variant should be used.
- No differences are observed in the Norwegian AJT- unusual as we would expect them to be attuned to the variants in the majority language
- Likely due to task difference: Norwegian task more complex due to the avoidance of the reflexive

# Discussion: CLI

- CLI: It seems that there is no CLI from Norwegian to Italian in Production
- Indication of CLI in the Norwegian production
- The Italian system seems simplified (in production)
- If the Italian possessives were reduced to PreN, then the direction of CLI would be theoretically Italian → Norwegian
- But we know from the AJT that there is awareness of the possessive variants in Italian

# Conclusion

- The Heritage Language may seem simplified (only PreN produced)
- The simplified system (in production) may still influence the majority language
- There is awareness on the pragmatic use of the variants in the heritage language
- It is important to measure bilinguals on different tasks

## Questions?

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