

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
Example	Min bil My car	Bilen min Car-the my	La mia macchina The my car	La macchina mia The car my
Markedness (contextual)	Marked	Unmarked	Unmarked	Marked
Derivation	Basic	Derived	Derived	Basic
Frequency (from corpora)	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

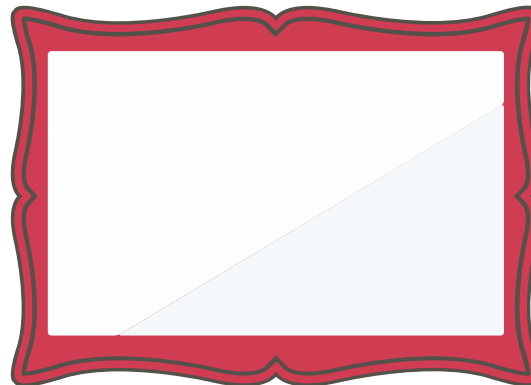
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Is there structural overlap?

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

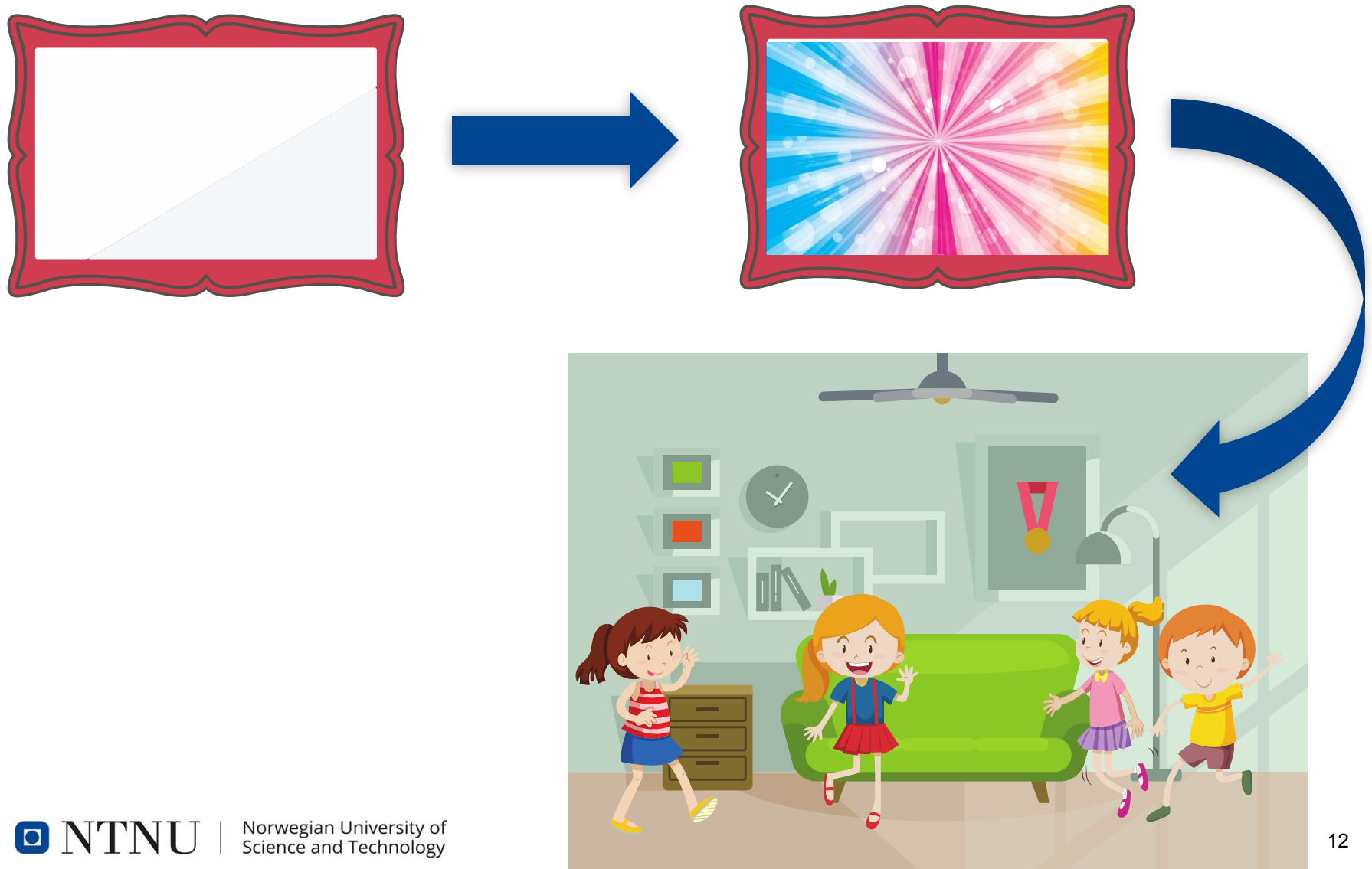
Elicitation

- 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 3rd 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

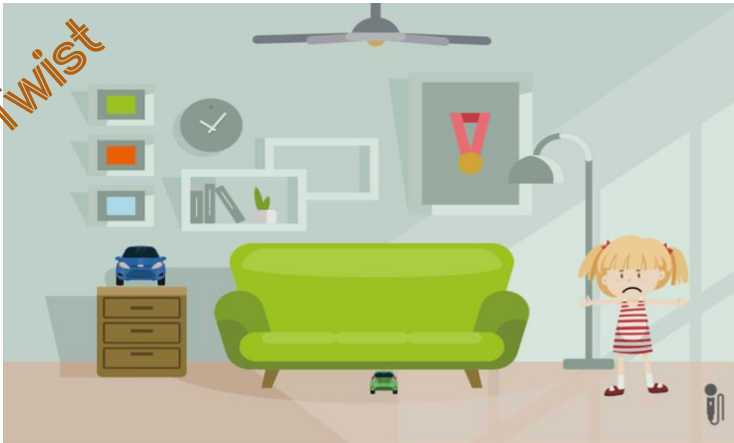
Intro



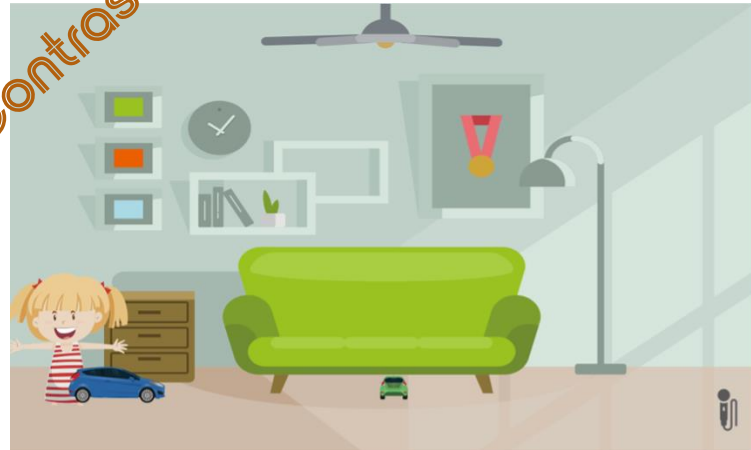
Neutral



Twist

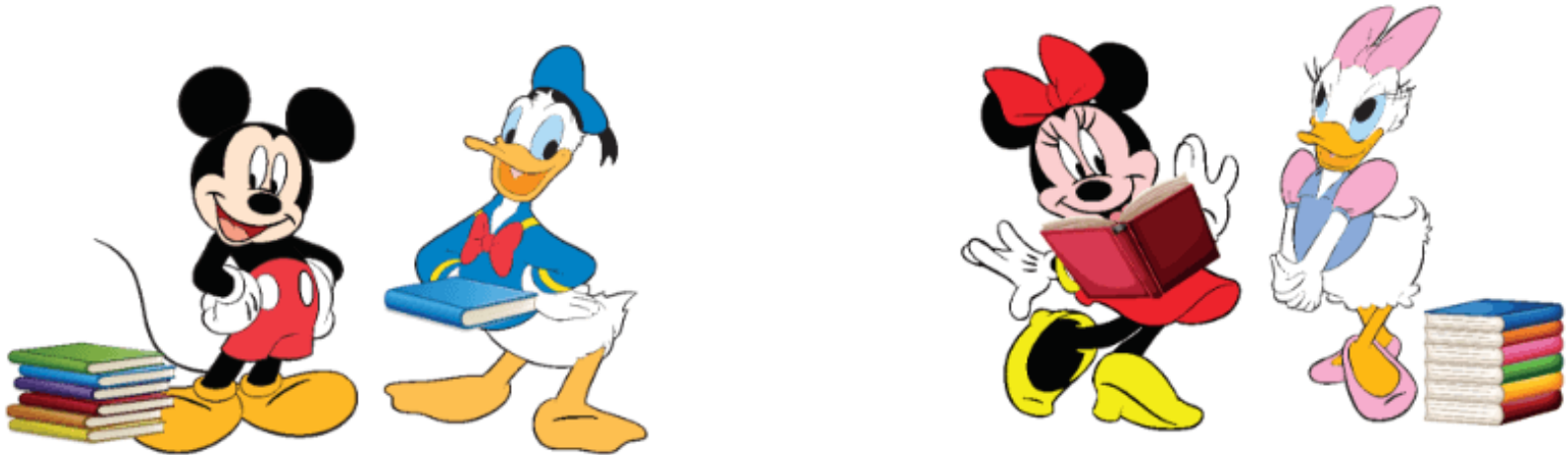


Contrast



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.

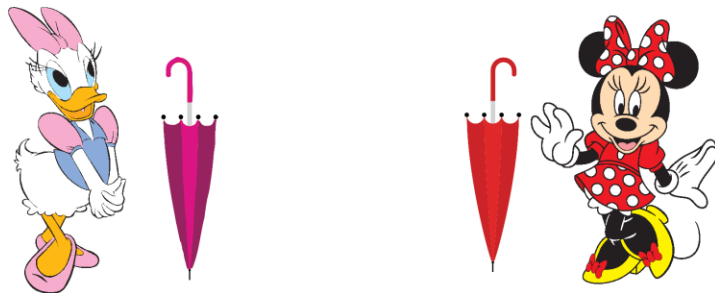
(Look! Minnie has a red cup)



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_i sover i sengen sin_i/ sengen hennes_i

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

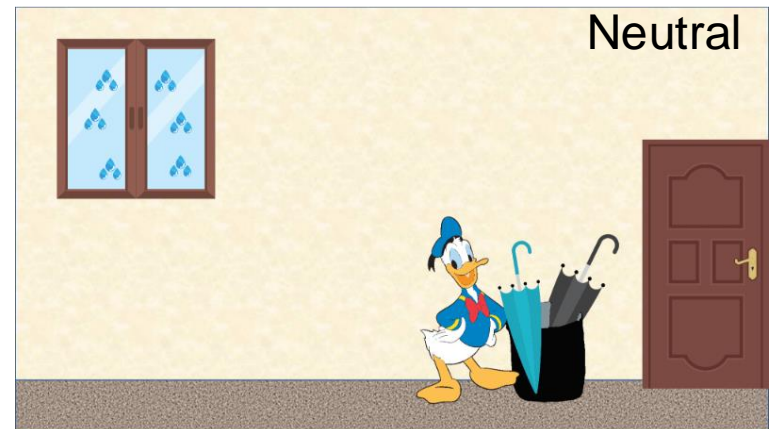


Se. Donald har en blå paraply og Mikke har en svart paraply.

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.



Neutral



Contrast

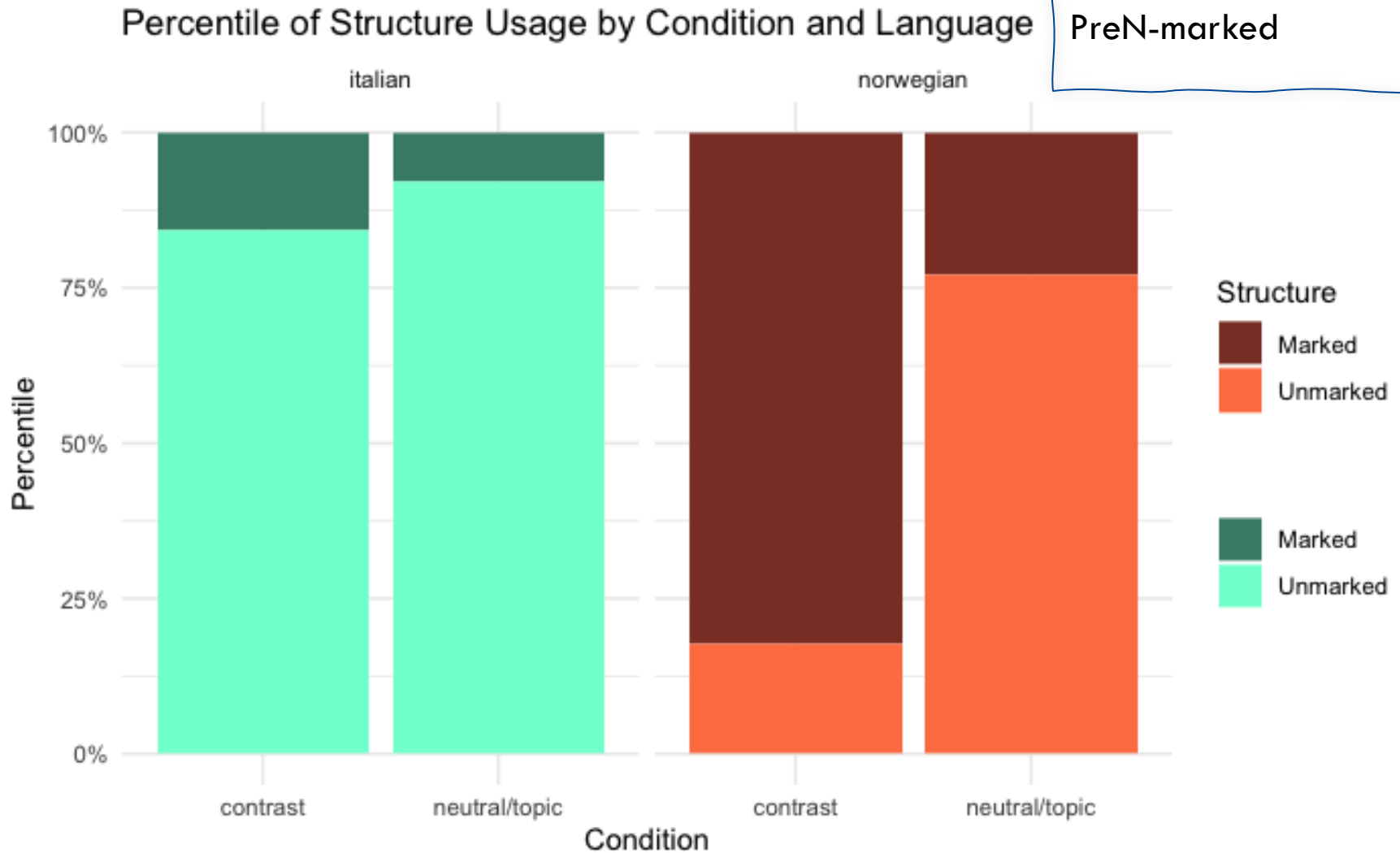
Se nå! Donald tar Mikke sin paraply. **Paraplyen hans** er større/ **hans paraply** er større.

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

Results: Elicitation

It: PreN-unmarked, PostN-marked

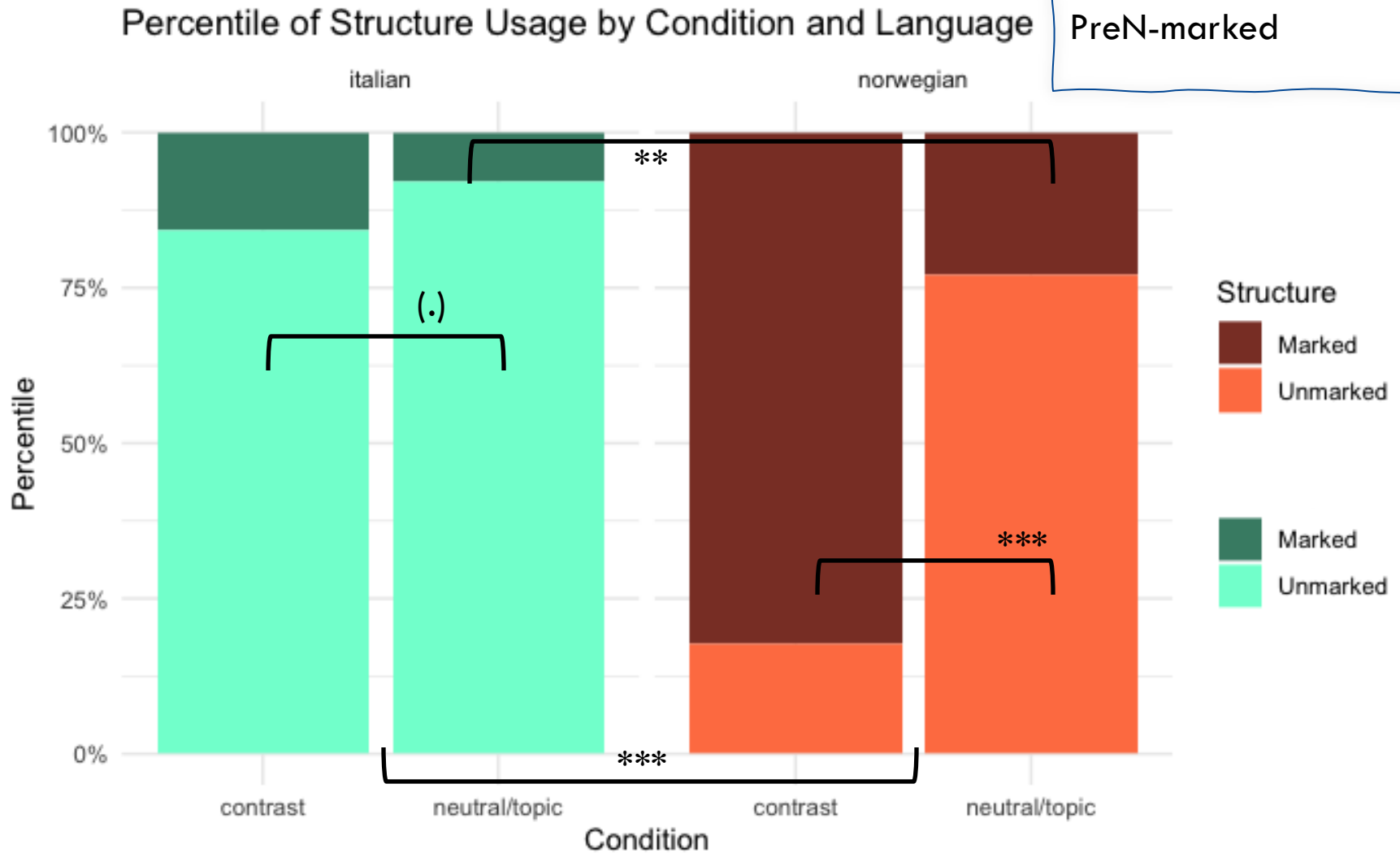
Nor: PostN-unmarked, PreN-marked



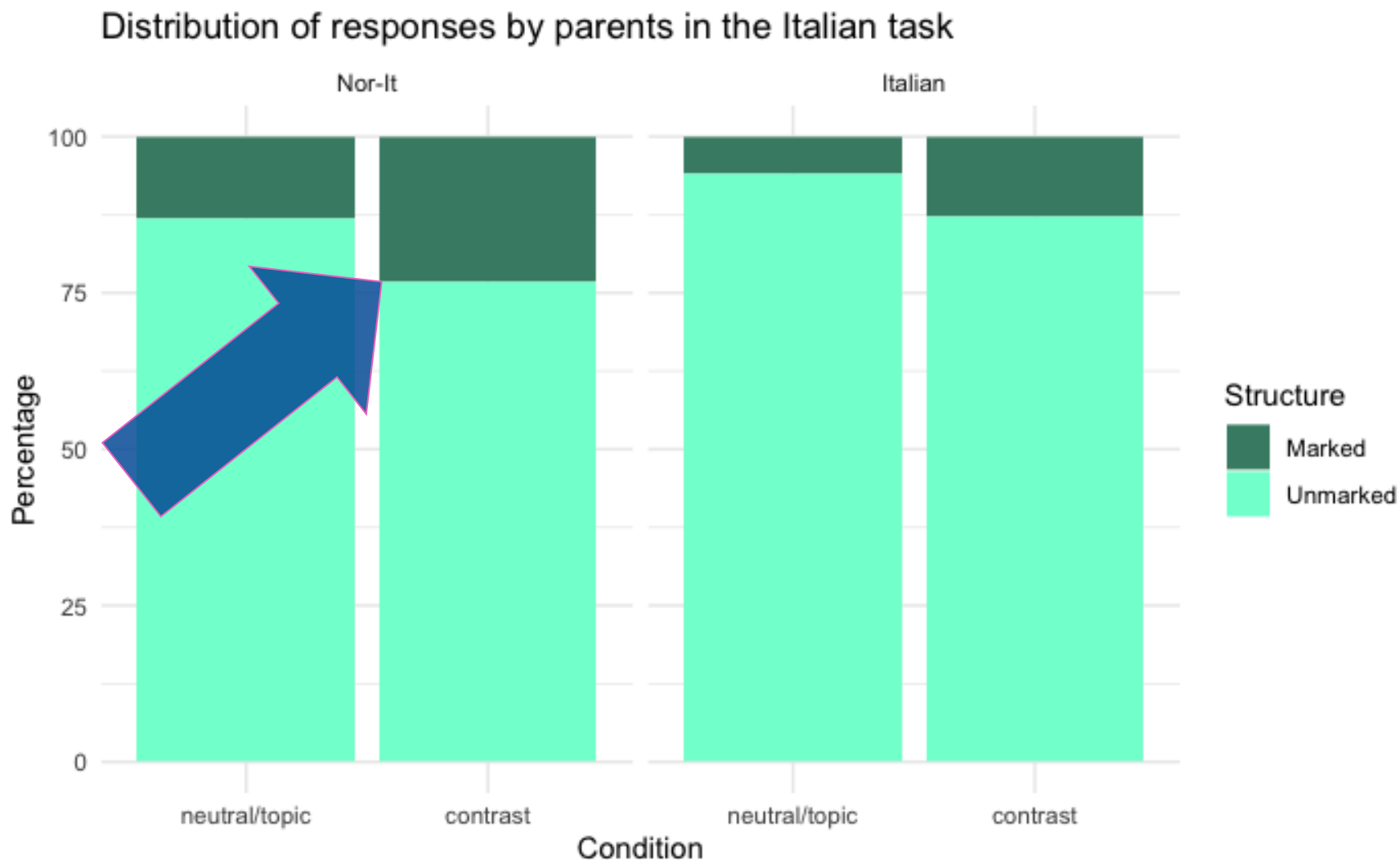
Results: Elicitation

It: PreN-unmarked, PostN-marked

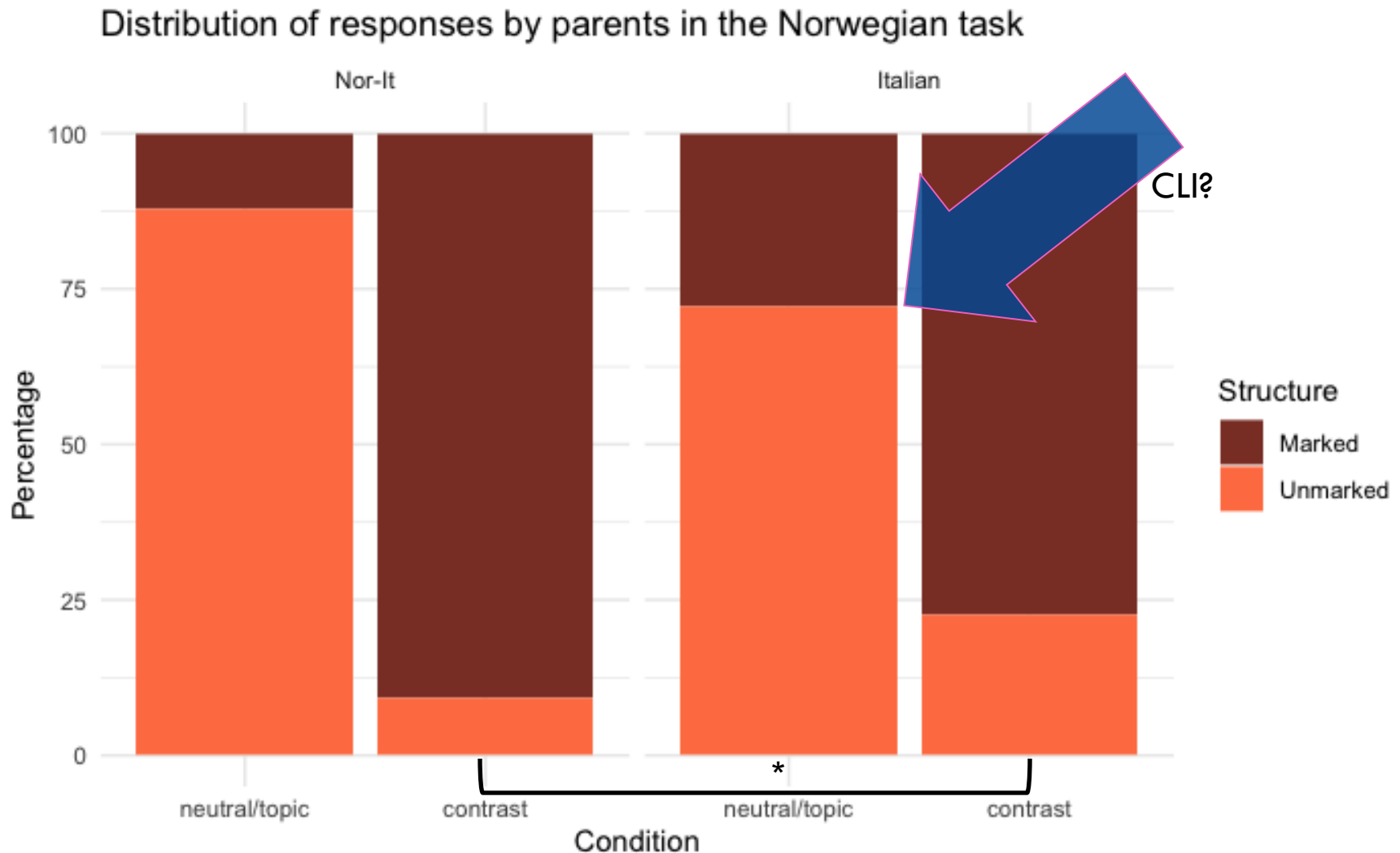
Nor: PostN-unmarked, PreN-marked



Italian task: the role of parents



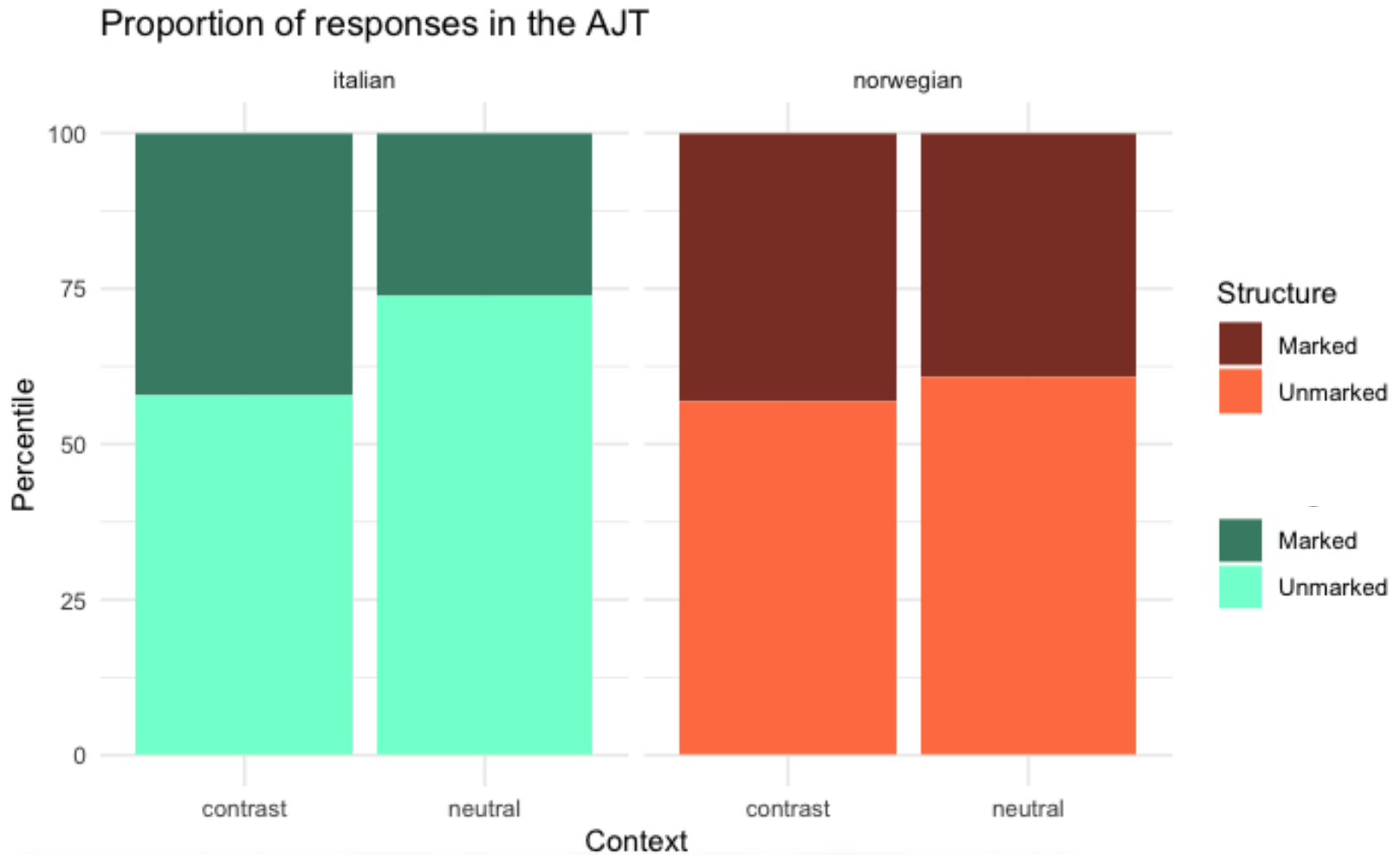
Norwegian task: the role of parents



Interim summary

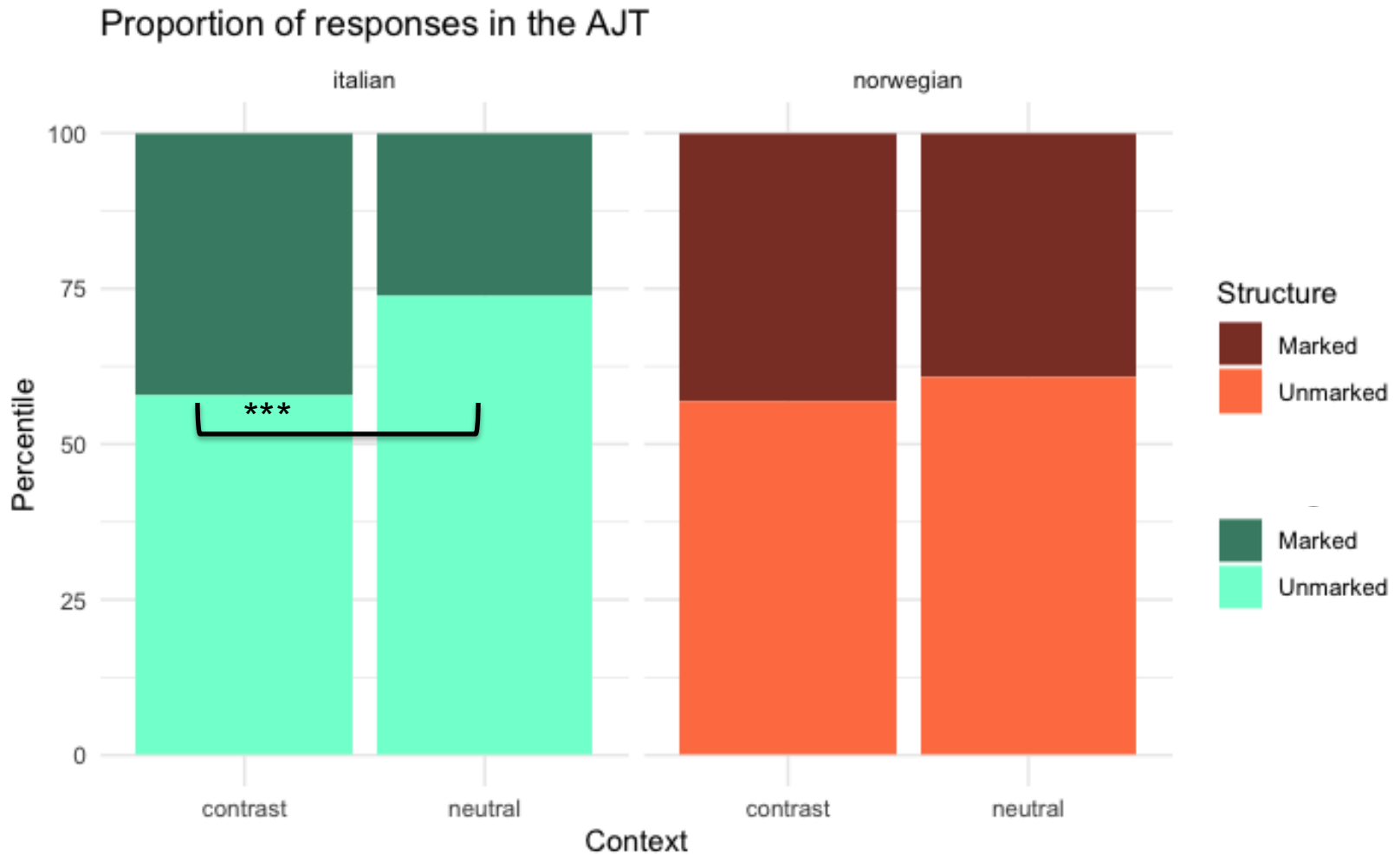
- The children are more target-like in using the two variants contextually in Norwegian (majority language)
- In Italian they use the PreN almost exclusively
- Simplification of a system?
- Receiving Norwegian input in the home correlates positively with the use of the variants
- Receiving more Italian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

Results- AJT



```
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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