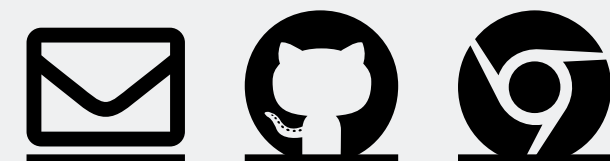# Second Language Acquisition

LG 376 — Semester 2, 2021 (Jan-May 2022)

CLASS 4: AGE AND CROSSLINGUISTIC INFLUENCES

Sakol Suethanapornkul

Outline

- Recap

- Age in L2 learning

  - Investigating ultimate attainment in L2A

- Prior knowledge in L2 learning

  - The early parts of transfer research

- Looking ahead: Week 5
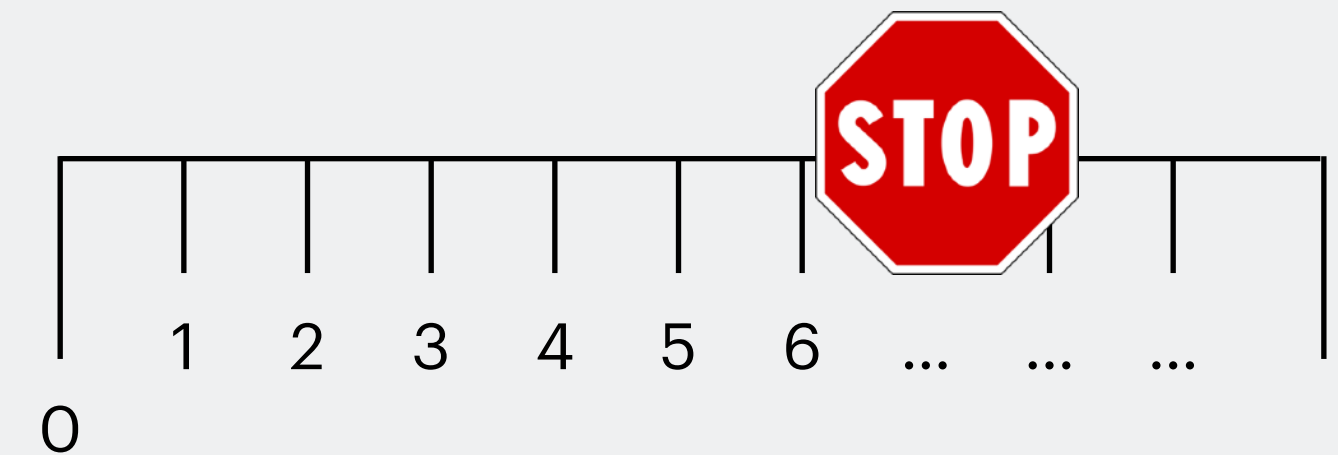
Recap

Setting the scene...

Two questions regarding age in SLA:

1. Critical/sensitive periods for L2 acquisition

   - Is there a biologically determined optimal timing for Lg. learning?

2. Ultimate linguistic success

   - Is it (im-)possible for late starters to be as good as those who learn Lg. X from birth (**and are now mature speakers**)?

Are children or adults better L2 learners?

- Muñoz (2006) presents evidence of age in **foreign language** (**FL**) contexts (English in Catalonia), involving ~ 2,000 school-age children

    - Late starters maintained a slight advantage throughout

    - Younger children did not catch up!

- Muñoz (2014) showed that a better predictor of success in FL contexts is **quality and quantity of input**, not starting age
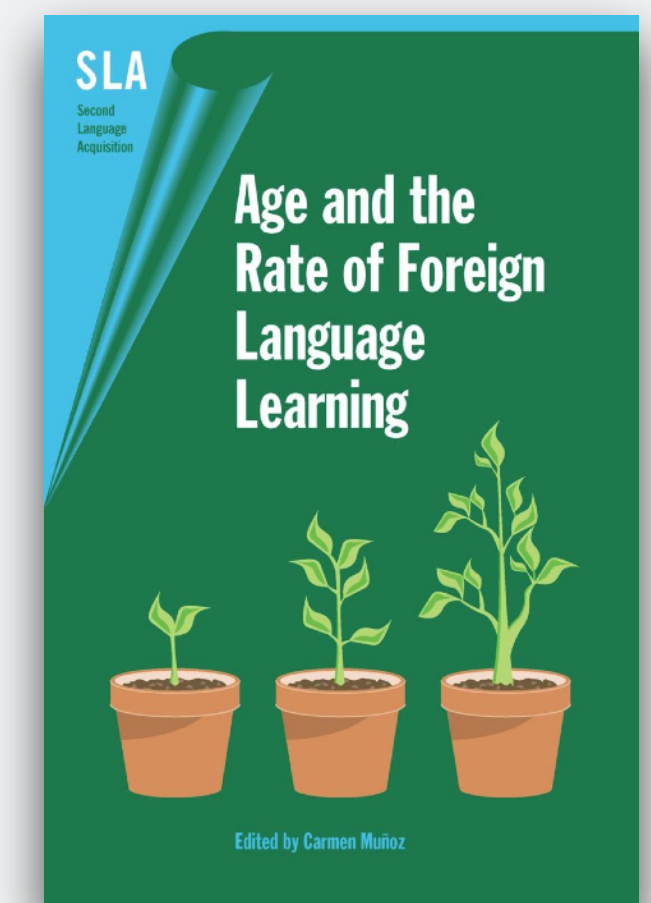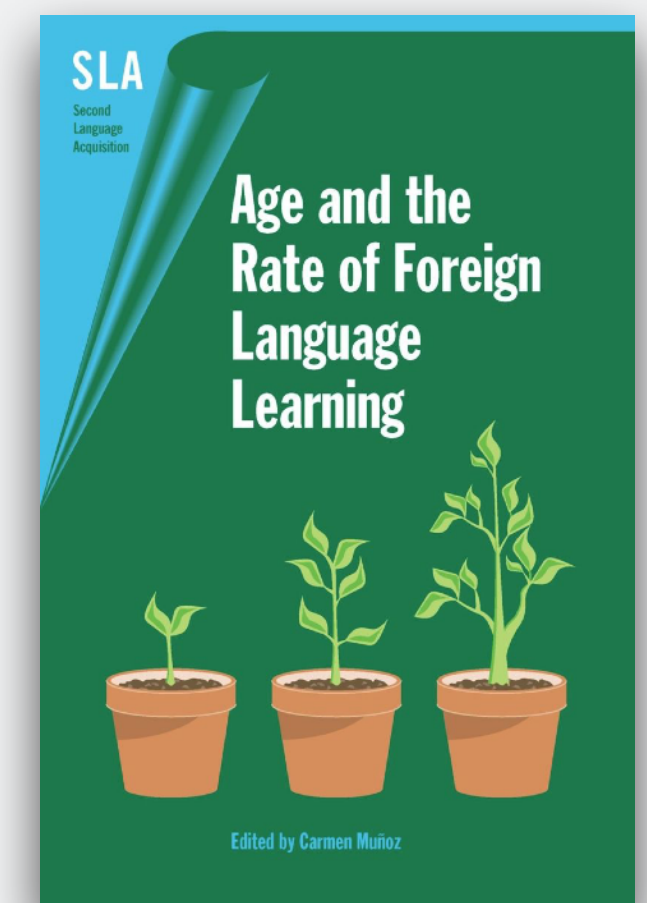
Are children or adults better L2 learners?

- Muñoz (2006) presents evidence of age in **foreign language** (**FL**) contexts (English in Catalonia), involving ~ 2,000 school-age children

Starting early ≠ better L2 outcomes

See Muñoz (2019) for a more recent summary

Ultimate attainment

What exactly is ultimate attainment?

- Full linguistic competence attained at the end state of L2 acquisition

- Success indistinguishable from the competence of native speakers

- Research:

  - participants in second language contexts (minimum: 5 to 10 years)*

  - **correlational** studies of age of arrival (AOA) and language scores

  - **exceptional "cases"** (or groups)

Correlational studies

Test scores (morphosyntax, phonology, etc.)

100

0

4   5   6   7   8   9   10   11   12   13   14   15   ......
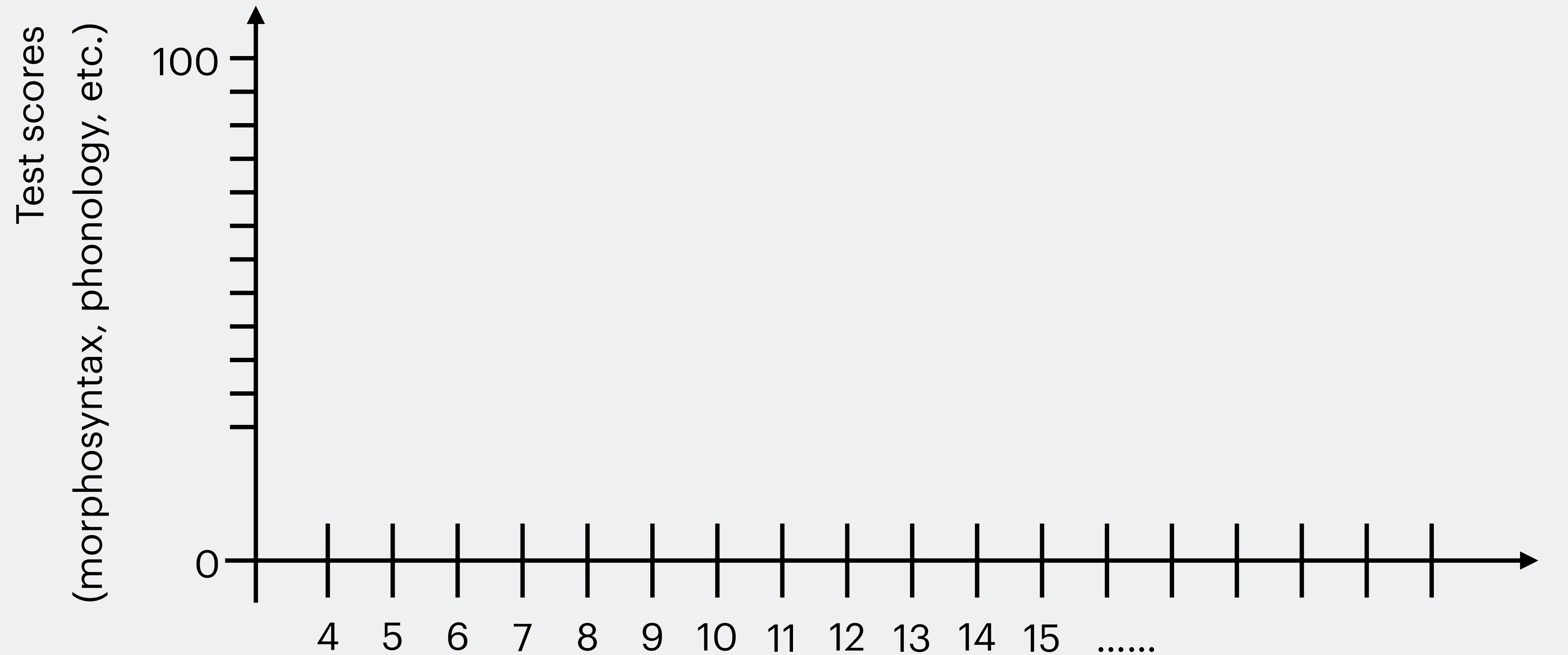
Age of Arrival (AOA): Age at which a person arrives in an L2 environment

[similar to but different from age of onset]

Correlational studies

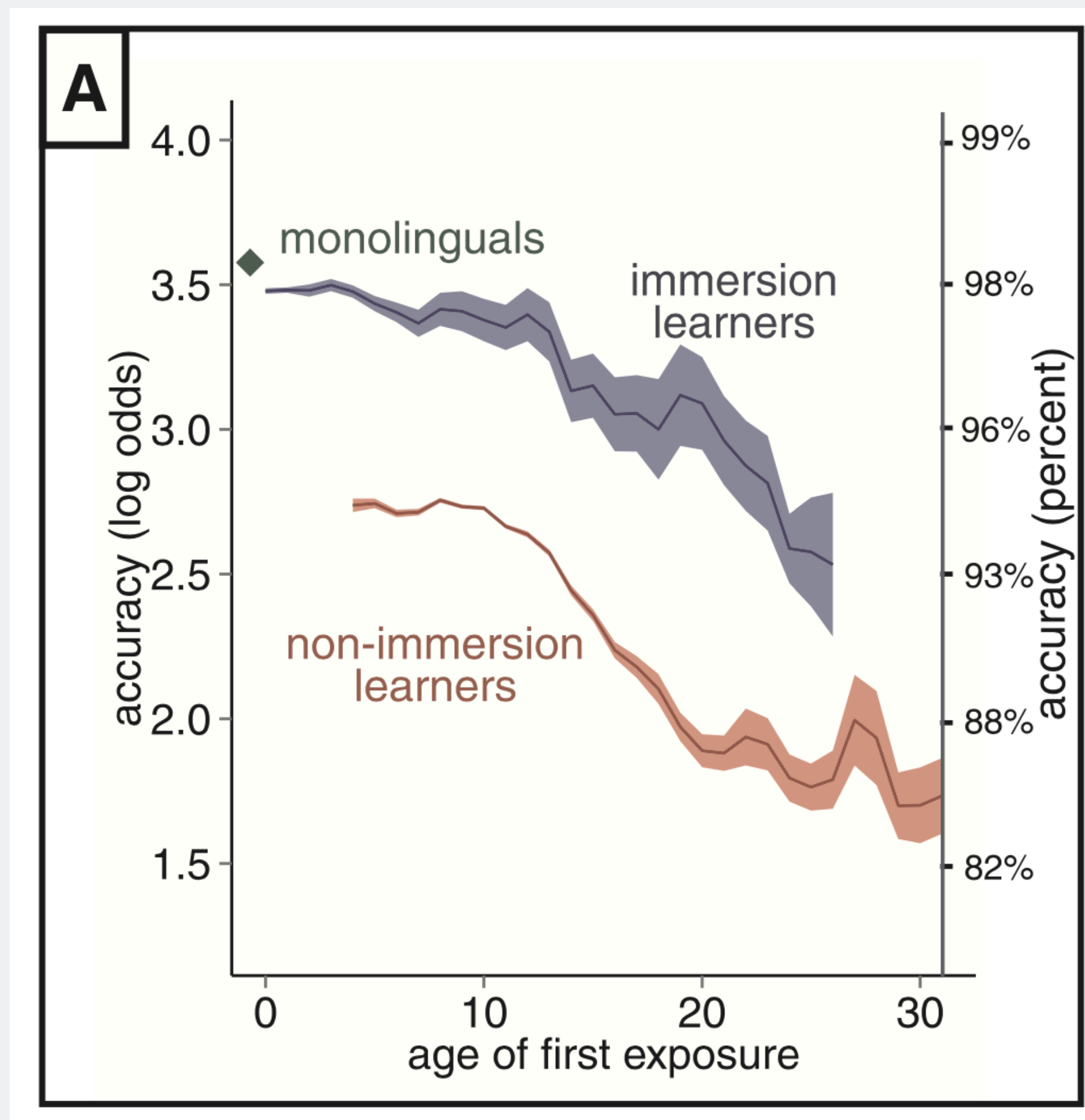- Correlational studies show a negative relationship between ages and scores

- This plus newer studies:

  - 12 years old   morphosyntax*

  - 9 years old   lexical idiomaticity

  - 5 years old   phonology

Source: Johnson and Newport (1989). *Cognitive Psychology*

But newer studies....

Hartshorne et al. (2018) cf. van der Silk et al. (2021)

10-12 yr.
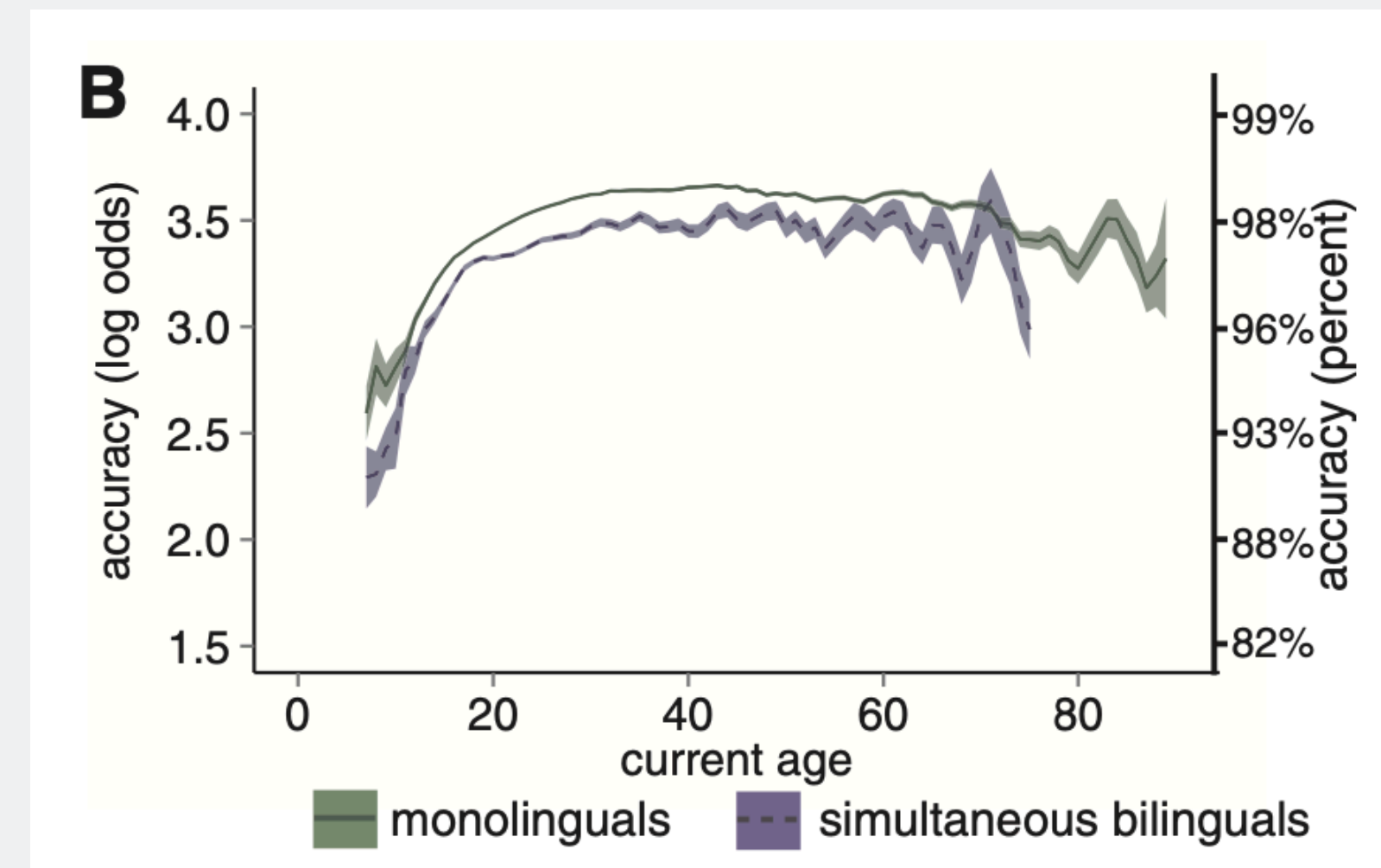
30 years
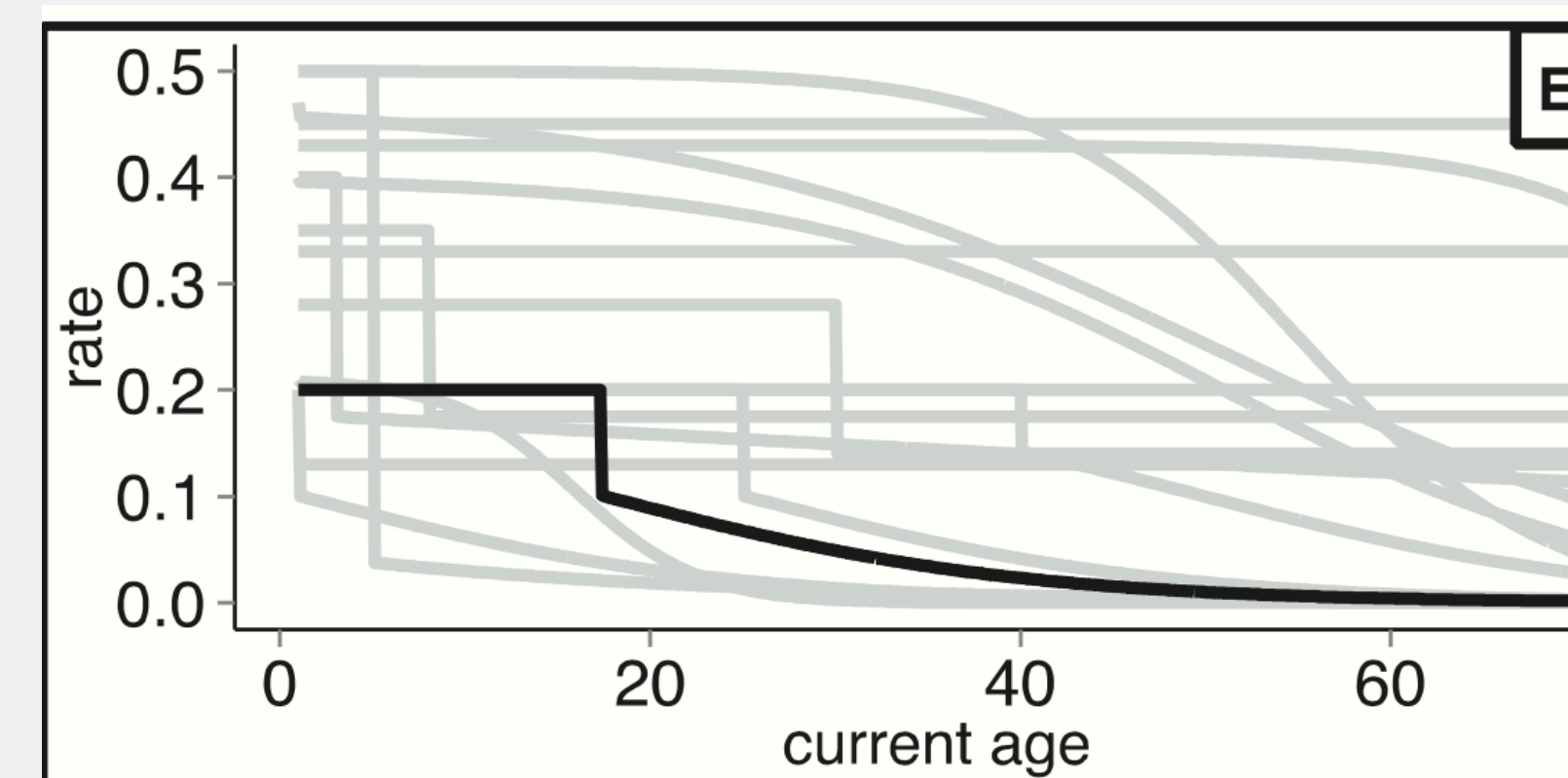
CP = 17.4

Exceptionally advanced L2 learners

- Question: how native is really "near-native"?

  - Old wave: Ioup et al.'s (1994) study

  - New wave: Hyltenstam and colleagues from Sweden

- "Scrutinized nativelikeness"

  - subject advanced L2 learners to exhaustive and very difficult batteries of test in many different domains

Exceptionally advanced L2 learners

Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam (2009) selected 41 native-like/near-native L2 speakers of Swedish from 104 potential candidates (out of 195 participants)

- Age of onset/arrival (< 11 or > 13)

- 4-hour testing; 20 tests (results on 10 tests)

- **None of late learners** within native speaker range

- **Few early learners** have "actual" native-like competence

Exceptionally advanced L2 learners

Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam (2009):

Instrument	AO 1–11 (n = 31)	AO 13–19 (n = 10)	χ^2	p
1. VOT production	23 (74%)	4 (40%)	3.931	<.05
2. VOT perception	22 (71%)	2 (20%)	8.092	<.01
3. Babble noise test	21 (68%)	3 (30%)	4.437	<.05
4. White noise test	15 (48%)	3 (30%)	1.038	>.1, ns
5. GJT (auditory)	18 (58%)	4 (40%)	0.992	>.1, ns
6. GJT (in writing)	19 (65%)	5 (50%)	0.397	>.1, ns
7. RT (aud. GJT)	29 (94%)	6 (60%)	6.812	<.01
8. Cloze test	16 (52%)	5 (50%)	0.008	>.1, ns
9. Idioms	18 (58%)	2 (20%)	4.385	<.05
10. Proverbs	5 (16%)	1 (10%)	0.227	>.1, ns

Exceptionally advanced L2 learners

Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam (2009):

> *Our primary interpretation of the results is that* **nativelike ultimate attainment** *of a second language is, in principle,* **never attained by adult learners** *and, furthermore,* **is much less common among child learners than has previously been assumed** *(emphasis added)*

On native speakers...

Native English-speaking adults in L2 research are often highly educated:

Source: Dąbrowska (2019). *Language Learning*
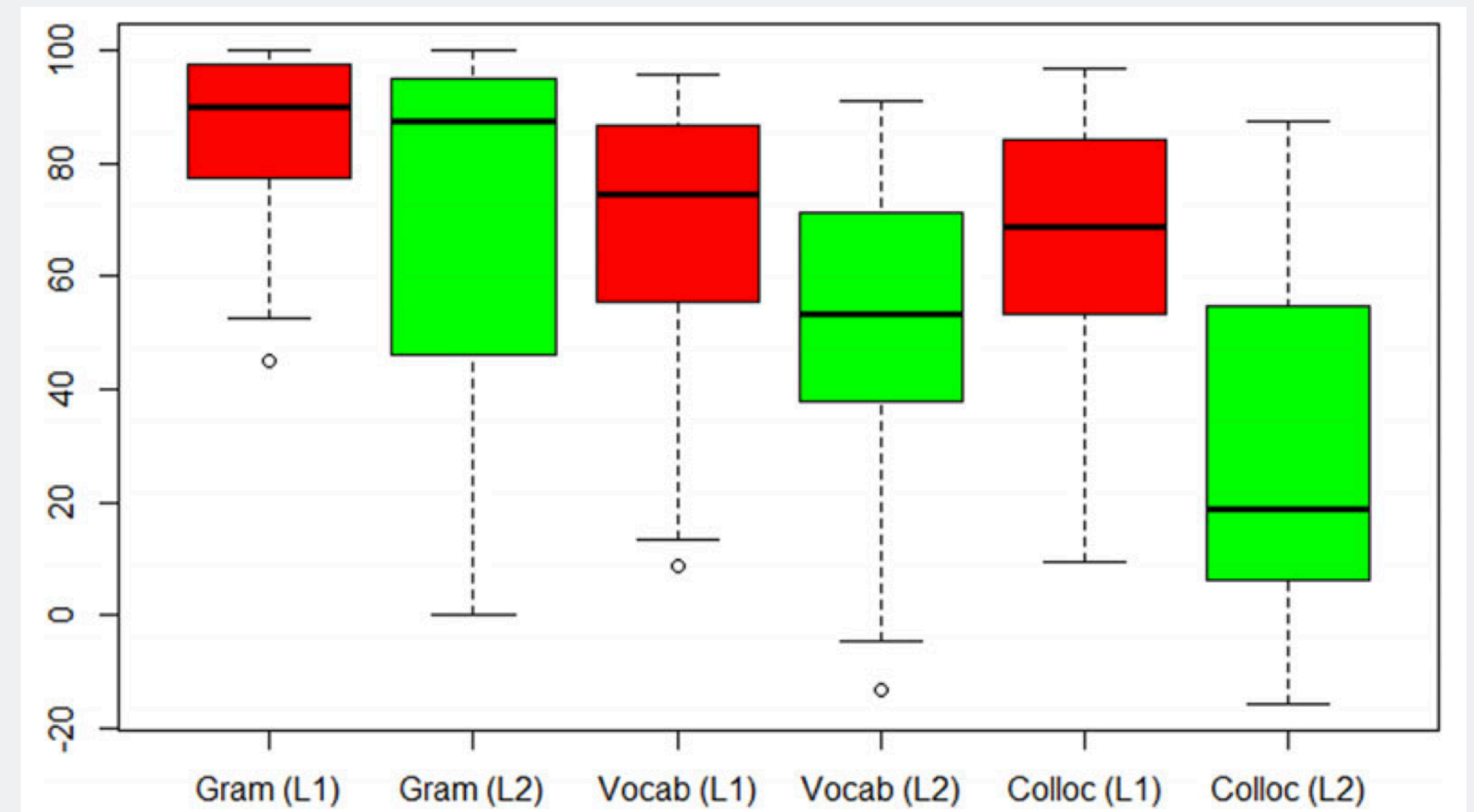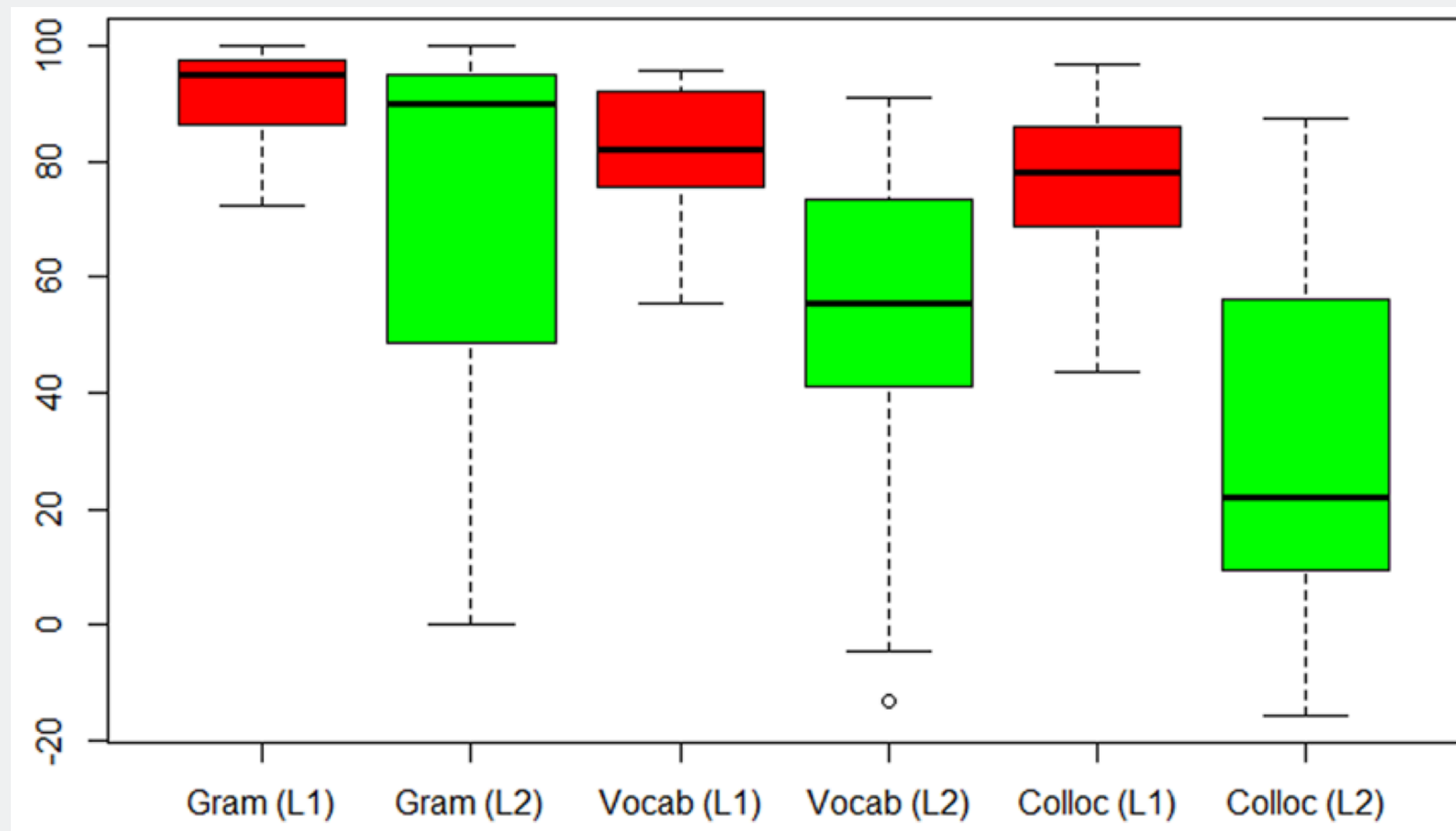
On research into age and L2 learning

Flege (2009, pp. 183–184) on age and L2 phonological acquisition:

> *few if any researchers believe that AOA is itself responsible for variation in L2 learning…[but] is related to a wide range of variables that have been hypothesised to affect L2 learning directly*

Age as an index of:

state of cognitive development	L1 proficiency	frequency & kind of L2 input
state of L1 development	language dominance	

On research into age and L2 learning

Many researchers (not all) work within generative linguistic theories

- Fundamental properties (i.e., UG) of human language 'hard-wired' in infants' brain

- Language-specific properties triggered by input

- Children and adults use different mechanisms

  - Bley-Vroman: *Fundamental Difference* Hypothesis

  - DeKeyser: Implicit learning in children vs. explicit learning in adults

Crosslinguistic influences

Setting the scene...

- All L2 users have knowledge of an L1 (and knowledge of other Ls)

  - older children: Thai → English

  - teenagers & adults   Thai → English → Japanese

- Basic question:

  - How is the development of a new L2 influenced by knowledge and capabilities available through previously learned Ls?

Area: ✔ Transfer   ✔ Crosslinguistic influences   ✗ Interference

L1-L2 differences and similarities

Robert Lado

- **Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis** (CAH)
  - Analyzing L1-L2 differences to predict problematic areas
    - L1-L2 difference = difficulty
    - L1-L2 similarity = L2 easiness
  - (based on behaviorist idea of habit formation)

L1-L2 differences and similarities

Robert Lado

- **Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis** (CAH)

English   **Spanish**

The dog	bought	the flower	El perro	compró	la flor
S	V	O	S	V	O

The dog	bought	it	El perro	la	compró
S	V	O	S	O	V

- CAH predicts

L1 English → L2 Spanish

*El perro compró la

L1 Spanish → L2 English

*The dog it bought

L1-L2 differences and similarities

Robert Lado

- Problems for CAH
  - Similarities do not always help (Swedish-Turkish negation)
  - Differences do not always cause errors (word order)
  - Difficulties can be asymmetrical (Spanish vs. English pronouns)

Interlingual identifications

- By late 1980s, researchers came to realize:

  - Transfer → psychological perception of similarities & differences

  - Andersen's (1983) *Transfer to Somewhere* principle

    - Not only L1 but also L2 must have features that invite (mis-)perception of similarities

  - **Interlingual identification**

    - The judgment that something in the native language and something in the target language are similar

Interlingual identifications

- Judgment can occur at two levels

  - **Unconscious**: evidentiality in Quechua-Spanish speakers

    - Encode evidentiality in past perfect tense of Spanish verbs

  - **Conscious**: strategic English-French transfer of Phillips

    - "It was the nearest I could get to something that might be right"

Question: Can you recall any experience that "shows" this type of judgment?

Lesson #4

- Transfer isn't just about **surface** forms in L1 and Ln

  - Don't presume that learning will be easy/difficult because L1 and L2 share "similar" forms

  - Pointing "similar" forms to students may not always lead to learning!

- Transfer is a psychological process

Besides the L1s: Interlanguage

- L1/L2 common errors in English

  - *wented, goed*

  - *the car was crashed*

- Similar mistakes in L2 learners from different L1 backgrounds)

- **Interlanguage** (Selinker, 1972)

  - *Transitional language **system** constructed by learner at each point in development toward TL*

Besides the L1s: Developmental sequences

- **Sequences** = stages that L2 learners pass through to competence

Negation

Stage 1:

Negative element before verbs

No bicycle
I no like it
Not my friend

Stage 2:

No/not alternating with 'don't'

He don't like it
I don't can sing

Stage 3:

Negative element may be after auxiliaries

You can not go there
She don't like rice

Stage 4:

'Do' marked for tense, person, number

It doesn't work
I didn't __went__ there

Besides the L1s: Developmental sequences

- **Sequences** = stages that L2 learners pass through to competence

Question

Stage 1:	Stage 2:	Stage 3:	Stage 4:	Stage 5:	Stage 6:
Single words, formulas	Declarative word order	Fronting	Inversion in *wh-* copula	Inversion in wh- questions	Complex questions
Dog? *What's that?*	*The boys throw the shoes?*	*Where the children are playing?*	*Where is the sun?* *Is there a fish in the water?*	*What's the boy doing?*	

Next week…

- **<u>Topic</u>**: Crosslinguistic influences (continued)

  - How does transfer take place?

  - Which language is the source of transfer?

- **<u>Reading</u>**:

  - USLA (3.4, 3.6, 3.10, and 3.11)

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