



Exploring the Role of Interactive Alignment in Bilingual Over-explicitness: Evidence from Null and Overt Subjects in an Artificial Language

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Background

Interactive alignment in shaping language

- *Interactive alignment* - interlocutors adapt their language use during conversations by using the same words, structures or even pronunciation (*priming*), thus activating the same linguistic representations in the mind of interlocutors.
- This process can drive language change as certain linguistic variants become more frequently used and spread in the community, leading to changes in language structure over time.

Over-explicitness among bilingual speakers

- Bilinguals, including L2 learners, child bilinguals, L1 attriters and heritage speakers, shows a preference to be more explicit in choosing an anaphoric form (overt pronoun/lexical phrase).

Research aim

- Exploring the role of interactive alignment in propagating and consolidating over-explicitness

Methods

Participants: 90 US Native English Speakers on MTurk
Artificial language design:

○ Sentences

Context	Supportive (Topic Continuity)	Non-Supportive (Topic Shift)
Sentence	<i>leepo pilka. simko (pilka).</i>	<i>roopo pilka. jarko (barsa).</i>

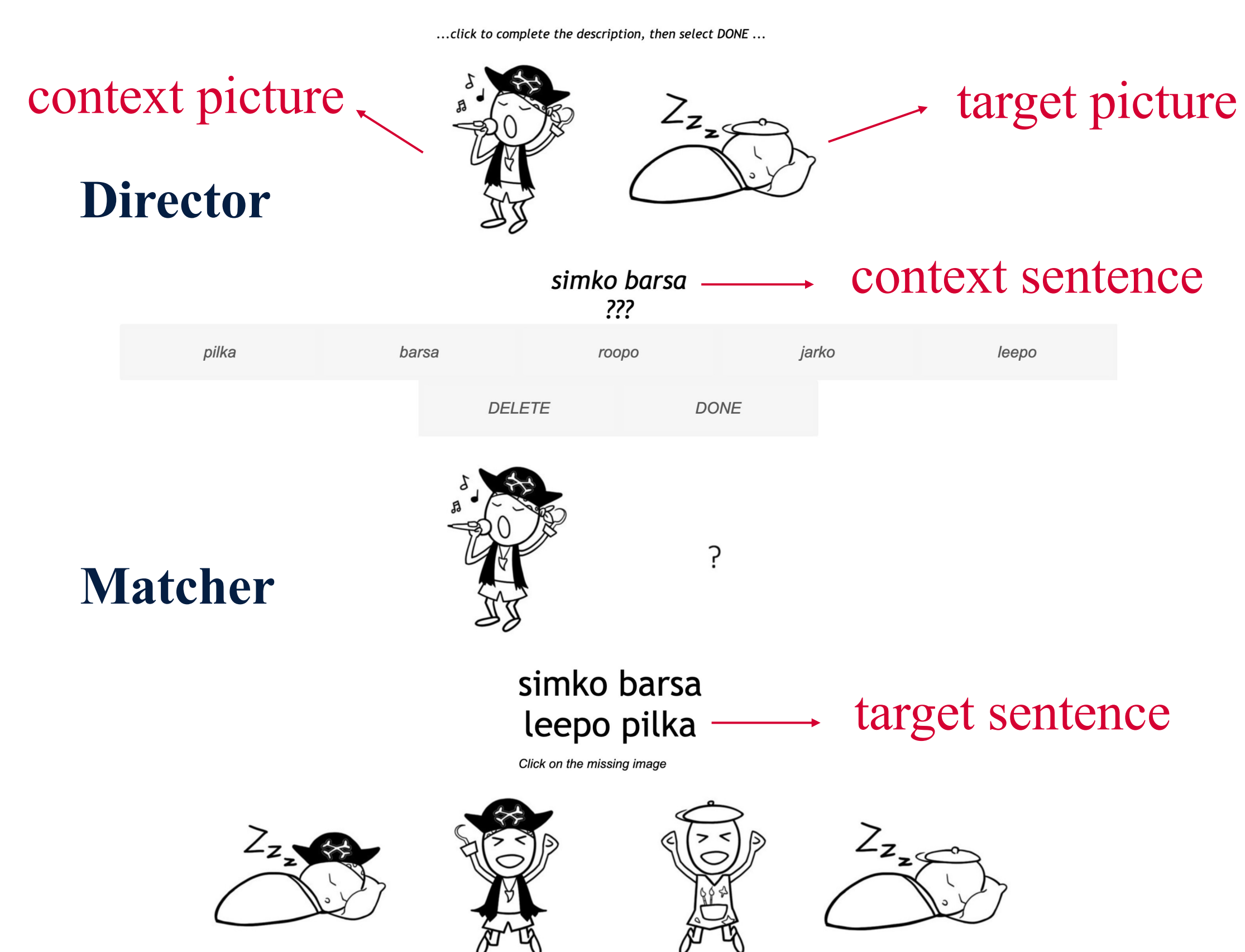
○ Language patterns: proportion

Context	Subject of the Target Sentence	Native Language	Attrited Language	
			Mid Version	Weak Version
Supportive	null subject	100%	50%	80%
	overt subject	0	50%	20%
Non-supportive	null subject	0	50%	20%
	overt subject	100%	50%	80%

○ Conditions: Mid-Mid, Weak-Weak, Mid-Weak

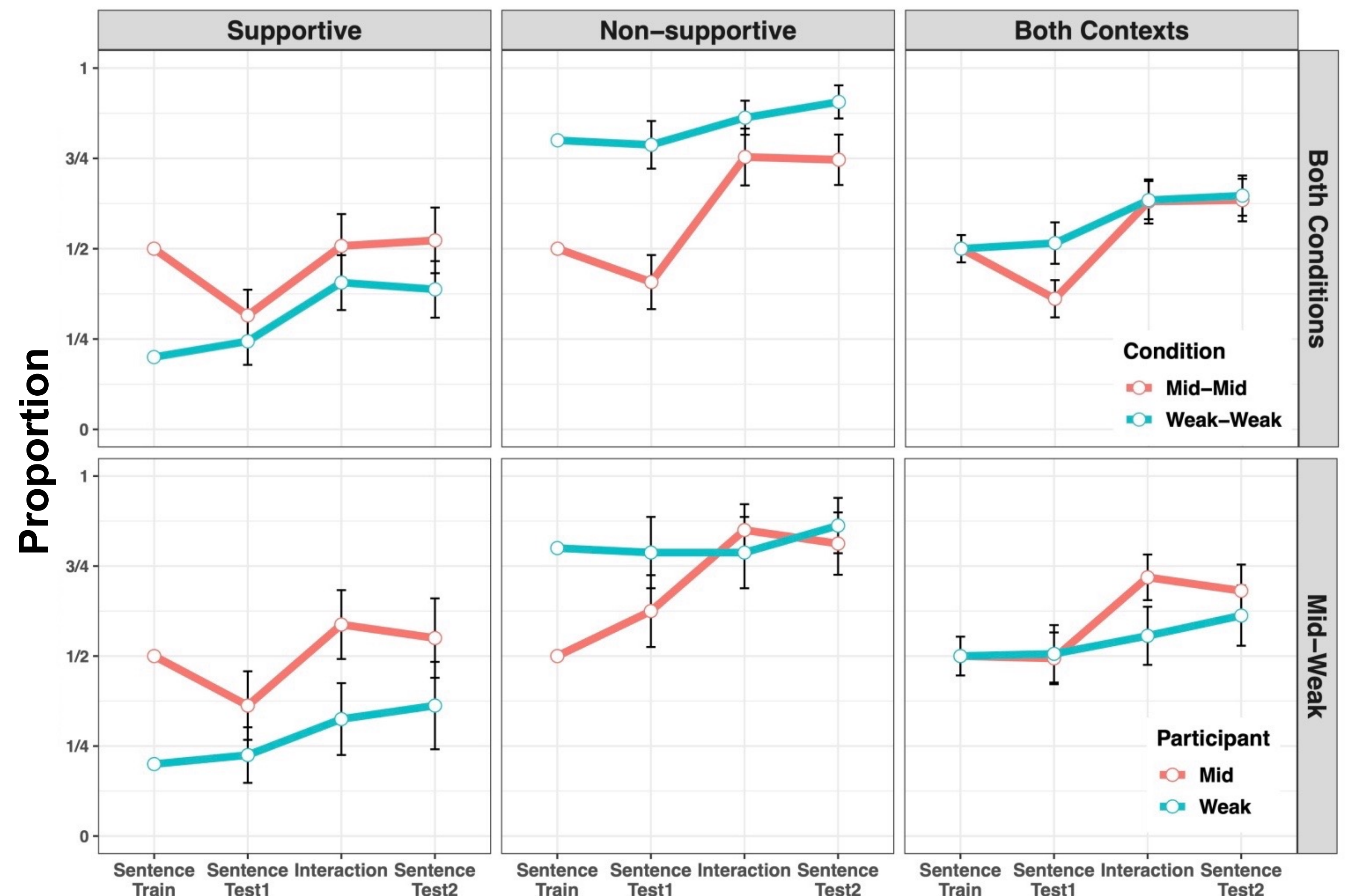
Main procedures: Sentence Train, Sentence Test 1, **Interaction**, Sentence Test 2

Interaction: the director-matcher game

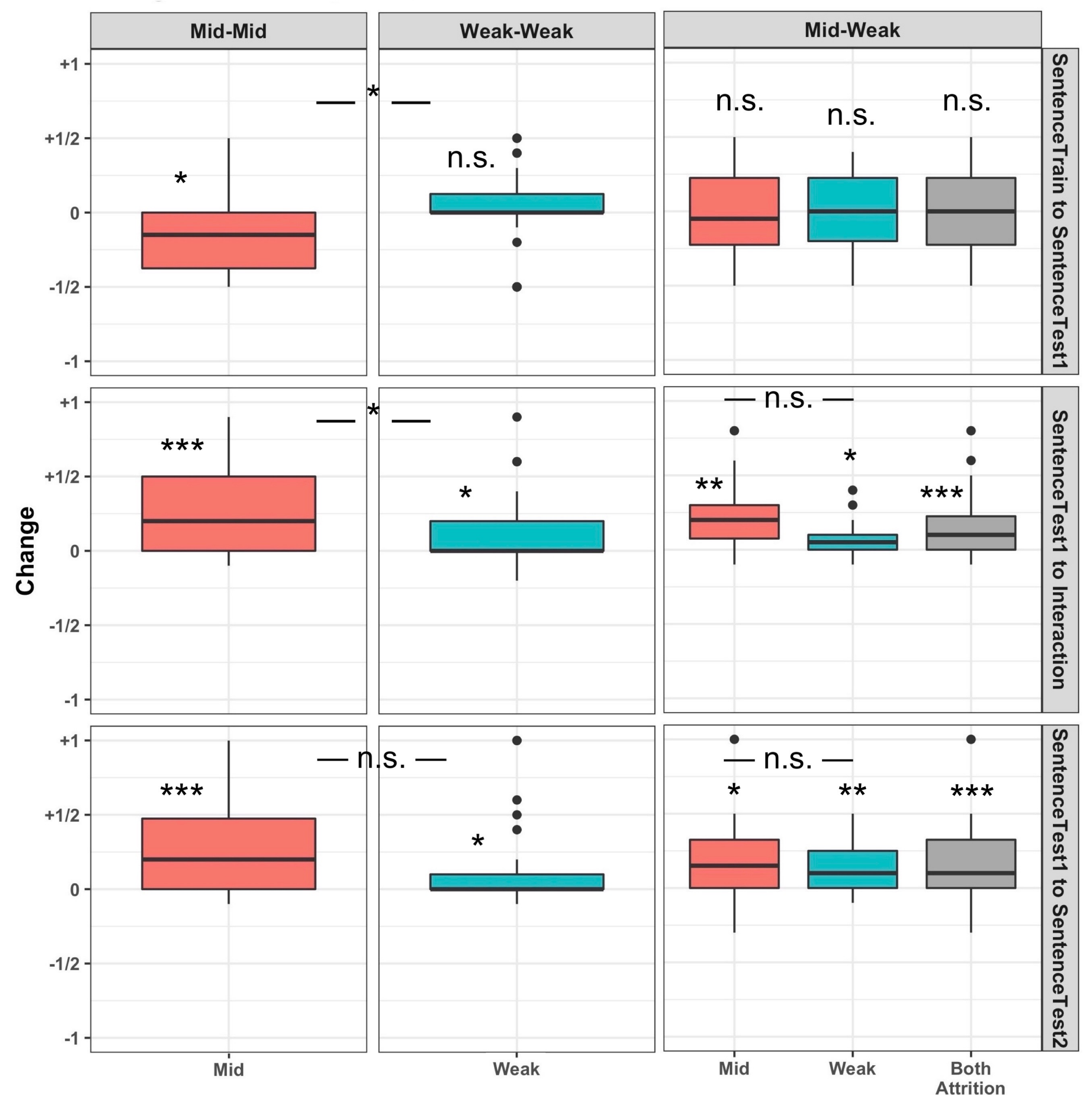


Results

Mean of Overt Subject Production



Change of Overt Subject Production



Conclusion & Discussion

Conclusion

- Interaction brings about an increase of overt subject production overall.
- Mid attriters change more drastically than Weak attriters.
- No more change occurs from Mid attriters paired with Weak partners.
- More change occurs in Non-supportive than Supportive context.
- Such effect of interaction can be preserved afterwards.

Discussion

- Attriters tend to use overt subjects when communicating with other attriters due to their communicative needs to avoid ambiguity and achieve alignment.
- Interactive alignment plays a role in diffusing and strengthening changes.