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Differences between ESL, EFL and Monolinguals: A Developmental Retrospective Grammaticality Judgment Task Study

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What does it mean if early second language learners differ from monolinguals?

Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009

- Probed the linguistic knowledge and use of Spanish L1, highly advanced L2 learners of Swedish
 - Found that AoA was strongly predictive of convergence.
 - **However** – Even the youngest learners (as a group) did not reliably converge on the authors' definition of 'nativelikeness'.
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- Conclude that it is rare for an L2 speaker *of almost any AoA* to converge on 'nativelike' linguistic knowledge and use.
 - State that other findings of 'nativelike' L2 knowledge are likely due to ceiling effects on experimental tasks.

Monolithic Monolingualism?

Dabrowska (2012) reviews literature that shows that even monolinguals vary in their knowledge of linguistic forms. Frequently, these differences are traced to differences in educational background, suggesting that basing 'native-speaker' knowledge on university undergraduates may bias the concept in favour of a particular type of native speaker rather than all.

Bilinguals are inherently a more diverse group (Grosjean, 1989) and have more varied experiences with language (Paradis & Jia, 2016).

Native to ~~Who~~ Whom?

Relevance of monolingual–early bilingual differences to:

GENERAL POPULATION (?)

- The type of use and knowledge differences detected in research are unlikely to be frequently noticed.
- People (unfortunately) probably more likely to base 'non-native' on factors like ethno-cultural background.

APPLIED RESEARCH

- Beginning ESL in high school can impact success, but graduation rates actually higher for early ESL learners in BC (Garnett, 2010)
- Bilingualism brings practical benefits.

BASIC RESEARCH

- Differences between the use or knowledge of any two language users should be identified and explained.

Previous Literature

MONOLINGUAL–BILINGUAL DIFFERENCES FOR GRAMMATICAL MORPHEMES

Child Longitudinal Study Findings

These show that convergence for English morphology by those with non-inflected L1s (specifically Chinese languages) may not occur even by 5 (Jia & Fuse, 2007) or 6 years (Paradis, Tulpar, & Arppe, 2016) of English exposure.

Paradis, Tulpar, & Arppe (2016)

Paradis *et al* found that by round 3 of the study 11 out of 18 participants had not obtained criterion scores for one or more of the items probed on a standardized test of English inflectional morphemes (TEGI).

- Participants had a mean age of 10;5 (SD = 0;11) with 6;4 years (SD = 0;7) of exposure to English
- All had an AoA < 6;0 (mean = 4;2, SD = 1;0)
- Typically developing monolinguals obtain criterion scores by 6;0

Studies of Ultimate Attainment

Studies that test the linguistic knowledge of adults who learned an L2 in early childhood indicate that these learners may *NEVER* converge on monolingual language knowledge/use (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Flege et al, 1999).

L1 can impact convergence (McDonald, 2000).

Why Include an EFL Group?

Child foreign language experience is typically omitted from this type of research because:

- Convergence on monolingual norms is not expected.
- Findings for child foreign language (FL) acquisition do not directly generalize to children learning a community language.

However, given that the concept of ‘native-speaker’ is often central to ultimate attainment research, it is useful to also compare child L2 learners to those who are definitely not native speakers.

The Present Study

Research Questions

1. Are there detectable differences between child English L2 (ESL) learners and monolingual English speakers in adulthood?
2. Do the ESLs differ from the monolinguals in the same way as the EFLs differ from monolinguals?

Grammaticality Judgment Task

Recorded audio stimuli probed the following morphemes:

1. Articles
2. 'Be' forms
3. 'Do' forms
4. Past Tense
5. Third Person Singular
6. Plural Marking

Fillers:

- Correct stimuli
- Adverbs with awkward/incorrect placement

Experimental items were counterbalanced with correct stimuli divided between two lists.

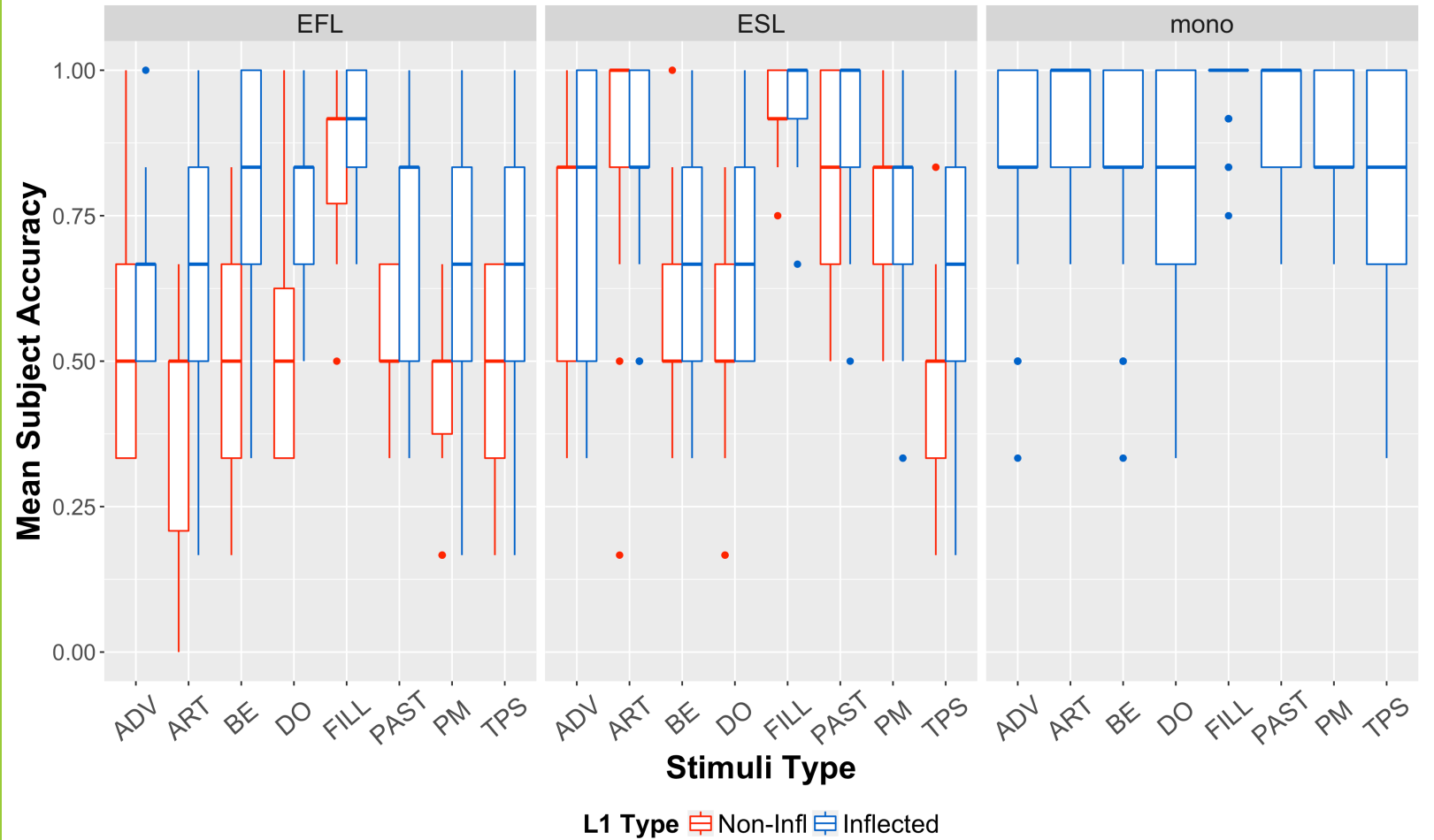
Participant Groups

	MONO	ESL		EFL	
Language Type	English	Inflected	Non-Infl	Inflected	Non-Infl
Number	53	37	25	13	14
Age	20;5 (2;2)	19;12 (1;6)	19;11 (1;7)	23;2 (6;1)	20;8 (1;7)
Age Range	18;2 – 29;3	18;1 – 23;1	18;2 – 25;4	18;10 – 43;1	18;6 – 23;8
Age of Arrival (AoA)	NA	5;7 (4;3)	2;10 (3;0)	19;10 (4;4)	17;5 (1;5)
AoA Range	NA	1 - 14	1 - 12	14 - 32	15 - 19
Age of Eng. Education (AoEd)	4.17 (0.86)	6.53 (2.80)	4.83 (1.46)	7;10 (3;6)	8;4 (3;10)
AoEd Range	3 – 6	3 – 13	3 - 10	3 - 13	5 - 17

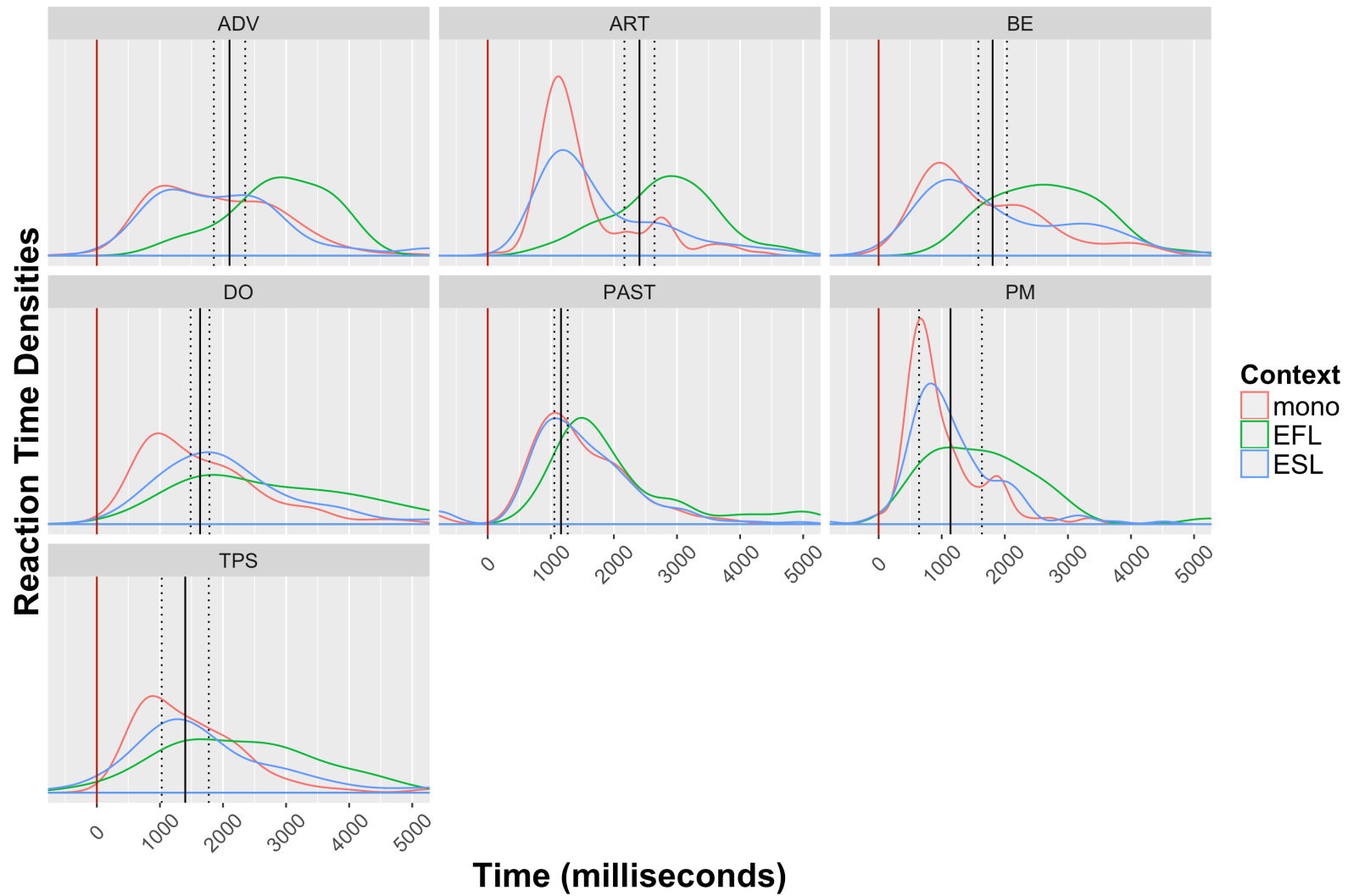
Results: Summary Plots

Group Accuracy

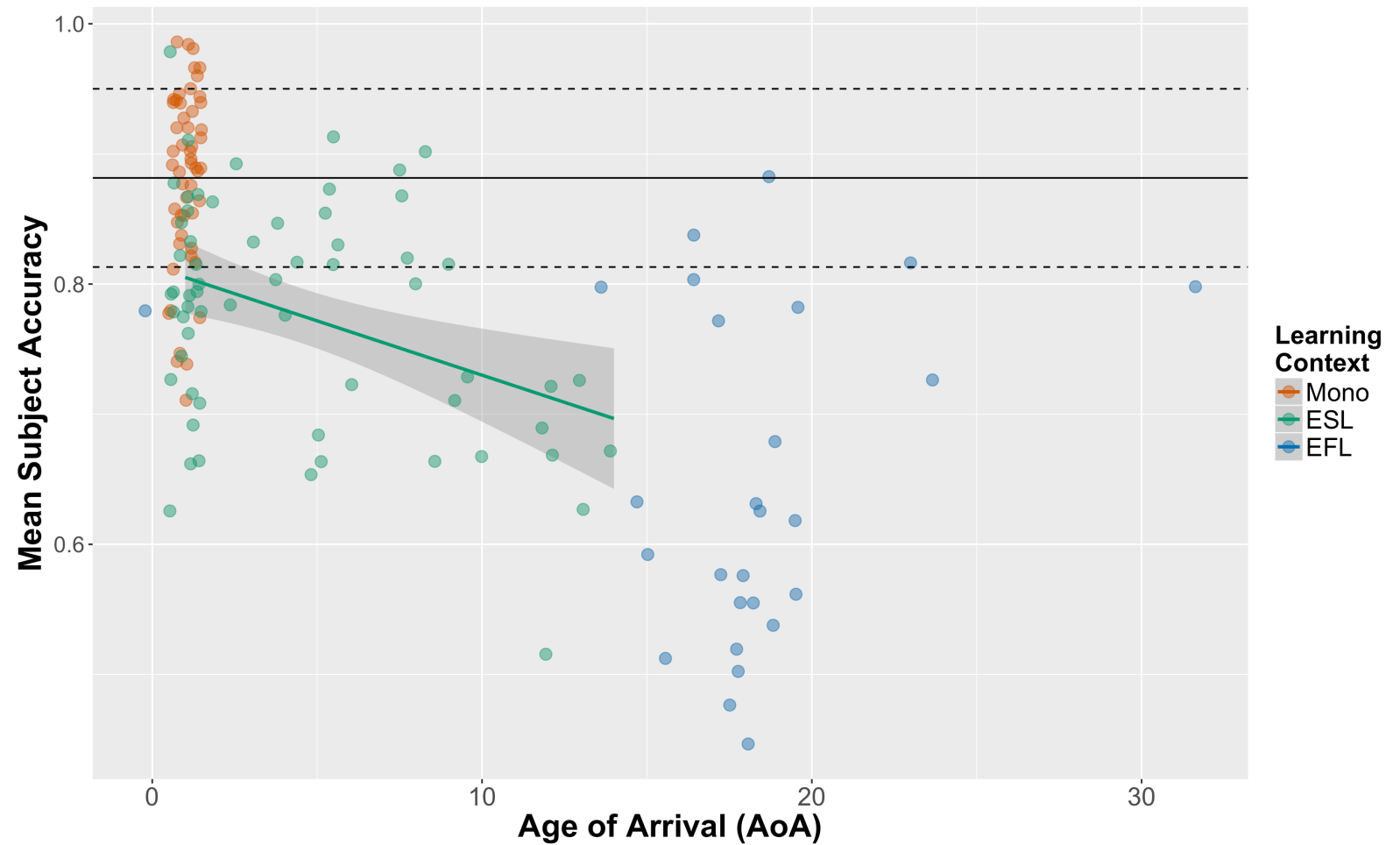
1. ADV = Adverb
2. ART = Articles
3. BE = Be
4. DO = Do
5. FILL = Fillers
6. PAST = Past tense
7. PM = Plural Marking
8. TPS = Third Person Singular



Group Reaction Times



Subject Accuracy



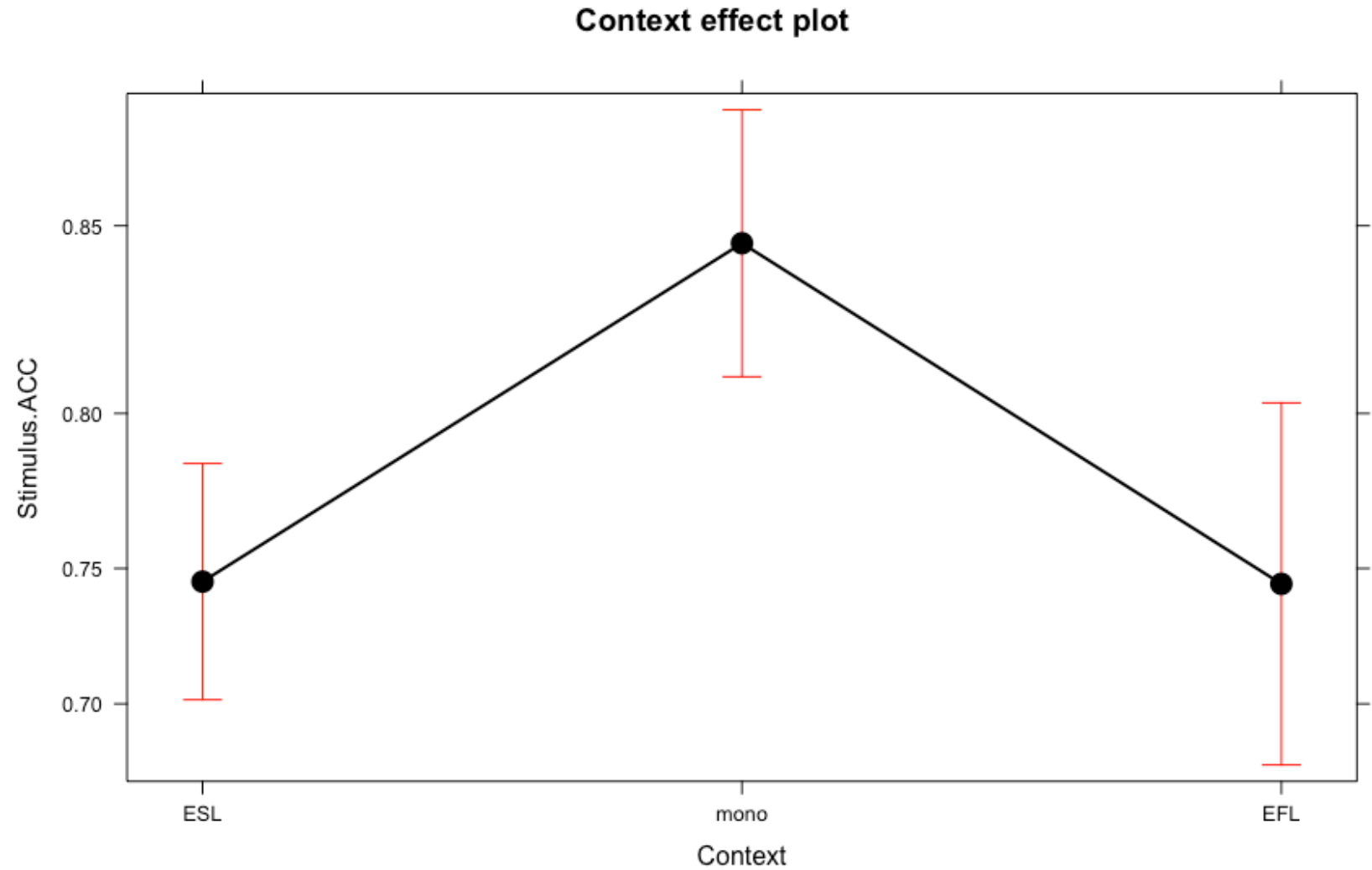
Points represent individual participant scores.

Points are coloured by group.

Results: Mixed Effects Model Plots

Model Results: Accuracy by Context

ESL vs. Monolinguals vs. EFL



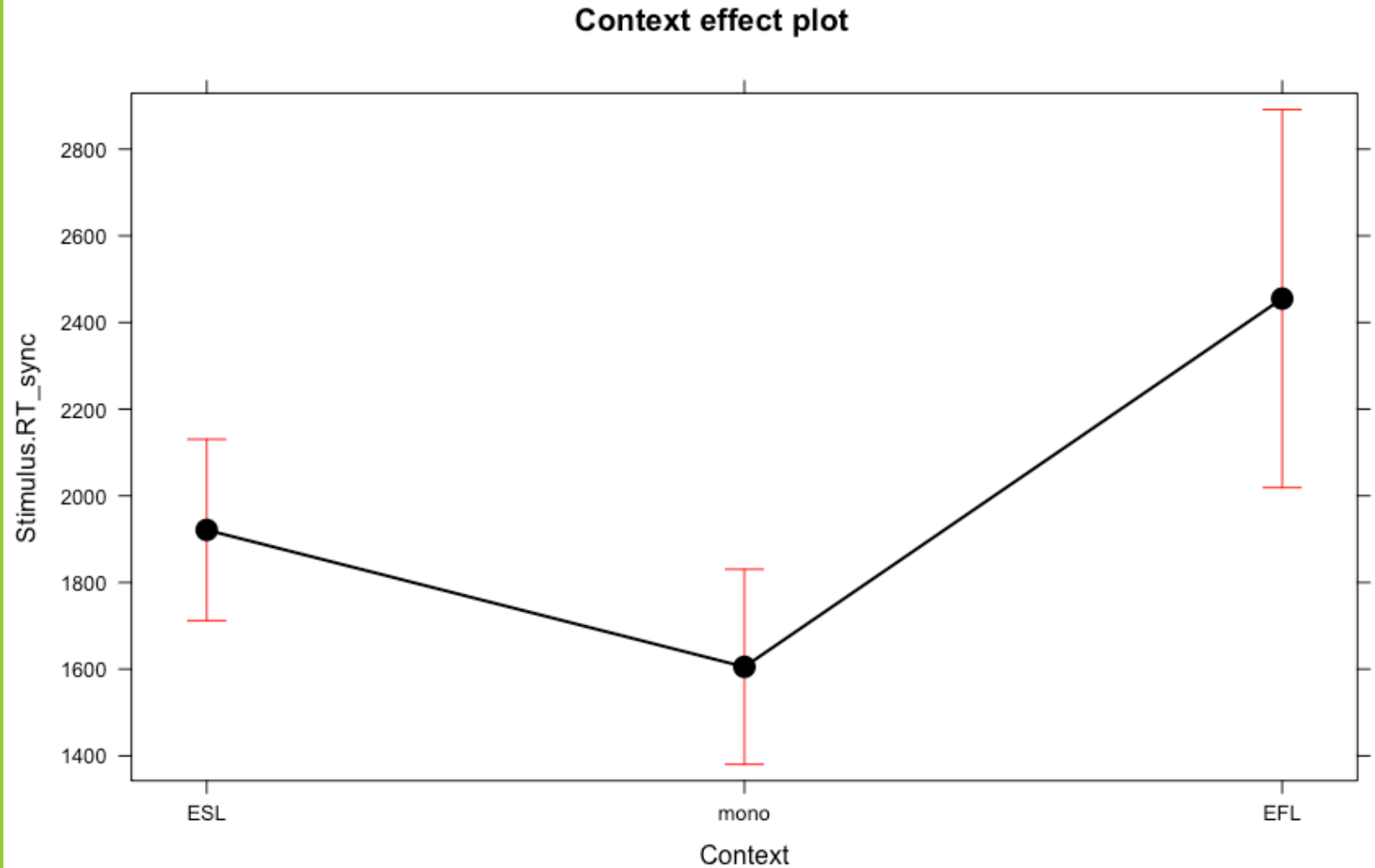
Model

Results:

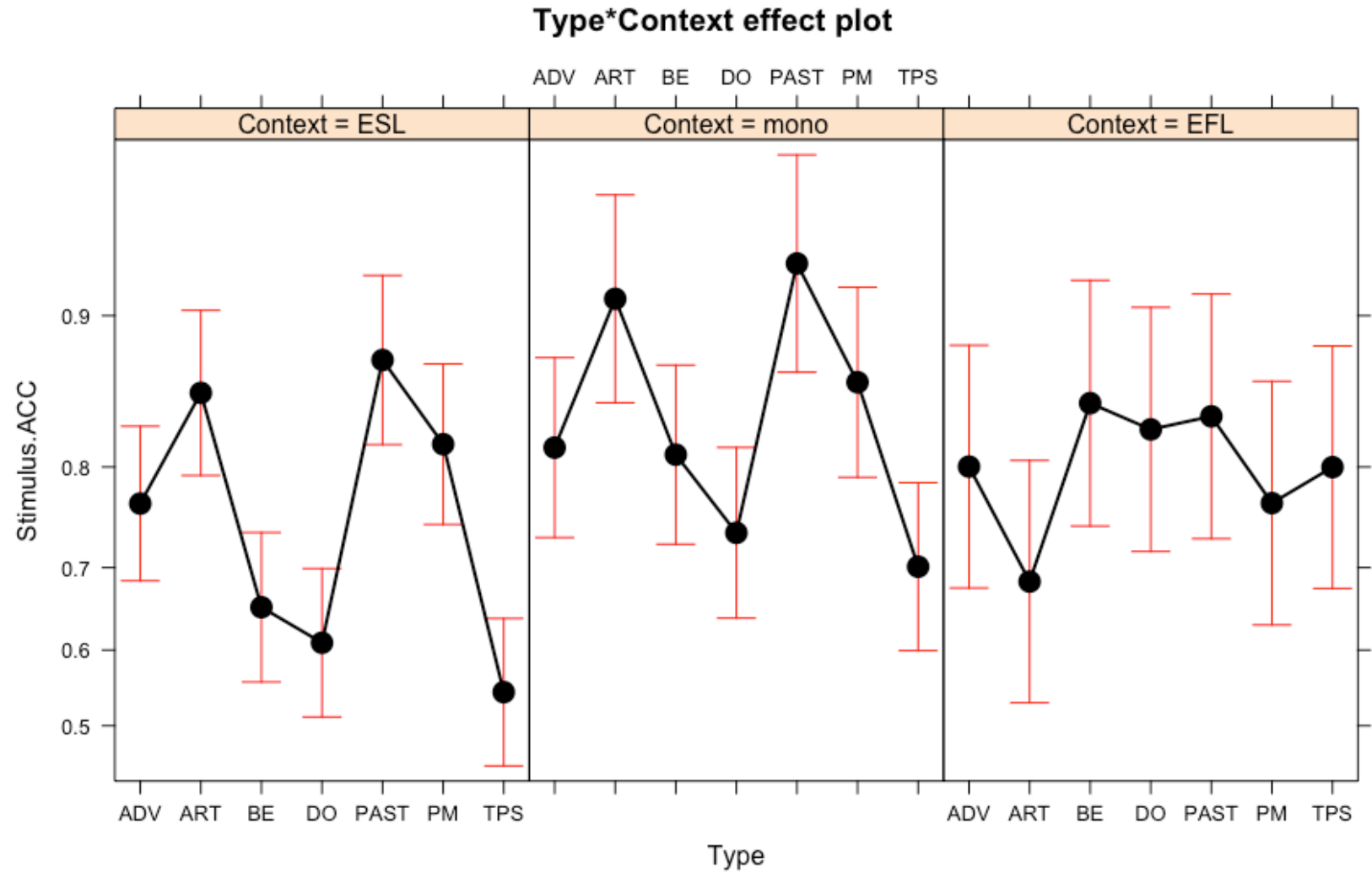
Reaction Time by
Context

ESL vs. Monolinguals vs.
EFL

(Only for stimuli that
had an error, and was
correctly detected by
the participant.)



Model Results: Accuracy by Context Group and Morpheme Type



Discussion

Research Question 1

1. Are there detectable differences between child English L2 (ESL) learners and monolingual English speakers in adulthood?
 - Yes

Research Question 2

1. Do the ESLs differ from the monolinguals in the same way as the EFLs differ from monolinguals?
 - **Mixed**
 - Looking at aggregated performance (either accuracy percentage or reaction time) the ESLs and EFLs both lag behind the monolinguals.
 - **However**, ESL participants mirror monolinguals in their *relative* sensitivity to morphemes.

Discussion

Language input and experience are known to influence early and late L2 acquisition. The input and language experience that bilinguals have had varies more widely than that of monolinguals. Given these facts, early bilinguals should not be expected to perform identically to monolinguals.

However, early bilinguals raised in the L2-speaking community are functioning members of that community. As such, it should be expected that they are similarly sensitive to the same linguistic cues as the larger language community.

Conclusion

Differences ≠ Deficits

Studying differences in groups of language users is informative from a scientific perspective. These differences do not need to be interpreted as 'deficits'.

However, it should never be assumed that the linguistic knowledge and use of a monolingual will be identical to that of a bilingual, but then this should also not be assumed for any language users, even within more varied samples of monolinguals.

Thank You

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ESL AoA by L1 Type

