

Dialects compete on the Fife and Amalfi Coasts

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Languages vs. Dialects

Choosing between lexical alternatives from distinct languages is different to choosing between dialectal lexical alternatives.

- Between-language translation equivalents (e.g., *table – mesa*) facilitate naming in the picture-word interference (PWI) paradigm (Costa, et al., 1999; Dylman & Barry, 2018), see Fig 1.
- Dialectal equivalents (e.g., *elevator – lift*) produce interference (Melinger, 2018; 2020), see Fig 1.

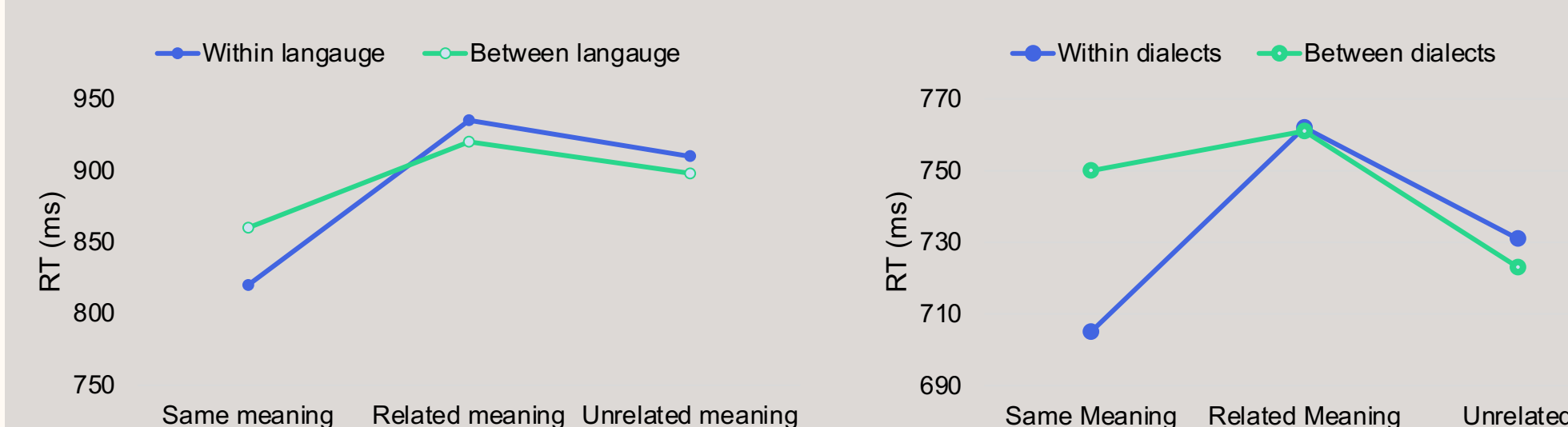


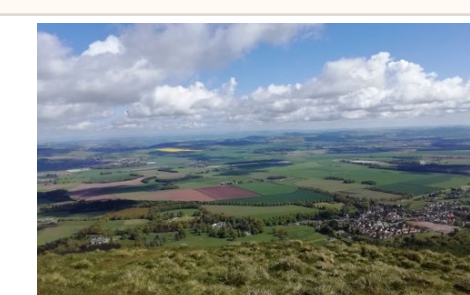
Figure 1: Left panel shows between language facilitation reported by Costa et al., 1999; Right panel shows dialectal equivalent interference reported by Melinger, 2018; 2020.

Melinger (2018) argued that this polarity reversal derives from a representational distinction between languages and dialects.

- What factors underpin this distinction?
 - Mutual Intelligibility – Common criterion used by sociolinguists (Hudson, 1996)
 - Active, proficient usage – Sumner & Samuel (2009) found different input representations are established by active vs. passive dialect users.
- Melinger (2018) tested Scottish undergraduate students with variable proficiency in Scots dialect. Similarly, the Scottish dialect may not have been sufficiently distinct from the standard English variety to warrant language-like lexical organization.

In the present study, we assess the role of *mutual intelligibility* and *active, proficient usage* in influencing the polarity of translation equivalent effects in the PWI paradigm.

Experiment 1: Methods



- Glenrothes, Fife has areas of significant deprivation, which is associated with dialect usage in Scotland.
- 25 English-Scots bidialectal speakers from Glenrothes were tested in their homes by a community member.
- Pictures selected in semantically related pairs (*trousers* and *slippers*) and combined with 6 distractor conditions, see Fig 2.
- Translation-equivalents were all non-cognate.
- Proficiency was assessed by self-report and vocabulary test.

	Within Dialect	Between Dialects
Same meaning	Trousers	Brecks
Related meaning	Slippers	Baffies
Unrelated	Chimney	Lum

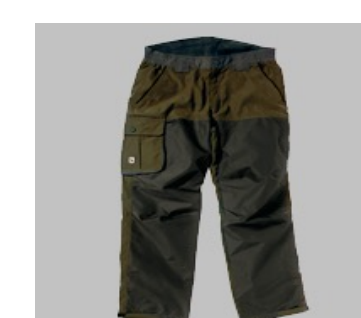


Figure 2: Example stimuli from Melinger (2018) and used in Exp 1.

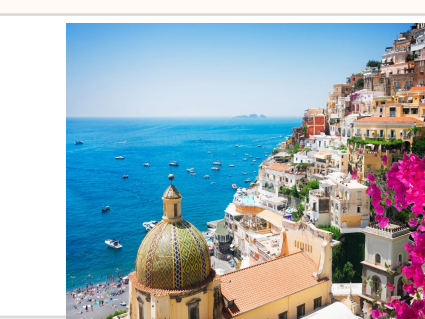
Experiment 1: Results

- Significant translation-equivalent interference observed, ($p = .001$), replicating findings from Melinger (2018).
- Significant within and between dialect semantic interference observed ($ps < 0.2$).
- Scottish distractor conditions produced faster RTs in the unrelated and related conditions ($ps < .013$) but slower RTs in the same meaning conditions ($p = .005$).



Figure 3: Mean picture naming times by condition.

Experiment 2: Methods



- Neapolitan dialect has marked dissimilarities to standard Italian with contrasting phonology masking lexical similarity and distinct grammars.
- Reported low mutual intelligibility with standard Italian and high levels of usage.
- 25 Italian-Neapolitan speakers from the Amalfi Coast named 32 pictures in Italian.
- Pictures paired with 6 distractor conditions, see Fig 4.
- Proficiency was assessed by self-report and vocabulary test.

	Within Dialect	Between Dialects
Same meaning	asino	sciecco
Related meaning	pipistrello	spurtiglione
Unrelated meaning	vassai	quantiera



Figure 4: Example stimuli for Exp 2.

Experiment 2: Results

- Significant translation-equivalent interference observed, ($p < .000$).
- Significant within and between dialect semantic interference observed, ($ps < .000$).
- Target pictures were named faster when paired with Italian distractor words compared to Neapolitan distractor words, although the difference in the unrelated condition did not reach sig ($p = .066$).

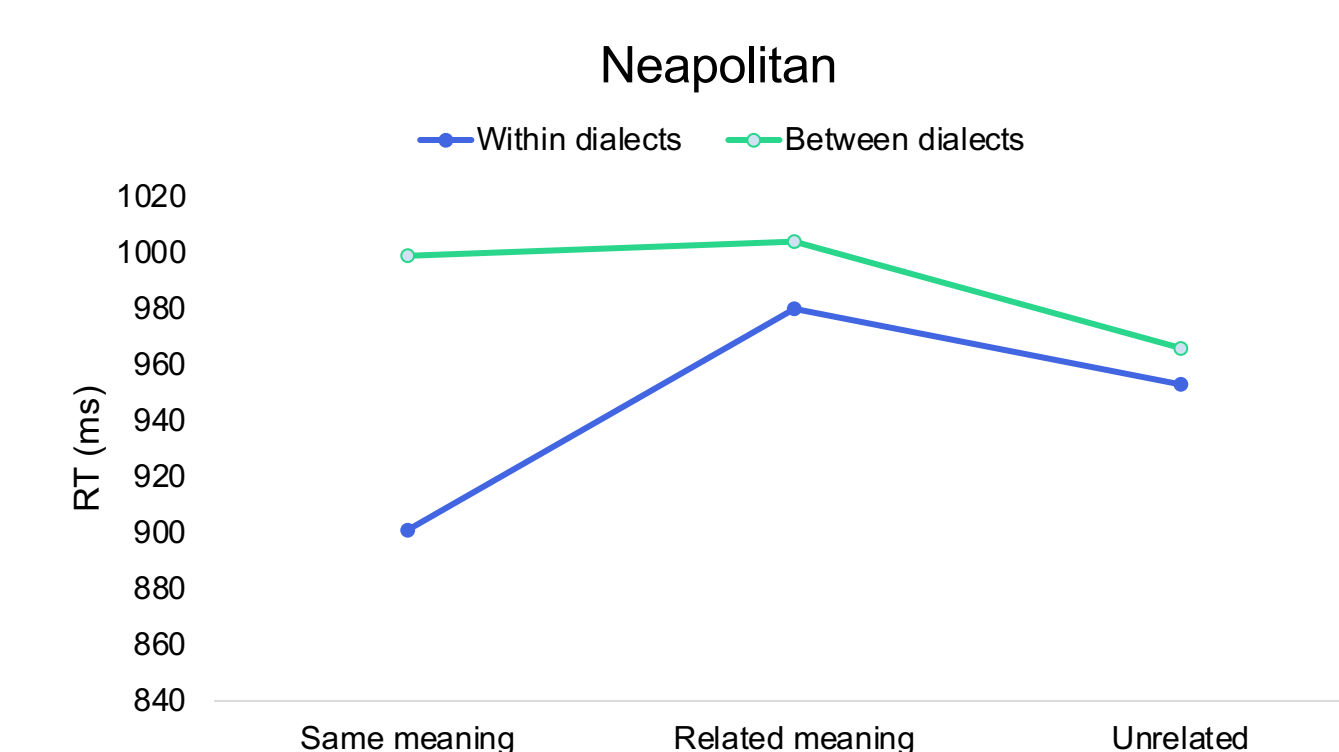


Figure 5: Mean picture naming times by condition.

Discussion

In both experiments, same-meaning dialectal distractor words slowed picture naming relative to the unrelated condition, replicating prior findings.

Despite increasing dialect proficiency and distinctiveness, variants tested here did not exhibit language-like effects for translation equivalents.

Results provide further evidence that dialects are represented in a co-dependent manner, as opposed to languages which are represented independently (Labov, 1989), see Fig 5.

It remains to be seen what factors are critical or necessary for establishing independent representations.

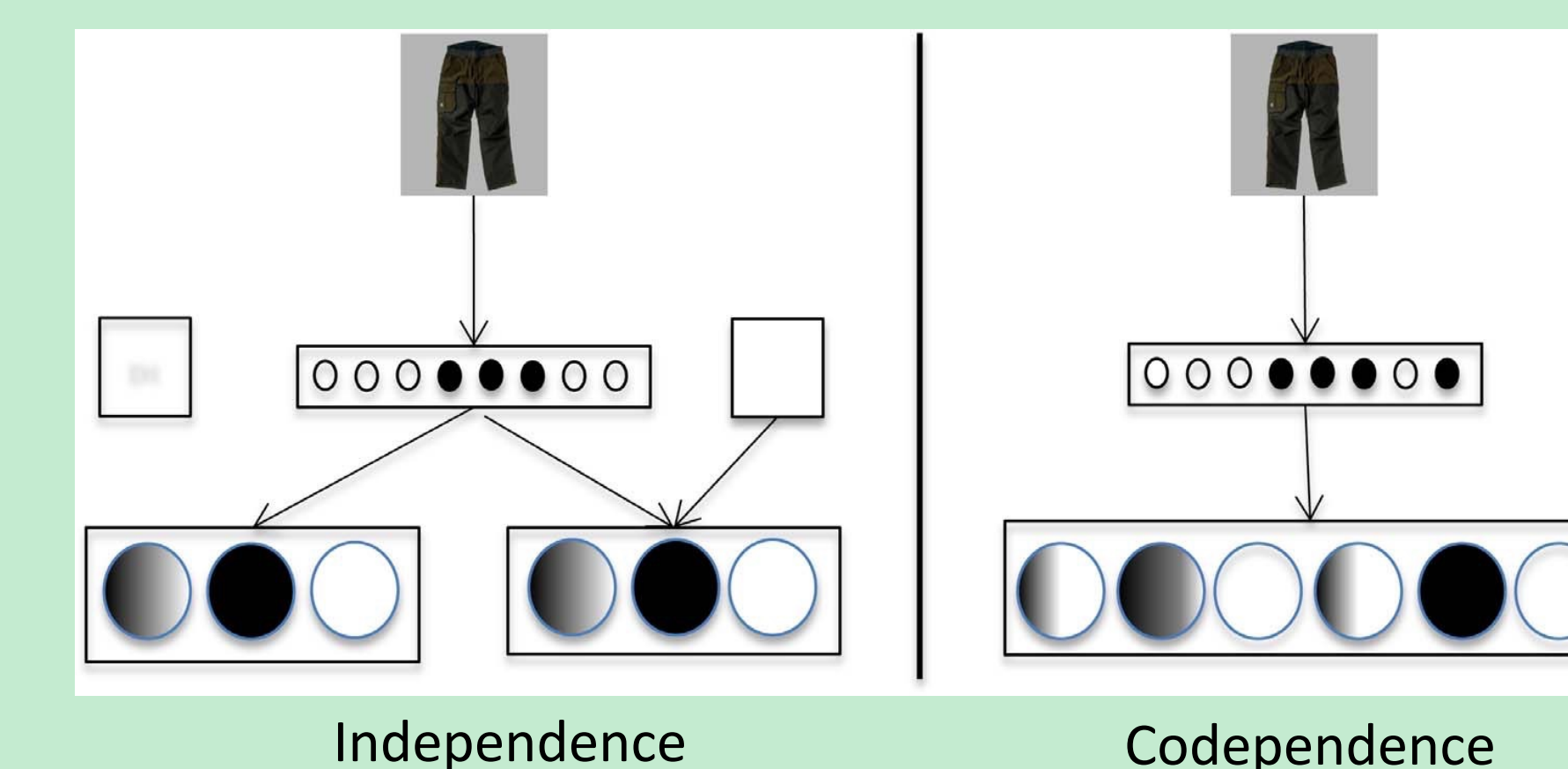


Figure 5: graphic illustration contrasting different lexical organizations.

References

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