

# Non-native English speakers know what they've heard but do not take competing alternatives into account



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## Introduction

L1 speakers find some novel sentences unacceptable.

1a) ?? Amber explained Zach the answer.

1b) ?? Daniel forced that Helen compete.

There's a better way to express the same meaning!

(**Competing Alternative**)

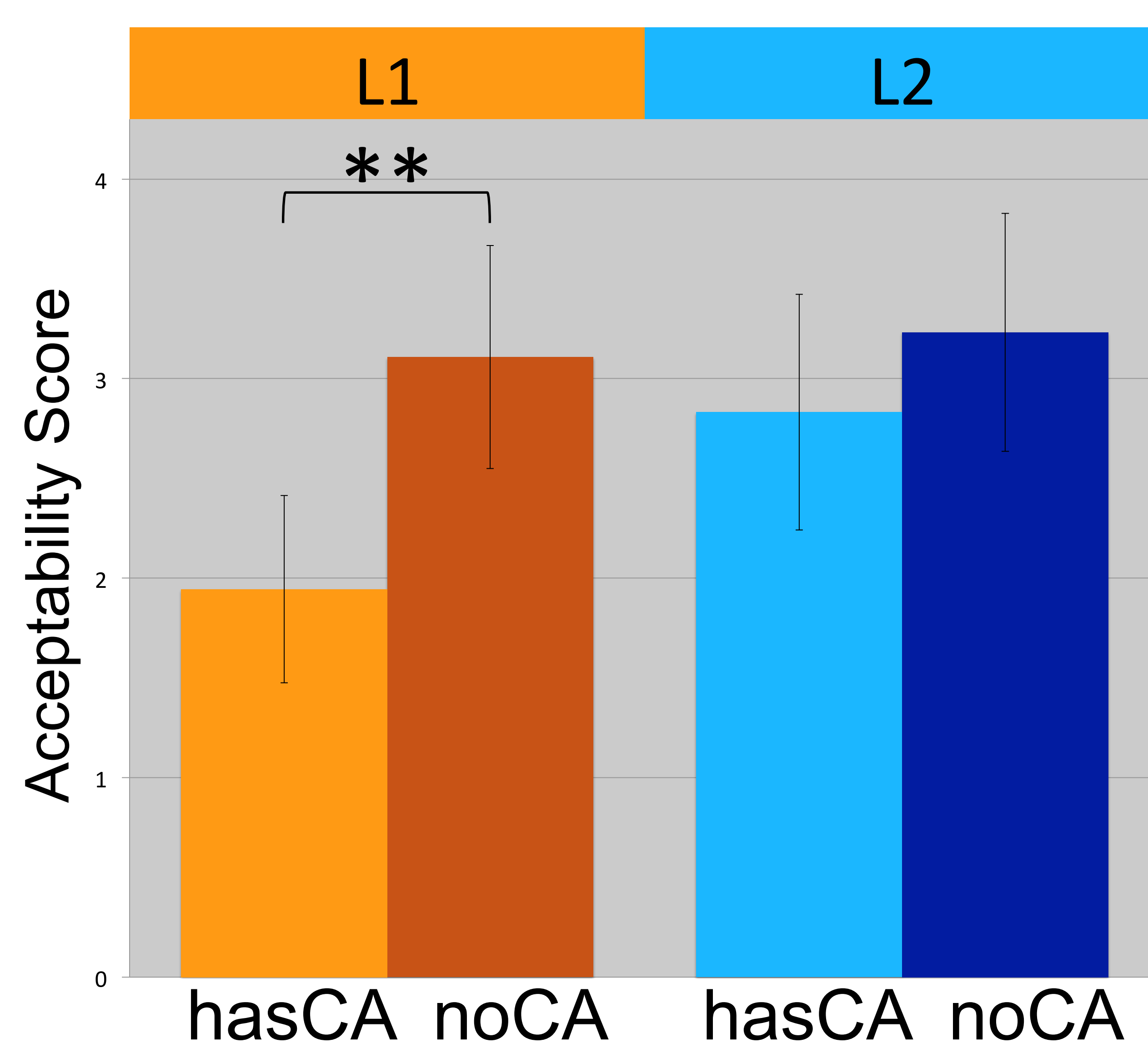
2a) Amber explained the answer to Zach.

2b) Daniel forced Helen to compete.

L1 speakers find novel sentences with no competing alternative to be more acceptable.

4) Jack slept the afternoon away.

5) The lifeguard swam the children to the shore.



L2 speakers judge novel sentences with a competing alternative (**hasCA**) to be as acceptable as those without (**noCA**). (Robenalt & Goldberg 2016)

## Experiment

### Will L2 speakers perform like L1 speakers after exposure to competing alternatives?

### CA Exposure vs. Baseline Exposure

50% of participants read and typed the sentences.

50% of participants read the sentences embedded in a story and answered comprehension questions.

Conditions:

#### Competing Alternative

Darryl explained the solution to Ann.

#### Baseline

Darryl jumped in the bouncy castle.

## Judgments



### Can L2 speakers remember what they heard?

## Memory

Darryl explained Ann the solution.

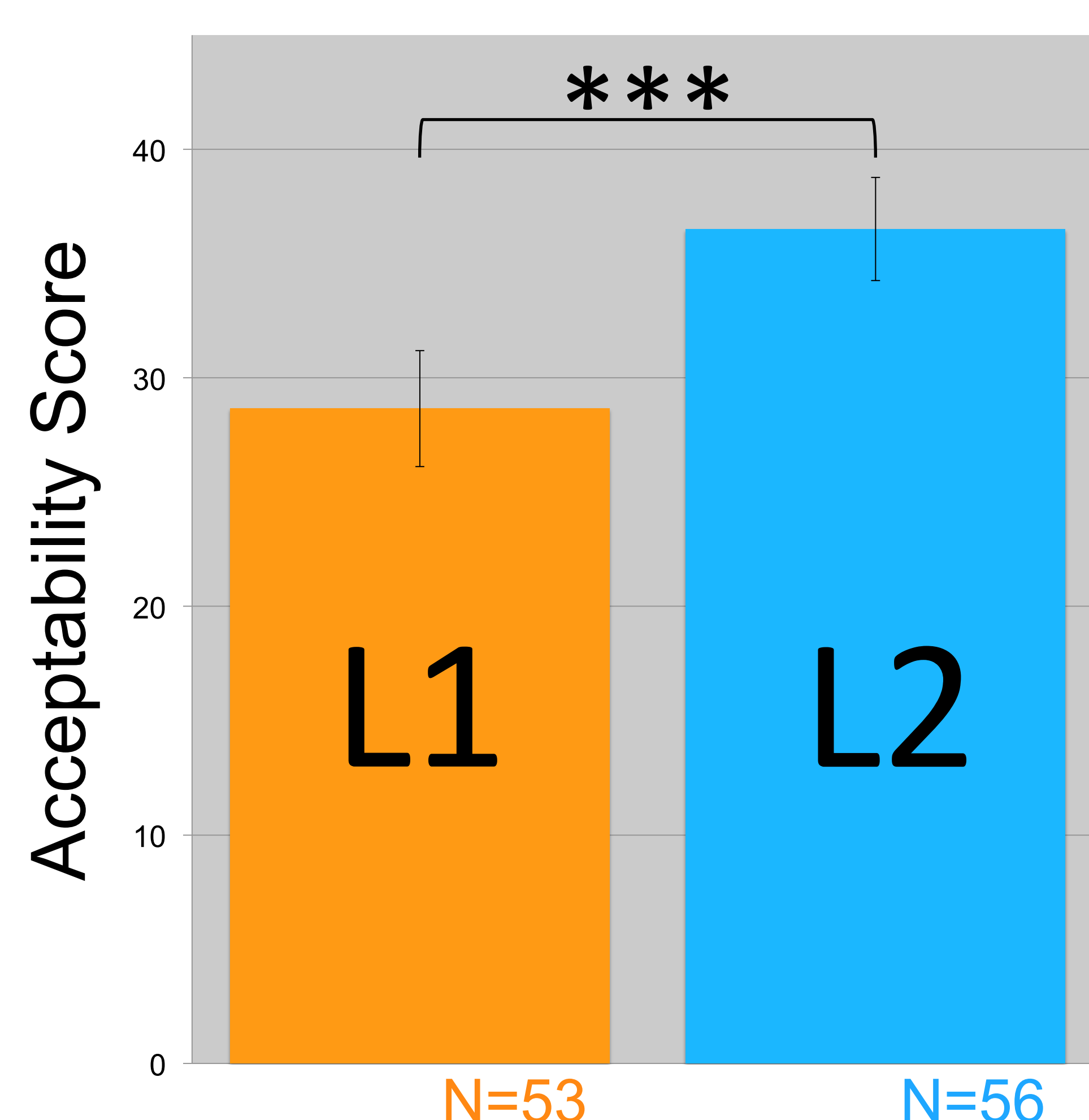
● New  
○ Old

Darryl jumped around in the bouncy castle.

● New  
○ Old

## Results

### Judgments: L1 ≠ L2

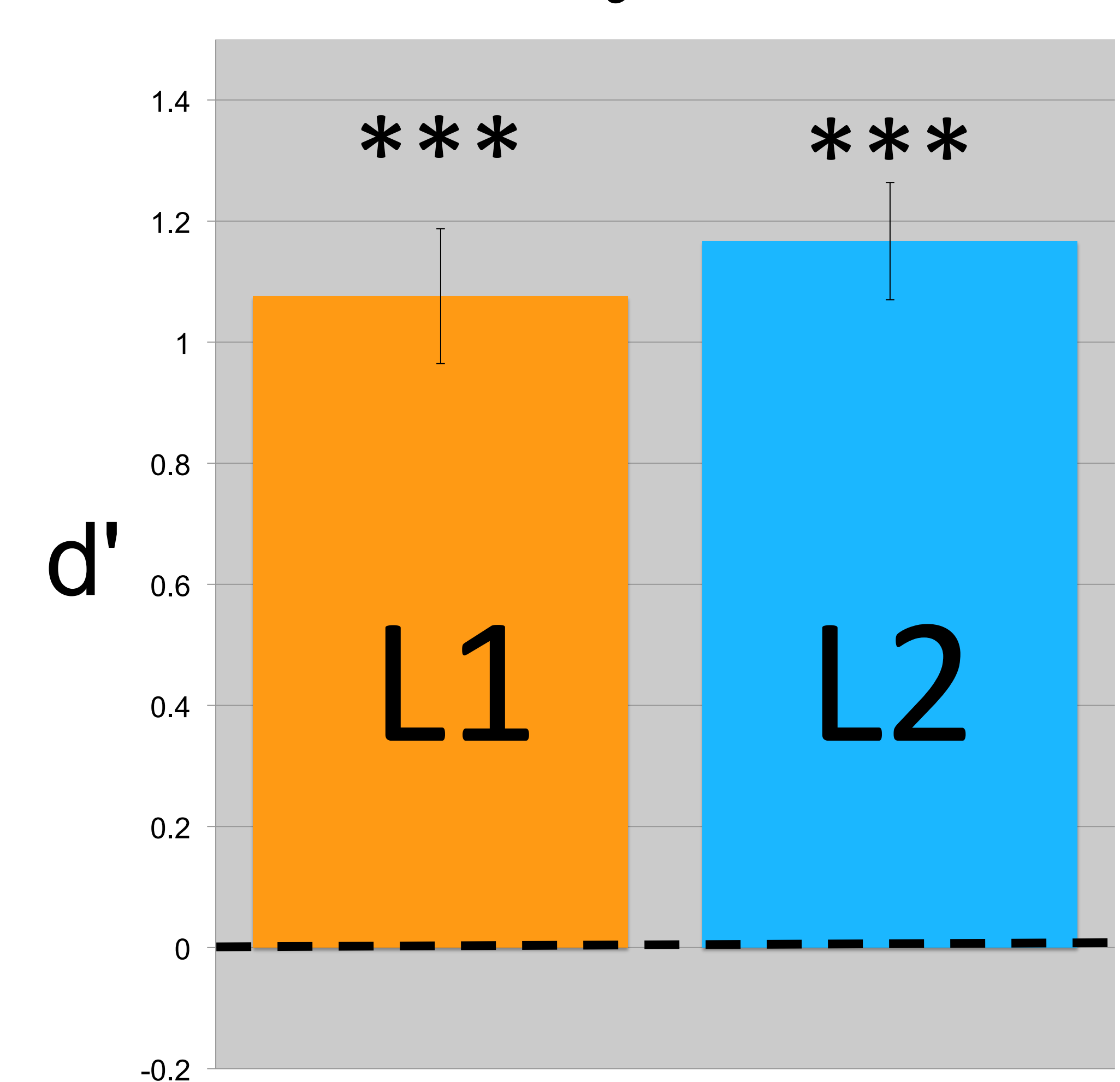


L2 speakers judge novel sentences with CA to be more acceptable than L1 speakers do.  
( $\beta = 20.01$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

Competing Alternative	Baseline
36 (SD=3.1)	37 (SD=3.3)
N=27	N=29

Exposure to CA does not change L2 judgments.  
( $\beta = 3.41$ ,  $p = 0.44$ )

### Memory: L1 = L2



L2 speakers retain the exact form (verb + construction) of the exposure sentences. ( $p < 0.001$ )

Memory does not differ from L1.  
( $p = 0.8$ )

## Future Directions

Do L2 speakers generalize across verbs for constructions?  
Are L2 speakers less sensitive to competition?

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Robenalt & Goldberg. (2016). Nonnative Speakers Do Not Take Competing Alternative Expressions Into Account the Way Native Speakers Do. *Lang. Learning*.