

Usage rates and variable rules: what changes in migrants' speech

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Dialect Contact and Speech Communities

- This paper: 8 Northeastern migrants living in São Paulo
- Speech communities:
 - Labov (1972, 120–1): “the speech community is [...] defined [...] by participation in a set of shared norms: these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behavior, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage.”
 - Guy (1980): uniformity in variable rules doesn't entail equal usage rates of a variant by its members; rather, the speech community is defined by equal constraints regarding the set of correlated variables and the relative factor ranking within each variable

Different rules, different communities

Adapted from Guy (1980, 27)

	consonant	vowel	pause
NYC	1.0	.56	.83
Philadelphia	1.0	.38	.12

Different rules, different communities

Cameron (1993, 325)

TABLE 14. *Second person tú reanalyzed by specificity of reference: San Juan versus Madrid*

	San Juan		Madrid	
	[+Pro]	Total	[+Pro]	Total
[+Specific] ^a	48%	145	40%	58
[-Specific] ^b	69%	188	19%	150

^aChi-square value of the difference: 1.240 (not significant).

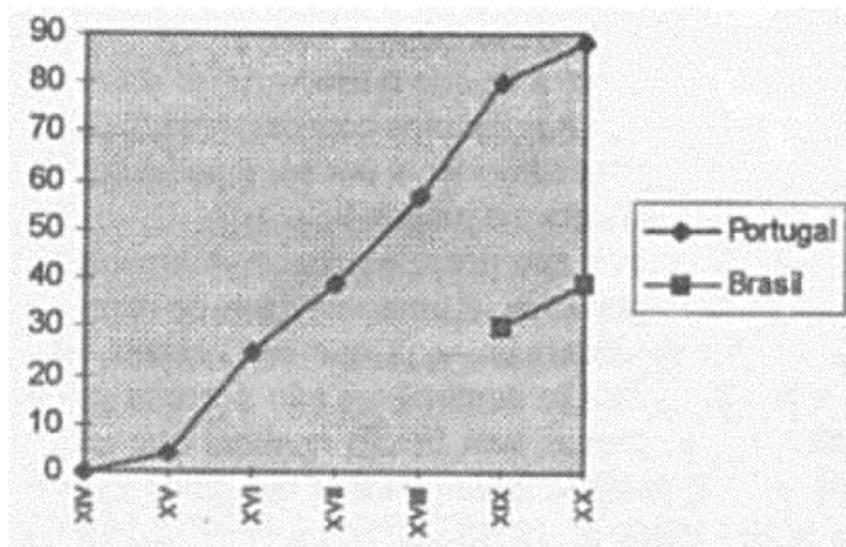
^bChi-square value of the difference: 83.105, $p < .001$.

This paper

- Main question: what exactly is it that changes in migrants' speech?
- Do migrants increase their usage rate of the host community's prototypical variant, or can they also acquire abstract variable rules, considering (i) set of correlated variables and (ii) the relative factor ranking within each variable?
- Findings: Northeastern migrants in São Paulo have not only increased their usage rate of a specific variant, but also generally acquired Paulistanos' variable rules

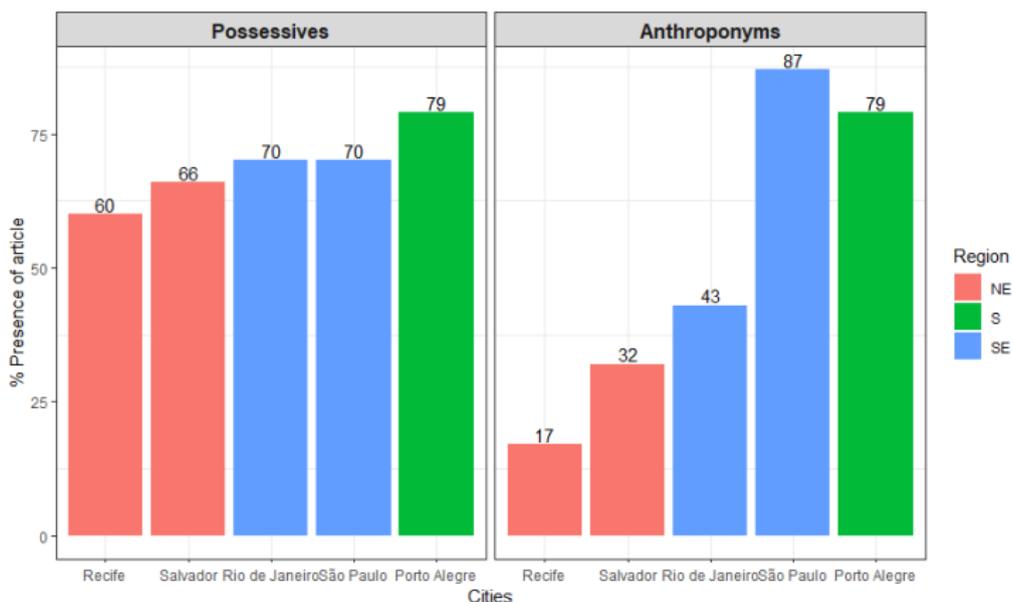
The variable: Presence or absence of the definite article before possessives

Figure 1: Rate of usage of definite article before possessives between the 14th and the 20th century (Callou & Silva, 1997, 14)



The variable: Presence or absence of the definite article before possessives

Figure 2: Rate of usage of definite article by region (Callou & Silva, 1997, 21)



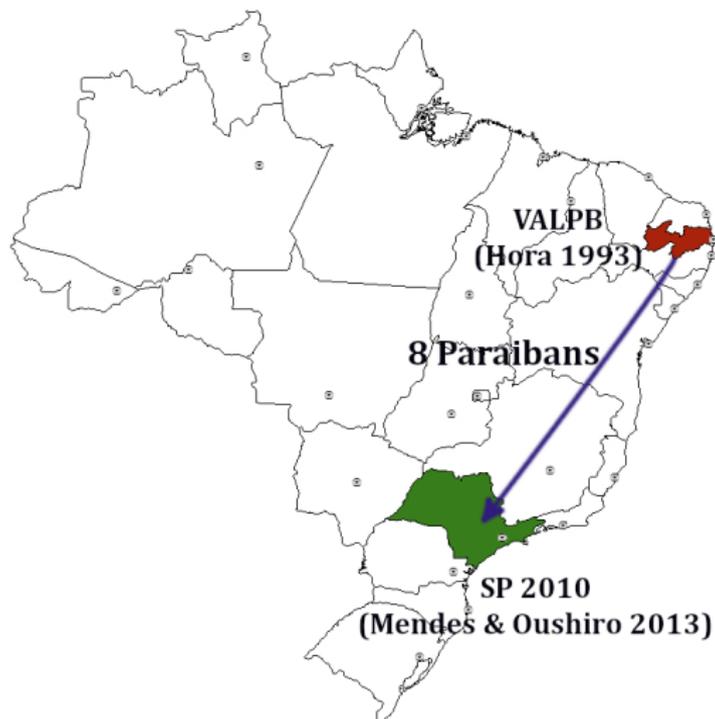
The variable: Presence or absence of the definite article before possessives

- *minha mãe* vs. *a minha mãe* lit.: '(the) my mother'
- Presence of article: innovative variant starting in European Portuguese (Callou & Silva, 1997)
- Regional differences in Brazil
- None of the variants is stigmatized; some evidence of consciousness on the part of the migrants, but not a very salient feature

Corpus



Corpus



Corpus



Methods

- 2,230 tokens
- Response variable: Presence or absence of definite article
- Contexts of neutralization excluded
e.g. *dei um presente pra (a?) minha mãe*
'I gave a present to (the?) my mother'
ganho (o) meu salário
'I earn (the?) my salary'

Methods (*cont.*)

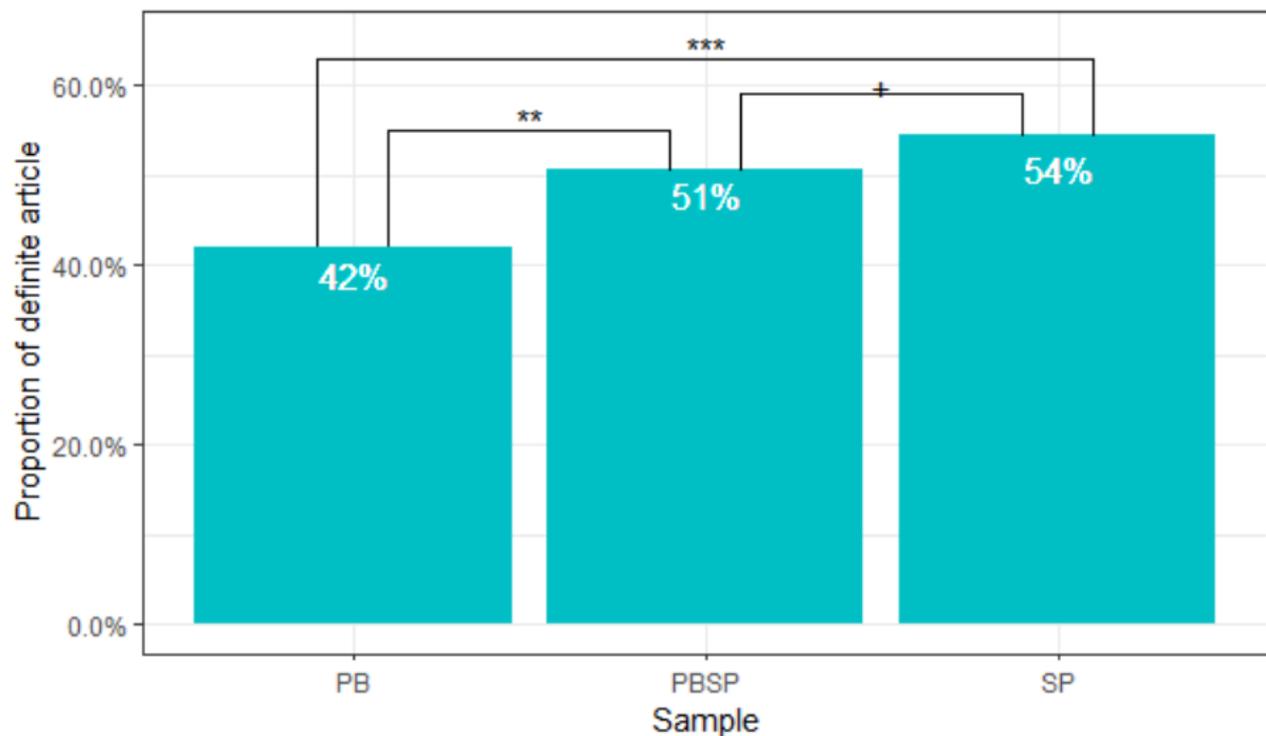
Predictors

- **Sex/Gender** (female, male)
- **Age group** (younger, middle-aged, older)
- **Level of education** (high school, college)
- **Speaker** (random effect)
- **Possessive person** (1st: *meu, nossas*; 2nd: *seu, tuas*; 3rd: *seu*)
- **Possessive number** (singular: *meu, nosso*; plural: *meus, nossos*)
- **Possessive gender** (feminine: *minha*; masculine: *meu*)
- **NP semantics** (abstract noun: *minha infância*; concrete object: *na sua casa*; human: *meu pai*)
- **Type of preposition** (absence: *o meu chefe*; uncontracting *desde a minha infância*; contracting *dos meus pais*)
- **NP specificity** (specific: *meu irmão mais velho*; nonspecific: *então meu colega falou*)
- **NP syntactic function** (subject, topic, adv. adjunct, genitive, dir. object, ind. object, predicate)
- **NP nucleus** (random effect)

Methods (*cont.*)

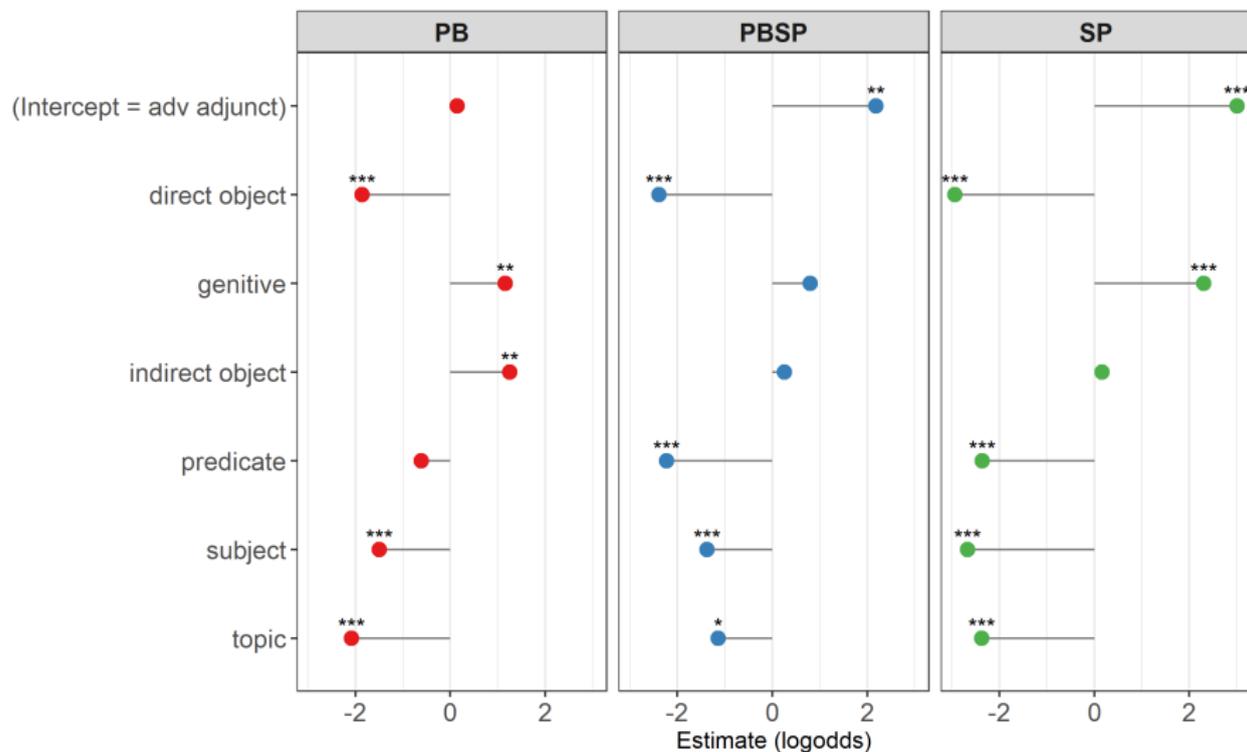
- Mixed effects models
- Conditional inference trees: `partykit` package (Hothorn *et al.*, nd)
- Separate analyses for each sample (PB, PBSP, SP)

Figure 3: Overall distribution



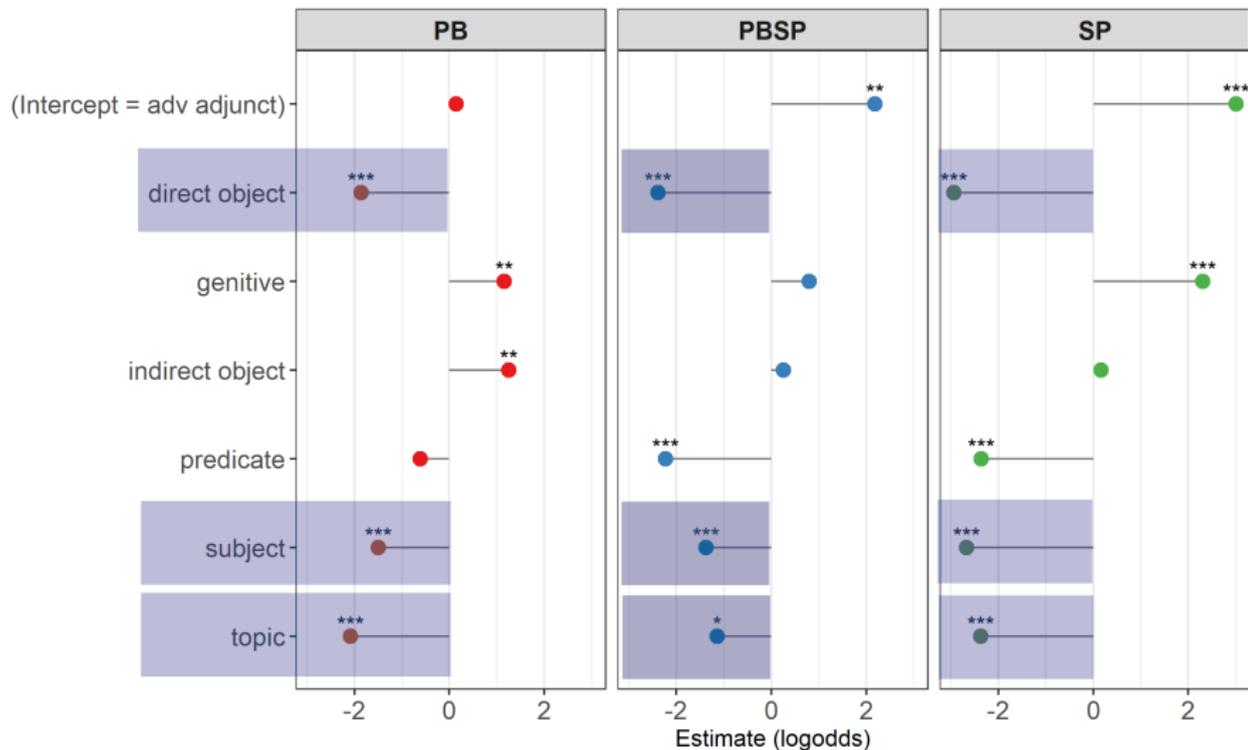
Internal predictors

Figure 4: Probability of presence of definite article according to NP Syntactic Function



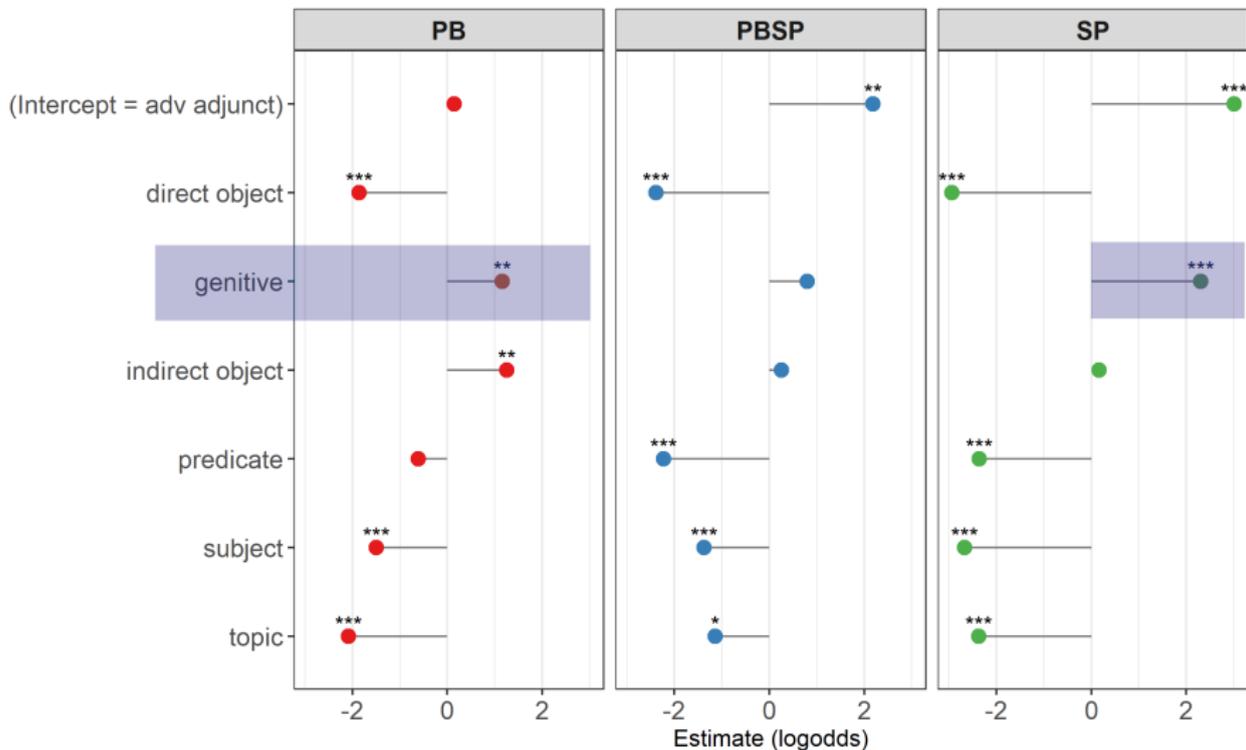
Internal predictors

Figure 4: Probability of presence of definite article according to NP Syntactic Function



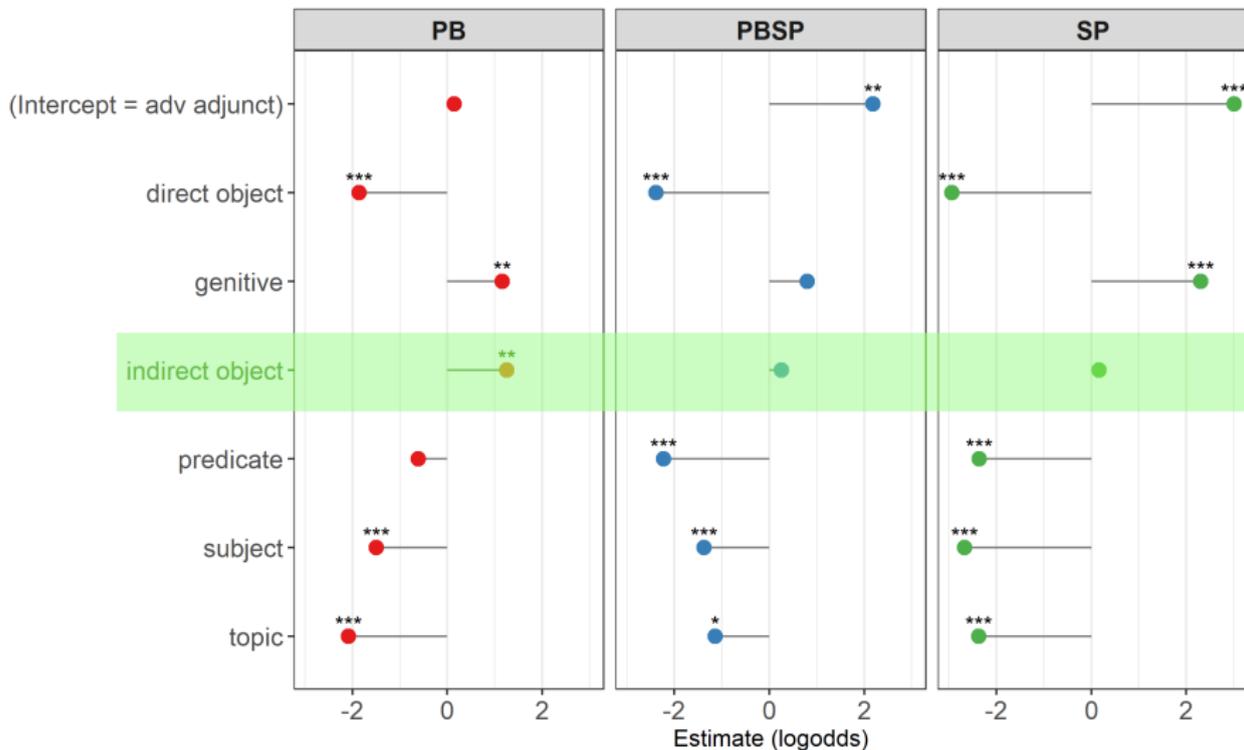
Internal predictors

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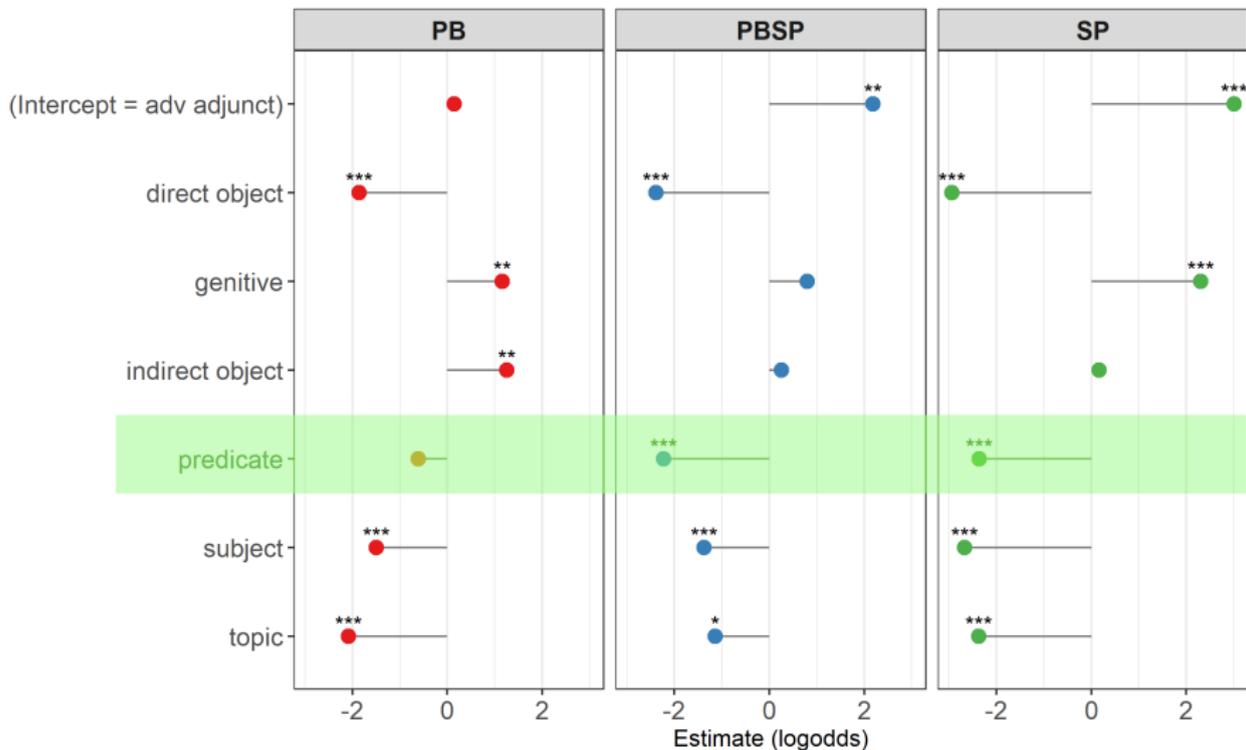
Internal predictors

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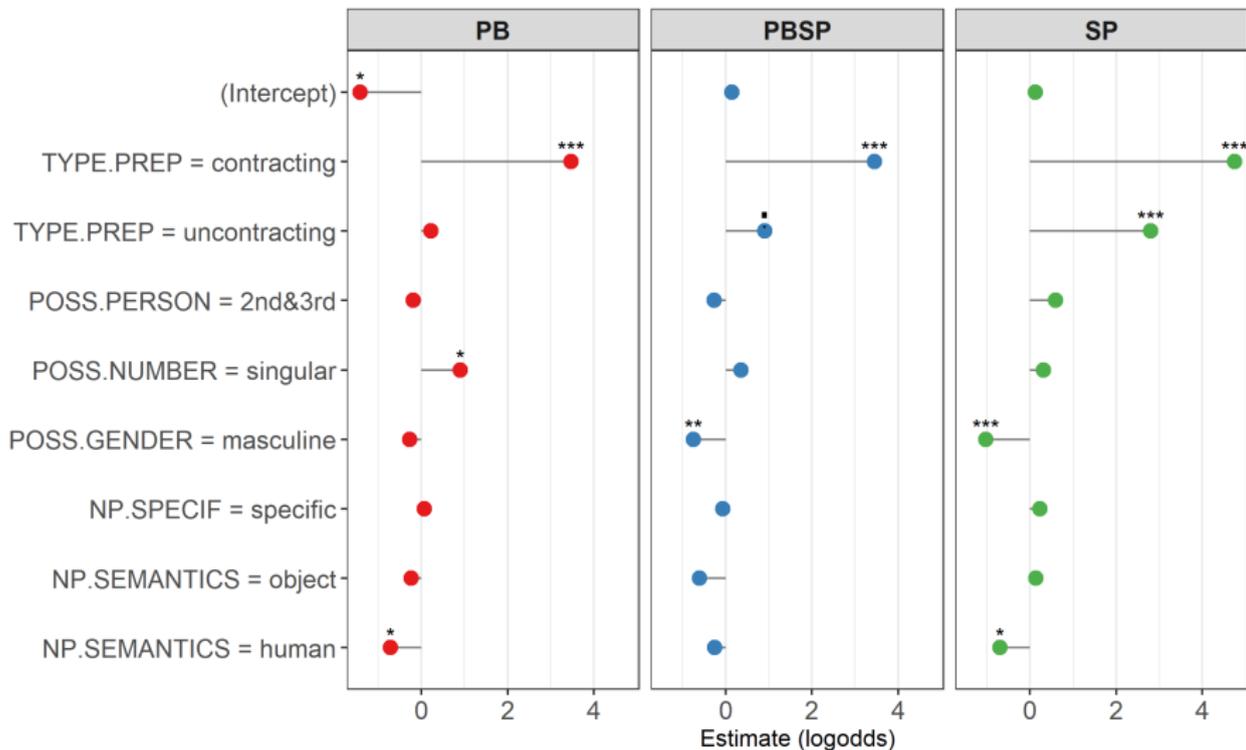
Internal predictors

Figure 4: Probability of presence of definite article according to NP Syntactic Function



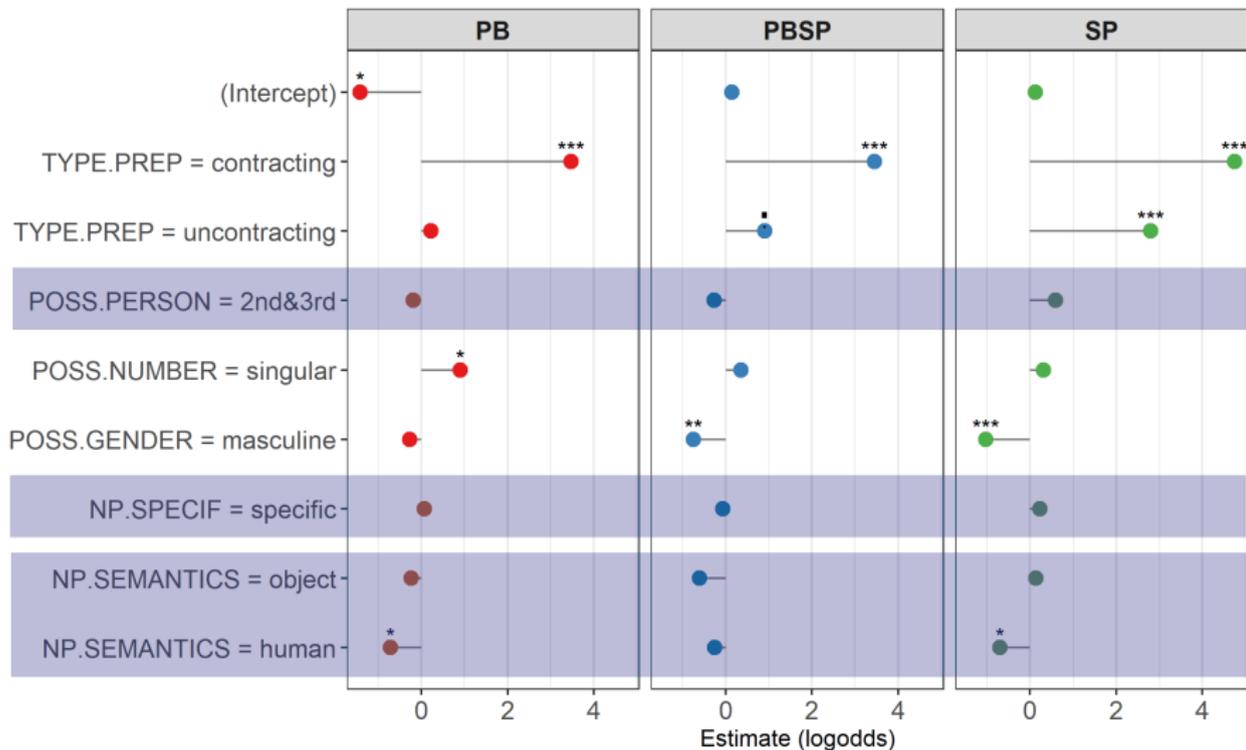
Internal predictors

Figure 5: Probability of presence of definite article according to internal predictors



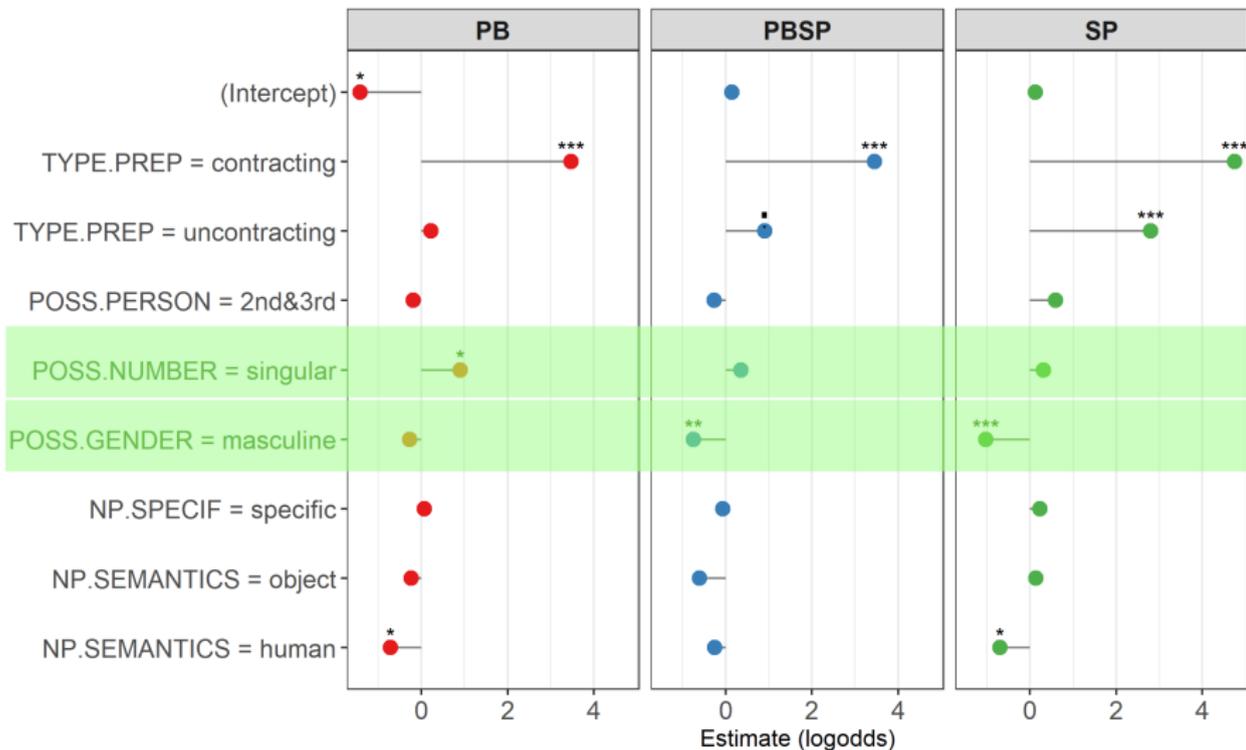
Internal predictors

Figure 5: Probability of presence of definite article according to internal predictors



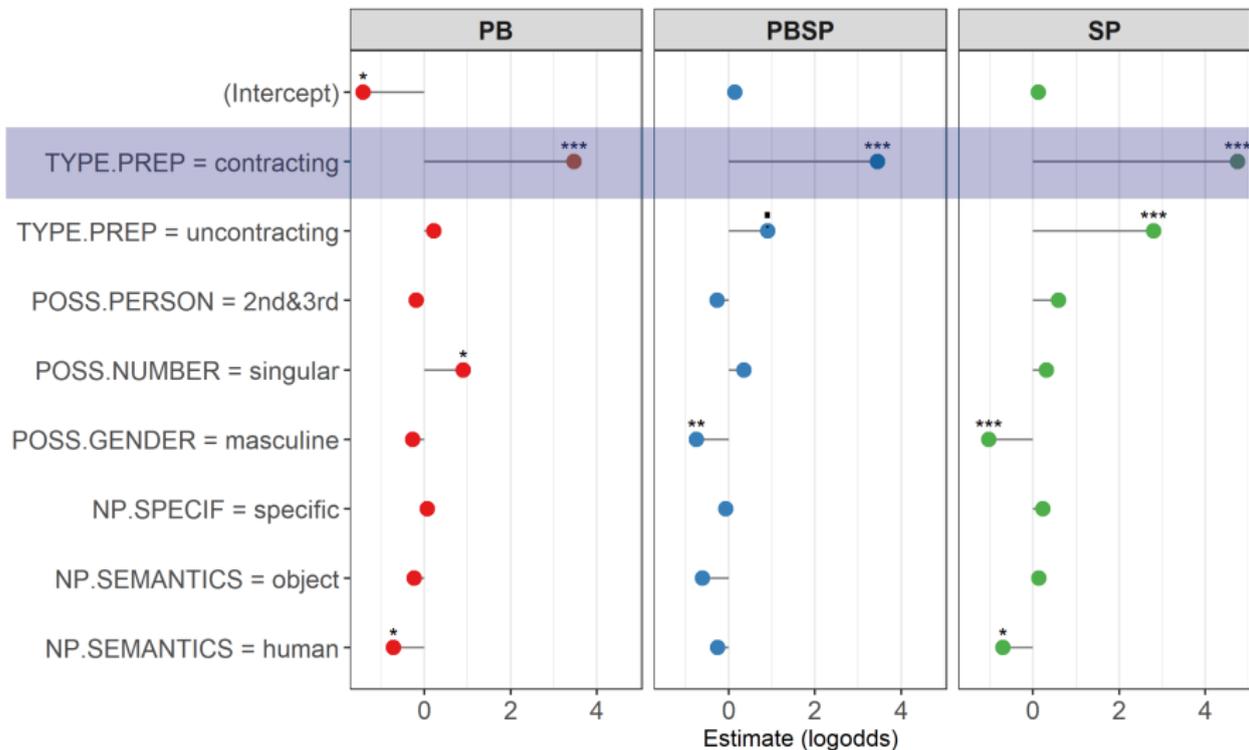
Internal predictors

Figure 5: Probability of presence of definite article according to internal predictors



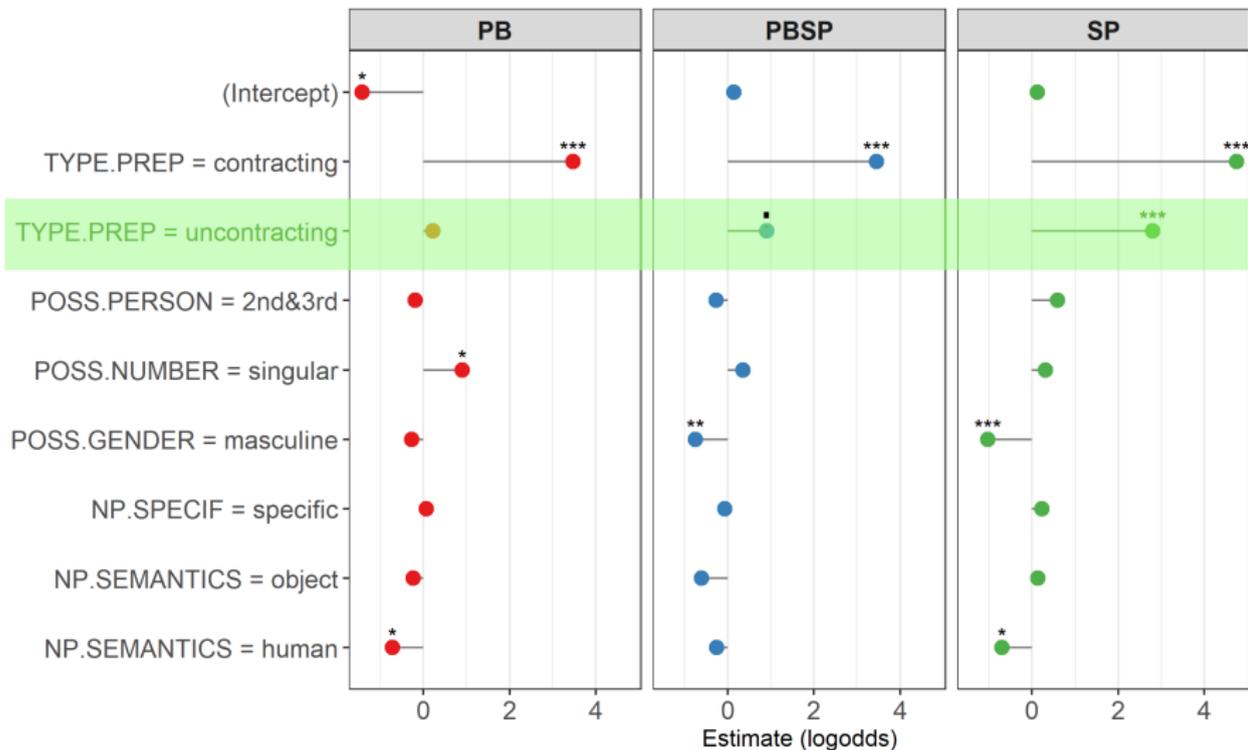
Internal predictors

Figure 5: Probability of presence of definite article according to internal predictors



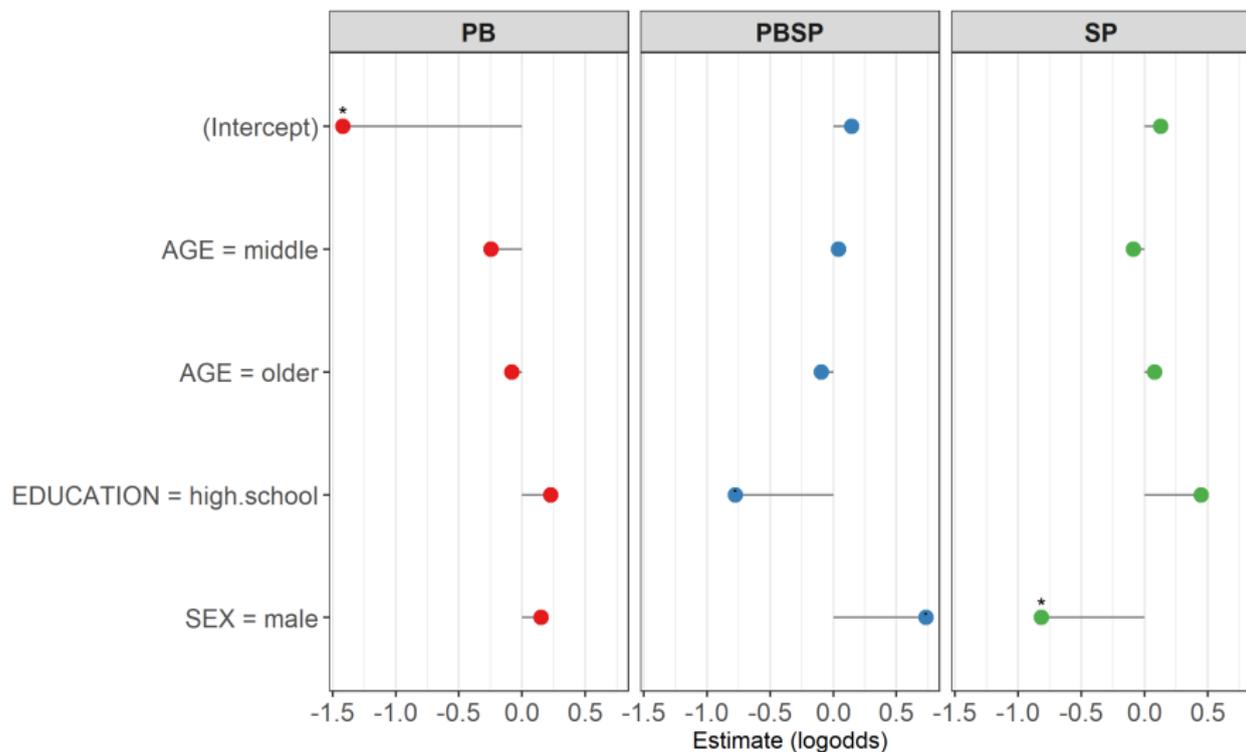
Internal predictors

Figure 5: Probability of presence of definite article according to internal predictors



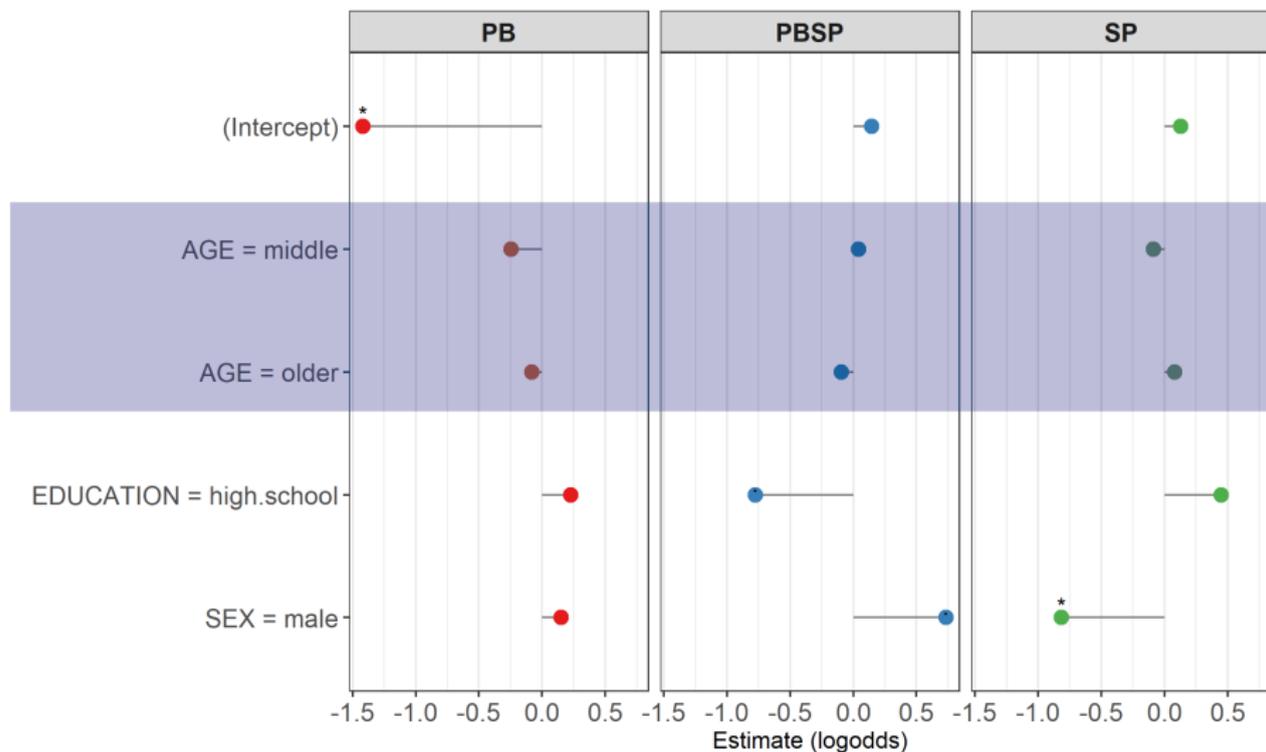
Social predictors

Figure 6: Probability of presence of definite article according to social predictors



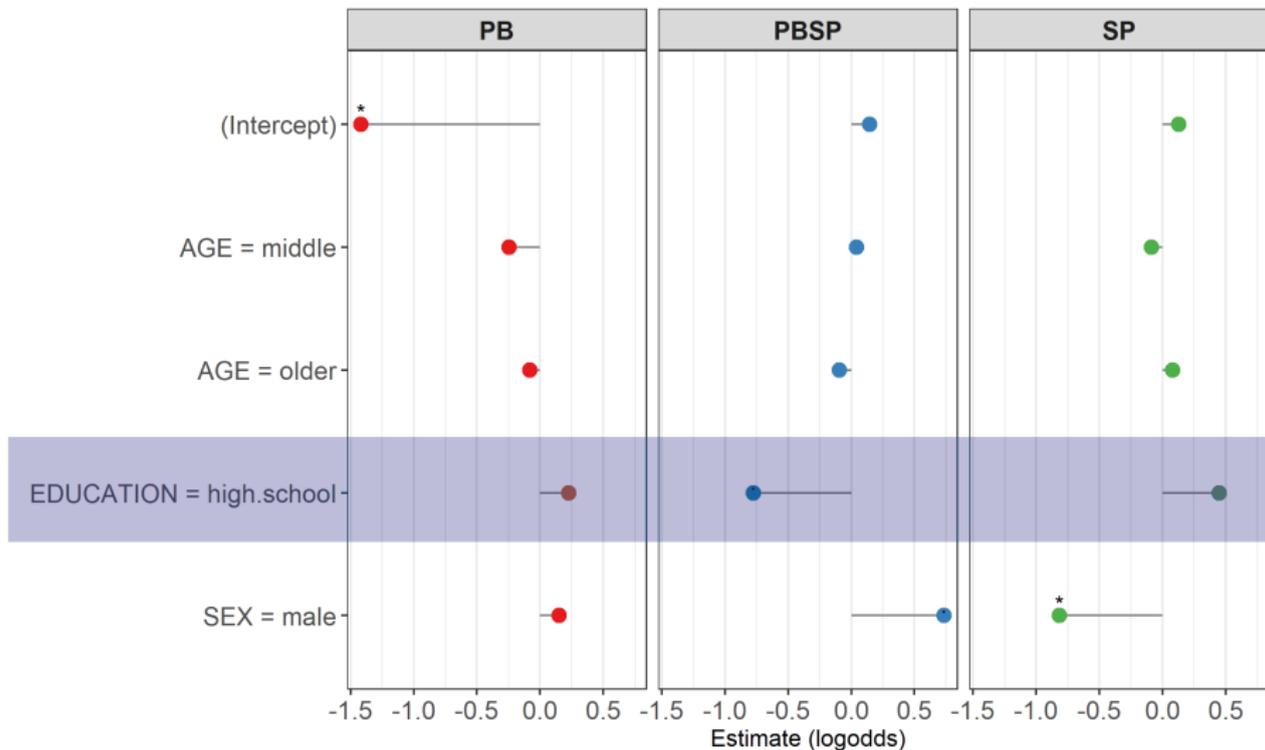
Social predictors

Figure 6: Probability of presence of definite article according to social predictors



Social predictors

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Social predictors

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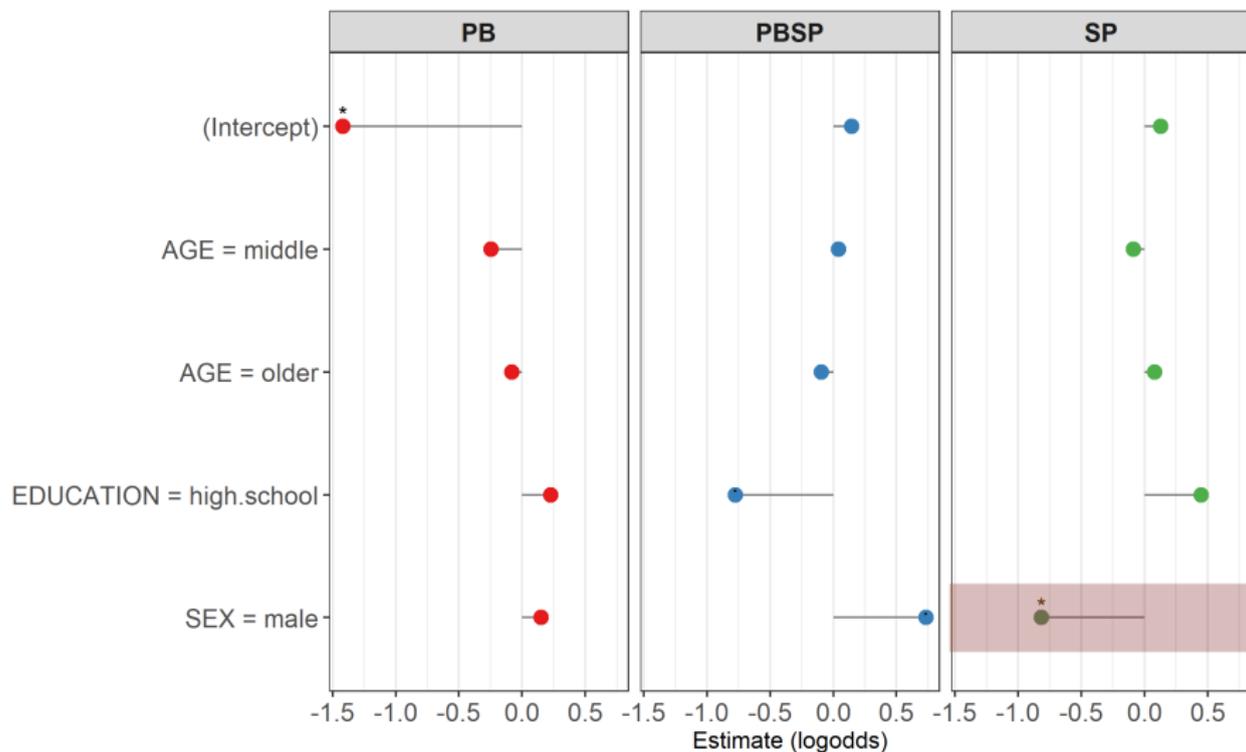


Figure 7: Conditional Inference Tree for PB

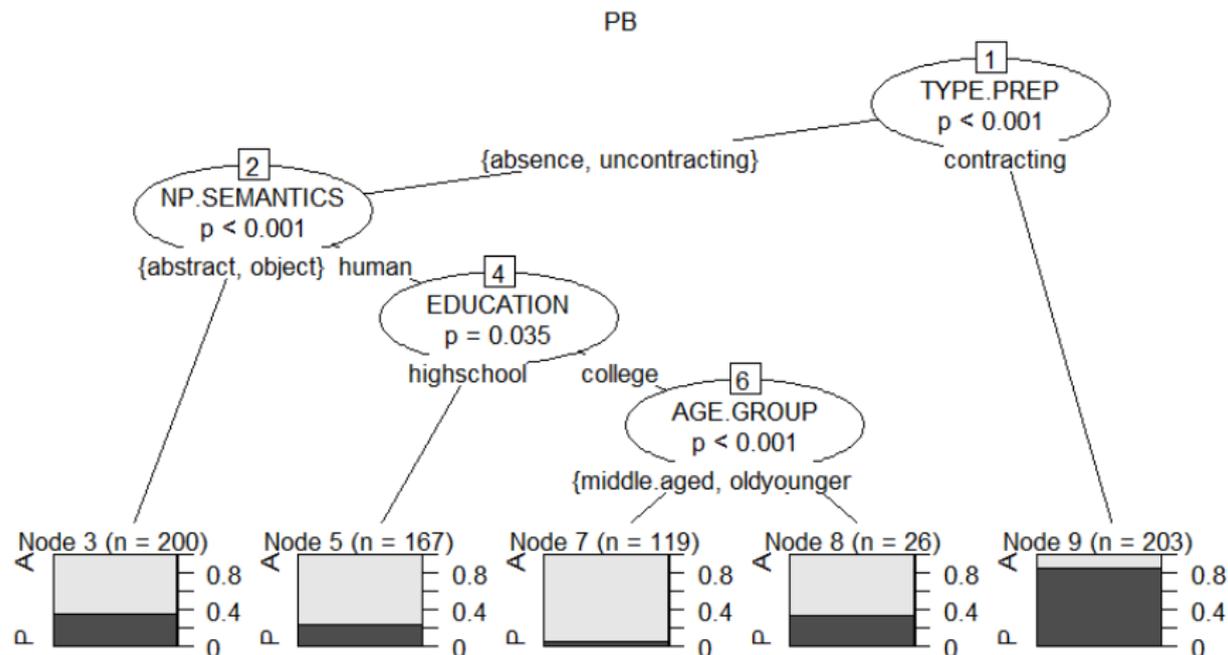


Figure 8: Conditional Inference Tree for SP

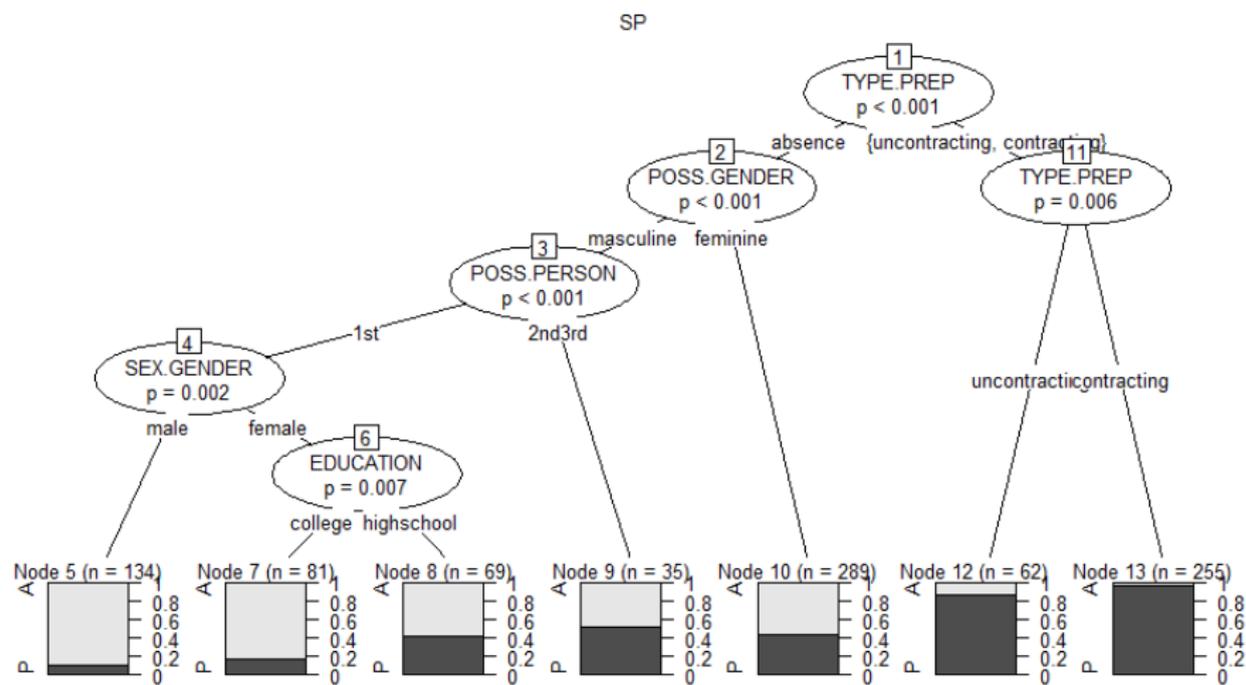
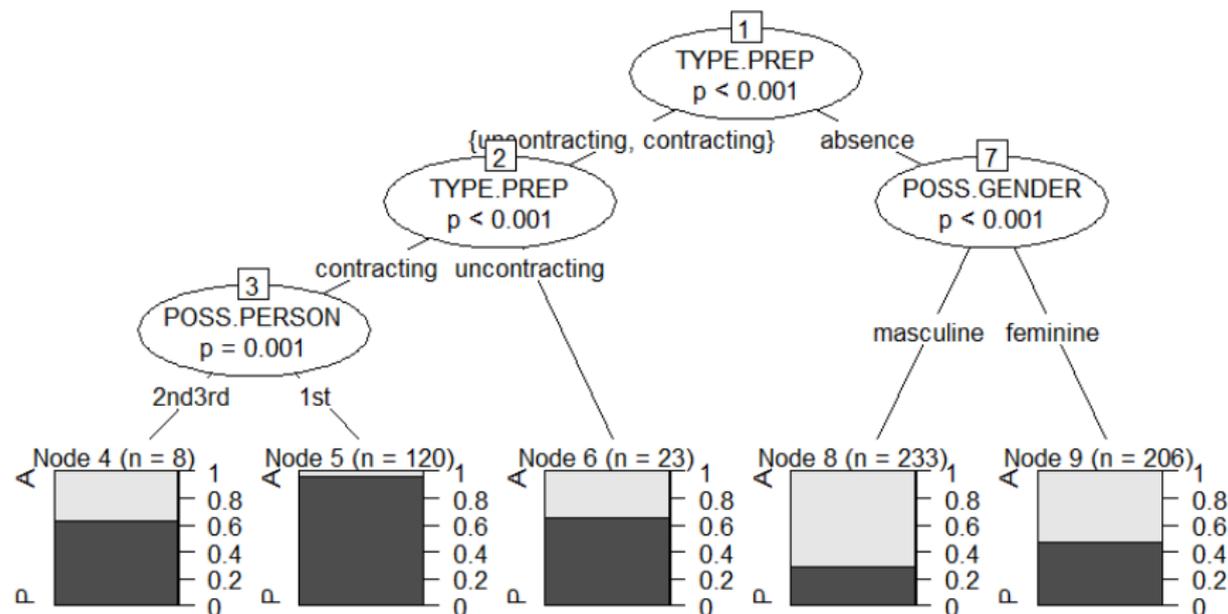


Figure 9: Conditional Inference Tree for PBSP

PBSP



Discussion

- Different effects for PB and SP: migrants aligning with SP for...
 - Syntactic function: indirect object and predicate
 - Possessive number: singular
 - Possessive gender: masculine
 - Type of preposition: tentative acquisition for uncontracting prepositions

Discussion (*cont.*)

Table 1: Summary of results for conditional inference trees

PB	PBSP	SP
Type of Preposition NP Semantics	Type of Preposition Possessive Person Possessive Gender	Type of Preposition Possessive Gender Possessive Person
Education Age group		Sex/Gender Education

Conclusion

- Migrants in a dialect contact situation can not only increase their usage rates of a specific variant, but also learn more abstract grammatical patterns
- However, they don't necessarily mirror host community's social stratification
- Consequences for our understanding of the stability of an individual's grammar throughout her or his lifespan: internal grammars can be changed in contact with a new dialect
- New questions:
 - What is the path for the acquisition of abstract variable rules?
 - Is dialect acquisition different for “brand-new” variants?

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Thank you!

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Usage rate of definite article per speaker

