

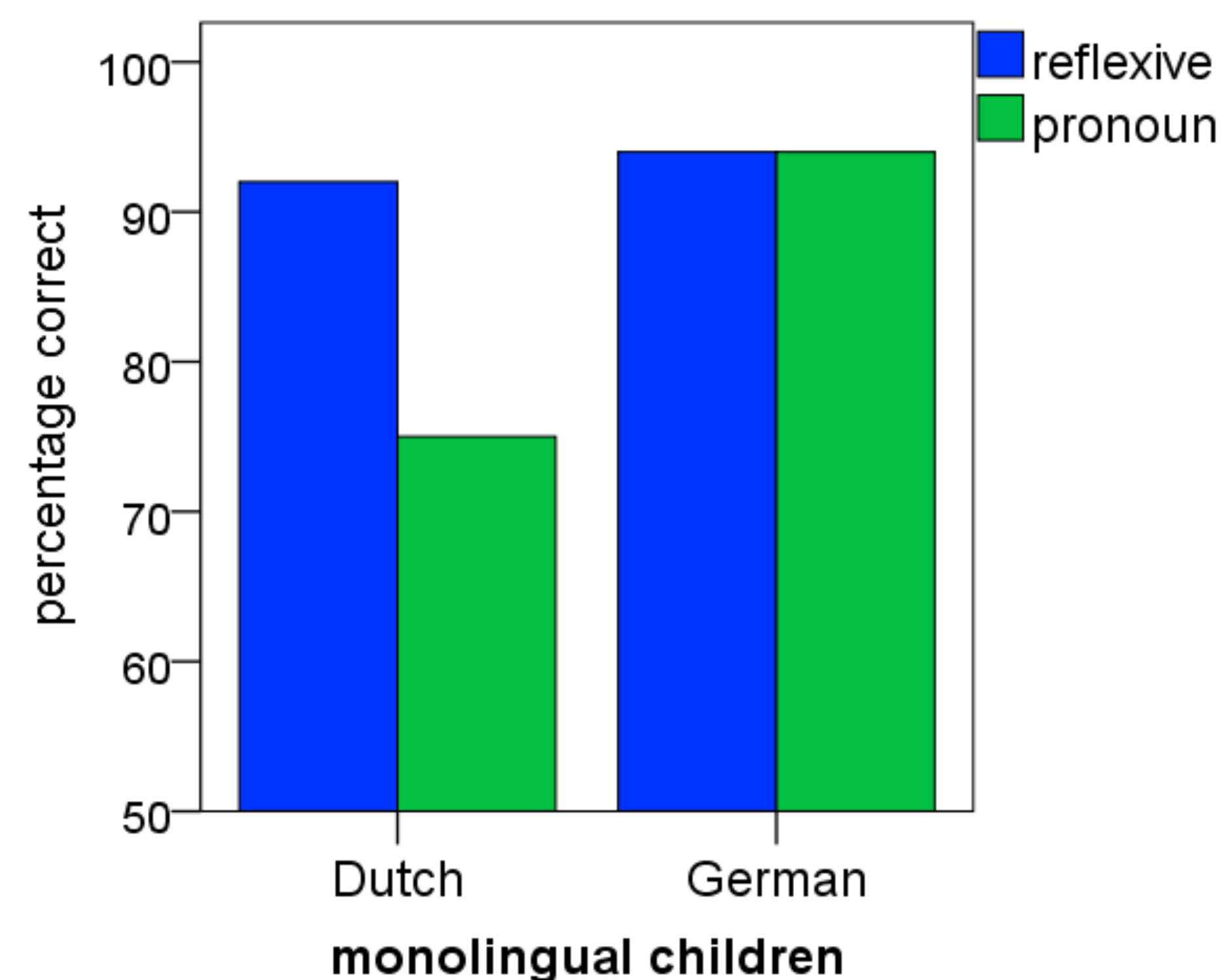
# Pronoun interpretation problem in bilingual Dutch-German children: language dominance and language influence

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## Introduction

- crosslinguistic differences in interpretation of reflexives and pronouns
- interpretation of object pronouns in children (age 4): German > Dutch (e.g. Ruigendijk et al. 2010, Ruigendijk et al. 2011)



values adapted from Ruigendijk et al. 2010: 1997 & Ruigendijk et al. 2011: 146

- effects of crosslinguistic influence & language dominance found in bilinguals for subject pronoun interpretation (e.g. Sorace et al. 2009) → also for object pronouns?

## Research Questions

- How do Dutch-German bilingual children interpret object pronouns?
- In how far is their interpretation affected by language dominance and/or language influence?

### some possible outcomes:

- effect of language dominance: more German-dominant → better performance on pronouns
- effect of language influence in Dutch → better performance on pronouns compared to monolinguals

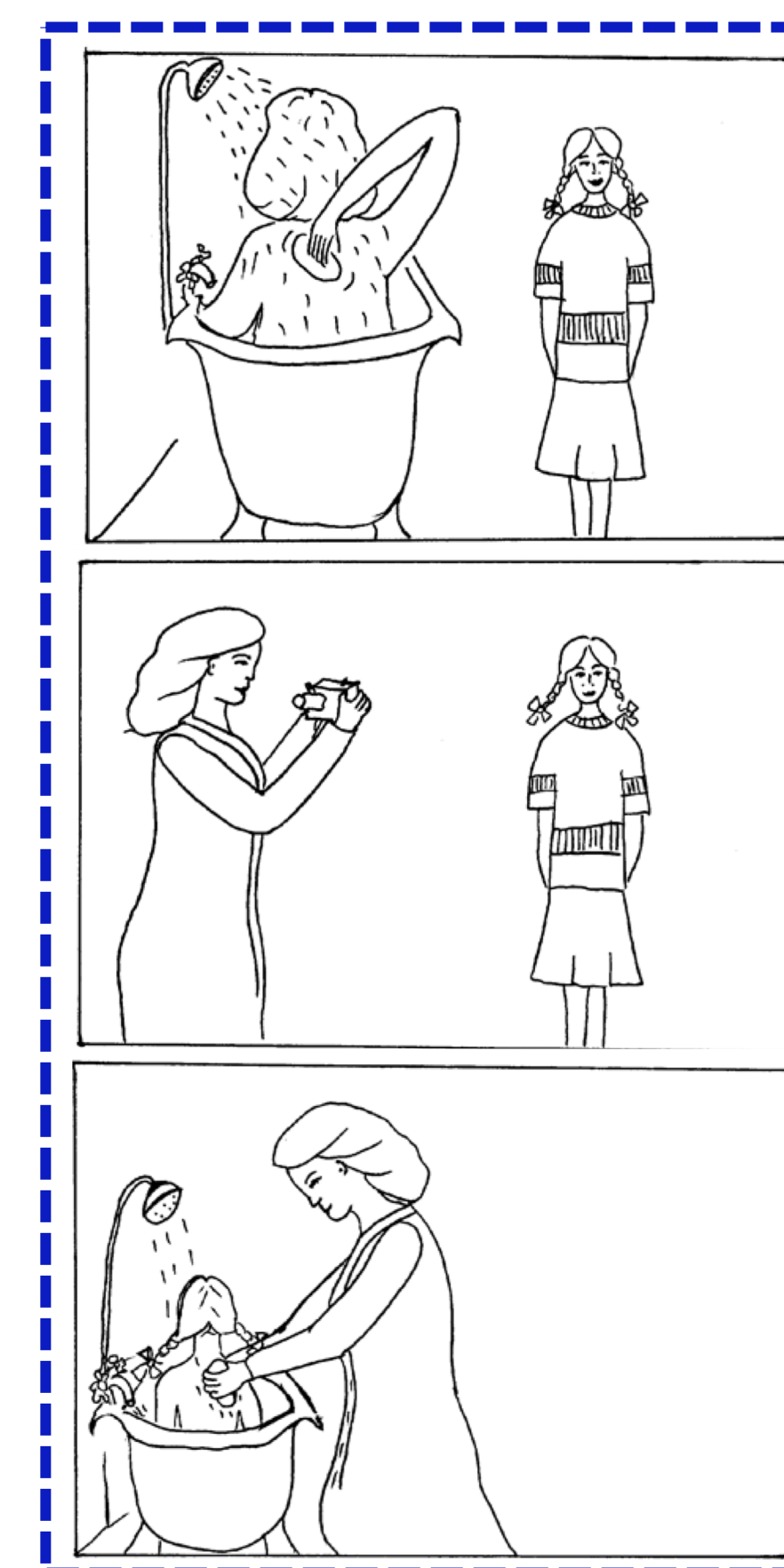
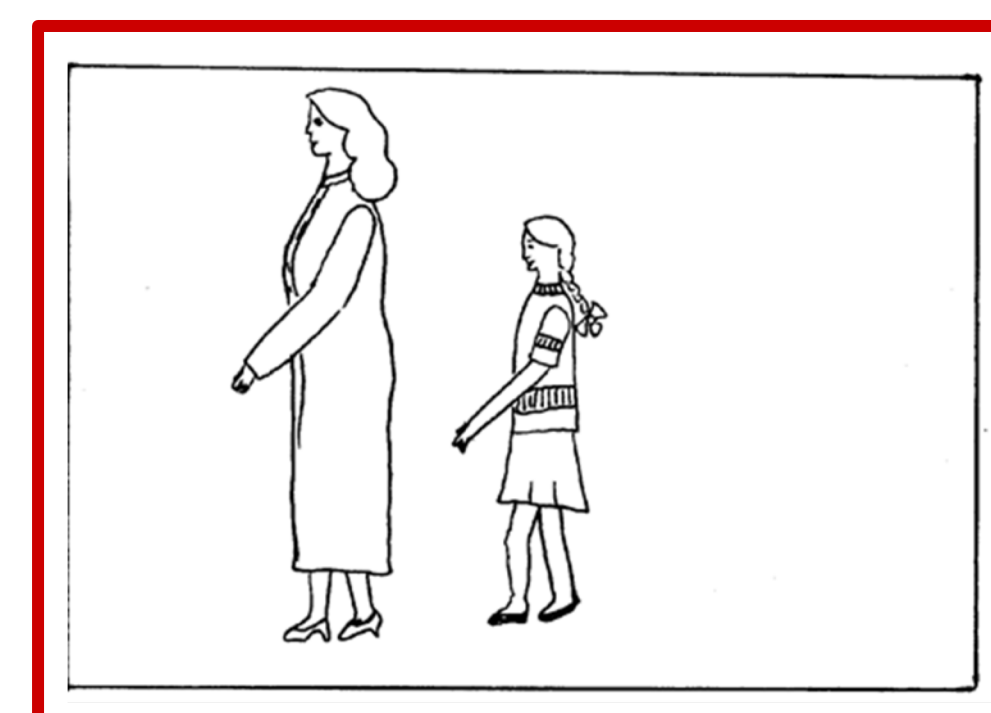
## Methods

- **Participants:** 21 children (age 3;8-6;11, mean 5;7), from NL & GER
- **Picture Selection Task:** 16 transitive sentences with a reflexive or pronoun for each language

DU: Eerst hebben de vrouw en het meisje gelopen  
en daarna heeft de vrouw zichzelf/haar gewassen.

GE: Erst sind die Frau und die Kleine gelaufen  
und dann hat die Frau sich/sie gewaschen.

„First the woman and the girl walked and then the woman washed herself/her.“

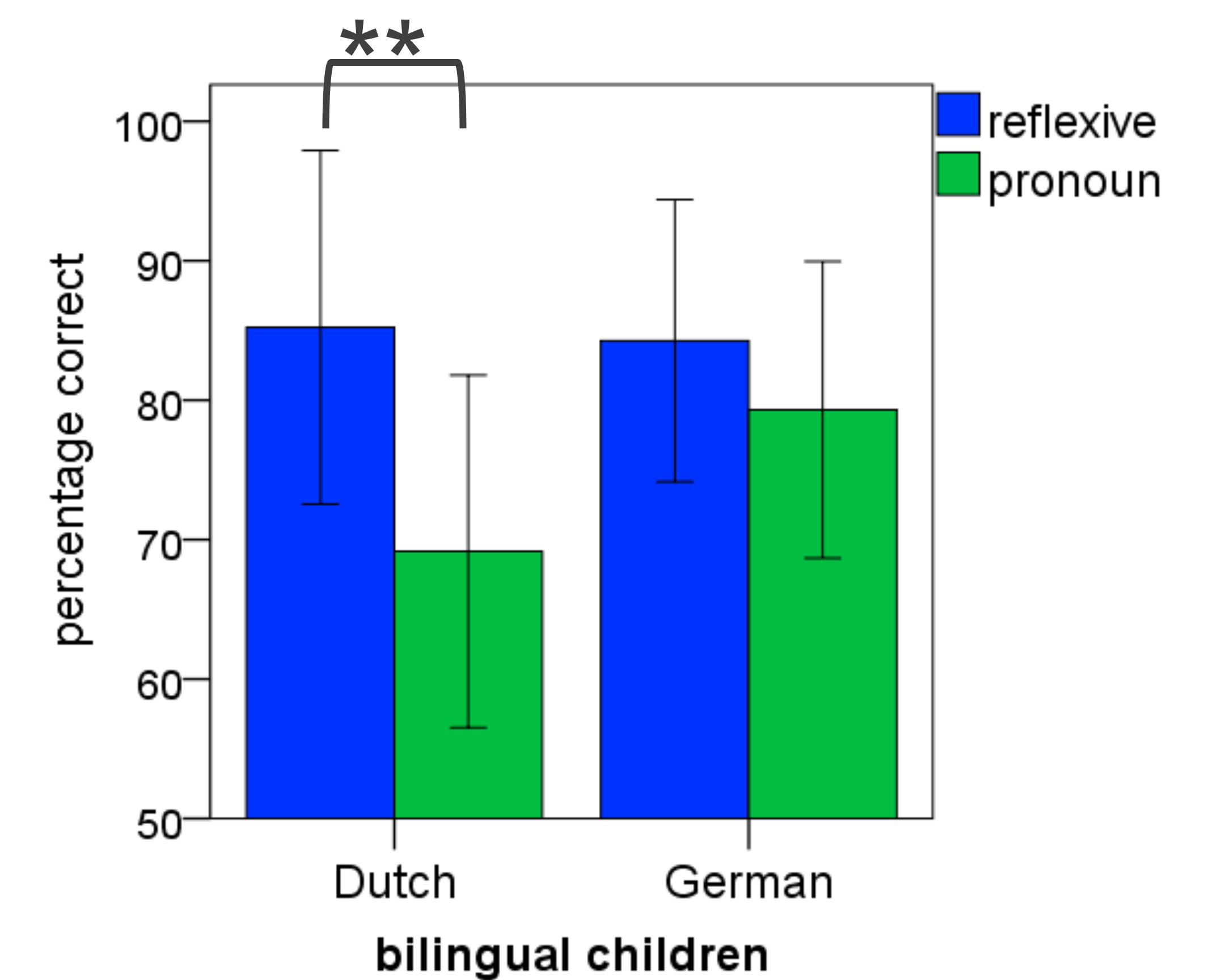


- **Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test** → measure language development + test language dominance



picture: <https://www.psychometrica.de/ppvt4.html>

## Results & Conclusion



language	% reflexives correct (SD)	% pronoun correct (SD)
biling. Dutch	85.2 (27.9)	69.2 (27.8)
biling. German	84.3 (22.2)	79.3 (23.4)
monoling. Dutch	92.3 <sup>B</sup>	75 <sup>B</sup>
monoling. German	94.4 <sup>A</sup>	94.2 <sup>A</sup>

values adapted from <sup>A</sup>Ruigendijk et al. 2010: 1997 & <sup>B</sup>Ruigendijk et al. 2011: 146

- no effect of language influence in Dutch
- no effect of language dominance (DU:  $p = 0.401$ ; GE:  $p = 0.379$ ) → problematic: age not equally distributed
- effect of age in Dutch → development similar to monolinguals
- overall: bilinguals' performance < monolinguals'

### possible explanations:

- effect of bilingualism: processing costs of two languages → decreased performance
- effect of language influence in German pronoun interpretation