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Acquiring native-like intonation in Dutch and Spanish

Comparing the L1 and L2 of native speakers and second language learners

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Introduction

Goal of our study

To learn more about the **acquisition of intonation** in a **second language**.

Information status and intonation in the L1

Dutch	New information is generally ACCENTED and given information is deaccented (Rasier, 2006; Swerts et al., 2002). Ex. De rode bezem en de GROENE bezem 'The red broom and the GREEN broom'
Spanish	The ACCENT is usually placed at the end of the intonational phrase, irrespective of information status (Face, 2002; Hualde, 2005). Ex. El globo verde y el guante VERDE 'The balloon green and the glove GREEN'

Research Questions

RQ1 Do Spanish and Dutch differ in the way they use intonation to mark information status?

RQ2 If so, does this lead to prosodic transfer from the L1 to the L2 (in both languages)? (Rasier & Hiligsmann, 2009)

RQ3 If so, is the extent of the prosodic transfer influenced by the proficiency level of the L2 learner? (Swerts & Zerbian, 2010)

RQ4 If so, is prosodic transfer bi-directional? Does the L2 also influence the L1? (Mennen, 2004)

Method

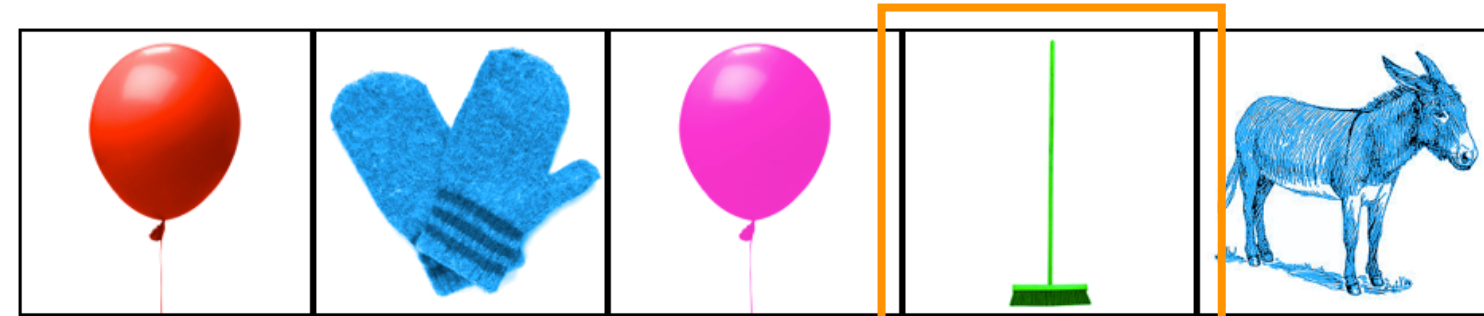
Participants (N=124)

NSD ¹	NSS	Less proficient ² DLS	Proficient DLS	Less proficient SLD	Proficient SLD
n=26	n=19	n=21	n=19	n=19	n=20

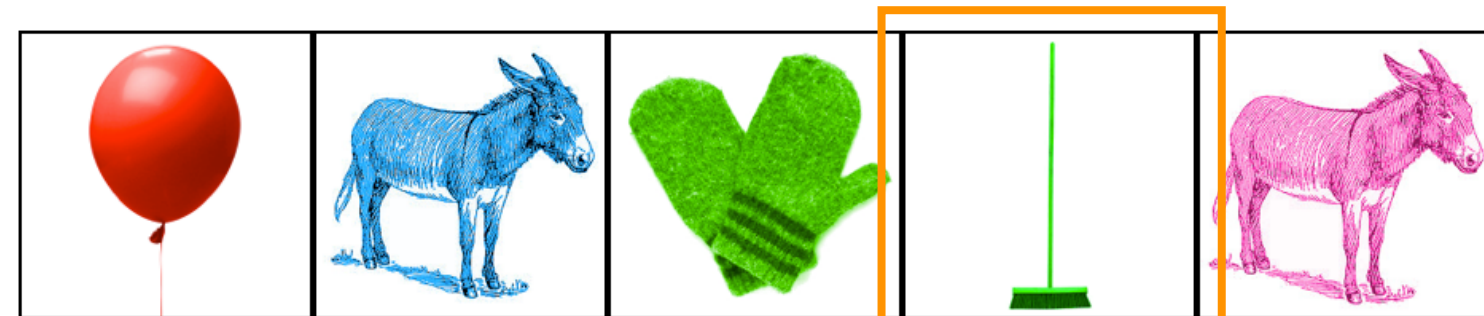
Speech elicitation task: Describe the **objects** and their **color** (n=4).

Information status types (n=4)

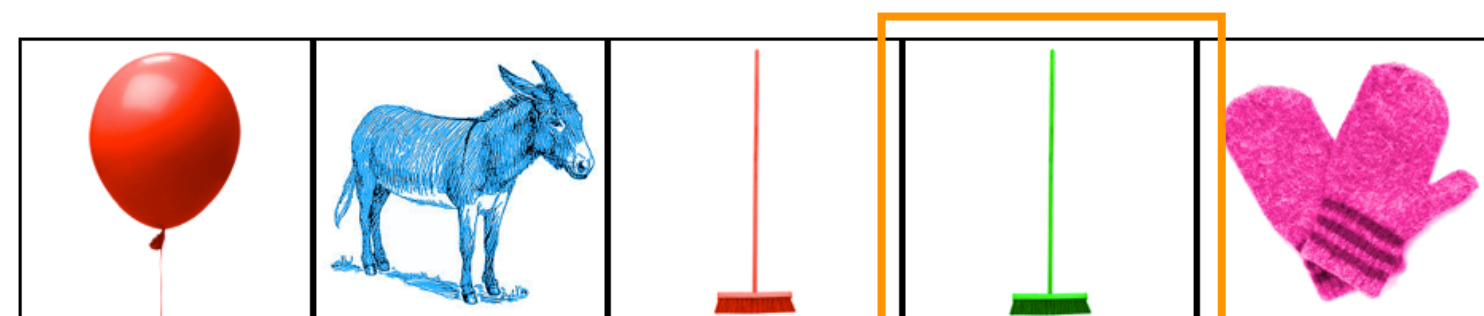
NN: Both the first and the second word of the NP are new in the list



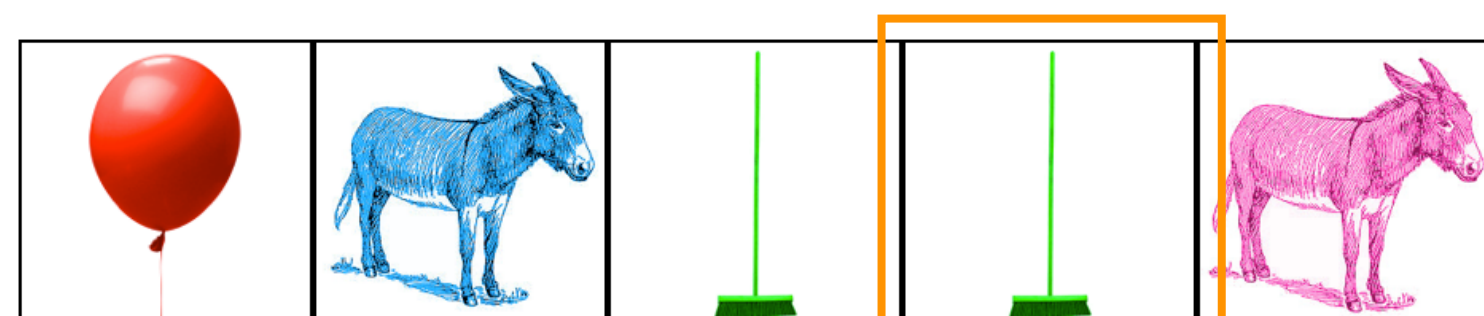
GN: The second word of the NP is new in the list, but the first one is the same as the first word in the preceding NP



NG: The first word is new in that list, but the second word is identical to the second word of the preceding NP



GG: Both the first and the second word are used in the preceding NP, but not in the description of any other picture in the list

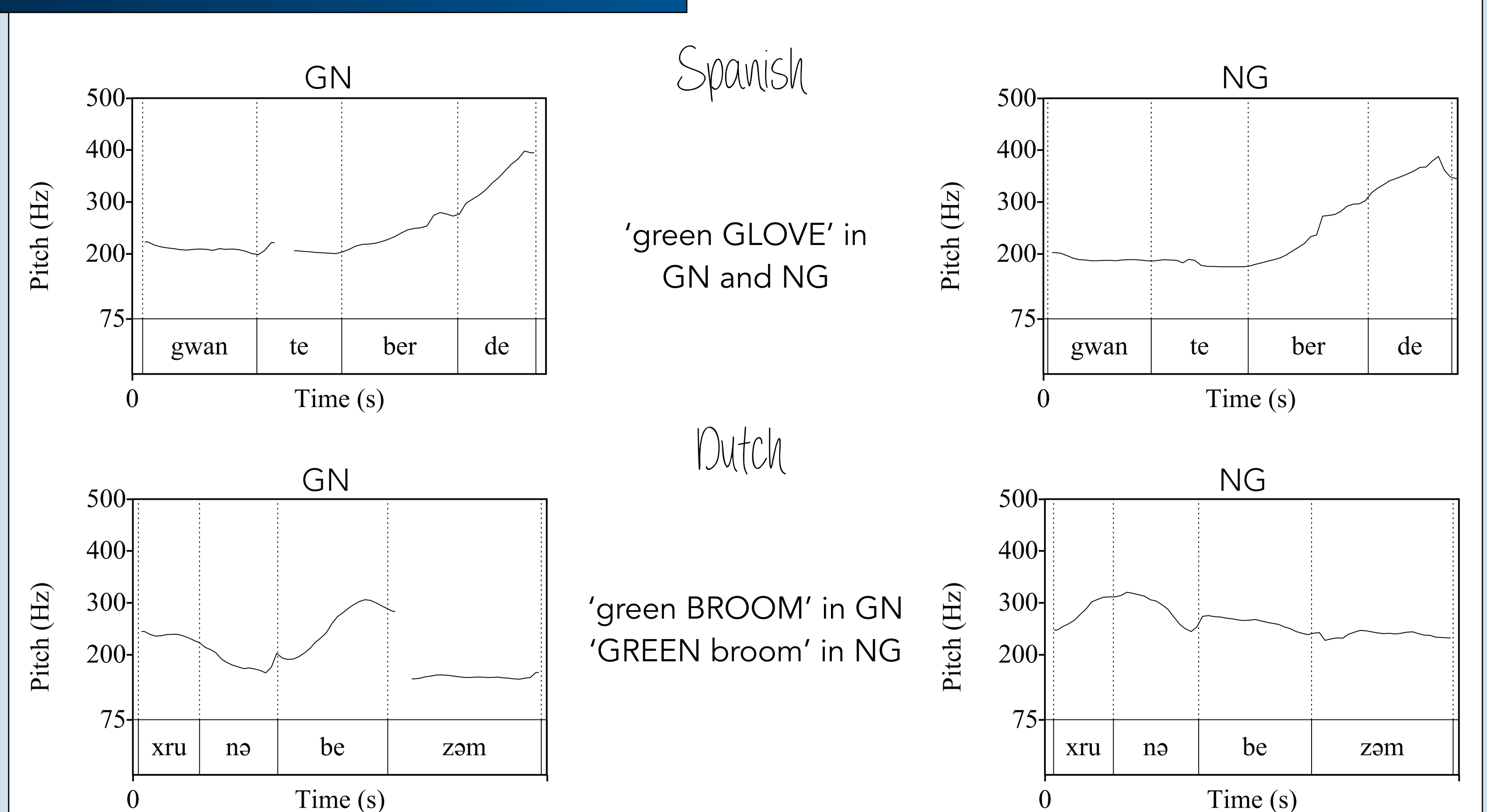


Measure: Difference score in Hertz (F_0 word 2 - F_0 word 1).

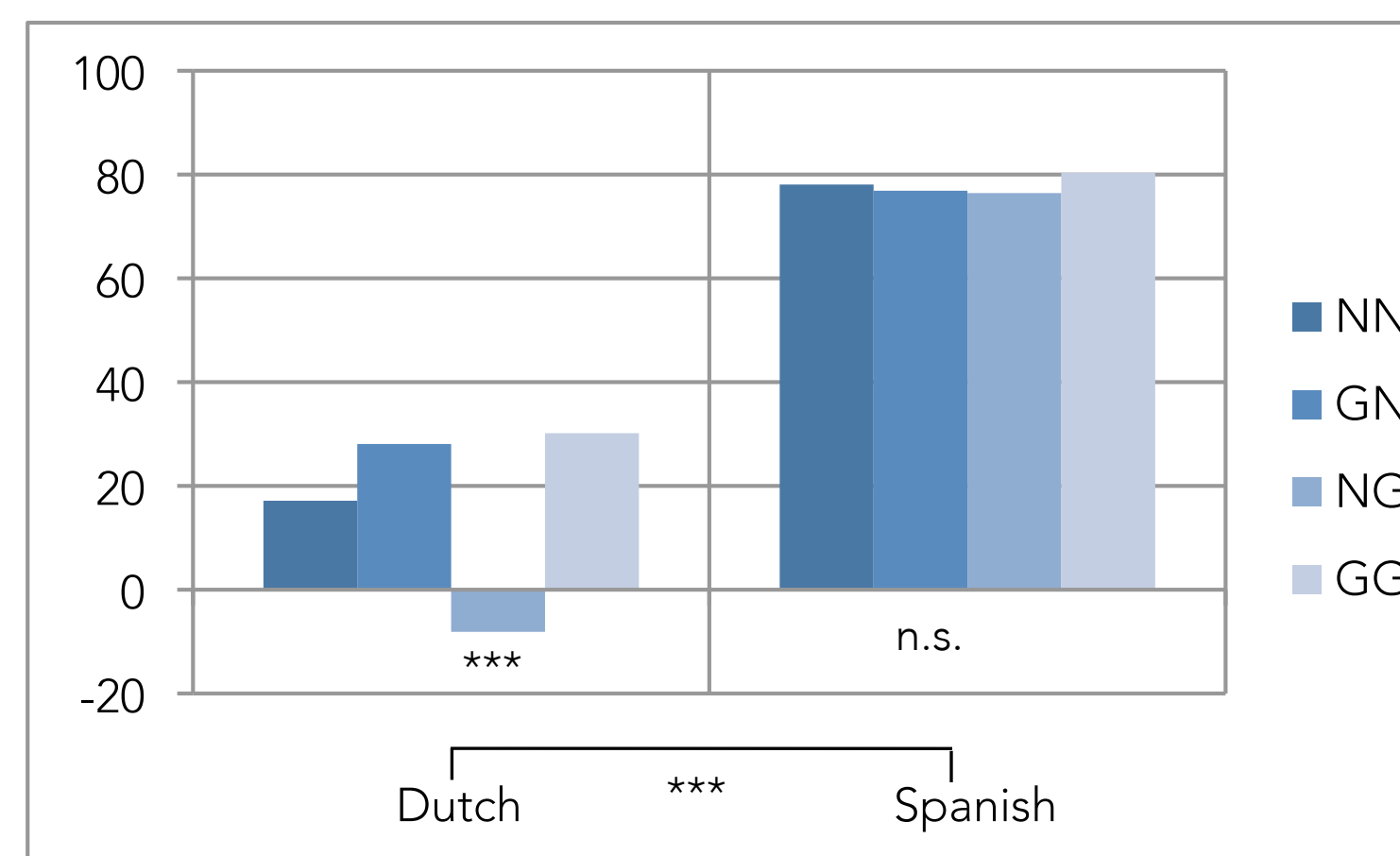
¹ NSD = Native Speakers of Dutch, NSS = Native Speakers of Spanish, DLS = Dutch Learners of Spanish, SLD = Spanish Learners of Dutch.

² Less proficient = $\leq A2$, Proficient = $\geq B1$, see Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

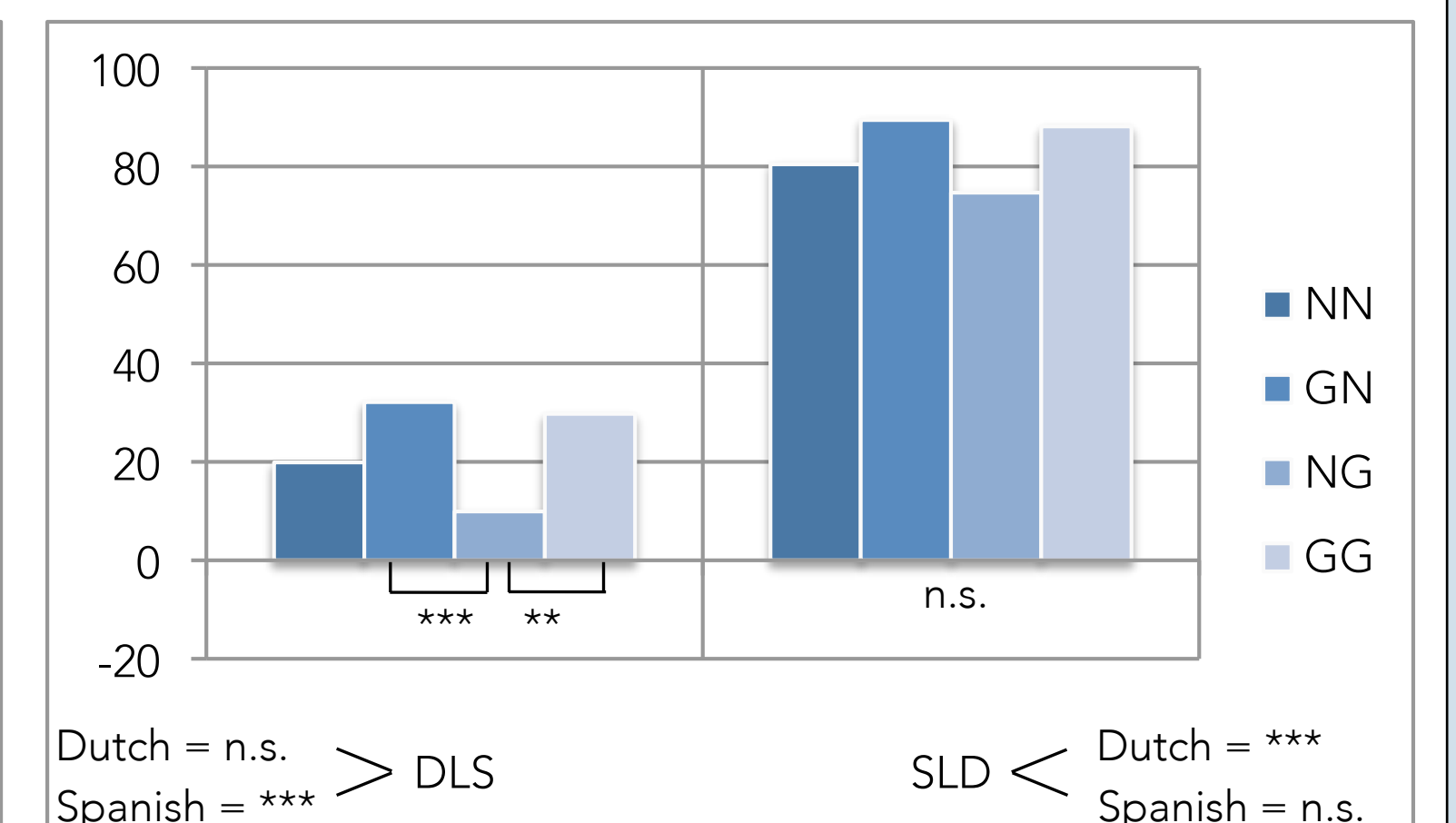
Results



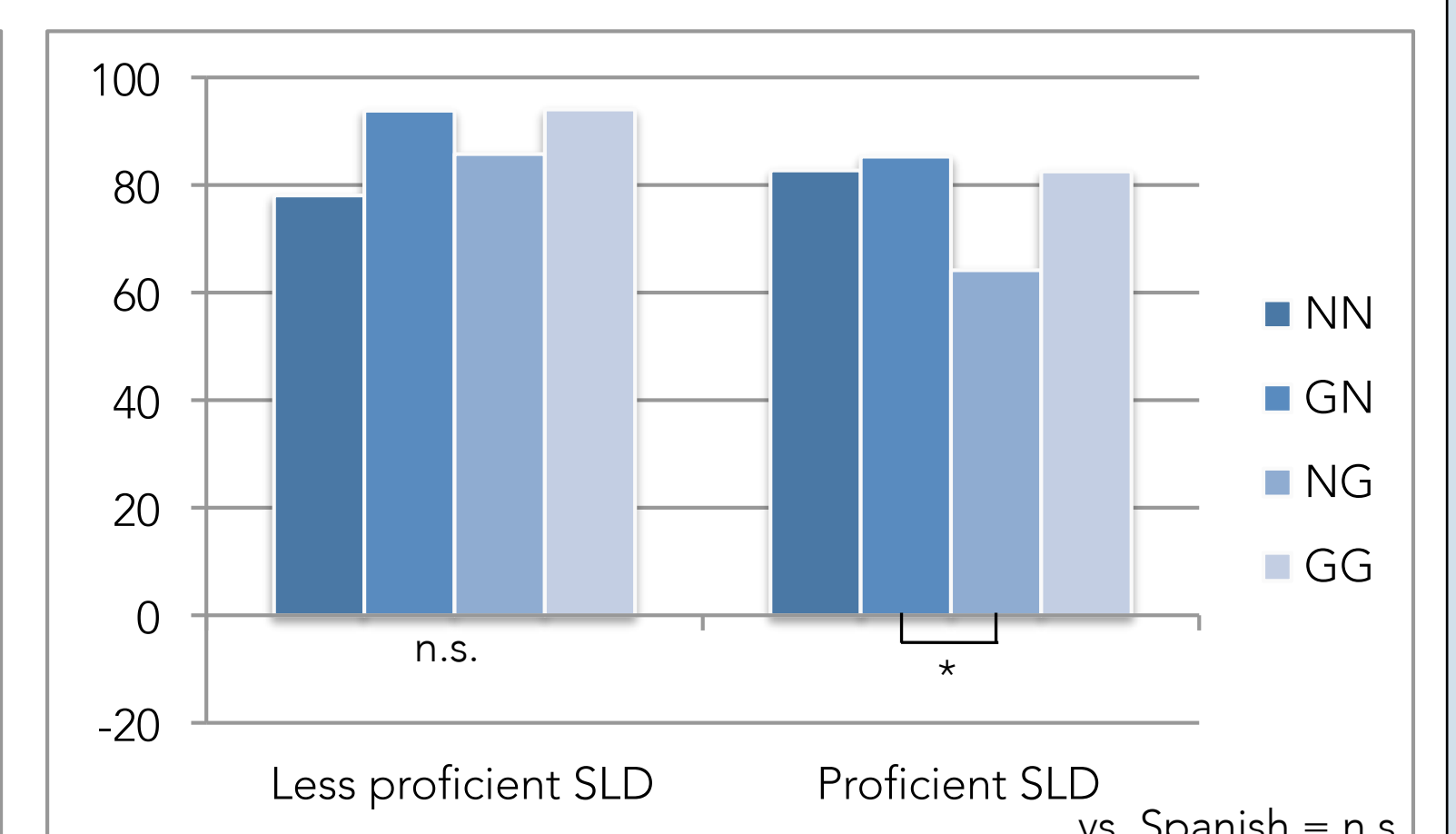
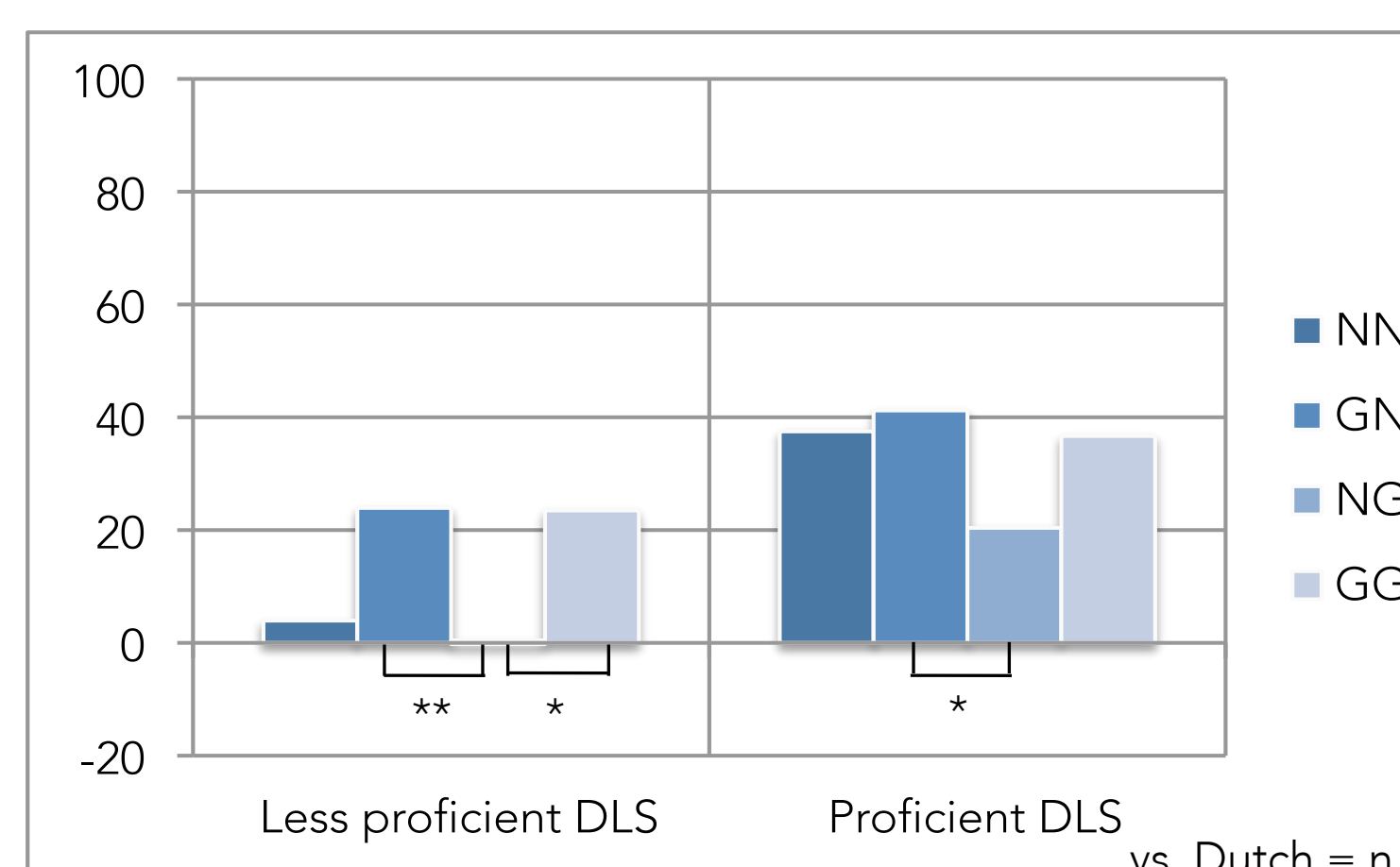
RQ1



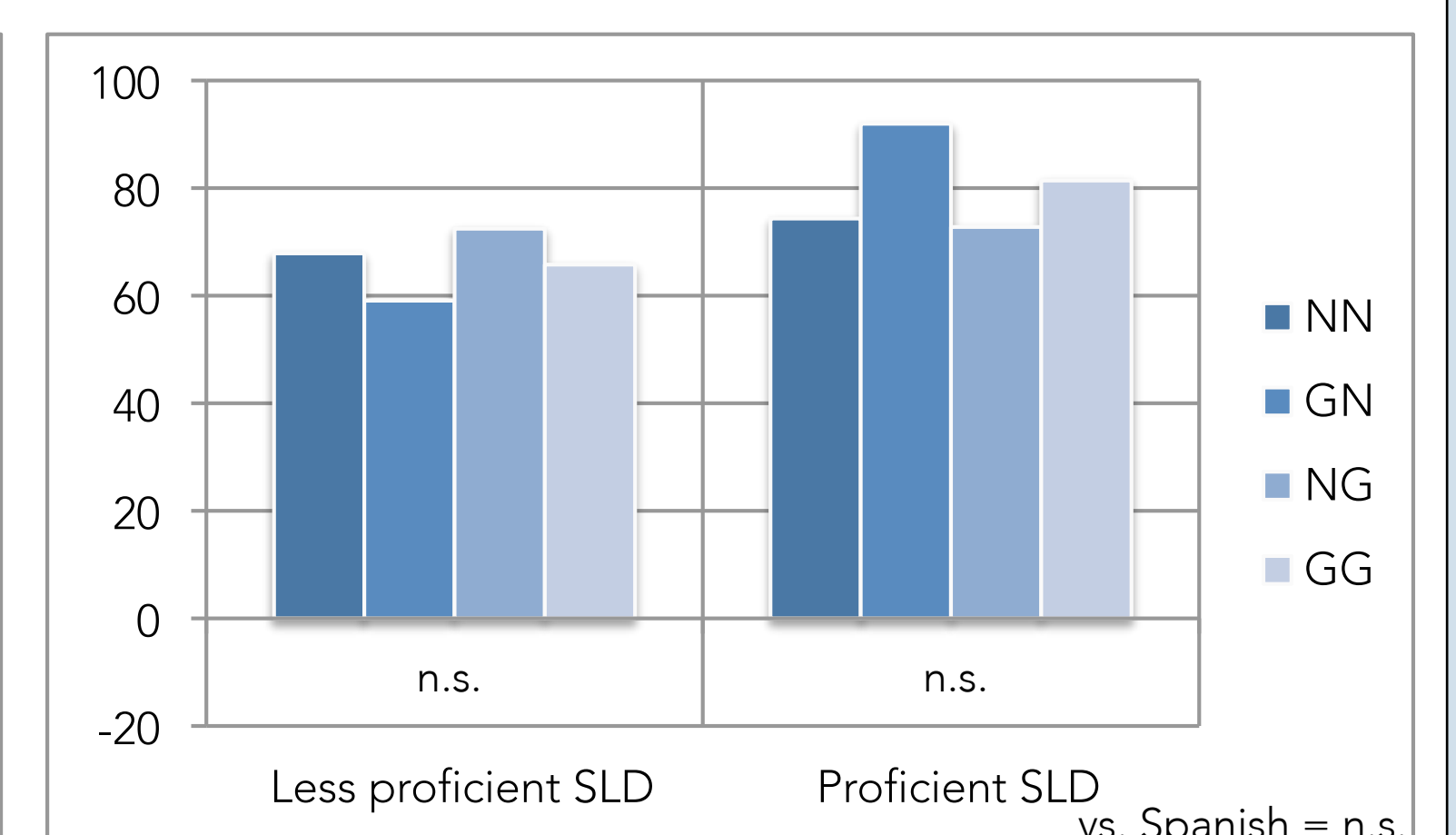
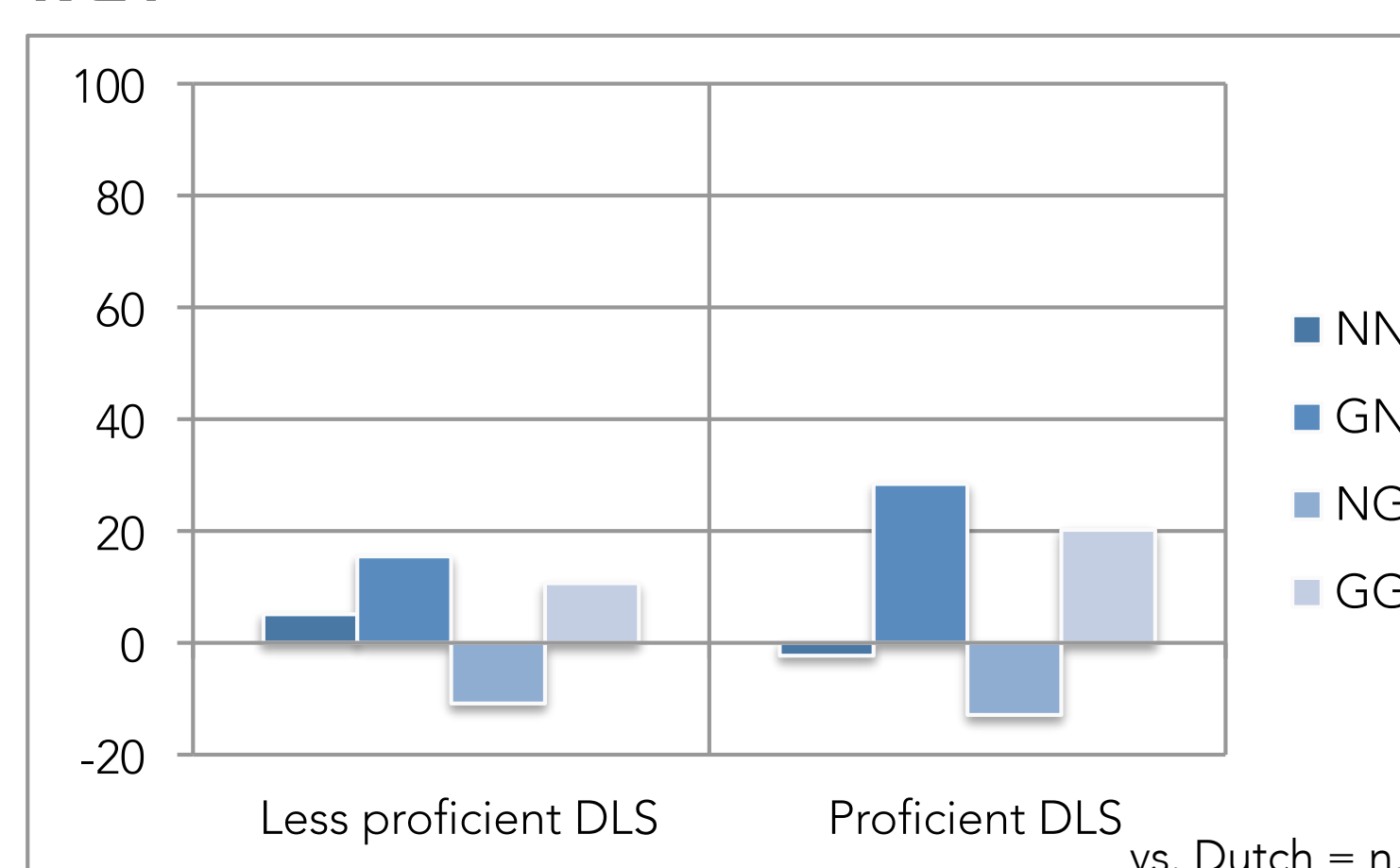
RQ2



RQ3



RQ4



Discussion & Conclusion

Answers to Research Questions

RQ1 Yes, Dutch and Spanish differ in the way they use intonation to mark information status (see pitch tracks).

RQ2 This leads to **prosodic transfer**: both learner groups copy **pitch accent and boundary tone patterns** of their L1 to their L2.

RQ3 The extent of the **prosodic transfer is clearly influenced by the proficiency level** of the second language learner.

RQ4 But there is no evidence that suggests that the L2 also influences the L1, so the transfer is **not bidirectional**.

- Bidirectional transfer possibly only takes place when intonation does not have a **functional meaning** or at the **highest proficiency level**.

- Future work might focus on the effect of non-native intonation on the **intelligibility/comprehensibility** of L2 speech by means of **perception studies**.