

Grammatical Skills in Monolingual Spanish Speakers



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Introduction

- Spanish is the second most spoken language in the U.S., and also one of the fastest growing.⁷
- Hispanic parents and caregivers in the U.S. speak to their children in Spanish at home, resulting in Spanish becoming their first language and them learning English when they enter school.⁵
- Spanish-speaking children are often both under and over-identified in special education classrooms¹⁵ in large part due to a lack of valid assessments and norms.

Current Study

Language Sample Analysis was used to address the following questions:

- How often are Specific Language Impairment (SLI) grammatical markers evident in narratives of monolingual Spanish speakers?
- What is the relation between grammatical structures and mean length of utterance in words (MLUw) and does accuracy increase as a function of MLUw?

Methods

Population sample

- Participants: 126 monolingual Spanish children in second grade, aged 6;11 to 9;0 (years;months)
- Language Samples: Narrative retell of "Frog, Where Are You?"¹⁰ selected from one larger parent study

Procedures

- Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT) to code for nine grammatical structures: preterite (P), imperfect (I), singular article (SA), plural article (PA), plural noun (PN), subjunctive (S), preposition (PP), conjunction (C), direct object clitic (D)
- The present study was compared to a study by Baron et al. (2018), which analyzed how Spanish grammatical morpheme production is correlated to the MLUw

Analyses conducted to determine:

- Percent of children who used grammatical structures
- Number of times children used grammatical structures
- Percent accuracy of grammatical structures
- Correlations of percent accuracy of grammatical structures and MLUw
- Children's percent accuracy of grammatical structures by MLUw group compared to Baron et al. (2018) study of the Spanish dominant group

Results

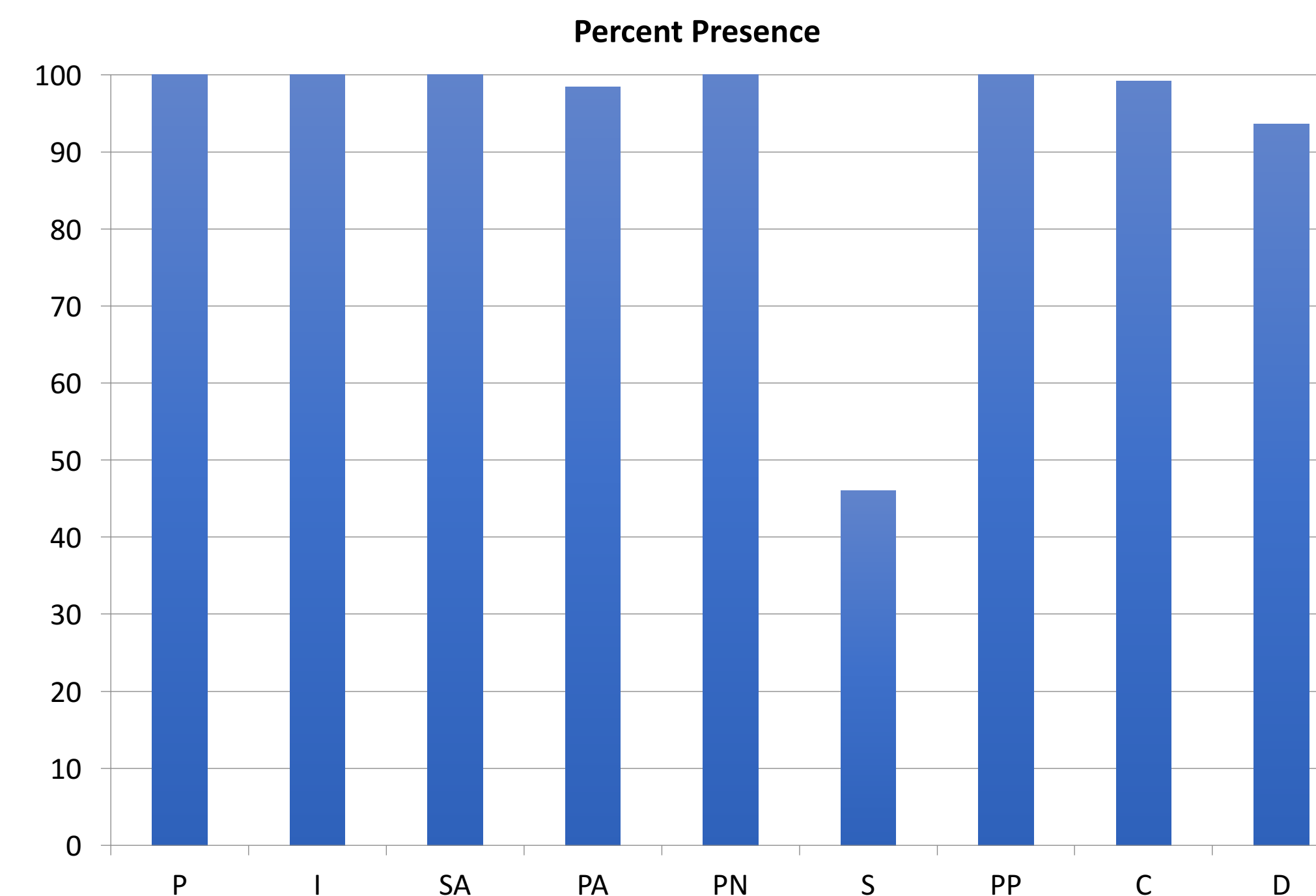


Figure 1: Percent of children who used grammatical structures.

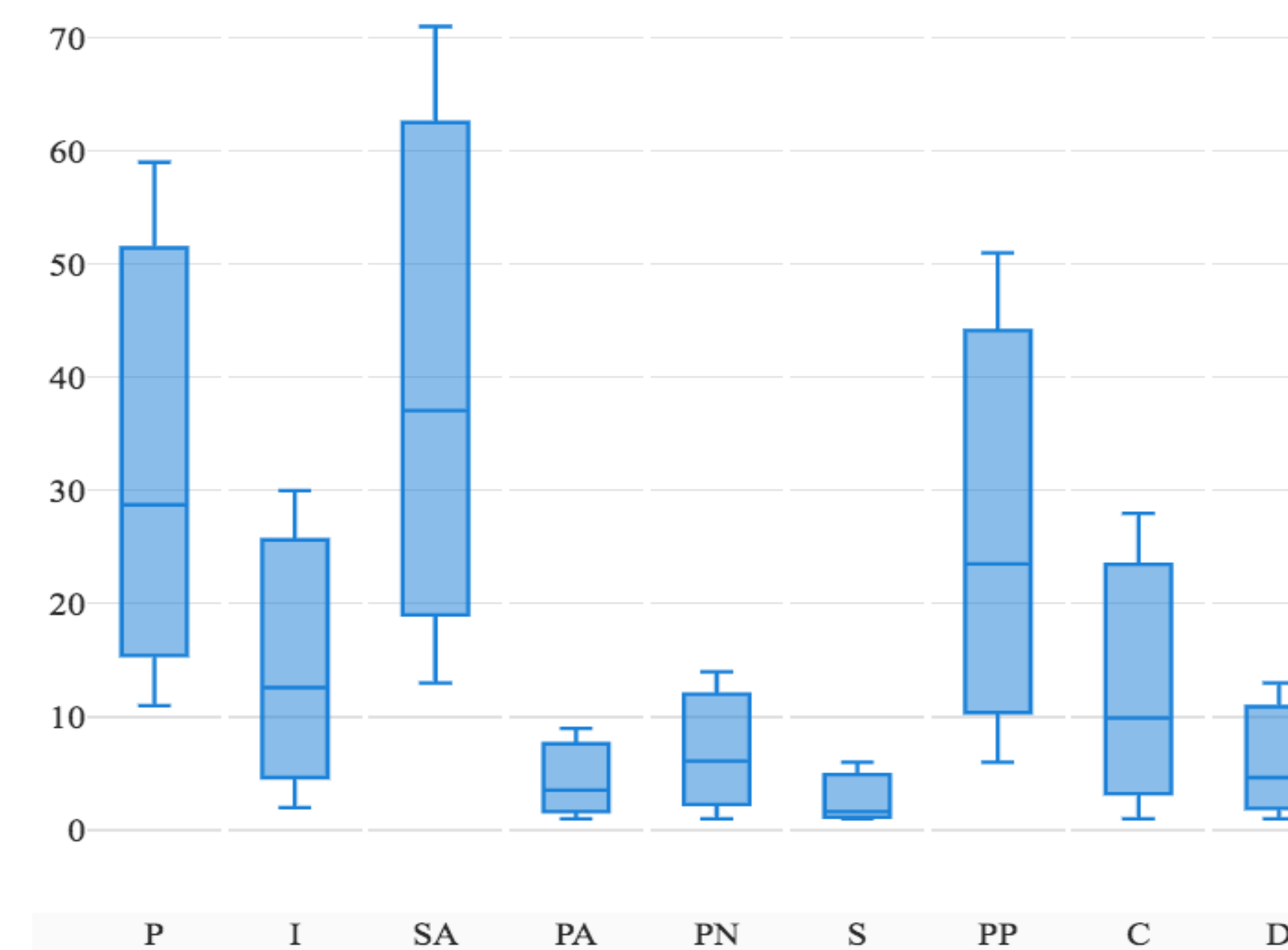


Figure 2: Number of times children used grammatical structures.

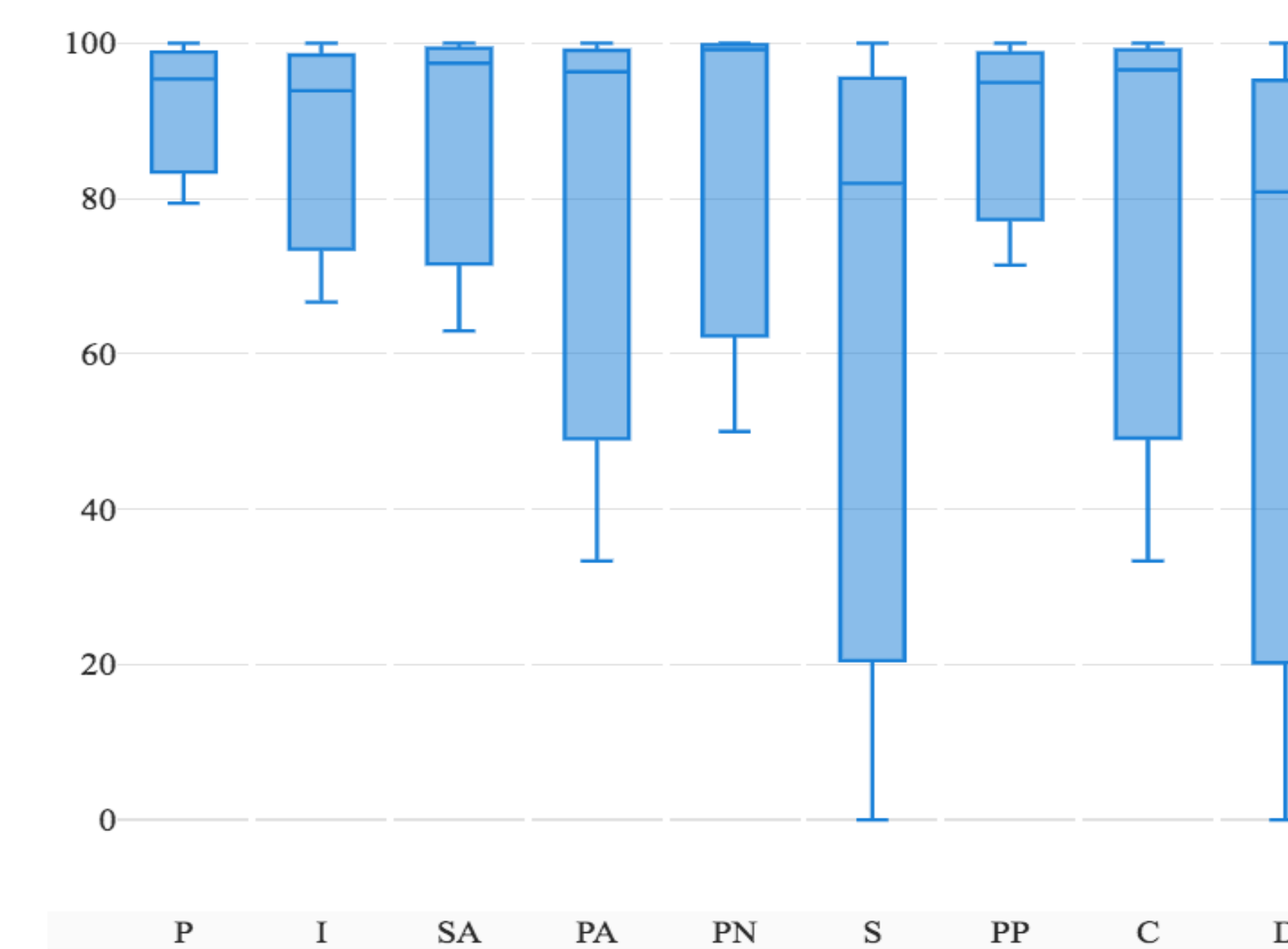


Figure 3: Percent accuracy of grammatical structures of children who used the structures.

Grammatical Morpheme	Correlation with MLUw (Present study)	Correlation with MLUw (Baron et al. study)
Preterite	-0.064	0.152*
Imperfect	0.005	0.154*
Singular article	0.166	0.127*
Plural article	0.114	0.201*
Plural noun	0.113	0.127*
Subjunctive	0.047	0.132*
Preposition	0.251*	0.113*
Conjunction	0.108	0.178*
Direct object clitic	0.077	0.156*

Table 1: Correlations of percent accuracy of grammatical structures and MLUw. (*p < 0.05)

Grammatical Morpheme	Present study (4.00-4.99)	Baron study (4.00-4.99)	Present study (5.00-5.99)	Baron study (5.00-5.99)	Present study (6.00-6.99)	Baron study (6.00-6.99)	Present study (7.00-7.99)	Baron study (7.00-7.99)	Present study (8.00-8.99)	Baron study (8.00-8.99)
Preterite	95.58	59.20	95.41	70.73	95.88	74.40	95.59	80.00	92.29	40.00
Imperfect	95.48	72.84	93.19	75.85	94.49	78.93	95.64	92.00	93.37	84.00
Singular article	96.02	74.25	97.31	78.66	97.68	85.27	99.03	87.50	99.15	75.00
Plural article	98.61	63.18	95.44	68.29	95.99	75.60	100.00	83.33	100.00	60.00
Plural noun	98.90	75.37	98.79	80.49	100.00	86.61	100.00	95.00	100.00	70.00
Subjunctive	83.33	47.27	80.00	52.93	84.65	59.29	86.11	38.00	75.00	60.00
Preposition	92.91	51.99	94.27	56.30	96.57	62.50	96.87	60.00	98.68	63.33
Conjunction	97.12	70.15	95.67	73.98	97.63	79.46	98.61	80.00	100.00	86.67
Direct object clitic	85.89	51.34	77.89	51.95	86.73	64.29	75.66	58.00	87.50	56.00

Table 2: Children's percent accuracy of grammatical structures by MLUw group compared to Baron et al. (2018) study of the Spanish dominant group.

Discussion

- Narratives can be used to elicit most SLI grammatical markers in monolingual Spanish second graders.
- The direct object clitic and subjunctive were not used as often by participants.
- Singular article, preterite, and preposition were most frequently used by all speakers.
- Percent accuracy was the lowest for direct object clitic and subjunctive.
- Only one significant correlation between MLUw and percent accuracy of grammatical morphemes suggests that MLUw may not be a beneficial way to measure syntactical complexity.⁸
- Percent accuracy was always higher for all structures compared to the Baron et al. (2018) study.
- There was no shift in percent accuracy as a function of MLUw across groups.
 - Differences may be due to what is considered an error.
- Additional research is necessary to compare the Spanish language skills of Spanish monolinguals and Spanish-English bilinguals.

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