Reconciling the contradictory phenomenology of defectiveness

Maria Copot

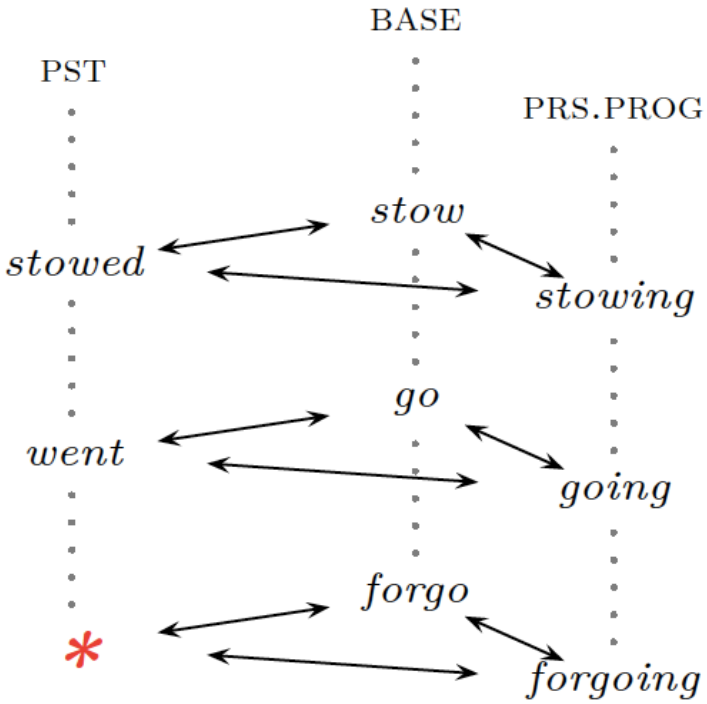
Université Paris Cité, LLF, CNRS

Labex EFL

Université Paris Cité

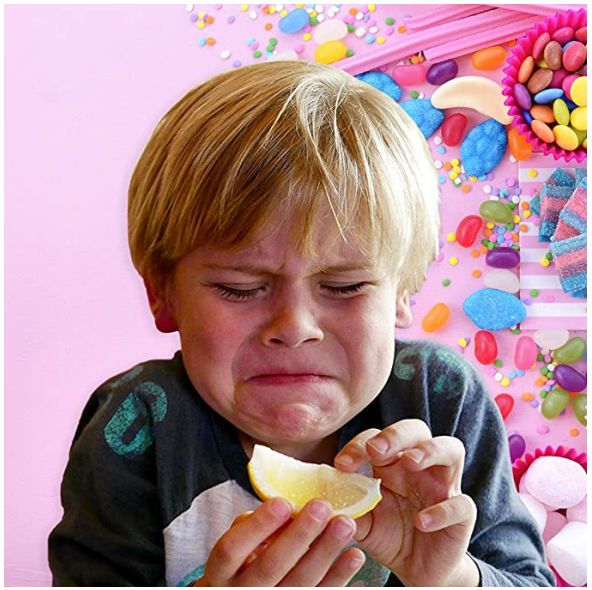
Introduction

Defectiveness



- A paradigm cell remaining unfilled despite expectations (Sims, 2015)

A psychoanalitic parenthesis - a felt sense of defectiveness



Disgust Icky, ugly, unfortunate, “eugh”, “why are you doing this to me”

Defectiveness has certain negative qualia for speakers.

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One expects these qualia to have an impact on the use of defective forms.

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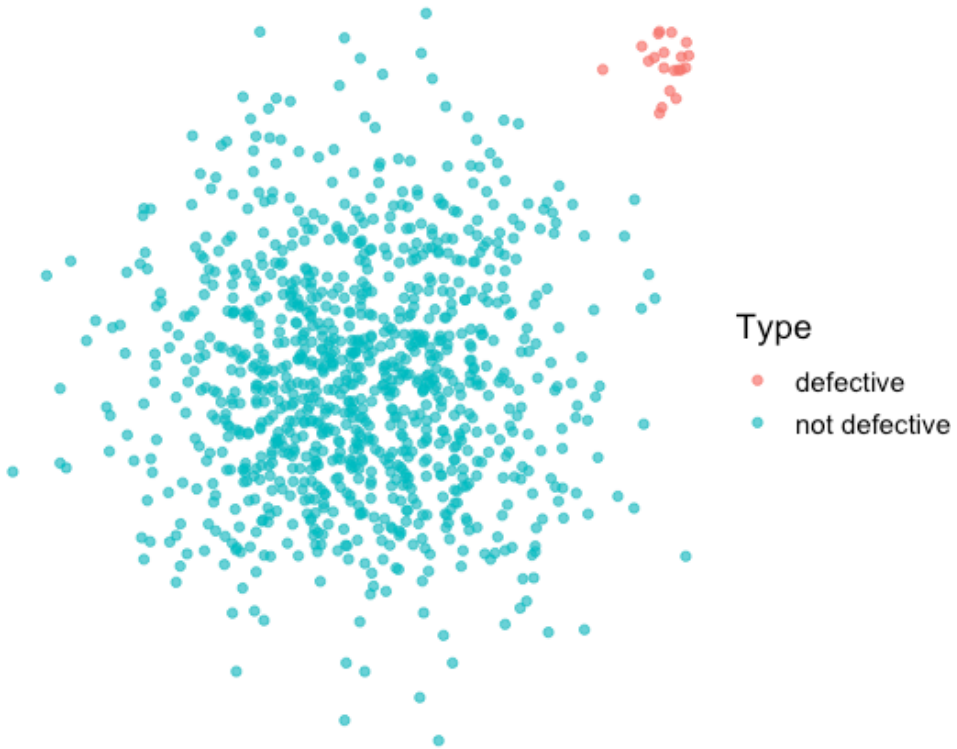
Defective forms should not be used in language.

The situation with usage

- PhD thesis originally on defectiveness.
- Understand the processing of defective words.
  - Step zero: create a method to find defective words in corpora, as basis for experimental items.



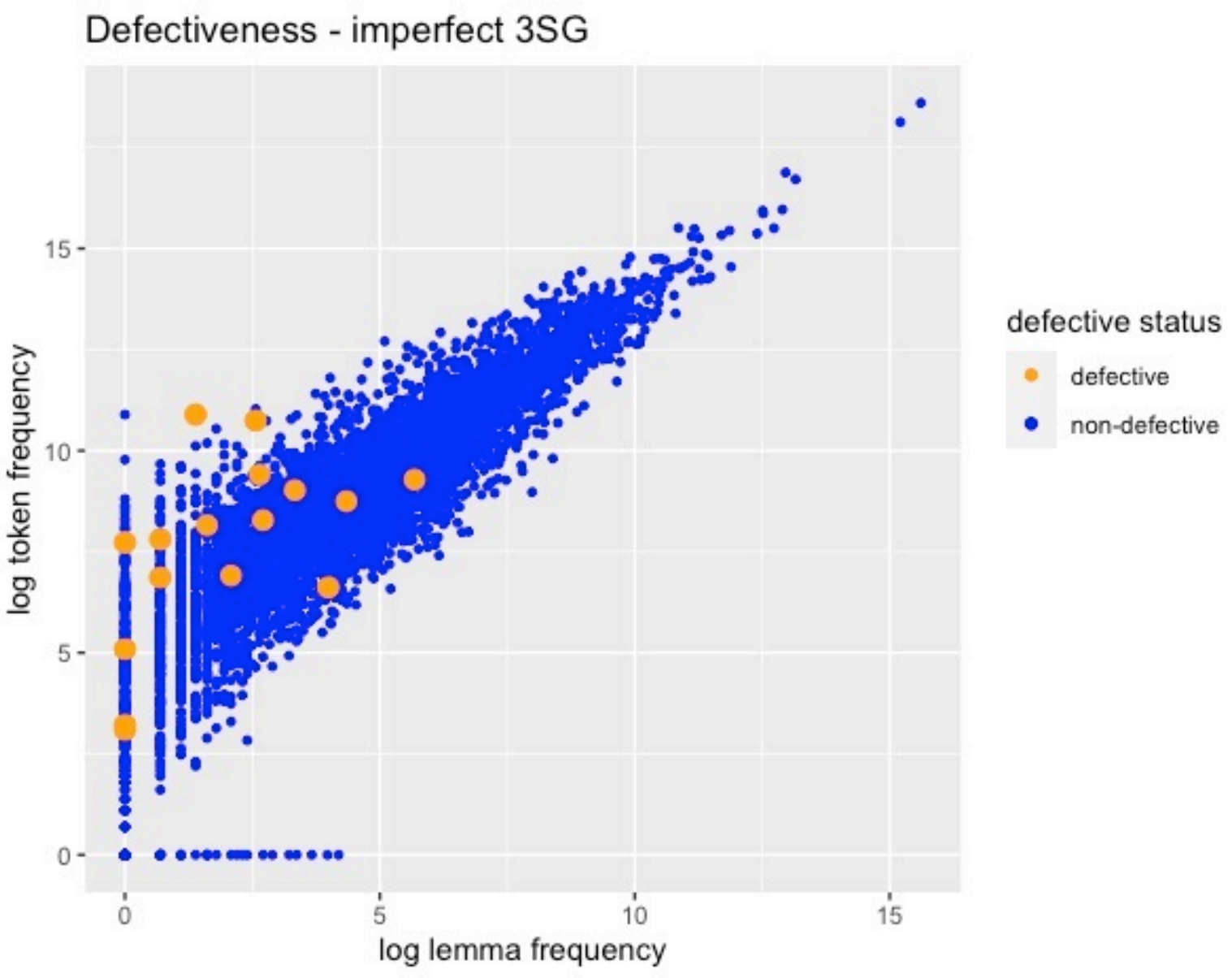
The situation with usage - taxonicity

- Every quantitative study on defectiveness finds that defective words as a group are different on average along relevant dimensions from non-defective words.
- Finding minimal overlap between defective and non-defective words hasn't been explored to my knowledge.

The situation with usage

- Step zero: create a method to find defective words in French and Russian corpora, as basis for experimental items.
- If defectiveness is the unexpected absence of a word form to fill a cell, then it should manifest as a lexeme being much less frequent than expected in a particular cell.

Must meet the data where it is



Finding defectiveness in corpora - a cursed endeavour

- Repeatedly **unsuccessful**, took $\frac{1}{3}$ of my PhD, using ~ 5 methods on multiple parts of speech in both French and Russian.
  - **Frequency analysis**: defective words as less frequent than expected
    - ...compared to various reference classes
  - **Statistical modeling**: defective words as large negative residuals in models attempting to predict token frequency from
    - frequency of cells belonging to the same lexeme
    - frequency of cells of related lexeme
    - distributional semantics
    - information theory

Defectiveness in corpora

- Speakers are using defective words in corpora and on the internet
  - Not just metalinguistic attestations
  - Not just irony
  - Not just L2 speakers

  For this to happen, at least one of these must be true
  - Dictionaries are wrong about what words are defective
  - Defectiveness felt sense does not cash out in diminished usage

The pitch

- Social factors have a crucial role in explaining the origins and manifestation of defective felt sense.
  - Question the assumption that defectiveness “is in the grammar”.
  - Explain contradictory results in the behavioural literature on defectiveness.
  - Help shed light on the ontology of defectiveness and how it relates to other phenomena.

What follows was done in collaboration with Andrea Sims

Defectiveness in French verbs: a sociomorphological phenomenon?

A typology of French verbal defectiveness

Based on what dictionaries deem defective, Boyé and Cabredo Hofherr (2010) propose a typology

1. Form indeterminacy: speakers don't have a plausible form for the defective paradigmatic slot.
    - APPAROIR 'to appear' is only used in the IND.PRS.3SG. Hard to predict rest of paradigm.
2. Form conflict: plausible forms exist but they are rejected for independent reasons.
    - NEIGER 'to snow' - **je neige* 'I snow', defective for semantic reasons
3. Form gaps: plausible stems are not used without any synchronic motivation.
    - CLORE 'to close'. *Vous *closez* has no reason not to exist, and is the obviously correct form, yet it is deemed defective.

French speakers have defective felt sense

le verbe clore 17 views

Ampac 8 Feb 2001, 18:17:26

to

Présent

Je clos
Tu clos
Il clot
Nous clo ... ?
Vous clo .... ?
Ils closent

Impératif

Clos
Clo ???
Clo ???

Merci de me donner toutes les formes de "clore", on a cherche au boulot mais on n'a pas trouve

Ampac C.

Yet the forms of CLORE are not used any less frequently than one might expect in corpora. Why?

The status of defective words - highlighting important pieces of the puzzle

1. In corpora, defective forms are used as if they were non-defective.
2. Speakers do not like defective forms, but do not mind other words that have the same structural properties
    - overabundant forms (Bermel, Knittle, and Russell, 2018)
    - (defective-resembling) nonwords (Albright, 2003)
3. Although we are making progress in individuating structural factors correlated with defectiveness (Baerman and Corbett, 2010; Fábregas, 2018; Sims, 2023), these are not sufficient nor necessary

Explanatory accounts of defectiveness - the role of social variables

- Theories of the synchronic nature of defectiveness focus on providing mechanisms for defectiveness to fall out of the grammar. (Albright, 2003; Sims, 2006, 2015, 2023)
- Diachronic theories of defectiveness do acknowledge the role of social factors (Baerman, 2008, 2011; Broadbent, 2009; Gilliéron, 1919).
  - e.g. Baerman (2011) notes that CLORE owes its defectiveness to having fallen out of use and then having been resurrected by the Académie française in certain cells.
- The synchronic role of social factors remains underexplored.

The research question

- We propose that attending to system-external factors resolves the paradox of how defectiveness manifests.
- The research question: what is the role of linguistic prescriptiveness in accounting for speakers' felt sense of defectiveness?

Why should linguists care about prescriptivism?

- To many, speakers' and societies' beliefs about how language should be are irrelevant to studying the way that language is.
- Prescriptivism is simultaneously seen as
  1. irrelevant to the study of language - "linguists should be descriptivists, not prescriptivists"
  2. to be countered- "leave your language alone"

Why should linguists care about prescriptivism?

- Attitudes like “leave your language alone” and “prescriptivism is harmful” rest on the belief that prescriptivism can actually affect language use
  - If prescriptivism had no consequences, we wouldn’t spend any effort combating it.
- Historically, plenty of examples:
  - Diminished usage of anglicisms in formal French.
    - *Une *application/candidature* ‘a job application’
  - Changes resulting from hypercorrection
    - e.g. *between you and I*, *octopi*
  - Increasing adoption of *they* as a gender-neutral 3SG pronoun in English.

Prescriptivism - and more generally speakers' metalinguistic awareness - should be taken it into account when looking at patterns of usage, like any other sociolinguistic factor.

Prescriptivism in France

- High metalinguistic awareness of language
  - Tradition of *remarqueurs*, columns about language in popular media (Ayres-Bennett, 1994, 2006).
  - Lots of schooling in grammar and literature.
- Language planning
  - Low tolerance for local languages and varieties.
  - Attempts to exclude all foreign borrowings and loanwords.

Prescriptivism in France - Académie Française

Since 1635, its mission is to “keep the French language pure and elegant, and fit for discussing the arts and sciences”.

(to everyone’s big surprise, barely any linguists involved)

The link between prescriptivism and defectiveness

Defectiveness as stigmatised word forms

Vogel (2019)'s paradox of grammatical taboos

1. A taboo in a language L can only hold over a construction C, if C exists. Thus, C must be part of Ls language system.
2. Because of the taboo over C, speakers of L who conform to the taboo nevertheless believe that C should not and therefore does not belong to L.

Prescriptivism and defectiveness

- Standardising culture: one and only one way to speak correctly
  1. Implicit avoidance:
     - there is a right way to express a message →
     - speakers uncomfortable with morphological indeterminacy →
     - avoid form rather than risk choosing wrong one.
  2. Explicit avoidance: such cases may be codified as defective in grammars, yielding to the acquisition of the gap as explicit linguistic knowledge in a prescriptively authoritative text.
     - But words may be coded as defective for reasons other than indeterminacy → CLORE 'to close', resurrected.

Prescriptivism interacts with and substantiates metalinguistic knowledge of defectiveness.

Predictions of a prescriptiveness account

- Speakers vary in whether they deem a word defective
  - Depends on their personal inclinations towards prescriptivism.
  - Depends on whether they have explicit metalinguistic knowledge of the word's defective status.
- Defective words vary in the extent to which they are deemed defective
  - Some words are more central to prescriptivist discourse - a function of frequency

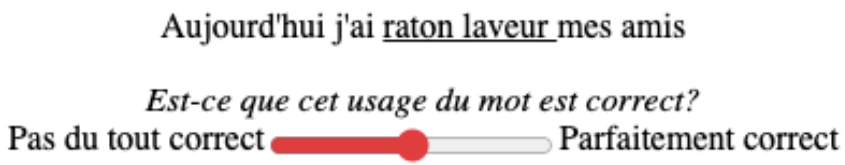
Defectiveness in French verbs

- Dictionaries disagree, reflecting variation is conservatism and usage.
  - Core group is defective in all dictionaries
    - FALLOIR ‘to have to’, QUÉRIR ‘to seek’
  - Some lexemes are defective in some dictionaries but not in others
    - BRAIRE ‘to bray’ is defective in Le Robert but not Larousse
  - Even if the same lexeme is defective in two dictionaries, different cells might be listed
    - OCCIRE ‘to kill’ is defective for its IND.PRS, IND.IPFV, IND.PST in both Le Robert and Larousse, only Larousse lists it as defective in its IND.FUT.

Methodology

The experiment

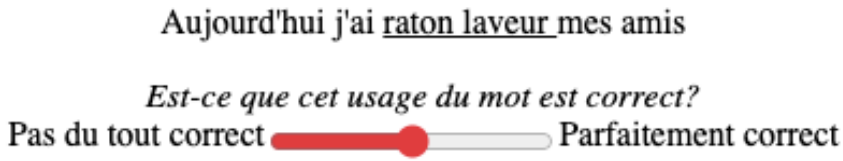
- French speakers
  - Well-documented list of defective forms
  - Strong prescriptive culture
- Acceptability judgement task



Task Conditions

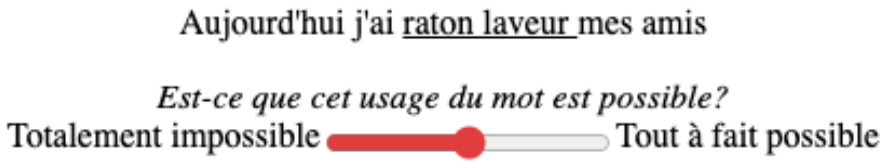
Normative Judgement Could you find this usage in a dictionary? Would a teacher mark it as correct?

+normative, +formal



Possibility Judgement Could you hear this usage from friends hanging out at a bar, or students after school?

−normative, −formal



Item conditions

- Defective verb forms marked as defective in at least two French dictionaries.
  - Removed lexemes that were marked as formal or archaic or register-restricted (e.g. legal)
  - (most defective lexemes are either explicitly marked as formal or connotated as such - CLORE VS FERMER 'to close')
- Slang: grammatical taboos - informal French words
- Subject agreement errors: ungrammatical - the verb featured an incorrect agreement marker[1]

[1] not homophonous with the correct option

Hypotheses

If prescriptivism is what causes defectiveness, we expect defective words to…

- Be rated higher in the possibility task than the normative task
  - They are used in the language but are stigmatised
  - Similar to slang in this respect
- Be rated more variably than the other two item conditions
  - Depending on how strong the prescriptive pressure against using a given lexeme is
  - Depending on the individual's level of agreement with prescriptive norms and their knowledge of them.

Procedure

80 participants from Prolific.co

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Administered a **prescriptiveness questionnaire** (aimed at three types of prescriptivism) and collected demographic info

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Assigned to a **task condition**, given instructions for the kind of judgement required

⇓

9 items for each of the three item conditions in a randomised order, no distractors

⇓

Verification of **lexeme knowledge**

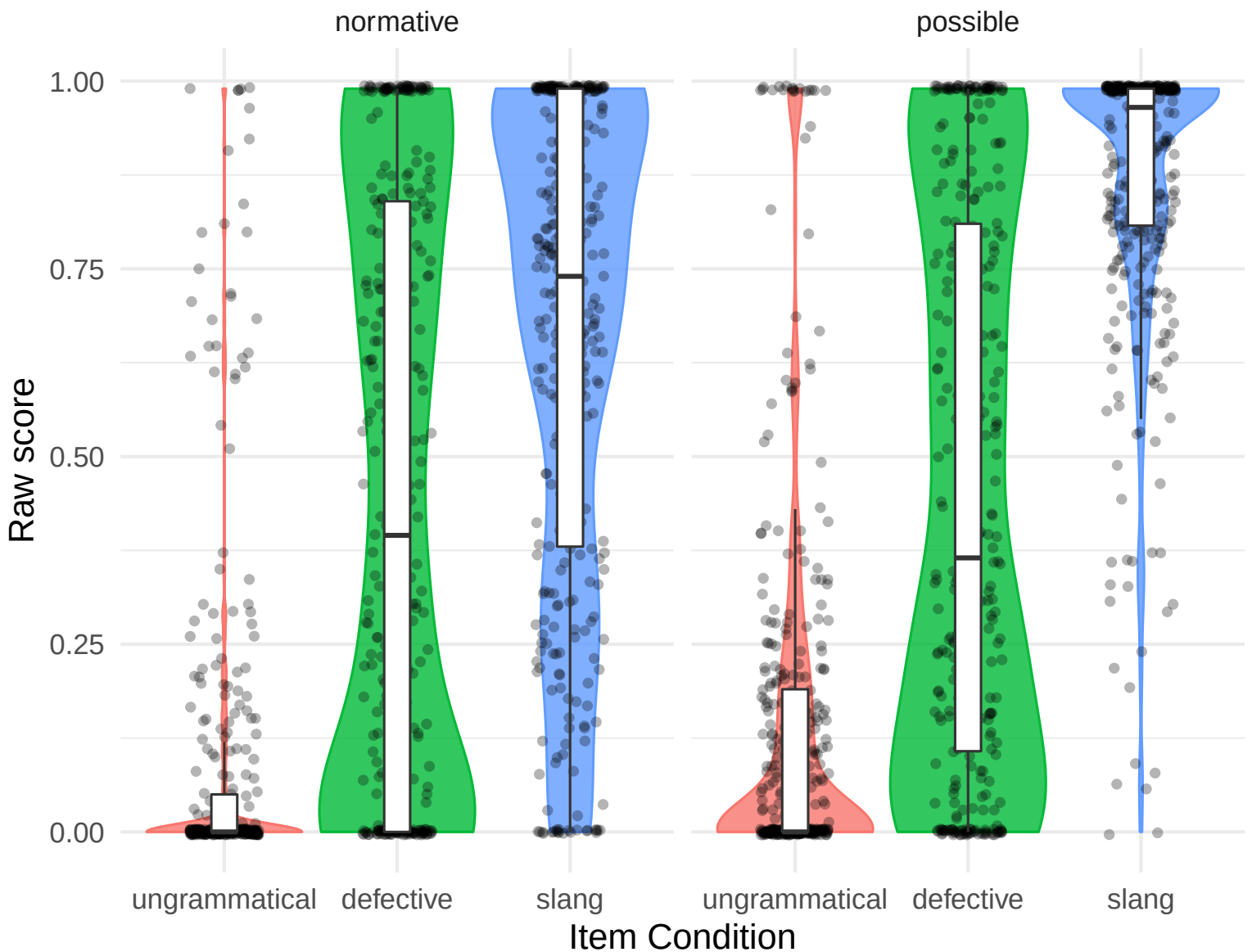
Analysis

A bayesian zero-and-one-inflated beta regression was fitted to participant judgements.

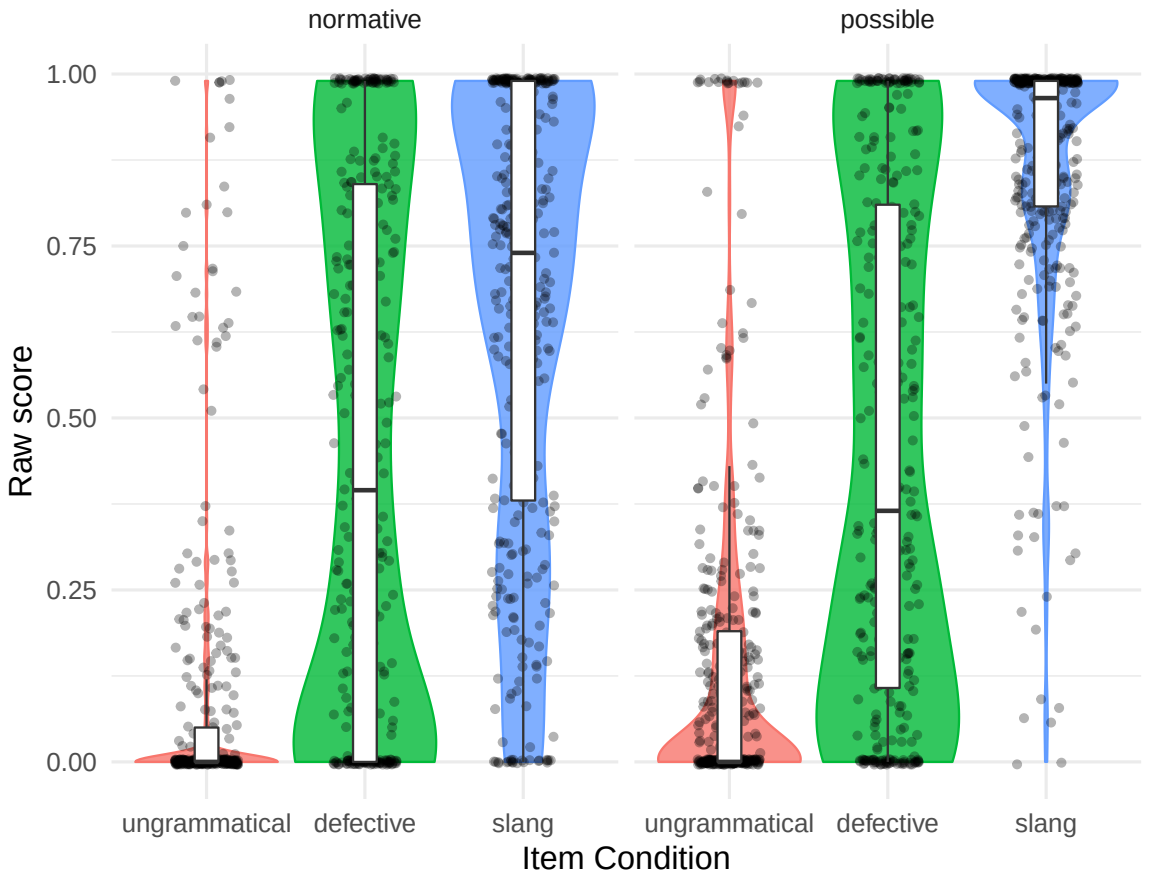
judgement ~
item_condition * task_condition * frequency * prescriptivism +
(item_condition * frequency | participant) +
(task_condition * prescriptivism | item)

Results

Task and item condition - raw data

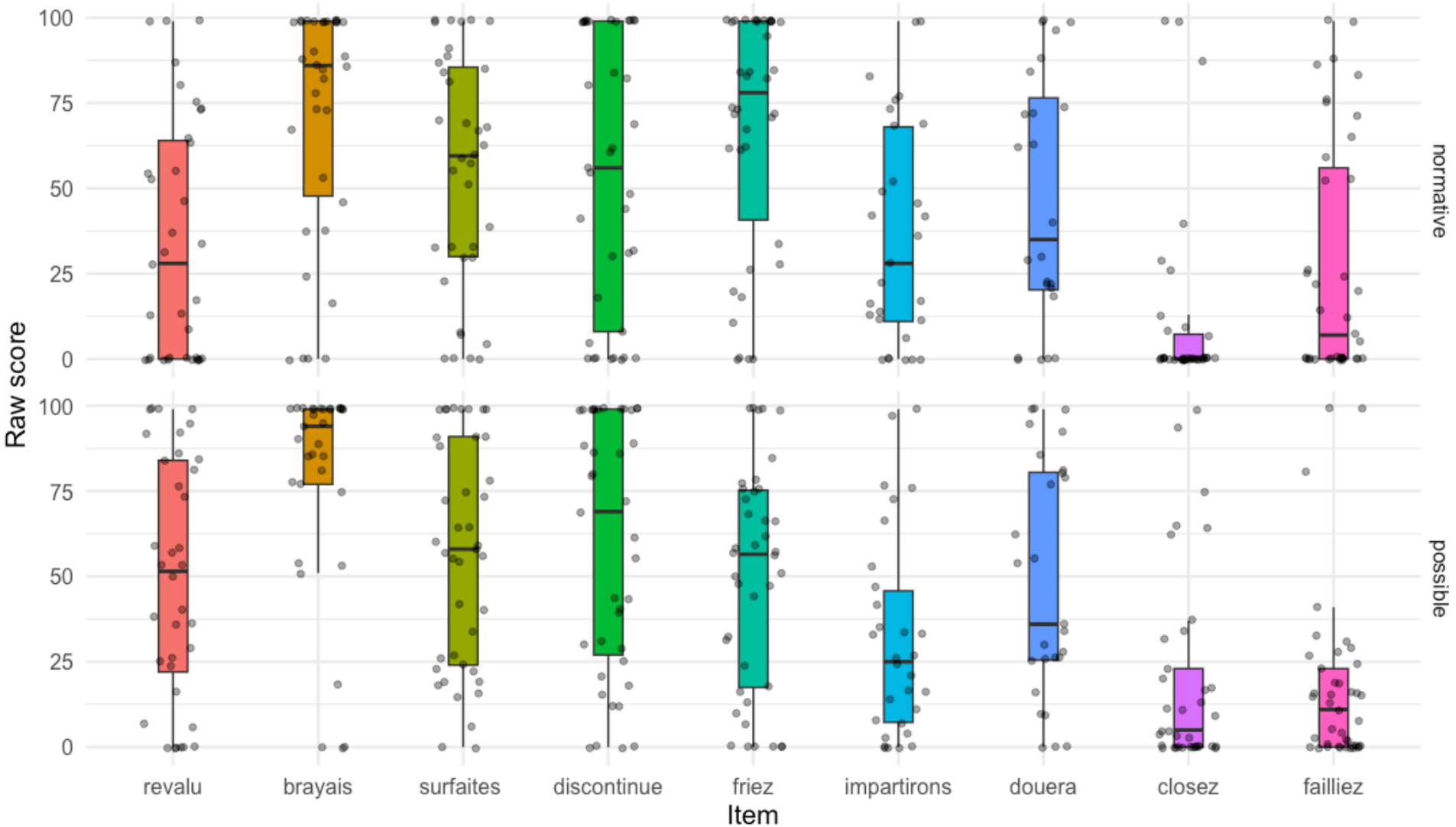


Task and item condition - raw data

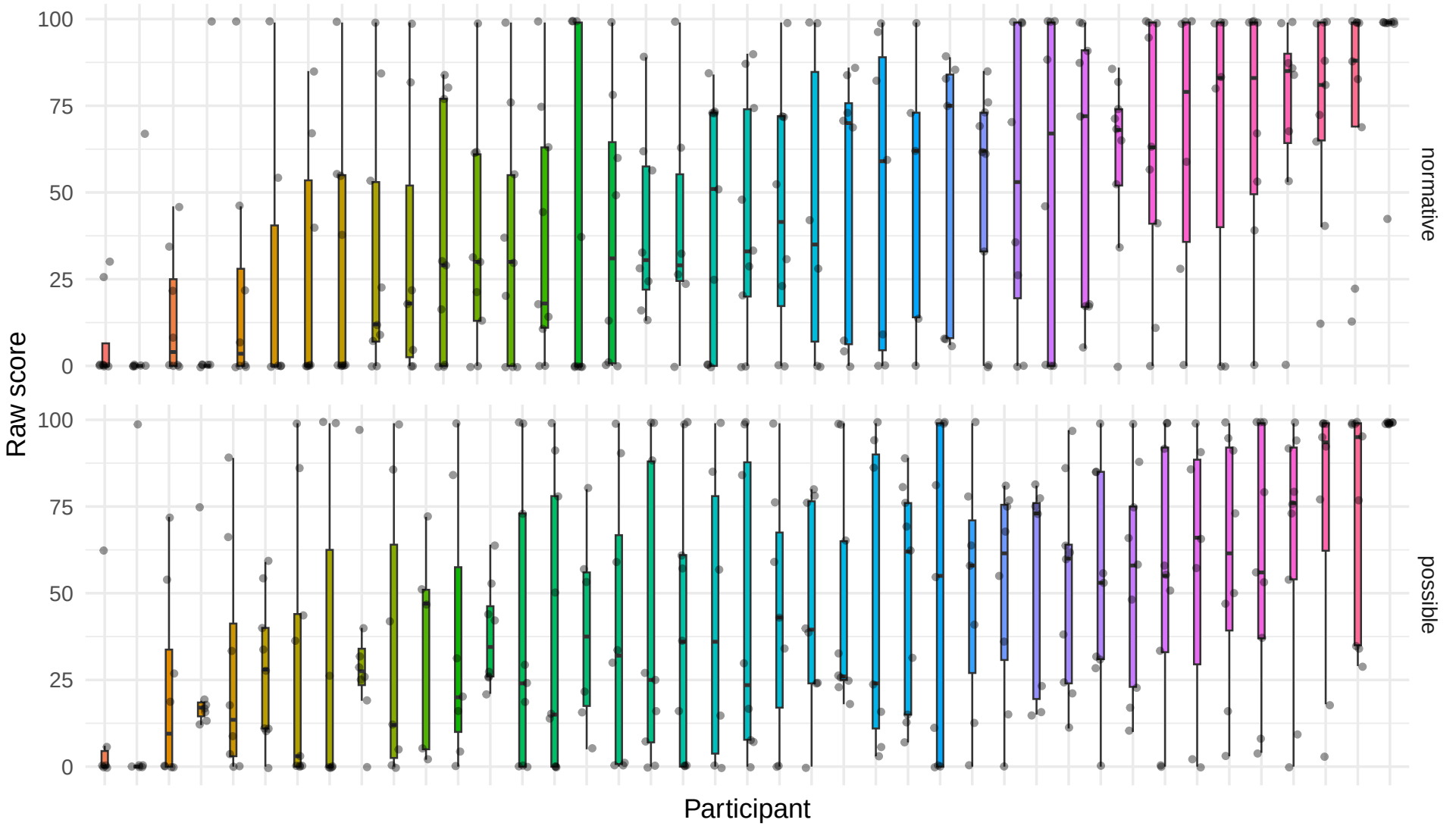


	ungrammatical	defective	slang
median $\hat{\sigma}$ by participant	0.08	0.36	0.11
median $\hat{\sigma}$ by item	0.23	0.34	0.26

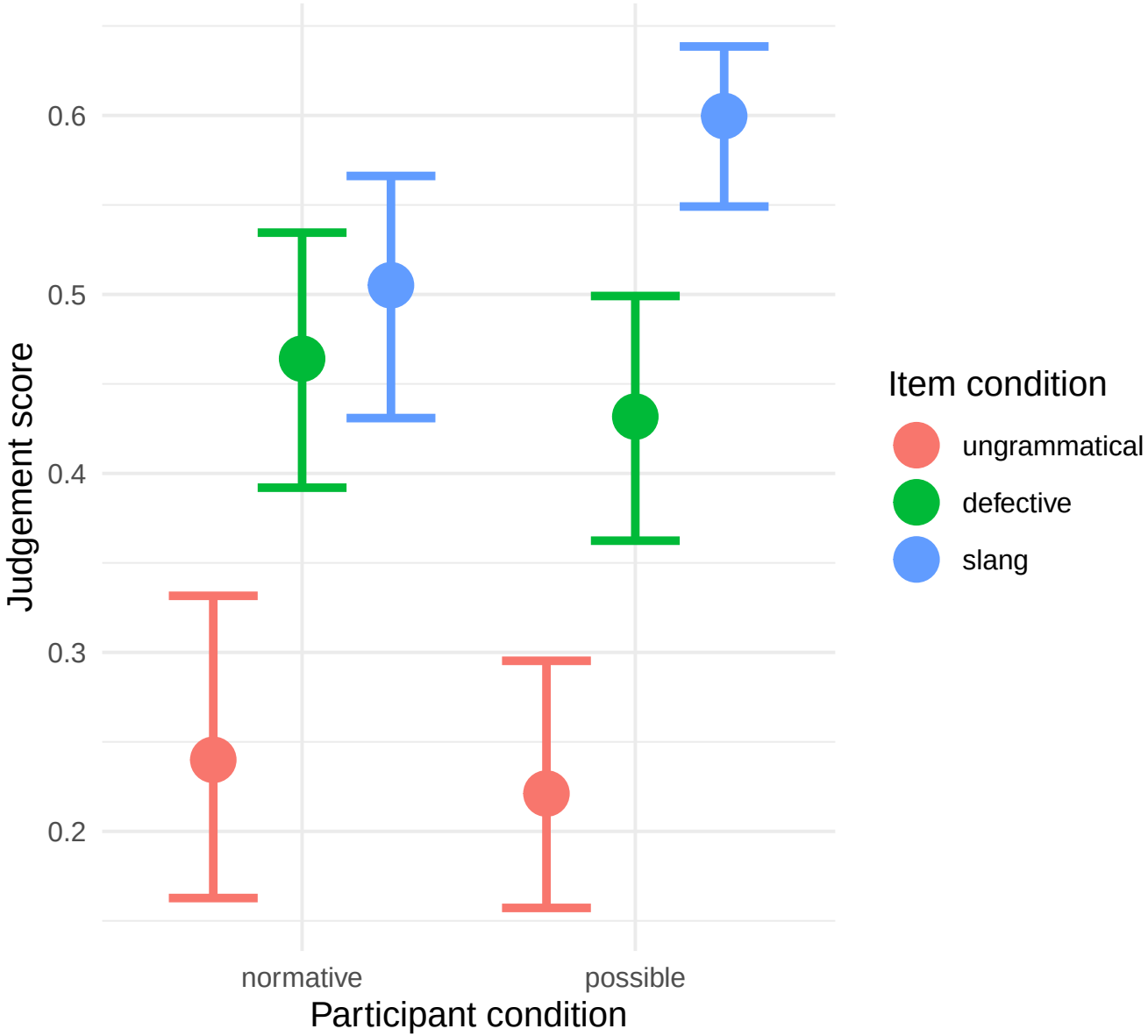
Variability for defective words by item and task



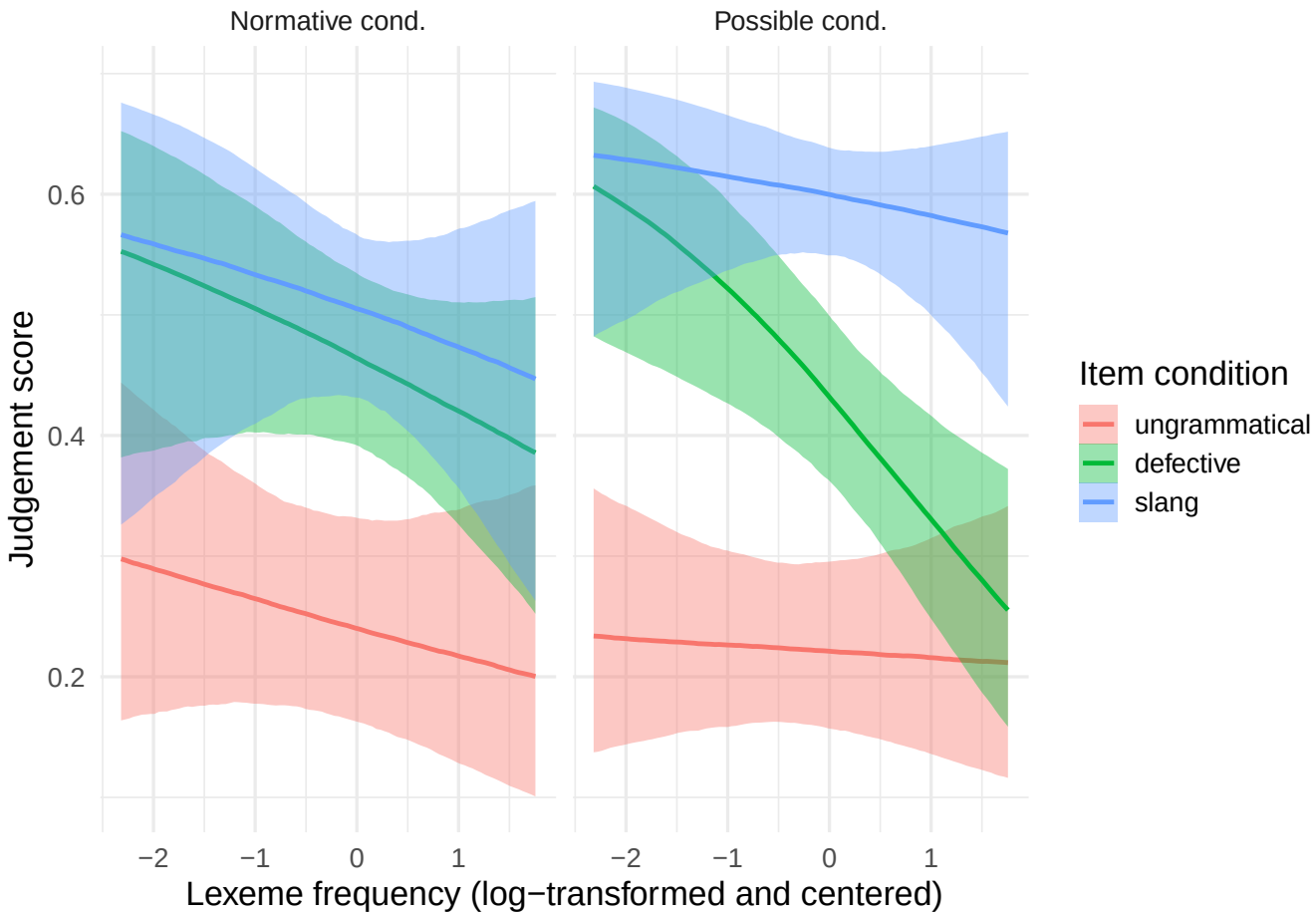
Variability for defective words by participant and task



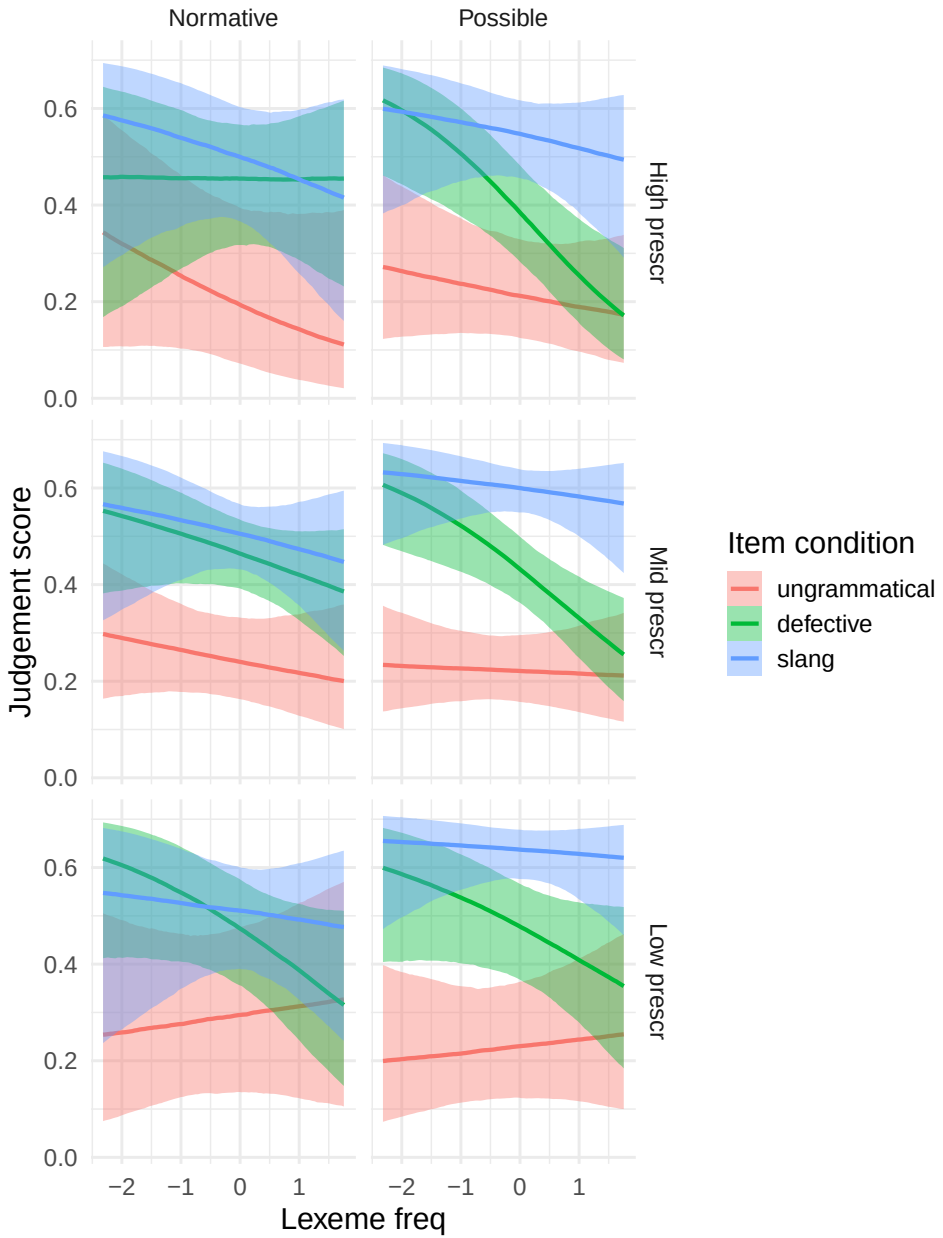
Conditional plots - item x task



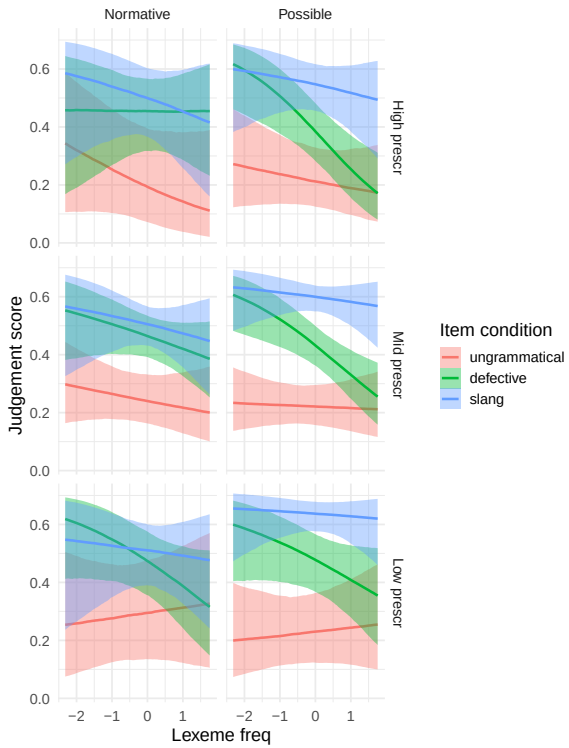
Conditional plots - item x task x frequency



Conditional plots - item x task x frequency x prescriptivism

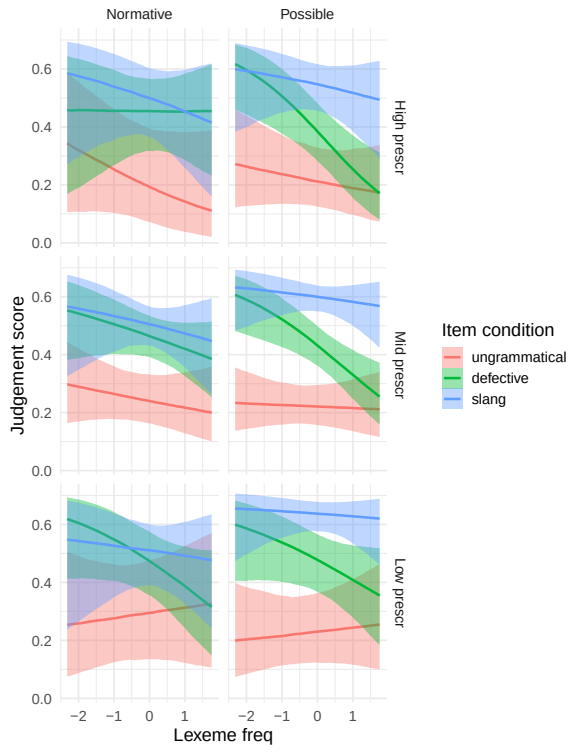


The effect of prescriptivism - inaccurate predictions



- Prediction: in normative task, defective words rated more harshly by more prescriptive people, moderated by frequency.
  - Instead: high prescriptiveness people in normative task rate lower on average, but have a flatter slope for frequency. Why?
  - Treating all defective words as equally bad.

The effect of prescriptivism - inaccurate predictions



- Prediction: frequency shouldn't matter at all in the possibility task - instead, strong negative slope
  - Formal lexemes are disproportionately the target of prescriptivism (no slang word is defective...)
  - Register clash - unlikely to hear formal lexemes between friends at the bar.

Discussion

Core findings

- Defective words elicit much more variable responses than other item types.
  - Different speakers count different words as defective.
- A defective word's lexeme frequency matters a lot for its acceptability (not true for other item types)
  - Normative task: words that are known to be defective are rated worse
  - Possibility task: words that are known to be formal are rated worse
- Participant prescriptivism has an important role in the normative task.
  - More prescriptive participants rate defective words worse on average, and treat them as a unified group regardless of frequency.

Trusting dictionaries for morphological investigation

- Do so with care.
- We already know this is unwise for phenomena subject to individual variation and sociolinguistic conditioning.
    - But I suspect many phenomena to which this applies are still flying under the radar.
    - Underestimating the importance of this could mislead attempts to theorise about linguistic phenomena.

Resolving the contradictory phenomenology of defectiveness

Started with a puzzle. Both of these are true:

1. Defective words have frequency profiles similar to nondefective words in corpora.
2. (Some) speakers dislike (some) defective words (to a greater or lesser extent).

Possible keys to a resolution

1. Aggregating over the variation in items and speakers might be enough to yield attested frequency patterns for defective words in corpora.
    - I think prescriptivism is behind this variation, but it doesn't have to be.
2. If we concede prescriptivism has a role, defective words may be used when social sanctioning risk is low
    - Internet: perceived low risk (generally)
    - Experiments: perceived high risk

A cognitive mechanism?

The Negative Feedback Cycle (Kapatsinski, 2022): cognitive mechanism that might explain a disconnect between production (corpora) and comprehension (acceptability judgement) of defective words.

First stages of processing about generating options, later stages about suppressing suboptimal options (message, communicative context etc)

- Low vs high stakes : determines threshold of uncertainty for engaging filter
  - Low stakes: defective forms more likely
- Production vs comprehension: former happens fast, latter can take indefinite time.
  - Production: defective forms more likely

Qualia and the prescriptivist account of defectiveness

Disgust-oriented qualia for defectiveness in French very similar to seeing someone make a social faux pas.

Different than qualia for ungrammaticality, which are confusion-oriented.

Next steps

- The experiment's results are suggestive of prescriptivism playing an important role in accounting for defectiveness, but not decisive. Unavoidable because
  - Defective lexemes in French have inherently formal connotations.
  - The task conditions differed in both normativity and formality.
- A follow-up study:
  - Compare the outcome of the same structural conditions in ±prescriptive language planning approaches.
  - Joint work with Mari Aigro, Virve-Anneli Vihman, Andrea Sims.

Next steps

- Defectiveness in French is often linked to uncertainty or indeterminacy.
- The same structural conditions lead to overabundance in Estonian.
- French has a language planning culture that is antivariationist, while Estonian embraces variation.
- Is defectiveness what happens when grammatical uncertainty meets antivatiationist pressures?
- An experiment coming soon!

Thank you for not having **forgoed* this talk!

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Appendix

Sitting with the qualia

English	Yesterday, she [forgo] the entrée so she could have dessert.
French	Nous [clôre] la porte.
Italian	Il sole ha [splendere] tutto il giorno.
Spanish	Presidente, [abolir] esa ley!
Russian	Мне нужно пять [кочерга].

The extension of defectiveness

- Phenomena falling under the umbrella label of defectiveness vary in
  - Their diachronic pathway (lexeme once had full paradigm vs lexeme never had full paradigm)
  - The part of the linguistic system responsible (syntax, semantics, morphology, phonology, mystery)
  - Whether the issue is with the word's form, meaning or both
  - ...several other dimensions
- Wise to treat them as a natural class?

Establishing scope

- Because of
  1. the wide variety of things we mean by “defectiveness”
  2. the fact that the empirical work I will present is on French verbs

  it would be unwise to claim that the findings apply to all defectiveness
- Goal: highlight the role of social factors in inducing a felt sense of defectiveness

Defining prescriptivism

- Curzan (2014): practices of language regulation
  - created, maintained and enforced by institutions
  - reproduced and perpetuated by ideologically aligned speakers
- Cameron (1995): a sociolinguistic practice that is
  - elitist
  - authority-/institution-based
  - often, though not always, conservative

Types of prescriptivism (Curzan, 2014)

- Standardising
  - Deciding what is part of the standard language (right) and what is outside of it (wrong).
  - There is only one way to speak correctly.
  - “it’s wrong to...”
- Stylistic:
  - Deciding what counts as beautiful uses of the language.
  - More variation-friendly.
  - “it’s ugly to...”
- Restorative:
  - Keep the language pure.
  - ”The language was better when... let’s go back to that.”
- Politically responsive:
  - Promoting inclusive/politically expedient language.

Prescriptivism and defectiveness

- Standardising culture: one and only one way to speak correctly
  - There is a right way to express a message → speakers uncomfortable with morphological indeterminacy → avoid form rather than risk choosing wrong one.
  - Such cases may be codified as defective in grammars, yielding to the acquisition of the gap as explicit linguistic knowledge in a prescriptively authoritative text.
    - Indeterminacy is then not the only thing that leads to defectiveness, if for restorative prescriptivism reasons a form has a gap, then it will be learned as such.
- Prescriptivism interacts with and substantiates metalinguistic knowledge of defectiveness whatever the reason for the prescriptive force.

The relationship between defectiveness, lexeme frequency and prescriptivism

- Frequency has a much stronger effect on defective items than prescriptivism. Compatible with two causal structures.

[t]0.4

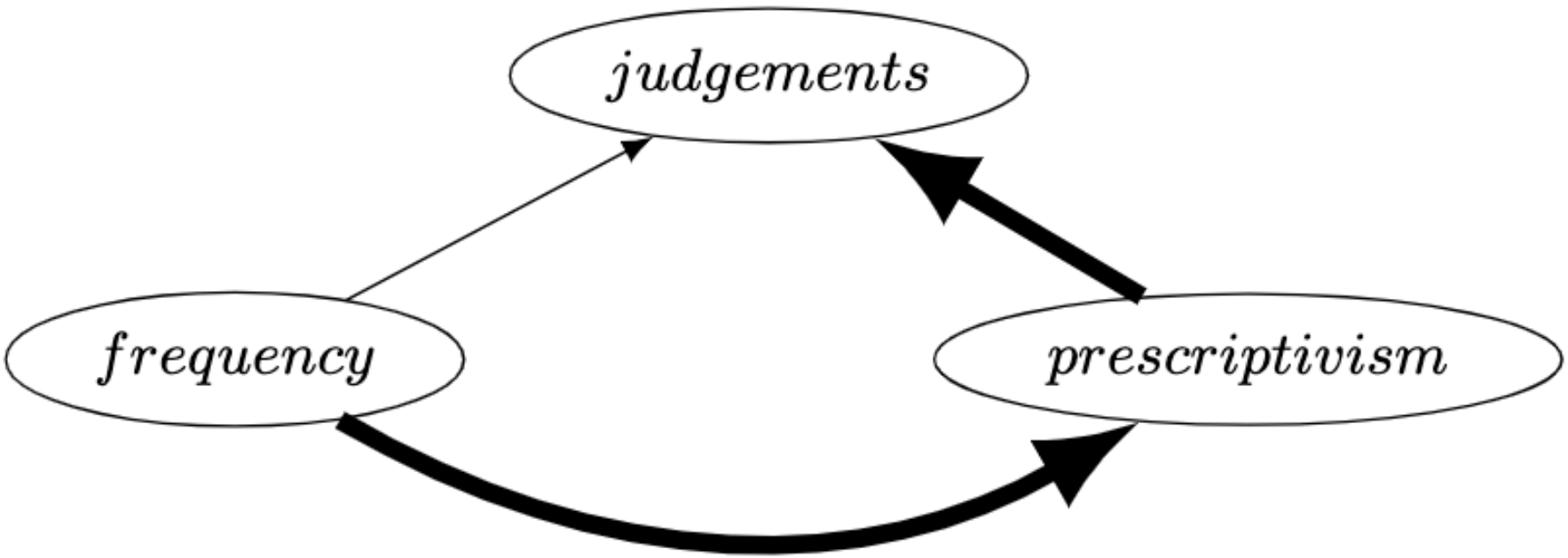


Figure 1

The negative effect of frequency

- Most previous research found a positive effect: less frequent lexeme $\rightarrow$ more uncertainty, feels 'worse'
  - **albright2003**; Sims (2006), Pertsova and Kuznetsova (2015), and Pertsova (2016): participant more confident producing form for high-freq lexemes (Spanish, Russian)
  - Sims (2015): gaps in Greek disproportionately affect low-freq lexemes
  - Nikolaev and Bermel (2022): less frequent defective lexemes more likely to be avoided.
- Not accidental: visible in the raw data, present in all internal replications. Not the only ones to find a negative effect of frequency on the judgement of defective words (İleri and Demirok, to appear, for Turkish)
- Much is different: task, items, type of defectiveness. A metanalysis is necessary - at minimum, defectiveness and frequency have more complex interaction than previously thought.

Finding defectiveness in corpora

- “A lexeme lacking any acceptable form”
- Naïve prediction: all defective forms have a frequency of 0. Important to ward off against
- False positives:
  - Because of Zipf, most words in a lexicon occur zero times in corpora, regardless of defective status.
- False negatives:
  - Metalinguistic mentions of defective forms
  - Legitimate uses of defective forms (...errors? non-native speakers?)

Empirically finding defective words

Finding defectiveness in corpora

- Slightly less naïve prediction: defective forms have a frequency that is lower than expected
- …but how to set up what is expected?

Distinguishing expected from unexpected absence

- Unsurprising if *methylhexanified* occurs 0 times in a corpus.
- Comparison to the frequency of other forms of the same lexeme helps quantify whether we can be certain that low frequency is not accidental.

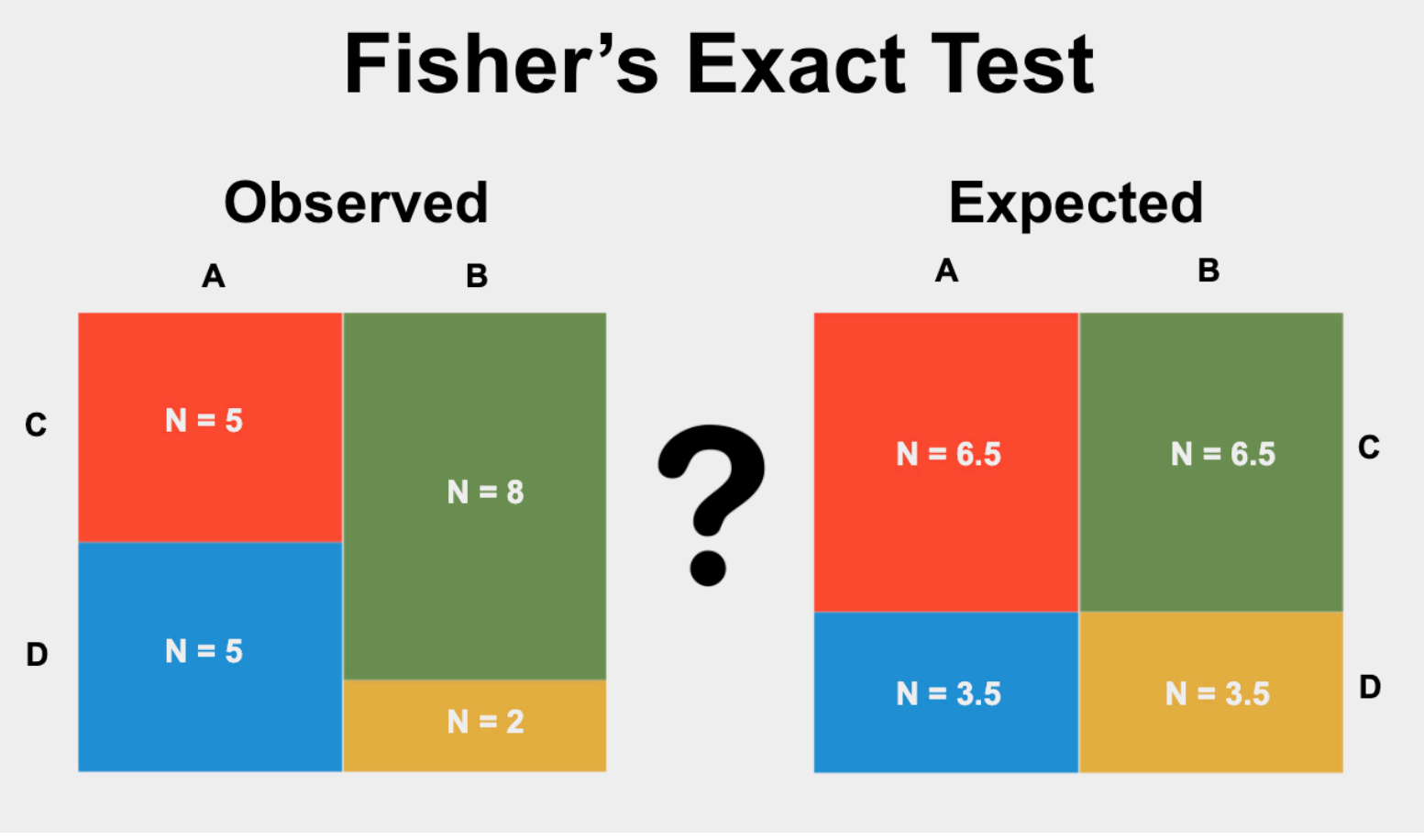
methylhexanified	0	*forgoed*	0
methylhexanify	2	*forgo*	76392

Comparing observed to expected frequency

- The overall frequency of the concept expressed by the lexeme is accounted for by comparison with another form of the same lexeme
- Must simultaneously compare with the frequency of other lexemes in the same cell, which serve as measure of what to expect.
- If inflection is a way of expressing the same meaning in different grammatical contexts, the ratio $\frac{Cell\ A}{Cell\ B}$ should be constant throughout the lexicon.
    - Lexemes with ratios below this trend = defective

Comparing observed to expected frequency

- Mathematically simplest way of performing these comparisons: Fisher's exact test.



Comparing observed to expected frequency

- Mathematically simplest way of performing these comparisons: Fisher's exact test.

unearthed	598	*forgoed*	0
unearth	6541	*forgo*	76392

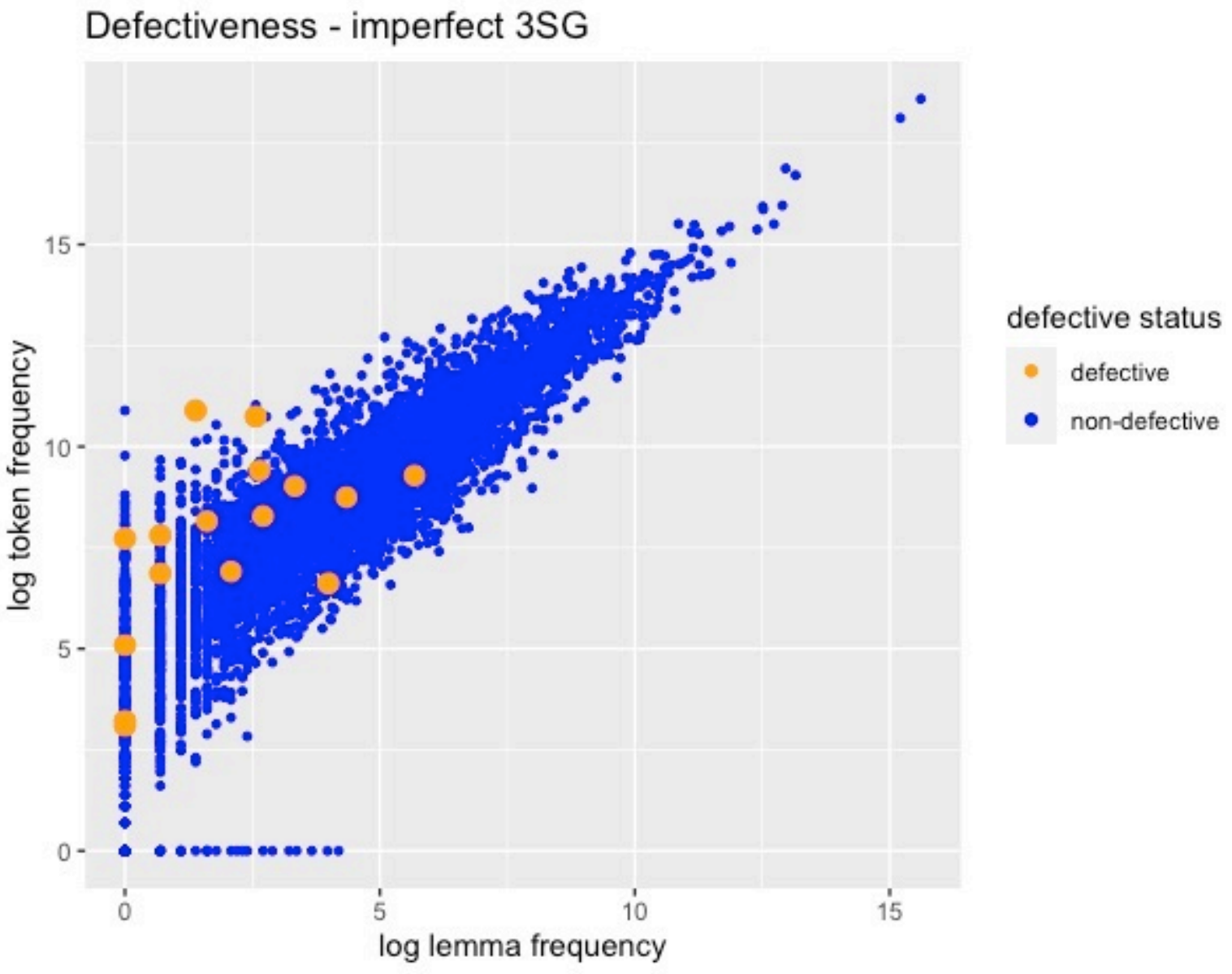
Frequency ratios - expectations

Defective words are expected to have a lower frequency ratio compared to other lexemes in the same cell.

$$\frac{\textit{forgoed}}{\text{FORGO}} < \textit{avg}(\frac{\textit{ate}}{\text{EAT}}, \frac{\textit{illuminated}}{\text{ILLUMINATE,...}})$$

$$\frac{C1\ (\textit{defective})}{\text{DEFECTIVE}} < \textit{avg}(\frac{C1\ (\textit{nondefective})}{\text{NONDEFECTIVE}})$$

Frequency ratios - the ground truth



Variations on the theme

- Attempted a few variations on this idea - similar results
  - Frequency of a reference form as the denominator.

    IPFV.3SG VS INFINITIVE
  - Frequency of a form with minimally different morphosyntactic properties as denominator.

    IPFV.3SG VS IPFV.3PL

Defectiveness as large negative residuals

- Statistical modeling: learning how different variables relate to each other. Learned mappings can then be used to make predictions about specific data points.
- Simplest case: learn mappings between the frequency of a lexeme in the INFINITIVE and its frequency in the PST.PTCP

$$freq(\text{PST.PTCP}) \sim a + freq(\text{PRS.SIMPLE}) * b$$

- Can add more predictors, e.g.

$$freq(\text{PST.PTCP}) \sim a + freq(\text{PRS. SIMPLE}) * b + freq(\text{PRS.PROG}) * c$$

- Can allow for nonlinear relationship between predictors

Defectiveness as large negative residuals

- The mappings learned can be used to make predictions, e.g.

freq(PST.PTCP)	= a	+ freq(PRS.SIMPLE)	*b	+ freq(PRS.PROG)	*c
freq(EATEN)	= a	+ freq(EAT)	*b	+ freq(EATING)	*c

- Residual: the difference between the predicted value and the observed value.
- Defectiveness: large negative residual? Lower frequency than expected given the behaviour of other lexemes.

Defectiveness as large negative residuals

- Played with a number of parameters
  - Variables: raw frequencies vs frequency ratios
  - Model structure: interaction terms between predictors
  - Distribution of predicted variable: poisson, negative binomial, gamma, normal, lognormal.
  - Mixture models: zero-inflation, hurdle (modeling zero frequencies as potentially generated by different means compared to non-zero frequencies)

Defectiveness as large negative residuals - outcome

- Fewer false positives than before, especially good at catching words that are defective for syntactic/semantic reasons (e.g. weather verbs), but still cannot dial into ”morphological” defectives (of the FOREGO type).
- Defective words usually have negative residuals, but these are not particularly large, on par with many other non-defective words.

The missing ingredient: semantics?

- Perhaps not very informative to compare $\frac{\textit{foregoed}}{\textit{forego}}$ to all other lexemes.
- Some lexemes may have low frequency ratios in the cell for independent reasons:

	JOLI ‘beautiful’		LESBIEN ‘lesbian’
M.SG	joli	>	lesbien
F.SG	jolie	=	lesbienne

The missing ingredient: semantics?

- Restrict comparison to semantically similar lexemes.

$$\frac{foregoed}{forego} \; vs \; \frac{avoided}{avoid}$$

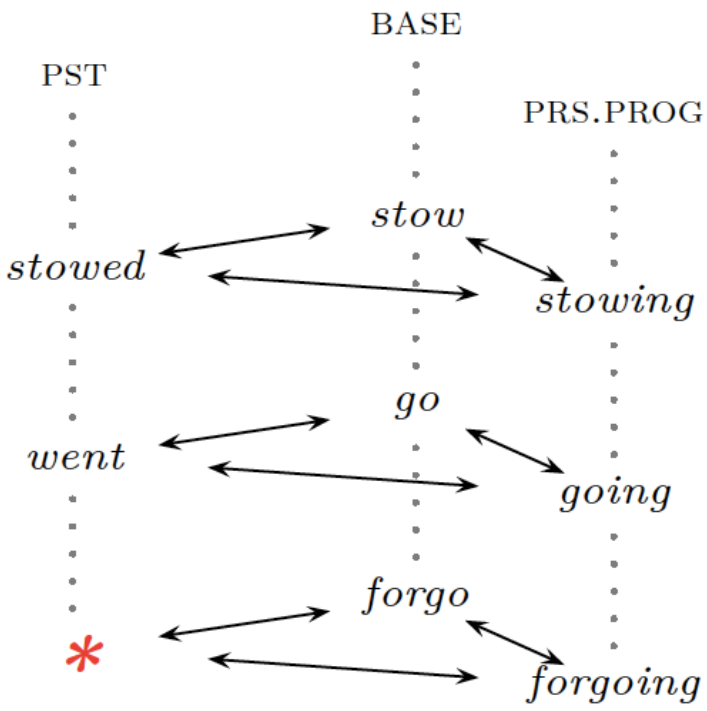
- Use word embeddings to define a comparison class. Convert the lexicon into a vector space and find lexemes with similar meaning to the lexeme of interest, based on the words they co-occur with.

Accounting for semantics

- Fisher test: only compare to lexemes with cosine similarity > 0.7 to target lexeme.
    - Words with too few near neighbours removed from the analysis.
- Modeling: include a dimensionally reduced vector as predictor, alongside lexeme frequency.
- Still a few false negatives, but mostly false positives.

Defectiveness and word form uncertainty

- Word form uncertainty is associated with ”morphological defectiveness” (most saliently, Albright, 2003)



Defectiveness and word form uncertainty

- Word form uncertainty is associated with ”morphological defectiveness” (most saliently, Albright, 2003)
- Exploit this fact to find defective forms?

Information theory and word form uncertainty

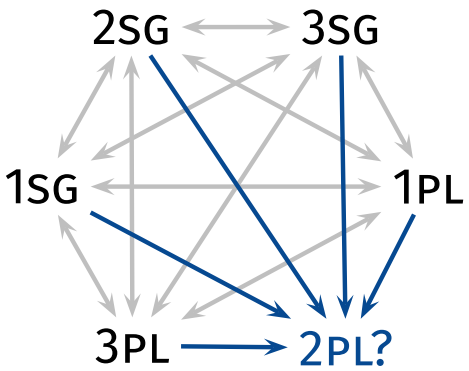
- Build a measure of how uncertain a given word form is, based on other members of its paradigm.
- Two aspects of form predictability may be relevant:
  1. How surprised are we to see that a particular pattern has applied?
     - SG *goose* → PL *geese*
  2. How uncertain are we about which pattern actually applies?
     - PRS *fling* → PST $\begin{cases} \textit{flung?} \\ \textit{flang?} \\ \textit{flinged?} \end{cases}$

Information theory and word form uncertainty

Out of all the patterns compatible with the phonology of the form…

How surprised are we to see that pattern P applies?	surprisal
How uncertain are we about which of the possible patterns apply?	local entropy

A form's paradigmatic uncertainty is its average uncertainty when predicted from each of the other cells in its paradigm



Using word form uncertainty to find defectiveness

- Sorting low frequency items by uncertainty measures successfully captured a number of defective lexemes, but many nondefective lexemes also ranked highly
- Using uncertainty and lexeme frequency to predict token frequency and then selecting large negative residuals does not isolate defectives

Widening the search

- These methods were applied to French, attempting to hone in on the words deemed defective in Lexique (Bonami, Caron & Plancq, 2014) for verbs and nouns, and on those deemed defective in Bonami & Boyé (2003) for adjectives.
- They were also applied to Russian nouns, attempting to hone in on words deemed defective by the Zalizniak dictionary.

The taxonicity of defective words (in French)

- The methods employed all sought to find combinations of dimensions along which defective words formed a clearly separate extreme.
- Or at least have them all be close enough to one corner of the space
- Instead, defective words seem to pattern all over the place, and while there are correlations with factors, no combination of factors attempted is able to pick out defectives as a natural class.

The taxonicity of defective words (in French) - why?

- Things deemed defective in French dictionaries are indeed heterogeneous (Boyé & Cabredo Hoffher, 2008)
- Three main groups
  - Stem indeterminacy
  - Stem conflict
  - Stem gaps
  - (secret fourth group: defectiveness for reasons outside the morphology)

A paradox

How can both of these be true?

1. Speakers do not like defective forms
2. Defective forms are indistinguisheable from non-defective forms in corpora.

The paradox - some hypotheses

- Maybe our methods were poor
  - But Ayala (2022) finds underattestation for Icelandic defective forms in corpora
  - Maybe interspeaker variation in what is defective is enough to hide underattestation in the aggregate
    - But why is there interspeaker variation on this?