

# Information Status and Word Order in Heritage and L2 Russian

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May 22-25, 2017

- “Grandma lost her glasses”

- SVO: Babushka poteryala ochki.
- SOV: Babushka ochki poteryala.
- OVS: Ochki poteryala babushka.
- OSV: Ochki babushka poteryala.
- VSO: Poteryala babushka ochki.
- VOS: Poteryala ochki babushka.



# Word order in Russian

- All six orders are possible, but not all created equal:
  - Miller & Weinert (1998), based on Bivon (1972) and Kapanadze & Zemskaja (1979):

## Mainly Written:

- **SVO: 79%**
  - **OVS: 11%**
  - **OSV: 4%**
  - VOS: 2%
  - SOV: 1%
  - VSO: 1%
- Preferred by NSs in GJ tasks  
(Kallestinova, 2007)

## Spoken:

- SVO: 42%
- SOV: 34%
- OSV: 11%
- OVS: 3%

# Word order in Russian

- Associated with **informational-structural** factors (Bailyn, 2014; Holmberg, 1998; Jasinskaja, 2016; Kallestinova, 2007; Yokoyama, 1987)
- Reflects the distinction between **topic** (given/old information) and **comment/focus** (new information) in discourse (Birner & Ward, 1998; Gundel, 1975; King, 1995; É. Kiss, 1987)

# Grandma lost glasses

Broad focus

Narrow  
focus on O

- -Q: *What happened?* *What did grandma lose?*

- SVO: Babushka poteryala ochki

- -Q: *Who lost glasses?*

Narrow  
focus on S

- OVS: Ochki poteryala babushka

- -Q: *What did grandma do with the glasses?*

Narrow  
focus on V

- SOV: Babushka ochki poteryala

- Assuming 'neutral' intonation with nuclear accent on the last word, HL\* (Jasinskaja, 2016)

# Given Before New

- The “given before new” principle (Gundel, 1988):
  - The constituent occupying the sentence-final (or right-edge) position is interpreted as presenting **new information**
  - The constituent in the left periphery is interpreted as the **topic** (given/old information)
- → Given (topical) elements are more likely to undergo leftward movement

# Light Before Heavy

- The “end-weight” principle (Quirk et al., 1972; Hawkins, 1983; Wasaw, 1997)
  - Heavy constituents tend to be placed after light constituents
- → Light elements are more likely to undergo leftward movement
- Both syntactic weight (heavy/light) and discourse status (new/old) have been shown to affect constituent order independently of each other (Arnold et al., 2000).

# IS in Heritage Language

- Narrow presentational focus in Spanish (Hoot, 2017)
- Clefts and information focus in near-native French (Donaldson, 2012)
- Clitic left dislocation and topicalization in Spanish (Zapata et al., 2005)
- Topic and focus particles in Korean and Japanese (Laleko & Polinsky, 2013, 2016)



# Word order in Heritage Russian: What we know

- Reduction of word order flexibility and predominant use of SVO in production;
- The status of VS?
  - Relatively strong retention (Polinsky, 2006)
  - Infrequent use or absence (Isurin & Ivanova-Sullivan, 2008)
  - Infrequent use but fewer errors with VS than with other non-canonical orders (Dubinina & Laleko, 2014)
- Limitation: only production data available so far

# Word order in Heritage Russian: What we know

- Cross-linguistic transfer?
- Heritage Russian in Germany (Brehmer & Usanova, 2015):
  - German is V2 in declarative main clauses, V1 in imperative sentences, V-final in subordinate clauses
  - No V2 transfer detected in main clauses, but some evidence for transfer effects in subordinate clauses (significant trend towards V-final, also extending to main clauses)
  - “The bilingual adolescents show an even higher degree of variation concerning word order patterns if compared to the monolingual controls” but it is not clear if all of the non-canonical patterns that occur are pragmatically acceptable (p. 198).

# Advantages and limitations of production studies

- Great way to see the ‘big picture’; quantifiable data for correct/incorrect occurrences
- But:
  - Use of narratives: principles of discourse organization that are not necessarily present in other linguistic situations, i.e. interactions with interlocutors;
  - Participant samples tend to be smaller;
  - Non-occurrence: lack of knowledge, avoidance strategies, or lack of appropriate context?
- Question: what do HL speakers really know?

# The Study

Exp. 1: Written AJT (intransitive and transitive verbs)

Exp. 2: Auditory AJT (transitive verbs)

# Questions

- In what contexts and under what conditions do HL and L2 speakers use the canonical (SV/SVO) and non-canonical orders?
  - Inversion: (O)VS
  - Object fronting without inversion: SOV, OSV
- Do the HL/L2 speakers differentiate between pragmatically acceptable/unacceptable constructions in all contexts?
- Are HL/L2 speakers sensitive to the same factors as baseline speakers in their judgments?

# Experiment 1: Written AJT

<b>Participants</b>	<b>HL (N=27)</b>	<b>L2 (N=20)</b>	<b>L1 (N=15)</b>
<b>Age</b>	19.3 (18-24)	19 (18-22)	24 (18-38)
<b>Age of arrival to the U.S.</b>	2.1 (0-7)	0	n/a
<b>Age of switch to Eng</b>	4.6 (0-7)	0	n/a
<b>Average daily use of Rus (%)</b>	26.3 (5-45)	10.7 (1-20)	100
<b>Understanding spoken Rus(1-10)</b>	8.3 (5-10)	5.2 (3-7)	n/a
<b>Speaking Rus (1-10)</b>	7.1 (4-10)	4.6 (2-7)	n/a
<b>Reading in Rus(1-10)</b>	6.5 (4-10)	6.1 (3-9)	n/a
<b>Writing in Rus (1-10 )</b>	6.1 (4-10)	5.7 (2-9)	n/a

# Experiment 1: Written AJT

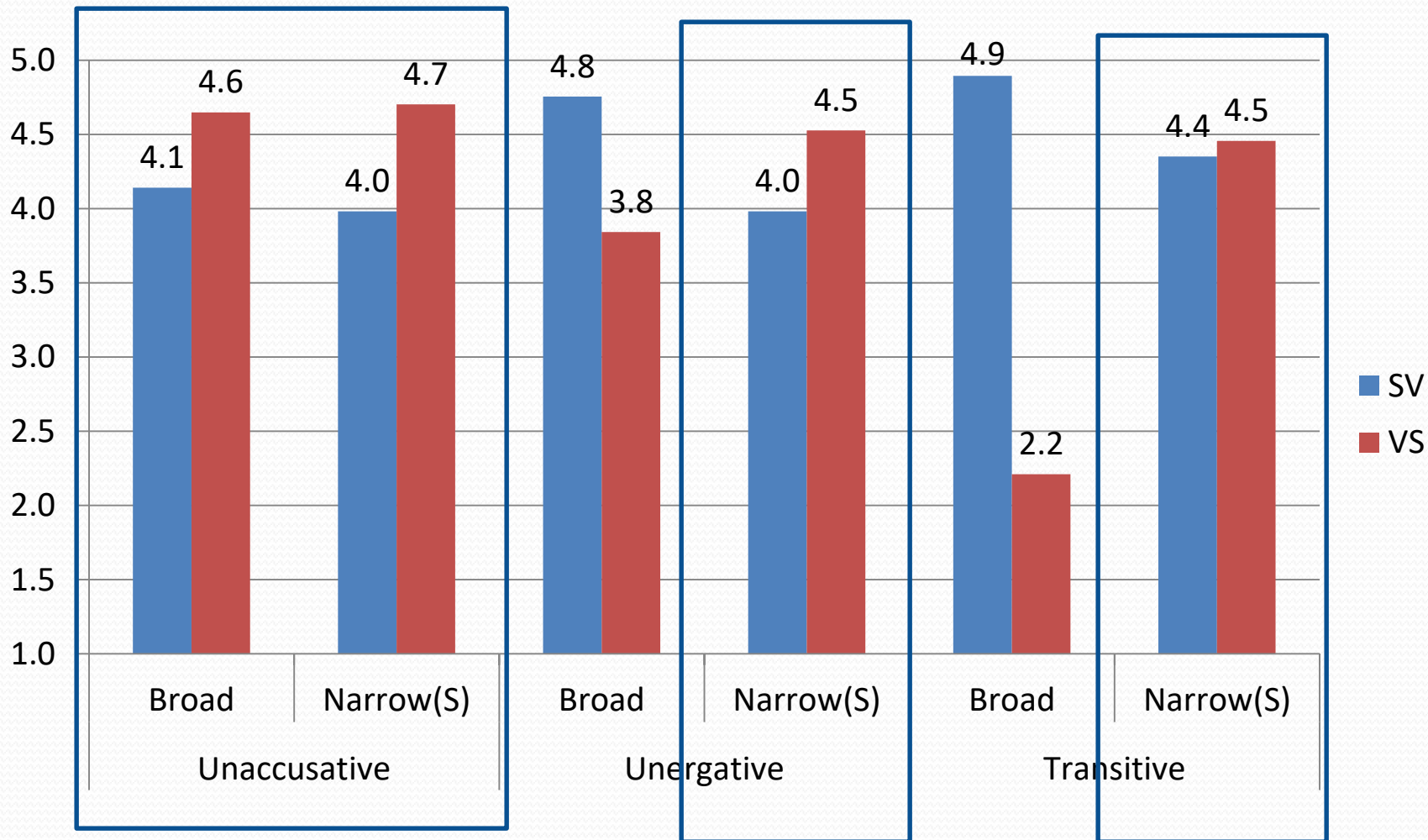
- **Design:**
- Question-answer pairs targeting *SV(O)*, *(O)VS*, *SOV*, *OSV* orders in broad-focus and narrow-focus contexts.
  - unaccusative, unergative, transitive
- Participants asked to evaluate the answer on a 1-5 scale
- **Predictions for HL/L2:**
  - underuse of non-SVO and overuse of SVO orders;
  - overuse of infelicitous constructions/ lack of differentiation between acceptable/unacceptable contexts

# Inversion in Russian

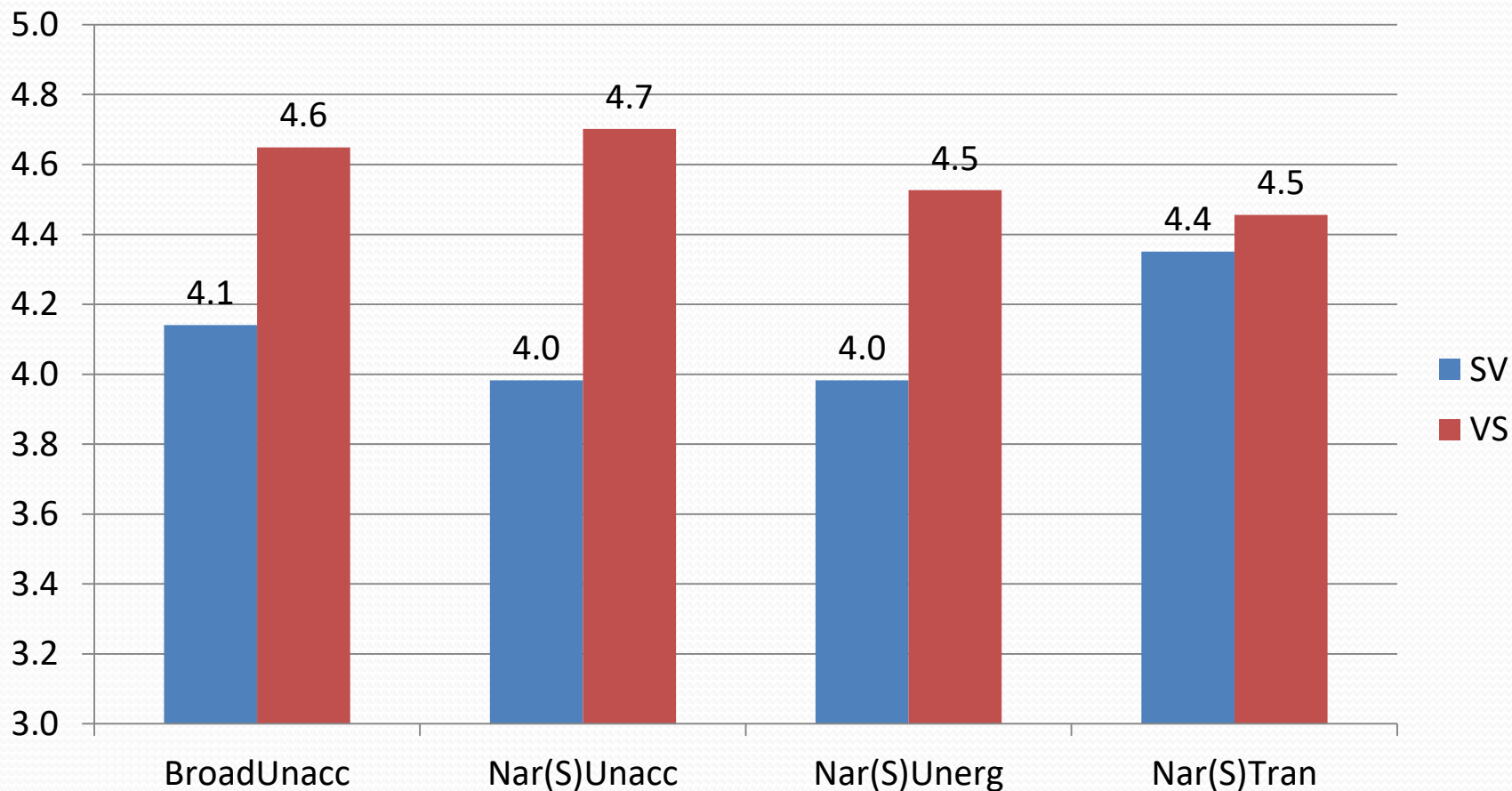
- Broad focus (“What happened”?)
  - Unaccusative
  - ??Unergative
  - #Transitive
- Narrow focus on S: (“Who lost glasses?”)
  - Unaccusative
  - Unergative
  - Transitive



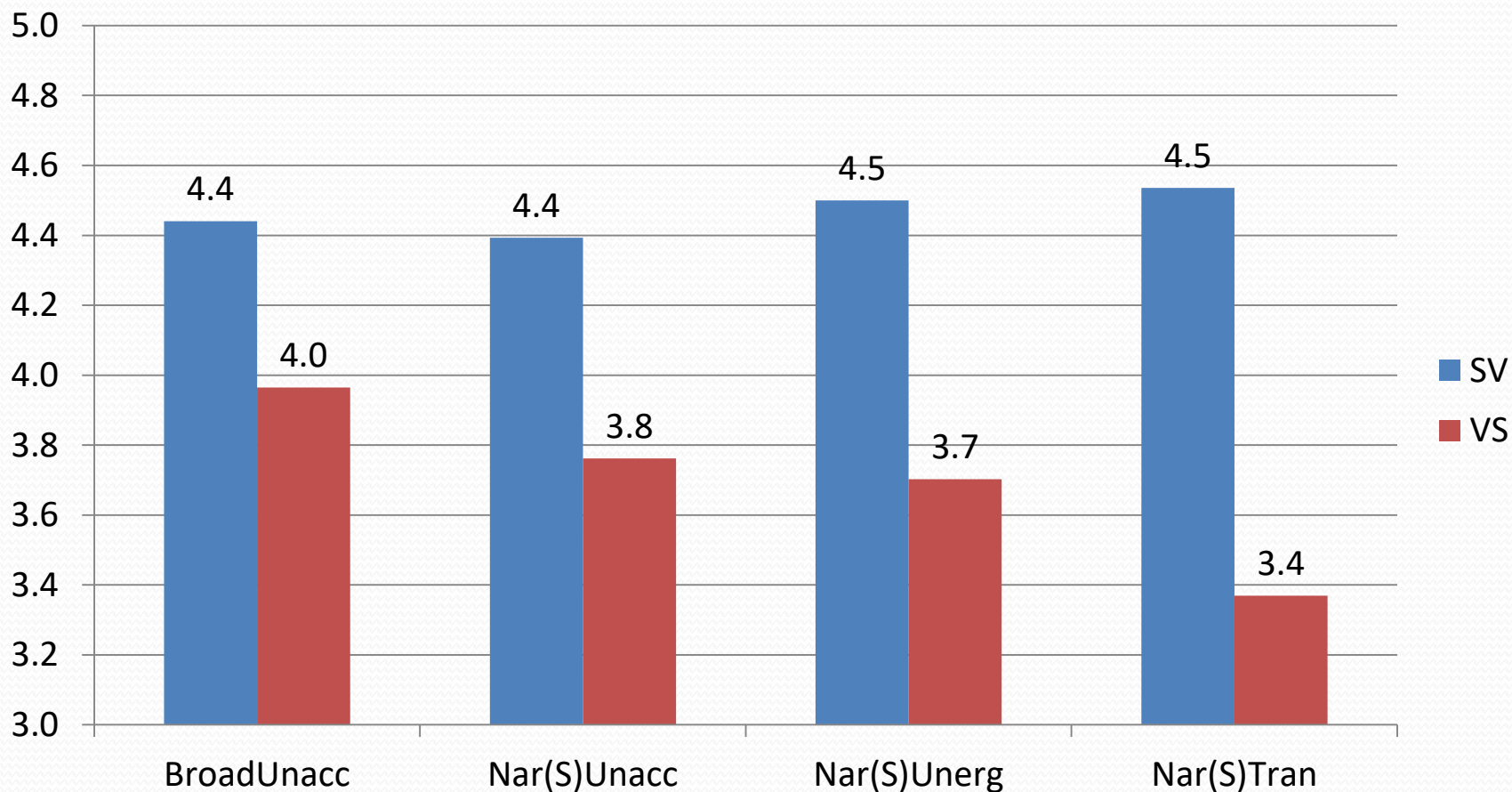
# Inversion in Baseline Russian



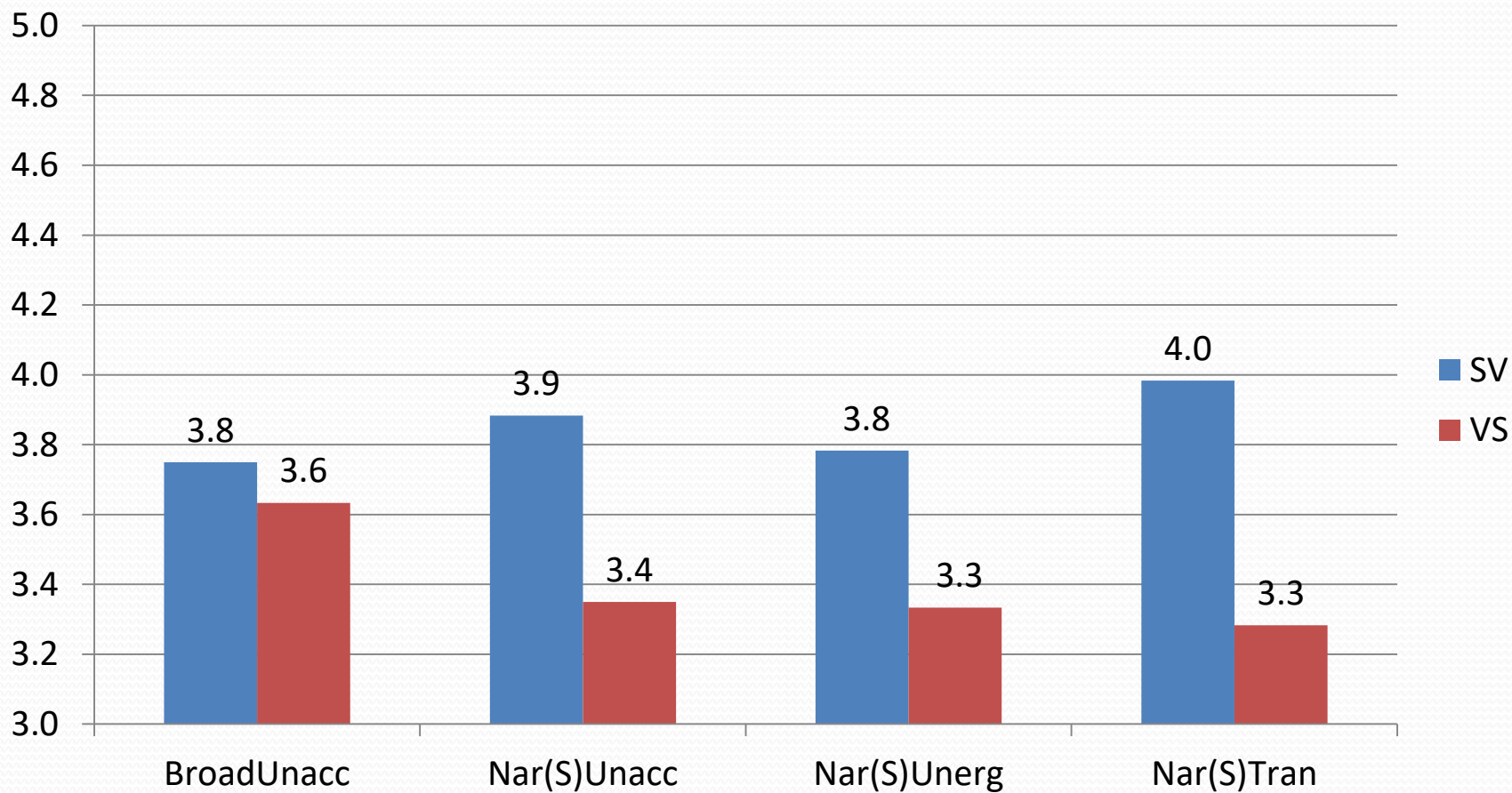
# Baseline Russian: VS vs. SV



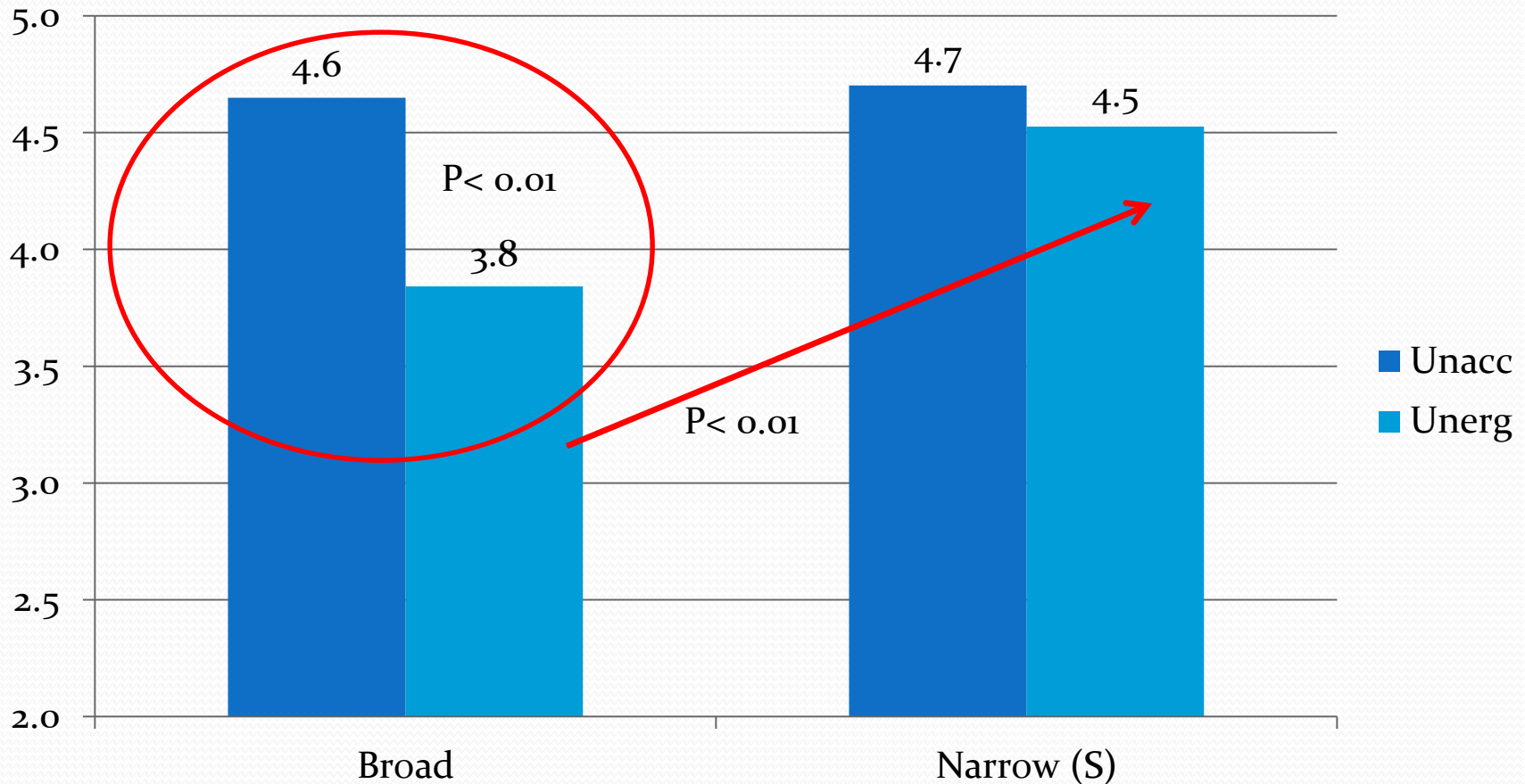
# Heritage Russian: VS vs. SV



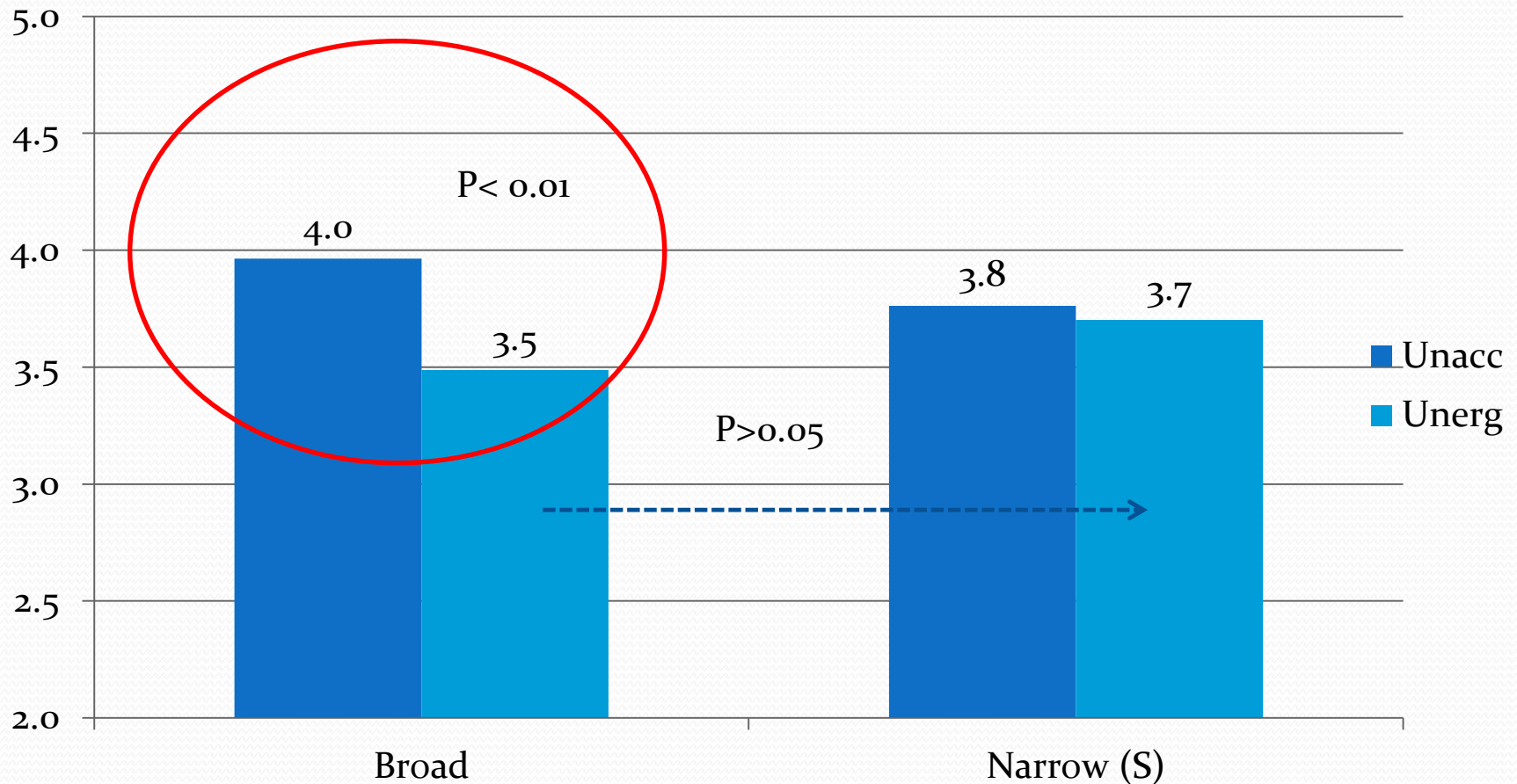
# L2 Russian: VS vs. SV



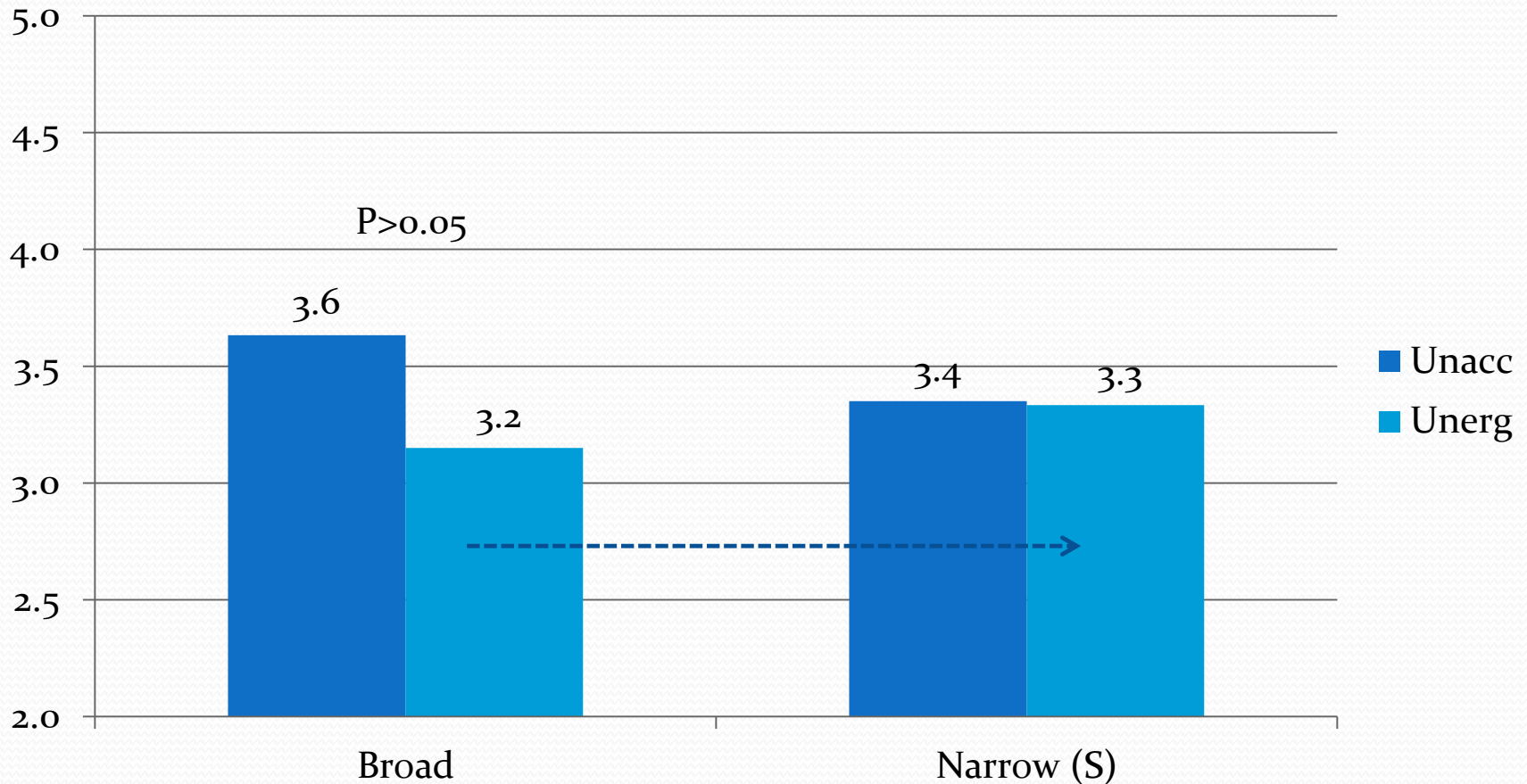
# VS in L1: What factors are involved



# VS in HL: What factors are involved



# VS in L2: What factors are involved



# Interim Summary

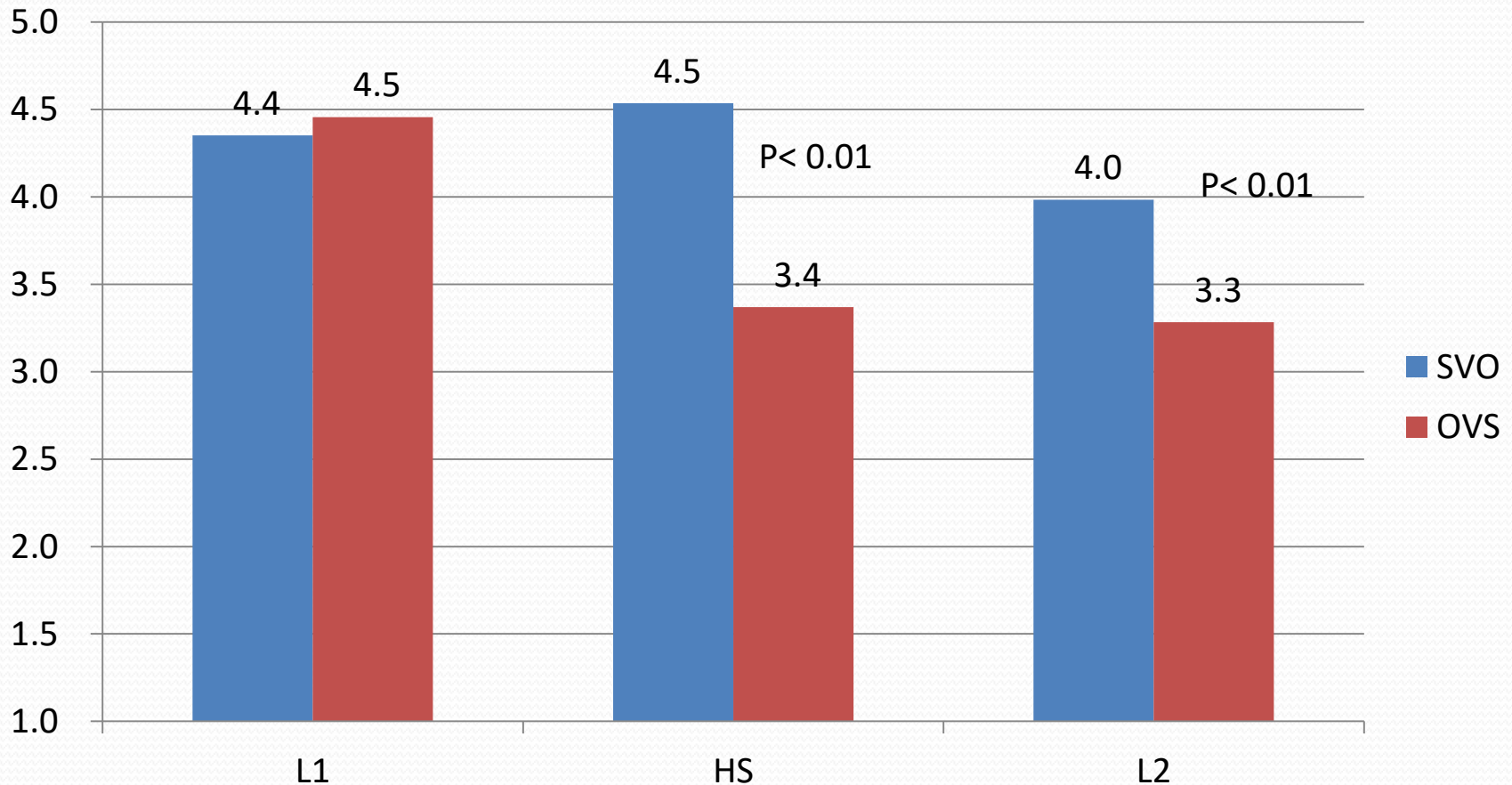
- Inversion with intransitive verbs:
  - verb type matters for L1 and HL speakers, but not for L2 speakers
  - information status of the subject matters for L1 speakers, but not HL and L2 speakers
- What about transitive verbs?



# Transitive verbs

- Basic order SVO, but the following variations occur:
  - Inversion with object fronting:
    - *Kto poteryal kluchi? Kluchi poteryal sosed.* OVS
    - who lost keys.ACC keys.ACC lost neighbor.NOM
  - Object fronting without inversion (middle):
    - *Gde igrushki? Mama igrushki ubrala.* SOV
    - where toys? mom.NOM toys.ACC put-away
  - Object fronting without inversion (initial):
    - *Gde igrushki? Igrushki mama ubrala.* OSV
    - where toys? toys.ACC mom.NOM put-away

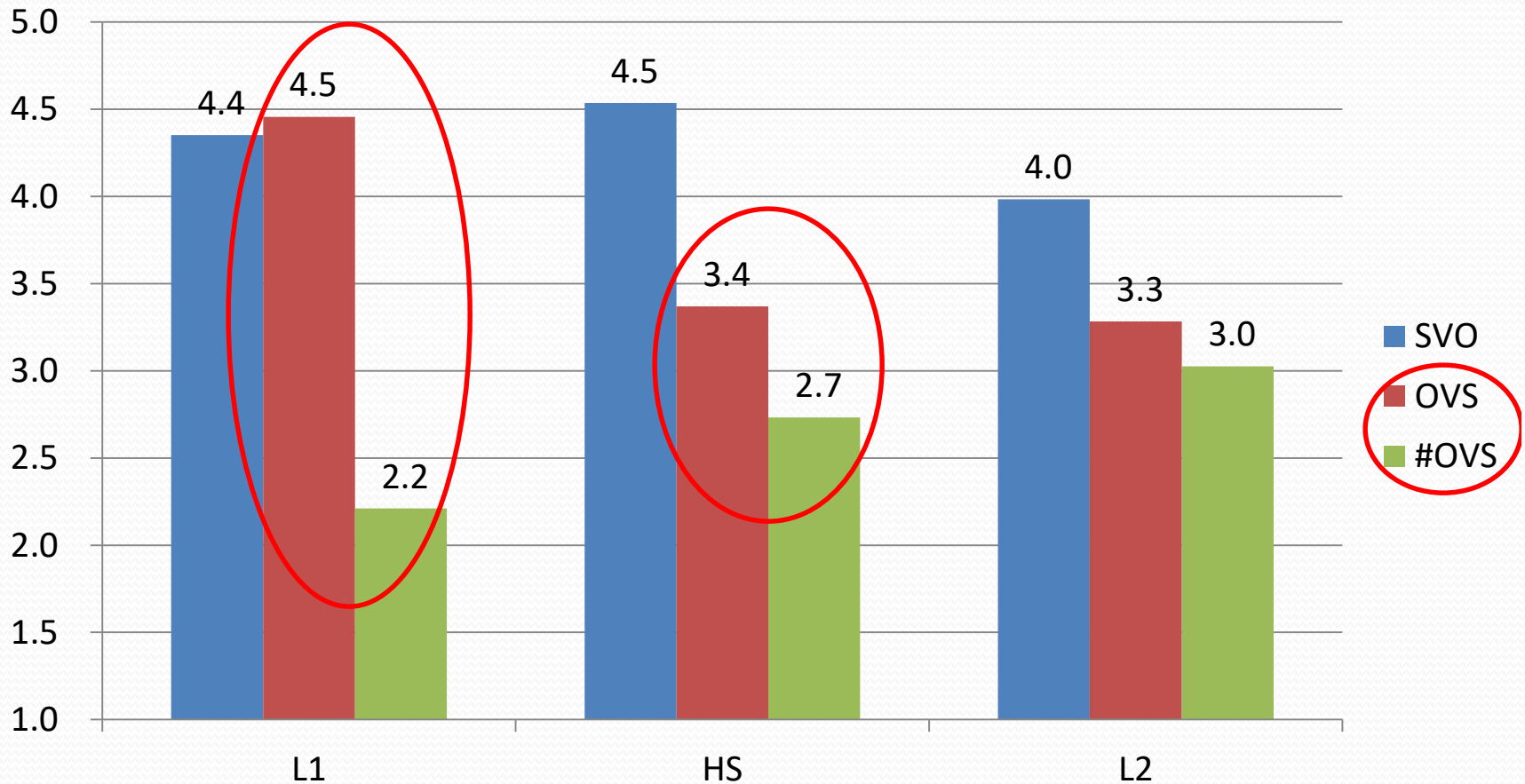
# SVO/OVS with transitive verbs (Narrow focus on S: “Who lost glasses”?)



# Reduction of options

- Contact-induced change often manifested as the **narrowing of options**:
  - elimination of optionality in favor of the less marked option (Heine, 2006),
  - loss of discourse-pragmatic constraints governing the occurrence of specific variants (Silva-Corvalán, 1994)
- {SVO/OVS} → SVO
- Interaction of multiple factors:
  - processing efficiency
    - non-canonical sentences are harder than canonical (Gibson, 1998; Miyamoto & Takahashi, 2001; Sekerina, 2003 even with context)
  - frequency of occurrence
  - dominant language transfer

# Loss of inversion? Not really



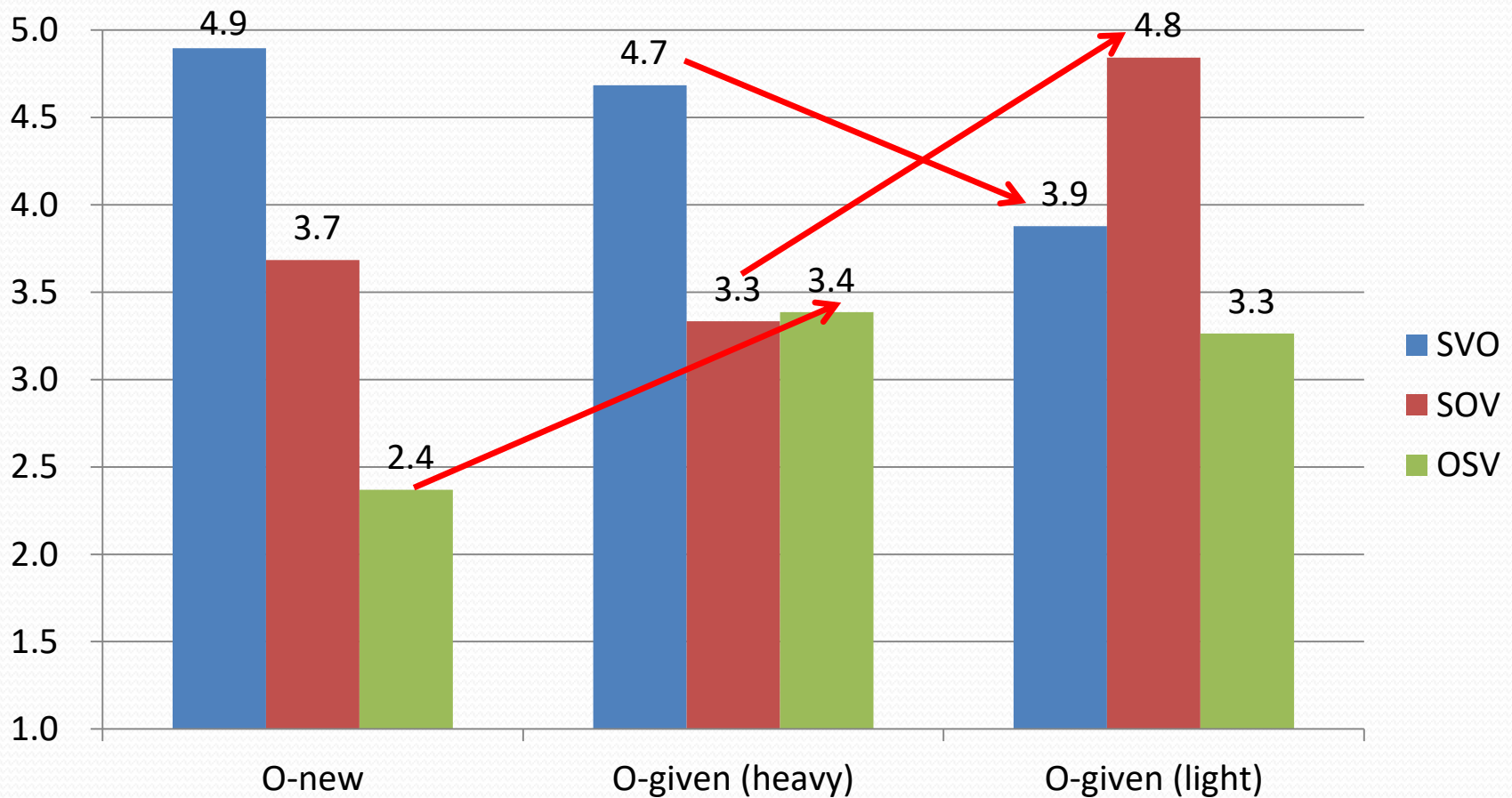
# Givenness and Heaviness in Object Placement (SOV, OSV)

- New/unknown objects tend to appear post-verbally; old/known/given objects pre-verbally
  - Given: VO (39.1%), **OV (60.9%)** (Sliussar, 2007)
  - New: **VO (59.7%)**, OV (40.3%)
- Pronominal objects (light) typically occur preverbally
  - The rate of OV constructions with pronominals reported to be as high as 84% (Dyakonova, 2004 for caregiver speech)

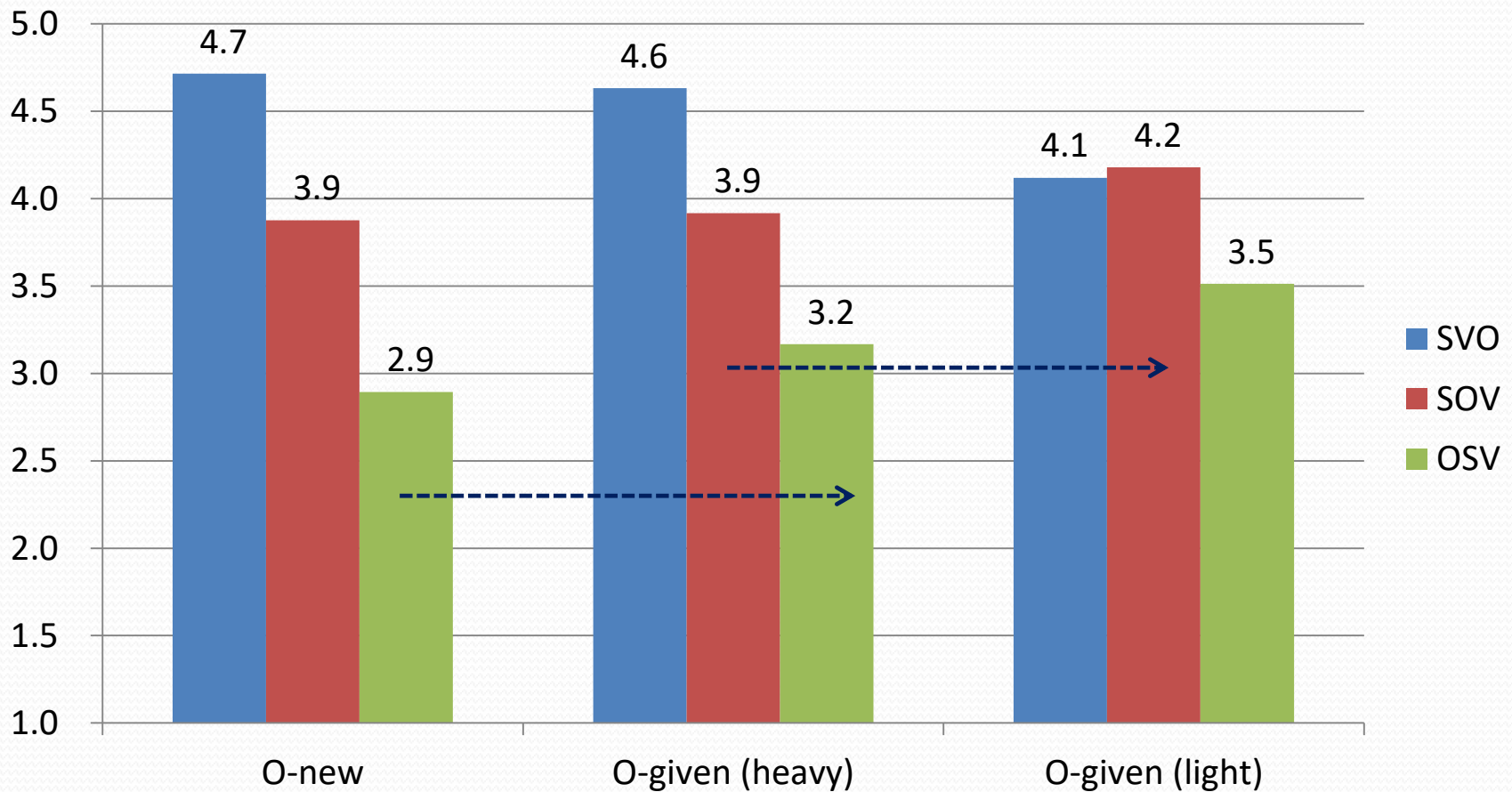
# Object Placement in Russian: Results

- What the results show for baseline speakers of Russian:
- The new/given distinction matters for OSV
- The heavy/light distinction matters for SOV

# Object placement in baseline Russian

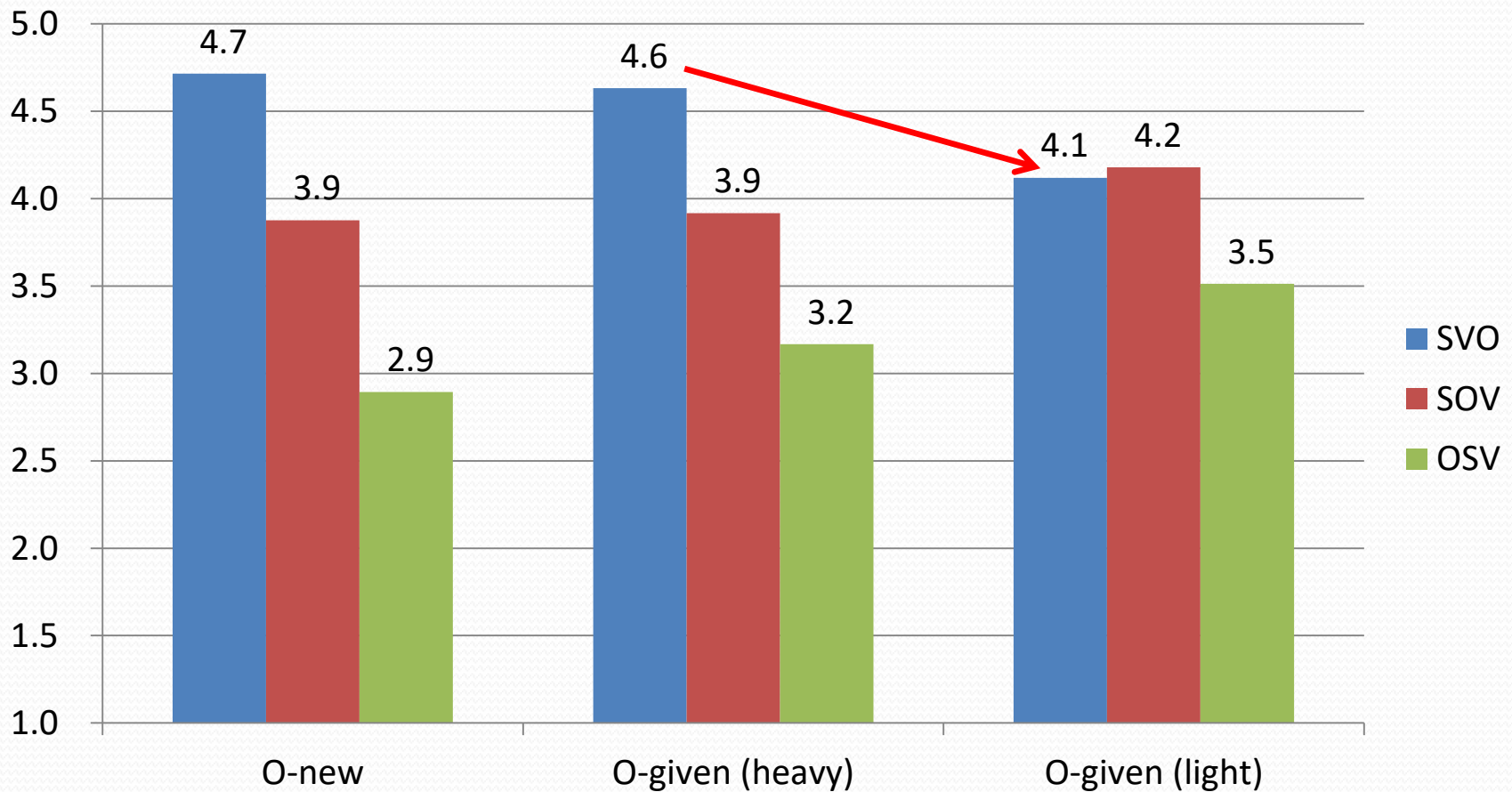


# Object placement in heritage Russian

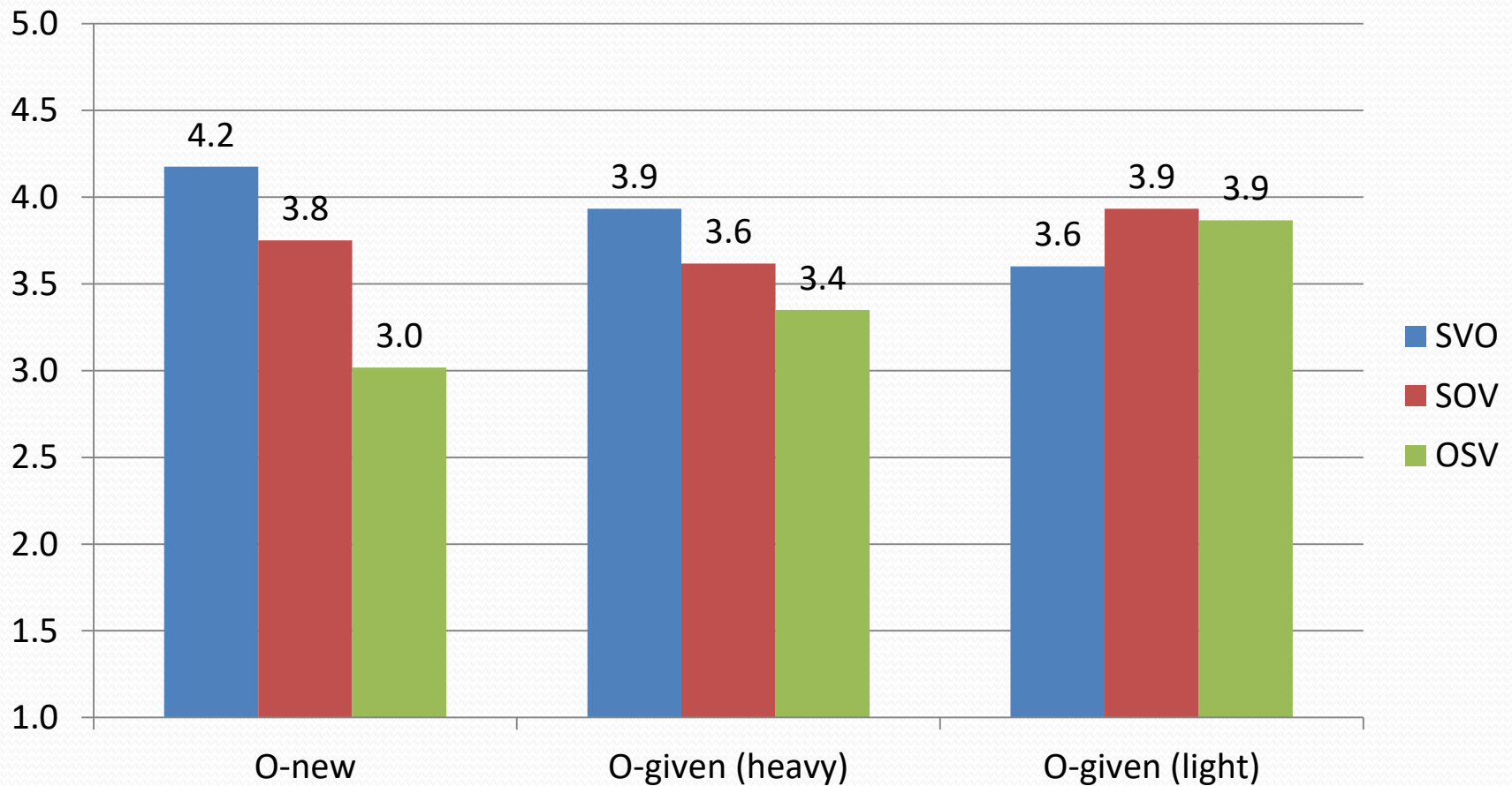




# Object placement in heritage Russian



# Object placement in L2 Russian



# Interim Summary

- Inversion:
  - {SVO/OVS} → SVO in both HL and L2
  - OVS vs. # OVS in L1 and HL, but not in L2
- Object placement:
  - L1: givenness and weight
  - HL: weight
  - L2: no clear effects

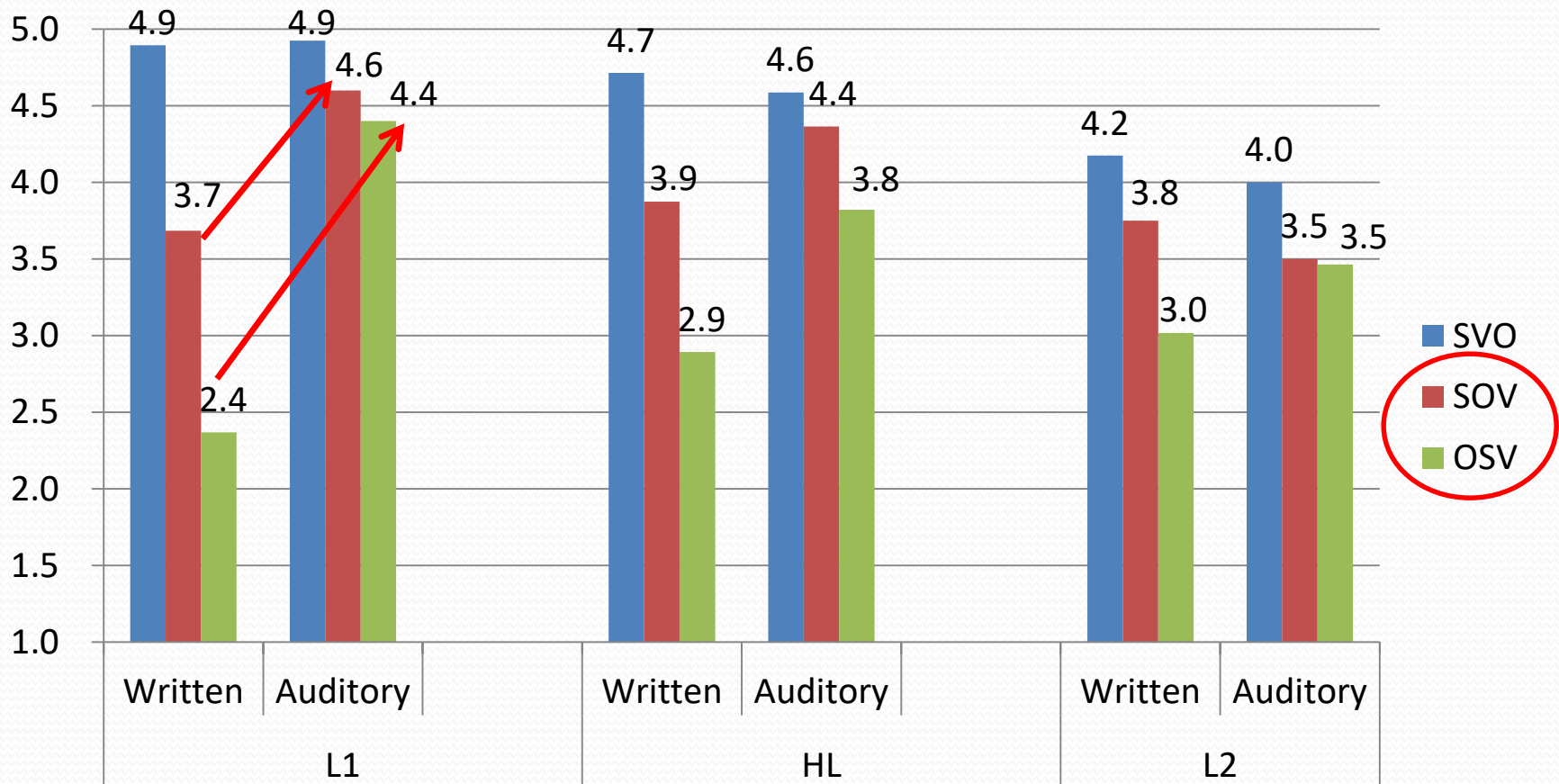
# Experiment 2: Auditory AJT

Participants	HL (N=20)	L2 (N=7)	L1 (N=16)
Age	21 (18-26)	22 (18-28)	40 (24-69)
Age of arrival to the U.S.	4 (0-9)	0	n/a
Age of switch to Eng	6 (0-13)	0	n/a
Average daily use of Rus (%)	21 (5-50)	11.4 (0-40)	100
Understanding spoken Rus(1-10)	8.7 (6-10)	5.6 (3-8)	n/a
Speaking Rus (1-10)	6.8 (3-10)	5 (2-7)	n/a
Reading in Rus(1-10)	5.5 (1-10)	6.4 (4-8)	n/a
Writing in Rus (1-10 )	4.9 (1-10)	5.1 (3-7)	n/a

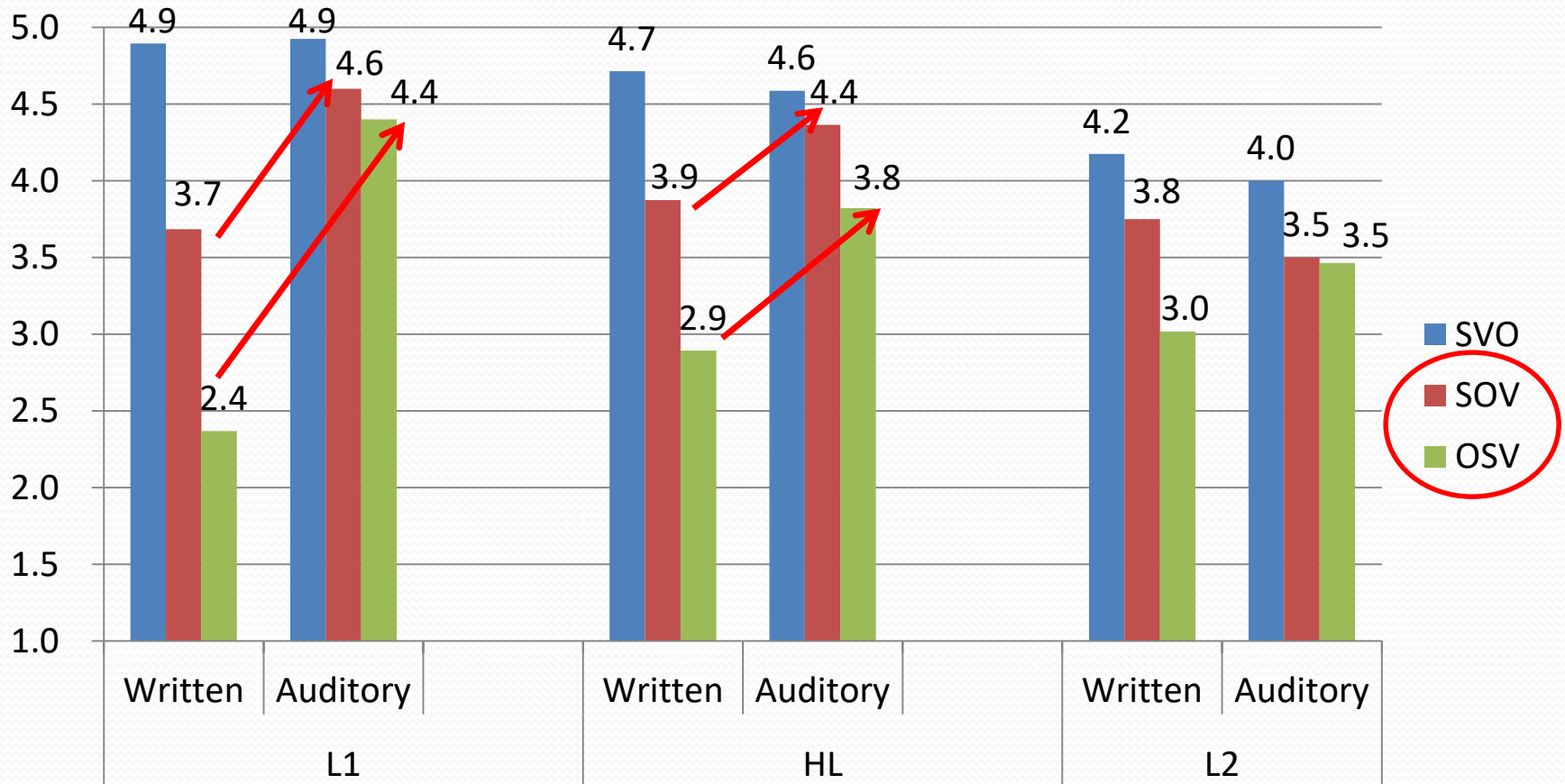
# Auditory presentation

- Access to prosodic cues
  - Narrow focus associated with prosodic marking (Zubizarreta, 1998; Jasinskaja, 2016; Yokoyama, 1987)
- Closer to spoken language where non-canonical orders are more common
- Both factors predict more target-like results in HL speakers due to their early naturalistic aural exposure to prosodically rich input

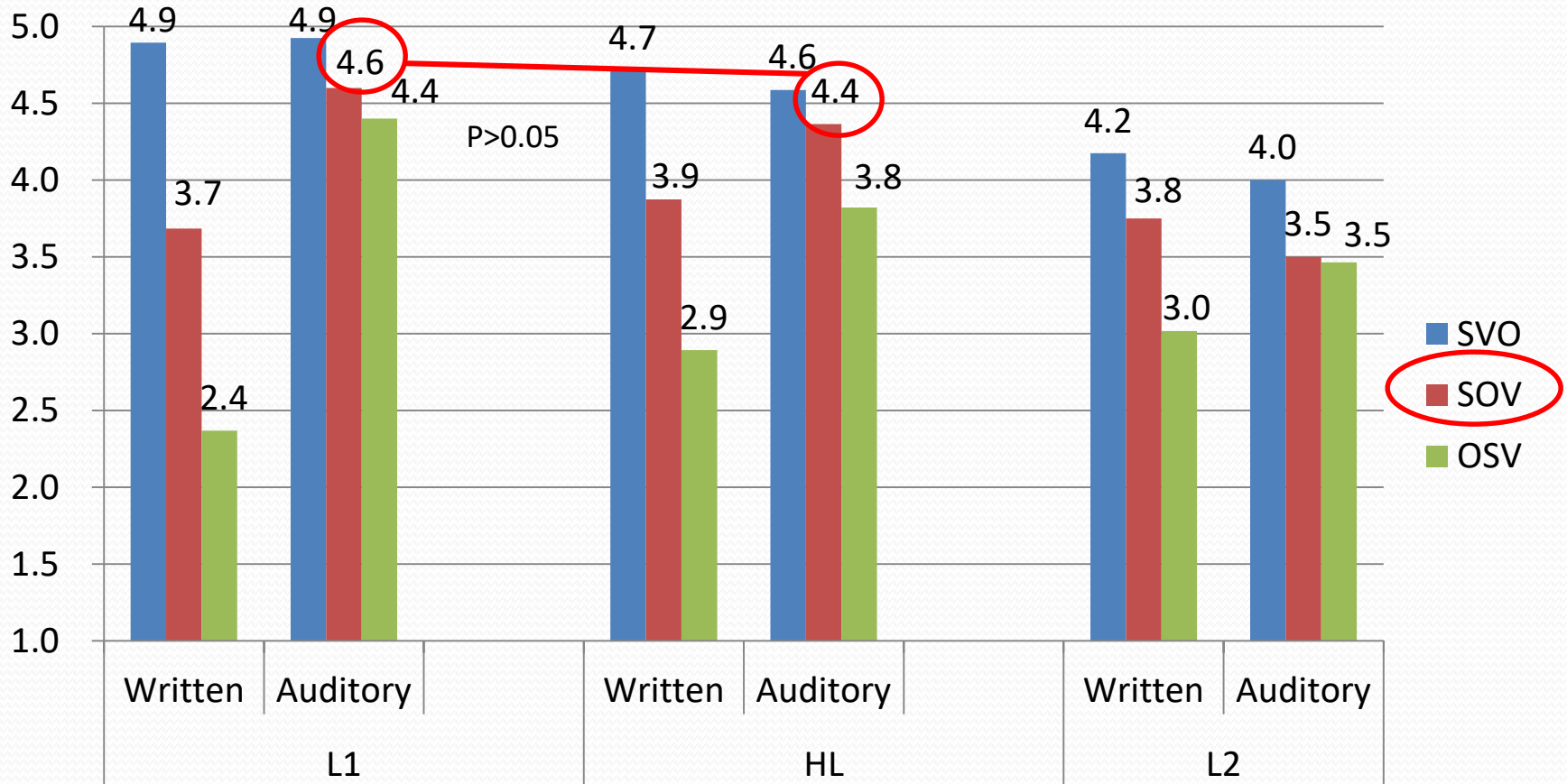
# Objects: Written vs. Auditory



# Objects: Written vs. Auditory



# Objects: Written vs. Auditory

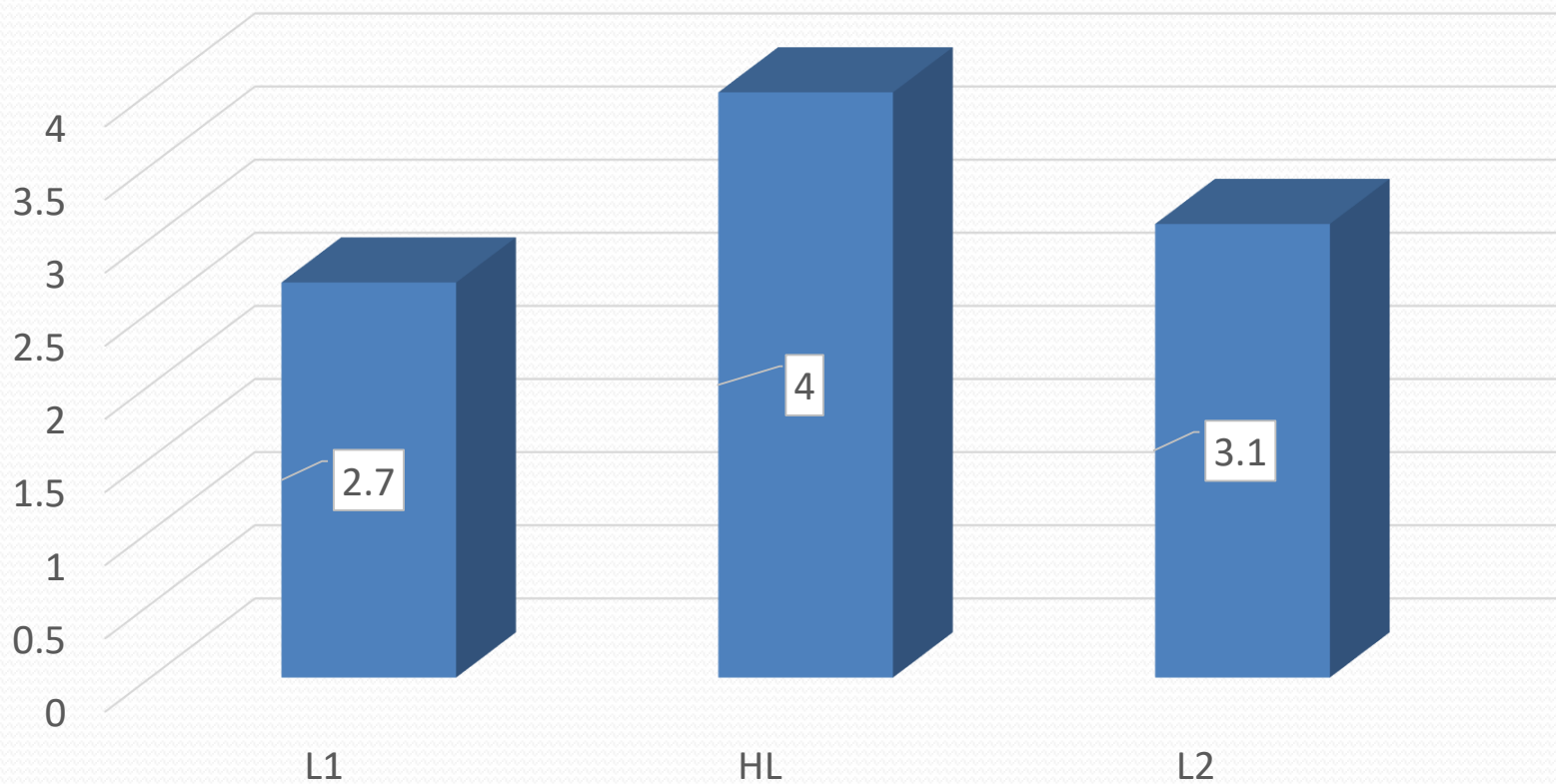




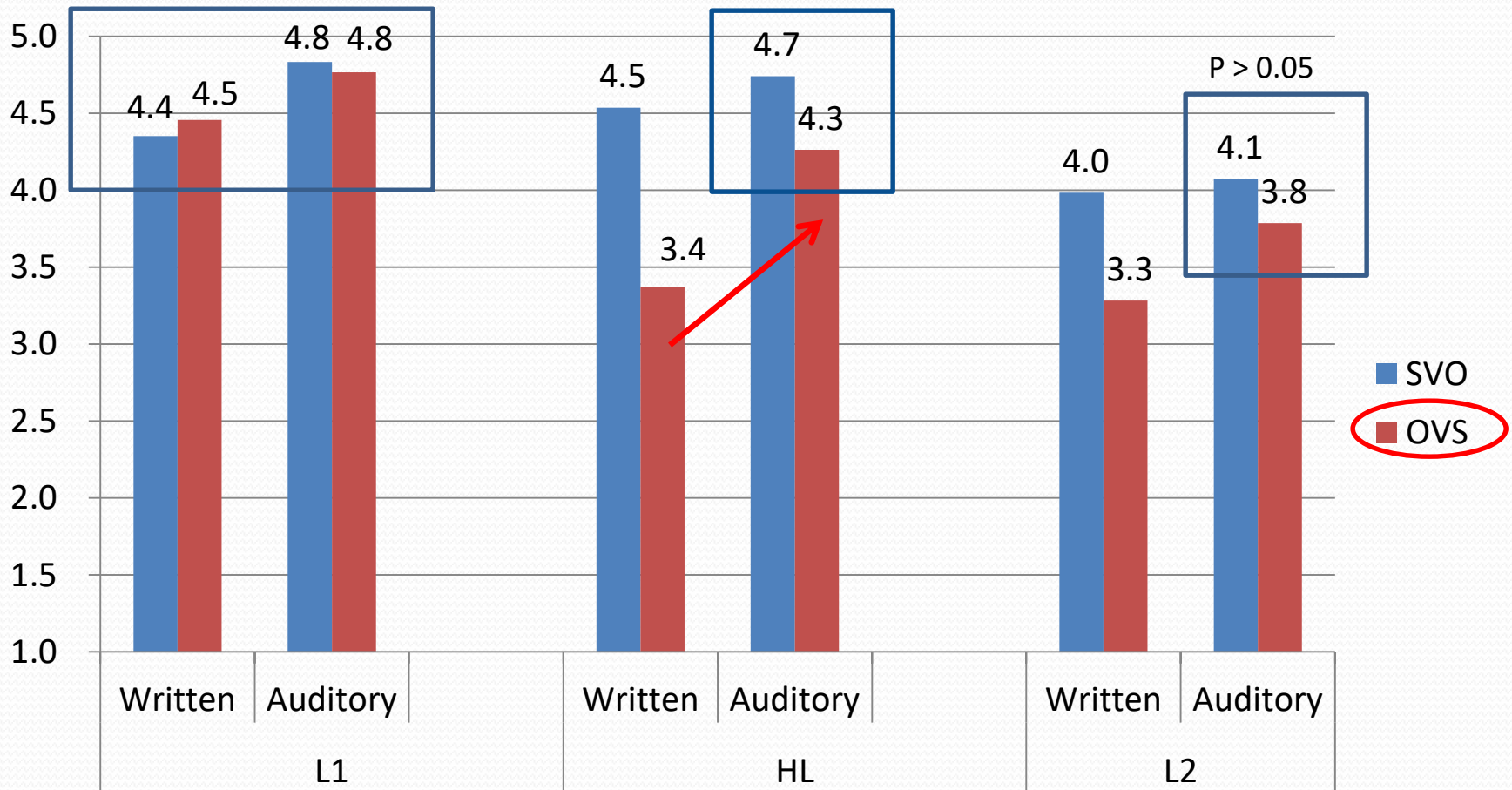
# What explains this?

- SOV is an emerging feature of colloquial Russian (Slioussar, 2007)
- OV orders prevalent in child Russian (Gvozdev, 1961; Dyakonova, 2004)
- Higher occurrence of SOV and OSV in informal/non-academic texts; SVO bias in written/academic texts
  - Sirotinina (2003): 7-8% of OV in scientific texts, 66.4% in informal dialogues
- Overgeneralization?

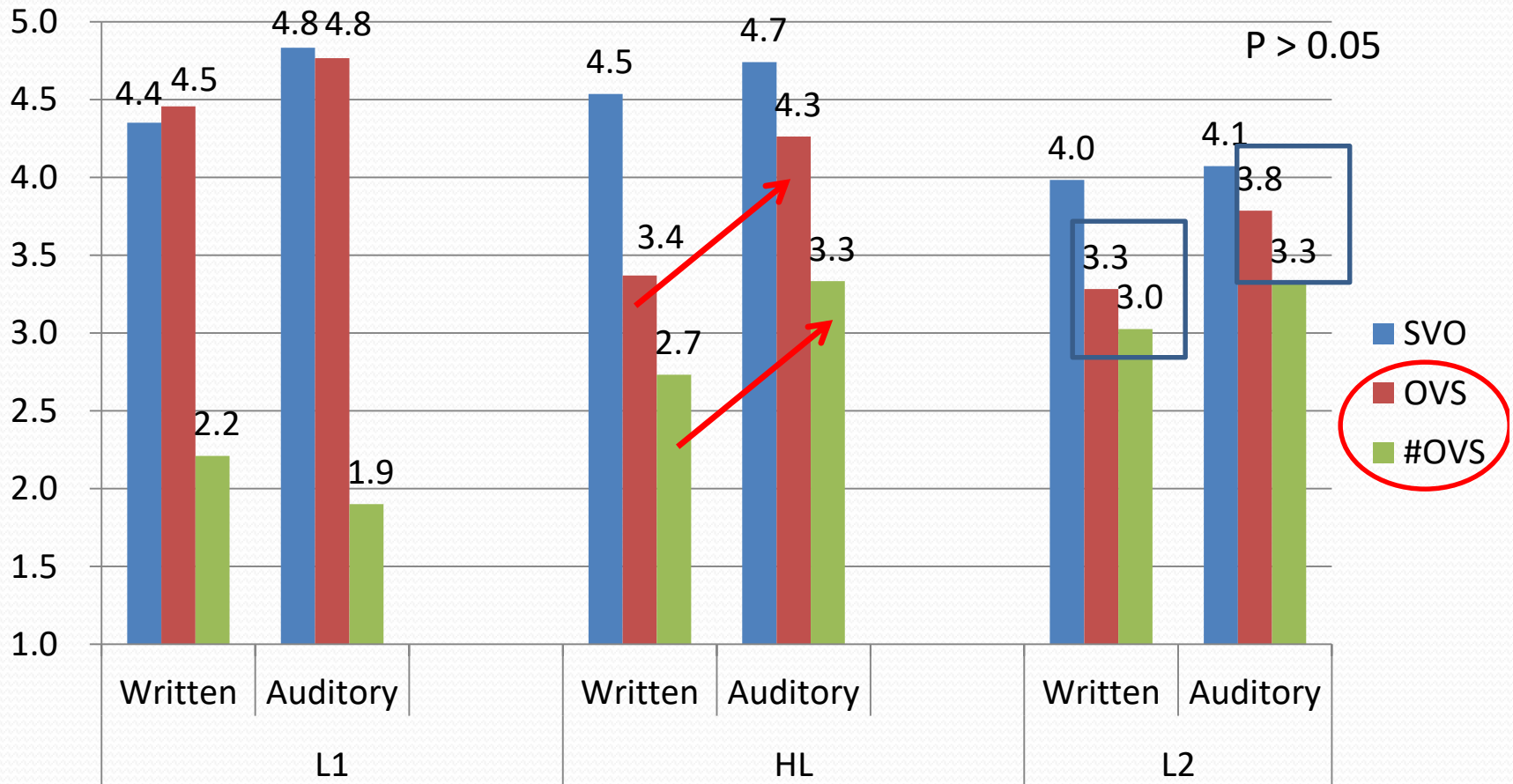
#SOV



# Written vs. Auditory: SVO/OVS interchangeability



# Overgeneralization of #OVS in HL speakers (auditory)



# Summary

- Word order in HL and L2:
  - Prevalence of SV and SVO
  - Reduction of options {SVO/OVS} and overextension of the unmarked pattern
  - Over-acceptance of infelicitous orders (esp. in auditory presentation) as a result of more relaxed pragmatic judgments
- L1 speakers: verb type, weight, givenness; auditory presentation boosts ratings for non-SVO orders
- HL speakers: verb type, weight; auditory presentation boosts ratings for non-SVO orders (O-fronting) but also in infelicitous contexts (#OVS, #SOV)
- L2 speakers: no clear improvement with auditory presentation

**Thank you!**