

## Introduction

- Russian has a sophisticated case system with 6 cases whose inflections may differ across 3 declensional classes, 3 genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter) and 2 numbers (singular and plural) → **Russian presents a great testing ground for examining how children acquire complex grammatical rules.**
- No agreement concerning the age of case-use onset and the order in which different cases emerge (Ceitlin, 2000; Gvozdev, 1981, 2007; Gagarina & Voeikova, 2009).
- Additional challenge for acquisition of the Russian case system may be due to linguistic interference (in a bilingual context), which has been shown to cause the reduction of the case system (Polinsky, 2007). The examination of the interaction between a rich inflectional Russian morphology system and a restricted English morphology system is potentially useful in revealing the language aspects that are most vulnerable and fragile due to the **influence of the poorer morphology.**

## Hypothesis

- Bilingual children are expected to make more case errors which will persist even at later stages of language acquisition (Schönenberger et al., 2011).
- Both groups of children will make more mistakes in plural forms (Schwartz and Minkov, 2014) and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> declension which is less frequent in the Russian language. **Russian has 3 declension types: 1<sup>st</sup> declension – feminine and masculine nouns ending [a] [ya], 2<sup>nd</sup> declension – masculine and neutral with [no ending] [o], 3<sup>rd</sup> declension – feminine nouns with endings [soft sign]. The most frequent – 2<sup>nd</sup>, medium frequency – 1<sup>st</sup>, the less frequent – 3<sup>rd</sup>.**
- We expect more inflectional errors in non-word block, because children need to generalize inflectional rules to novel input and they will make case errors, if they don't acquire these inflectional rules.

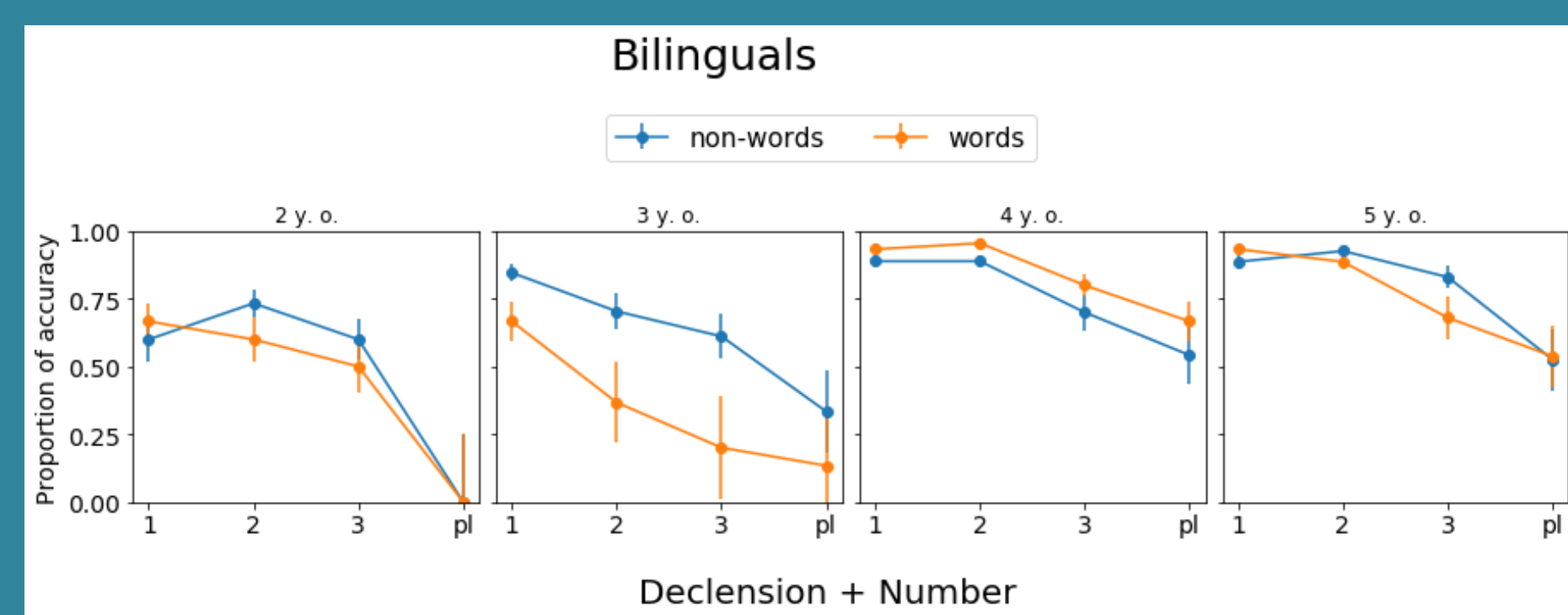
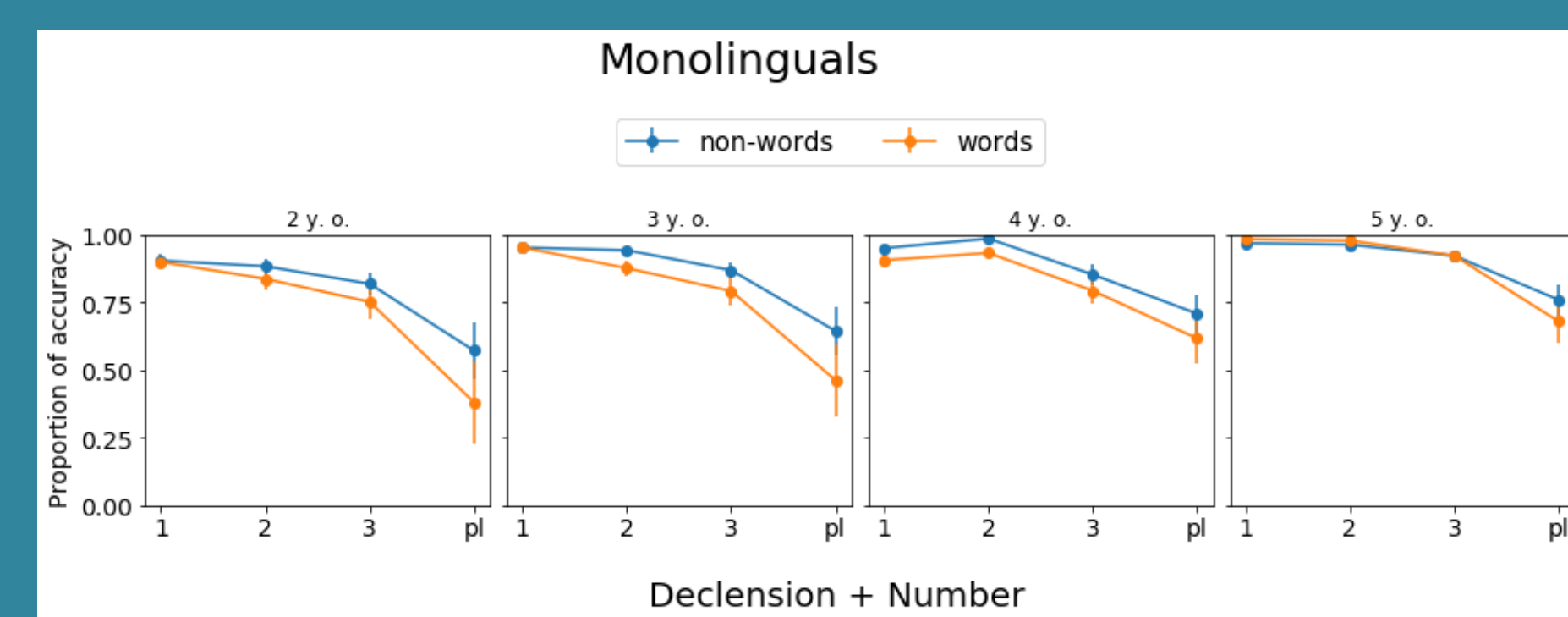
## Materials and Procedure

**Stimuli:** 24 real life objects denoting 24 target word stimuli and 24 non-existing objects for the non-words; non-words were created by replacing 2 consonants in each target real word.

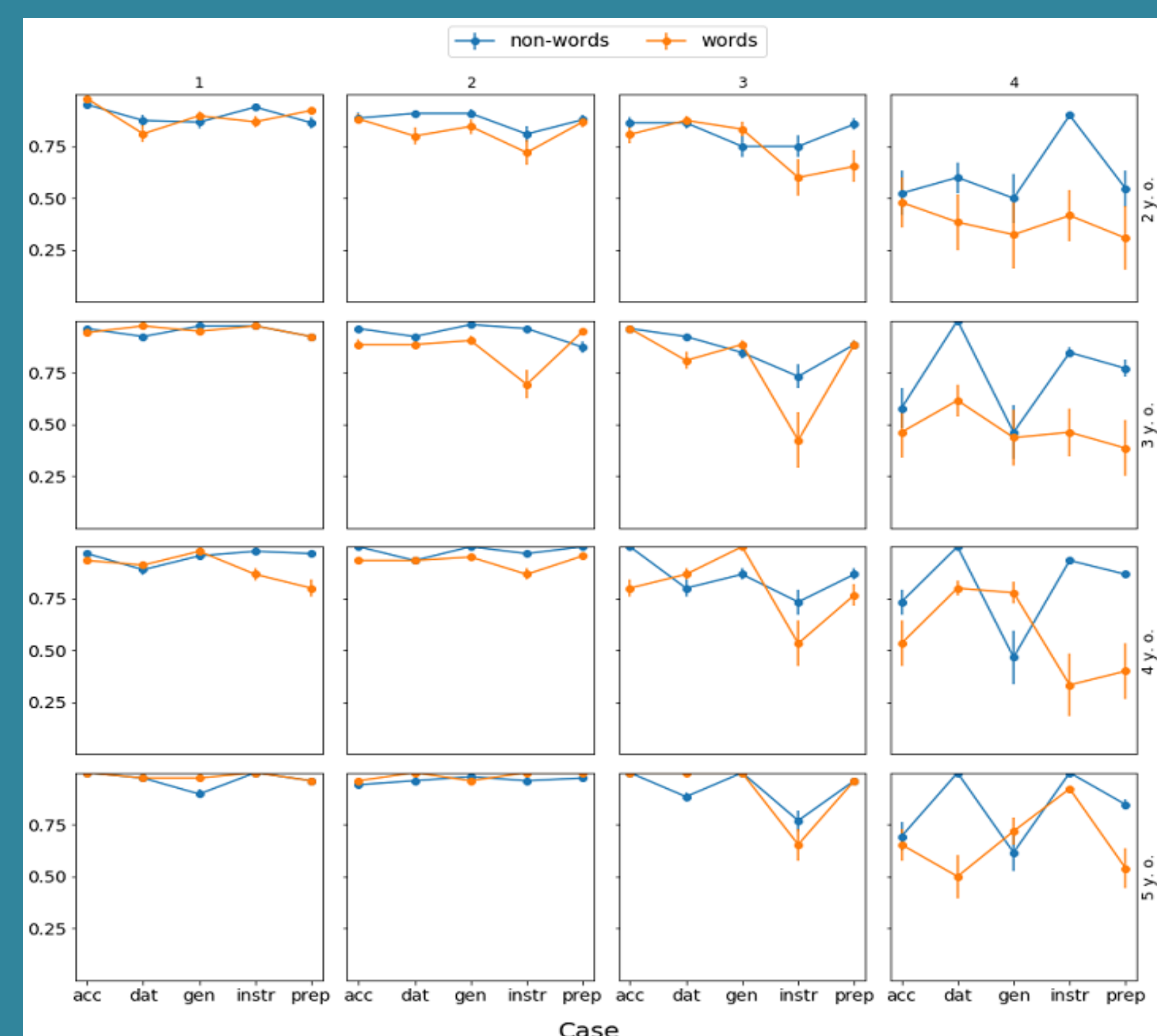
**Task:** a picture-based sentence completion task.



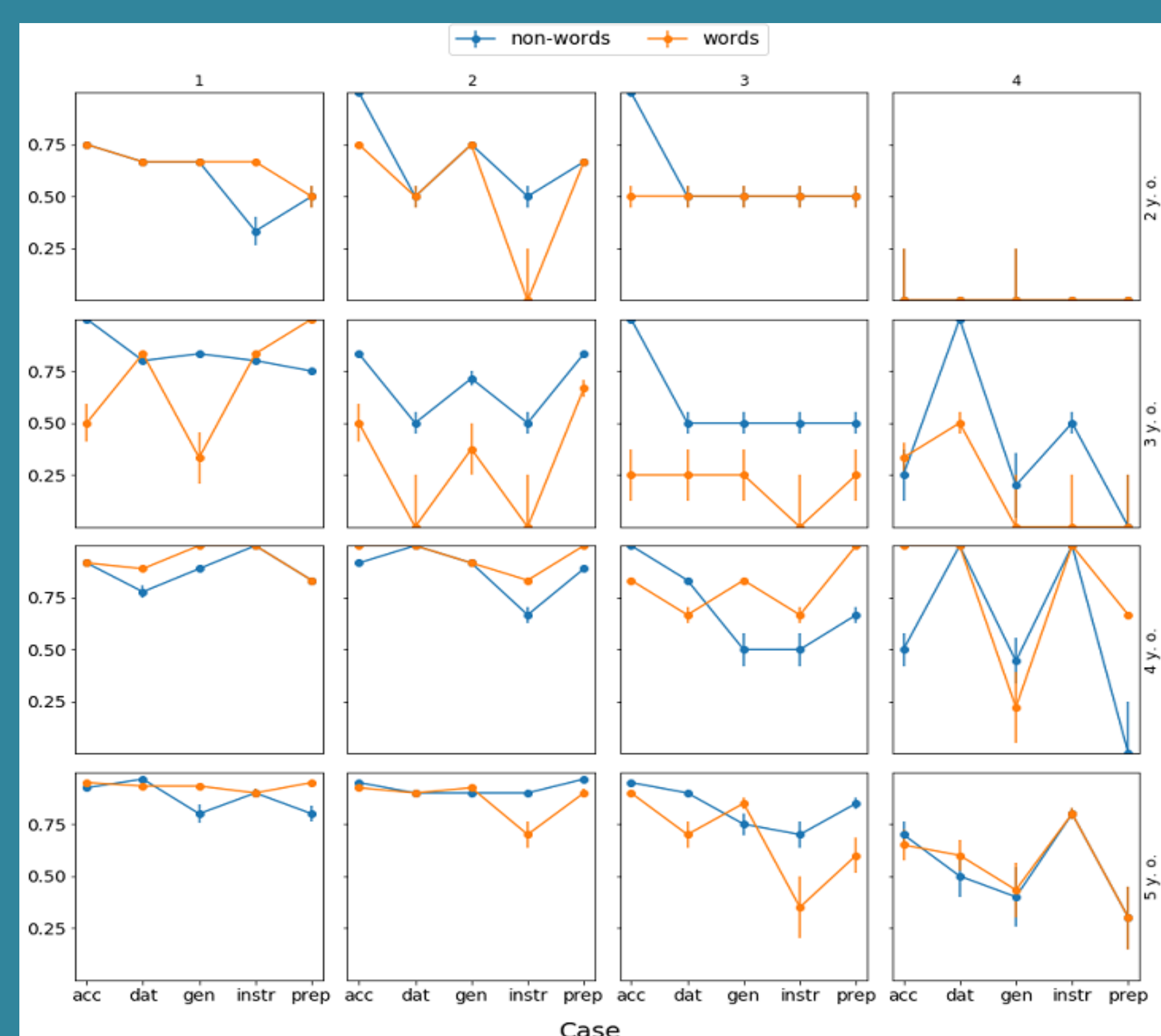
## Quantitative results



### Monolinguals : Individual cases



### Bilinguals : Individual cases



## Aims

- Compare production of case inflections among English-Russian speaking bilingual children and monolingual Russian speaking children.
- Examine at what age bilingual and monolingual children learn to generalize inflectional rules to novel input.
- Unlike previous studies that examine specific aspects of case use, we examine a full set of oblique cases for regular nominal forms in the Russian language (across three declensions as well as plural forms) and identify the main areas of difficulty.
- We use non-words in second part of our experiment, which will allow us to identify if a child can generalize inflectional rules not only to existing words but also to novel input. This prevents the child from using "freezing forms" of real words.

## Participants

Age (years old)	Russian monolinguals	Russian-English bilinguals
2	14	1
3	13	3
4	13	3
5	14	10
total	54	17



## Qualitative results

- Bilingual children tend to replace the DAT, INSTR, and PREP cases with the ACC case;
- Both monolingual and bilingual children tend to use 2<sup>nd</sup> declension forms in place of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> declension forms.
- Children tended to substitute zero inflections in plural forms with the more transparent, and stressed -ov, -ev endings, supporting the idea of 'inflectional imperialism' (Slobin, 1966).
- 2-3-year-old monolingual children substituted oblique cases with the NOM case; bilingual children made nominative substitutions even at 4-5 years of age.

## Conclusions

- Both monolingual and bilingual children showed the greatest amount of errors in the plural forms in line with previous studies (e.g., Schwartz and Minkov 2014) and 3<sup>rd</sup> declension.
- Bilingual children made nominative substitutions even at 4-5 years of age, which supports our hypothesis. Russian-English bilinguals differ from monolinguals in the timeline of acquisition; they acquire case inflections more slowly.
- Children were more accurate with non-words than with words. It can show us that children who have already acquired the inflectional rule use the "freezing" form (the most frequent form of this lexeme) in the real words' block.