



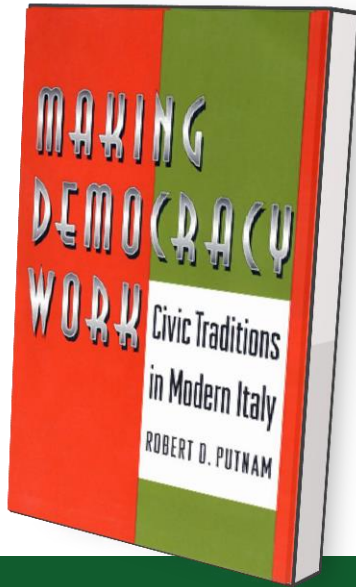
Making Democracy Speak: Linguistic Foundations of Social Capital

Matthias Meyer-Schwarzenberger

MatchPoint Seminar on Culture, Social Capital and Politics
Aarhus University, May 24, 2013



Making Democracy Speak

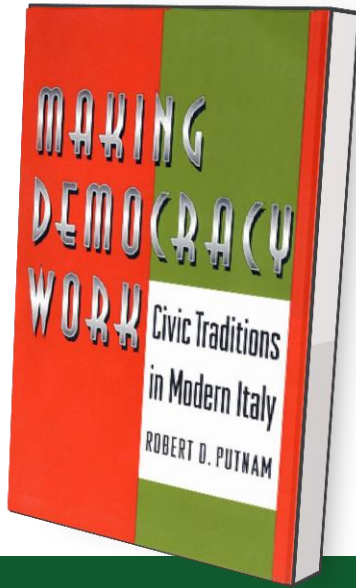


“The North-South gap in Italy, and the range of theories that have been offered to account for it, mirror the broader debate about development ...

Robert D. Putnam
Making Democracy Work, p. 159



Making Democracy Speak



“...development of horizontal social networks that contribute favourably to governmental and to economic performance.

Robert D. Putnam
Making Democracy Work, p. 229

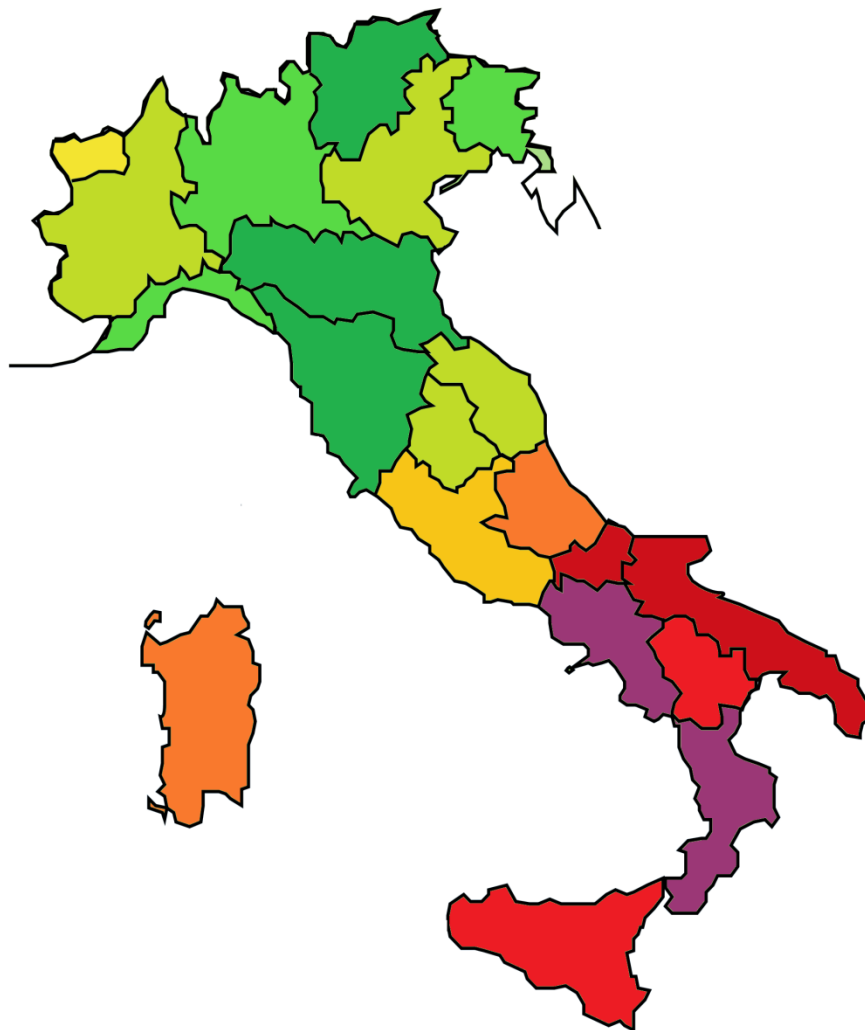


- The North-South gap: Italy and beyond
- Linguistics 1: Observations
- Linguistics 2: The European grammar of ownership
- Linguistic capital: A neglected resource
- Italy once again: Making Democracy Speak



The North-South gap: Italy and beyond

- Putnam's Italy: regions ranked by Civic Community Index, c. 1970





Social capital research on Italy – ‘dependent’ variables

1) Presumed effects of social capital:

- Economic performance (Liberti & Sideri 2011)
- Entrepreneurship (Chiesi 2007)
- Financial development (Guiso, Sapienza & Zingales 2004)
- Employment rates (Andriani 2010)
- Health (Fiorillo & Sabatini 2011)
- Political accountability (Nannicini, Tabellini & Troiano 2010)
- Voter turnout (Guiso & Pinotti 2011)
- Etc.



Social capital research on Italy – ‘independent’ variables

2) Hypothetical explanatory factors:

- Cultural predispositions (Galassi 2001)
- Cultural legacy (de Blasio & Nuzzo 2009)
- Inter-generational value transmission (Tabellini 2008)
- Inter-gen. transmission of beliefs (Guiso, Sapienza & Zingales 2008)
- But not over centuries (McLaren & Baird 2006)
- Only ‘structural’ social capital (Sabatini 2005)
- Efficient public administration (Liberto & Sideri 2011)
- Institutions (Mauro & Pigliaru 2011)
- Organized crime (Peri 2004)
- Differences in IQ (Lynn 2010) → **Recently, a severe debate...**
- Etc.



The North-South gap: Italy and beyond

In any event, certain mechanisms seem to work only in the North:

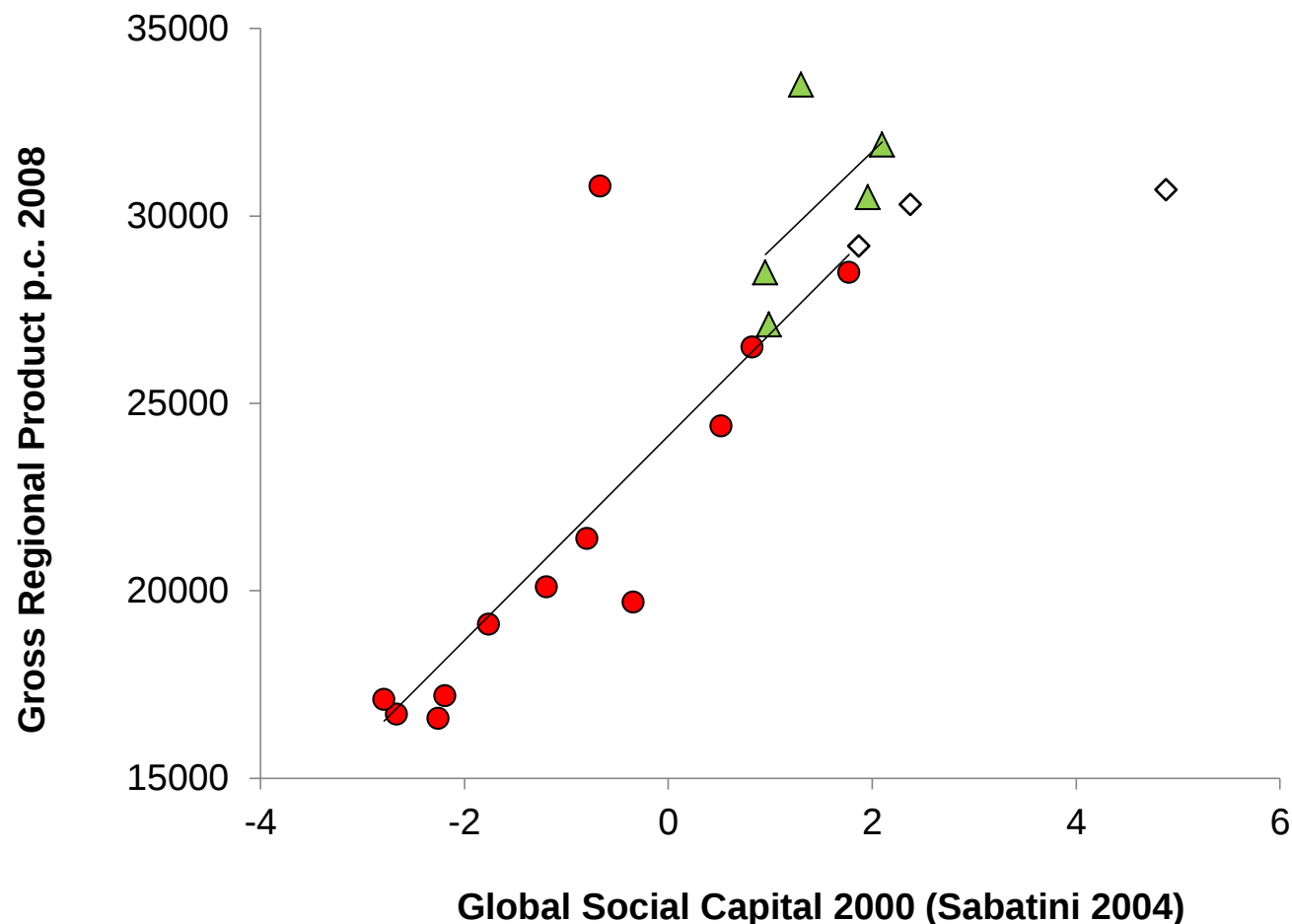
- Civicness (Ballarino & Schadee 2005)
- Free city-state experience (Guiso, Sapienza & Zingales 2008)
- Decentralization policies (Mauro & Pigliaru 2011)

→ Is this due to the fact that the grammar of the Northern dialects is different from the grammar of Southern dialects?



The North-South gap: Italy and beyond

In any event, certain mechanisms seem to work better in the North:





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Sociolinguistic situation in Italy:

- 8 minority languages, 3 statutory (French, German, Slovene)
- Standard Italian emerged only around 1970 (mass media)
- Today, dialect used mostly by elderly people and lower social strata
- However, dialect used differently in different regions:
 - Emilia-Romagna: dialect at home, Italian in public
 - Veneto: dialect used in public as well
 - Liguria: dialect no longer used by many

Historical background:

- No standardized 'national' language but literary 'elite' language
- Literary tradition in several 'dialects' (actually, different languages)
- Local dialects prevailed even after industrialization and WW1



Special grammar of northern dialects:

- Mandatory pronominalization of the subject
- Expletive dummy subject (e.g., *it is raining*, *it seems*, ...)

Examples:

- Florence *Maria **la** viene* ‘Maria is coming’
(Italian: *Viene Maria*)
- Veneto *Dove ve **tu**?* ‘Where do you go?’
(Italian: *Dove vai?*)
- Emilia ***L** e pyovú* ‘It has been raining’
(Italian: *È piovuto*)



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Linguistics 1: Observations

- König & Haspelmath's Europe ('Standard Average European')

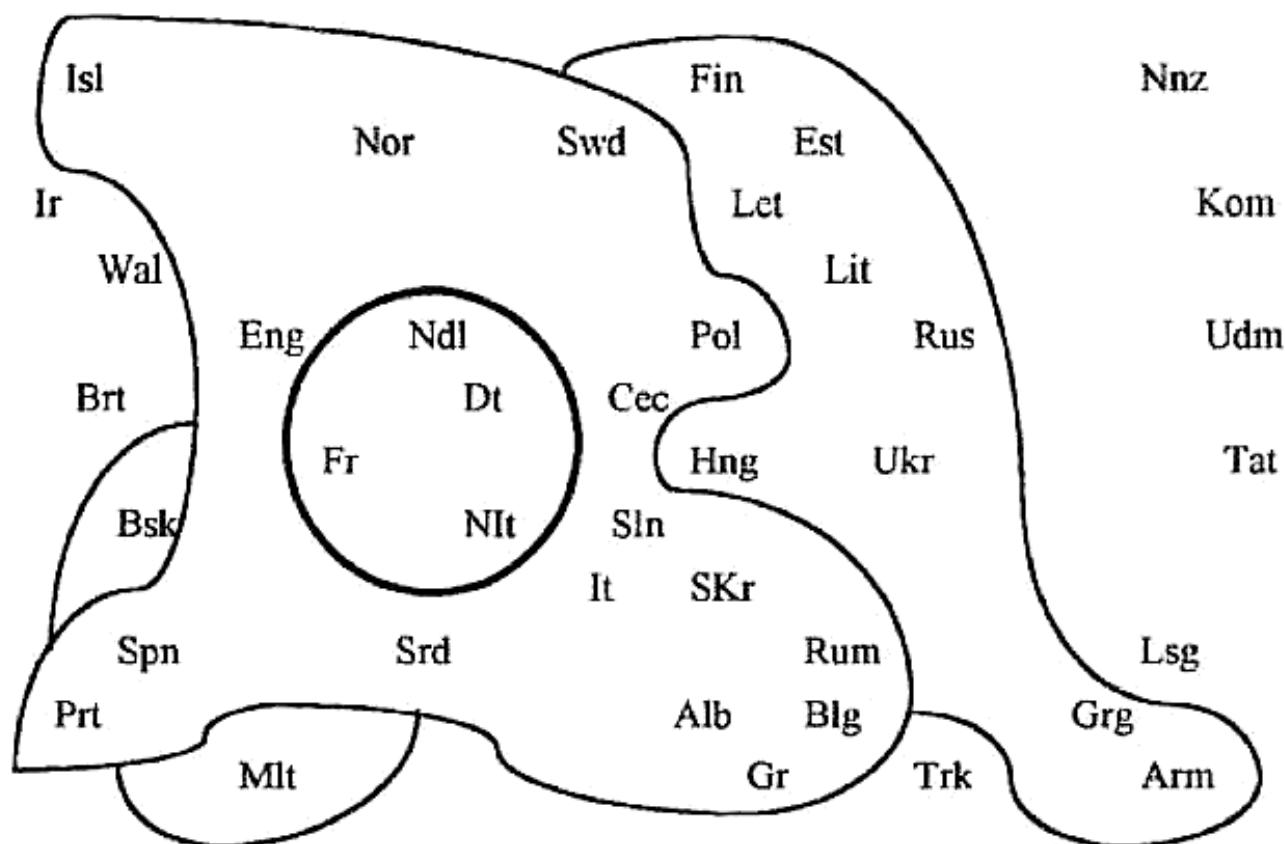


Abbildung 1: Der europäische Sprachbund („SAE“)



Linguistics 1: Observations

- König & Haspelmath's Europe ('Standard Average European')

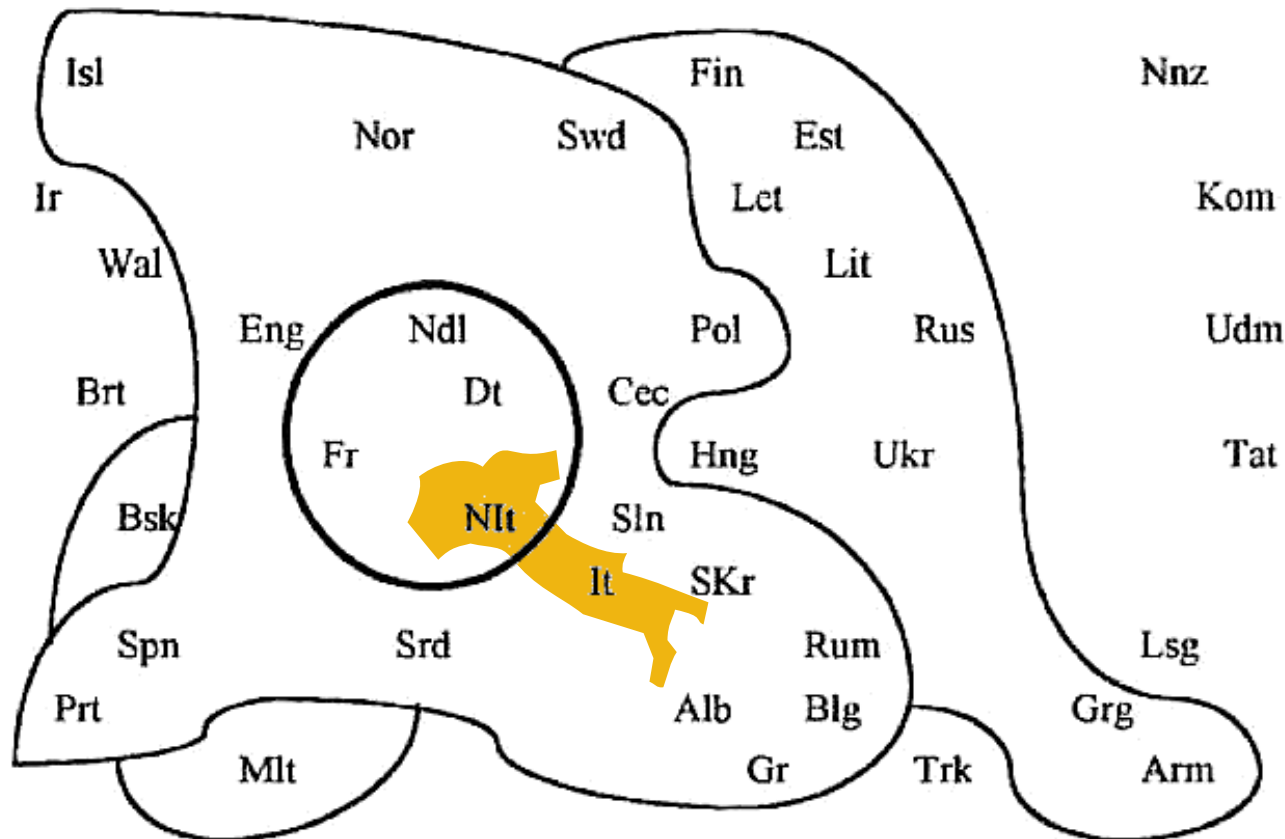


Abbildung 1: Der europäische Sprachbund („SAE“)



Linguistic particularity of ‘Standard Average European’

- Subject prominence (Li & Thompson 1976)
- Expression of pronominal subjects (Dryer 2011)
- In formal linguistics, ‘projection’ of a ‘CP’ (but cf. Kaiser 2002)
- Many more features: ‘SAE’ linguistic area (Haspelmath 2001)
- Abstract concepts allow for counterfactual reasoning (Bloom 1981)
- On the whole, an “exotic language” (Dahl 1990)

Outstanding linguistic means of...

- Identifying ‘subjects’ (e.g., actors, possessors)
- Relating subjects with ‘predicates’ (actions, attributes, properties)
- Subjects and predicates may be abstract, impersonal, counterfactual



Linguistics 2: The European grammar of ownership

Examples:

- *Look, **there is** my father* instead of just saying, *Look my father*
- ***The tree** has beautiful leaves* v. *Tree, the leaves beautiful*
- Alternative statement: *The tree's **leaves** are beautiful*

Inevitable illocutive force:

- Almost every utterance becomes a logical declarative proposition
- The 'speaker' becomes the responsible 'author' of the statement

Hypothetical socio-psychological effects:

- Strengthened self-perception and social roles (accountability)
- More efficient communication? (Axel 2005)



Historical origins of 'SAE' features:

- Migrations and early Middle Ages (Haspelmath 2001)
- Language change in northern Italy: 1350–1550 (Spiess 1957)
- Full grammaticalization even later (Volodina 2009, 2012)

Hypothetical causes:

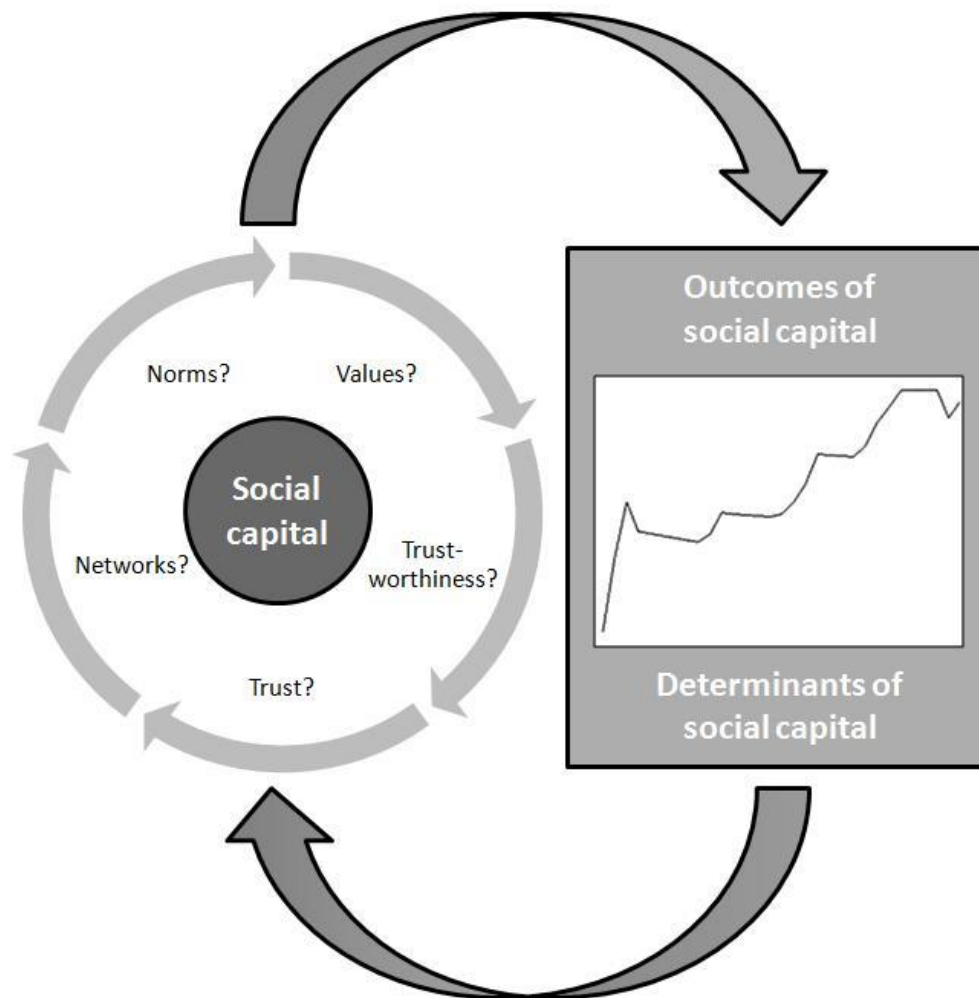
- Reanalysis of language structures by children acquiring the 'same' language with a new grammar
- Due to disemphasis of something that used to be salient in discourse before
- A discourse-pragmatic grammatical option grows into a formal grammatical requirement when the pragmatic intent withers away
- Diffusion of linguistic innovations usually due to higher prestige: central city → other cities, city → countryside



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Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

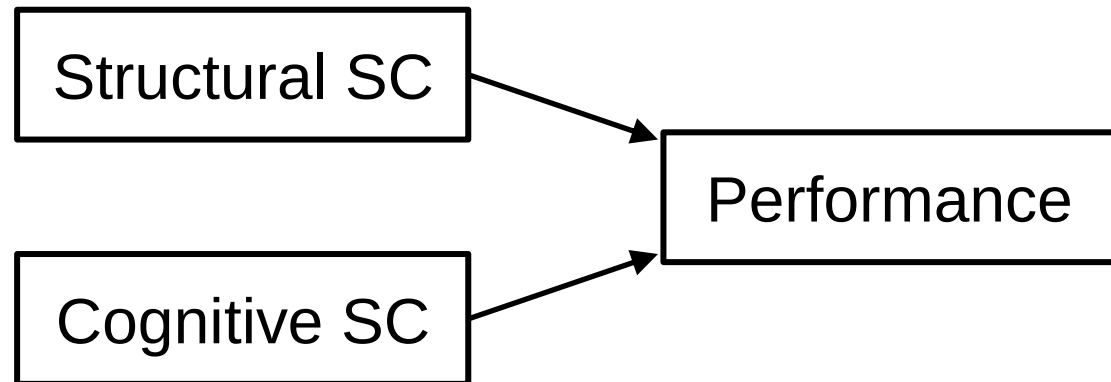


Capital → Return on investment → Growth → ...



Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

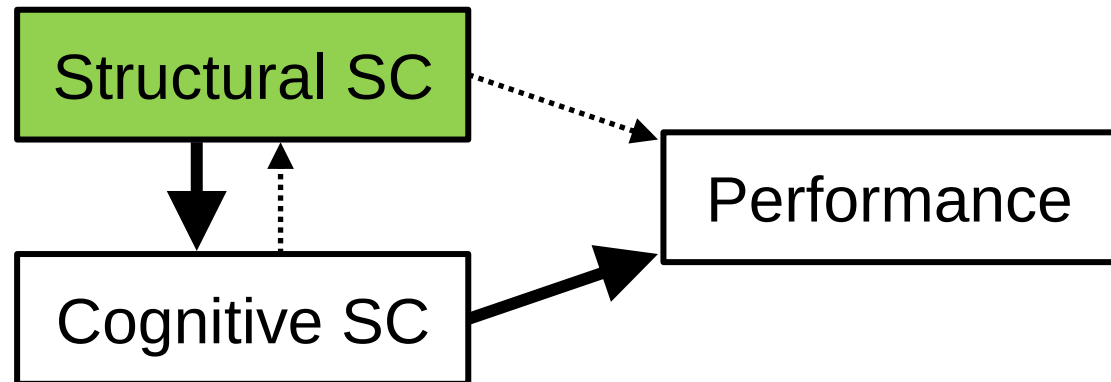
A. Social capital: alternative proposals





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

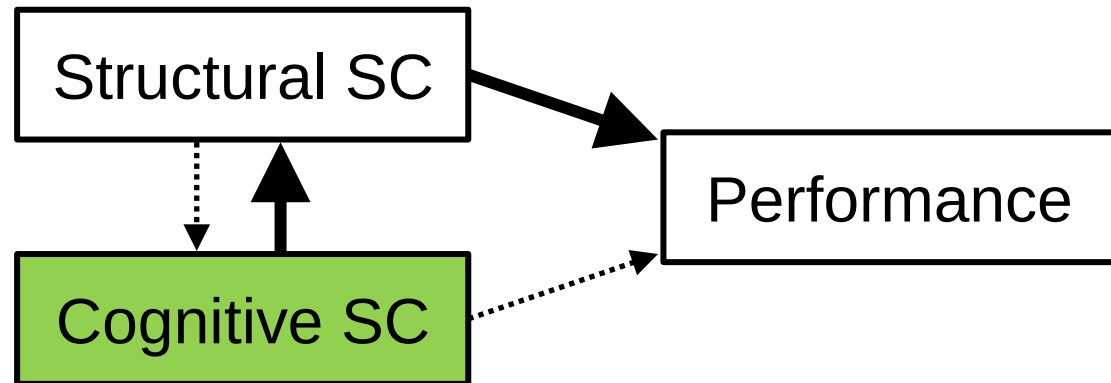
A. Social capital: alternative proposals (1)





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

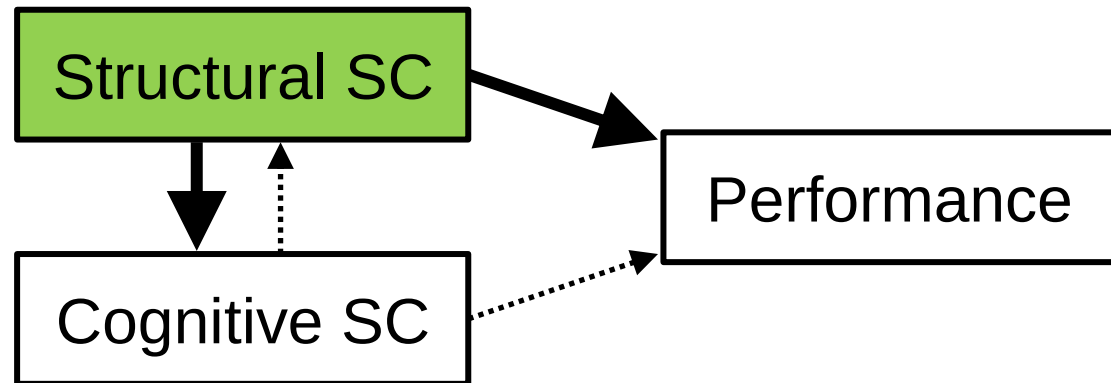
A. Social capital: alternative proposals (2)





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

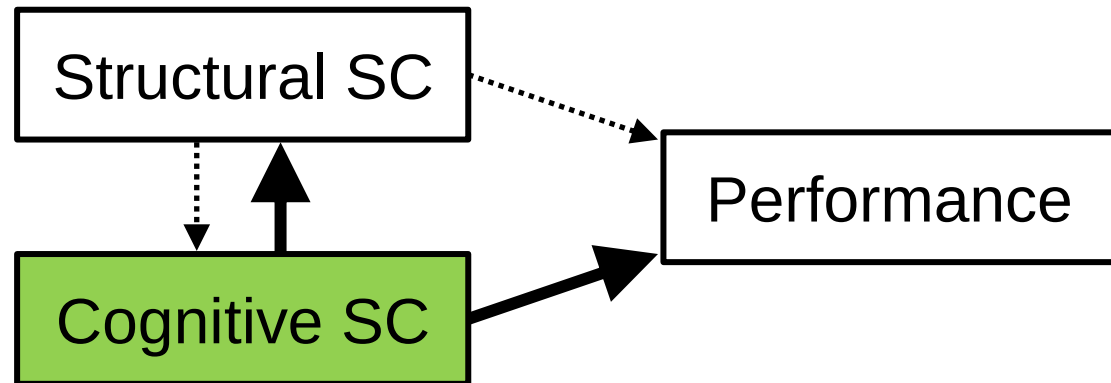
A. Social capital: alternative proposals (3)





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

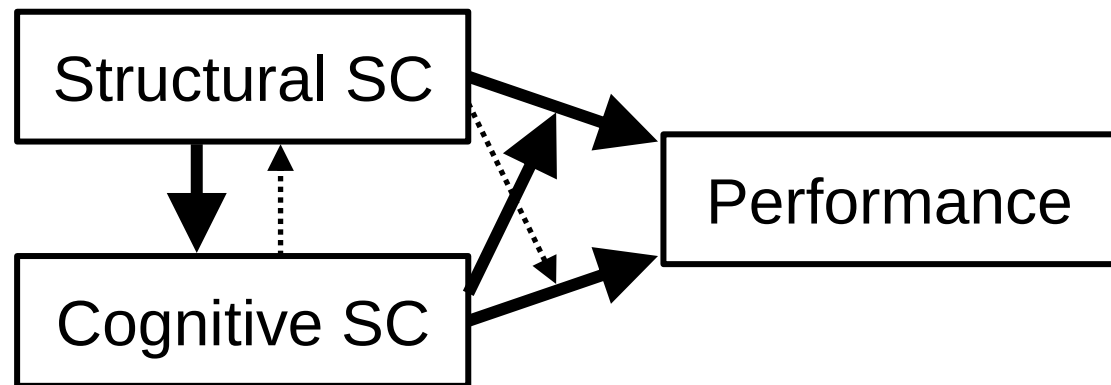
A. Social capital: alternative proposals (4)





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

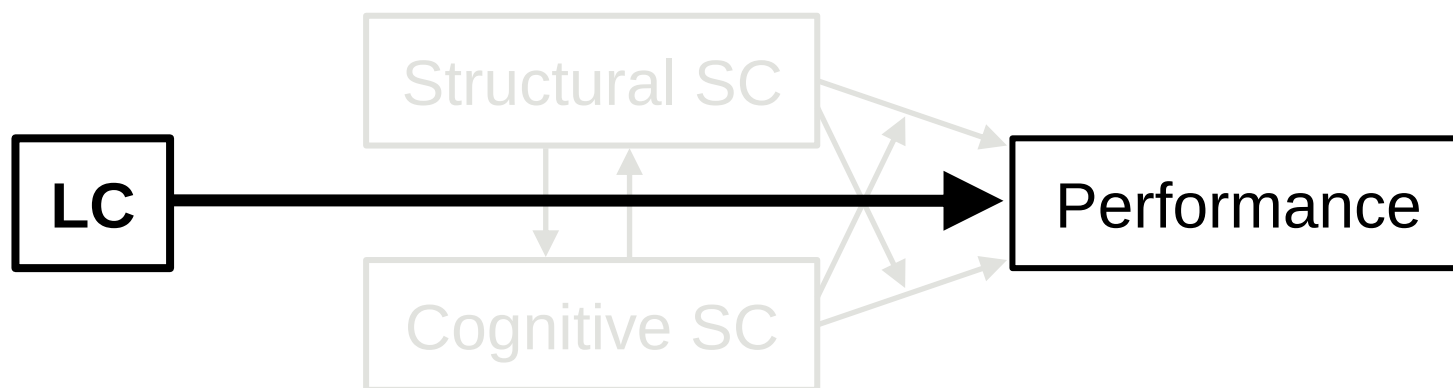
A. Social capital: complex models (example)





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

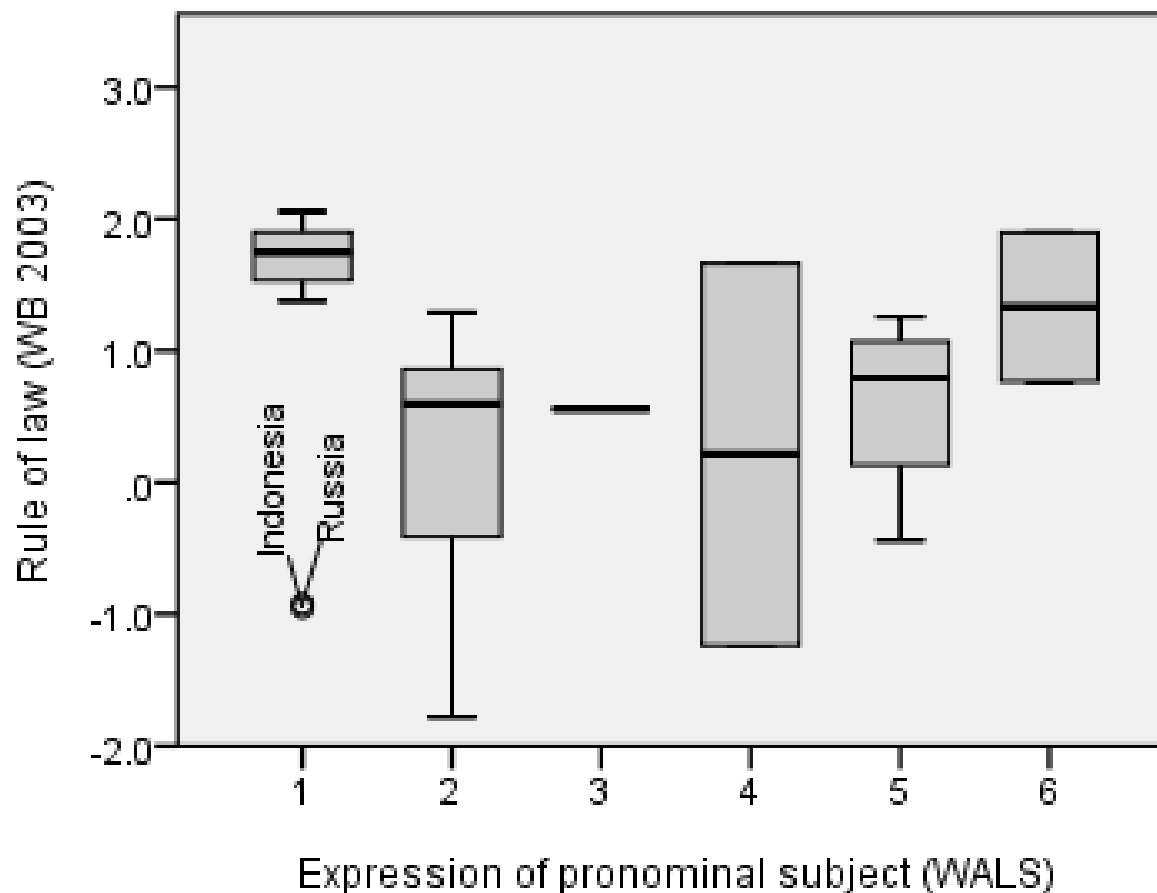
B. Linguistic capital: observed effect





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

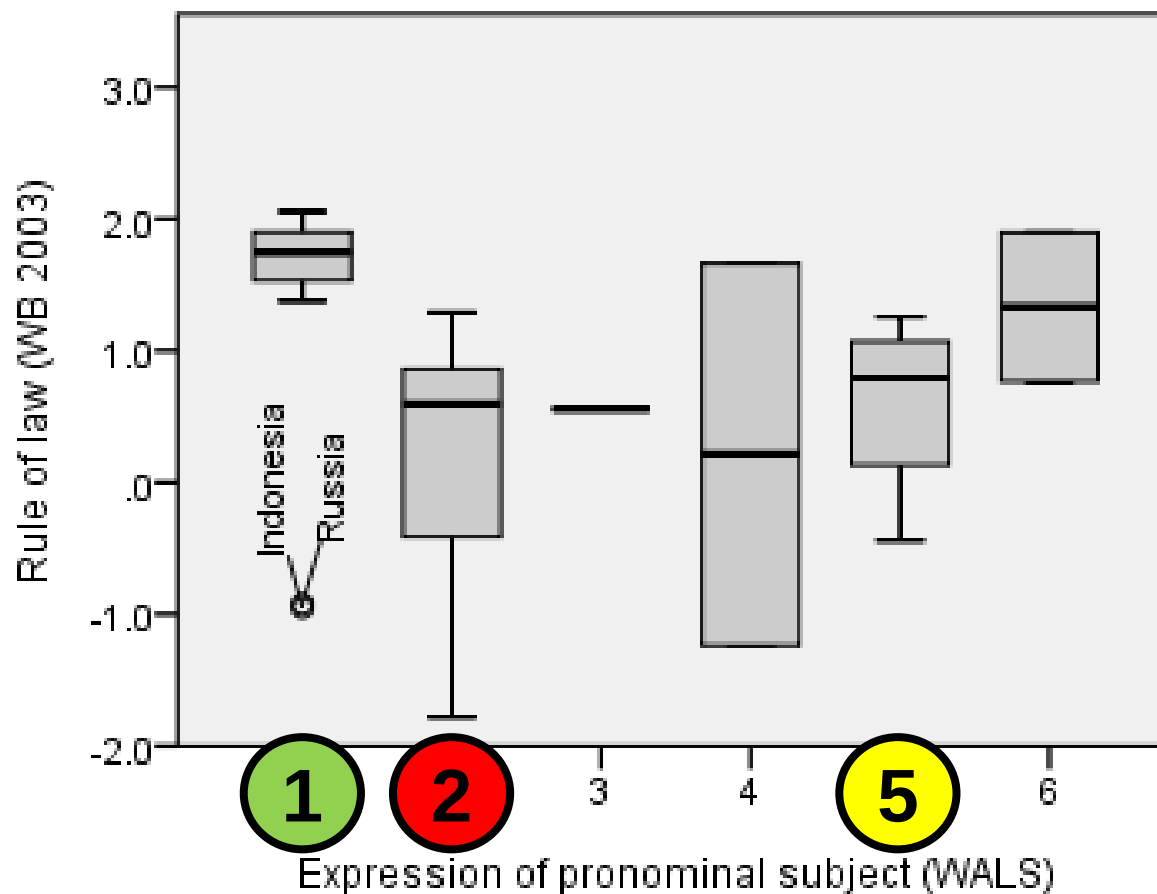
B. Linguistic capital: observed effect





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

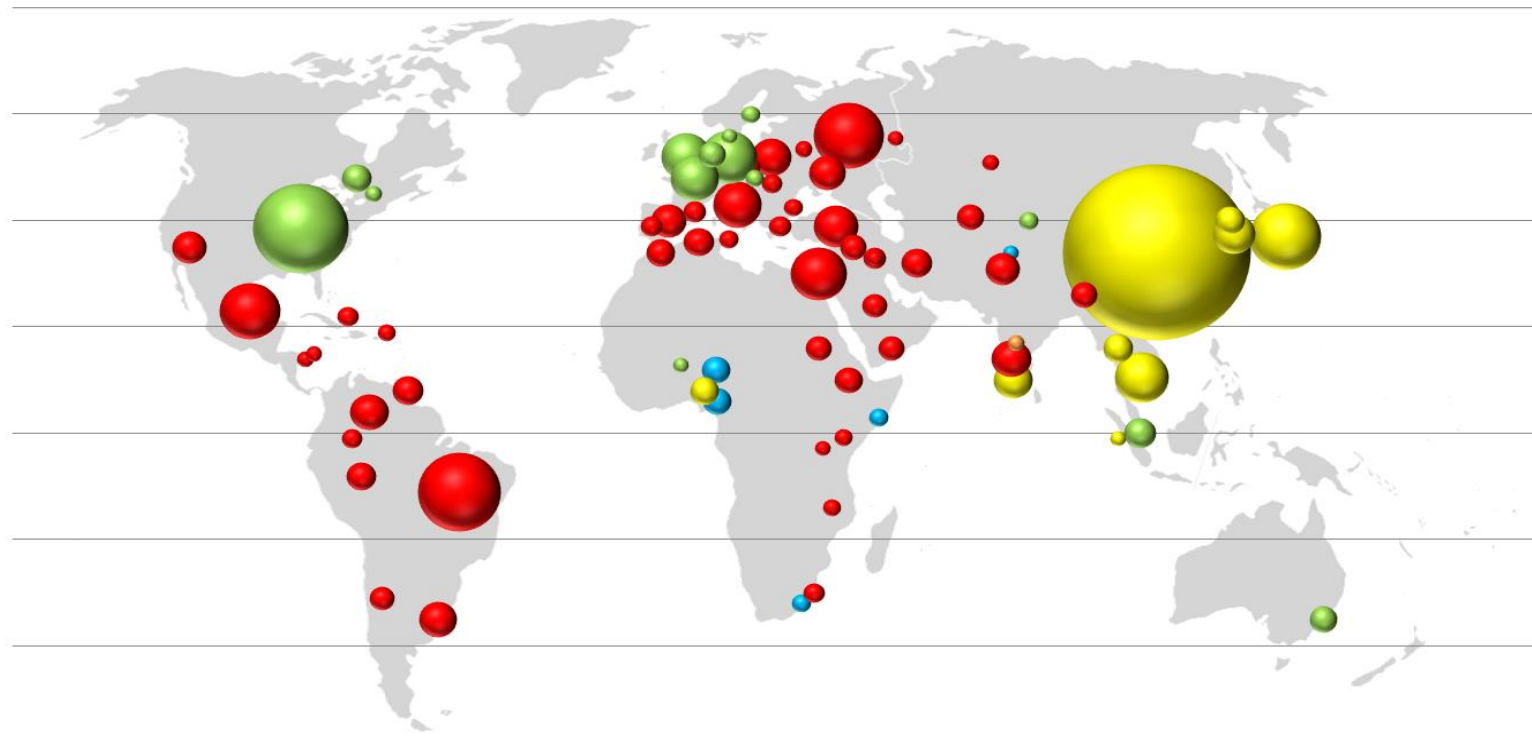
B. Linguistic capital: observed effect





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

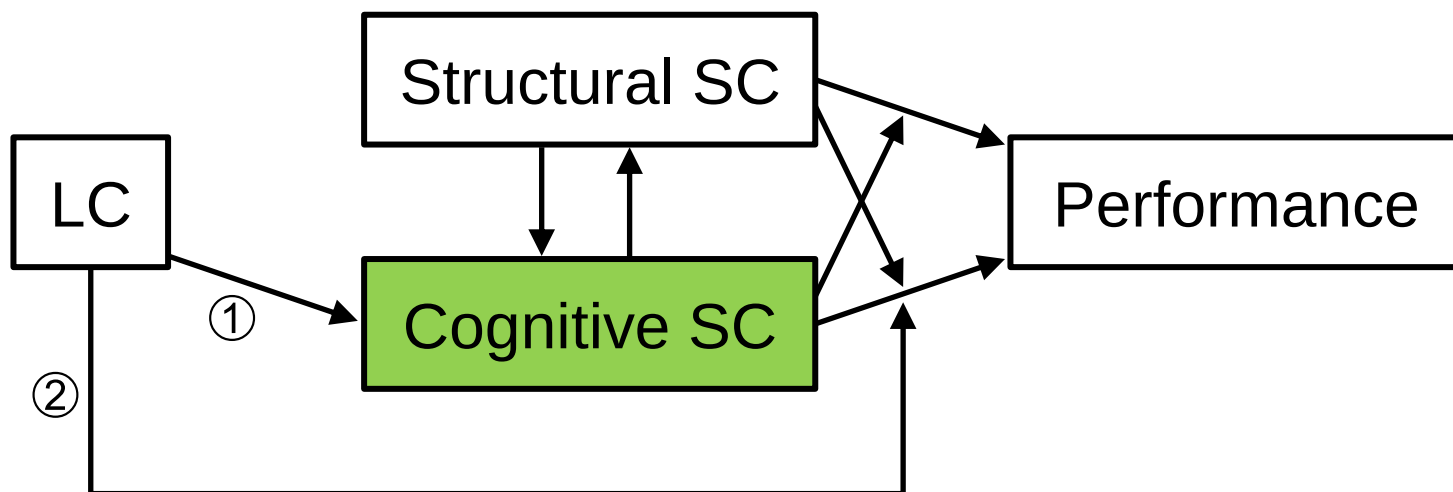
B. Linguistic capital: observed effect





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

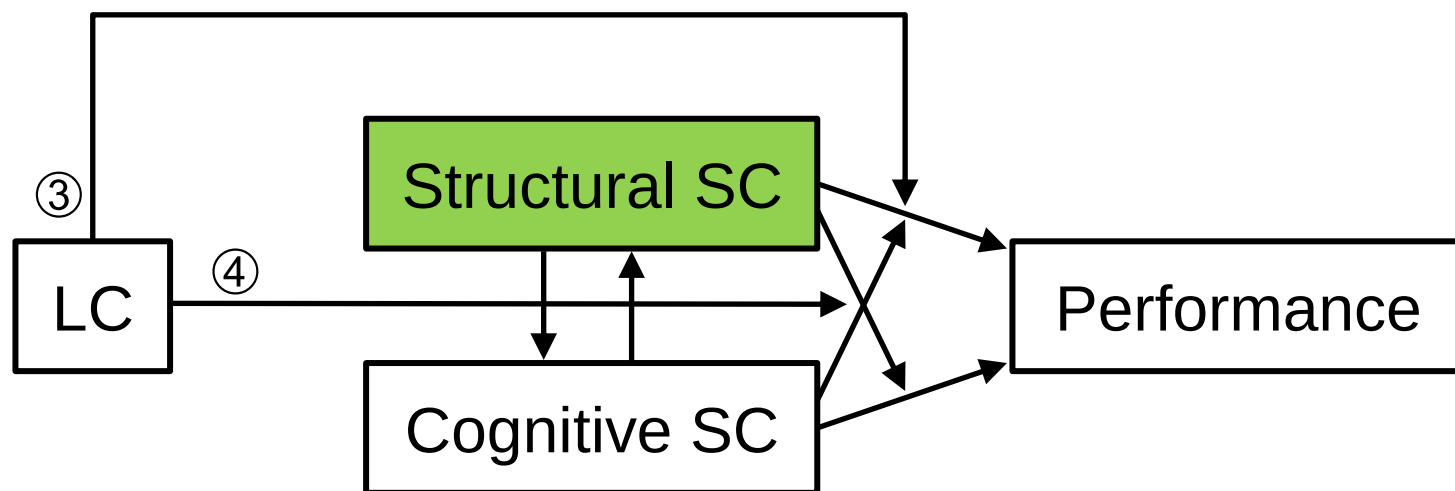
B. Linguistic capital: psychological effects (individual level)





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

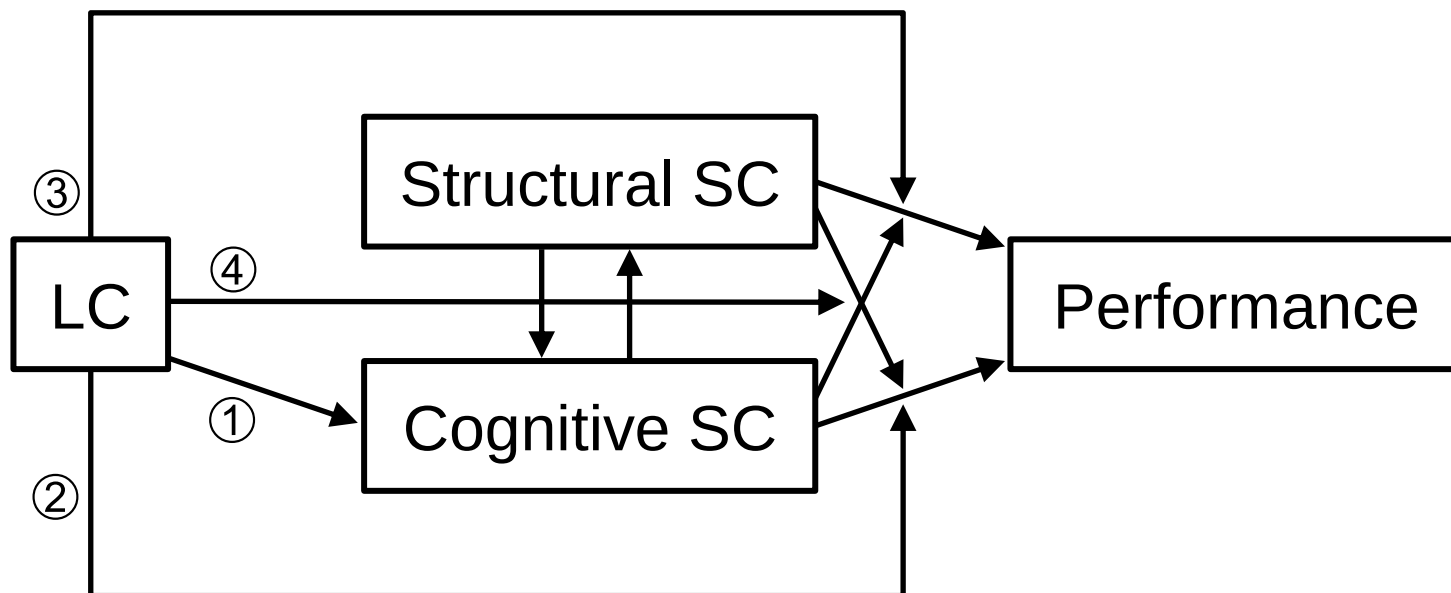
B. Linguistic capital: social effects (system level)





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

B. Linguistic capital: total effects





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

B. Tentative 2SLS regression with two independent variables:

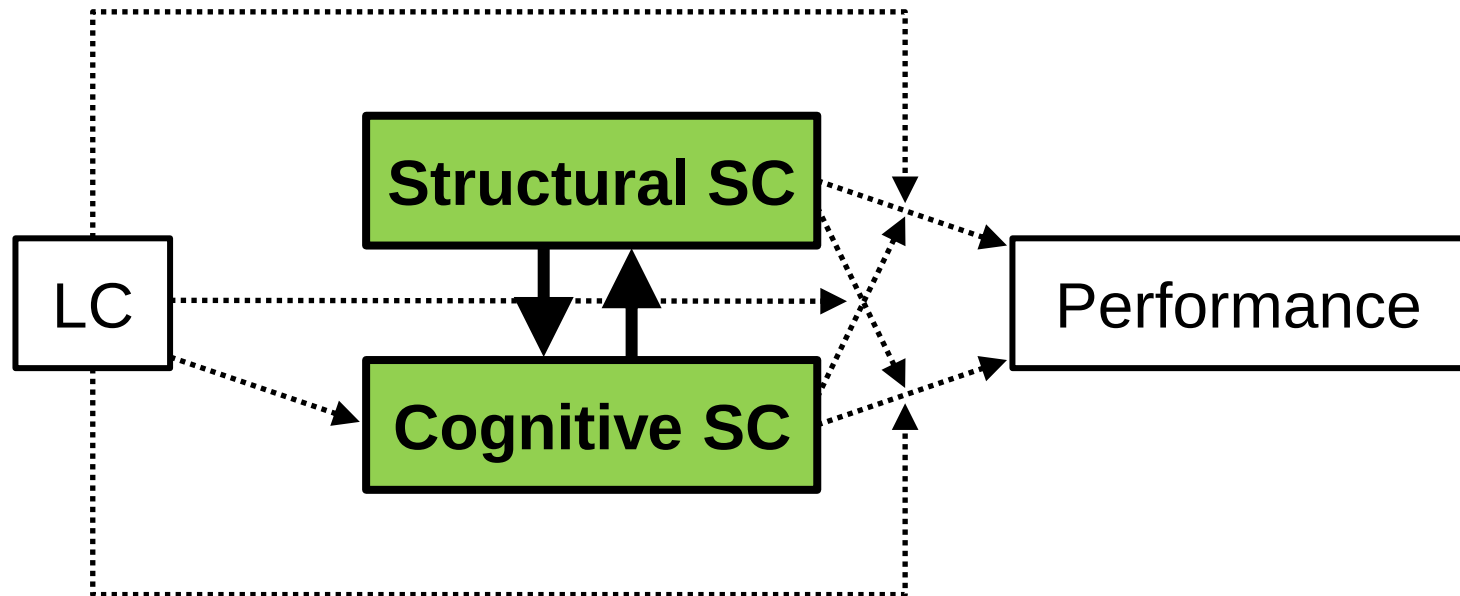
- LC = linguistic capital (instrument for cognitive SC)
- SSC = structural social capital

$$Y = \beta_0 + \underbrace{\beta_1 f(LC)}_{\textcircled{1}} + \underbrace{\beta_2 SSC f(LC)}_{\textcircled{2}\textcircled{3}\textcircled{4}} + e$$

Though exclusion restrictions are not satisfied!



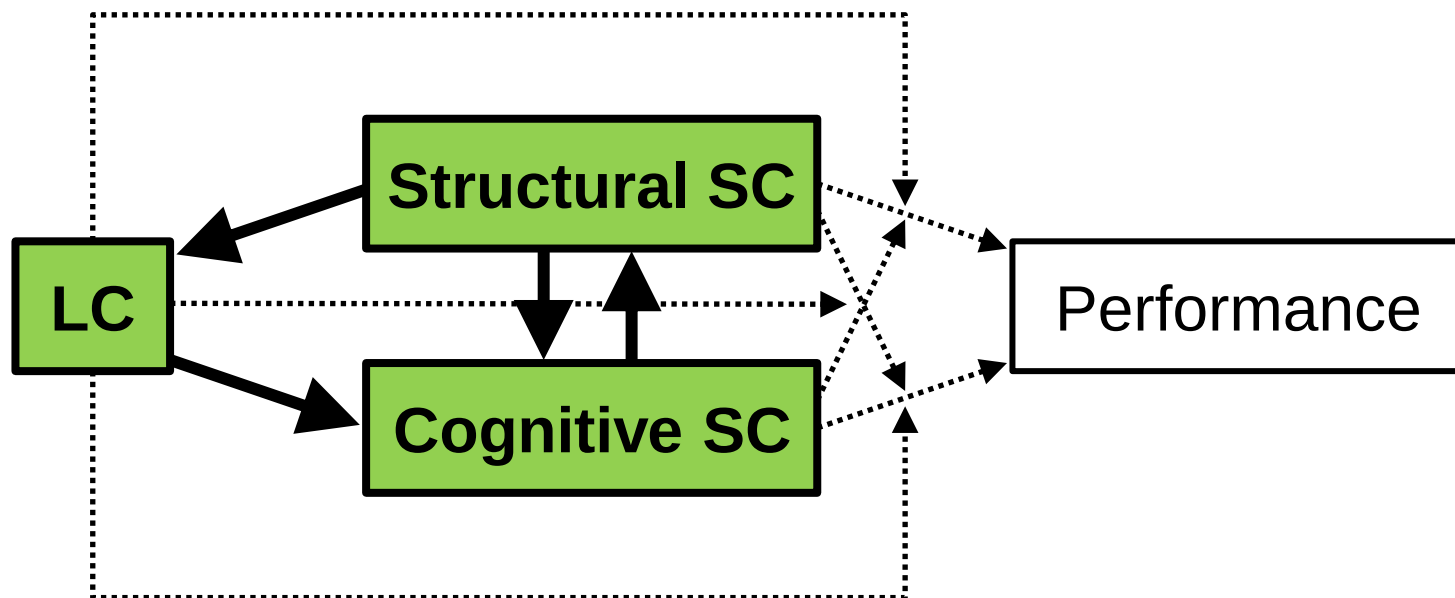
C. Accumulation of social capital





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

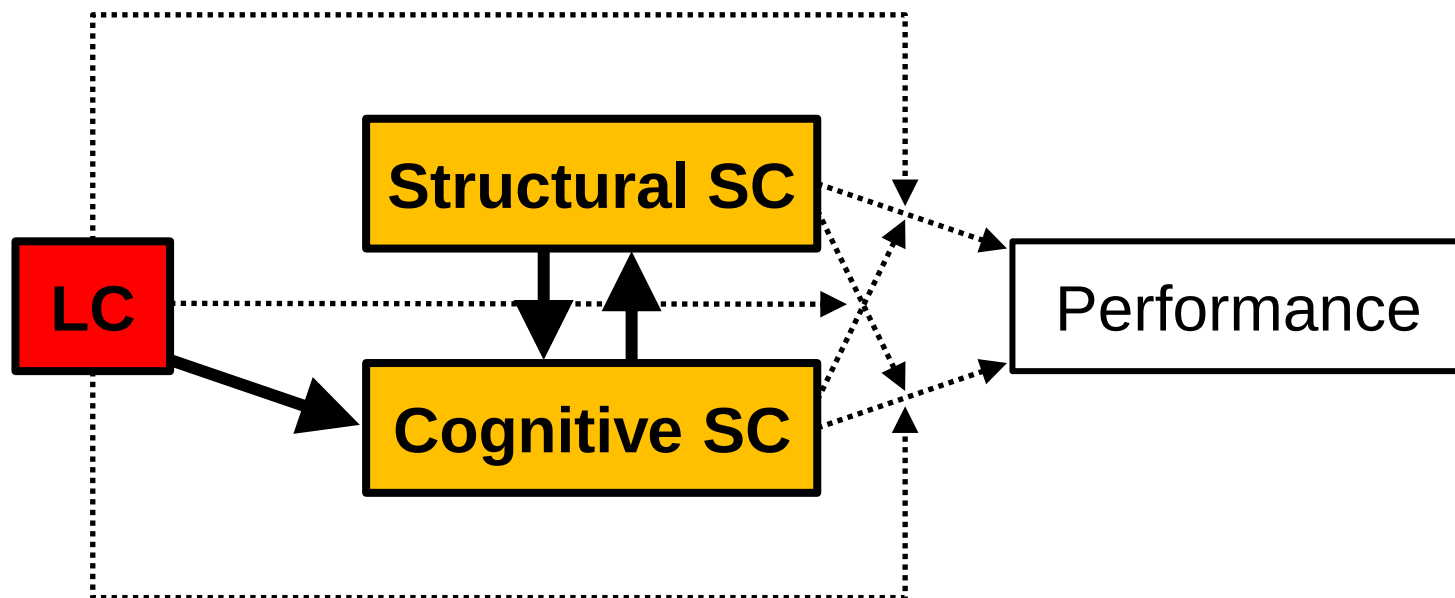
C. Accumulation of linguistic capital with language change





Linguistic capital: A neglected resource

C. Accumulation of linguistic capital with standardized language





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Italy once again: Making Democracy Speak

- Liutprand's Italy: Longobardia Maior and Longobardia Minor, 744





Longobardia Maior:

- High fragmentation (20–35 duchies, many gastaldias)
- Institutional instability, permanent internal competition
- After 774, full incorporation into the Frankish Empire

Longobardia Minor:

- Low fragmentation (2 duchies: Spoleto and Benevento)
- Institutional stability, no internal competition
- After 774, Benevento remained outside the Frankish Empire



Italy once again: Making Democracy Speak

North:

- High penetration of Germanic culture, e.g. *thing* (Gairethinx)
- Permanent competition among leaders and cities
- Binding legal norms of reciprocity (Launegild, Wadia)
- 1100–1150, quick revival of Roman Law
- 1200–1300, legal innovations (abolition of duels; factual evidence)
- 1300–1500, Commercial Revolution

South:

- Legal norms of reciprocity interpreted in an arbitrary fashion
- Stable political (i.e., administrative) institutions
- After 774, Benevento remained outside the Frankish Empire
- Slow revival of Roman Law, 12th–15th century



Italy once again: Making Democracy Speak

North:

- High salience of actors and property/properties in discourse
- Sudden social innovation, e.g. revival of Roman Law

➔ **Grammaticalization of subject clitics?**

South:

- Lower salience of relevant elements in discourse

➔ **Not enough input for grammaticalization?**

- Hesitant decline of Germanic law and traditions

➔ **No opportunity to grammaticalize?**



Summary:

Socio-economic effects of 'linguistic relativity' (Whorf 1956)

- Language structures as a stock of linguistic capital?
- Until around 1970, northern Italy had 'more' of this than the South
- In particular, SAE grammar seems to reinforce social capital

Speculative origins of SAE grammar in northern Italy:

- Lombard cultural and linguistic substratum?
- Frankish cultural and linguistic superstratum?
- Contact with contiguous languages within the Frankish empire?
- Interaction of all this with (the revival of) Roman traditions?



Thank you

Working paper shortly available at:

- <https://www.alexandria.unisg.ch/persons/person/M/>

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