



When linguistics and political science come together:

measuring the impact of deliberately used metaphors on citizens' perception of and opinions on political issues

Audrey VANDELEENE (Lund University)

Pauline HEYVAERT (ULg, UCLouvain)

Thomas LEGEIN (UCLouvain)

Frédérique DEPAS (ULg)

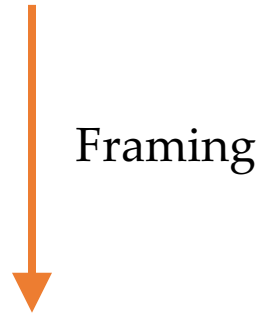
Jérémy DODEIGNE (UCLouvain, ULg)

Julien PERREZ (ULg)

Min REUCHAMPS (UCLouvain)

Towards an impact of metaphors on political preferences?

- METAPHORS – heuristic process of knowledge transfer



- POLITICAL PREFERENCES – depend on our understanding of the political arena

... but under which conditions ?

The mediating role of political knowledge

- Influential in shaping citizens' preferences and behavior
- May structure individuals' reaction to political information
 - Issue-based reasoning -> weaker impact of metaphors
 - Cue-based reasoning -> stronger impact of metaphors

Two vivid debates

The basic income

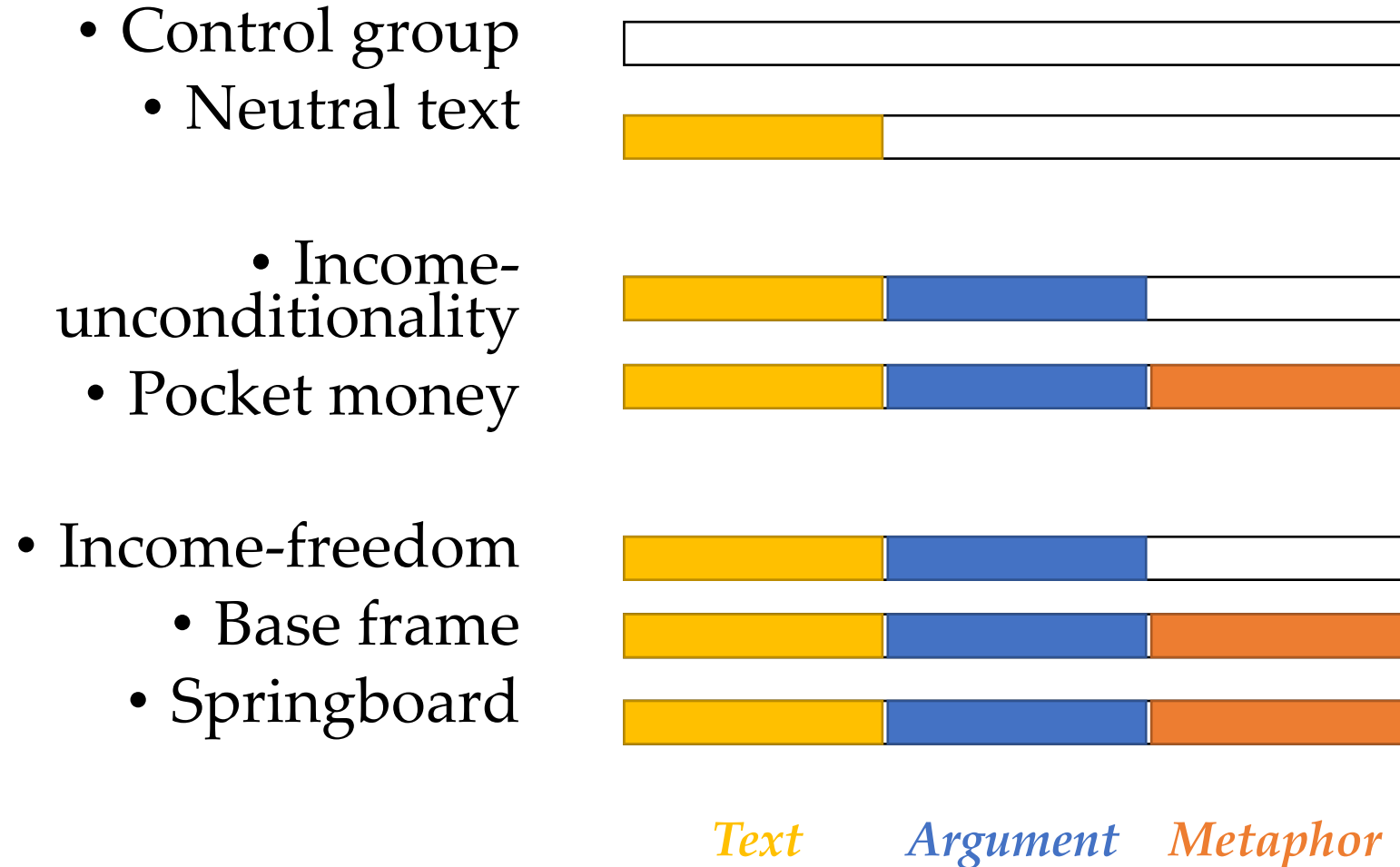
- *An income paid by a political community to all its members, on an individual basis, without means-test or compensation requirement*
- DV : Opportunity to implement ? (5-point Likert scale)

Belgian federalism

- *Balance of power between the Regions and the federal State*
- DV : Which degree of devolution ? (10-point Likert scale)

→ Metaphors may impact citizens' political preferences in a controversial debate

Experiment #1: BASIC INCOME



Revenue-unconditionality

- “We could see it as an income that citizens receive from the State by the very fact that they are members of it.”

Pocket money

- “We could see it as *pocket money* that citizens receive from the State like *children* receive it by the very fact that they are members of the *family*”

Income-freedom

- “We could see it as an income supplied by the State so that citizens can freely live their life without having to be concerned about material constraints.”

Base frame

- “We could see it as *a base frame* supplied by the State so that the citizens can *build* their life freely without having to be concerned about material constraints.”

Springboard

- “We could see it as *a springboard* supplied by the State so that the citizens can freely *launch* themselves into life without any material constraints.”

Results: IMPACT OF METAPHORS?

Mother Occupation (no profession)	0.43	(0.33)
Mother Occupation (worker)	-0.18	(0.48)
Mother Occupation (senior executive)	-0.35	(0.29)
Mother Occupation (accredited profession)	0.23	(0.32)
Father Occupation (no profession)	-0.31	(0.49)
Father Occupation (worker)	-0.24	(0.36)
Father Occupation (senior executive)	-0.04	(0.27)
Father Occupation (accredited profession)	-0.04	(0.32)
No prior knowledge of the basic income	0.36*	(0.21)
Political Interest	-0.05	(0.05)
Evaluation of the Economy	0.05	(0.06)
Salary as reward	-0.10**	(0.04)
State Intervention	0.03	(0.05)
Left-Right self-positioning	-0.15***	(0.05)
Group: Neutral text	-1.25	(1.06)
Group: Pocket money	-0.96	(1.01)
Group: Income-Unconditionality	-1.90**	(0.97)
Group: Base frame	-2.26**	(1.02)
Group: Springboard	-1.57	(1.02)
Group: Income-Freedom	-2.00**	(0.97)
Political Knowledge	-0.60**	(0.25)
Group: Neutral text + Pol. Knowledge	0.64*	(0.35)
Group: Pocket money + Pol. Knowledge	0.27	(0.31)
Group: Income-Uncond. + Pol. Knowledge	0.50	(0.31)
Group: Base frame + Pol. Knowledge	0.90***	(0.34)
Group: Springboard + Pol. Knowledge	0.58*	(0.33)
Group: Income-Freedom + Pol. Knowledge	0.56*	(0.32)
Constant	4.01***	(0.97)
Observations	599	
Log Likelihood	-299.85	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	655.70	

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01



Do arguments and/or metaphors impact the political preferences ?

- Compared to the control group,
 - Neutral text (NS) =

ARGUMENTS

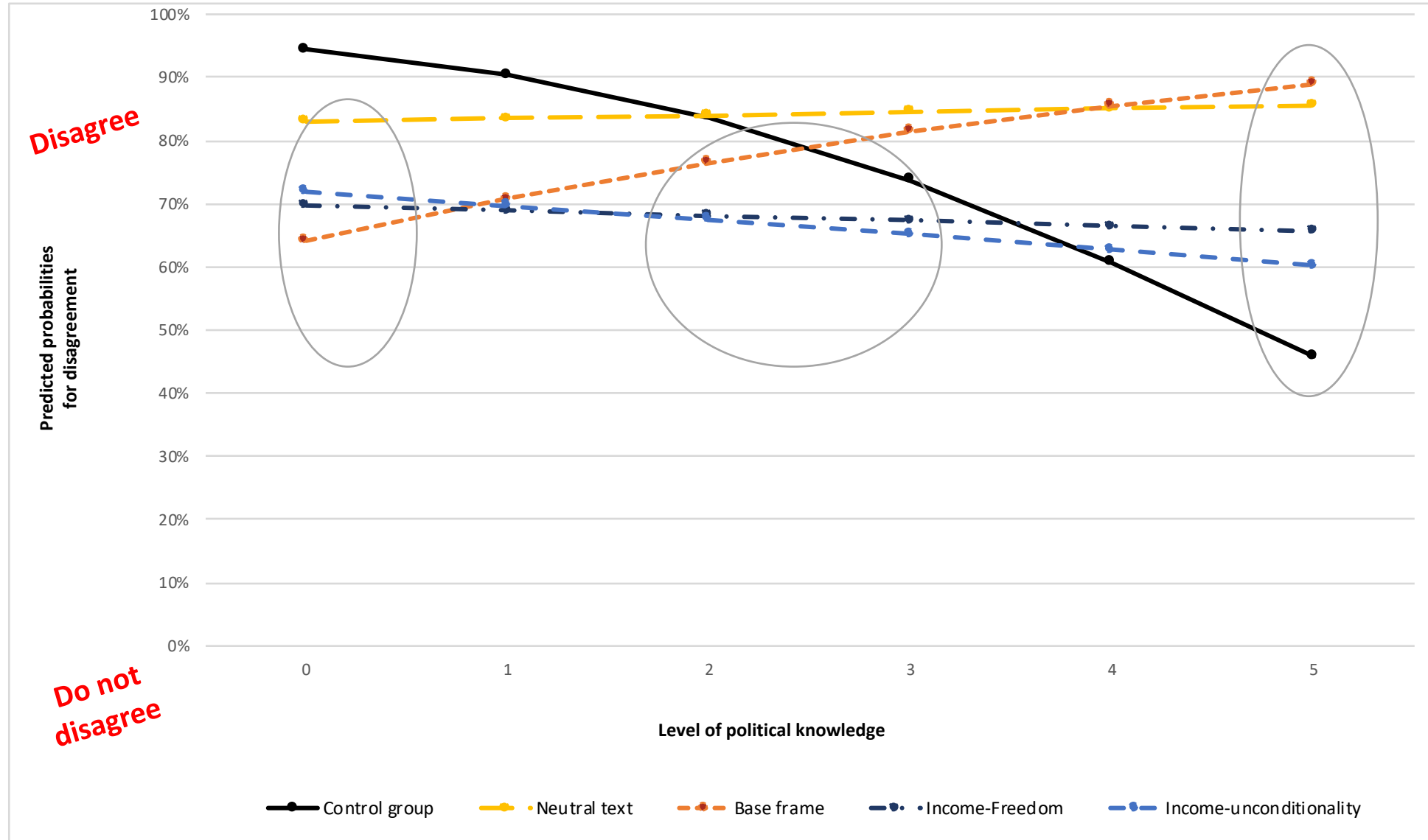
- Unconditionality (-1.90) ** +
- Freedom (-2.00) ** +

METAPHORS

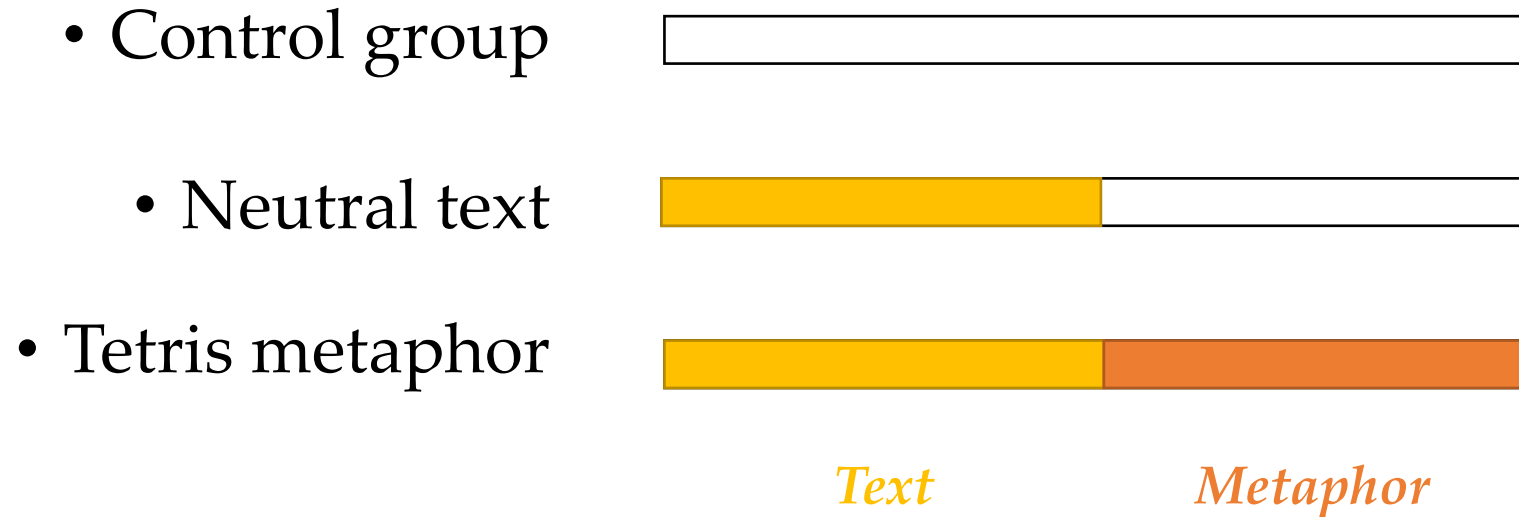
- Base frame (-2.26) **  
- Pocket money (NS) =
- Springboard (NS) =

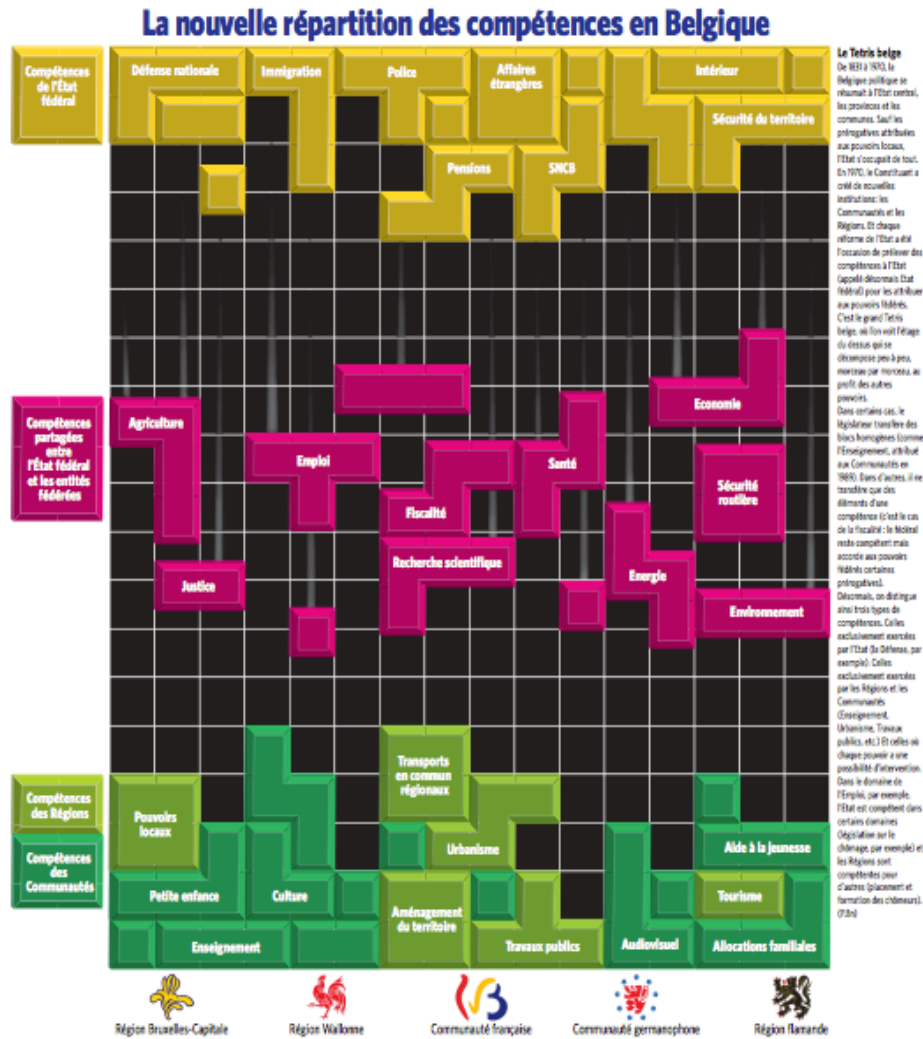
Pol. know.

The varied impact of political knowledge



Experiment #2: BELGIAN FEDERALISM





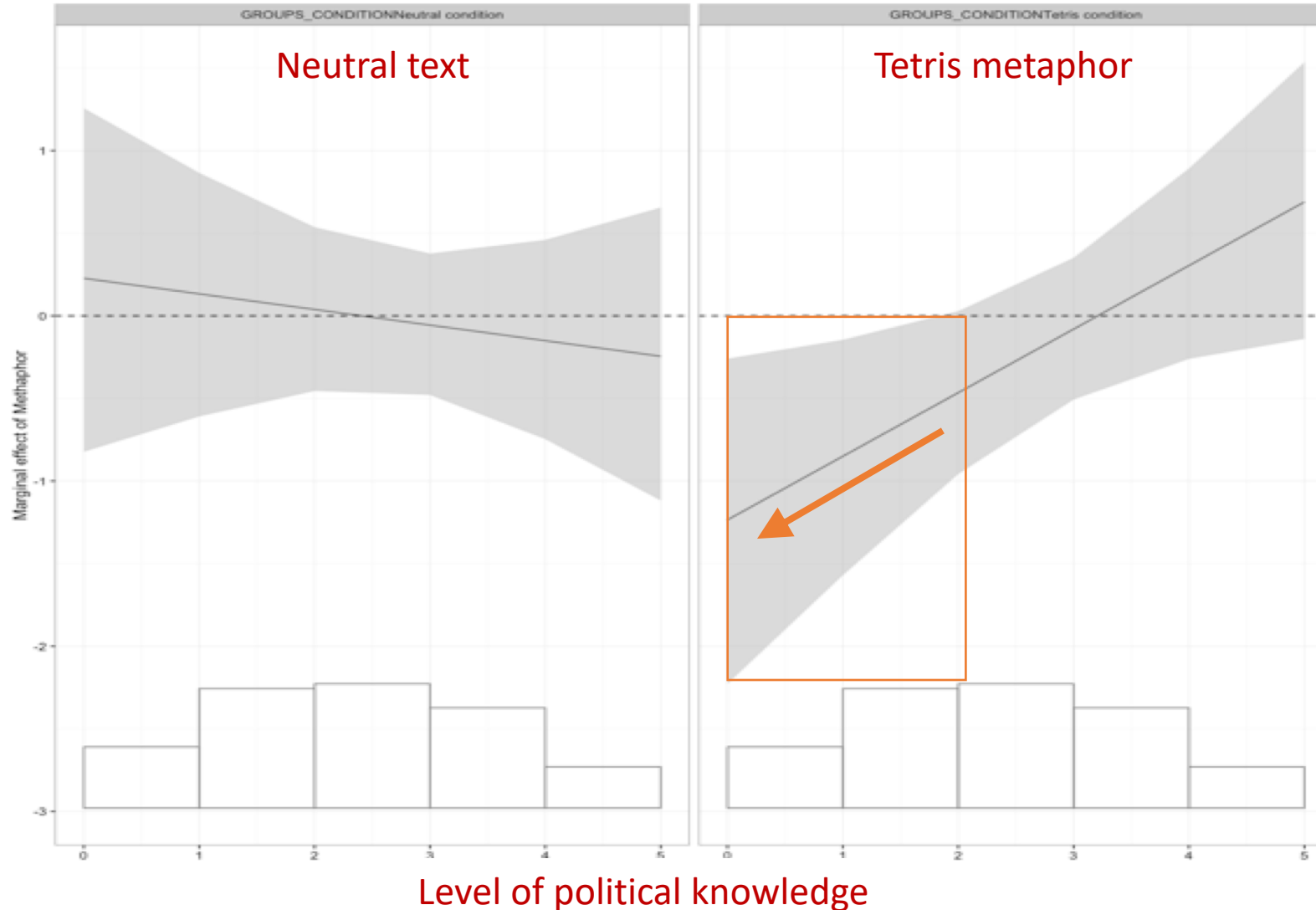
Neutral text

- And every state reform has been the occasion to take competences from the state (from there on called the federal state) to redistribute them to federal authorities. In certain cases, the legislator is transferring homogeneous competences ...

Tetris

- And every state reform has been the occasion to take competences from the state (from there on called the federal state) to redistribute them to federal authorities. This is the big Belgian Tetris, where we see the upper floor that is falling apart (decomposing), block by block, at the benefit of other authorities. In certain cases, the legislator is transferring homogeneous blocks ...

The varied impact of political knowledge



Conclusion

- Critical impact of metaphors
 - Not all metaphors played the same role
 - Depending on the level of political knowledge
- Relevance of the labeling of political concepts and of the images used to illustrate political opinions
- Relevance of being aware of the target group of a political discourse

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Thank you for your attention !

