

How do speaker accents affect children's preferences as to who to learn new skills and conventions from?

Introduction

During development, children are selective about who they choose to learn from.

- When it comes to learning language, previous research has shown that children make judgments based on speaker accents, as well as speaker reliability and familiarity. (Kinzler et al., 2007, Corriveau et al., 2009, Wagner et al., 2014)
- No research has focused specifically on the effects of children's socio-indexical features such as their age and gender.

Research Questions

- Can we replicate the previously reported effect of talker accent (i.e., English speaking children prefer to learn new knowledge from a native as opposed to a non-native talker) with children younger than 5?
- How do the children's own demographics (such as age and gender) play a role in their preferences for speakers?

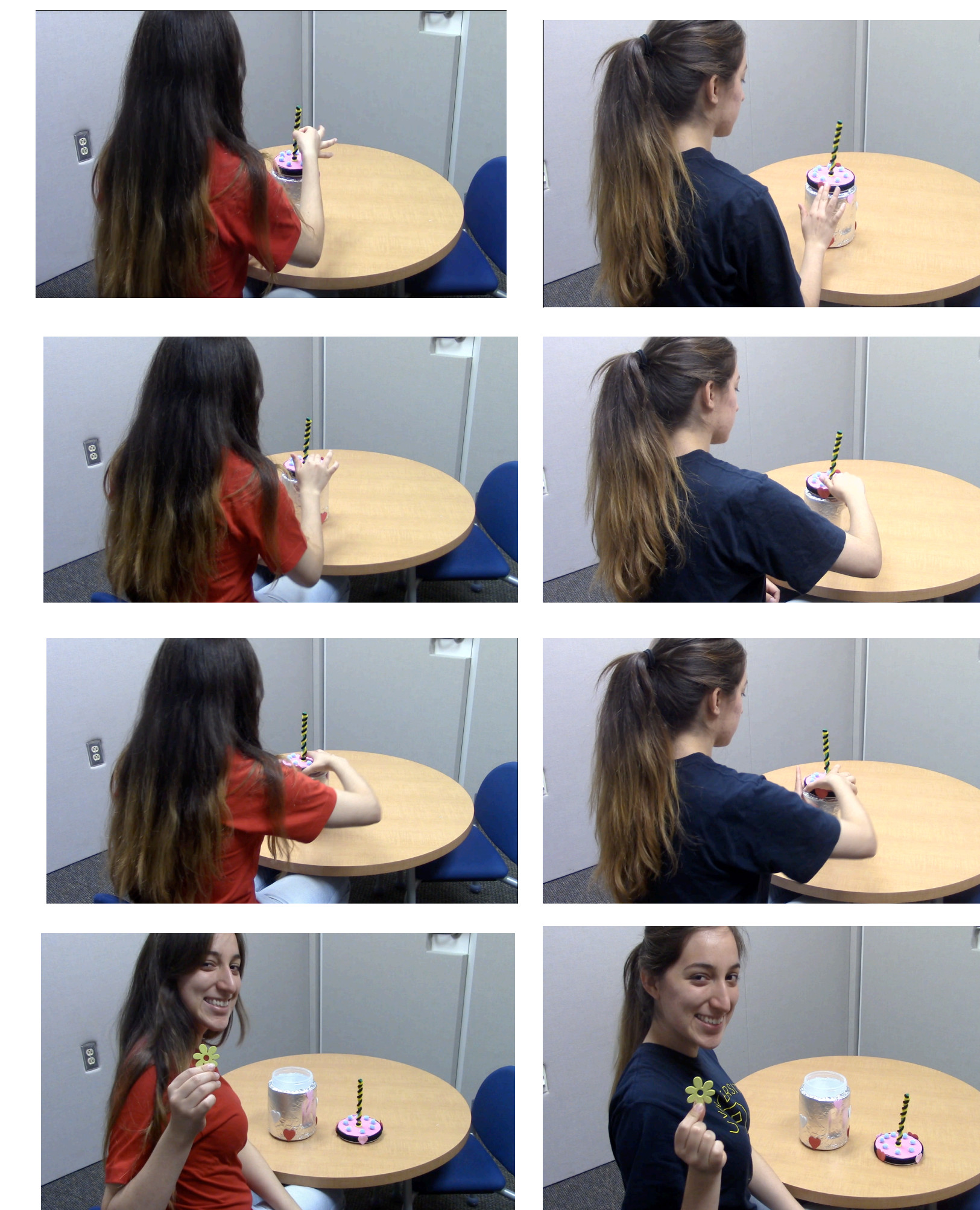
Methods

Participants

➤ 15 Males, 21 Females, Ages 4-7 (*mean age*= 4;8 *SD*=.86)

Procedure

Children are presented with two speakers demonstrate how to use 4 novel toys. After viewing both speakers wield each of the toys, they are asked to interact with it on their own.



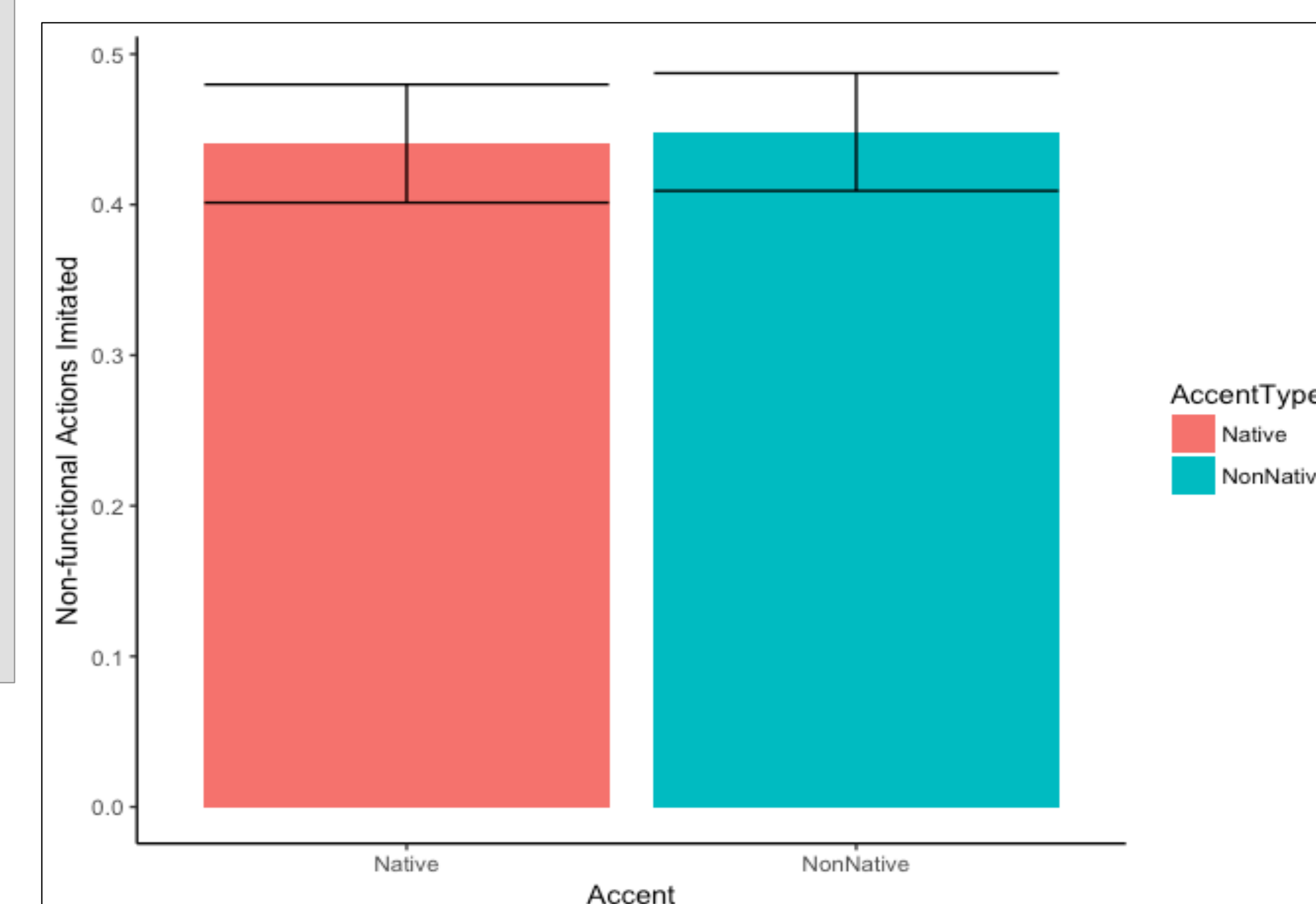
Speaker 1

Speaker 2

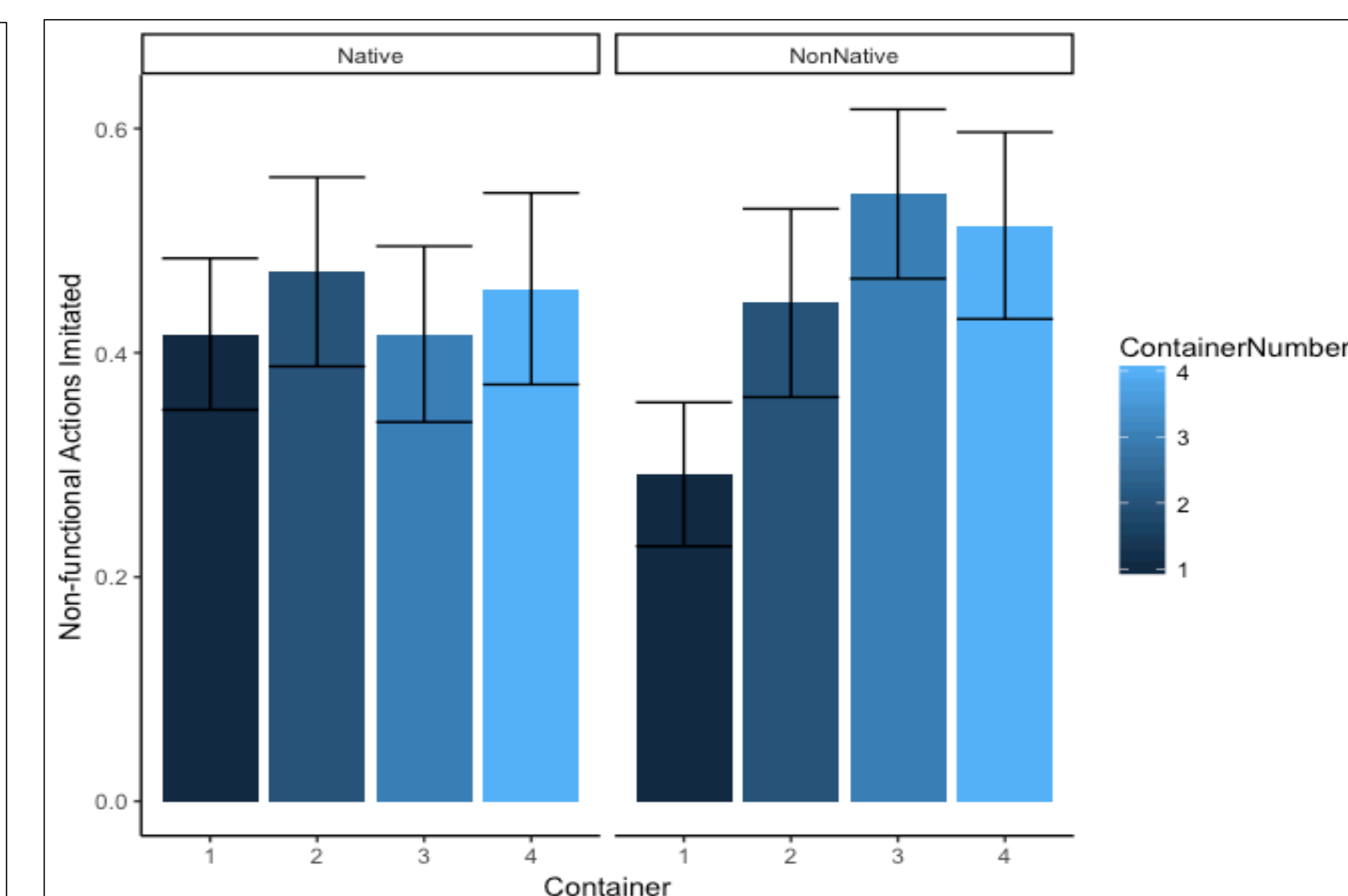
<p>Here is the bungle and here is how I play with it. First, I flick the straw like this. [NF]</p>	<p>Here is the bungle and here is how I play with it. First, I touch each heart on the lid. [NF]</p>
<p>Then, I touch three of the blue poms. [NF]</p>	<p>Then, I knock on the lid four times. [NF]</p>
<p>Finally, I twist and pull the top off. [F]</p>	<p>Finally, I twist and pull the top off. [F]</p>
<p>Then I reach in, and grab my prize.</p>	<p>Then I reach in, and grab my prize.</p>

NF = Non Functional; F = Functional

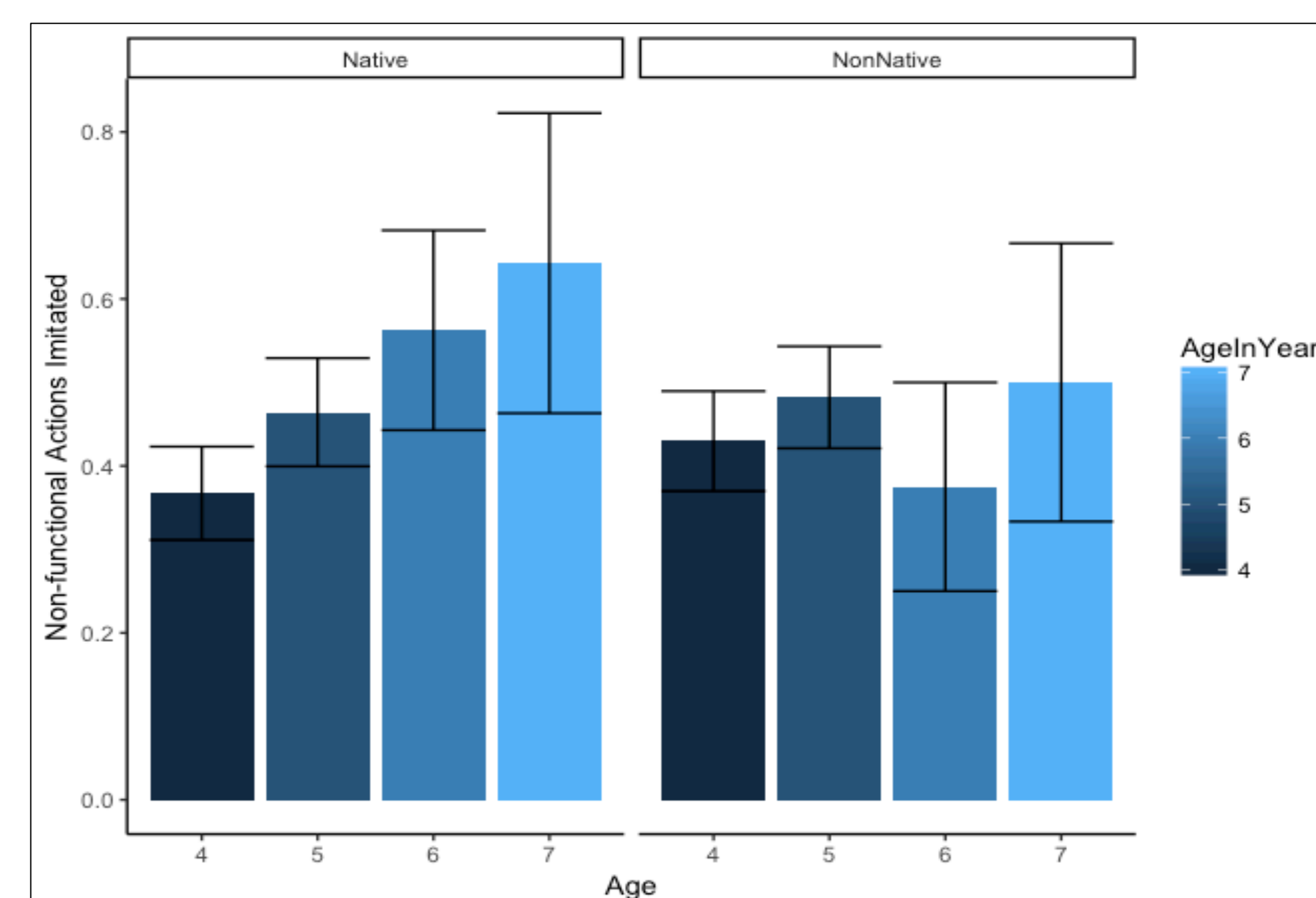
Results



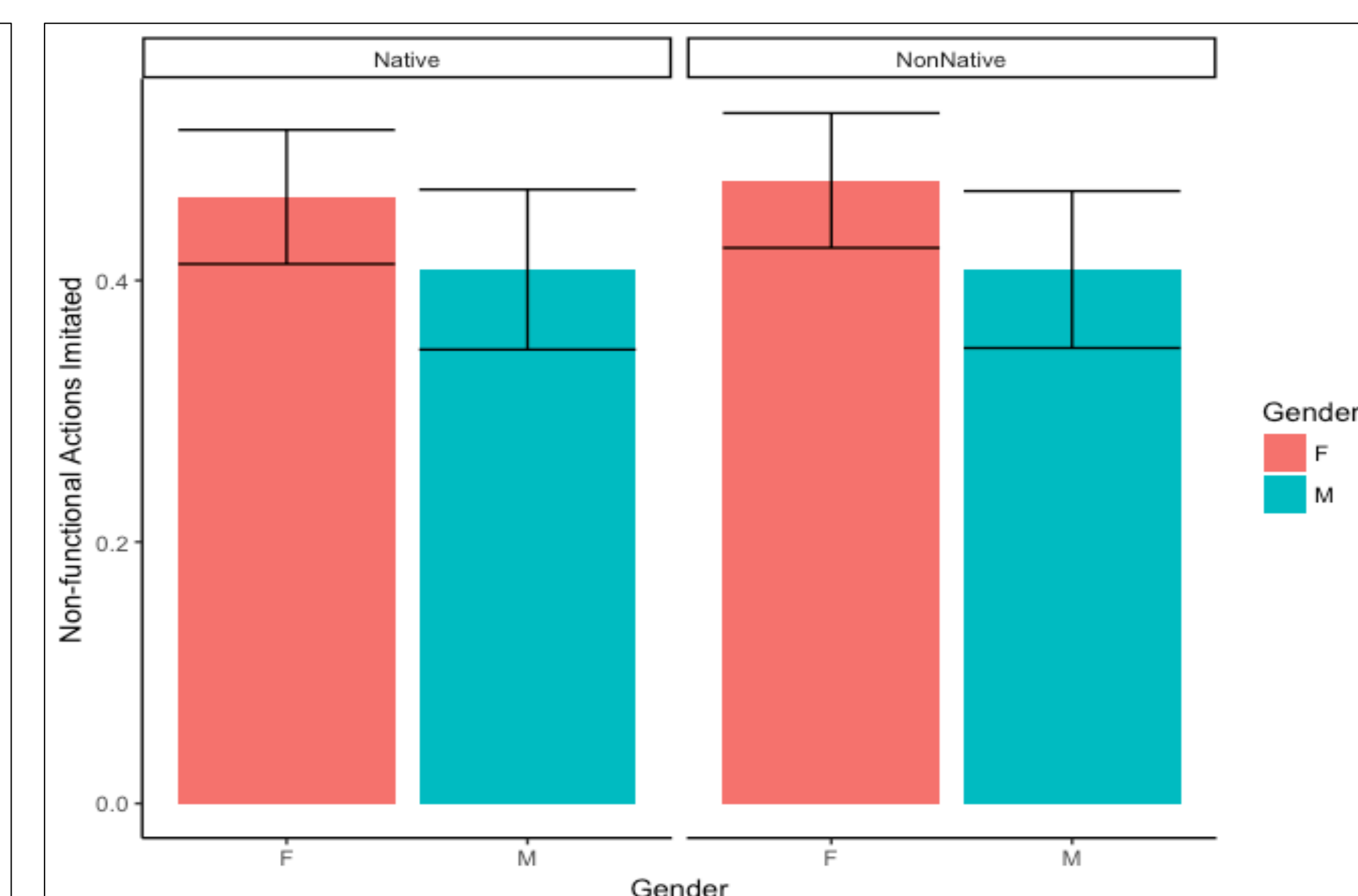
NF imitation by accent type



NF imitation by container (toy) type



NF imitation by age



NF imitation by gender

Conclusion

The older children become, the more likely they are to imitate the native speaker's actions, as opposed to the nonnative speakers. They show preference for speakers who sound most similar to themselves.

A special thanks to child participants for their cooperation and to the Kinder lab for their helpful comments on this project.