

# The Effect of Foreign Accent on Children's Learning of New Knowledge

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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**

- 1) 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?
- 2) How do the children's own demographics (such as age and gender) play a role in their preferences for speakers?

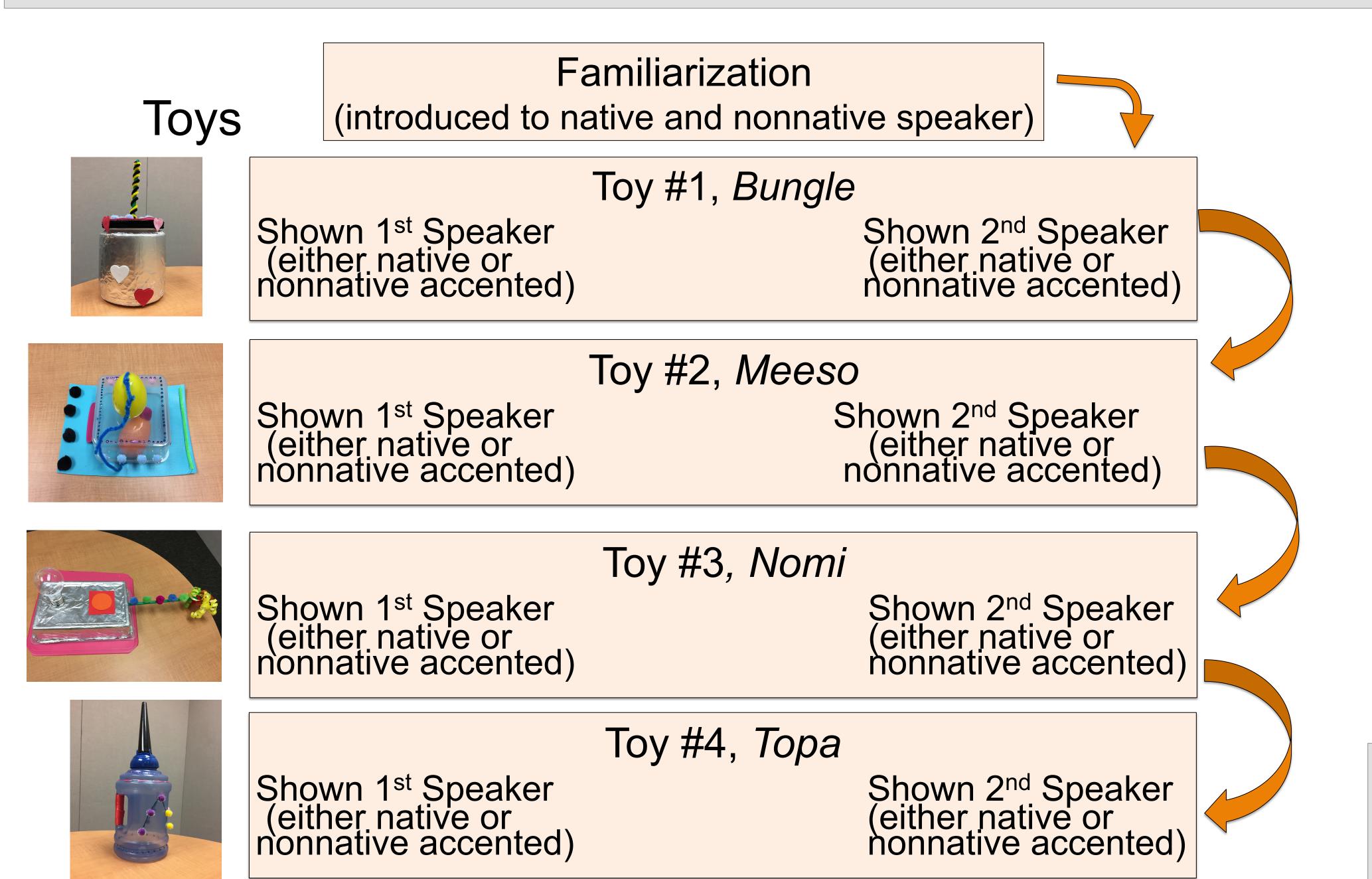
## Methods

### 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.

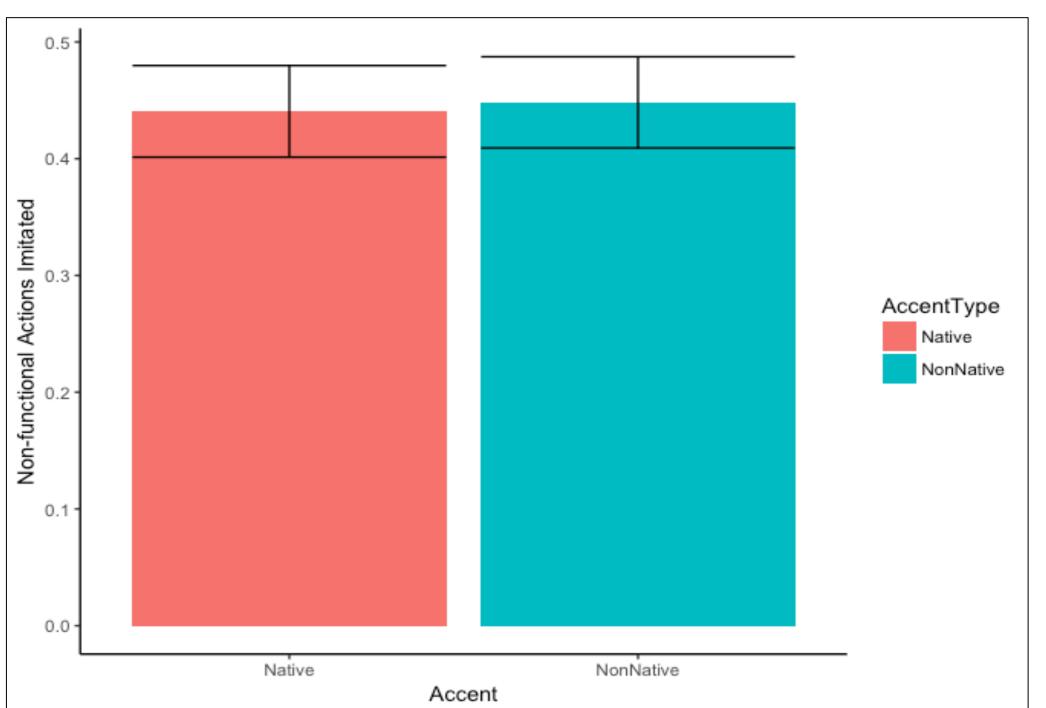


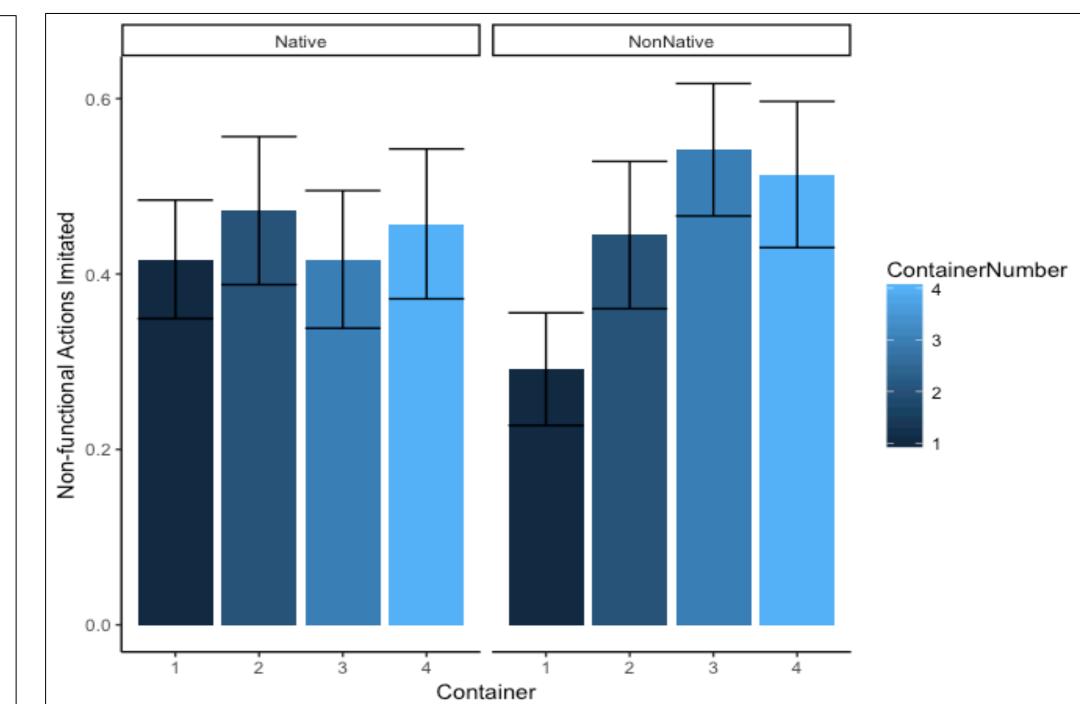
Corriveau, K., & Harris, P. L. (2009). Choosing your informant: Weighing familiarity and recent accuracy. Kinzler, K. D., Dupoux, E., & Spelke, E. S. (2007). The native language of social cognition. Wagner, L., Dunfield, K. A., & Rohrbeck, K. L. (2014). Children's use of social cues when learning conventions.

#### Speaker 2 Speaker 1 Here is the bungle and Here is the bungle and here is how I play with it. here is how I play with it. First, I flick the straw like First, I touch each heart on the lid. [NF] |[NF] Then, I touch three of the Then, I knock on the lid blue poms. four times. [NF] Finally, I twist and pull the Finally, I twist and pull the top off. [F] top off. Then I reach in, and grab Then I reach in, and grab my prize. my prize.

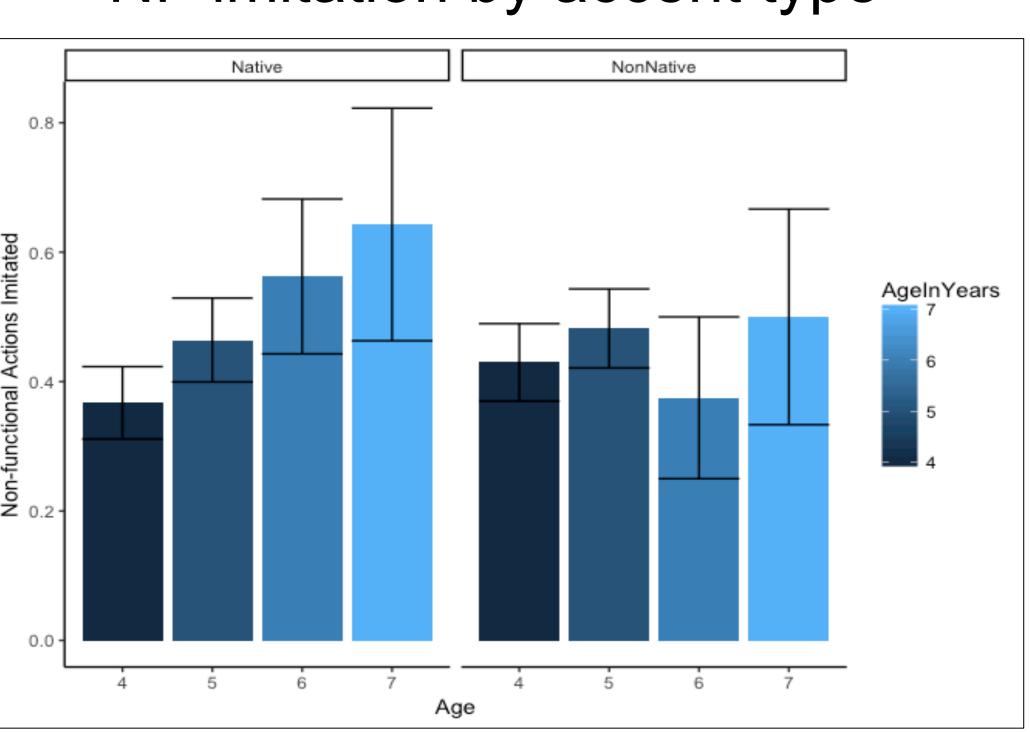
NF = Non Functional; F = Functional

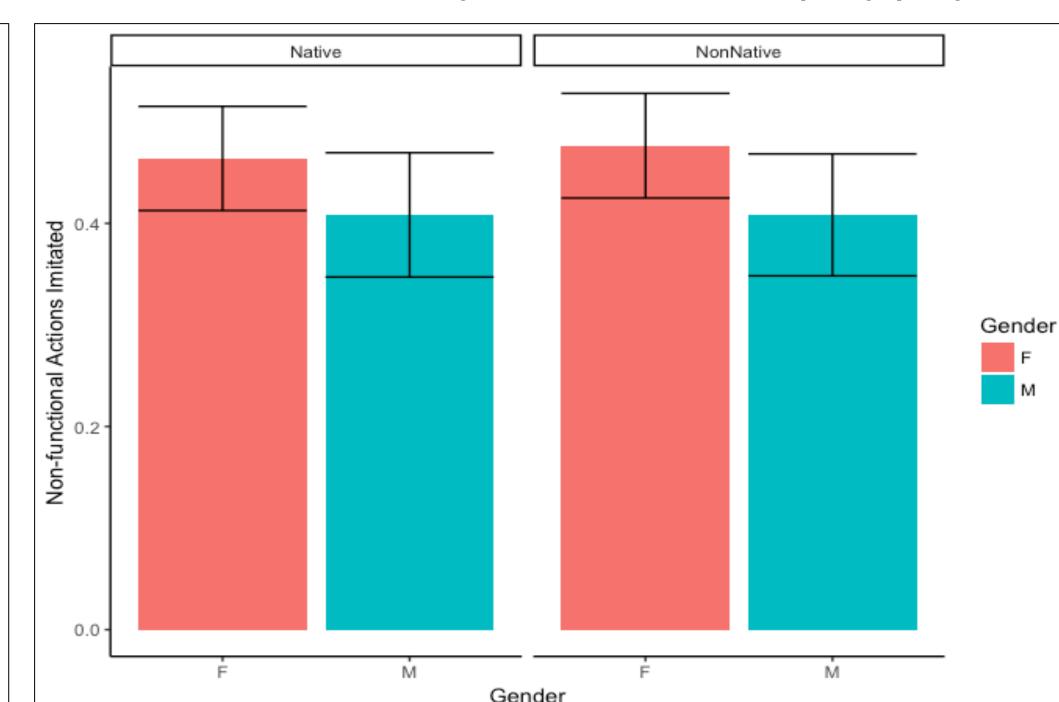
# Results





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.