

# Visual Attention to Faces of Unfamiliar vs. Familiar Language Speakers Varies by Infant's Language Background

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## INTRODUCTION

### Language experience modulates gaze behaviors

- Monolingual & bilingual infants attend differently to faces of familiar vs. unfamiliar language speakers<sup>1</sup>, cf. <sup>2</sup>
- Monolingual infants prefer to look at native language speakers than nonnative language speakers<sup>3</sup>

### Language experience affects communicative development

- Compared to monolingual children, bilinguals show enhanced social-communicative skills<sup>4</sup>

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do infants' early language experiences affect patterns of visual social attention?
2. How do linguistic & social cues drive infants' attention?

## METHOD

Participants: 15- to 24-month-olds\*

	Monolingual (n=47, 20 F)	Bilingual (n=42, 15 F)
Age (mos)	19.07 ± 2.84	18.53 ± 3.08
English exposure	92.60% ± 18.17% range: 85-100%**	56% ± 19.53% range: 20-80%

\* No infants were exposed to Armenian

\*\* 2 infants had 10% English exposure

### Task: Free viewing task of bilingual speakers talking

- 6 randomly ordered 20-24 sec videos
  - 3 in English (familiar lang)
  - 3 in Armenian (unfamiliar lang)



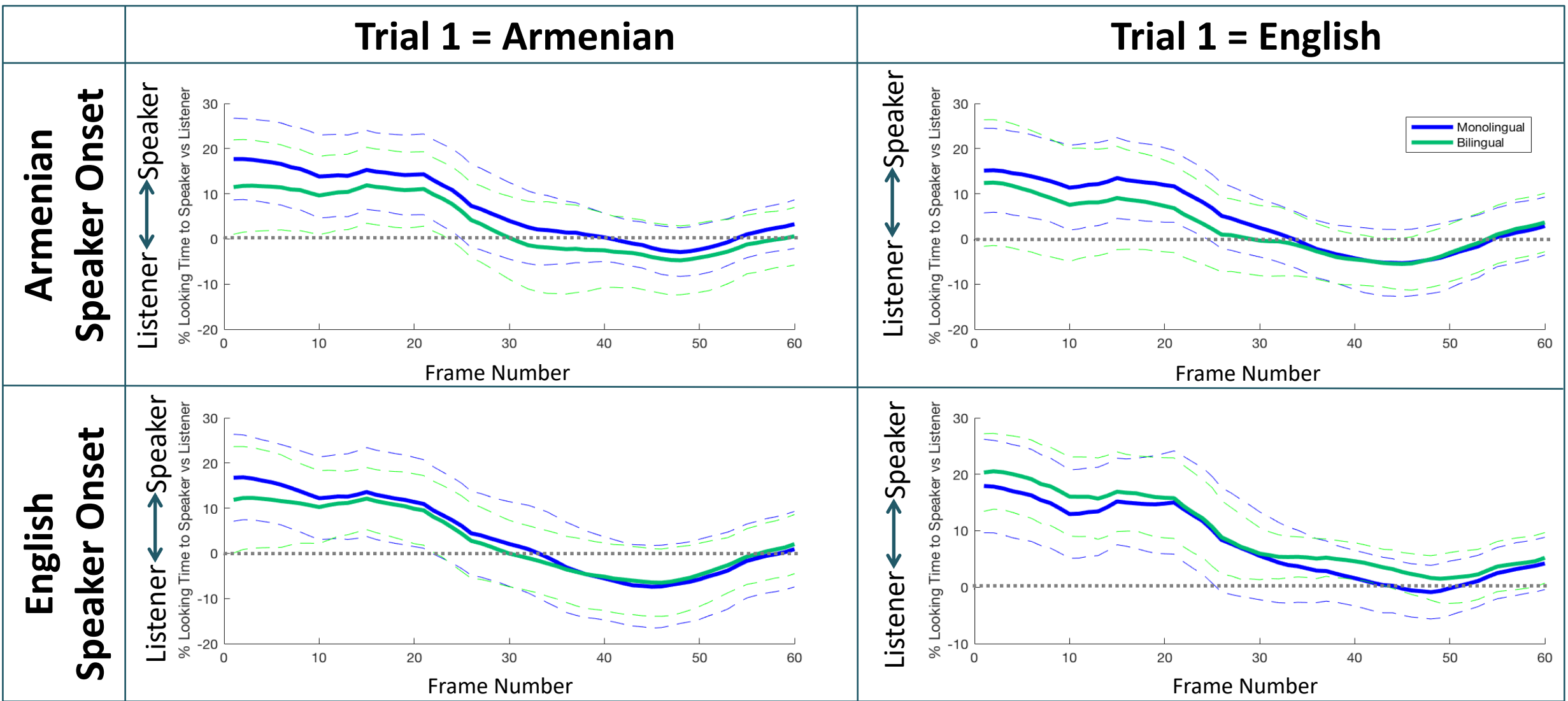
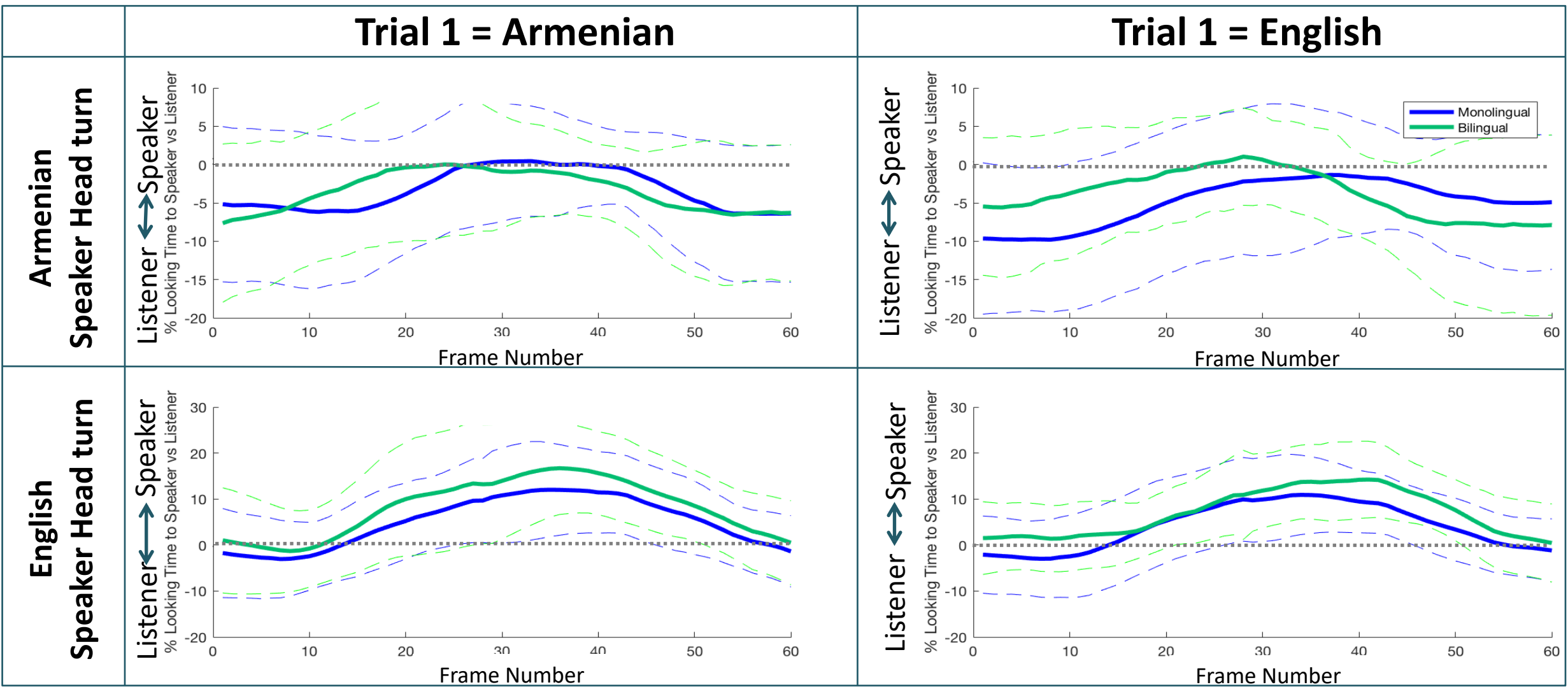
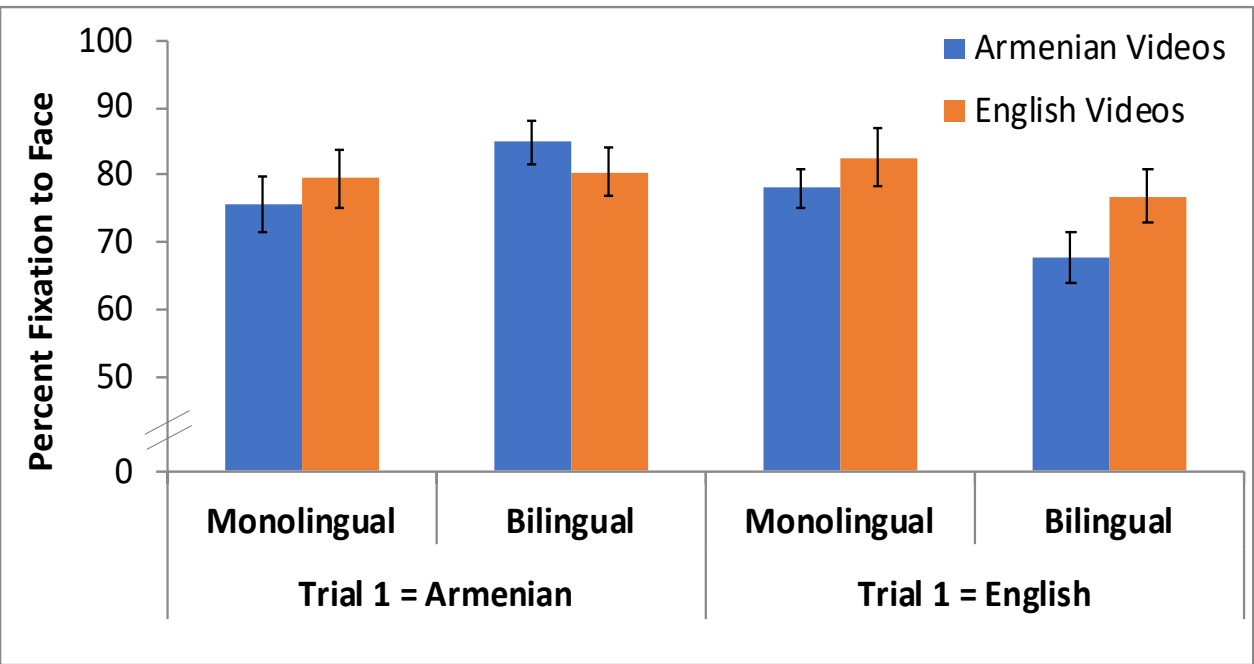
## RESULTS

### Infants' pattern of looking to bilingual speakers varies by what language was spoken in Trial 1

- Infants looked less to faces in Armenian videos when Trial 1 was in English,  $F(1,61)=4.321$ ,  $p=.04$

### Infants' pattern of looking may be driven more by head turns than speech onset

- Infants equally likely to orient to the speaker vs. listener during Armenian videos, but oriented more to the speaker during English videos



## DISCUSSION

### First encounter with a bilingual speaker affects bilingual infants' visual social attention

- Trial 1 language affected attention to faces in subsequent videos
- More looking to faces in Armenian videos when Trial 1 was in Armenian, but less looking to Armenian videos when Trial 1 was in English

### Infants' familiarity with a social-linguistic context affects visual social attention

- Infants' familiarity with a language may influence the way they attend to speakers more so than the infants' language background (e.g., monolingual vs. bilingual)
- In line with research showing monolingual infants' & children's preference for native over nonnative language speakers<sup>2</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

- Examine how visual social attention may be modulated by individual differences in early language experiences and language, communication, & socialization skills

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