

Effects of Embedding Decontextualized Language during Book-Sharing Delivered by Fathers in Turkey

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of embedding decontextualized language cues during book-sharing delivered by fathers living in low socioeconomic status (SES) in Turkey. After the intervention was introduced dyads with limited interactions in baseline showed significant increases and the contextualized talk in baseline was replaced with greater decontextualized talk.

Introduction

- A gap of 30-million words heard by many low-income children often has long-term consequences including language delays, reading problems, and school failure⁵.
- Parents in low SES households use limited decontextualized language in child narrative, book-sharing, toy play, and meal times activities without any parent training and guidance².
- Fathers' and mothers' child-directed speech have additive and potentially complementary effects on language development^{1,7}.
- Decontextualized language embedded in book-sharing can help prepare children for later school success by adding comments to stories, relating stories to children's lives, and explaining new vocabulary and unfamiliar concepts^{3, 4, 6}.

Research Question

To what extent do fathers living in low SES homes incorporate decontextualized language into book sharing when prompted through reminders and scripted examples of decontextualized utterances? Do these changes maintain when examples are removed from the books?

Method

Design: A multiple baseline design across behaviors evaluated the effects of intervention on decontextualized language and dyadic interaction outcomes.

Participants: Four (4) father-child dyads living in Istanbul, Turkey.

Curriculum:

- Seven storybooks with embedded decontextualized language instructions.
- An audio-recorder and a mobile phone voice recorder application (WhatsApp©) to record storybook reading sessions at home.
- A sequence of four training videos (2-4 minutes each).



Procedures:

- Initial parent orientation.
- The book reading sessions occurred in the dyads' homes for 7 weeks.
- The researcher communicated with father-child dyads through WhatsApp and home-visits.
- The order of introducing decontextualized language strategies was counterbalanced among the participants.
- Dyads practiced each decontextualized language strategy for 2 books. Each book was read in three consecutive sessions.
- These three sessions included two readings with embedded text cues and one generalization session, reading the book without text cues.

Results

Table 1. Decontextualized language coding definitions and examples

Coding Units	Definitions	Examples
Decontextualized Language Categories		
Text-to-life	Text-to-life talk includes comments and questions referring to the child's experience such as past and future events as well as people, places and things that are removed from the context.	"You also have a green shirt, don't you?" "We saw a big puppy on the street." "The puppy dances like you danced on the stage."
Explanatory	The explanatory talk includes novel information such as definitions, classifications, and comparisons for the instruction purposes.	"A ballerina is a woman who dances ballet." "Flower is a type of plant." "Plants cannot walk, but animals and humans can walk."
Interpretation	Interpretation talk includes predictions, comments, questions, reasoning and inferences on people, actions, events, and emotions.	"What do you think the puppy is going to do next?" "I wonder if the puppy is happy." "Why do you think the puppy is unhappy?"

Figure 1. Total number of decontextualized utterances produced by Dyad 1. Open symbols = generalization.

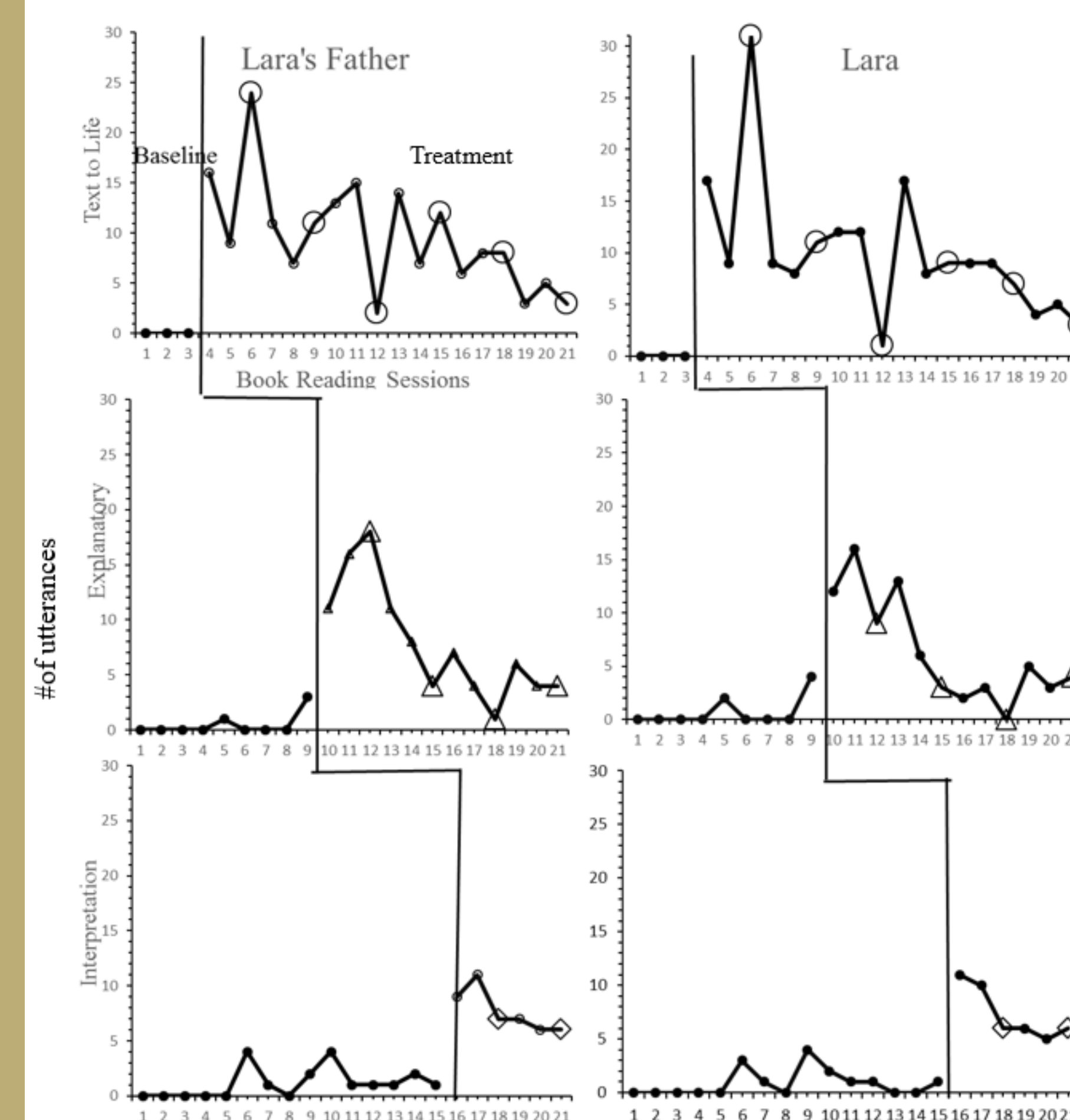


Table 2. The Tau U effect sizes of the intervention on decontextualized language utterances of Fathers and Children

	Father	Child
Dyad 1	Tau U = 1, p < .01	Tau U = 0.93, p < .01
Dyad 2	Tau U = .88, p = .01	Tau U = .92, p < .01
Dyad 3	Tau U = 1, p < .01	Tau U = 1, p < .01
Dyad 4	Tau U = .92, p = .01	Tau U = .83, p = .03

Conclusions

- In line with the findings of previous studies conducted with mothers^{3, 4}, fathers living in Istanbul could improve their child-directed conversations; resulting in an increase in child decontextualized language utterances.
- Two main patterns were observed during baseline book reading sessions. Dyad 1 and Dyad 3 engaged in minimal extra-textual talk, whereas Dyad 2 and Dyad 4 had a large amount of contextualized utterances.
- Fathers could be effective conversation partners with their preschool-aged children when the appropriate training and resources are provided.
- Fathers can perform three decontextualized language strategies and extend the conversations not only in training sessions, but also in generalization sessions.
- Children of fathers using decontextualized language utterances mirror their fathers' modeled language. Note that text cues in the books were designed to prompt only fathers' decontextualized language usage.

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