

Caregiver Interactions with Children with Language Impairment in a Latino and Non-Latino Sample



Tatiana Nogueira Peredo, Kelsey M. Dillehay, Ann P. Kaiser
Department of Special Education

Introduction

The goal of this descriptive study was to examine differences in caregivers language input and use of naturalistic strategies with their young children with language delays in a Latino Spanish-speaking sample and a non-Latino English-speaking sample. The quantity and quality of caregiver linguistic input in impacts child language learning and vocabulary for both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking children^{1,2,3,4}

Research Questions

1. Are there differences in caregivers' use of naturalistic language teaching strategies at baseline in a Latino and non-Latino sample? Specifically: Do caregivers in each group use the same frequency of responsiveness, matched turns, expansions, and target level utterances?
2. Are there differences in caregiver's linguistic input to their children in terms of their (a) mean length of utterance in words, (b) number of different words used, and (c) number of total words used?

Funding information

Participants

Forty children (30-42 months) with identified language delays and their caregivers participated. Children were matched on gender, age, IQ scores, and PLS scores. Families differ in language spoken and income. Caregivers differ in education level. Twenty dyads were Latino Spanish-speaking families (1R21DC015850) and twenty dyads were non-Latino English-speaking families (Roberts & Kaiser, 2015).

	Non-Latino (English) N (%)	Latino (Spanish) N (%)
Child gender		
boy	11	11
girl	9	9
Caregiver education level		
less than HS	13	0
HS	5	1
some college/trade college	0	5
college	2	9
graduate school	0	1
Caregiver relationship to child		
mother	18	18
father	1	0
other family	1	2
Country of origin		
Mexico		12
US (Puerto Rico)		1
Honduras		3
El Salvador		2
Peru		1
DR		1

Measures

Children and their caregivers were videotaped engaging in a 10-minute play interaction. Caregivers were told to engage with their child like they normally would and given the same set of toys (pretend foods/utensils, shape sorter, puzzle, blocks). Interactions were transcribed and coded in Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT).

Variables analyzed directly from SALT include caregiver:

- MLUw- mean length of utterance in words
- NDW- number of different words
- TW- total words

Data from transcripts were additionally coded and analyzed for the following variables:

- Responsiveness: percentage of times the caregiver responds to a child's communication
- Matched turns: percentage of time a caregiver takes conversational turns with the child
- Expansions: percentage of opportunities that a caregiver adds information to a child's utterance
- Target level: percentage of time a caregiver uses a short phrase matched to the child's language level

Results

Mean differences in language input

	Group		df	t
	Non-Latino (English)	Latino (Spanish)		
MLUw	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
	3.20 (0.39)	2.23 (.39)	38	7.90**
NDW	154.90 (33.02)	112.25 (41.41)	38	3.60**
TW	578.60 (198.70)	449.35 (214.59)	38	1.98+
Responsiveness				
	.92 (.08)	.99 (.01)	38	-4.25**
Matched turns	.26 (.14)	.27 (.15)	38	-.28
Expansions	.09 (.23)	.13 (.20)	38	-.67
Target level	.04 (.04)	.15 (.08)	38	-5.13**

Notes. +p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01. MLUw= mean length of utterance in words. NDW=number of different words. TW= total words

Discussion

Non-Latino, English-speaking caregivers talked more to their children in terms of their utterance length, number of total words spoken to the child, and number of different words spoken to the child. Latino Spanish-speaking caregivers from low-income households were more responsive to their children and used more short phrases that children could imitate.

References