INTRODUCTION

- Equivalent exposure to the maternal language results in higher vocabulary in English than in Spanish.
- Socioeconomic status does not fully explain this effect.\textsuperscript{1,2,3}
- Both quantity and quality of language input is associated with higher vocabulary.\textsuperscript{2,4}
- Communicative intent, and therefore, quality of parent-child engagement varies between cultures.\textsuperscript{5}

TWO STUDIES

Study 1: Mixed models analysis to determine the model with best fit and parsimony to characterize differences in home language vocabulary in young children exposed primarily to Spanish relative to English.
- Hypothesis: Expressive vocabulary will vary primarily as a function of age and language of assessment.
- Study 2: Analysis of parent-child engagement quality and relation to early vocabulary across languages.
- Hypothesis: Quality of engagement will account for differences in expressive vocabulary above and beyond maternal education.

METHOD

Participants:
- San Diego, California; Exposure to home language: 
  - 75% English
  - 27 Spanish—19 girls and 33 English—15 girls speaking children
  - (M = 16.83, range = 15.50 to 20.70),
  - (M = 23.30, range = 21.00 to 27.50), and
  - (M = 30.83, range = 28.60 to 37.20) months of age.
Study 1:
- Longitudinal design
- Parents completed MCDI:WG at Waves 1 and 2 and MCDI:WS\textsuperscript{5} at Wave 3.
- Expressive vocabulary was calculated from the vocabulary checklist.
Study 2:
- Dyads participated in 20 minutes of free play at Wave 3.
- Conversations were transcribed into inter-rater agreement – 90
- Transcripts of free play were coded for quantity and quality of three communication styles\textsuperscript{6} (inter-rater agreement – 87).

RESULTS: Study 1

- Expressive vocabulary data were evaluated across Waves to characterize patterns of vocabulary acquisition across languages using mixed models analysis to identify the model of best fit.
- First a model with only Wave to define the intercept was tested, followed by a model in which Wave was nested within Language. Finally, a model with maternal education nested within Language was assessed.

Follow-up t-tests indicate that expressive vocabulary differed significantly between groups:
- Wave 2 (t\textsubscript{12} = 3.38, p < .001)
- Wave 3 (t\textsubscript{12} = 5.46, p < .001)

RESULTS: Study 2

Symbol Infused Joint Engagement accounted for unique variance above and beyond parent education, sex of the child, exposure to maternal language, and language group.

DISCUSSION

- Findings from Study 1 support prior research showing slower vocabulary acquisition in Spanish-speaking children in the U.S. relative to their English-speaking peers.
- Mixed models analysis confirms a significant effect of home Language across Waves. Although maternal education is important to fit, it is not a significant predictor of this effect.
- Findings from Study 2 suggest that when controlling for parent education, child sex, and language exposure, both home Language and quality of engagement predict expressive vocabulary.
- This supports prior work indicating that quality of input strengthens children’s vocabulary development and extends this finding to Spanish-speakers.
- This relation is consistent across languages however, home language predicts both the quantity and quality of engagement.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Conduct growth curve analyses to explore in greater detail the difference in the trajectories in expressive vocabulary across samples.
- Identify characteristics of communication styles beyond the two explored in Study 1.
- Examine parent-child engagement patterns in the home.
- Extend research to Spanish-speakers living in Mexico.

REFERENCES


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