

Positive Psychology in Conversation: Types of Nurturing Parental Language and Associations
with Children's Development of Language Skills
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Abstract

Parent-child conversations are highly influential in children's language development, as well as their long-term socialization. The field of positive psychology is growing in global prevalence, and positive psychology language may hold the potential to scaffold children's language abilities. However, little research examines the types of positive psychology parents utilize and potential associations with specific language achievement outcomes. This study examined the prevalence of types of positive psychology-focused language used by parents with their 10-, 14-, and 18-month infants during play. Additional analyses explored how positive psychology language usage changed over time, and associations with child language outcomes. Transcripts of dyadic play sessions were analyzed across eight dictionary categories using LIWC software: "addressing [child] needs", "transparent communication", "warmth/comfort", "open expression of concern/validation" (researcher-generated dictionaries) and four LIWC-generated dictionaries: "prosocial", "wellness", "tone positive", and "emotion positive". The prevalence of these categories was evaluated and compared with outcomes of child language measures. It was found that parents use "transparent communication" language more than any other category across all developmental time points. "Prosocial" language increases over time with a statistically significant upwards slope and is positively correlated with PROD outcomes: a measurement of increased vocabulary abilities of the child. We also evaluated the impact of parental sex, education level, and income, and the "prosocial" language and PROD outcome correlation remained significant. Results are discussed with regards to the importance of parental conversations in scaffolding child language abilities as well as in increasing their peer socialization, further expanding vocabulary capabilities and language development.