Relations between social competence and language at 24 months

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Abstract

Previous research demonstrates that social and language development are closely related (Kuhl, 2007). Research from our lab has demonstrated that at 18-months of age, children's social competence is related to parent reports of children's expressive language at 18-months (Edgar et al., 2018). The present study extends prior findings by assessing this relationship at 24-months and by using a direct observation of expressive child language. Parents of forty 24-month-old children were asked to complete the Infant-Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (Carter & Briggs-Gowan, 2006) to measure the child's social competence. The children and their caregivers also participated in a Parent-Child-Interaction (PCI). Caregivers were provided with three toys and asked to play with their child as they would at home. Child speech production from the PCI was transcribed and cross-checked by trained research assistants. Transcriptions were analyzed using the Child Language Data Exchange Systems (MacWhinney, 2000). The number of child word types was expressed as a rate per minute. Regression analyses indicated that social competence was significantly associated with child type production, b = .046, SE = .015, p = .005, 95% CI: [.015, .077]. Findings revealed that children with greater social competence skills produced a greater number of unique words while interacting with caregivers. Future research can assess the relation between social competence and child language environment (English, Spanish, or bilingual), as well as the influence of parental language input on child expressive language production.