

How Does Adult and Child Language Use During Mealtimes Impact Children's Language Abilities in Spanish-Speaking Homes?



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INTRODUCTION

- A child's language environment has a significant impact on their language abilities (Hart & Risley, 1994; Hoff et al., 2013).
- Most studies in this area look at child-parent interactions, potentially missing other critical language input in the home from other members.
- In this study, we used a more wholistic measure by considering the total language environment of a child by including language input from other members in the home.

OBJECTIVES

Our goal was to answer how adult language use during mealtimes impact children's language abilities in Spanish-Speaking homes.

Hypothesis

- We hypothesized that children in an environment that encourages language (WH/ Open-ended questions) will have higher language abilities.
- We also hypothesized that children in an environment that discourages language (Closed-ended/ Yes No questions) will have lower language abilities

METHOD

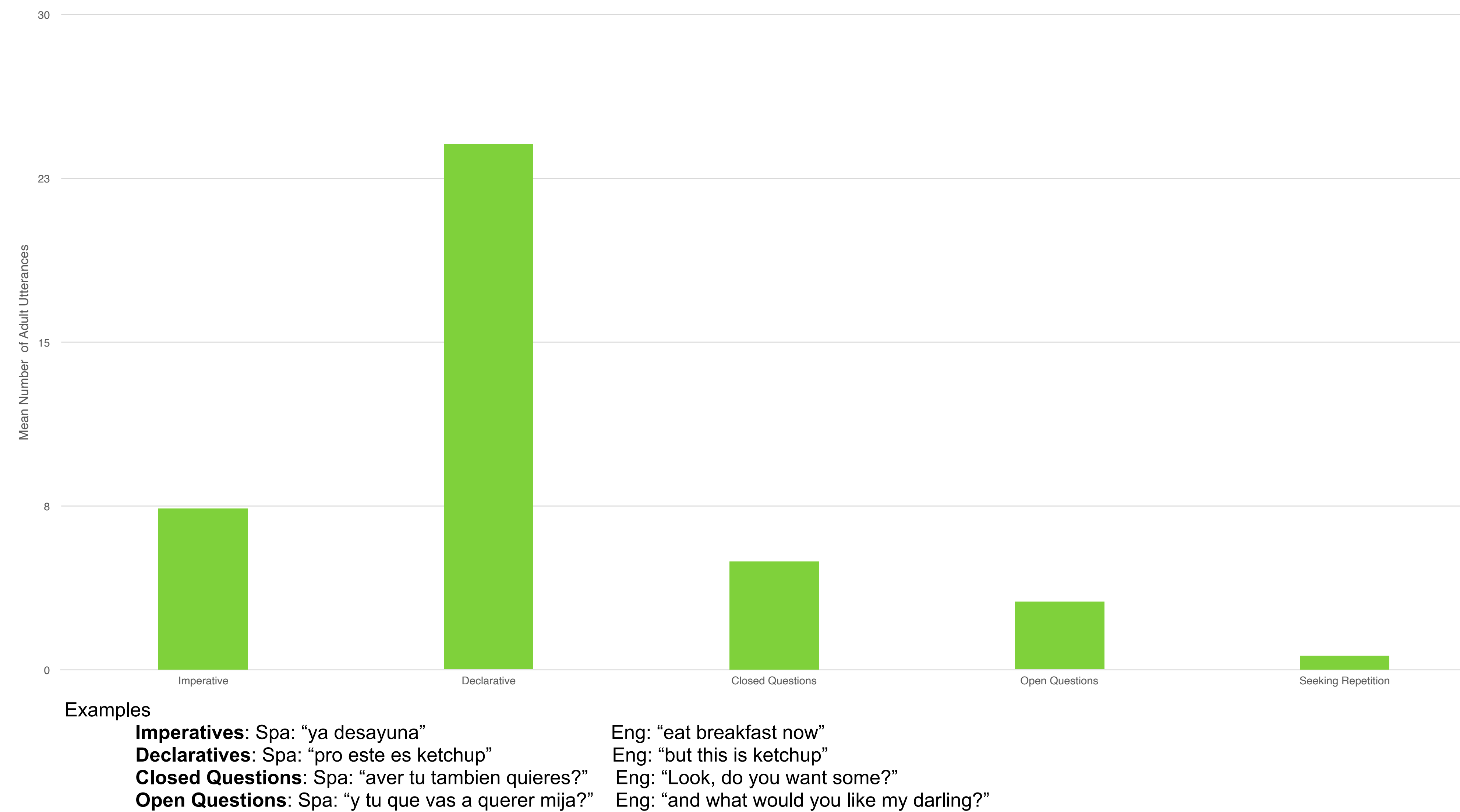
Participants: 17 bilingual Spanish/English children ages 3-6 years from Spanish dominant households

Procedures:

- Dinnertime language environments was transcribed using LENA technology.
- Each utterance was categorized as declarative, imperative or question (open-ended Wh- questions) and compared to child's language abilities.
- Language abilities were measured by the Quick Interactive Language Screener: English and Spanish (QUILS:ES)- provided Vocabulary, Syntax, and Language Learning (Process) in both languages.



MEAN NUMBER OF UTTERANCES BY SENTENCE TYPES



RESULTS

- Consistent with our hypothesis, adults asking closed-ended questions was negatively correlated to language abilities.
- When controlling for age (in months) and overall conversational turns, adults using closed ended questions at mealtimes (e.g., "did you drink your milk?") Was negatively correlated to overall processing abilities ($r(13) = -.568, p = .027$).
- Interestingly, adults asking open-ended questions was not correlated to better language abilities. We note the small sample size was a limiting factor in this study.

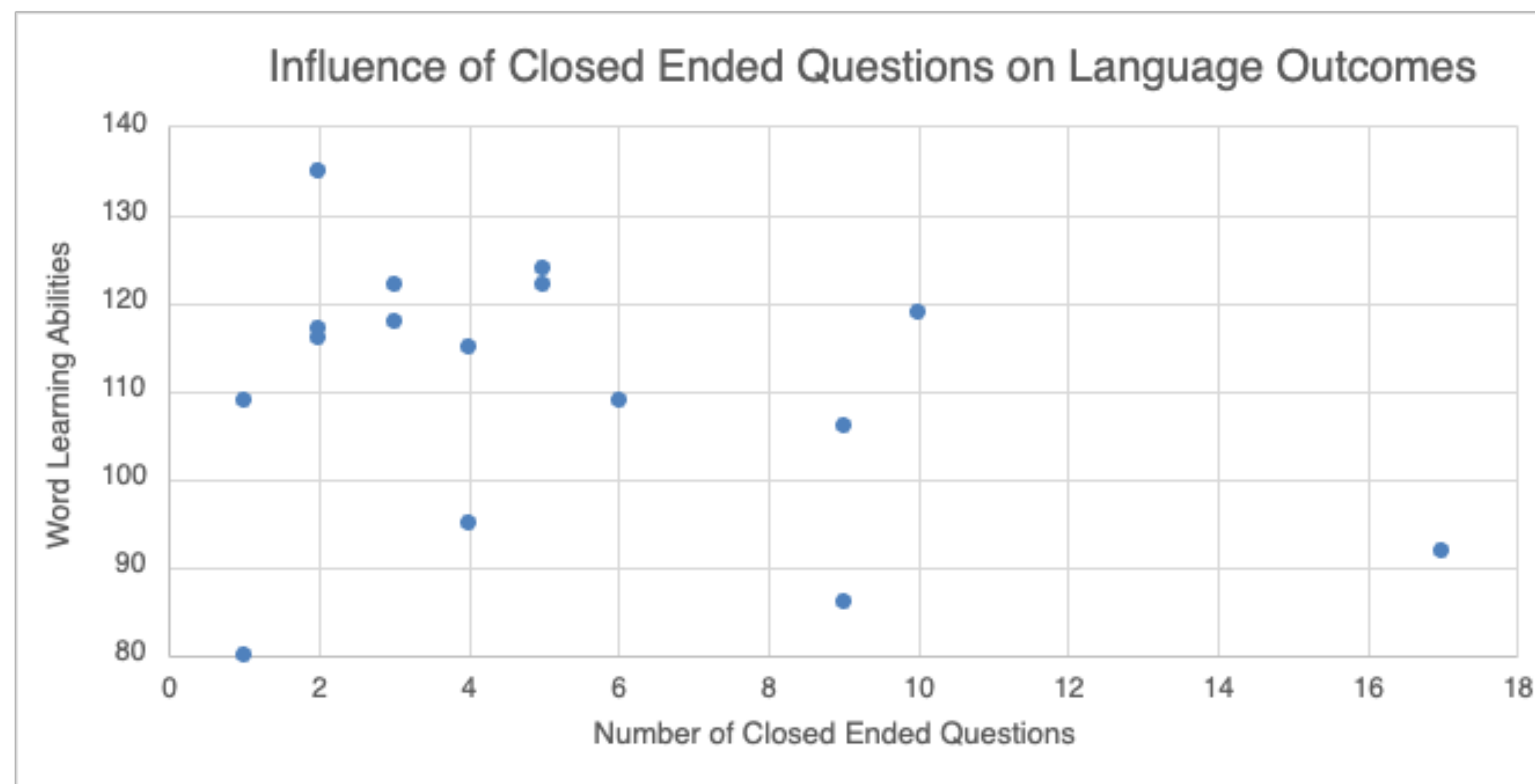
CONCLUSIONS

- Given that mealtimes are stressful for both parents and children, the results shed light on the types of conversations that adults should try to avoid, to lessen the detrimental factors that will impact children's language abilities.

REFERENCES

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RESULTS



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