Importance of Latine Parent Language and Responsivity in Eliciting Obedience from Autistic Children

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INTRODUCTION

- Interactions between Latine parents* and their children are guided by *respeto*, a cultural value that calls for calm authority from the parent and affiliative obedience from the child.
- Previous studies indicate that child affiliative obedience positively correlates with parental sensitivity and amount of language spoken by the parent.[1,2]
- However, these studies have focused on neurotypical children and not on autistic children who exhibit social communication and language difficulties.
  - Instead, autistic children may benefit from language input that is more finely-tuned to their own linguistic abilities.

*Parent can refer to any caregiver of the child.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- Is a Latine autistic child's level of affiliative obedience related to
  a) the language match between the child and their parent and
  b) sensitive (responsive rather than directive) parent responses?

HYPOTHESIS

- We hypothesize that parents who are verbally responsive to their children's communication (i.e., those who use temporally contingent utterances) and who are linguistically sensitive to their children's language level (i.e., language match) will have children with higher levels of affiliative obedience.
- Further, we predict that responsive parent responses will be more successful in eliciting affiliative obedience in comparison to directives.

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METHODS

Participants

- Twenty-six Latine parents and their autistic children (mean age = 37.23 months, SD = 8.05) participated in a broader Randomized Control Trial. [3]
- Children were, on average, cognitively (mean NVIQ = 60.90, SD = 18.13) and linguistically (mean MLUw = 1.36, SD = 0.59) delayed; mothers had an average of 14.65 years of education (SD = 2.54).

Procedures

- Children were assessed using the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS-2)[4] and the Mullen Scales of Early Learning (MSEL).[5] The Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales Developmental Profile (CSBS-DP)[6] and the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (VABS-II)[7] were conducted both pre- and post-intervention; the following results are from post-intervention.
- Parent-child dyads were recorded in their home during a 10-minute play session using a standardized set of developmentally appropriate toys. Parents were instructed to play with their children as they typically would.

Measures

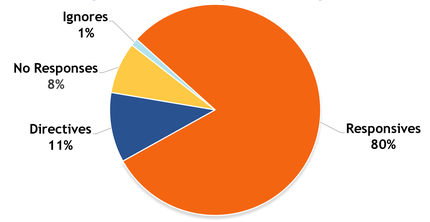
Parent-Child Language Match:
Parent mean length of utterance in words **(MLUw)** of responses within 3 seconds — Child **MLUw** = Language Match **(MLUw Difference)**

Child Affiliative Obedience (CAO):
A child's willingness to defer to parent instructions with respect and affect; rated on a seven-point scale from the Joint Engagement Rating Inventory (JERI)[1]

Parent Responses:
Verbal or gestural feedback within 3 seconds of the child's communication[8]

- **Directive responses** control or direct a child's behavior or focus of attention away from their current engagement.
- **Responsive responses** do not redirect the child from their current focus of attention; include non-verbal responses like gasps, gestures, and vocalizations.
- **Ignores and No Responses**

Average Parent Response Proportions



Data Analysis

- Pearson's product correlations were used to examine the relationship between participant background variables and CAO.
- Partial correlations were run to examine the relationship between MLUw difference and CAO, and responsivity and CAO.

RESULTS

Table 1: Background Variables and CAO

	Age	Mother's Education in Years	ADOS Social CSS	ADOS Total CSS	Nonverbal IQ	VABS Composite	CSBS Social Raw Score	CSBS Speech Raw Score	CSBS Symbolic Raw Score
Child Affiliative Obedience	-.128	.056	-.289	-.312	.675**	.412*	.390*	.398*	.408*

- Analysis of participant background variables revealed a strong significant correlation between child affiliative obedience and nonverbal IQ scores. To account for this, nonverbal IQ was controlled for throughout our subsequent analyses.

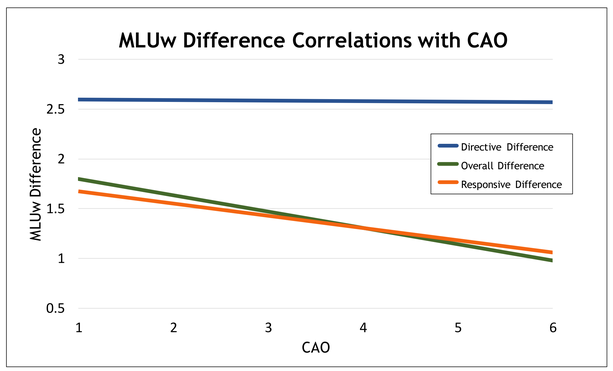
Table 2: MLUw Difference and CAO

	Overall MLUw Difference	MLUw Difference in Responsives	MLUw Difference in Directives
Child Affiliative Obedience	-.552*	-.557*	-.245

- Only overall MLUw difference [r = -.55, p < .05] and MLUw difference in responsive responses [r = -.557, p < .05] had significant correlations with CAO.

Responsivity and CAO

- No significant correlation was found between frequencies and proportions of response types and CAO, potentially as a result of low statistical power due to our sample size.



DISCUSSION

Findings

- Overall, Latine parents were responsive when responding to their autistic child's communication.
- We found strong significant correlations between CAO and overall parent-child language match and responsive language match.

Limitations

- Responsive was the response type most often used by the parents, making it difficult for us to analyze the directive response type.
  - The lack of correlation between directives and CAO may simply be due to a lack of statistical power resulting from the low frequency of directives in our analysis.
- Because our study focused on parent **responses**, it does not capture what happens before child communication.
  - There is a possibility that directives prior to the child's communication are related to CAO; however, prior directives were not captured in our coding system.

Future Directions

- We plan to increase our sample size to capture more parent directive responses to analyze.
- We also plan to expand our coding to account for parent utterances before child communication.

Conclusion

- Our results support the idea that smaller MLU differences (i.e., more well-matched language between parent and child) may facilitate higher levels of child affiliative obedience in Latine autistic children.
  - This suggests that Latine parents can play an active role in the enculturation of their autistic children via their language.

REFERENCES