

Abstract

Early parenting practices play an important role in shaping children’s future outcomes. In particular, high-quality early interactions can facilitate language learning and school performance. The rise of phone-based parenting applications (“apps”) could deliver low-cost interventions on parenting style to a wide variety of populations, especially the parents of very young children, who are often difficult to reach in other ways. Yet relatively little is known about the local effects of communicating to parents about how they should interact via videos. In two studies (one preregistered), we investigated effects of short videos on parent behavior. We showed parents videos depicting age-appropriate parent-child activities from a parenting app. We found that after watching the video, parents spoke more and made more bids for joint attention, as compared with controls who watched no video (experiment 1; N=60) or a science video (experiment 2; N=84). These results suggest that activity videos can lead to local changes in parent engagement, providing support for the use of such videos as a part of broader app-based parenting interventions.

Keywords: language development; parent intervention; childhood development; joint attention; lexical diversity

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