

The Relationship between Parents' Involvement, Attitude, Educational Background and Level of Income and Their Children's English Achievement Test Scores

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Abstract—The present study intends to investigate the relationship between Iranian parents' involvement, attitude, educational background and level of income and their children's English achievement test scores. At first, a reliable questionnaire was used and distributed among 140 parents. Next, to categorize parents in two levels, the normal curve and the Z score analysis were used and they were divided into two groups, with a higher or lower level of involvement and more or less positive attitude. Then, to find the students' achievement, a standard final achievement test was distributed among 70 primary school student. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the Spearman rank Order Correlation (ρ) were employed to explore the relationship between the variables. The outcomes showed that there are highly positive correlations between the parents' involvement, attitude, educational background and income level and their children's English achievement. It should be mentioned that parents' involvement and attitude were found to be really significant in their children's learning meaning the more they get involved in and the more positive attitude they have toward their young children's language learning, the more their children achieve in the education and also the higher level of parents' education and income are effective in children language achievement.

Index Terms—involvement, attitude, educational background, income, English achievement test

I. INTRODUCTION

The point of the younger the better in English learning, is accepted by people (Wang and Chang, 2011; Birdsong and Molis, 2001). It is clear that childhood education has to start early and children learn most at early ages. Foreign language instruction in elementary school has been justified by educators and experts with theoretically and empirically. More particularly, in the context of this study, Iranian parents are increasingly interested in their children's English learning from the early ages. Thus, this increasing significance of learning English has encouraged more primary schools to hold English language programs as a subject in their curriculum.

Parents' attitude toward and involvement in language learning are especially important in concepts when predicting children's success in language achievement (Baker, 1992). Almost all researchers interested in investigating "children's language learning at early ages" agree that one of the most constraining factors to this progress is the lack of parents' positive attitude and involvement toward their children's language learning (McClendon Cansler, 2008). This situation is true in Asia and even more emphatically in Iran where, until now, a little attention has been paid to this point.

Many parents are not involved in their children's learning programs and they do not find themselves that much responsible in having a positive attitude and high level of involvement in the children's language learning in Iran. As far as they register students in the learning programs, they consider their duty done. The parents are not aware of their crucial and central role in their children's achievement and development in educational programs.

Obviously, many studies have been done on the effect of learners' or their teachers' involvement in and attitude toward language learning, but a little attention has been given to their parents' involvement in and attitude while it is one of the most noticeable points and a key defining feature.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between Iranian parents' involvement, attitude, educational background and level of income and their children's English achievement test scores. In other words, the effectiveness of their positive attitude and high level of involvement as well as level of income, and educational background as the effective factors in the students' English achievement will be evaluated. Thus, this study is to unfold the relationship

between parents' positive attitude and high level of involvement and mentioned minor factors leading to their children's learning and achieving more.

Research hypotheses

To explore the relationships in the present study, the following hypotheses were posed:

H1: There is a relationship between parents' level of involvement and their children's English achievement test scores.

H2: There is a relationship between parents' strength of attitude and their children's English achievement test scores.

H3: There is a relationship between parents' educational background and their children's English achievement test scores.

H4: There is a relationship between parents' level of income and their children's English achievement test scores.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

First of all, attitude and involvement as the two key words of the study should be defined to serve the purpose of the current study.

Attitude means "sum of positive or negative emotions, feelings, and beliefs toward any object, such as people, things and ideas, through evaluations of our own mental states. In other words, attitude means self-perception and a result of observations of our own behaviors" (Bohner & Dickel, 2011, cited in Jang, 2012). Furthermore, Gardner (1985) argued that attitude can be defined as "an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of individual beliefs or opinions about referent" (p. 9). Knowledge indicates that the human being's thoughts and knowledge of the objects in language use while emotion includes good or bad feelings toward the objects, and potential action holds the behaviors regarding the objects (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; 2011).

Regarding involvement, there are different definitions, models and traditions (Share, Kerrins and Greene, 2011). Besides this confusion is the fact that the term 'involvement' can be defined synonymously with 'participation', 'partnership', 'collaboration' or 'cooperation'. Furthermore, there is no common understanding of its definition among scholars (Whitmarsh, 2009).

Theoretical Background

English has a worldwide strong hold and many people all around the world use English as their second language (Dalby and Lane, 2002). The number of English speakers has continually increased all over the world, and the non-native English speakers speaking fluently have outnumbered the native speakers of English (Graddol, 2006).

Ballantyne, Sanderman, and McLaughlin (2008) state that early childhood language program has an essential role in preparing young English language learners for future educational achievements. Children who have an opportunity to develop basic foundational skills in language and literacy in school programs will be more successful.

As parents are the first role model of their children, young children can learn basic skills by their help and become healthy adults. Parents, with their effective roles, are able to behave their children correctly, manage dilemmas, respond and communicate with their children properly (Mann, Pearl, Behle, 2004; Leung, Sanders, Leung, Mak and Leu, 2003).

Parents and teachers should try to make a suitable learning context for children. The first learning experience acquired by the child at home should support the efforts to learn at school. Such attempts can boost the level the teacher's success in his/her class applications (Burns, Roe & Ross, 1992).

Parents' consistent involvement increases the expectancy that suitable learning will happen in the classroom and at home. Parents play such a crucial role in their children's life in case of their children academic, physical, social, and moral development that teachers must consider parents as their indispensable collaborators (Latif, Rahmany & Hassani, 2013).

Feuerstein (1990) stated that parents have cognitive, social, and emotional roles in students' development. They can form their students' self-concepts and through this efficient cognitive functioning, improve their learning. This case is culture-bound and differs in different societies (as cited in Williams and Burden, 1997).

There are some personal properties such as age, gender, educational levels, income etc. that may have effects on parents' attitudes, motivations and home literacy practices (Jang, 2012). Parents', teachers' and students' beliefs are of high importance because they can contribute to conversations about the status of foreign languages and affect every language policy choice and set a new trend for multilingual education (Griva & Chostelidou, 2011; Nespor, 1987).

Parents can play a crucial role in terms of developing their children's positive thinking concerning foreign languages. The children's achievement in multilingual competence is highly affected by parental attitudes towards foreign languages (Young, 1994).

Generally, the concept of parents' attitudes is important in understanding children's language success since parents' attitudes influence their behavior regarding children's language learning (Tse, 1998, cited in Jang, 2012). In other words, parents' attitudes toward languages have significant impacts on children's attitudes (Baker, 1992).

A lot of studies have supported the significance of parental involvement in the children's education and specifically language learning. Parental involvement plays an important role in children education ranging from their activities at home as well as at school, and thus, it has been shown to be an important factor that positively influences children's education (Asli, 2008, cited in Abdullah et al., 2011). Based on what scholars believe, it is clear that the earlier in a

child's language learning process parent involvement begins, the more powerful the impacts will be (Cotton & Wikeland, 2001).

Research background

The variety of research outcomes indicates the beneficial impact that early foreign language learning has on children's cognitive and linguistic skills (Blondin et al., 1998). Besides, considering the growth of international relations of Iran with other countries, learning English language as an international language is considered much more important comparing to the past. The increasing number of language institutes and their language learners and also parents' interest regarding their children's English learning can clearly express the recent value of English language programs in Iran (Vaezi, 2008).

According to Griva & Iliadou (2011), parental attitudes play a vital role in motivating children to learn EFL as early as possible. Also, Cunningham (2001) demonstrated that parents' attitudes and behaviors can strongly influence their children's performances.

Although some studies of parents' attitudes and motivations in case of language learning have been carried in bilingual contexts, such as in the United States and Canada (Giacchino-Baker & Piller, 2006; Young & Tran, 1999), there is a lack of such research in monolingual contexts like Iran.

It is worth mentioning that parent involvement in schools has been strongly endorsed in the United States and has become a standard expectation by parents, teachers and students (Sheldon, 2002). The results of numerous studies revealed that parental involvement had a potential to improve student achievement and behavior (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Farkas et al., 1990).

A number of research findings related to parental attitudes toward and involvement in early language learning indicated the positive influences on children's language education improvement. In 2006, in Taiwan, a research done by the Government Information Office and indicated that most parents that had high level of involvement in and positive attitude towards early language learning and they supported English learning have more successful children (Cansler, 2008).

Finally and regarding the two minor factors of this study, parents' educational background and level of income, according to Cansler (2008), the components of parents' language attitudes, involvement and also their children achievement are also influenced by a variety of factors such a gender, ethnic background, parents' language background, social class and income level.

III. METHOD

The design of the present study is descriptive and since it intends to explore and describe the degree of relationship between two variables, correlation was used. More specifically, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation when both variables are measured at an interval level and when there are two ordinal variables, the Spearman rank Order Correlation (ρ) was employed.

At first, a pilot study was employed to examine the feasibility of the researcher-adapted questionnaire from the study which was carried out by Lois Elaine McLendon Cansler in North Carolina in 2008 and check the length, layout and item sequence since no previous research had been found in the context of Iran as a survey study in this regard except the study which was carried out by Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi, Yarahmadi (2015) in an experimental design to see the impact of Iranian parents' involvement in and attitude toward their children's foreign language programs for learning English. After administration of the questionnaires in the pilot study, the questionnaire yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87.

Participants of the questionnaire

Participants of this study consisted of both students' fathers and mothers from Ferdows primary school in Tehran, Iran in 2015. All the students participating in the research were girls. It should be mentioned that both parents of a student were asked to participate and they were recognizable by the codes that the researcher assigned. They were randomly selected parents of school through the third grade students taking part in English Time 2 course.

A total of 140 parents (70 fathers and 70 mothers) were accessed through their children attending the third grade of the primary school. The parents were asked whether their children attend other English programs out of school or not and those whose children take part only in school language programs which was true about almost all of students were chosen to take part in the study.

Participants of post-test

The students who participated in the present study were 70 ones who selected according to their parents' total score (in both involvement and attitude) in questionnaire. Thus, there are two groups of students, the ones whose parents have a high level of involvement and positive attitude and the others whose parents have a lower level of involvement and less positive attitude. According to the similar codes which were assigned to the parents and their children, the total score of parents in questionnaire and the students' achievement test score will be compared to see the effect of the parents' involvement in and attitude toward language learning program.

Instruments

As mentioned above, this study utilized a questionnaire to get parents' involvement in and attitude toward their children's English language programs as well as their level of education and income and divide them into two groups of

parents with higher level of involvement, more positive attitude, higher level of educational background and income and vice versa. Afterwards, this study employed a standard final achievement test of the book, English time 2, in order to check the students' achievement and then the effect of their parents' involvement in and attitude toward their children's English language programs.

IV. RESULTS

First, based on the questionnaires analysis and according to the normal curve and Z score, the researcher found two groups of participants among the parents considering their level of involvement and strength of attitude. It should be mentioned that the data related to the questionnaire presented in this section are retrieved from another research carried out by Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi, Yarahmadi (2015) in an experimental study.

The following graph and tables reveal the distribution of the parents:

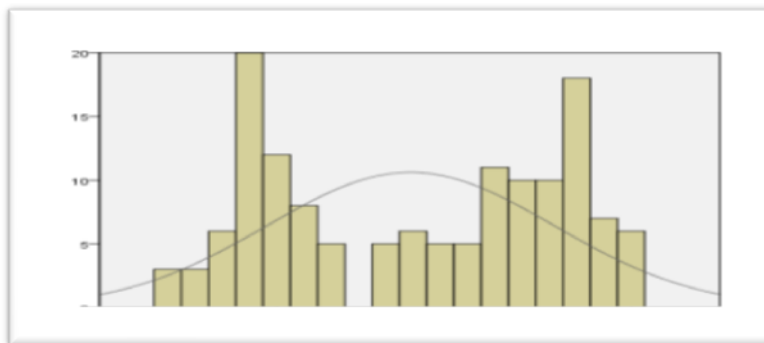


Figure I. Frequency distribution of participants based on attitude and involvement variables

TABLE I.
THE Z SCORE FOR INVOLVEMENT AND ATTITUDE VARIABLES

	Statistic	Std. Error
both Mean	3.7549	.06813
95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound 3.6202	
	Upper Bound 3.8896	
5% Trimmed Mean	3.7613	
Median	3.9231	
Variance	.650	
Std. Deviation	.80612	
Minimum	2.38	
Maximum	4.92	
Range	2.54	
Interquartile Range	1.54	
Skewness	-.117	.205
Kurtosis	-1.531	.407

Based on the Z score, two groups were defined as Lower Bound and Upper Bound ones. Those parents whose total scores of the questionnaire were lower than the Lower Bound number which was about 3.6 were defined as the parents having a lower level of involvement in and less positive attitude toward their children's language program. On the other hand, those parents whose total scores of the questionnaire were higher than the Upper Bound number which was about 3.9 were defined as the parents having a higher level of involvement and more positive attitude (Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi, Yarahmadi, 2015).

The results of the questionnaires are to be presented by examining the hypotheses posed earlier:

H1: There is a relationship between parents' level of involvement and their children's English achievement test scores.

TABLE II.
PEARSON CORRELATION: PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT AND CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES

		test score	involvement
test score	Pearson Correlation	1	.776**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	140	140
involvement	Pearson Correlation	.776**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	140	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

TABLE III.
SPEARMAN RHO CORRELATION: PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT AND CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES

		test score	involvement
Spearman's rho test score	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.789**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	140	140
involvement	Correlation Coefficient	.789**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	140	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to table II, the Pearson Correlation is 0.77 which is close to +1. Also, table III, Spearman's rho analysis, depicts that Spearman's rho Correlation Coefficient is 0.78. Thus, we can interpret that the level of parent's involvement is highly correlated with their children's achievement test scores. In other words, parent's involvement is an effective factor in their children's English course learning and achieving. All in all, the first hypothesis stating there is a relationship between parents' level of involvement and their children's English achievement test scores is supported.

H2: There is a relationship between parents' strength of attitude and their children's English achievement test scores.

TABLE IV.
PEARSON CORRELATION: PARENTS' ATTITUDE AND CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES

		test score	attitude
test score	Pearson Correlation	1	.750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	140	140
attitude	Pearson Correlation	.750**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	140	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

TABLE V.
SPEARMAN RHO CORRELATION: PARENTS' ATTITUDE AND CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES

		test score	attitude
Spearman's rho test score	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.749**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	140	140
attitude	Correlation Coefficient	.749**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	140	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As table IV and V show, the Pearson Correlation is 0.74 and Spearman's rho Correlation Coefficient is 0.78 being close to +1. So, it is obvious that the strength of parent's attitude is also highly correlated with their children's achievement test scores and the parent's positive attitude is an effective factor in their children's English achievement. The second hypothesis stating there is a relationship between parents' strength of attitude and their children's English achievement test scores is also proved.

H3. There is a relationship between parents’ educational background and their children’s English achievement test scores.

TABLE VI.
PEARSON CORRELATION: PARENTS’ EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND CHILDREN’S ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES

		test score	education
test score	Pearson Correlation	1	.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	140	140
education	Pearson Correlation	.702**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	140	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

TABLE VII.
SPEARMAN RHO CORRELATION: PARENTS’ EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND CHILDREN’S ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES

		test score	education
Spearman's rho test score	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.664**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	140	140
education	Correlation Coefficient	.664**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	140	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the above tables II, the Pearson Correlation is 0.70 and Spearman’s rho Correlation Coefficient is 0.66. Clearly, the level of parent’s educational background is correlated with the children’s achievement test scores. In other words, parent’s educational background is also an effective factor in their children’s English achievement test score. Thus, the third hypothesis, there is educational background and their children’s English achievement test scores is supported as well.

H4. There is a relationship between parents’ level of income and their children’s English achievement test scores

TABLE VIII.
PEARSON CORRELATION: PARENTS’ INCOME LEVEL AND CHILDREN’S ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES

		income	test score
income	Pearson Correlation	1	.580**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	140	140
test score	Pearson Correlation	.580**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	140	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

TABLE IX.
SPEARMAN RHO CORRELATION: PARENTS’ INCOME LEVEL AND CHILDREN’S ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES

		income	test score
Spearman's rho income	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.515**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	140	140
test score	Correlation Coefficient	.515**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	140	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to above tables, the Pearson Correlation is 0.58 and Spearman’s rho Correlation Coefficient is 0.51 meaning the level of parent’s income is also correlated with their children’s achievement test scores but not to the degree of aforementioned variables being highly correlated. It can be claimed that the parent’s income level is also an

effective factor in their children’s English course achievement. To sum up, the last hypothesis stating there is a relationship between parents’ level of income and their children’s English achievement test scores is also proved.

V. CONCLUSION

The goal of the present study was to investigate the relationship between Iranian parents’ involvement, attitude, educational background and level of income and their children’s English achievement test scores. As it was proved, all four hypotheses were proved and it was shown that there are highly positive correlations between the parents’ involvement, attitude, educational background and income level and their children’s English achievement. More specifically, parents’ involvement and attitude were found to be really significant in their children’s learning meaning the more they get involved in and the more positive attitude they have toward their young children education, herein language learning, the more their children are successful in the education. Besides, the higher level of education and income are effective in children educational achievement as well.

Before discussing the findings, It would be better to point that that no similar study was found to compare and check whether the outcomes of this research are in accordance with the results of them or not except the one was recently done by Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi, Yarahmadi (2015) in an experimental study proving the significant impact of parents’ involvement in and attitude toward their children’s foreign language programs for learning English.

Many studies have supported that parental involvement can boost student achievement and behavior (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; De Graaf, 1986; Farkas et al., 1990). Besides, Buchmann et al. (2010) proved that parental involvement leads to higher test scores and grades, better school attendance, more positive attitudes and behavior, and greater enrollment in higher education.

Moreover, the results of the present study are in accordance with what Cansler, (2008) found, in which there was a direct correlation between parental attitude and involvement in various capacities of schooling and student achievement in empirical investigations.

Finally, as it was mentioned in literature review, in line with what Jang (2012) found, a variety of parents’ personal characteristics such as age, gender, educational levels, income are significant in their own attitudes, motivations, and involvement as well as their children educational achievement.

APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE

Please check the item that best describes the experiences of your child and yourself.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Applicable	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My child talks positively at home about foreign language class.					
2. My child’s comments are positive about foreign language learning.					
3. My child feels successful in the foreign language class.					
4. My child likes the foreign language.					
5. My child likes the foreign language teacher.					
6. I am receiving enough information about the foreign language program at the school.					
7. I have seen my child performing in a foreign language school program.					
8. I have visited my child’s foreign language classroom.					
9. My child brings home useful foreign language worksheets, song handouts, or information.					
10. My child uses foreign language frequently at home.					
11. I am in favor of teaching a foreign language to children.					
12. I feel that studying foreign language has not jeopardized my child’s progress in other subject areas, such as math or reading					
13. My child is benefiting from the elementary foreign language program at our school.					

Now we have a few questions about you and your child. Please mark the blank next to your answer for each of the following items.

1. Is your child receiving additional foreign language instruction outside of the school program?
 Yes
 No
2. Can you speak English?
 Yes
 No
3. What is your gender?
 Male
 Female
4. What is your educational background?

- Bellow diploma
 Diploma
 Bachelor's degree
 Master's degree or higher
 5. In 2014, what was your family's monthly income?
 Lower than average
 Average
 Higher than average

Additional comments: If you feel this questionnaire did not allow you to adequately express your opinion, or if you would care to elaborate on a particular point(s), please do so in the space below.

Thank you for your time.

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