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Parents' Educational Level and Children's English Language Proficiency

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Abstract

The expansion of the English Language utilization, the concept of Lingua Franca, and the English language proficiency's role in children's social and vocational future, make children's learning English a vital affair for parents all around the world. Minding the role of parents' educational level is an understudied issue in children's English language proficiency level. To address this unexpected topic, the purpose of this study is finding the relationship between parents' educational level and children's English language proficiency. For this study, the researcher gave a TOEFL test (for evaluating the children's English language proficiency) and a questionnaire (for determining their parents' educational level) to eighty participants both female and male who are in their twenties and thirties. They were students in Intermediate and Upper Intermediate level in Gatt Language Center (GLC) in Tehran. After collecting the data the researcher considered each participant's score two times: First regarding to their fathers' educational level, second regarding to their mothers' educational level. The researcher ran Independent Sample t-Test for differentiation between children whose parents have university education and children whose parents do not have university education. This study showed that children whose mothers have university education have higher level of English language proficiency. But there is no significant difference of English language proficiency level between children whose fathers have university education and those whose fathers do not have university education. In accordance with this study, unlike fathers', mothers' educational level, especially university education, could affect children's English language proficiency level. So all parents especially mothers who desire to have children with high English language proficiency level, should take the prominence of their own educational level into account.

Keywords: *Education, Language Proficiency, Parents' Educational Level*

Introduction

The importance of reasonable level of education is getting greater in the society in which for a successful, proved and invariable future it is needful to have skills and education in high levels (Rich, 2000). Rich believes that in children's education both the school and the home are responsible, and beside the school, the most prominent source of children's learning, support and encouragement is the home (2000). Alison Rich asserts that parental resources, parental involvement, and parental support are three fundamental titles which debate about the parental impacts and diverse ways through which parents' could affect the education of their children. (2000). He also refers to parental resources as income level, parental education, and parental employment. Educational opportunities could be enhanced by having more educational materials, computers, books and etc. at home for a high family income. In accordance with some studies most of the time children pursue their parents' trace in families with higher level of education and are more successful in their higher education. More over the parents' employment status would affect children's education (Rich, 2000). In addition when searching in literature concerning the children's academic progress and motivation that are influenced by parents, Wigfield referred to influential parental factors as: "(1) parental, familial and neighborhood characteristics; (2) parents' general beliefs and behaviors; (3) parents' child-specific beliefs; and (4) parent-specific behaviors" (2006 as cited in Bulter, 2013, p.4). He clarified that parental education, household income, occupation, cultural tradition marital status, and the number of children are included in the first category. The second category consists of their attitude about bringing up the children, the place of control, their parenting styles and efficacy beliefs. Parents' expectation for their children's success and their attitude toward children's ability refer to parents' child-specific beliefs (the third category). Some issues such as parents' inducement to take part in different activities, guidance for future career, amount of time allocating for children, and teaching strategies are included in parent-specific behaviors (the forth category) (2006 as cited in Bulter, 2013). Children achievement and motivation are influenced by the interaction of all those four factors and their interaction with another factor which is the characteristics of the child and his/her siblings (birth order, gender, aptitudes, attitudes, personality, and past performance) (Wigfield, 2006 as cited in Bulter, 2013).

The Importance of Education

For every individual person, economy and society it is profitable to have higher education (Kyllonen, 2012).

Card indicated that acquiring education is prominent for society and people in the society as well. Higher income and earnings and lower unemployment are some results of acquiring higher education (as cited in Kyllonen, 2012). Also less crime, better civic participation, and greater health are attributed to higher education in society (Lochner, 2011 as cited in Kyllonen, 2012). Kyllonen in his article mentioned to data from the "U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics" in 2011, people who have less than high school diploma suffer more from unemployment and lower

income. However as the level of education acquisition goes up the income level goes up three to four times, and the unemployment for those people five to six times goes down (2012).

So it is the society and Higher Education Institutes duty to collaborate together for paving the way for people to have better access to higher learning (Osborne, Rimmer, & Houston, 2015) which “can be done by diversifying regulations and policies, and cultivating structural and functional diversity” (Osborne, Rimmer, & Houston, 2015, p.17).

Parents' Education Level and Students' Education Level

Yasan Gooding's study - the relationship between parental educational level and academic success of college freshmen - found that some factors such as family income, parents educational level, family structure and marital status which relate with each other, positively influence students' academic achievement (2001). He indicated that parents with higher educational level have children who perform better in standardized tests than children who have parents with lower educational level (2001).

The difference among students' academic performance would be diminished by controlling some factors namely: family size, family structure and the level of parents' education (Young & Smith, 1997 as cited in Gooding, 2001). Some studies proved the better performance of children in academic tests whose parents are well educated in comparison with students with parents that have high school education (Gooding, 2001). “In 1994, 13- and 17-year-olds whose parents had at least one or more years of college had higher math and science proficiency scores than those whose parents did not finish high school” (Young & Smith, 1997 as cited in Gooding, 2001, p. 4). “In the same study, parents' educational attainment was positively related to reading and writing scores as well” (Gooding, 2001, p. 4).

Although considering the level of income in family, the level of education of parents, and socioeconomic status separately is difficult, because level of income in family and the level of education of parents are included in socioeconomic status, they may considered independently. Namely in terms of the level of parents' education, the value parents place on children's education might be affected by parents' educational level which might affect students' goal in education (Young & Smith, 1997 as cited in Gooding, 2001). Young and Smith believed that a change has occurred in family's support and inducing children in education which is the result of increase in parents' educational level (both fathers and mothers) since 1970 (1997 as cited in Gooding, 2001). Parents' degree in college “leads to higher incomes, higher educational attainment, and a choice of more selective colleges for their children” (Gruca et al., 1989 as cited in Gooding, 2001, p.5) and are prominent to the children's college success (Gooding, 2001).

Many studies suggested that parents' educational level and socio-economic status affect children's school performance and outcomes as parts of sociological and psychological factors (Joan, 2009 as cited in Kainuwa & Mohammad Yusef, 2013). So Income, energy, time, and community contact are the resources that highly educated parents might have access to which leads to better and more parental involvement in the education of (Joan, 2009 as cited in Kainuwa & Mohammad Yusef, 2013).

Individual's type of education (western or religious), number of attended schools, and types of certificates refer to educational background (Kainuwa & Mohammad Yusef, 2013) that well educated parents provide their children with sufficient help, consider their children's school work and their academic work more, and observe their progress more sufficiently (Ramachandran et al 2003; Palmer 2005; & Verpoor 2005, as cited in Kainuwa & Mohammad Yusef, 2013). On the other hand due to insufficient knowledge, lower educated parents do not care to observe children's progress in academic work and this would discourage children (Ramachandran et al 2003; Palmer 2005; Verpoor 2005, as cited in Kainuwa & Mohammad Yusef, 2013). Generally speaking some factors that prevent parents from engaging with children's school work and participating in school programs are: "(1) school based barriers; (2) lack of English language proficiency; (3) parental educational level; (4) disjuncture between school culture and home culture; and (5) logistical issues" (Arias & Morillo-Campell, 2008, p.8).

Parents' educational background is a great factor in students' achievement as Taiwo indicates "the parents would be in a good position to be second teachers to the child; and even guide and counsel the child on the best way to perform well in education and provide the necessary materials needed by the child" (1993 as cited in Kainuwa & Mohammad Yusef, 2013, p.1). Also Musgrave (2000) believes that educated parents could "provide library facilities to encourage the child to show examples in activities of intellectual type such as reading of newspapers, magazines and journals. They are likely to have wider vocabulary by which the children can benefit and develop language fluency" (as cited in Kainuwa & Mohammad Yusef, 2013, p.2). Onocha indicates that children from highly educated family benefit from suitable environment for their school activities, having access to sufficient academic materials and feeling (1985 as cited in Kainuwa & Mohammad Yusef, 2013).

The relationship between higher level of parental education and students' graduate education aspirations was the result of a study which was on rural and gifted students, and also on talented students of color (McWhirter, Larson, & Daniels, 1996 as cited in Ojeda & Flores, 2008). Some previous studies proved the influence of parents on the education of children. The relationship between students' higher education and the parental expectations was the result of the study in a Mexican American high school (Ramos & Sanchez, 1995 cited in Ojeda & Flores, 2008). Generally speaking Behnke, Piercy, and Diversi in 2004 found that having children who are strongly keen on attending the college is the inclination of parents who have high educational aspiration for themselves. However, students with lower aspiration belong to parents who have lower educational aspirations (Ojeda & Flores, 2008).

Due to the impact that parents' educational level have on their style in parenting, children's academic success is affected too (Gooding, 2001). More educated families and parents are more lenient in their parenting (Dombrusch et al. as cited in Gooding, 2001). "Parents with lower educational attainment used coercive strategies for discipline which, in turn, predisposed their children to antisocial and abnormal behaviors" (DeBaryshe, Patterson, & Capaldi, 1993 as cited in Gooding, 2001, p. 15). However Gooding's study reported that only children's educational expectation is affected by parents' education (2001).

In the learning inputs study, Hushak in 1973 discovered that students who have less educated parents (lower-achieving students) are more dependent to their teachers than students with well-educated parents (higher achieving students). This issue is because students with lower educated parents access to limited learning inputs than the other students with higher educated parents. So the lower achiever students usually study more and ask their lower educated parents more help. Then the teacher is the only decent teaching input for these students (Gooding, 2001).

According to Hushak findings, educational atmosphere at home would be defined by parents' educational acquisition because children are at home most of their time and parents are educators and first learning inputs for their children. Hushak (1973) believes that parents could be as private teachers for their children and could have higher and more knowledge than the school teacher about one or more subjects if they have at least a bachelor degree. So in this atmosphere children would be less dependent on the school teachers' ability and skills. Also students with well-educated parents do not study a lot outside of their schools. Parents with low educational level try to amend by allocating more time and support on children's school work, but still these students are more dependent on teachers' skill as the primary learning input. In addition in this study fathers' educational level had stronger relationship with children's academic achievement than mothers' educational level (Gooding, 2001).

Bradley, Caldwell, and Elardo in 1977 (as cited in Gooding, 2001) indicated that culture of having higher education in parents would be transferred to their children, so well-educated parents transmit the ability of having higher education and continuing the education beyond the school to their children hereditary.

Cardoza's study referred to Latino mothers' educational level as the strong predictor for students' attendance and continuing the college (1991 as cited in Ojeda & Flores, 2008), but Hurtado and Gauvain's study showed no relationship between various mothers' educational level and various children's college aspirations (1997 as cited in Ojeda & Flores, 2008). Whereas their study on Mexican American high school students found that students' divers college aspirations could be predicted by fathers' educational level 1997 as cited in Ojeda & Flores, 2008).

Oh-Hwang in his study on American and Korean samples (1994, as cited in Gooding, 2001) indicated that there is a salient link between fathers' educational acquisition, intelligence, and scores in achievement tests so more intelligent children and higher achievers have fathers with higher level of education. On the other hand Oh-Hwang found that in those American and Korean samples, parents' education have an indirect impact on psychological maturity of teenagers. Mothers with higher level of education due to involving in schools' activities cause children to be more self-reliant. And this psychological maturity of children indirectly defines the level of academic achievement of children (1994, as cited in Gooding, 2001).

Mexican America fathers have great positive impact on their daughters' educational plans with their supports (McWhirter et al., 1998 as cited in Ojeda & Flores, 2008). Contrary, due to family's financial goals, fathers who were workers incited their children to quit their schools (Bohon et al., 2005 as cited in Ojeda & Flores, 2008).

Students' academic achievement could be predicted firmly by parents' educational level (Koban-Koc, 2016). Koban-Koc in their article- The effects of socio-economic status on prospective English language teachers' academic achievement-mentioned to another study which was conducted in Turkey by Gelbal in 2008 investigated the effect of divers factors namely mothers' level of education, number of siblings, and sex on children's academic achievement (2016).

Well educated mothers usually debate more about their children's school performance because they have more inclination to their children's school information. Furthermore mothers with higher level of education have higher level of expectation from their children in academic achievement (Stevenson and Baker, 1987 as cited in Gooding, 2001).

English Proficiency and Education

Zou and Zhang assert that "English is more than just a school subject; it permeates into many aspects of social life" (2011, p.191 as cited in Butler, 2013, p.6). English learning as a foreign language is not bounded to classroom activities and learning, however among many factors, parental and familiar factors play salient role in children's learning English (Butler, 2013).

Due to English proficiency's role in children's Academic success, investigating factors that affect their development of acquiring English language proficiency (Halle, Hair, Wandner, McNamara, & Chien, 2012). Some of these prominent factors except school related factors are: 1- the level of parents' education 2- family status in terms of socioeconomic 3- discrimination experience 4- the cause of the immigration 5- the amount of time they expose to English 6- factors such as aspiration, acculturation and motivation (Bialystock & Hakuta, 1994; Krashen & Brown, 2005; MacSwan & Pray, 2005; Portes & Hao, 1998; Thomas, 2004 as cited in Halle, Hair, Wandner, McNamara, & Chien, 2012). And Fitzgerald in 1993; Klingner in 2006 and Winsler et al.in 1999 asserted some school related factors are: early education programs teachers characteristics, decent bilingual education programs, number of students at school, and parents' involvement in school activities and programs (Halle, Hair, Wandner, McNamara, & Chien, 2012)

Vinke and Jochems focused on the importance of High level of education which leads to more utilization of a foreign language namely English (1993). In the article - English proficiency and academic success in international postgraduate education - which published in "Higher Education" journal Vinke and Jochems mentioned that this increase in using English would increase the impacts of English language proficiency on academic achievement. Especially in the cases that the medium of instruction is English language, so the students' academic performance is affected by learning a foreign language, especially English language. (1993).

Language proficiency

One of the most debatable issues among test developers and language researchers is language proficiency testing. The main problem and diversities of ideas are because of the language proficiency's concept, the best way of evaluating and assessing language proficiency, and choosing the decent language proficiency test to distinguish proficient students (Vecchio & Guerrero, 1995).

There are different opinion about the concept of language proficiency for example Valdes and Figueroa indicated that mastering and knowing the language is something above knowing rules, grammars and pronunciation, however it is “a mastery and control of a large number of interdependent components and elements that interact with one another and that are affected by the nature of the situation in which communication takes place” (1994, p. 34 as cited in Vecchio & Guerrero, 1995, p.3).

The Council of Chief State School Office defined English language proficiency in this way: “A fully English proficient student is able to use English to ask questions, to understand teachers, and reading materials, to test ideas, and to challenge what is being asked in the classroom. Four language skills contribute to proficiency as follows: 1. Reading - the ability to comprehend and interpret text at the age and grade appropriate level. 2. Listening - the ability to understand the language of the teacher and instruction, comprehend and extract information, and follow the instructional discourse through which teachers provide information. 3. Writing - the ability to produce written text with content and format fulfilling classroom assignments at the age and grade-appropriate level. 4. Speaking - the ability to use oral language appropriately and effectively in learning activities (such as peer tutoring, collaborative learning activities, and question/answer sessions) within the classroom and in social interactions within the school.” (1992, p. 7 as cited in Vecchio & Guerrero, 1995, p.4)

Canales asserted that English language proficiency is not just the accumulation of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, etc. language proficiency purpose is transferring the beliefs and culture. Namely a person who is proficient should be able to translate idioms from language to another language which is beyond the meaning of each single word (1994 as cited in Vecchio & Guerrero, 1995). Canales believes that language usage depends on the topic, speakers’ situation, and depends on the context. It needs connected speech, and needs inseparable skills to with the goal of reaching communicative competence (1994 as cited in Vecchio & Guerrero, 1995). Vecchio and Guerrero in their article in a handbook -Handbook of English Language Proficiency Tests - summarized the meaning of language proficiency as the consensus of separate elements like gestures, discourse structure and vocabulary to convey and communicate meanings in a certain situation and context (1995).

“Language proficiency is the degree of skill with which a person can use a language, such as how well a person can read, write, speak, or understand language. This can be contrasted with Language Achievement, which describes language ability as a result of learning” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p.292).

In MacSwan and Pray language proficiency refers to all aspects of language developments consisting of phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics (2005, as cited in Halle, Hair, Wandner, McNamara, & Chien, 2012)

Parents’ Education and Children’s English Proficiency

A study which is the Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE) in some European countries (Sweden, Croatia, Poland, Italy, Spain, the Netherland and England) came to the conclusion that

children's perception of the target language such as English in EFL context is affected by parents' educational level and there is a strong relationship between them (Butler, 2013). Also a study that was run in secondary school proved the variation in students' English performance from families with various parents' educational levels (Zou & Zhang, 2011 as cited in Butler, 2013).

Carhill, Suarez-Orozco and Paez in their article - Explaining English Language Proficiency Among Adolescent Immigrant Students - which is published in American Educational Research Journal mentioned the Entwisle and Anstone's study in 1994 and Hakuta et al's study in 2000 indicating that the link between parental education and children's progressing in learning second language proficiency is crystal clear (2008). Dickinson and Tabors report that providing children with the language environment at home similar to school language environment is the affair that more educated parents could afford (2001 as cited in Carhill, Suarez-Orozco, & Paez, 2008). Parents' education has a great impact on the children's progress in academic English, even before starting the school; educated parents could provide their children with encouraging and engaging children in activities that develop their literacy in reading and writing skills (Heath, 1983; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998 as cited in Carhill, Suarez-Orozco, & Paez, 2008). Especially the level of mothers' education affects students' language development because well-educated mothers "expose children and youth to more academically oriented vocabulary and read more often from books that are valued in school" (Goldenberg et al., 2006 as cited in Carhill, Suarez-Orozco, & Paez, 2008, p. 1159).

For having successful English learners with satisfactory level of Language proficiency, some factors namely parents' educational level needs to be taken into an account. This study is an effort to determine if parents' educational level plays role in learners' English proficiency level. Accordingly, the following questions were raised.

Statement of research questions

To fulfill the purpose of this study the following question was raised:

1. Is there any significant difference between English proficiency level of learners whose fathers have university education and learners whose fathers do not have university education?
2. Is there any significant difference between English proficiency level of learners whose mothers have university education and learners whose mothers do not have university education?

Research hypothesis

In order to investigate the above mentioned research question empirically, the following null hypothesis was stated:

1. There is no significant difference between English proficiency level of learners whose fathers have university education and learners whose fathers do not have university education.

2. There is no significant difference between English proficiency level of learners whose mothers have university education and learners whose mothers do not have university education.

Methodology

Participants

The participants of the present study were 80 English language learners in Gatt Language Center (GLC) in Tehran who are in their 20s and 30s, both female and male. These learners are in Intermediate and Upper Intermediate levels.

Instrumentations

In order to conduct this study, the following instruments were used.

TOEFL test:

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a “Standardized Test of English Proficiency administered by the educational Testing Service, and widely used to measure the English Proficiency of foreign students wishing to enter American university” (Amirpour, 2001, p. 14). As TOEFL test is a standard test for measuring the English learners' proficiency, a TOEFL test has been given to the learners in the language school (Appendix B). It consists of 59 question in three separate parts: Structure part concludes 15 multiple choice item, written expression part with 25 item, and reading part includes 2 readings with 19 multiple choice questions. 45 minutes were allocated for answering to test.

Questionnaire for parents' education level:

For distinguishing the parents' education level, special form (Appendix A) has been filled out by learners about their own and their parents' (mothers and fathers) educational level, learners' age and gender.

Procedure

To conduct this research the researcher gave TOEFL test and questionnaire about learners' parents' educational level to 80 male and female language learners in Intermediate and Upper Intermediate levels who study English in Gatt Language Center in Tehran. They are in their twenties and thirties. Both TOEFL test Papers and the questionnaires were given to the learners at the same time. Each learner had test papers and the questionnaire which were labeled with the same number. They had been asked to fill the questionnaire first and then answer to the test questions. After the standard time for this test, their papers were collected.

The learners' score of TOEFL test and the information from the questionnaire about their parents' educational level were considered. Each learners score has been considered twice; First for their fathers' educational level and then for their mothers' educational level.

Design

In this study, a descriptive design was adopted. The aim of the study was to investigate the difference between learners whose parents have university education and whose parents do not have university education in English proficiency level. Parents’ educational level was taken as the independent variable, and learners’ English proficiency level as the dependent variable.

Statistical analysis

For doing the statistical procedure to verify the research hypothesis, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The first statistical procedure was to conduct a series of descriptive data analyses consisting of mean, median, standard deviation, and standard error of mean. To investigate if there is a significant difference between learners’ English proficiency with educated parents and uneducated parents, independent sample t-test was used.

Results

As parents both mothers’ and fathers’ educational level matter, the researcher decided to focus on them separately. So there are two processes of data analysis for the learners. Each student’s score has taken in to consideration twice. First, the group of students whose fathers do not have university education compared with the group of students whose fathers have university education. Second, the group of students whose mothers do not have university education compared with the group of students whose mothers have university education.

For each process, the researcher compared two groups (students whose parents-fathers/mothers- do not have university education compared with the group of students whose parents have university education) which are independent so she used independent- sample t-test.

Descriptive Statistics

To compare the English proficiency level of learners whose fathers have university education with those whose fathers do not have university education, a t test had to be applied. Before that the assumption of normality of distributions was checked. The following table shows the descriptive statistics which includes information on the skewness of the distribution of the scores

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Students with Educated and Uneducated Fathers (N=60)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error
Scores	16.000	43.000	27.5000	.90088	6.97817	.313	.309

As the table shows the skewness of scores are within the range of ± 1.96 , therefore the normality of distributions.

Testing the First Hypothesis

To see whether the difference is statistically significant or not a t test was applied. The following table shows the result:

As shown in the following table, the variances were homogeneous in the two sets of scores ($F=.476$, $p=.492>.05$) as the second assumption for t test. Therefore, the first row in the table - Equal variances assumed - is applied. Here, it is shown that the difference was not significant ($t=.589$, $p=.558>.05$). Therefore, the first null hypothesis of this research is maintained, with the conclusion that the learners' English proficiency level is not different between learners who have fathers with university education and those who have fathers without university education.

Table2. Independent Samples Test

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.479	.492	-.589	58	.558	-1.06667	1.81182	-4.69341	2.56008
	Equal variances not assumed			-.589	56.806	.558	-1.06667	1.81182	-4.69504	2.56170

Descriptive Statistics

To compare the English proficiency level of learners whose mothers have university education with those whose mothers do not have university education, a t test had to be applied. At first the assumption of normality of distributions was checked. The following table shows the descriptive statistics which includes information on the skewness of the distribution of the scores.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Students with Educated and Uneducated Mothers (N=60)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error
Scores	16.000	44.000	30.5000	1.07632	8.33717	-.107	.309

As the table shows the skewness of scores are within the range of ± 1.96 , therefore, the normality of distributions.

Testing the Second Hypothesis

To see whether the difference is statistically significant or not a t test was applied. The following table depicts the result:

As shown above, the variances were homogeneous in the two sets of scores ($F1.146$, $p=.289>.05$) as the second assumption for t test. Therefore, the first row in the table - Equal variances assumed - is applied. Here, it is shown that the difference was significant ($t=9.821$, $p=.000<.05$). So, the second null hypothesis of this research is rejected, with the conclusion that the learners whose mothers have university education have higher level of English proficiency

Table 4. Independent Samples Test

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	1.146	.289	-9.821	58	.000	-13.06667	1.33043	-15.72981	-10.40353
	Equal variances not assumed			-9.821	55.628	.000	-13.06667	1.33043	-15.73223	-10.40111

than learners whose mothers do not have university education. The following table and graph visually show the means of the two groups of learners with educated and uneducated mothers:

Table 5- Group statistics (N=30)

groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
learners with uneducated mothers	23.9667	5.65980	1.03333
learners with educated mothers	37.0333	4.58997	.83801

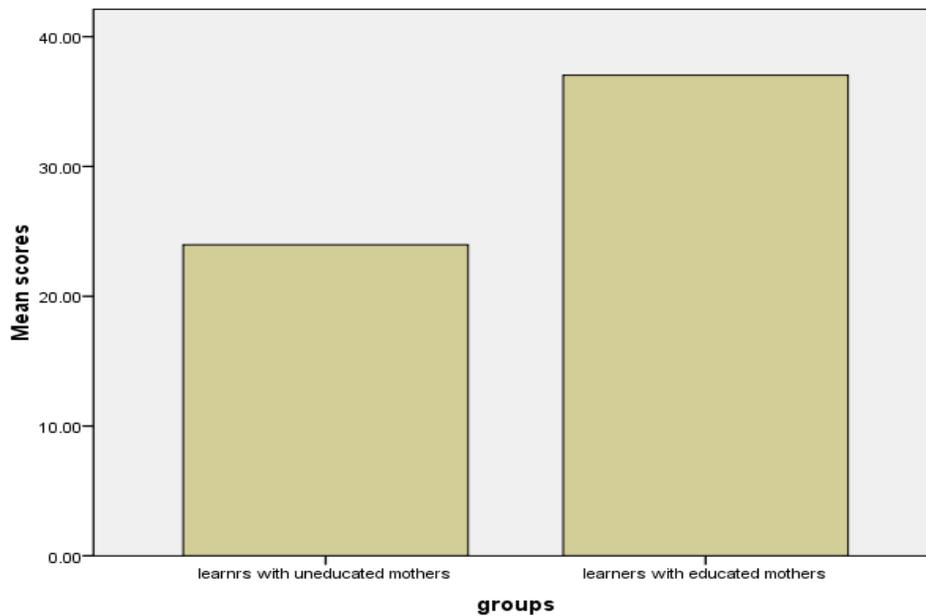


Figure 1. Bar graph representing the means of students with educated and uneducated mothers

Discussion

Based on the outcome of this study, there was not a significant difference between learners with fathers that have university education and those with fathers that do not have university education in English proficiency level. Otherwise, learners with mothers that have university education and

those with mothers that do not have university education are significantly different in English proficiency level. It was revealed that, learners with educated mothers are more successful in learning English and have higher level of English proficiency.

Conclusion

In accordance with some studies, parents' values, knowledge, beliefs, and goals for their children are affected by the parents' educational level, so children's school achievement and performance would be related indirectly to parental behaviors (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Arias and Morillo-Campbell asserted that parents' involvement in children's education might have been increased by their higher level of education, also well - educated parents could model social skills and provide their children with problem solving strategies which lead children to success in school performance (2008).

The prominence of the effects of intergenerational transfer of parents' educational level on children's achievement has been proved by many researches (Sticht, 2010). "Parental beliefs, values, aspirations and attitudes (termed here 'cognitions') are very important, as is parental well-being. ...Parenting skills in terms of warmth, discipline and educational behaviors are all major factors in the formation of school success" (Feinstein, Duckworth, & Sabates, 2004 as cited in Sticht, 2011, p. 37). So Sticht concluded that a major factor in equality of chance and opportunity is the intergenerational transfer of educational achievement (2010).

Parents' role in their children's education and as a whole in their future lives is prominent. In accordance with this research, unlike fathers, mothers' educational level (especially university education) can affect children's English proficiency level. This could have some reasons.

In comparison with fathers, the majority of mothers spend more time with children. They help children more in their lessons. Moreover due to this physical closeness, mothers have stronger emotionally relationship with their children. This matter can have mentally effect on children's attitude and interest toward language learning.

Children's socialization responsibility is mainly by mothers, so the mothers' characteristics have more effect on children's language skills, mothers have stronger impact on children's language proficiency (Dumon, 1989, as cited in Chiswick, lee, & Miller, 2004). Chiswick, lee, and Miller in their article - Parents and Children Talk: The Family Dynamics of English Language Proficiency - assert that it is because mothers spent more time for bringing up their children (2004).

In accordance with studies by LeVine (1980), Youniss and Smollar (1985), and Stevenson and Baker (1987) (cited in Gooding, 2001), mothers' education affects many aspects of children's education effort: "educated mothers are more likely to adopt parental investment strategies designed to maximize the life chances of the student, such as their probability of survival, health, and economic success" (p.22). "A well-educated mother might be more concerned and knowledgeable about obtaining educational credentials for her children by supervising their school attendance, transferring them to better schools, and providing supplementary tutoring when necessary" (LeVine, 1980, Stevenson, & Baker, 1987, Youniss & Smollar, 1985, as cited in

Gooding, 2001, p.22). well-educated mothers “provide her child with more useful forms of instruction, self-perception, encouragement, interaction, and exposure, thus transmitting skills and shaping his or her psychological development in distinctive ways” (Majoribanks, 1979 as cited in Gooding, 2001, p.22). Cognitive ability of the children is affected by mothers’ educational level. There is a relationship between mothers’ encouragement, ratification, oral confirmation and the children’s schooling (Laosa, 1975, 1977, 1982 as cited in Gooding, 2001). Hannan and Luster asserted that children’s educational acquisition is affected by maternal education both directly and indirectly (1993 as cited in Gooding, 2001).

Implications

The essential shift is required in education policies from focusing on “one life cycle” to focusing on “multiple life cycles” due to the prominence of parents’ educational level’s intergenerational effects on children’s achievement (Sticht, 2010). The transfer of parents’ educational achievement to children’s achievement would be distinguished in such a policy (Sticht, 2010).

The finding of this study provides insights into parents and students relationships and has shown that English language learners with mothers who have university education have higher level of English proficiency as determined by the TOEFL test. In accordance with this study, unlike fathers’, mothers’ educational level, especially university education, could affect children’s English language proficiency level. So all parents especially mothers who desire to have children with high English language proficiency level, should take the prominence of their own educational level into account.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study focused on the difference between learners with educated parents and uneducated parents in English proficiency level. The subsequent recommendations are offered with the hope that other researchers find them sufficiently attractive to pursue to complete the result of this study.

1. In the present study learners’ gender was not taking into consideration and the researcher had both female and male participants together. So a more detailed study is required to see whether gender in this study would have different results.
2. There are different factors in parents that affect learners’ English proficiency level, however the researcher focused on parents’ educational level; other factors such as parents’ encouragement, support, allocating time, involving in language school programs, and their English language proficiency level could be scrutinized too.
3. Other studies can be carried out to explore the reasons of the effect of mothers’ educational level on children’s English language proficiency level.

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