
Home Literacy Environment and Children's English as a Second Language Acquisition
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Abstract

The home learning environment plays an important role for children's early competencies development. In particular, the early home literacy environment (HLE) that consists of all literacy resources and interactions in a family that support children's linguistic and literacy learning is closely associated with children's language comprehension and production. A key aspect of the HLE is shared reading that should start early in children's life and should be part of a regular routine in the family.

Introduction

Around the world today, there are more and more children and adults who, for personal, aesthetic, academic, and economic reasons, are becoming multilingual. It is a fact that there are more bilingual brains on the planet than monolingual ones. Whether it is to find new literature, friends, or business markets, or to maintain a connection with the historic past of a heritage language, there are many reasons to learn something of a second language. There are a number of advantages to being exposed to a second language, including cognitive advantages that can arise from achieving a particular level of proficiency in a second language.

For centuries, it has been acknowledged that learning about other people, other cultures, and other languages broadens the mind. Historically, individuals were exposed to languages such as Latin and Greek in school to give them access to rich literature and enable a deeper appreciation of the history and structure of the English language. More recently, students have had the opportunity to be exposed to international languages, heritage languages, official languages (French and English), and Aboriginal languages. Exposure to these other languages enhances cultural awareness. Students learn that cultural practices vary around the world. They learn respect for members of other cultures and speakers of other languages. It has been argued that it is much more difficult to be judgmental of an individual you know than it is to be judgmental of an unknown group. (The Language Research Centre (LRC), 2006)

Literacy activities foster the interaction between family members and children, which enhances the children's development of ESL acquisition (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). There are two potential pathways in which HLE may impact children's language learning. First, family members can support children's language development through language interaction and literacy activities. Second, family members can foster a rich literacy environment, such as by providing ESL learning materials to children (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002).

An adequate level of English competency and proficiency is considered an important component of successful academic and career development (Meng, 2015). Therefore, factors that boost ESL ability have drawn great attention from researchers. HLE has a significant role in ESL learning, yet no meta-analysis provides scientific evidence on the extent to which HLE contributes to ESL acquisition. As a result, this study goes beyond previous research by conducting a meta-analysis and examining the impact of HLE and its components (for example, parental involvement) on ESL acquisition. This study focused on HLE factors that were proximal to and closely associated with children's ESL ability, including HLE resources, parental involvement, shared reading, parental beliefs, maternal effect, paternal effect, and sibling effect (Niklas, Wirth, Guffler, Drescher, and Ehlig, 2020).

Home Literacy Environment.

According to Puglisi, Hulme, Hamilton, and Snowling (2017), the literacy activities or the availability of literacy resources at home that can be used to facilitate children's literacy development are referred to as the "home literacy environment" (HLE). HLE refers to a multifaceted construct that includes language- or literacy-related activities between parents and children, using resources at home (Niklas et al., 2016). It includes different aspects, such as the environment (literacy-related opportunities provided by parents); literacy interface (parents' participation and approaches to literacy activities); passive HLE (parents' literacy modeling in leisure activities); active HLE (parents' engagement in language learning activities); and shared reading (Burgess et al., 2002). It is an umbrella term used to describe the literacy-related interactions, resources, and attitudes that children experience at home (Hamilton, Hayiou-Thomas, Hulme, and Snowling, 2016).

Studies have found that HLE factors such as library visits, functional uses of and verbal reference to literacy, parental encouragement and attitudes toward reading, parental teaching of literacy skills, parental modeling of literacy behaviors, parent-child shared reading, and the number of books at home are positively linked to children's language ability (Yeung & King, 2016). HLE plays a vital role in children's complex cognitive and academic performance development, as claimed by Van Bergen, Zuijen, Bishop, and Jong (2017).

Past studies confirm the importance of HLE to the cultivation of children's reading abilities, which has been confirmed by past research (Liu, Georgiou, & Manolitsis, 2018). According to Inoue, Georgiou, Parrila, and Kirby (2018), four key HLE factors contribute to children's reading development, as shown by empirical research: (i) parental literacy beliefs (PLB), also referring to parental expectations of children's performance; (ii) parental education years at school (PEY), also called parental education level; (iii) parental literacy involvement in their children's activities (PLI); and (iv) home literacy resources (HLR).

Parent literacy belief (PLB) and Home literacy resources (HLR)

Parental literacy beliefs refer to parents' wishes, goals, or desires that enhance their children's reading comprehension performance through literacy knowledge acquisition. Englund, Luckner, Whaley, and Egeland (2004) report that parental literacy belief enhanced children's reading performance through intrinsic motivation enhancement. Weigel, Martin, and Bennett (2006) reported a moderate correlation between PLB and reading comprehension. On the other hand, Stephenson, Parrila, Georgiou, and Kirby (2008) found that PLB and reading comprehension are strongly linked.

Parents with positive beliefs about ESL teaching are likely to foster a rich HLE and actively engage children in ESL-related literacy activities. Positive parental beliefs help create more literacy experiences in which children and parents work together (Sigel, Lisi, & Ann, 2002). Parental beliefs influence parents' literacy behaviors and interactions with children's learning motivation and learning habit development (Harkness & Super, 1992). Evans, Cremaso, and McKinnon (2004) reported that parental beliefs enhanced children's ESL phonics, sounding out words, and word spelling patterns. Sonnenschein, Baker, Serpell, Scher, Truitt, and Munsterman (1997) reported that parental beliefs enhanced the cultivation of children's interest in ESL storybook reading. Baker and Scher (2002) revealed that parents who viewed reading as a source of entertainment were likely to have children who enjoyed reading. Also, Burgess et al. (2002) said that how good literacy activities were depended on what the parents thought.

Home literacy resources refer to literacy equipment (e.g., TV or radio), literacy materials (e.g., story books, CDs), and a literacy language environment that are available at home for children's literacy knowledge development. The number of HLR categories and the amount of HLR available at home are two important factors that contribute to children's literacy knowledge development (Strasser & Lissi, 2009).

Parental beliefs about their children's English learning and the availability of learning resources at home, such as books and electronic learning materials, have been found to be linked to children's language development (Wang, 2015). The number of books at home is strongly correlated to children's literacy knowledge base (Dixon & Wu, 2014). For example, the availability of foreign language books is positively linked to children's phonological processing (Trainin, Wessels, Nelson, & Vadasy, 2017). Oller (2014) showed that book storage at home enhances literacy knowledge in African-American immigrant children and their mothers. It is also linked to an increased engagement in literacy activities at home.

Parent Education Year

The number of years that parents received education during their school learning period is referred to as "parental education years." Hindman, Skibbe, Miller, and Zimmerman (2010) found a positive relationship between parents' education level and their children's reading comprehension achievement.

Parent Literacy Involvement

Parental literacy involvement in their children's activities refers to literacy activities in which parental behaviors interact with children's literacy learning. The major benefit of PLI on literacy acquisition is that children can receive knowledge through interaction with their parents (Johnson, Martin, Brooks-Gunn, & Petrill, 2008). Johnson et al. (2008) reported a moderate relationship between PLI and reading comprehension.

Review of Empirical Studies of HLE and children's ESL acquisition

Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) reported a complex relationship between children's home literacy activities and language acquisition through a longitudinal study design. Specifically, they found that children's ESL book reading ability was related to parental vocabulary teaching and children's listening comprehension skills. Literacy activities foster the interaction between family members and children, which enhances the children's development of ESL acquisition (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). There are two potential pathways in which HLE may impact children's language learning. First, family members can support children's language development through language interaction and literacy activities. Second, family members can foster a rich literacy environment, such as by providing ESL learning materials to children (Burgess et al., 2002).

Dong, Wu, Dong, and Tang (2020) examined the effects of HLE factors on children's reading comprehension through a meta-analysis of 59 studies conducted between 1998 and 2018. The results of the meta-analysis indicated three main findings. First, the overall positive correlation between HLE and reading comprehension in children was moderate ($z = .32$). Second, sampling area, type of home literacy resource, and parental involvement styles did not show a significant interaction effect between each HLE factor and children's reading comprehension. Third, parents' involvement and literacy expectations of children had a significantly higher correlation with children's reading comprehension than home literacy resources did. The results of the study show that parents' involvement in literacy activities and their expectations about literacy are more important for their children's literacy skills to improve.

Yang and Chow Chow (2022) carried out a quantitative synthesis of research on home literacy environments (HLE) and children's English as a Second Language (ESL) learning outcomes through a meta-analysis of 18 articles in kindergarten, primary, and secondary school students ($N = 4401$) carried out between 2000 and 2018. It examines the associations between HLE factors and children's ESL performance. Results showed the effect sizes between HLE factors and children's ESL performance were small to moderate. Family members had a comparable impact on children's ESL performance. Parental literacy teaching behaviors have stronger effects on children's ESL ability than parental beliefs about their children's English learning and the availability of learning resources at home. These results show how important HLE is and how different HLE factors affect a child's ability to learn a second language.

Home literacy environment (HLE) is a predictor of language and reading development in typically developing children, but not much is known about how it affects literacy development in children at risk of dyslexia in their families. Hamilton, Hayiou-Thomas, Hulme, and Snowling (2016)

looked at the HLE at age 4, precursor literacy skills at age 5, and literacy outcomes at age 6 in a group of children with a family history of dyslexia (n = 116) and children with no known risk (n = 72). Developmental relationships between the HLE and literacy were comparable between the groups; an additional effect of storybook exposure on phoneme awareness was observed in the family-risk group only. The effects of socioeconomic status on literacy were partially mediated by variations in the HLE; in turn, effects of the HLE on literacy were mediated by precursor skills (oral language, phoneme awareness, and emergent decoding) in both groups. Findings are discussed in terms of possible gene-environment correlation mechanisms underpinning atypical literacy development.

Rashid, Morris, and Sevcik (2005) looked at 65 elementary-aged children with RD as a sample to find out how home literacy activities with parents and children affected how well the children did in school. The results indicated that children's home literacy activities were not significantly related to any of their academic abilities, whereas their parents' home literacy activities were significantly related to their children's passage comprehension and spelling scores. However, children with and without RD may have different relationships between the home literacy environment and reading.

In the longitudinal study, Nikolas et al. (2020) analyzed the associations between parental attitudes toward shared reading and children's linguistic competencies and whether these associations may be mediated by the HLE. Further, we were interested in changes in parental attitudes over time and their association with child and family background characteristics. The sample consisted of N = 133 children with an average age of about 3 years at t1. The children were tested two more times, with a 6-month period in between each assessment. Parental attitudes toward shared reading, socioeconomic status (SES), and the HLE were assessed via a parental survey. Children's sentence comprehension, productive language, and grammar were measured with a standardized test battery. Children whose parents had a more positive attitude toward shared reading not only lived in a higher quality HLE but also performed better in the linguistic tests. In a structural equation model, an indirect effect was found, showing that the HLE mediated the effect of parental attitudes on children's linguistic competencies. Further, parental attitudes toward shared reading did not change significantly from t1 to t3, and a lower score in the SES scale was associated with a less positive attitude toward shared reading. Consequently, parental attitudes toward shared reading seem to be an important basis for individual differences in the quality of the HLE and also for children's linguistic competencies. Since these attitudes vary based on a family's socioeconomic status (SES), they may be a good place to focus on in order to improve HLE and young children's language learning.

Conclusion and Suggestions

According to the findings of the studies reviewed, parental literacy activity involvement and parental literacy expectations contribute more to children's literacy knowledge enhancement. The size of the correlation effect sizes between HLE factors and children's ESL performance ranges from small to moderate, according to this meta-analysis. The findings emphasize the important role of family members in children's ESL development and indicate that parental involvement can be the key to maximizing the usefulness of HLE resources in fostering children's ESL development. Consequently, parental attitudes toward shared reading seem to be an important basis for individual

differences in the quality of the HLE and also for children's linguistic competencies. As these attitudes vary in the context of different family SES backgrounds, they may be a good target for interventions to support the quality of HLE and young children's linguistic learning. A key aspect of the HLE is shared reading, which should start early in children's lives and be part of a regular routine in the family.

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