



DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: WHAT MATTERS IN THE LANGUAGE LEARNING OF CHILDREN?

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ABSTRACT

Language learning is one of the most challenging skills to teach in a formal learning environment and demographic information is very useful for understanding social and economic matrix of language learning. This research deals with language learning and the influence of different demographic factors like gender, parents' income, parents' education, family background, socioeconomic status and urbanity of geographic background on language learning of the children. A sample of 500 respondents participated in collection of data for the current study. The researchers developed a questionnaire consisting of 25 statements. Quantitative and descriptive statistics with SPSS software were employed to investigate the effects of demographic factors on the language learning process of children. The study concludes that the demographic factors play a significant role in language learning of the kids. There are differences in the language learning abilities, interest, resourcefulness and awareness of the learners on the base of the demographic factors. The study implicates that outcomes of language learning can be estimated on the base of demographic information so the planning can be done accordingly.

Key Words: language learning, demographic factors, gender, parents, socio-economic status

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Introduction

Language is a very important part of life. The role of communication between people not only allows us to understand each other but also helps to establish relationships and to express our thoughts and plans or concerns. Acquiring language and using language is an amazing ability we, as human beings, have (Coat 2004). As Schmenk (2004) writes: Acquiring a language is like learning to play a game. Acquisition of languages is something that can sometimes be confused, condensed, or even forgotten. For example, children have to learn the language game rules, how to articulate words, and put them together in ways that are acceptable to the people around them.

We need to keep two very important things in mind: first, children do not use language as adults, because children are not adults. Language acquisition is a gradual, lengthy process involving many apparent 'errors' to understand the child's language acquisition, Secondly, children will figure out how to talk the dialect(s) and language(s) that are utilized around them. Youngsters, as a rule, start by talking like their folks or parental figures, yet once they begin to blend in with other kids (particularly from the period of around 3 years) they begin to talk like companions their own age Ellis (1994). Children can't control how they talk: they will build up their intonations and they will get familiar with the dialects that think they need. On the off chance that children don't care for the nearby emphasize, they will either need to endure it or move to someplace with a highlight you like! Ellis (1994) said that the child is happy with his/ her accent and they prefer their local language they will be happy. As indicated by Aslan (2009) as all of us, kids are people. What makes them unique with grown-ups, in general, is that children are raised in grown-up universes as per grown-up desires.

Ehrman and Oxford (1990) stated that the children figure out how to show their conduct on what goes on around them, be it clothing standards, non-verbal communication, social graces or language utilizes, generally first through their parental figures and later through companions in their family, neighborhood or school. The people converse with youngsters to educate them regarding our grown-up world and they find out about the world from what we let them know. Be that as it may, they additionally find out about language, from how they use it to enlighten them concerning other things. This implies language learning is going on at whatever point language is utilized around youngsters Kimura (2006). The purpose of the study was to investigate the language learning acquisition used by the learners and to reveal the link between the effect of demographic factors use and success levels with language acquisition.

Literature Review

The term language acquisition continues with the discussion of language and demographic factors. There is bulk of literature available on the relation of demographic factors and achievement in the language and language learning (Gardner, Lambert & Smythe 1975, Oxford & Shearin 1994). It is believed that kids don't just duplicate similar to whatever they are presented to, for two reasons: Firstly, they are growing genuinely and naturally. In the same way, as it might take a very long time to have the option to build up the fine engine abilities required for sewing on a button, it will take a long time to have the option to utilize discourse speech organs in similarly exact manners. Secondly, kids are growing intellectually. They have to discover approaches to understand their condition, so they can connect easily with it Trudgill (1974). They do this by dynamically adjusting the information they get to

their own rising psychological and etymological capacities, and by screening out what is up 'til now unreasonably complex for them to comprehend (Peacock, 1999 & Horwits, 1988).

Discourse and language are autonomous capacities, developing language doesn't reflect rising discourse in any direct manner or the other way around. There's nothing fundamentally erroneous with somebody's language capacities on the off chance that they stammer, stutter or slur their words together, yet these highlights of their discourse may require revising that they hinder comprehensibility past adolescence (Howitz, 1987). There's nothing essentially amiss with somebody's discourse and language that they can't state She sells seashells on the beach by age 6, although their language capacity may require checking that they don't comprehend what this sentence implies, in any language, at a similar age Horwitz's pioneer considers (1985, 1987 and 1988).

Butler (1990) contends that language learning / acquisition requires significant investment because all adapting needs an ideal opportunity to process and make their experience can't be hurried. Numerous parental figures need to get 'results', and in twofold time, as indicated by grown-up desires, and afterward stress that 'nothing is happening'. Youngsters will build up their methodologies for realizing whatever they discover and applicable to learn around them, including language. Youngsters are considerably more ingenious, flexible, and imaginative than the parents are regularly arranged to give them acknowledgment for language (Graddol, 2006).

Block (2002) stated that there is nothing to stress over if the youngster doesn't seem like a grown-up. There might be motivation to stress if kids don't seem like themselves. A youngster's physical and intellectual advancement is best surveyed against the kid itself, with the goal that particular age ranges matter not exactly the child's advancement starting with one phase then onto the next (Golstein 1995, 2001 & Frye 1999). Even though sounds will be gained in a similar

way across the languages that various children may discover various sounds simpler or increasingly troublesome: every youngster will have their learning systems (Lin et al, McMahill 1997, 2001). Some particular demographic factors which are race, gender, salary level, riches, religion, language, ethnicity, calling or occupation, age, area, family foundation family unit status, condition or environmental factors, populace's social and monetary setting, training which impacts on the understudies' language at the center level (Oxford dictionary.com).

The demographers do work out positively past this wide definition and draw broadly picture from related disciplines: human science, financial matters, insights, history, political theory, human sciences, brain science, general wellbeing, and ecological sciences (Block 2002). Every individual, youthful and old, follow two sorts of learning technique. Firstly, drawing on physical capacity, is that children learn in stages (they ensure that they can stroll before they run). The other, drawing on scholarly capacity, is that they sum up from experience (if they see a creepy-crawly that they ever observed and that appears as though a cockroach they are probably going to figure it might be a cockroach) (Patterson & Goddard: 2000).

The researcher concluded that the child learns and acquires more and more language, each step in the process becomes less and less visible, to adults as well as to the child. The research is true about adult language learning acquisition which is influenced by demographic elements; it may sometimes seem, to adult learners, that they are progressing very slowly. These techniques assist the children with clarifying them in the entire language, from articulation through jargon, vocabulary, and sentence structure and to develop abilities like how to hold a discussion.

Research Methodology

The current study was quantitative because the quantitative research relies on statistical tests and can be easily replicated. The nature of the research was descriptive; Creswell (1994) stated that the descriptive method of research is to gather information on the present condition. The survey was used for the current research and questionnaire was used as research instrument to collect data from individuals. The population for this study consisted of government schools and private schools of Iqbal Town at the middle level. The population was randomly sampled within each category by using convenient sampling method. The sample size for the study was comprised of 5 government schools and 5 private schools of Iqbal Town. The final sample was 500 students from the identified schools with equal representation of 50 individuals from each school. The questionnaire used in the current study was developed on 5-point likert scale with responses ranging between strongly agree (coded as 5), agree (coded as 4), neutral (coded as 3), disagree (coded as 2), and strongly disagree (coded as 1). The results of the questionnaire were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and presented in the form of mean score and Standard Deviation and the SPSS user.

Results and Findings

The result shows that there is a significant effect of demographic factors on the language learning process. The result of the questionnaire reported that the demographic factors are a generally direct and straightforward influence on language learning. The primary purpose of the research question was to explore the effect of demographic factors in terms of learners' opinions about the language learning process. To find out the opinions of learners about language learning a questionnaire consisted of 25 items which were divided into 6 sections related to language and major 6 demographic factors such as gender, parents' education,

parents' income, status, etc. The results discussed here according to the sections of the questionnaire one by one.

1. Gender and Language Learning

There were four statements related to gender and language learning included in the current research and were part of the questionnaire. The statements and their analysis in form of frequency and percentage have been presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Gender and Language Learning

S #	Statement	SA N(%)	A N(%)	N N(%)	D N(%)	SD N(%)
1	Girls and boys differ in language learning process or language use.	176 (35.2)	215 (43.0)	23 (4.6)	83 (16.6)	3 (0.6)
2	Boys are more accurate and fluent in language rather than girls.	121 (24.2)	172 (34.4)	88 (17.6)	100 (20.0)	19 (3.8)
3	Girls are quicker to acquire language.	208 (41.6)	173 (34.6)	66 (13.2)	41 (8.2)	12 (2.4)
4	Boys are sharp and keen observer for language skills rather than girls.	121 (24.2)	213 (42.6)	49 (9.8)	96 (19.2)	21 (4.2)

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Table 1 shows that these items claim that gender (girls and boys) (G) affect on language learning. The respondents believed that learning a language is a complex process and it is very difficult for boys to acquire language and it requires a lot of hard work and learning abilities. They believed that girls have a better understanding of the complexities of the language and they are more capable of learning the language than boys. This shows that gender plays an important role in the learning of language as there are different in the language learning capabilities of the learners as perceived by the respondents.

2. Income of Parents and Language Learning

There were four statements related to income of parents and language learning included in the current research and were part of the questionnaire. The statements and their analysis in form of frequency and percentage have been presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Income of Parents and Language Learning

S #	Statement	SA N(%)	A N(%)	N N(%)	D N(%)	SD N(%)
5	Parents' income influences on language learning process.	189 (37.8)	197 (39.4)	57 (11.4)	46 (9.2)	11 (2.2)
6	Parents' income has deep influence on child's mental language.	129 (25.8)	255 (51.0)	77 (15.4)	30 (6.0)	9 (1.8)
7	Rich people can give more facilities to their children for language acquisition.	206 (41.2)	219 (43.8)	40 (8.0)	30 (6.0)	5 (1.0)
8	Income level enhances the abilities of their children regarding to language acquisition	137 (27.4)	215 (43.0)	98 (19.6)	41 (8.2)	9 (1.8)

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The results in the above table show that the income level of parents (I) deeply and strongly affect the language learning process. The respondents thought that it was equally important for girls and boys that their parents should have good and enough salary for the language learning process and only then they would be able to give proper facilities and resources to their children. The result shows that parents' income always has a deep and positive influence on children's mentality. It enhanced the skills and abilities of children also, therefore, the conclusion is that this demographic factor influences on acquiring language and was a determinant of language learning.

3. Education of parents and Language Learning

There were four statements related to education of parents and language learning included in the current research and were part of the questionnaire. The statements and their analysis in form of frequency and percentage have been presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Education of Parents and Language Learning

S #	Statement	SA N(%)	A N(%)	N N(%)	D N(%)	SD N(%)
9	Education of parents plays an important role in language acquisition.	240 (48.0)	217 (43.4)	30 (6.0)	7 (1.4)	6 (1.2)
10	Uneducated parents fail to give proper basic skills of language learning to their children.	97 (19.4)	281 (56.2)	68 (13.6)	36 (7.2)	18 (3.6)
11	Educated parents develop proper skills of language structure, vocabulary and its proper usage to their children.	207 (41.4)	226 (45.2)	39 (7.8)	22 (4.4)	6 (1.2)
12	Uneducated people use informal language which negatively affects the children's language.	191 (38.2)	188 (37.6)	52 (10.4)	45 (9.0)	24 (4.8)

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree,

Table shows that the education of parents exhibited strong effects on the language learning process of the children. The respondents expressed that it was important for parents that they should be highly educated, only after that they can provide better language learning opportunity for their children. Education of parents was suggested to affect the provision of proper facilities and resources to their children. The respondents believed that the educated parents would better understand the need for the modern age and would be sensible and receptive to it. The parents' education was believed to cast deep and positive influence on children's mental abilities of language learning.

4. Family Background and Language Learning

There were four statements related to family background and language learning included in the current research and were part of the questionnaire. The statements and their analysis in form of frequency and percentage have been presented in Table 4:

Table 4: Family Background and Language Learning

S #	Statement	SA N(%)	A N(%)	N N(%)	D N(%)	SD N(%)
13	Family speak their mother language with children without focusing language skills.	196 (39.2)	238 (47.6)	55 (11.0)	11 (2.2)	None
14	Family members help in developing the skills of language acquisition.	116 (23.2)	296 (59.2)	64 (12.8)	12 (2.4)	12 (2.4)
15	Mother has very strong and deep influence on the child's development of language acquisition.	230 (46.0)	201 (40.2)	40 (8.0)	19 (3.8)	10 (2.0)
16	Family or Parents' behavior effect on acquiring language.	205 (41.0)	209 (41.8)	55 (11.0)	13 (2.6)	18 (3.6)

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The results in the table reveal that family background has deep and strong effects on the language learning process of the children. It is important for children if they belong good and healthy atmosphere so that they perform the language learning process effectively. The respondents reported that the environment would create positive and healthy sound mind for children to help them learn language. The results show that the environment would also enhance the skills and abilities of children in language learning.

5. Socio Economic Status and Language Learning

There were four statements related to socio economic status and language learning included in the current research and were part of the questionnaire. The statements and their analysis in form of frequency and percentage have been presented in Table 5:

Table 5: Socio Economic Status and Language Learning

S #	Statement	SA N(%)	A N(%)	N N(%)	D N(%)	SD N(%)
17	Socio- Economic factors have deep influence on language acquisition.	198 (39.6)	242 (48.4)	41 (8.2)	17 (3.4)	2 (0.4)
18	Class system effect on learning language process.	87 (17.4)	294 (58.8)	101 (20.2)	18 (3.6)	None
19	Social class effect on speech, vocabulary and pronunciation of language.	148 (29.6)	222 (44.4)	82 (16.4)	48 (9.6)	None
20	Lower class does not acquire the language at standard level.	167 (33.4)	155 (31.0)	47 (9.4)	61 (12.2)	70 (14.0)

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The results in table 5 demonstrated that the socio-economic status of the learners played an important role in the language learning process. The respondents reported that better social status would give healthy sound mind to children to expedite language learning. In a nutshell, the socio-economic status was expected to create deep and positive influence on children's language learning.

6. Rural and Urban effect and Language Learning

There were five statements related to whether the respondents belonged to urban areas or rural areas and its effects on language learning included in the current research and were part of the questionnaire. The statements and their analysis in form of frequency and percentage have been presented in Table 6:

Table 6: Urbanity of Background and Language Learning

S #	Statement	SA N(%)	A N(%)	N N(%)	D N(%)	SD N(%)
21	Villagers are not aware about the acquisition of language.	182 (36.4)	194 (38.8)	61 (12.2)	41 (8.2)	22 (4.4)
22	Modern and educated people promote the skills and	177 (35.4)	256 (51.2)	48 (9.6)	15 (3.0)	4 (0.8)

abilities of language among their children.						
23	Rural people have lack of interest in language acquisition skills.	160 (32.0)	199 (39.8)	74 (14.8)	55 (11.0)	12 (2.4)
24	Urban people are sharper and intelligent to learn language.	186 (37.2)	207 (41.4)	52 (10.4)	22 (4.4)	33 (6.6)
25	Rural and Urban society affects language acquisition process.	157 (31.4)	270 (54.0)	36 (7.2)	8 (1.6)	29 (5.8)

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The results in table 6 revealed that whether the children belonged to urban area or rural area was an important indicator of the language learning of the children. The respondents were of the view that the urban children would be sharper enough to learn language quite easily. Since the people living in rural areas were not well aware of the importance of learning language and there was lack of interest as well, so the urban population was assumed to have an advantage in this regard.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the demographic factors play a significant role in language learning of the kids. There are differences in the language learning abilities, interest, resourcefulness and awareness of the learners on the base of the demographic factors. The current research focused on some of the important demographic factors such as gender, income level, education of parents, family background, socio-economic status, rural and urban society. The findings of the current study reveal that all demographic factors were considered to respond similarly with regard to language learning process. Therefore, it can be concluded that the outcomes of language learning can be estimated on the base of demographic information so the planning can be done accordingly as there were differences reported by the respondents in language learning with reference to the demographic factors.

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