

FAMILY SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Lisa Richardson

University Of South Florida Sarasota- Manatee

Lisa Richardson, Department of Education, University of South Florida

Contact: Richardson@mail.usf.edu

Analysis

Family learning is a type of learning, which occurs as a unit in a common area. The purpose of this research is to study the effects of families with internal support systems in second language acquisition compared to families without for socioeconomic gain.

When referring to internal support systems, it is intended to mean that the family is learning together as a cohesive unit, rather than a family learning a second language in separate spaces independent from one another. If a child is learning English at school, and a parent is learning English at work through daily interactions, or with a class, then the activities are not connected. Whole family instruction led by a single instructor could enhance learning by using the support of siblings and multigenerational knowledge.

Additionally, motivation is a key factor for learning the second language. Will a family be more successful if their learning is motivated to increase their socioeconomic status?

To analysis this, we must first compare what programs are out there and their success.

The evidence provided here stems mainly from qualitative studies in journals that show the positive effects of learning together as a unit. Family learning has been typically targeted through the school systems as a way to support the student and assist the families.

Family Literacy Programs

The UK's government family literacy program uses teachers and nursery care providers to target prospective families and use their public spaces. However, it is then left to a community teacher, as they are referred to, to meet and greet with the parents in casual ways like morning coffee talks to make them feel comfortable, get to know their needs, and gain their participation (Wainwright and Marandet, 2013). They have found these

programs successful by having parents make community connections and increase involvement in their child's education. However, some people feel targeted as it pertains to their class, migrant status, and ethnicity (Wainwright and Marandet, 2013). This is good to know, because the schools can intimidate immigrants, and they may not want to participate. Having them eased into being on their child's school grounds with a casual coffee chat would encourage continued participation.

On the other hand, Collier and Auerbach's (2011) study of family literacy programs in four California public schools, found failure in these types of family literacy programs in a school environment. This is when programs focused on the content and curriculum teaching and learning in a school context of English only. They recommended making more cultural and personal connections with the families. Early (2017) also supports drawing on funds of knowledge from family members. Her study showed success when English mechanics were avoided and focus was placed on, "honoring language, culture, and story." Family members in this study and program had the ability to choose what language to speak in at the classes. This made families more comfortable and more apt to participate.

Chao and Mantero (2014) reported success with family literacy practices in church spaces. There, families read and listen to religious materials that draw them closer to their faith with family-together activities. This supports integrating family interests and culture into the learning to make it successful.

Wainwright and Marandet (2013) conducted a 12-month study by the British Academy in West London, and found that government policies targeted immigrant mothers with a hook of becoming better parents and increasing social mobility. Fathers had not taken an

active role in participating in these family learning programs, even though there have been efforts to include them. One rationale was that mothers are still seen as the natural teachers and caretakers of the family and that there is a division of labor when concerned with gender roles in families.

The Importance of Collective Spaces

What if these programs intimidate families? What other creative spaces besides schools, nurseries, or churches have been used, and are they successful?

Dixon and Wu (2014) found that parent involvement in family literacy programs in London with immigrants were successful in three unique types of collective spaces: a home-visit program, a doctor's office, and a government nutrition program office.

The home-visit program participants felt more comfortable to meet in their home rather than meeting in strange locations with other programs or at school. They felt that it was because they were on their familiar home turf. Immigrant families felt safe and comfortable there. This increased involvement with whole family language learning led by a single instructor.

Additionally, there was a positive reaction from families with a library being established with a librarian, in a medical clinic, that took, "low-quality wait time into high-quality parent-child literacy time," (Dixon and Wu, 2014). Families could interact with the librarian and take home books in a bag. Librarians could also assist in finding appropriate book levels for them and their children, along with giving parents some literacy tips on how to read to and with their children.

Finally, the literacy activities in a government nutrition office found that parents and children enjoyed integrating parent's prior knowledge in traditional properties of herbs.

Parents felt valued for their knowledge, which increased engagement, and ultimately increased learning of the second language.

It is encouraging to see that government spaces can be used for new ways to reach out to immigrant families, make them feel comfortable, assist in learning effective literacy practices, and build on parent's funds of knowledge.

The limitations for the doctor's office and nutrition office may be that the whole family would not be present. Dixon and Wu state that most studies are focused on the mother-child literacy activities more than with fathers or other adults. They suggest that further research be done on, "the roles of fathers, siblings, and other relatives in children's literacy development. These additional participants in home literacy may help us design more inclusive home literacy programs," (2014).

Internal Support Structure

Haneda found that the internal support structure in a family with out-of-school literacy activities and practices went beyond just parent to child (2006). She found that siblings, cousins, and extended family members collaboratively participated in these activities in home community areas like the kitchen or living room.

"Para-phrasing" is also being used in immigrant households by the children, to their parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents in the forms of translating letters, forms, labels, news, and fictional writings. This evidence supports the theory behind the success of having the internal support structure of whole family learning, and gives a model that it is not only possible, but is happening already, only without an instructor. Furthermore, it is important to note that these types of reading material are meaningful to the family, which motivates the increase in participation. Wanting or needing to know the information

because it directly affects them, makes the entire family motivated to learn a second language from each other.

Social Capital

Stevens and Patel's (2015) research support Coleman's social theory with their view on generativity and social capital. They found that they are not separate areas of one life, but rather they work together to increase opportunities in social networks. Li's (2007) findings in his study in Canada with four Chinese families, found that the increase of family capital (physical, human, and social) reflected the quality of the child's parent involvement and home environment. While some families were motivated by higher education and improved job status, now and in the future for their families, other families were motivated by the necessity of being able to run a business and communicate with customers. The purpose of learning the language made a difference as to what was used to increase literacy. All families saw that by improving family capital in one of these areas it increased all of the areas. This is interesting, because if families knew that these types of capital were important, they could focus on them as a way to increase their socio-economic status. Acquiring a second language could assist in this.

The Karen refugee women participated in family literacy learning program as a way to increase their community involvement and aid in attaining employment. This aided in their feelings of isolation leaving and empowering them to be more independent (Quadros and Sarroub, (2016). Hope (2011), also studied refugees and family literacy programs and found that if the learning acknowledged and built on the migrant's strengths as a socio-cultural activity, it would improve language learning and encourage empowerment. Therefore, using transcultural capital, which blends the migrant's history

with their possibilities in the future increases not only their emotional well-being, but their language fluency (education) as well.

Language Learning and Acquisition

When considering best practices for family literacy programs and uses of internal supports systems, the matter of curriculum comes up. Do second language learners prefer strategies that support whole family language learning or acquisition strategies? In the study by Altmisdort (2016), successful students preferred the acquisition strategies, which focused on the use of authentic materials, music, film, and reading. Additionally, they were highly motivated to learn the language. These are strategies and activities that can be collectively completed by whole families capitalizing on their strengths with internal support systems and high motivation.