Bilingualism in Spanish Immigrants

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Bilingualism affects the language acquisition however previous researches have only discussed the relationship between the replication of children language and the maternal education with respect to English language only. Moreover, previous researches have studied the immigrant language experiences while keeping in view many factors that might affect the process of language acquisition. For instance, the maternal socioeconomic status, exogamous marriages, education level, beliefs and observations of the mother regarding child development. The previous hypotheses are based on the level of maternal education and its effects on the children language are studied keeping in view their English proficiency level. In this current research article, researchers aim at studying the relationship between children language development and maternal education in the context of their first language, Spanish. The bilingual practices in Spanish immigrant children serves as a motivation for this study because in previous studies maternal education as a variable has been studied with respect to English language only. Similarly, the current research study is an attempt at researching the effects of Spanish immigrant mothers education level acquired in English and Spanish on their children’s English and Spanish language skills simultaneously.

The researchers selected the sample used by Place and Hoff in 2016 and studied 92 bilingually born children, 45 girls and 47 boys aged 12 months till 60 months during the research period (Hoff et al., 2018). However, in present research study, the researchers modified the variables and only selected those mothers who were native Spanish born and not married to a nonimmigrant. Although the Fathers’ education level was not required for the test but only those children were selected in the sample who’s paternal first language was also Spanish and they were native Spanish born as well. The interviews and assessments were done in the lab playrooms but 85% of them were done in the homes of the children. For measuring the tests, two dichotomous variables were formulated: (1) mother’s education level in English ranging from less than a 4 year degree or more than a 4 year degree or even more than that and (2) mother’s education level in Spanish ranging from less than a 4 year degree or more than a 4 year degree or even beyond. Moreover, two more variables were selected and they were the language input in English and Spanish languages at home and Children’s vocabulary in English and Spanish languages (Hoff et al., 2018).

The findings supported the hypothesis that the effect of maternal education level on the children’s is language specific. The maternal education level in English effected children’s English and the education level in Spanish effected the children’s Spanish language skills. However, the education level of English did not affect children’s Spanish skills and vice versa. The researchers came at the conclusion that the children use language specific vocabulary items for the things they talk in Spanish at home and they use English vocabulary items for the things they talk about in English. However, the level of English language surpassed the level of Spanish language skills in bilingual immigrant children because English is used as a medium of instruction in schools. Similarly, English allows a bilingual immigrant more advanced language experience in daily life communication.

The research highlights the significance of a bilingual experience in the U.S. which is equally important as getting a monolingual experience of English language. However, the present study does not highlight the relationship between the native language and the second language of the children in an American context. For instance, children were not assessed through multiple vocabulary tests in both the languages. The maternal education level as a variable does not directly affect the children’s language experience in both the languages as mothers now live in the new country and maybe brought into America by their parents too after their birth. Everyday communication and peer exposure also add in a person’s vocabulary items and vocabulary forms language.

**References**

Hoff, Erika, Andrea Burridge, Krystal M. Ribot, and David Giguere. “Language Specificity in the Relation of Maternal Education to Bilingual Children’s Vocabulary Growth.” *Developmental Psychology* 54, no. 6 (2018): 1011–19. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000492>.