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Generational Status and First Born Child: Predicative of Achievement in Learning ESL

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Abstract: Research on age, gender, socio-economic status, generational status, motivation have their origin in Coleman's study which found that students' socio-demographic variables play crucial role in learning at school. This paper presents the findings of a study on relationship between generational status (English language learner), first born child and students' achievement in learning ESL in a few selected secondary schools of Rajasthan. This study adopted an Ex-Post-Facto research design followed by simple random sampling technique using questionnaire survey for data collection. The students' achievement in learning ESL assessed by the affiliating board (Central Board of Secondary Education) of schools in form of grades was taken from the schools. The t-test results indicated that students' achievement in learning ESL is dependent on generational status and first born child. Standard multiple regression also indicated the significant relationship between generational status, first child and students' achievement in learning ESL at secondary level.

Keyword: *Achievement, Birth order, English as a second language, Generational status*

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Introduction

This paper sheds light on the impact of socio-demographic variables namely generational status and first born child on secondary school students' achievement in learning English as a second language (AESL) in developing countries like India.

The learning setting of learners comprises not only school and classroom but also his/her social and psychological environment. According to a study by Nannyonjo, on analysis of factors influencing learning achievement in grade six, both school factors such as textbook availability, class size, teacher/pupil ratio etc and home background characteristics such as age, number of books at home, language spoken at home have been found to have significant relationship with student learning achievement. Even Shimada studied student achievement and social stratification which also included both home and school factors. These studies demonstrate the important role played by all factors in learning ESL. Learners' social environment in form of socio-demographic variables like age, gender, residence setting, socio-economic status, etc have been established to contribute in learning achievement. According to Nelson-LeGall, "Both the individual and the social context are active and constructive in producing learning and understanding" (52). This social environment develops heterogeneity among learners though sitting in same classroom and receiving same teaching and instructions, textbooks, etc. The ELT classroom has and will always comprise heterogeneous learners due to learners coming from different sections of society. The heterogeneity is in terms of learners' individual characteristics like intelligence level, grasping power, age, gender, generational status, neighborhood, attitude, motivation, beliefs, desires and many more. Sociological as well as psychological constructs have roles to play in learning and achievement in ESL (Pishghadam and Khajavy). Differences in learning achievement and outcomes in ESL of learners after being provided with same formal settings, the call for accentuating the role of socio-demographic variables has emerged as an important area for study in Second language acquisition (SLA), applied linguistics, etc since four to five decades.

The present study identifies socio-demographic variables as generational status of English language learner and first born child. "English learner students are often viewed as a homogenous group of students when in fact they are a diverse group with distinct generational differences among them. Typically the term generational status has been defined to describe the birthplace of the individual or individual's parents. Defining students by generational status may provide information about the manner in which these students are motivated, are self efficacious, form language learning beliefs, and acculturate" (del Carmen Garcia 12). Generational status are also defined referring to the number of generation of the students' family has been

residing in any particular place (Kaufman, Chavez and Lauen). There is a difference between first generation and traditional students with respect to their basic knowledge of any subject, school or college, personal commitment, and level of family support, with first generation of students being at disadvantage in most cases (York-Anderson and Bowman).

Literature suggests the need to identify the role of generational status in language learning. Olsen and Jaramillo concur and identify three types of ELs: (a) newly arrived or first generation students with adequate schooling in their home country; (b) newly arrived or first generation with inadequate schooling in their home country; (c) US-born long-term ELs or Generation 1.5. Researchers have frequently indicated that sociological factors more than psychological factors contribute to learning and literacy (Scribner and Cole). The literature of research in general education and language learning does not show any empirical study taking the issue into account in Indian context. Much of the studies conducted on generational status are in context of immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2005; Freeman, Freeman and Mercuri; Norrid-Lacey and Spencer; Rubinstein-Ávila; Macias) outside Indian context. Deb studied effect of generational status on college adjustment and psychological well-being among South Asian American college students. Here, “Asians” as people having origins in the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, and includes individuals from countries such as Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Thailand, and Vietnam (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, and Shahid). Also no studies could have been traced with respect to generational status specific to learning ESL in Indian context. Empirical evidence suggests that sibling structure influences children's educational outcomes. While the negative effect of the number of siblings is quite consistent, there are mixed findings for birth order and birth spacing (Karwath, Relikowski and Schmitt). Although a number of factors affect the outcomes for children, many authorities believe that children's birth order plays a special role in their destiny (Sailor). Children lower down the birth order do worse than those higher up the birth order (Iacovou). Keller, Troesch and Grob and Lowry have stated that birth order and first born child have an impact on second language skills among bilingual children. Since social factors determine the way individuals act, scholars believe that sociology outweighs psychology in educational success (Bourdieu), these factors are found to have role in second language skills. Thus, the present study gauges the relationship between generational status (in terms of English language learner), first born child and students' achievement in learning English as a second language (AESL) at secondary schools. The present study aims to discover that, are these socio-demographic variables have any role to play in AESL besides students have been exposed to English as a subject as well as medium of instruction for more than ten to twelve years in formal settings.

Objectives of the present study

The current study has examined the relationship between generational status, first born child and students' AESL of secondary schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary education (CBSE) in Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan. Secondly, the study has also identified that between generational status and first born child variables, which variable is more important with respect to strength of relationship between predictor and criterion. Thus, the present aims to explore the following research questions.

- Is there any significant difference in the mean score of groups of each variable (generational status and first child) with respect to students' AESL?
- Is there any significant relationship between generational status, first born child and students' AESL?
- Is there any variance shared by significant predictors in model?

Research methodology

This study adopted an ex-post-facto research design. This design is considered suitable because students' variables such as generational status and first born child have already taken place and AESL variable is not manipulative as they have already occurred.

The study targeted the students of class ten in residential and non-residential secondary schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in Jhunjhunu district, Rajasthan (India). The data comprised a sample of 823 students from nine schools. Since the schools under study admit boarding as well as day schooling students, students with different socio-economic background join this school. Hence it is assumed that the findings of these schools may be significant for the larger population.

The survey has been conducted by using a questionnaire to collect information about the generational status and first born child of the participants. The study has been delimited to socio-demographic variables such as generational status and first born child. Face validity and content validity have been assessed by experts and accordingly changes are made. The students' AESL are measured through the result of a particular subject at the end of year overall course marks; computed as weighted averages of both formative and summative assessments for the respective year conducted and provided by CBSE.

Findings, Analysis and Discussion

In the present study, generational status is defined as whether the students belong to the first generation of English language learner. Here, generational status is dealing with students' earlier generation's education through English medium. Another variable first born child, here, refers to the birth order of students. Whether

the student is the first child of his/her parents? Dummy coding has been used for categorical/nominal variables, here; generational status and first born child are dichotomous in nature as independent variables. The students' AESL as dependent variables has been already on a continuous scale. SPSS has been used for various statistical data analysis techniques like t-test and standard multiple regression performed. These statistical techniques are known as inferential statistical techniques. They are parametric in nature. Parametric tests need to be satisfied underlying certain assumptions prior to performance of it. All the assumptions have been assessed and found under acceptable range. Thus, the ensuing section describes empirical findings and discussion.

Table 1. t-test result

Variables	Characteristics	M	SD	t	df	p-value
Generational status	Yes	70.92	12.10	-8.239	821	0.000
	No	77.89	10.55			
First born child	Yes	77.11	11.27	3.028	821	0.003
	No	74.70	11.53			

An independent sample t-test (see Table 1) has been performed to compare mean scores of AESL of respondents as the first generation of English learner and second or third generation; first born child and second/third born child. The results have indicated that respondents under second or third generation of English language learner ($M= 77.89$, $SD=10.55$) scored higher in English than respondents under first generation of English language learner ($M= 70.92$, $SD=12.10$); $t(821)= 3.102$, $p=0.000$; respondents being first born child ($M= 77.11$, $SD=11.27$) scored higher in English than respondents being second or third born child ($M= 74.67$, $SD=11.53$); $t(821)= 3.028$, $p=0.003$. These results indicate that there is a means score difference in AESL with respect to variables generational status and first born child.

Table 2. Result of multiple regression analysis

Model 1	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t-value	sig
	B	Std Error	β		
Constant	72.166	0.814		88.672	0.000
Generational status	6.952	0.841	0.276	8.267	0.000

First born child	-2.379	0.765	-0.104	-3.101	0.002
Magnitude of effect (R^2)=0.087, F^*=39.131					

Model 1: Predictors: (constant), Generational status, First born child.

R value= 0.295. $\Delta R^2=0.085$. $*p \leq 0.001$. Dependent variable: AESL

The output revealed a correlation between all independent factor and dependent factor, $r = 0.295$. The model summary highlighted $R^2 = 0.09$, $F(20, 802) =$, $p < 0.001$ indicating statistical predictive capability of independent variable (generational status and first born child) on dependent variable (AESL). The F test (see table 2) is significant which means that the model fits the data and implies that independent variables predict significantly AESL at secondary school level. Furthermore, the significance of the predictor variables in influencing AESL indicates that generational status ($\beta=0.276$, $t=8.267$, $p < 0.001$), first born child ($\beta=-0.104$, $t=-3.101$, $p < 0.005$) are significant.

Consequently, it has been found that generational status variable emerges to be important variables than first born child variable in predicting respondents' AESL based on the responses in present study based on standardized coefficient (β value). It has been found that generational status variable has exerted strong effects as β value is above 0.25 and first born child is found to exert small effects as β value is 0.10.

Generational status

Generational status of respondents in the present study is in terms of English language learner. It has different definition according to the context. Here, it deals with respondent as students' parental education through English medium. The t-test ($t=-8.239$, $p=0.000$) and regression ($\beta=0.276$, $p=0.000$) analysis brought to the fore that the respondents who fall under second or third generation of language learner have outperformed their counterparts falling under the first generation of the language learner. The regression analysis indicates that generational status has a direct significant effect on AESL at secondary schools. The significant generational disparity with positive path displays the importance of generational status in the present study. The findings also indicate that it is not only significantly related but also produces strong effects on AESL. Literature highlights the importance of generational status in academic engagements (Bohon, Johnson and Gormon ; Crosnoe) in different circumstances regarding environment and definition of the generational status variable. Jamshidi noted a significant disparity in language proficiency of Iranian students with respect generational status; second generation (generation 1.5 EL) of students performed better than the first generation (newly arrive immigrant EL). Here, generation 1.5 means either born in U.S. or have lived there

for most of their lives and first generation means newly arrived either with adequate or inadequate schooling in their home country. Also, the second generation outperformed both first and third generations in unadjusted math, reading, and science tests (Kaufman, Chavez and Lauen) among Asian students. Perhaps, more important, however, second or third generation of students is at an advantage to avail the economic facilities, educational environment and following positive attitude towards educating them. However, students of second or third generation of parents are in better SES conditions, exposure could go to elite schools which outline their attitude, motivation and interest in learning boosting their achievement indirectly. This also leads to high aspiration among students.

First born child

The status of respondents as first born child of their parents is also studied to assess its impact. The t-test ($t=3.028$, $p=0.003$) and regression ($\beta=-0.104$, $p=0.002$) results reveal first child to be a significant predictor of AESL. These analyses claim that being first born child adds to their AESL as compared to being second or third born child in the present study. The path coefficient in regression analysis is found to be negative which means they move in opposite direction. This resembles that as the respondents move from the position of later born child to first born child their AESL decreases. Laird and Shelton noted that first-born children have an increased susceptibility to both drug use as well as positive educational outcomes. Firstborns are always seen as leaders, high-achievers, ambitious, and conforming (McGuirk and Pettijohn). According to confluence hypothesis, the impact of birth order on cognitive achievement was largely influenced by familial intellectual environment and the opportunity to serve as an intellectual resource. Familial intellectual environment decreases in respond to increased family size. Therefore, firstborns were born to a higher intellectual environment as compared to the later-born children (Zajonc and Markus). Another reason could also be first born child have the opportunity to monopolize their parent's attention to get the position of privilege and significance as compared to the later-born child (Adams). Zajonc insists that results from several studies of birth order effects on intellectual performance may be discrepant because the effects are both positive and negative dependent on the age of the respondents during the study. He claims that there should be no influence of birth order on intellectual ability for children younger than 11 years but a positive influence on birth order for children older than 11 years when, arguably successive children have had opportunities to tutor their younger siblings. Many studies (Rodgers et al; Kircaldy et al) included family size, SES in the assessment of the relation between first born child or later born child and academic performance. This suggests that to get more powerful determinants, one would need to consider other specific variables like gender, age, SES, birth gap, the number of siblings that are more like to underlie such outcomes. According to confluence theory, one reason for later born child to receive reduced intellectual abilities, since, younger siblings also interact with an

older sibling whose intellectual abilities are less than that of an adult. Whereas, Ha and Tam found no significant differences between birth order and academic performance of college students in Malaysia. Literature (Berglund, Eriksson, and Westerlund; Reilly et al) state that research on first born child and language development have been much more explored among pre-play kids or among toddlers, etc with different findings for developmental stages in language learning. Keller, Troesch, and Grob claim first-born siblings showed better second language skills than later-born siblings of bilingual children admitted in an early institution (pre-play). Bornstein, Leach and Haynes also found that there exist no difference between a first born child and later born child for vocabulary development.

Conclusion

The findings and analysis of present study have indicated that generational status in terms of English language learner and first born child variables do have strong and small but meaningful effect on students' achievement in learning ESL at secondary schools. This lay downs the need for consideration of these variables to be incorporated indirectly in teaching techniques in English classrooms. Though the findings have produced strong relationship but the contribution of these variables in the outcome variable is low. Therefore, mixed research (both quantitative and qualitative analysis) is required to study these variables in detail.

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