



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MATERNAL READING BELIEFS, HOME ENVIRONMENT, AND MOTHER-CHILD INTERACTION WITH EMERGENT LITERACY AMONG YOUNG CHILDREN IN IRAN

AZIMEH JAFARI SADR

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By

AZIMEH JAFARI SADR

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2015

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved mother and to the lovely memory of my father, who have always loved me unconditionally.

I dedicate this work to my husband who has been a constant source of support and encouragement throughout my life. This work also dedicated to my wonderful son and daughter, Danial and Asal, that both of them have been my best motivators.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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AZIMEH JAFARI SADR

January 2015

Chairman : Rumaya Binti Juhari, PhD.
Faculty : Human Ecology

The objectives of the study had been to determine the relationships between maternal reading beliefs, home environment, mother-child interaction and emergent literacy amongst young children in Iran. Findings of this mixed methods strategy study were based on data collected from 90 children between the ages of 3 and 4 years and their mothers. Data were collected using questionnaires, observation and face to face interview. Children were assessed individually while mothers completed mothers' reading beliefs inventory. Mother and child interactions were videotaped, and home environment was observed, while mothers were asked to respond to the questions related to their home environment in the questionnaire.

Results of the current study indicate that there was no significant relationship between maternal reading beliefs and emergent literacy. However, a positive and significant relationship was found between home environment and emergent literacy among the children. The findings of this study showed that children who were exposed to better home environment, have higher emergent literacy skills. There was also a positive and significant relationship between mother-child interaction and emergent literacy. Children whose mothers had higher scores in storybook reading style in mother-child interaction showed higher emergent literacy skills. The findings also confirmed that there were no significant difference in emergent literacy skills between boys and girls in this study.

From the multivariate analysis, the home environment appeared as the strongest predictor of child's emergent literacy, followed by mother-child interaction. The present study also supported the partial mediation role of mother-child interaction in the relationship between home environment and emergent literacy among young children. For the qualitative analysis, mother-child storybook reading interaction was investigated by observing the interactions that took place between mother and child during reading storybooks. The presentation of the reaction of the child was divided in two categories

of reaction, based on whether the child was deemed active or passive. The possible types of activity or passivity in the response of the child depends on the maternal behaviors during storybook reading, such as when the mother used cognitive and emotional aspects in her reading style and methods, during the process of reading storybooks to children who were active. If mothers were more supportive of their children during the process of reading storybooks, the children were more likely to enjoy the activity to a greater degree, particularly if cognitive and emotional aspects had been applied properly during the reading. It would be reasonable to conclude that storybook reading interactions between mother and child had been firmly connected to language and emergent literacy skills.

The findings of this study should reveal important implications for promoting and encouraging physical, cognitive, social and behavioral elements in supporting the development of children's emergent literacy prior to the beginning of formal schooling. Various possibilities regarding the nurturing of emergent literacy were suggested which include encouraging mothers to read with their children, promoting positive interactional behavior between mother and child, and providing advice on the creation of a more conducive home environment.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PERKAITAN ANTARA KEPERCAYAAN BACAAN IBU, PERSEKITARAN RUMAH, DAN INTERAKSI IBU-ANAK DENGAN TUNAS LITERASI DALAM KALANGAN KANAK-KANAK DI IRAN

Oleh

AZIMEH JAFARI SADR

Januari 2015

Pengerusi : Rumaya Binti Juhari, PhD.
Fakulti : Ekologi Manusia

Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan hubungan antara kepercayaan bacaan ibu, persekitaran rumah, interaksi ibu-anak dan tunas literasi dalam kalangan kanak-kanak di Iran. Dapatan kajian yang menggunakan kaedah method gabungan ini adalah berdasarkan data yang dikumpul daripada 90 kanak-kanak berumur tiga hingga empat tahun berserta ibu mereka. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan borang soal selidik, pemerhatian dan temubual bersemuka.

Kanak-kanak telah dinilai secara individu manakala ibu melengkapkan inventori kepercayaan bacaan ibu. Interaksi antara ibu dan anak dirakam, dan persekitaran rumah diperhatikan, sementara ibu-ibu diminta untuk menjawab soalan berkaitan persekitaran rumah mereka.

Hasil kajian mendapati tiada perkaitan signifikan antara kepercayaan bacaan ibu dan tunas literasi. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat perkaitan positif dan signifikan antara persekitaran rumah dan tunas literasi kalangan kanak-kanak. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan hubungan signifikan antara interaksi ibu-anak dan tunas literasi. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan kanak-kanak yang didedahkan kepada persekitaran rumah yang lebih baik, mempunyai tunas kemahiran tunas literasi yang lebih tinggi. Terdapat juga hubungan yang positif dan signifikan antara interaksi ibu-anak dan tunas literasi. Kanak-kanak yang ibunya mempunyai skor yang lebih tinggi dalam gaya membaca buku cerita dalam interaksi ibu-anak menunjukkan kemahiran tunas literasi yang lebih tinggi. Hasil kajian juga mengesahkan bahawa tiada perbezaan signifikan dalam tunas literasi antara kanak-kanak lelaki dan perempuan.

Dari analisis multivariat, persekitaran rumah muncul sebagai peramal paling kuat, diikuti oleh interaksi ibu-anak terhadap tunas literasi. Kajian ini juga menyokong peranan pengantaraan separa interaksi ibu-anak dalam hubungan antara persekitaran dan tunas literasi kalangan kanak-kanak. Bagi analisis kualitatif, interaksi ibu-anak membaca buku cerita juga telah dikaji dengan memerhati interaksi antara ibu dan anak semasa membaca buku cerita. Tindak balas anak-anak dibahagikan kepada dua kategori iaitu aktif atau pasif. Tindak balas aktif atau pasif anak bergantung kepada tingkah laku ibu semasa membaca buku cerita, contohnya apabila ibu menggunakan aspek kognitif dan emosi semasa membaca buku cerita, kanak-kanak itu aktif. Sekiranya ibu lebih menyokong ketika anak-anak mereka membaca buku cerita, kanak-kanak itu akan lebih cenderung untuk suka membaca, terutamanya jika aspek kognitif dan emosi digunakan dengan betul semasa membaca. Wajarlah disimpulkan bahawa interaksi membaca buku antara ibu dan anak mempunyai kaitan kukuh dengan. Bahasa perkembangan bahasa dan tunas literasi.

Hasil kajian ini mempunyai implikasi penting dalam mempromosi dan menggalakkan elemen kognitif, social dan tingkah laku bagi menyokong perkembangan tunas literasi anak. Pelbagai kemungkinan memupuk tunas literasi dicadangkan seperti menggalakkan ibu untuk membaca dengan anak-anak mereka, menggalakkan tingkah laku interaksi positif antara ibu dan anak, dan member nasihat tentang peyediaan suasana persekitaran rumah yang lebih kondusif yang mampu memupuk tunas literasi dalam kalangan kanak-kanak.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 27 January 2015 to conduct the final examination of Azimeh Jafari Sadr on her thesis entitled "Relationship between Maternal Reading Beliefs, Home Environment and Mother-Child Interaction with Emergent Literacy among Young Children in Iran" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Zaid Ahmad, PhD
Professor
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Rozumah Baharudin, PhD
Professor
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Tengku Aizan Tengku Abd Hamid, PhD
Professor
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Bus. A.G. (Adriana), PhD
Professor
Leiden University
Netherlands
(External Examiner)



ZULKARNAIN ZAINAL, PhD
Professor and Deputy Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 17 June 2015

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Rumaya bt Juhari, PhD
Associate Professor
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Mariani bt Mansor, PhD
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Rohani Abdullah, PhD
Associate Professor
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

BUJANG BIN KIM HUAT, PhD
Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

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Name and Matric No: Azimeh Jafari Sadr, GS: 22296

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Name of
Chairman of
Supervisory
Committee:



Rumaya bt Juhari, PhD

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PENSYARAH

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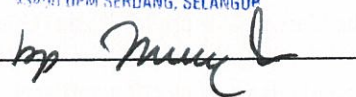
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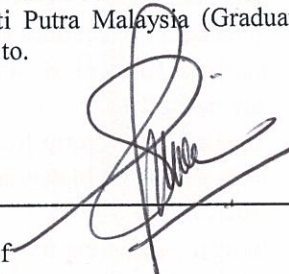
Name of
Member of
Supervisory
Committee:



Rohani Abdullah, PhD

Signature: _____

Name of
Member of
Supervisory
Committee:



Mariani bt Mansor, PhD

PROF. MADYA DR. MARIANI MANSOR

PENSYARAH

Fakulti Ekologi Manusia

Universiti Putra Malaysia

43400 Serdang Selangor Darul Ehsan

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Literacy exerts a profound effect on the lives of children, shaping their future and chances of success (UNESCO, 2005). It is the most vital skill to possess, especially in today's increasingly demanding world. In the pursuit of academic excellence, intellectual achievement and personal growth, it is arguably one of the most essential skills, if not the most essential of them all. It is recommended that children acquire some literacy skills before the age of five, which have been designated as emergent literacy skills. Emergent literacy skills are capable of strongly predicting the level of achievement in literacy learning in later years, and in many other areas of studies and endeavors throughout life (Coursin, 2012). However, the level of literacy skills is also heavily dependent on the home environment, and the priority that the family assigns to the teaching of reading and writing (UNESCO, 2005).

Chapter one consists of the background of the study variables, statement of the problems, objectives, research questions and hypotheses. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks, definition, significant and limitation, organization of the thesis and chapter summary are also presented in this chapter.

1.1 Background of Study

In the modern world, literacy is a survivorship skill (Ministry of Education Iran, 2010). In Iran, as in many other countries, child literacy is one of the most crucial challenges in raising future generations. Literacy development deeply affects children's lives, determining their future role and situation in a complex world where modern technologies develop and extent at a rapid rate (UNESCO, 2005). Iran is no exception to this phenomenon. In Iran, free public education was mandated in 1911 (Menshari, 1992), and has been a priority of government policies and budgets ever since. Iran has struggled for many years to attain the current literacy rate of 84.3% (UNESCO, 2012). According to UNESCO, the literacy rate in Iran is ranked 99 out of 158 countries (UNESCO, 2012). Comparisons with other Asian countries show that the literacy rate in Singapore is 96.4%, whilst in China it is 95.1%, in Malaysia, 93.1% and Indonesia 92.8 % (UNESCO, 2012). Since being literate is an important factor in child development (Dombey, 2013), and reading and writing are the essential elements of literacy, failure to learn to read and write are the major reasons for students to drop out of schools (Torgesen, 2002). Bearing in mind the importance of literacy, the elimination of illiteracy is therefore of paramount concern; and it cannot be attained without promoting and improving the standard of education of young children. Learning is a fundamental human right, to which every child in every country is entitled to receive (UNESCO, 2008); especially when literacy is a powerful tool that provides a strong foundation for academic achievement, intellectual and personal growth.

More than 95% of children under the age of six in developed countries achieve educational support before pre-primary school (Javadi, 2006). Pre-primary education is a one-year program for 5 year olds; but it is not compulsory for every child in Iran (Kian, 2010). Mofidi (2012) showed that less than 50% of Iranian children join this program. In developed societies, young children today are placed in day-care centers at an earlier age than they had been in past generations (Wu, 2007). In Iran, kindergarten provides additional support before pre-primary school from ages 1 to 5 (Mofidi, 2012). In Japan 98% of children under five years of age are involved in educational support before pre-primary school (Javadi, 2006), and in Vietnam it is 50%; but in Iran, it is 7%. According to the Census of Kerman Province (2011) in Iran, the total number of children from birth to the age of 4 is 277,885; but only 28,595 of them attend kindergarten. Approximately 10 percent of young children attend kindergarten; whilst 90 percent of them spend this period of their childhood at home (Bureau of Welfare Organization Iran, 2011), without any formal kindergarten or pre-school education.

For children in Iran, formal reading instruction begins in the first grade. Alphabetic instruction, which enables beginners to read and write, is offered only during the first grade. Failure to achieve optimal skill in literacy in the first grade may cause significant reading difficulties, specifically in the inability to connect sounds with their corresponding graphemes (Zandi, 2006). In relation to studies in Iran itself, Nasirian (2005) indicates that if Iranian children prior to pre-school years have poor emergent literacy skills, this is likely to lead to reading difficulties for first grade children. Therefore, pre-school can provide opportunities to learn emergent literacy skills before formal schooling. Mofidi (2006) asserted that he had found substantial and startling differences when comparing the literacy skills of those children who had attended pre-school compared to those children who did not. Therefore, to reduce illiteracy and to improve reading skills, it is desirable, if not imperative, that young children should possess some literacy before formal education.

The environment in the home and parents' beliefs in literacy in young children appear to affect child emergent literacy. Hood, Conlon, and Andrews, (2008), Dobbs-Oates, Pentimonti, Justice, and Kaderavek, (2012) have claimed that they had discovered substantial links between the home environment and reading ability. This should not be surprising as children learn their first language from home, and from where they can observe and participate in literary-related activities, and thus develop their literacy skills. Most Iranian homes do not appear to promote the culture of reading among their children, providing low levels of exposure to printed materials (Ayatollahzadeh, 2004). It has been found that parents, especially mothers, should help by teaching their children to read when very young, so as to inculcate a reading habit in them, towards acquiring better emergent literacy skills before they begin attending school (Ehri and Roberts, 2006). Kaskia (2010) further stated that he had found that children had much better results in school, when their parents had taught and encouraged them to read and interacted with them through literacy-related activities at home. Even though this is not a complete panacea, this would provide a considerable reduction in the amount of literacy related problems presently faced by schools.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Emergent literacy is defined by Lonigan and Shanahan (2010) as the ongoing process in which children acquire pre-literacy skills. This process can begin at birth, and progress into middle childhood. It is possible for parents and the home environment to significantly affect this entire ongoing process. Various researchers (Justice and Ezell, 2004; Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998) believe that emergent literacy skills begin at a very early age.

Failure in learning emergent literacy skills successfully may cause future academic difficulties and disappointment (Torgesen, 2002). Ghasemi (2010) reported that 22% of Iranian students show a lower level of academic achievement in high school. Academic achievement is an important issue in the lives of students, which can have negative effects on families and society. Mowla (2011) estimated that 10% of young children have problems with learning literacy in first grade. Thus in 2010, the Iranian Ministry of Education announced the commencement of a reformation program which included the upgrading of pre-school education curriculum. The reformation program seeks to prepare citizens to face challenges more successfully, such as in the scientific, social, economic and political (Ministry of Education Iran, 2010) fields.

Emergent literacy that can be nurtured at home allows and encourages positive gesture of parent- child relationship. Activities such as reading storybooks promote emotional bonding between parent and child (Wu, 2007). Although Iranian parents do value their children's education, storybook reading is not a widespread practice in most Iranian families (Mohammadi, 2011). Wu (2007) stated that the idea is not only to use interaction between mother and child in storybook reading to improve mother-child relationship, but to build up literacy in the child as well. In Taiwan, mothers are encouraged to use the shared book reading activity as a way to create learning experiences between mothers and children at home. Iran's Ministry of Education aims to achieve the goal of creating a learning environment for young children at home by parents, especially mothers (Molaei, 2014). Asian countries such as China and Taiwan have shown great levels of success with this participation (Wu, 2007). Therefore it is necessary to understand how behavioral strategies with mother-child interaction during the process of reading storybooks can support emergent literacy skills in Iran. This is the main reason for applying qualitative part.

In many Western countries, there have been extensive studies regarding the possible connections between the home environment, the interaction between mothers and their children, the reading beliefs of mothers, and emergent literacy for children of a young age. In contrast no study in Iran has specifically examined the role of Iranian mothers during the reading of storybooks to their children, along with the reaction of the children (Ayatollahzadeh, 2004). The current study aims to examine the connections between the home environment, the interaction between mothers and their children, the reading beliefs of mothers and emergent literacy specifically among young children in Kerman, Iran. In addition, the mother-child interaction which is observed through the

qualitative technique of observation (video-taping the reading of storybooks) is transformed into quantitative measures (Wu, 2007). It further structures the effects of maternal behavior in the quantitative measures used to check for mediating effects. In a comprehensive manner, maternal behavior towards reading storybooks and mother-child interaction are investigated.

In light of the problem statement, the research questions are as follows:

1.2.1 Quantitative Research Questions

1. What are the levels of home environment, maternal reading beliefs, mother-child interaction and emergent literacy of participants in this study?
2. What are the nature of relationship between maternal reading beliefs, home environment, mother-child interaction and emergent literacy?
3. What are the unique predictors of emergent literacy?
4. To what extent does mother-child interaction mediate the relationship between home environments, parent reading beliefs, and emergent literacy?

1.2.2 Qualitative Research Question

5. What behavioral strategies of mother-child interaction do take place during storybook reading?

1.2.3 Mixed Research Question

6. How does mother-child interaction during storybook reading foster emergent literacy among young children?

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objectives

The main objective of the present study is to identify significant predictors of emergent literacy among young children. Consequently, it also seeks to investigate the mediating role of mother-child interaction on variables that relate to emergent literacy. The study further attempts to discover how mother-child interaction foster emergent literacy skills among young children.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To describe personal (age and gender) and family (parents' age, education, job, family income) characteristics of the respondents.
2. To describe the level of emergent literacy, maternal reading beliefs, home environment, mother-child interaction among the respondents of this study.
3. To determine the relationships between maternal reading beliefs, home environment, mother-child interaction and emergent literacy.
4. To examine gender differences in emergent literacy among respondents of this study.

5. To determine the unique predictors of emergent literacy among the respondents of this study.
6. To examine the mediating roles of mother-child interaction on the relationships between home environments, maternal reading beliefs and emergent literacy.
7. To describe behavioral strategies of mother-child interaction among the respondents of this study.
8. To understand how mother-child interaction fosters emergent literacy skills among young children.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

In general, it is hypothesized that emergent literacy is highly predicted by maternal reading beliefs, home environment, and mother-child interaction in young children in Iran. Based on the objectives of this study, the hypotheses of the study are as following:
Objective 3: To determine the relationships between maternal reading beliefs, home environment, mother-child interaction and emergent literacy among young children.

H_{a1}: Children whose mothers have higher maternal reading beliefs tend to have higher literacy skills.

H_{a2}: Children who have higher home environment scores tend to have higher literacy skills.

H_{a3}: Children whose mothers have higher mother-child interaction scores tend to have higher literacy skills.

Objective 4: To examine gender differences in emergent literacy among young children.

H_{a4}: Girl respondents have higher emergent literacy compared to boy respondents.

Objective 5: To determine the unique predictors of emergent literacy among young children.

H_{a5}: The regression coefficient for all selected independent variables equals zero when regressed against \ R X Q J F K L O G U H Q ¶ V H P H U J H Q W O L W H U D F \

Objective 6: To determine mediating effect of mother-child interaction on the relationship between home environment and emergent literacy.

H_{a6}: Mother-child interaction significantly mediates the relationship between home environment and emergent literacy among young children.

1.5 Significance of Study

This study offers several contributions to the existing body of knowledge and future research about emergent literacy amongst young children. A very limited number of studies on emergent literacy have been conducted in different cultural settings such as Iran, which is unique in many aspects, including language, religion, educational system and economy. Emergent literacy in Iran has not been given proper attention, and as of W K H W L P H R I Z U L W L Q J I H Z V W X G L H V K D Y H E H H Q G R Q H L reading abilities in line with their home environment and maternal reading beliefs.

Therefore, this study is important to probe this issue in the Iranian context to provide in-depth understanding. This study also adds more information in the research carried out in this area in Iran.

The present study provides information on mother-child interaction that may be of potential use for policymakers to introduce and improve programs in ways that promote and develop the literacy of children. Furthermore, it is hoped that the results of this study can help policymakers in other ways to focus on young children and their development.

The results of this research provide additional knowledge for future research concerning emergent literacy in young children. New and follow-up research studies can be conducted to determine and classify other factors influencing the process of emergent literacy. It is also hoped that this research study will be beneficial and useful to the Ministry of Education in Iran, which plays a crucial role in education, and is responsible for the education of pre-primary children, primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary students. The findings of this study can be used to gain better results in order for the young to acquire literacy early in their lives, through innovative planning, implementation and co-ordination of various programs and services, especially in preschool.

The results are also important to parents, schools, educational counselors and teachers, to better understand how factors such as reading to children, home environment and styles of reading storybooks can strongly influence emergent literacy among young children.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Social Interaction Theory (SIT) (Woolfolk, 1998) is one of the best known theories in psychology. Over the past several decades, many studies have been based on or benefited from this theory. Woolfolk (1998) suggested that social interaction results in gradual changes in children's thought and behavior that can differ greatly across cultures (Woolfolk, 1998).

Scaffolding is a way of learning that occurs when an advanced adult assists the child in a dyadic interactive situation. Another term for scaffolding is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which characterizes the potential capability of a child when an appropriate assistance is given from an adult or peer to the child (Vygotsky, 1978). The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is discovered in a dyadic interaction where the child can accomplish tasks in front of a mentor and eventually achieve the task by himself.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that children's cognitive development is influenced by their interaction with the social world. Children are active learners in constructing their language and literacy skills developed through discovery and interaction with the environment. They make and form their daily encounters with the world by constructing and capturing ideas about literacy.

Vygotsky (1978) further clarified that the progression of reading skills is based on situations where children are within the developmental stages. In other words, within the developmental stages, children interact with their environments to construct their knowledge and skills. Vygotsky argued that learning, including literacy acquisition, occurs in a fixed order. The developmental researchers believed that the order was based on the individual sequences of development; whilst the constructivists believed that the order was based on the unique progression of attaining task-specific skills (Vygotsky, 1978; Cattell, 2004; Casbergue, McGee and Bedford, 2008). Overall, both developmental and constructivist researchers assert that learning languages and literacy are influenced by the idea that the progress of the skills are influenced and directed by adults.

Based on theories of language acquisition, learning and cognition, the emergent literacy paradigm is a more unified conceptualization of the mechanisms underlying literacy development. Similar to the behavioral, developmental, and reading readiness approaches, the idea of emergent literacy embraces individual developmental and environmental differences and emphasizes on the importance of literacy growth in early childhood. To achieve better literacy, children should gain skills and general proficiency in reading and writing (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998).

Studies have shown the importance of literacy development. Edwards (2007) noticed that parental beliefs about early child literacy and language influenced literacy behaviors of their 18 to 36 months old toddlers. Wu (2007) found significant associations between maternal beliefs and parental practice variables and emergent literacy approach, Wu believed that a child can reach the potential of his development (i.e., Zone of Proximal Development) with assistance from a significant adult or advanced peer (i.e., scaffolding) in a dialectic interaction. Tompkins (2009) describes emergent literacy as the skills that are required for reading and writing in a child; and further stressed that the environment in the home is important towards the development of such skills. Cassel (2012) demonstrated that the quality of home literacy environment is a good predictor of emergent literacy.

As a result, Vygotskian theory emphasizes the significance of social interaction in a dialectic interaction, a child can achieve the potential of his development (i.e., Zone of Proximal Development). The

study. Emergent literacy can be described as a procedure for writing skills by engaging with parent and objects in their environment. As a result of this historical and theoretical background, emergent literacy is identified for the purpose of this research as a natural process with the language and print surrounding his daily life that finally guides his ability to read and write. The theoretical framework for this study is depicted in Figure1-1.

The theoretical framework of this study is represented as follows:

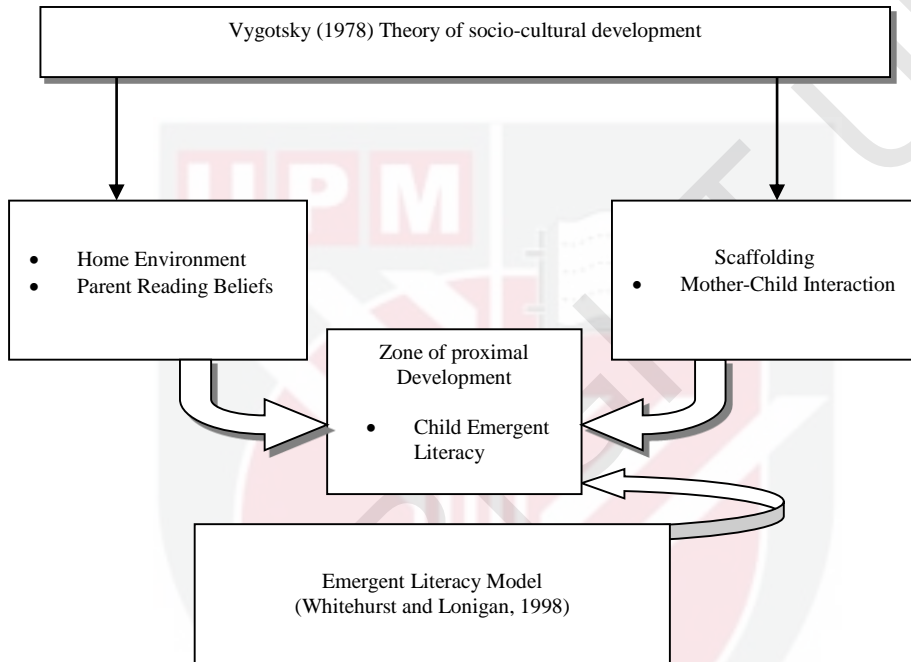


Figure 1-1: Theoretical Framework for the study relationships between maternal reading beliefs, home environment, and mother-child interaction with emergent literacy among young children.

Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) claimed that emergent literacy is made up of skills which also include outside-in and inside-out (Storch and Whitehurst, 2001; Zill and Resnick, 2006). Outside-in skills relate to the skills that a child acquires from outside of the instructional experience, sense of experiences from home and early educational settings. Outside-in skills include skills like letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and knowledge of print. Inside-out skills are skills that a child acquires from within the instructional experience, such as writing and drawing. Together, these processes predict successful long-term learning (Hammer, Scarpino, and Davison, 2011; Lonigan, Schatschneider, et al., 2008; Sénéchal and LeFevre, 2002; Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998, 2001).

Support for this model can be found in a relevant study conducted by Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001). Whitehurst and Lonigan investigated the relationships among outside-in and inside-out skills and the role of these domains on later reading. They found various conclusions providing support for this model. Inside-out skills and outside-in skills were found to be constant from pre-school to kindergarten, and the amount of strength in these skills was significant as children use these skills to learn literacy.

Furthermore, pre-school inside-out skills are acquired to predict second grade reading, as strongly as first grade reading predicts second grade reading. The results strongly indicated that literary skills taught in preschool have proven to be very useful by the time children start formal schooling. Inside-out and outside-in skills are important in preschool, but greater differences are apparent in later school years. This shows the effect of the two skills; however, inside-out skills appear to be better predictors later on in primary school. A theoretical framework on emergent literacy is devised to investigate \ R X Q J F K L O G U H Q V O H D U Q L Q J R - In On With The Out Theor R W K W K H (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998) were adopted.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the current study is developed based on the theoretical framework (Figure 1.2). The conceptual framework of this study outlines the relationship between maternal reading beliefs, home environment, and emergent literacy via mother-child interactions. Two phases for the study are devised. The first phase is to study the relationship between maternal reading beliefs, the home environment and emergent literacy via mother-child interactions. The second phase is to understand how behavioral strategies of mothers support emergent literacy by reading storybooks. Hence, this phase focuses on the observation of mother-child interaction. This study uses the mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) to provide a more in depth view of the issues by combining the quantitative and qualitative findings of research.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that learning may raise a variety of internal developmental processes in children when they interact with more competent people in their environment; and without this interaction, these processes would not be mobilized. Parents are more effective teachers because they are sensitive to the child's needs; and can provide the proper amount of support, whilst the child completes tasks on his own. Parents who provide a strong literacy support system will be providing more opportunities for participation in literacy activities, which is the purpose and motivation for literacy development.

Figure 1.2 presents an overview of the conceptual framework of the study which outlines the relationship between the independent variables of maternal reading beliefs, home environment and mother-child interaction and the dependent variable of Emergent Literacy. Therefore, in this process it makes the mother-child interaction as a mediator variable among independent variables (Maternal Reading Beliefs and Home

Environment) and dependent variable (Emergent Literacy). Based on the current framework, maternal reading beliefs and home environment are expected to affect emergent literacy.

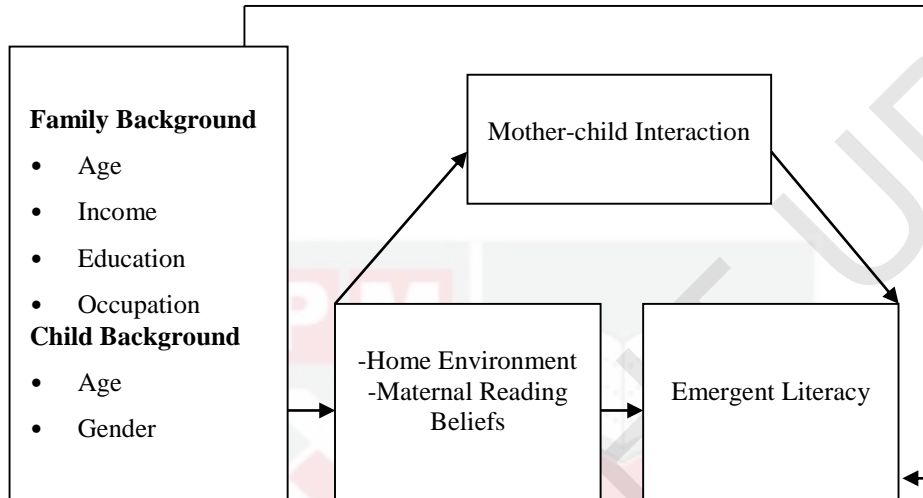


Figure1-2: Conceptual Framework for the study on the relationship between maternal reading beliefs, home environment, and emergent literacy via mother-child interactions

1.8 Definitions of Terminology

1.8.1 Emergent Literacy

Conceptual Definition: Emergent literacy refers to the achievement of literacy which is important in the life of child (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998).

Operational Definition: R H V S R Q G H Q We Adapted From Haw Language and Emergent Literacy Assessment (LELA) by Cunningham, Hicks and Williams (2002). High score on LELA means high level of language and emergent literacy.

1.8.2 Children

Conceptual Definition: A child is a person between birth and full growth (Dewey, 2013).

Operational Definition: Children enrolled in kindergarten at the time of survey that they were 3 to 4 years old.

1.8.3 Home Environment

Conceptual Definition: The home represents the quality and quantity of support, structure, and stimulation which are available to a child and promotes the child's cognitive and language development (Mayes and Lewis, 2012).

Operational Definition: HOME (Caldwell and Bradley, 2003). Higher scores on HOME indicate that the home provides a better representation of the home environment for young children.

1.8.4 Maternal Reading Beliefs

Conceptual Definition: Maternal reading beliefs refer to mothers' attitudes and beliefs about reading to pre-school children (DeBaryshe and Binder, 1994).

Operational Definition: MRWB (DeBaryshe and Binder, 1994). Higher scores on maternal reading beliefs illustrates that mothers of respondents have higher attitudes on reading for their children.

1.8.5 Mother-Child Interaction

Conceptual Definition: Mother-child interaction refers to the quality of interactions between mothers and children through the observations of mother-child storybook reading task (Wu, 2007).

Operational Definition: Behaviors codes of maternal interactive were adapted from Rates of Maternal Interactive Behavior (Wu, 2007). The codes transformed the observation made during mother-child storybook reading session. Higher scores on maternal interactive behaviors indicate high level of mother-child storybook reading interaction.

In addition, the strategies used by mothers and the reactions of the children during storybook reading were observed through qualitative technique of observation by video-taping and analyzed thematically. The strategies reflect mother-child reactions that nurture or hinder concepts related to emergent literacy.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters, including the current chapter. Chapter Two reviews the last literature related to the key variables in this study. Chapter Three defines the research methodology including research design, sampling procedure, pilot testing and data collection. Chapter Four reports the results of the study and discusses on the findings and Chapter Five concludes with the implications and recommendations for future research.

1.10 Summary

This chapter began with the background of the present study which provided an account of the relationship between maternal reading beliefs, home environment, mother child interaction and emergent literacy among children. In the following sections, the statement of the problem, significance of the study, research objectives, hypotheses, theoretical and conceptual frameworks and definition of terms of the study were presented. The next chapter reviews previous literature on maternal reading beliefs, home environment, and emergent literacy via mother-child interactions.



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