

The Socioeconomic Status of Parents and Parental Involvement in Post-Pandemic Era: A Longitudinal TEFL Study in Iran

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Abstract

There exists a scarcity of studies examining the intersection of neoliberalism discourse, parental involvement, beliefs, and Socioeconomic Status (SES) regarding speaking proficiency of young English learners in the post-pandemic era. To this end, 28 children were selected along with their parents and were taught with the same syllabus, and tuition was waived for children with low SES. Two questionnaires were designed and validated to examine the effect of socioeconomic factors on parents' beliefs and involvement. The findings showed that SES has a significant effect on parental beliefs and involvement. The results also indicated that young learners' parental factors could affect the success of these learners in the post-pandemic era. This research study can encourage more studies on intersectionality in educational research.

Keywords: TEFL, Young learners, Socio-economic status, Educational psychology, Parental behavior

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1. Introduction

As English language has progressively come to be seen as a lingua franca and a means towards success in the globalizing world, a substantial amount of time, effort, and resources are being invested in teaching and learning English around the world. In recent years, this zeal for learning English appears to have spread among even young learners of the language (Butler, 2014). Therefore, in recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in the factors that influence L2 acquisition by young learners. Among these influencing factors, the child's socioeconomic context, including parental factors, may influence early language development (Hoff, 2013). The post-pandemic era necessitates increased parental involvement in education to support the instruction of young learners and to address the forthcoming challenges faced by humanity in different societies. Recent studies, such as Murshidi et al. (2023), have also explored the role of parents and their involvement in education during this period.

In recent times, the concepts of Socioeconomic Status (SES) of parents and their involvement have become one of the most crucial issues in the education of young learners. Socio-economic status is a combination of an individual's work experience based on income, education level, and occupational status, as well as the economic and social dimensions of an individual or family (Bhat et al., 2016). It indicates one's place in society and strongly influences the individuals' experiences from childhood to adulthood (Hackman et al., 2015). In addition, SES is more important for the child's growth in the early years, as it limits access to activities that trigger cognitive growth and materials and conditions for stimulation (Forns et al., 2012). In particular, the parental SES affects the performance of some neuropsychiatric systems more than others, especially memory (anecdotes, events, and meanings), written and oral language age, and executive functions (Hackman et al., 2010; Piccolo et al., 2014). Therefore, SES is generally classified into three categories of high SES, middle SES, and low SES. Children who come from families with a lower level of parental SES are more likely to have less academic success compared to those who belong to a middle level of parental SES. The SES can also affect the quality and quantity of paternal involvement in the education of their children (Bellibas & Gumus, 2013). Thus, the SES and parental involvement warrant further investigation. The present study strove to fill this gap by exploring the intersection of

neoliberalism discourse in education, parental involvement, beliefs, and SES, with regards to the speaking proficiency of young English learners in the post-pandemic era.

Particularly, among the parental factors considered in the study, the parents' beliefs about their child's ability to succeed in learning English were the strongest predictors of English language learning outcomes at all three grade levels (Poon, 2020). According to Wigfield et al. (2006), the parental factors that affect children's school achievement and socialization of motivation are classified into four major influencing factors:

- (a) Parents, family members, and neighbors;
- (b) The general beliefs and behavior of the parents;
- (c) The specific beliefs of the parent's child; and
- (d) Parental behavior.

However, there is evidence that preschool education (5 years after birth) is very important in the transfer of SES from parents to children, in general (Duncan et al., 1994; Farkas & Beron, 2004; Hart & Risley, 1995; Lee & Burkham, 2002). Parents' beliefs, in particular, are also strongly correlated with children's self-assessment ability and confidence while learning English (Butler, 2014). Such involvement includes the time parents spend with their children, teaching strategies, providing toys, and equipment as well as providing educational guidance for them.

With respect to L1 development, socioeconomic status has been found to impact vocabulary learning and language processing at a very early stage. In addition, the child's socioeconomic context, including parental factors, may influence early language development in terms of vocabulary diversity, syntactic complexity, conversational and literacy development, and general processing ability (Hoff, 2013). Apparently, education is becoming more and more a means of reproducing a social class, even if it is not yet perceived as such. For this reason, there is growing concern about performance gaps in English that correlate with the socio-economic status of learners. That is, during the past decades, scholars have been successful in documenting the effect of family SES on school-age young learners'

achievement in academic contexts in various sociocultural settings (e.g., Sirin, 2005; Liu et al., 2020). In recent years, studies on learners' socioeconomic status and parents' beliefs about their young learners' academic success as two significant factors have gained prominence in educational settings.

A growing body of research has investigated the role of socioeconomic status on young learners' language skills (Abel et al., 2017). However, not enough research has been conducted in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) investigating the relationship between young learners' SES and the extent to which they develop English. Few studies have been carried out in this area up to now. Additionally, regardless of the increasing inclination to lower the starting age of learning English as a Second, Foreign, Local or Global language, a few studies have focused on the way parents' socioeconomic status and their beliefs and involvement regarding learning English affect young learners' L2 learning. Much research has been done in areas where English is used as a second language (e.g., Butler, 2014). Moreover, participants were selected from students in two different regions, where the quality of their English education may differ. The current study aims to explore the intersection of the socioeconomic status of parents with their direct and indirect involvement in their education after the pandemic and advocates for funneling high-quality education exclusively to children from affluent families. Rubin et al. (2020) discussed how neoliberal reforms promote parents as individual consumers in education, favoring individual parental consumerism over collective parental engagement for policies that benefit many. This contrasts with the traditional understanding of education as a public good. Thus, this study emphasizes the need to consider these factors when conducting educational research on parental factors in the case of young learners. For the purposes of this study, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What are the relationships between high versus low parental SES and the indirect involvement of parents in their children's English language learning in the post-pandemic era?
2. What are the relationships between high versus low parental SES and the direct involvement of parents in their children's English language learning?

3. What are the relationships between high versus low parental SES and the beliefs of parents about their children's English language learning?

2. Review of literature

Although socio-economic conditions have a decisive effect on academic performance, few studies have studied them thoroughly in the post-pandemic era, much less in the field of language learning. However, the indispensable role of socio-economic status in language learning has recently attracted considerable attention among Second Language Acquisition (SLA) scholars. Some studies have shown that parents' involvement has no impact on student development or adaptation, while in some other studies it has surprising and positive effects. In some cases, parental involvement has reduced student achievement.

Evidently put, children have unique abilities, tendencies, and personalities that play a vital and dominant role in shaping and reshaping their involvement, achievements, and objectives. On the other hand, family structure, size, income, work patterns, education, and characteristics of a community, also affect academic performance and personal adaptation (Alexander et al., 1988; Corwyn & Bradley, 2002; Yeung, et al., 2002).

Davis (1988) investigated the relationship between school achievement and family demographics as well as other variables and academic differences between these two groups of students in single-parent families. The final results of the statistical analysis of this study did not show any correlation between SES and success, but the results support the hypothesis that individuals adapt over time and compensate for any deficiencies arising from the growth of low-income single-parent families.

Khayyer (1994) also examined the effect of SES on academic performance. In his survey, six public elementary schools in the Illawarra region of New South Wales were selected by random selection of content. A demographic and family background questionnaire was used to determine the students' SES. A reading comprehension test (TORCH) and a Mathematics test (PATMATHS) served as instruments to determine the students' academic performance. The results showed that socioeconomic status had a significant direct impact on determining the academic performance in this study. Likewise,

Aikens and Barbarin (2008) found that children with low ESS acquired slower language, delayed character recognition, and phonological recognition and they were at the risk of learning difficulties.

Hamid (2011) also investigated the possible correlation between socioeconomic characteristics and academic performance in English of high school families in rural Bangladesh. Accordingly, the "academic achievement in English" of rural students was low and there was a pattern correlation between family income, parents' educational background and English academic performance at this generally low level of performance. As a result, students with higher levels of parental education and higher family incomes were more likely to score high on the aptitude test and on the English test of the high school qualifying test.

Learners' socioeconomic status with their English scores on the most recent public exam have been examined by Shamim (2011). He stated that learners in the upper-income group are always better than learners in the lower-income group. He suggested that the positive correlation between high family income and students' higher English proficiency could be due to their prior education in English-language private schools compared to the students in the low-income group.

However, some researchers have focused on rural-urban inequalities of English education in different countries (Hu, 2007). Based on a study, Zhang and Adamson, (2007) compared learners' socioeconomic status with their English scores on the most recent public exam. He said learners in the upper-income group are always better than learners in the lower-income group. He suggested that the positive correlation between high family income and students' higher English proficiency could be due to their prior education in English-language private schools compared to the students in the low-income group.

Furthermore, the relationship between a student's socio-economic status and English proficiency level has not been studied effectively in an EFL context. Studies in some European countries (e.g., Croatia, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Sweden) have found that parents' level of education is significantly related to their primary school understanding of foreign languages like English (Butle, 2014). In addition, the degree

of influence on the target language outside regular schools and the use of artworks by parents in the language of instruction have also been shown to be reliable (Enever, 2011).

Similarly, a positive correlation between the students' economic status and their overall language learning outcomes was found by Ariani and Ghafournia (2015). Their results showed a significant relationship between the participants' learning outcomes and their attitudes towards language learning. Additionally, the effect of parents' socioeconomic status, their involvement and opinions about learning English on their children's English learning has been studied. Based on their research study, a comprehensive survey of parents found that while parents' views on teaching English and their children's success in learning English did not differ between different SES groups, their direct and indirect involvement differed significantly. In combination with the student learning outcomes data, it was reported that while the parents' SES did not have much effect on their children's listening and reading/writing performance during their primary school years, it did show an effect on their ability to speak in school.

Accordingly, children who come from families with a low level of SES are more likely to have lower academic success compared to those who belong to a middle level of SES family (Poon, 2020). Such differences can be explained in terms of several factors related to parents. As a result, the study focused on the extent to which young learners' academic success in the three core categories is different in children with low and middle class. They also studied the differences in the expectations of parents, their involvement, and the children's engagement in two levels. Finally, they analyzed the role of the parents' expectations, involvement and the children's engagement and explained how socioeconomic status impacts children's success. Their participants were 184 primary students from a low SES and 165 primary students from middle SES in Hong Kong. The results indicated significant differences in all the four variables.

Looking from a different perspective, SES plays an important role in cultural growth of children, particularly in the case of offering them the opportunity to learn a new language. Such language learning within translanguaging paradigm in language education can enhance

the multiculturalism competence of children that is emphasized in recent studies such as Ghajarieh and Safiyar (2023) and Ghajarieh et al. (2024).

Besides, SES is more important for the child's growth in early years, as it limits access to activities that trigger cognitive growth and materials and the conditions for stimulation (Forns et al., 2012). In fact, poverty is believed to affect the parents' ability to address the diverse needs of their children as they grow up, and economic hardships reduce communication between parents and children. Loss of income, unemployment, and other problems will also reduce parental custody and love for their children and will even increase the severity of punishment behaviors. In fact, parents are the first teachers of their children. Therefore, parental education affects learners' academic achievement. For instance, Ahmad et al. (2013) argue that children who are from families with less educated parents tend to do worse in school in comparison with students with more educated parents. For him, parents receive an education that supports their children intellectually, economically, psychologically, and emotionally, thereby helping them to be more comfortable and adapt to their academic growth, which brings them more comfort and higher learning outcomes.

According to this literature review, few studies have investigated the relationship between SES and language learning in the context of FL education. While studies focusing on the effect of SES and parental factors on young learners' oral language proficiency are scarce, almost no studies have examined the effect of these factors when the quality of instruction is controlled. Therefore, the current study attempted to examine the effects of parents' SES as well as their beliefs and level of involvement, on the education of English to Iranian children over a period of time in the post-pandemic era. With this focus, this study is aligned with recent scholarship on the intersection of parental beliefs and involvement, neoliberal discourse in the post-pandemic era, and the socioeconomic status of parents (e.g., Murshidi et al., 2023; Rubin, et al., 2020).

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The target population was the Iranian EFL learners enrolled in *Mahestan* English Language Institute kindergarten, Tehran, Iran. To accomplish the objectives of the study, 28 out of 184 female and male EFL learners within the age range of 4 to 6, were selected through convenience sampling to take part in the present study. Later, they were categorized into two groups of high and low socioeconomic status based on the socioeconomic questionnaire.

3.2. Instruments

The following questionnaires were given to the participants to complete.

Survey of Parents' SES: Information regarding the parents' education and monthly family income was collected through a simple demographic form. The high and low SES levels were determined by calculating the income-to-needs ratio, i.e. dividing the family's total income by the poverty line announced by the Iranian government. Those families who fell below the poverty threshold were classified as low income and those who had 80 percent of the maximum income announced the National Welfare Organization in Iran were classified as high-income households.

Survey of Parental Involvement in Post-pandemic Era: This questionnaire – devised by the authors – comprised items that covered the following elements: (1) characteristics of parents such as their SES; (2) the indirect involvement of parents such as language environment and their English proficiency; (3) the direct involvement of parents such as assisting their children to learn English, helping them do their homework, and providing private classes; (4) their overall views of English; and (5) their views and expectations about their children's capabilities in learning English. To assess the internal validity of the questionnaire, factor analysis was run for each query in the questionnaire. The calculated coefficient of all factors indicates the number of questions with a high internal validity. The highest coefficient was related to the factors on mother's and father's language skills with a coefficient of 0.94 and the lowest value was related to the learning factors of learning and parental support and cooperation with a coefficient of 0.76. Based on the pilot results, some items of the original questionnaire were changed.

3.3. Procedures

This research study was a longitudinal study collecting quantitative data through surveys. The parental involvement questionnaire was piloted in several English institutes in different regions of Tehran during a one-year period before the beginning of the study's practical phase. Two female English language teachers were selected from among experienced teachers in the institute to hold the English classes in this research study, and 2 classes were selected (each class included 14 students; 7 boys and 7 girls). The morning class was selected for the high SE group with fourteen students (seven boys and seven girls) and the afternoon class was selected for the low SE group with the same number and genders of students. Both classes met five times per week, 4 hours a day. The crucial point here is that for both groups an experienced instructor was chosen who worked in the institute for three years. One of the researchers prepared a syllabus which the instructors reviewed and modified without changing its content. The instruction paralleled with the topics included in the course syllabus and the only resources used were videos and audio files prepared for this study. All class meetings were held in an ordinary classroom equipped with computers, video projectors, and smart boards.

The parental factors include the parents' beliefs on and involvement in their children's English learning. The questionnaires were developed based on the literature and previous samples. Cronbach's alpha reliability for the developed questionnaire was 0.8. Then, their responses were correlated with English grades of their children.

Prior to the data collection, ethical approval was obtained from one of the researchers' institutes. Parents' consent was obtained for all the learners. During the study, the *Mahestan* syllabus was taught to the learners by the trained teachers. Parents were also given a demographic questionnaire including items related to their educational level and income. Participants who had a high-SES and low-SES were only invited to participate in the study. In the evaluation phase, all the parents were asked to fill out a questionnaire about their direct, and indirect involvement, and their opinions. The teachers were also asked to report their learners' academic success and involvement.

4. Results

4.1. High SES Families and Indirect Involvement in the Post-pandemic Era

As displayed in Table 1, the correlation between high SES families and their indirect involvement was significant. All the variables of family income and parents' education were provided below, respectively.

Table 1

Correlation among High SES Variables and Parents' Indirect Involvement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SES							
(1) Income							
(2) Father's Education	.75**						
(3) Mother's Education	.77**	.68**					
INDIRECT involvement							
(4) Books In Persian	.37**	.27**	.29**				
(5) Books In English	.38**	.32**	.35**	.41**			
(6) Father's English	.35**	.33**	.41**	.42**	.45**		
(7) Mother's English	.39**	.29**	.25**	.41**	.44**	.39**	

4.2. Low SES Families and Indirect Involvement

In Table 2, the SES variables were significantly and meaningfully correlated with each other. With respect to indirect involvement, their data analysis showed that parents are rather similar with no significant differences in terms of "languages spoken at home, fathers and mothers use of English at work".

Table 2

Correlation among Low SES Variables and Parents' Indirect Involvement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SES							
(1) INCOME							

(2) FATHER'S EDUCATION	.73**					
(3) MOTHER'S EDUCATION	.78**	.72**				
INDIRECT INVOLVEMENT						
(4) BOOKS IN PERSIAN	.35**	.26**	.25**			
(5) BOOKS IN ENGLISH	.32**	.35**	.35**	.43**		
(6) FATHER'S ENGLISH	.37**	.33**	.42**	.4**	.45**	
(7) MOTHER'S ENGLISH	.37**	.29**	.26**	.41**	.45**	.39**

4.3. High SES Families and Direct Involvement

Concerning the relation between parents' socioeconomic status and their direct involvement, Table 3 indicated that high SES parents and their direct involvement/beliefs are highly correlated with each other. Besides, the data interpretation revealed that parents' SES is highly correlated with their perceptions in terms of providing educational aids for their children ($r = .83$).

Table 3

Correlation among High SES Variables and Parents' Direct Involvement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
SES									
(1) Income									
(2) Father's education	.75*								
(3) Mother's education	.77*	.68*							
(4) Mother's English	.39*	.29*	.25*	.41*	.44*	.39*			

Direct

involvement

(1) Study

involvement

.34* .35* .29* .42* .41* .38* .36*

Private
classes

.36* .34* .22* .39* .44* .39* .38* .37*

Although there are some similarities, the low SES families bear a great number of differences with high SES ones. More detailed information can be found in Table 4. As the data analysis showed, the parents with low SES have a positive correlation with their involvement and beliefs in class activity observation (72%), preparation of educational aids (79%), and the private courses (71%). Regarding private lessons, most parents have not firmly believed in considering more private lessons for the kids and having free time for doing the exercises. The high cost of such classes was their main reason.

Table 4

Correlation among Low SES Variables and Parents' Direct Involvement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
SES									
(1) Income									
(2) Father's education	.73**								
(3) Mother's education	.78**	.72**							
Direct involvement									
(4) Study involvement	.33**	.35**	.25**	.43**	.41**	.36**	.36**		
(5) Private classes	.33**	.37**	.25**	.37**	.44**	.38**	.37**	.39**	

4.4. High SES Families and Beliefs

Considering the findings shown in Table 5, analyzing the data based on the distinctive criterion of high vs. low families using the questionnaire, the parents' beliefs namely beliefs about English language learning and child's success/abilities were significantly and positively correlated with the families' socioeconomic status. The responses to the questionnaire indicated that almost all parents believe in the critical role of English as a strategic language in the world. The findings also showed a positive and meaningful association between the parents' beliefs about the child's success or abilities and their SES.

Table 5

Correlation among High SES Variable and Parents' Beliefs

	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
(1) Income										
(2) Father's Education	.75**									
(3) Mother's Education	.77**	.68**								
Beliefs About English Ed.										
(4) Role Of English	.25**	.29**	.33**	.35**	.28**	.27**				
(5) Parents Responsibility	.32**	.35**	.39**	.29**	.25**	.26**	.33**			

(6) Efforts									
	.42	.43	.45	.39	.38	.37	.32	.31	
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
(7) Beliefs									
About	.41	.43	.29	.39	.37	.36	.35	.29	.32
Success	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**

5. Discussion

As per the quantitative analysis, the results indicated that the SES played a vital role in shaping the parents' views towards different aspects of language learning. The findings have revealed that the relation between families' income and educational levels, and their SES was meaningfully significant. In terms of educational level, there was a significant difference between both groups in that the high SES families firmly believe in the strategic role of English in forming the ultimate achievement of their kids. They also considered that English plays a crucial role in having a brilliant and successful future both in jobs as well as private lives.

This attitude can be attributed to the parent's level of education and the challenges they have had during their study or work. Those of low SES families do not see such importance in learning English and mostly consider it like other subjects or even consider it less important than them. Meanwhile, some of the parents, however, believe that family income and parents' educational level cannot guarantee the kids' success. Children's efforts and attempts serve as their driving motor to success. Furthermore, high vs. low SES families, expectedly, were different in other aspects of indirect involvement. It can be claimed that reading more books, either in Persian or English, raises the parents' expectations for their children's academic achievement. When they have read a number of books, parents are more sensitive to children's learning, in particular learning a foreign language (Enever, 2011).

Accordingly, English-related home/environments and parental expectations are noticeably correlated with the students' English performance. Such a difference between high and low SES families can be well-justified by Hampton et al.'s (1995) cultural conflict theories which say that the low SES families lack cultural capital such as certain types of

expected involvement in school activities and education at home. On the other hand, the high SES families are often matched with what is often expected from them by schools and mainstream societies.

In terms of the effects of direct involvement, the findings showed a significant relationship between the parents' SES and their direct involvement concerning reading English books for their kids. Almost two-thirds of those of high SES families responded that they may spend 2 hours a day reading English books for kids and only 20 percent 3 hours daily. That is, in contrast with low SES families who, mostly, pointed out that reading a L2 book is a usual experience in their home. Considering Hampton et al.'s (1995) institutional deficiency, it can be argued that low SES families relate home-oriented extra activities to the deficiency of institutes that do not take responsibility for what they are expected to do and try to engage families in particular functions to perform parts of their duties. As the findings revealed, it can be claimed that high SES families care more about their children's learning process, do their best to provide the best educational aids, monitor their learning process using different means and strategies, and enroll their kids in even more private classes. According to the results, the high SES parents maintain that academic achievement cannot fulfill opportunities for education attainment, namely effective schooling and equality in education. This is supported by Miura (2010) who referred to the role of families' SES background in influencing the educational attainment and career choices (Zou & Zhang, 2011). Additionally, the results of the study can be discussed regarding the discourse of neoliberalism which focuses on the idea that money plays a pivotal role in providing better opportunities for students to be educated in different school subjects, including English. The SES of parents can also be explored and identified narrative stories of young learners in education (e.g., see Alt et al., 2016). The involvement of parents in the education of their children in the post-pandemic era (Murshidi et al., 2023) also added a new dimension to parental involvement and most of the parents who participated in this study highlighted this in their interviews. Thus, in the Iranian context, the convergence of neoliberalism discourse and the post-pandemic era has the potential to increase discrimination experienced by young learners in education. This is particularly observable in online classes, wherein parents assume a central role in ensuring their children comprehend and complete assigned tasks and

lessons during each session. The findings revealed the intersection of parental beliefs, involvement, and socioeconomic status with the discourse of neoliberalism in the post-pandemic era. It is evident that young learners in education systems across various countries may experience varying levels of discrimination. Therefore, policymakers in education, as well as scholars engaged in educational research, should consider the existence of intersectionality in education when setting policies or undertaking academic investigations.

6. Conclusion

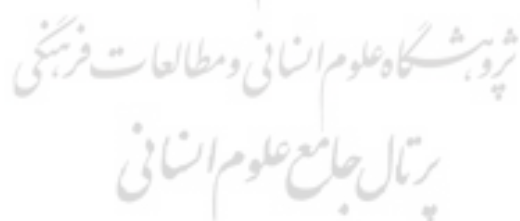
The current study aimed to investigate the extent to which there can be any relationships between the parents' socioeconomic status and their direct/indirect involvement regarding English language learning of their children. Moreover, the study sought to examine the links between the parents' socioeconomic status and their views on English language learning of their children. As the present study has focused on a limited number of parents in an affluent district in Tehran, which would make it difficult to extrapolate the findings to other contexts, therefore, future researchers are recommended to replicate the studies in other areas of the country and involve different groups of individuals with different SES backgrounds. Also, the study used a self-reported questionnaire, thus, further studies can be concentrated on drawing upon other means for data collection. While the SES is under the radar in many educational settings, the impact of such factors is detrimental for learners having low SES parents.

In addition, the role of other agencies in education, especially in the case of young learners who are greatly affected by their parents' financial status as well as their schools' resources should be regarded as vital. The failure to include children with low SES parents in education policies and language learning and teaching approaches increases the vulnerability of these children and lowers their outlook for a better future. The findings substantiated the findings of previous investigations concerning the effects of parents' direct/indirect involvement and their beliefs on their kids' L2 learning. The differences between high versus low SES families can be explored in the sociopolitical/economic conditions of Iran. The results of this study are beneficial to teachers working with young learners, teacher educators, and policy makers in different ways. Also, teachers and teacher educators could discuss the SES of parents and their interconnectedness with learning outcomes in pre- and in-service

courses. Moreover, the study could also raise the awareness of policymakers and curriculum designers regarding low SES learners in education as high-stake agencies whose abilities in learning a new language can be affected. This, in turn, encourages the implementation of more policies to support the children of such families. It is hoped that this study encourages more related research on language education research in Iran and other countries with a focus on the intersectionality of different factors and discourses on a certain variable in education. After all, equality in education cannot be achieved without raising the awareness of agencies involved in training our children regarding the existent inequality and the interaction of different factors and discourses on existent educational issues.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) certify/certifies that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in the present research paper.



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