THE ROLE OF FAMILIAR SUPPORT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

Communicative competence refers to the ability to state and understand consistent and meaningful ideas through oral and written communication. The oral dimension of this competence is clearly linked to the students' willingness to actively participate in conversations and interact with other people. Academic subjects regarding language skills in Primary Education are addressed to widen their vocabulary, improve the use of communication strategies, as well as their level of cohesion and coherence in written texts. However, oral skills are mainly acquired through other informal and non-academic interactions, such as conversations with their parents and friends. Thus, families play a crucial role in their children's education as regards to their oral communication abilities. Although many hypotheses regarding the acquisition of oral skills in foreign languages have been previously examined, few researchers have addressed this potential influence of families or friends in the mastery of the mother tongue. The aim of this research was therefore to examine the role of family relationships that may foster this competence among other academic and personal factors. With this aim, we examined a public dataset composed of data from 25,741 students enrolled in 4th course of Primary Education. These students were assessed through a common exam based on PISA requirements. Moreover, they answered a survey about their personal and familiar circumstances. These data were gathered in 2009 within the framework of a national research project, coordinated by the Spanish Ministry of Education. We performed multilevel regression analysis to identify the most influent personal factors on the score concerning the communicative competence. Findings offered compelling evidence that parents–children relationships had positive and strong effects on the acquisition of this skill, especially as regards to the interaction with the mother. Having good friends at school was also a positive influence, as well as reading habits and daily homework. The number of books in the home library showed a positive effect, though this variable could be confounded by the social and economic level of the family. Overall, girls tended to obtain higher scores in this competence, regardless of other academic or personal factors, in line with previous evidence. The present findings have important implications for language professors, as well as tutor professors in charge of communication with families.