The Association between Household and Community Characteristics and Children's Acculturation

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BACKGROUND

- Acculturation has been defined as a process that consists of cultural and psychological changes that arise from ongoing intercultural contact. This process is influenced by environmental factors such as family, work, and society.
- Language spoken at home is a commonly-used indicator of acculturation, where acculturated residents speak English at home and less acculturated residents speak a language other than English at home.

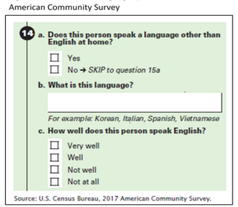
THIS STUDY

The purpose of this paper is to examine acculturation in a nationally representative sample of youth from different ethnic backgrounds and to further explore the relationship between youth's acculturation, measured as language spoken at home, and the acculturation of adults in their household, while taking into account the influences of community and parent/child sociodemographic characteristics.

DATA AND METHODS

- 2017 American Community Survey (ACS)
- Analyses were limited to 205,300 youth, ages 5 to 17 years, living in U.S. households in which at least one member speaks a language other than English (LOTE).
- The Successive Difference Replicate method was used for variance estimation for the logistic regression models.
- For more information see https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs

Figure 1. Questions on language spoken at home, American Community Survey



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey.

DEFINITIONS

Children's English speaking ability

English very well: child speaks only English or child speaks English very well

English less than very well: child speaks English well, not well, or not at all

Household English language composition groups

Some English only: at least one adult speaks only English and at least one adult speaks language other than English (LOTE) with English ability varying

All very well: all adults speak LOTE and all adults speak English very well

Varied ability: all adults speak LOTE and adults have different levels of English ability

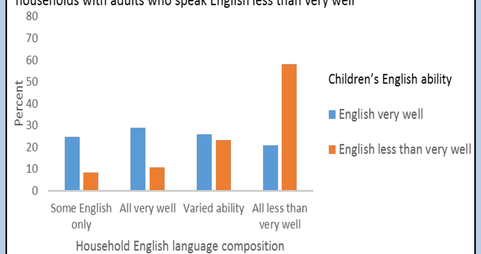
All less than very well: all adults speak LOTE and all adults speak English less than very well

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of study predictors by English ability of children in households with a least one adult who speaks a language other than English

Contextual variables/predictors	Children's English ability: Very well English Mean or %	Children's English ability: Less than very well English Mean or %
Demographic		
Percent of LOTE speakers at county level	29.1%	30.8%
Child's race		
White	15.8%	11.8%
Black	6.1%	4.4%
Asian	12.8%	14.5%
Non-Hispanic other	5.2%	2.6%
Hispanic	60.1%	66.7%
U.S. Exposure		
Child's nativity (native-born = 0)		
Native-born	90.8%	68.0%
Foreign-born	9.2%	32.0%
Child's age of entry	0.56	2.57
Child's time in the U.S. (years)	10.52	7.49
Parental Resources		
Parent education		
Less than High school	20.2%	36.0%
High school grad	22.5%	25.0%
Some college	25.4%	18.0%
Bachelor's degree or more	31.9%	21.5%
Household Income		
Not in poverty	79.3%	66.7%
In poverty	20.7%	33.3%
Household English Language Composition (adults in household)		
Some English only	24.7%	8.3%
All very well	28.8%	10.5%
Varied ability	25.9%	23.2%
All less than very well	20.7%	58.3%
Total # of cases		205,000

Note. For native-born children, age of entry = 0 and age in the U.S. = chronological age (years since date of birth). Estimates are based on survey which included statistical uncertainty. The coefficient of variation for all estimates was 18% or less.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey

Figure 2. Children who speak English less than very well are more likely to be in households with adults who speak English less than very well



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey

Model 1 – Demographic characteristics:

- Children living in counties with low proportions of LOTE speakers had a higher likelihood of speaking English very well versus counties with high proportions of LOTE speakers
- Non-Hispanic White, Black and Other race children were more likely to speak English very well than Hispanic children. Non-Hispanic Asian children were not statistically different from Hispanic children

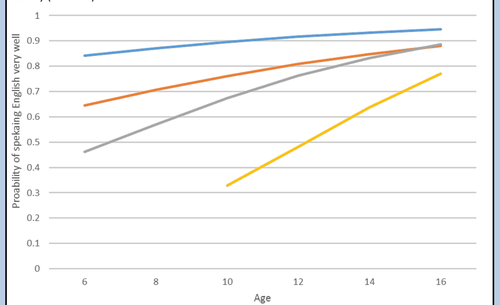
Model 2 – U.S. exposure characteristics:

- Foreign-born children were half as likely to speak English very well as those who were native born.
- The younger children were when entering the U.S. the greater the likelihood of them speaking English very well.
- The more years children lived in the U.S. the greater the likelihood that they spoke English very well.
- There was a significant interaction effect between age of U.S. entry and years in the U.S. Specifically, the effect of years in the U.S. was greater for children who entered the country at a later age (see Figure 3).

Model 3 – Parental resources:

- Parents with a Bachelor's or higher had a higher likelihood of their children speaking English very well than parents with high school or less than high school education (taking the highest education of parents in the household).
- Children living in households with an income below the poverty level were less likely to speak English very well than those in households not in poverty.

Figure 3. Nativity, age of entry, and time in the U.S. interact to shape children's English ability (model 2)



Trajectory 1: native-born, age of entry = 0, total yrs in the U.S.= 16 yrs.
Trajectory 2: foreign-born, age of entry = 1yr, total numbers of yrs in the U.S. = 15 yrs.
Trajectory 3: foreign-born, age of entry = 5yrs, total number of yrs in U.S.= 11 yrs.
Trajectory 4: foreign-born, age of entry = 10yrs, total numbers of yrs in the U.S. = 6 yrs.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey

Model 4 – Household English:

- Children in households where all adults spoke English less than very well were one-eighth as likely to speak English very well as households with at least one adult who spoke English at home (some English only).
- Households with varied ability were also less likely to have children who spoke English very well than some English only households. All very well households were not significantly different from some English only households.
- See Figure 2 for the distribution of children's English ability by household English language composition.

Model 5 – Full model with all predictors:

- Most significant effects in models 1-4 were also significant in the full model (model 5).
- The effect of the proportion of LOTE speakers at the county level remained significant from model 1 to model 5.
- Among the different race groups, only non-Hispanic Black remained significant in the full model.
- The effect of U.S. exposure variables on children's English ability remained significant (compared with model 2).
- Education had the same effect as in model 3.
- The effect of household English language composition on English ability was present in the final model as in model 4.

Table 2. Results of logistic regression analyses predicting children speaking English very well

Variable	Model 1 Odds ratio[1]	Model 2 Odds ratio	Model 3 Odds ratio	Model 4 Odds ratio	Model 5 Odds ratio
Demographic characteristics					
Proportion of county speaking language other than English	0.95*				1.0
Race					
Hispanic [omitted]	--				--
Non-Hispanic White	1.4**				0.9
Non-Hispanic Black	1.5*				1.7**
Non-Hispanic Asian	1.0				1.0
Non-Hispanic Other	2.1**				1.3
U.S. exposure					
Child's nativity					
Native-born [omitted]		--			--
Foreign-born		0.4**			0.5**
Child's age of entry		0.95**			0.95**
Child's time in the U.S. (years)		1.1**			1.1**
Child's age of entry * child's years in U.S.		1.05**			1.05**
Parental Resources					
Parent education					
Less than high school completion			0.4**		0.6**
Completed high school			0.7**		0.7*
Some college or associate's degree			1.1		0.8
Bachelor's degree or higher [omitted]			--		--
Poverty status					
Household income at or below poverty level			0.7**		0.9
Household income above poverty level [omitted]			--		--
Household English					
Some English-only [omitted]				--	--
All very well				0.9	1.0
Varied ability				0.4**	0.5**
All less than very well				0.1**	0.2**
Nagelkerke R^2	1%	14%	4%	15%	26%
N (thousands)	205	205	205	205	205

[1] Odds ratios between 0.9 and 1.1 are shown as 0.95 or 1.05 when they are significantly different from 1.0.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$
Note. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey.

CONCLUSION

- Most effects observed here can be interpreted as representing "exposure to English"- time in U.S., language use in household, and community.
- Parent's education may be subject to other interpretations.
- A combination of contextual factors plays a role in children's acculturation (English ability) with the household context having the strongest influence.

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