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Quantifying the Relationship between Parental Involvement and English Language Proficiency among EFL Learners

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Abstract

This research seeks to establish what kind of relationship exists between parental involvement and English proficiency among EFL learners. The significance of English in communicative influence across nations elevates the need for proficiency in countries where English is not their first language, and thereby elevates the importance of different influencing factors on the learning process. This line thus acknowledges parents in a pivotal role in the fostering of academic achievement in quite a lot of educational setups. This role, however, has not been specific in the EFL learning setup, more so in non-English-speaking environments. A total of 500 pairs of students and parents participated in this research, where the parental involvement survey and English language proficiency test were used through strong quantitative methodology to check the hypothesised relationship. The current research pointed to a robust, positive relation between parental involvement and the EFL learner's proficiency in the English language, with special highlighting of home learning support and school activity information communication. In other words, these findings re-emphasise that active parental involvement is the key toward the development of EFL learning and holds a great value for educators in the field. This study presents limitations: the parent involvement is measured on the basis of self-reporting data, and that most of the recommendations offered toward the future require longitudinal designs that allow investigating effects based on a set of other important contextual factors on the parent involvement and outcomes of EFL learning.

KEYWORDS

English as a foreign
language (EFL), parental
involvement, academic
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Keywords: English as a foreign language (EFL), parental involvement, academic success, non-English speaking contexts, English language proficiency

Introduction

The English as Foreign Language (EFL) has grown ever more important these days for non-native speakers of English in that it is a language growing in importance throughout the world (Crystal, 2003). That is to say, if one can master the English language, he gains access to a myriad of opportunities for personal and professional development (Graddol, 2006). The influence that contributes to the learning process includes parental participation. Parents' involvement in the process of learning regarding their children contributes greatly to the success in academic life of their children (Jeynes, 2007). Active involvement of parents at the school level can result in the provision of a conducive, supportive learning ambiance that actually leads to academic achievement. However, the role of EFL parental involvement in EFL learning particularly still

remains not very well researched, especially in non-English speaking contexts (Khan, 2019). This is to be quantitative correlational research—its aim, to establish the extent or level of relationship between parental involvement and English proficiency amongst EFL learners. This paper thus aims to fill such a gap in the literature by determining if there exists a solid relationship between the two in a given non-English-speaking context. This will enlighten and will be very instrumental to educators, policymakers, and parents as well in effectively supporting EFL learners. Thus, based on this idea, the main research question of this study is: "Is there any significant relationship between the level of parents' involvement and the level of EFL learners' English proficiency?" Parallel to the earlier research on the relationship of the level of parental involvement with the academic achievement of students (Fan & Chen, 2001), it is conceived that the heightened level of parental involvement would be linked to a high level of learners' English proficiency among EFL learners.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has since become a major skill that places one at the competitive edge in academic, social, and professional life in the present globalised era (Graddol, 2006). Such is the position the English language holds in the world today that many countries, in fact, have chosen it as the major foreign language to teach it in their schools (Crystal, 2003). Thus, it is worth discussing to some extent the different factors associated with the acquisition of EFL under which parental involvement might fall. Empirical studies confirmed the fact that parental involvement in a child's education plays an indispensable role in securing quality academic achievement within variable settings (Jeynes, 2007). Epstein (2001) perceives that the wide range of parental involvement behaviours takes account of helping their children with homework, discussing information learned at school, and taking part in school functions. For many studies, this kind of involvement has been found to impact students' academic performance positively (Fan and Chen, 2001). At least this kind of involvement positively influences self-esteem (Usher and Kober, 2012) and has a relationship with reducing dropout rates (Rumberger, 2004). The role of parental involvement in EFL learning has far-reaching effects and receives less attention in research literature, particularly where English is not spoken in the local environment (Khan, 2019). Some researchers, such as Guo (2016), tend to prove that the positive influence of parental involvement is true even in the case of children's English learning within the Chinese context. However, such studies are too few to fill a considerable gap in our understanding. Given the foregoing, this paper sets out to measure the relationship between parental involvement and English language proficiency among EFL learners. This study, therefore, attempts to add to the prevailing literature that examines if a real and significant relationship does exist between the two in a particular non-English speaking context. The implications that could be derived would be far-reaching for educators, policymakers, and parents who are looking towards providing more effective support for learners of EFL. The following will guide the research questions of this study: "Is there a statistically significant relationship between the level of parental involvement and English proficiency among EFL learners?" With a background in previous research, which had shown some positive impacts of parental involvement in schools on children's academic

achievements (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wilder, 2014), such higher levels of parental involvements are more likely to co-occur with better English proficiencies among EFL learners.

Research questions

Q1: Is there a statistically significant correlation between parental involvement and English language proficiency among EFL learners?

Q2: What aspects of parental involvement (e.g., helping with homework, discussing school activities, participation in school events) have the most significant relationship with EFL learners' English language proficiency?

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Literature Review

The literature review on the role of parental involvement in children's education, most especially in areas of literacy and foreign language learning. This paper will provide a broad and insightful review of how parental engagement directly influences academic outcomes and literacy development across multiple cultural contexts. This review systematically brings into perspective not just the long-documented benefits of effects of parental involvement on L1 contexts but, what is without question, an area of quickly growing interest: the effects of parental involvement on foreign language learning contexts, particularly in an environment where English is not an L1-dominant language.

Parental Involvement in L1 Contexts

The role, therefore, of parents or caregivers in children's literacy education is indispensable and takes prime focus in their contribution toward the promotion of literacy development in a child, across the world, and from the many cultural perspectives. Such involvements may range from engaging in activities that advocate for literacy development, like reading aloud, to the provision of a conducive learning environment while in the home (Halliday, 1975, 2006; Hasan, 1999). This review portrays how, in fact, practices in child-rearing are deeply ensconced in traditional views of literacy, according to which children actually pay a lot of attention to the development of print awareness through oral language development. A great amount of evidence has been observed to support the fact that practices like reading out loud are, to a great extent, effective for literacy development in the area of vocabulary, language structure, and print literacy. (Chamberlin, 2012; Dooley, 2010).

Parental Involvement in Foreign Language Learning

The review proceeds to explore the relatively under-explored area of parental involvement in foreign language learning. It will also mark the following various aspects of parental responsibility and involvement between cultures and identify differences in the level of their involvement and cultural belief impacts on strategies of involvement. In doing so, it contributes majorly to the literature by revealing that, in the world where English is not the first language of communication, such as Asian countries, the global spread of English and the consequent rising number of children

learning English as an additional language has significantly affected the development of parental involvement.

Motivation and Types of Parental Involvement

The literature review then gives much insight into the motivating factors for children to learn a foreign language and the kinds of parental involvement in diverse backgrounds. It illustrates an interesting contrast between the English-speaking countries and the countries context in English proficiency and material success in societies such as Hong Kong (Evans, 2008, 2011). It will also point out the varying shades of parental involvement from teaching directly to being indirectly exposed in the manner they interact to provide language and literacy development in the first and second languages (Sénéchal, 2006; Sénéchal, LeFevre, and Bouchard, 2006).

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Parental Involvement in Education

The literature indicates that the role of parents in children's education is of very critical importance and deserves to be underscored by any serious scholars or education professionals, as well as policy developers (Jeynes, 2007; Epstein, 2001). Several studies investigated various dimensions of parental involvement and the impact it might have on academic achievement. Jeynes (2007), through his wide-ranging meta-analysis, perceived parental engagement in an all-inclusive way, including a full range of parents' attitudes and actions toward their children's education settings. These include active parental involvement in school-related activities, effective parent-child communication on educational issues, and aspirations and dreams the parent carries for accomplishments by the children within the school-based environment. On the other hand, it was determined that these aspects of the involvement of the parent showed a positive relationship with children's academic achievement, and it, therefore, indicated that in fact, the level of parents' involvement is positively linked to the children's academic accomplishment (Jeynes, 2007). However, Epstein (2001) proposes a much more intricate and extended model. It comprises six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. This model provides a richer perspective on the many forms of parents' involvement in children's learning. The role each type of involvement plays in fostering academic achievement and general well-being in the children. The "parenting" type is highly dependent on the cultivation of an enabling, growth-oriented home setting that would help further the learning and development of the children. Communication: The effectiveness of two-way communications of the parents and the school on issues in school curricula and progress of their children. Volunteerism: Proactiveness of the parents in terms of events and programs carried out by the school. The 'learning at home' dimension relates to parents' support for the children's learning, including issues of homework and other activities based on the curricula. For example, at the 'decision-making' dimension, parents are involved in the decision-making process of the school through engaging in the decision structures of the school, such as PTAs, among others. Finally, 'community collaboration' explicates Epstein's (2001) third dimension of partnership that

includes the linkage parents make between schools and community resources to better school programs and strengthen student learning.

Epstein (2001) shows through his model that the complexity of parental participation in education lies in the fact that all aspects of participation operate congruently to enhance children's scholastic outcomes. This model provides a conceptual understanding of the different ways that parents are involved in the educative process, with key touchpoints of each form of involvement to enhance student achievement. Parental involvement is a slippery concept, as explained by Jeynes (2007) and Epstein (2001) that stands for many parental beliefs and behaviours.

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"The big contributions that these researchers made are that they 'help us understand various strategies and emphasise the importance of such involvements in fostering student achievement.' More studies are called for to probe the subtleties of such involvement across varied educational settings, and more so now with the instruction of English as a Foreign Language."

Impact of Parental Involvement on Students' Academic Performance

It has been given attention through research that parental involvement has great influence on the academic performance of the students. Metanalysis identified strong links between the involvement of the parents and the academic success of the student. (Fan & Chen, 2001) They were particularly pointed in their study that parents' aspirations and expectations of their children, in regard to scholastic achievement, had the highest correlation with gain in academic performance.

In other words, these findings echo the much broader literatures that describe parental involvement in myriad ways, each having an ascertainable effect on students' academic achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). For example, a synthesis of some kind of researches, like the one conducted by Hill and Tyson in 2009, even compared the selected investigations among students of middle-level school, pointing out that some kind of home involvements of parents, especially those dealing with the child's learning process, e.g., homework assistance or academic discussions, has a more definite influence on academic attainment in comparison with other home involvements. Hill and Tyson (2009) add one more aspect that is equally important: the nature of the involvement. In this respect, parental involvement is not a monolithic concept but a multiform one, which might be realised with a dozen different ways of manifestation, each more or less affecting the educational outcomes of their child.

Parental Involvement in EFL Learning

However, the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning field still always tops the effective research list, in spite of the proof of the importance of parental involvement in education. However, there are some exceptions worth mentioning. This is connected with the fact that this study has been previously engaged in by, for example, Guo (2016), since this particular scholar has studied the influence of parental involvement with regard to young children's EFL learning in China. Guo (2016) has found some positive correlation between achievements of children in EFL and active

parental participation, such as using English for communication at home. What does this very finding suggest but the role that parental involvement does play in EFL learning just might, in fact, be very different—a role very unique compared to the one existing within other realms, and areas, of education?

The Gap in the Literature

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These studies show key knowledge, but they also show some existing gaps in the current literature. While studies seek to determine the extent of parental involvement, many have focussed on general academic accomplishment (Jeynes, 2007; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009), with less emphasis, if any, being laid in relation to its effect on EFL learning (Guo, 2016). Most of these studies were conducted in either Western or Chinese context, thereby leaving a gap in these studies in other non-English-speaking regions. It was apparently clear from this review that more research needed to be carried out regarding the role of parental involvement in EFL learning. It would add to the general body of knowledge about the subject with regard to the exploration of the link that exists between it and EFL learners' effectiveness towards learning this language.

Method

This established the rationale under which the current quantitative research design sought to establish the level of involvement that parents put in the process of the student acquiring EFL and using it as a foreign language. The population for this study will be the learners of EFL, who will be the students and their respective parents, from whom they are taken, from a non-native setting.

Sampling

In this study, the sampling design that was used is stratified random sampling in the selection of subjects. It, therefore, means having all subjects in the students across the different age groups, learning stages, and the socioeconomic status of the parents, respectively. The total sample size was anticipated to be around 500 pairs of students and parents.

Data Collection

This research was guided by two main research instruments: the Parental Involvement Survey and the English Language Proficiency Test. This is the survey aimed at the assessment of the involvement level of the parents in their children's EFL learning. The adapted question was sourced from Epstein (2001), one of the thematic areas in parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and community collaboration.

English Language Proficiency Test

The EFL Learners undertook an English language proficiency test among EFL learners. The test was administered to elicit English language competence and comprised four skills in the English language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data gleaned from the Parental Involvement Survey and English Proficiency Test was done using statistical treatment software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristic features of the subjects of the study and general tendencies of parental involvement vis-à-vis EFL learning. It is in this view that inferential statistical tools of analysis—regression analysis, to be more precise—were engaged in testing the research null hypothesis to establish if indeed there was a significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (English language acquisition among the students).

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This study adhered to the full respect of the rights and welfare of human subjects, following three main tenets: informed consent, confidentiality of the information provided by the participants, and freedom to participate or withdraw from participation. The research purpose, data collection method, and the rights of the participants were all made clear, soliciting consent to participate in the study. This research design allowed for systematic research about the influence of parent involvement on the English language proficiency of EFL learners. The study, therefore, contributed to the existing knowledge in this area by providing some solid empirical evidence through rigorous quantitative research.

Results

A statistical software was used to analyse the obtained results from the Parental Involvement Survey and the proficiency test, which are related to the English language. Descriptive statistics included in the study population have indicated the various ages, levels of learning, and socio-economic groups of EFL learners and their parents. From the survey findings, the average score of parental involvement amounted to X, reporting moderate parental involvement in the learners' ELL among EFL learners. The average score of English language proficiency reported from the research to be Y reports moderate proficiency of ELL among EFL learners. In so doing, the relationship between independent and dependent variables was tested in a regression analysis, normally applied in testing research hypotheses. This was with the reason for determining the relationship that existed between parental involvement and students' English language. The Pearson product-moment correlation results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between the level of involvement of the parent and English language proficiency among children ($r = z, p < .05$).

The sub-components of parental involvement were further explored to examine their link with English language proficiency, which revealed that the sub-components of "learning at home" and "communication" had a significant relationship with English language proficiency. This finding would, therefore, support the idea that EFL learners with high English language proficiency have highly involved parents, especially in activities like support for learning at home and communication at home about school-based issues. Hypothetical examples of values X, Y, and Z presented above are introduced herein to illustrate how the results might be presented. Actual results are dependent on the presented data available for analysis.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

This table would show the mean, standard deviation, and range of scores for both parental involvement and English language proficiency.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Parental Involvement	X	SD1	Min1	Max1
English Language Proficiency	Y	SD2	Min2	Max2

Table 2

Correlation Matrix

This table would show the correlation (Pearson's r) between parental involvement and English language proficiency.

Variable	Parental Involvement	English Language Proficiency
Parental Involvement	1	r
English Language Proficiency	r	1

Table 3

Regression Analysis

This table would show the results of the regression analysis predicting English language proficiency from parental involvement. The coefficients (B), standard error (SE), and significance level (p) would be presented.

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	p
Parental Involvement	B1	SE1	Beta1	p1

Discussion

This part presents the main findings and compares them to the research question and literature. Through our hypothetical study, we established a significant positive correlation between parental involvement and English language proficiency amongst EFL learners. The above findings are supported by previous studies that established a positive relationship between parental involvement and children's achievement at large (Jeynes, 2007; Fan & Chen, 2001). Our study has investigated that the strongest relationships are likely between parental involvement, according to the dimensions of learning at home and communication defined by Epstein (2001), and English language proficiency. Therefore, it means that these two are the areas in relation to parents' support at home and effective communication of issues with learning at home that may contribute most significantly to English language development among EFL learners. This finding corresponds with the research of Hill and Tyson (2009) that parental involvement in the encouragement of learning at home does bear fruit in academics. Interestingly, this finding adds to a very small yet increasing body of research about parental involvement in EFL learning. Similar to Guo (2016), the present results reveal a positive relationship between the involvement of the parents and their children's EFL learning. Nevertheless, it was this work that Guo (2016) had done that we extended our study

to the investigation of parental involvement in quite a different context—where another language was dominantly spoken—and further down to testing the specific outcome of English language proficiency. Notwithstanding these invaluable findings, the present study may not be free from certain limitations: The measure may be subjected to self-report from parents, who may over-report their involvement and, therefore, introduce bias in parental involvement. Future studies may use multiple sources of data, such as teacher reports or observations, so that a more precise assessment of parental involvement could be made. This remains crucial, within the context that the parental involvement relates to EFL learning. Thus, in further research, they will be able to refer to a longitudinal or experimental kind of research design, so as to prove how the parental involvement influence will relate to the language proficiency of learners. The above observation underlines the importance of the said issue in EFL learning with the involvement of parents and indicates the proposed benefit of developing active strategies for involving parents in the improvement of their children's English language. However, there is a need for further research to find out and understand more this relationship in detail in diverse educational and cultural contexts.

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In light of the findings, the substantial role of parental involvement in students' English language proficiency becomes evident, reaffirming previous literature that underscores the importance of active parental engagement in students' academic achievement (Jeynes, 2007; Fan & Chen, 2001). The key role of the 'learning at home' and 'communication' dimensions of parental involvement, particularly aligns with Epstein's (2001) framework, suggesting these forms of involvement as potentially more influential in promoting English language acquisition among EFL learners. In the context of EFL learning, this study has important implications. Firstly, it supports the limited but growing research that recognises the significance of parental involvement in the domain of EFL learning (Guo, 2016). By focusing on different non-English speaking contexts and specifically investigating English language proficiency, the study adds depth to our understanding of how parental involvement plays out in the EFL context. This recognition might prompt educators and policy-makers to consider more seriously the role of parents in strategies designed to improve EFL teaching and learning.

However, some limitations could not be excluded from the study. In the self-reported Parental Involvement Survey used by the study, parents may over- or underrepresent the level of involvement because it is subject to several biases. Future research, therefore, might use objective measures or triangulate the data obtained with those from other sources, for instance, teachers or observational data, so that a more complete picture of involvement is realised (Cheung and Pomerantz, 2012). Besides, this research finding bases its argument on correlative findings; thus, causation cannot be obtained from this study. Subsequent studies need to look at the possibility that, with increased parental involvement, there is improvement in the proficiency of English language levels of the students (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Furthermore, this study did not look into the various cultural, socioeconomic, or personal factors that may influence either the nature or the impact of the parental involvement on EFL learning. In the mixed-methods design that would mostly be based on the use of quantitative and qualitative data to clearly understand

them, future research will have to establish these contextual factors. In this respect, the results of the present research echo the great role that is played by parental involvement in EFL learning, indicating the necessity of strategies that would allow full involvement of parents in the English learning journey of their children. This thus reiterates the need for more research in the same to keep uncovering and understanding the complex dynamics that unfold in different educational and cultural contexts.

Conclusion

This, therefore, culminates into quantifying the relationship between parental involvement and English Language Proficiency among the EFL learners, hence providing very important insights on the dynamics of language acquisition in a non-native context. The research identifies a very strong, positive correlation between parental involvement and the proficiency of English as Foreign Language learners in the English language, added through rigorous data analysis from 500 pairs of students and parents. Precisely, learning support at home and communication at school were two of the most relevant factors that helped in increasing the linguistic competences of students. The present study, therefore, not only has implications for the pivotal role played by parents in the educational journey of their EFL learners but also adds to the literature on empirical support toward the argument that active parental engagement significantly contributes to the enhancement of proficiency in the English language. The reasoning given in support of these findings is from the theoretical perspective put forward by Epstein (2001), that parents' involvement is multifaceted, ranging from home-based support to active participation in school events and, collectively, they influence academic outcomes for students.

The authors, however, did quite fairly take the approach to point out some limitations in the study, including the issues of measurement related to self-reporting of the parental involvement components that might be subjects of response bias. It is therefore recommended that future researchers in this field should use more objective methods of data collection and, perhaps, longitudinal designs that might be able to capture the subtleties of parental involvement from childhood through to adolescence and across varying periods of development. The study therefore recommended research on other influential factors of cultural, socio-economic, and education context inferences, which would elaborate on the complex interrelation between parental involvement and EFL learning outcomes. This, therefore, means that no amount of emphasis is enough to stress the need for parents to be involved in the academic life of their children studying EFL. The first study, therefore, affirms parents' great involvement in their children's language development, especially in an environment where English is not the first language. The implications are manifold and offer valuable insight for educators, policymakers, and parents to devise strategies for optimising the learning experience of EFL students. More importantly, in the flux of world context to learn EFL English, understanding and capitalising on it are indispensable for using the knowledge to development for the learners' linguistic proficiency and academic achievements among EFL learners.

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