

The Influence of Family Education on Primary School Students' English Speaking

Wanting Su*

School of Accountancy, Northeast Agriculture University, Harbin, Heilongjiang, 150030, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 17620231151253@stu.xmu.edu.cn

Abstract. English, as a globally prevalent language for communication, holds significance in various spheres of life. Language acquisition, contingent on the linguistic milieu, especially in the sociocultural context, is profoundly influenced by familial factors. Both domestic and international studies have underscored the considerable impact of family background on students' English language acquisition. This paper aims to delve into the influence of family background on English language acquisition, with a specific focus on three pivotal aspects: family circumstances, parental cultural competence, and the home environment. This examination aims to provide readers with a comprehensive insight into the pivotal role that family background plays in shaping linguistic proficiency. Research findings underscore that family circumstances, encompassing socioeconomic status and access to educational resources, exert a significant influence on English language acquisition. Furthermore, parental cultural competence, which encompasses their educational attainment and exposure to the English language and culture, assumes a crucial role in this process. In addition, the familial atmosphere, inclusive of parental involvement, encouragement, and support, significantly impacts children's motivation and attitude toward English language learning. To optimize language acquisition, it is imperative for families to acknowledge the importance of their background and actively engage in efficacious educational practices. Recommendations encompass creating an English-rich environment within the home, exposing children to diverse English learning resources, nurturing a positive disposition toward learning, and encouraging regular English practice and communication.

Keywords: family education; primary school; English speaking.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

In the contemporary era, English has assumed an increasingly vital role due to the burgeoning global economy. It has evolved into the predominant international language, facilitating economic, political, and cultural exchanges among nations [1]. The effect of English is especially pronounced in China, where it holds particular significance for several reasons. First, it occupies a mandatory position in the curriculum at all educational levels, alongside Chinese and Mathematics, making it one of the three core subjects. Students are incentivized to excel in English, given its inclusion in pivotal exams such as the Middle School Entrance Examination and College Entrance Examination. Furthermore, proficiency in English is considered a prerequisite in numerous industries and professions, especially in global enterprises, multinational corporations, and international organizations [2]. Mastery of fluent English enhances employability, fosters career advancement, and facilitates cross-border collaboration and business interactions.

Moreover, spoken English assumes a critical role in students' English language acquisition. First, language serves as a medium for communication, making effective communication in English a primary objective of language learning. Second, China's education model places greater emphasis on developing students' reading and writing skills in English, often neglecting their oral proficiency. Consequently, many students lack the necessary skills for fluent verbal communication, which is evident in international English proficiency tests.

Family education, defined as the process of nurturing, educating, and guiding children within a familial context, constitutes the initial and formative education children receive. During this phase, parents have the opportunity to instill their children's interest in learning, kindle their curiosity for knowledge, and create an optimal learning environment. Parents play a pivotal role in inspiring their children to set educational goals and develop effective learning habits [3]. The advantages of family education in learning primarily encompass personalized attention, close supervision, a flexible learning environment, and positive motivation. Parents can tailor their teaching approaches to their children's unique characteristics, closely monitor and guide their progress, and provide a flexible and motivating atmosphere conducive to learning.

Family education forms the bedrock of both formal school education and broader societal education, exerting a substantial influence on improving students' oral English proficiency. This influence is evident in several key areas. First, language acquisition is intricately tied to the sociocultural environment, and family education can offer an indispensable context for English language learning [4]. Second, family education and formal schooling are synergistic, with the former complementing the latter and providing essential support for enhancing students' oral English skills. Regardless of the English instruction students receive in school, family education serves as a crucial supplement. Additionally, parents can curate suitable language resources to bolster their children's vocabulary, correct their pronunciation, and refine their intonation.

1.2. Research Scope

This study undertakes a comprehensive literature review to investigate the impact of family education on primary school students' English-speaking proficiency. It specifically explores the influence of family environment, socio-economic background, financial investment, and parental education levels. The findings highlight the pivotal role of family setting in shaping children's English language abilities. The creation of a nurturing home environment, provision of resources, and active parental involvement emerge as key factors in enhancing proficiency. In summary, this research underscores the significance of family education in fostering children's English-speaking abilities, laying the foundation for their academic success.

1.3. Research Significance

While numerous experts and scholars, both domestically and internationally, have conducted extensive research on the relationship between family education and primary school students' English speaking abilities, there remains room for further expansion and deepening of this theoretical research [5]. In particular, the depth and breadth of research should be extended. Furthermore, it is crucial to encompass a wider array of subjective factors within the family environment that influence primary school students' oral English proficiency.

Additionally, through more extensive research into the nexus between family education and primary school students' oral English proficiency, this study aims to raise awareness among parents regarding the importance of English training and education for their children. This shift in perspective can help reposition English learning from being solely exam-focused to being a skill with sustained influence on students' future development.

2. Implications of Family Education

2.1. Family Conditions

2.1.1. Household income

The financial income of a family is indicative of the level of investment parents are willing to make in their children's education. Higher household incomes often correlate with greater parental willingness to enroll their children in extracurricular tutorial classes and invest in educational materials and supplementary books [5]. This financial capacity also impacts a child's exposure to the

world and their psychological state, subsequently influencing their sociability and oral proficiency. Families with limited economic resources may provide less financial support for their children's education, resulting in a narrower worldview and fewer opportunities compared with children from higher-income families. Some children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds may even face challenges such as a lack of educational materials, which indirectly affects their self-esteem and, consequently, their academic performance. It is important to note that when family income falls below a certain threshold, children from disadvantaged backgrounds often exhibit heightened motivation to excel academically. These children recognize the critical importance of education and strive to enhance their academic performance to secure better prospects. Such situations serve as inspiring examples that underscore the value of learning.

2.1.2. Family involvement

Family expenditures can be categorized into two main components: daily necessities and moral and cultural expenditures. Contemporary parents, particularly younger generations, have shifted their spending habits to prioritize their children's growth, willingly allocating more resources toward books and higher-level products in their daily lives [6]. They emphasize the pursuit of identity and personal development for their children. However, this perspective may have some adverse effects on children's moral development.

The structure of family expenditures has evolved significantly with improved living conditions. As people experience increased affluence, concerns about basic needs like clothing, housing, and sustenance diminish, allowing for a better quality of life. Consequently, parents have been increasingly focusing on employing scientifically informed approaches to raise their children. For instance, many parents have started following scientific dietary guidelines to ensure their children's well-being, recognizing the connection between good health and academic achievement. During the secondary school years, some parents even choose to live with their children and take charge of meal preparation. Families are providing their children with more educational resources, including English extracurricular tutorials, English tutors, English summer camps, and English competitions. Substantial variations in children's oral proficiency can be attributed to differences in parental involvement [7]. This discrepancy is largely driven by the unique nature of the English subject. English, as a foreign language, is often less mastered by parents, who may struggle to guide their children effectively in English language acquisition. Parents' familiarity with spoken English is particularly limited. Access to authentic spoken English and the guidance of a speaking teacher can significantly enhance students' oral performance. Consequently, many students nowadays opt to learn English from foreign teachers. Parents' attitudes toward their children's participation in English extracurricular tutorials, English tutoring, English summer camps, or English competitions reflect their dedication and commitment to their children's oral English development. Increased family support for education indicates a heightened parental focus on their children's oral English skills. Consequently, parents invest more time, effort, and financial resources to improve their children's oral English proficiency. As students engage in English extracurricular tutorial classes, English tutoring, English summer camps, or English competitions, they become more interested in language learning, gain self-confidence, and develop a sense of achievement compared to their peers of the same age. This, in turn, fosters greater enthusiasm for English learning and leads to improved academic performance.

2.1.3. Resources provided by the family

A child's academic achievement typically exhibits an upward trend in correlation with the level of resources supplied by the family. In essence, a greater infusion of resources from the family often leads to better student performance, while limited family resources tend to result in poorer student achievement. This observation aligns with conventional wisdom and supports our initial hypotheses [8].

To a certain extent, the resources provided by the family reflect the cultural atmosphere of the household and the parents' interest and proficiency in English. More abundant family resources

generally indicate that parents place a higher degree of importance on their children's English education and performance. In such families, children are likely to be subconsciously influenced and become more motivated to learn English.

2.2. Literacy Level of Parents

2.2.1. Education

Numerous studies have explored the correlation between parents' education and their children's academic performance, and the findings align with the conventional results. A study by Soviet pedagogue Vasilinava highlighted that among students who achieved high grades in the seventh grade, there were twice as many students with highly educated parents compared to those with parents of lower educational attainment [9].

Higher parental education levels tend to enhance their ability to educate their children effectively. Parents with advanced education find it more comfortable to tutor their children and can impart valuable learning methods and experiences. They can influence their children both through direct instruction and by setting an example. Parents' attitude toward knowledge and their enthusiasm for learning can also have a profound impact on their children, who often emulate their parents' dedication to acquiring knowledge. Highly educated parents typically possess more advanced and scientific educational perspectives. They set reasonable expectations for their children's academic progress, aspire to see their children achieve higher levels of success, and are willing to invest more in their children's education. Notably, the father's level of education is particularly influential in shaping children's attitudes toward education and can establish the father as an authoritative figure in their eyes. Children often admire their fathers, unconsciously imitating their behavior and absorbing their educational values, which exert a lasting subconscious influence on them.

2.2.2. English proficiency

Higher levels of parental English proficiency can be advantageous for students. Parents with advanced English language skills are better equipped to provide oral English tutoring to their children. They also have more opportunities to engage in tutoring and active involvement with their children, leading to increased educational support over time, which significantly impacts students' oral English proficiency.

While it was observed that there was no significant difference in the oral English communication scores of primary school students based on their fathers' English proficiency, a notable distinction was found in the oral English communication scores based on their mothers' English proficiency. This discrepancy is largely due to the fact that mothers are typically more involved in their children's education, offering guidance and closely monitoring their performance, whereas fathers are often less engaged due to their work commitments [10].

2.2.3. Parental Study Abroad Experience

A parent's experience of studying abroad is a significant advantage for primary school children. When parents and children share an interest in Western culture, they can better relate to each other. Parents can intensify their children's English education and engage in more frequent communication with them. Increased communication fosters a deeper appreciation for the English language and boosts a student's confidence in learning it. Furthermore, parents' study abroad experiences enhance the parent-child relationship, which, in turn, positively impacts students' English performance.

Research by Sun Yueling concluded that parents' study abroad experiences had a significant impact on students' English achievement. Specifically, students whose parents had studied abroad were more likely to excel in English. Moreover, there was a significant difference in students' English oral communication achievements based on their fathers' interest in Western culture, while no significant difference was found in relation to their mothers' interest in Western culture. This disparity can be attributed to parents with study abroad experiences being more willing and able to engage in their children's English learning through shared interests. The father's interest in Western culture, in

particular, motivated children to excel, particularly in terms of their oral performance. Mothers, on the other hand, may have a casual interest in Western culture, such as Western literature, films, or cultural concepts, but they may not actively participate in their children's English learning.

2.3. Family Atmosphere

2.3.1. Emotional support and parental attitudes towards their children

According to survey data from the related literature, it was found that there was no significant difference in the English oral communication achievement of primary school students in terms of the situations in which their fathers accompanied the students in English activities [11]. However, a significant difference exists in primary school students' English oral communication achievement when their mothers accompany them in English activities. The more the mothers participate in English activities with their children, the better the students' achievement; conversely, when mothers are less involved in these activities, the students' achievement tends to be worse. This finding aligns with common perceptions, which may be ascribed to several factors.

Primary school students are young, and this age group of children has not yet developed stable learning habits and methods. The primary school stage is crucial for cultivating good learning habits and methods, especially for learning English and spoken English. Hence, parental involvement in English-related activities is particularly essential during this stage.

Mothers, often taking on the primary role in educating their children, are more likely to accompany their children in such activities. In terms of time, energy, and the quality of accompaniment, mothers excel over fathers. In other words, mothers tend to provide higher-quality support, while fathers' involvement may be less comprehensive. Consequently, there is no significant difference in primary school students' oral communication achievement in English based on fathers' participation in English activities.

Mothers are often perceived as highly action-oriented and nurturing figures in their children's minds. Coupled with the quality of their involvement in learning, mothers play a more effective role in ensuring positive outcomes for children.

Parents' engagement in English activities with their children is an asset for enhancing students' oral English proficiency. This involvement reflects parents' interest in and dedication to English education. Moreover, it strengthens the parent-child relationship, increases parents' guidance and supervision of students' English education, and provides additional educational support, all of which contribute positively to students' oral English achievement. Notably, the oral English communication performance of primary school students varies significantly based on their parents' involvement in English activities. Children whose parents frequently participate in English activities with them tend to perform the best, whereas children whose parents rarely engage in such activities tend to have poor performance. However, it is essential to strike a balance, as children whose parents engage in English activities with them very frequently may score lower. This could be because, for students with weaker spoken English skills, excessive parental involvement might counterproductively hinder their improvement. Therefore, parents should provide their children with the right amount of support and encouragement.

2.3.2. Parental Involvement and Communication

In accordance with data from the research, there is no significant difference in primary school students' English oral communication achievement in relation to fathers' tutoring in spoken English [12]. Conversely, primary school students' English oral communication scores vary significantly based on mothers' involvement in tutoring spoken English. As mothers' involvement in tutoring increases, students tend to achieve higher scores, aligning with common perceptions.

This result is unsurprising and mirrors the findings related to parents' attention to their children's English education for similar reasons. Many families tend to be male-dominated, with mothers taking on the primary role of educating their children, investing greater time and energy in the process.

Fathers' involvement in tutoring spoken English often remains limited to verbal supervision and inquiries, with less practical involvement. This may lead to lower student identification with paternal tutoring, resulting in no significant difference in student performance. Conversely, the perception of mothers as highly action-oriented individuals and their positive image in their children's minds make their tutoring in spoken English more effective in terms of student achievement [13]. As mothers increase their involvement, dedicating more time and effort, children become more focused on their grades, receive greater encouragement (or pressure), and actively or passively engage more in their learning, all of which impact their academic performance.

2.3.3. House rules

In the preceding sections, we discussed the influence of parental quality on family education. In this section, we will continue to explore other aspects of family education. Parents should adopt an indirect approach to support their children, fostering positive attitudes toward learning and life, and cultivating a strong interest in family life. It is effective for parents to create a nurturing cultural environment within the family, aiding their children in developing good study habits. For instance, parents can encourage their children to read various types of literature, such as novels, plays, and poetry. While reading, children can be prompted to highlight important information, which may prove useful in the future. Parents can also instill the habit of problem-solving in their children. When children encounter difficulties in their English learning, it provides an opportunity for parents to teach them how to address such challenges independently. During leisure time, parents can kindle their children's enthusiasm for daily life, encouraging them to explore important and relevant information on the internet [14]. This approach serves as a constructive way to guide and assist children in their learning. By creating a relaxed learning environment, children can excel in their English studies, ultimately achieving academic success.

3. Conclusion

Family background exerts significant influence on students' English learning, encompassing two crucial components: family economy and family education. Within this multifaceted landscape of factors affecting students' English learning, the author cannot overlook the profound impact of family background. Indeed, family background indirectly influences students' achievements in English learning, shaping their educational outcomes. In particular, the parents' profession and educational attainment maintain a close relationship with family economic status, which in turn plays a pivotal role in shaping children's English learning experiences and outcomes. This underscores the intricate interplay of factors within the domain of family background in the context of English language education.

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