

Parents' role in providing learning opportunities of English to their children in a familial environment

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Abstract: This study tries to find out roles of parents in providing learning opportunities of English to their children in a familial environment. The research has been carried out in Lubumbashi educational division one. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used and 51 parents have been used as samples. The findings show that in order for parents to play a proper role, they should work hand in hand with school administrators and teachers. In the other hand, teacher should motivate students to learn English and adopt strategies that will favorise a continual usage of English both at school and at students' home environment.

Key words: parents' role, learning opportunities, English language, familial environment.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Although education is a shared responsibility between teachers, society and the government, the perfect and harmonious development of children's personalities occur in a family environment, in a climate of happiness, compassion and understanding (UMAR and MAKALUSENGE, 2020). Parents play an important role in linguistic development of their children. This linguistic development of children proceeds from the mastery of their mother tongue to the learning of the second language (Motseke, 2020). Nurturing children requires parents' involvement. This means that parents should communicate with their children as it improves children's communication abilities. Vygotsky (1978) said that cognitive development, which is the ability to think, understand and process an information effectively, is facilitated when a child's problem solving is guided by adults. Hence, Derick (2017) says that families as the first educators of their children continue to influence their children learning and development during the school year. Now, foreign, language learning is one of the problems that Congolese children encounter while being at school, at home and in the community. And it is very much important and influential that a child gets help from its family. Mental and intellectual strength can be developed in children with the help of family values. Thus, this study intends to find out the role of parents in providing opportunities of learning English by their children in a familial environment and to identify attitudes that parents have towards the learning of English. Consequently, the following questions are worth to be asked:

- Do parents play their role by giving learning opportunities of English to their children?
- What are attitudes do parents have towards the learning of English?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Berstein (1970), the child's early home experiences are part and parcel of his or her learning and education. This means that family life as well as his or her environment play an important role in learning a language like English. Parents are among the key stakeholders in scaffolding children in the education process to help children understand the material under study. while teachers play a direct role of facilitating teaching and learning process at school, parents cannot be left in this process in order to provide quality education for the children (Brown, 1980; Grolnick and Ryan, 1989). Parents must however, bear in mind that children's homework promotes continuity of teaching and learning away from the school environment. So, parents need to help children when they experience difficulties and not entirely doing the homework for them (Epstein, et al, 1997).

Cahyati and Kasumah (2020) state that parents can provide smart phones to their children in order for them to use the internet and learn English on line. Parents can give enthusiasm and support their children in telling them to study hard. They should also accompany their children because good monitoring is one of the factors in the process of growing and developing a child (Winingsih, 2020).

In addition to that, Dekker (1993) says that although many parents may not be certain on how to help their children with assignments, guidance and support, they can be actively involved in home learning activities, as well as having an opportunity to teach, be a role model, and guide their children. The influence of parents can be viewed by focussing on the attitude and their supportiveness to children. But the level of involvement depends on the perception parents have towards their children's education (Blair, 2014). Education starts at home with parents and their attitudes affect the quality of education which their children get (David, 2009).

The current study is unique in that most of the studies about parental roles or involvement talk about education in general. But this study pinpoints only the learning opportunities of English by children. It is therefore, important to know if Congolese parents like English and want their children to learn it as it is a foreign language.

III. AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims at: - finding out the role of parents in providing learning opportunities of English to their children in a familial environment.

- Identifying attitudes that parents have towards the learning of English.

IV. PARTICIPANTS/SUBJECT/ POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The data for the current study have been collected by means of a questionnaire survey that is comprised of open format questions and closed format questions. 51 parents who have their children in the Lubumbashi educational division 1 have been randomly selected to participate and these parents have shown their consentingness. It should be noted that the Lubumbashi educational division 1 has three categories of schools and these are:

- Schools managed directly by the state government;
- Schools managed by different denominational churches but being controlled by the state government;
- Private schools with no financial aid from the government.

And due to the parents' failure to be conversant with the English language, questionnaires have been written in French.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, I have followed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to conduct my research. This means that the qualitative design is used to collect information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education and some other issues without measuring and quantifying (Kothari, 2004). In the other hand, the quantitative approach involves the quantitative analysis in a formal and rigid fashion.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

The data of this study have been analysed by doing a descriptive approach. This means that summaries of participants' responses have been categorised in accordance with the views of Carey (2015), who said that categorisation of questions and answers is important for data analysis. To maintain the validity and reliability of the responses, I have collected some data from many dimensions as Amin (2018) said.

VII. FINDINGS

The emerging themes that have generated from the questionnaire are categorised as follows:

- Parents' attraction to English language;
- Parent – teacher relationship;
- Means used by parents to help children learning English;
- Parents' attitude towards the learning of English;
- Difficulties observed by parents in their children learning English;
- Parents' suggestions for children's better learning of English.

The data are presented in tables as shown below:

Table 1. Parents' attraction to English language

Opinion	Favourable	Unfavourable	total
Numbers of parents	47	4	51
Percentage	92,1	7,8	100

Our sample that is comprised of 51 participants reveals that 47 parents representing 92,1% are favourable to learn English because of their business affairs, finding jobs and to speak with people coming outside the country. In the other hand, only 4 parents are unfavourable to learning English for lack of interest in learning it.

Table 2. Parents – school collaboration.

Contact frequency	Once	Never	total
Numbers of parents	6	45	51
Percentage	11,7	88,2	100

The above table shows that most of the parents do not collaborate with school administrators and teachers concerning the learning of English in particular, since the results show that 45 parents or 88,2% have never gone to school to see English teachers of their children. Only 6 parents or 11,7% declare that they have done it once.

Table 3. Different opportunities provided by parents to learn English.

Learning opportunities	Fulfilled	total	Unfulfilled	percentage	total
Speaking English at home	19	37,2	32	62,7	51
English media	25	49	26	50,9	51
English books	30	58,8	21	41,1	51
Reading together and helping children with homeworks	22	43,1	29	56,8	51
Rewarding children when they do better results in English	20	39,2	31	60,7	51

The table above containing different means that parents should use to help the learning of English by their children reveals that parents do not play their role accordingly. 19 parents (37,2%) speak English at home and 32 parents (62,7%) do not speak English. 20 parents (39,2%) encourage their children by rewarding them and when 31 parents (60,7%) do not. In addition to that, 22 parents (43,1%) read together with their children and help them whereas 29 parents or (56,8%) do not read together and leave their children do alone their English home works. Concerning watching English movies, listening to English songs, going to English clubs, and listening to English programs only 25 parents (49%) do so with their children while 26 parents or (50,9%) do not bother. Finally, only 30 parents or (58,8%) provide their children with English books whereas 21 remaining parents or (41,1%) leave their children to use only English copybooks. In a nutshell, the only means that parents use properly is one but other useful means are neglected.

Table 4. Parents' attitude towards the learning of English

Attitude	Positive	negative	total
Numbers of parents	47	04	51
Percentage	92,1	7,8	100

The table above shows that 47 parents or (92,1%) have a positive attitude and 4 parents representing (7,8%) have a negative attitude.

Table 5. Difficulties observed by parents in their children learning English.

Difficulties	Number of parents	percentage
Lack of motivation to learn English	2	3,9
Incapability of reading and writing	30	58,8
Lack of qualified teachers	04	7,8
Change of teachers	01	1,9
Lack of willingness by children	02	3,9
None	10	19,6
Insufficiency of English text book	02	3,9
Total	51	100

The table above illustrates that the most difficult thing for children is reading and writing though other difficulties are minor. 30 parents (58,8%) say that their children fail to read and write. 10 parents or 19,6% do not notice anything from their children's learning. 4 other parents or (7,8%) point out that having unqualified teachers affects their children in learning English. 2 parents or (3,9%) evoke that their children lack the motivation. 2 other parent (3,9%) claim that their children are unwilling to learn English. Concerning the insufficiency of the English text books only 2 parents (3,9%) declared that. And finally 1 parent representing (1,9%) says that the change of teachers also affects their children's learning of English.

Table 6. Parents' suggestions for children' learning English.

Propositions	Number of parents	percentage
Teachers should ameliorate their teaching methods/techniques	12	23,5
Teaching English should start from pre – school up to high level	02	3,9
Children should have much time out making conversation, dialogues etc.	22	43,1
Teachers should use audio – visual techniques	01	1,9
Number of hours in the school curriculum should be increased	04	7,8
Teachers should motivate their student	02	3,9
The government should provide English text books	01	1,9
Nothing	07	13,7
Total	51	100

The suggestions that parents have made concerning the better learning of English by their children show that children do not have much time to express themselves in English since 22 parents or (43,1%) say that children should have much time on making conversations, dialogues, etc. 12 other parents (23,5%) advise teachers to ameliorate their teaching methods and techniques. 4 parents (7,8%) say that hours in the school curriculum should be increased in order to let children have much time to learn. 2 parents (3,9%) say that the teaching of English

should start from pre – school up to tertiary level. 2 other parents (3,9%) state that their children are not motivated by their teachers. One parent only (1,9%) says that teachers should use audio – visual techniques. The other parent (1,9%) asks the government to provide schools with text books. Finally, 7 parents (13,7%) have nothing to suggest.

VIII. DISCUSSION

According to the research findings above, it can be noticed that parent's role in providing learning opportunities of English to their children is very moderate. Some major learning opportunities such as: using English at home, using and following English channels on the radio and TV, reading together with children, helping children when they do their home works and rewarding children when they do better in English are neglected. The reason for parents not to do so is that they don't know English. This research result supports Motseke (2020) who found that for parents to help their children with homeworks, they needed to have knowledge of the English language, including grammar and meanings of words. Most of the parents accepted that they like English. This result is also similar to the finding of Nair et Al. (2014), who found that the participants perceived the high significance of English language, leading them to have a very positive attitude towards the English language. For "Parent – school teacher collaboration," the research findings of this study shows that the respondents play their role moderately. 88,2% of parents do not go to school and see English teachers of their children. This result proves sufficiently that parents consider English language as a mere subject that is not useful in the society. Thus, this result matches together with the results that Yothasmuth (2013) and Praipraew (2011) found. In their study, they found that the levels of parental role at school were at low and moderate level. The reason being that parents had a high respect towards the way teachers made decisions for their children study. Therefore, parents did not want to disturb teachers. But in this study, the reason is the status that the English language has in the Congolese society in which parents and children live in a multilingual society. Before learning English, They already know their mother tongues, they have national languages and then the official language which is French. So, English is not taught and learnt to produce people who are able to speak, write and engage themselves successfully in the conversation with native speakers. But it is taught as a normal course that children can learn just to get marks. That is why children have difficulties in reading and writing. This result corresponds also to the results found by Justin and Kazembe (2023) who found that learners of English were unable to speak and write though they had studied it for many years. They also recommended that English teachers should shift from the teacher – centred lesson to the student – centred lesson and provide opportunities for learners to interact with their peers.

IX. CONCLUSION

Learning a foreign language requires much efforts and much determinations. All relevant opportunities should be put together in order to have better results of children. Providing various learning opportunities of language without ignoring any and parents should be aware of their proper role.

X. RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations can go a long way in helping parents to improve their roles in teaching and learning of English and for future researches:

- Parents should read together and help children with their home assignments;
- Parents should maintain parent – teacher relationships;
- Parents should monitor their children's learning.

Concerning the future study, the present study has focussed only on the learning opportunities of English. Future study should be conducted with parents' role in children' education in general.

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