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Mothers' Presence Beside Their Children in EFL Classes: What Gains Does It Bring to Children?

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Abstract

Given the link between parental involvement and children's academic outcomes, the current research set out to redress the imbalance created by the almost nonexistence of research evidence on the impacts of simultaneous presence of mothers beside their children in an EFL class. To this end, following a mixed-method approach (a quasi-experimental design and semi-structured interviews), 35 starter-level female children, aged 4-6, selected via convenience sampling were randomly assigned into an experimental group (N=18) in which mothers attended the class with their children, and a control group (N= 17) in which mothers did not. Findings unraveled that mothers' in-class presence enhanced children's English language vocabulary, increased their class attendance, provided a feeling of affection and safety to help them relax and get motivated, caused their in-class behaviors to be closely monitored, and created rapport and solidarity between home and school. Mothers' in-class presence also provided a unique opportunity for mothers to co-teach with the teacher the new vocabularies to their children. The findings also suggested that teaching English to mothers prior to their children's course of instruction assisted them in scaffolding their children in classes. The implication is that as a result of their ongoing in-class presence, mothers may become more vigilant influential agents in educational meetings and school board decision-makings. Also, stakeholders need to be encouraged to devise plans allowing them to harness more efficiently the positive impacts of mothers' in-class presence and provoke parents' active participation in classrooms.

Keywords: Children language learning, EFL, Mothers' in-class presence, Parental involvement

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1. Introduction

The process of learning a second or foreign language in most countries begins at the primary school level and many parents are invariably in quest of the most appropriate classes for their children to ensure they can excel in their linguistic development relative to their peers and survive and thrive in an increasingly complex market-driven world (Forey et al., 2016). Ever since the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Bill in the U.S. and its far-reaching ramifications for other educational settings across the globe, it has been brought to the public's attention that successful learning, especially during early formative years of education, not only demands teachers' high-quality pedagogical endeavors but, to be deemed fruitful, highly calls for parents' active involvement in their child's education (Dillon, 2019). It happens that when the two parts of the equation (i.e., teachers and parents) do not tally, children are liable to face risk factors with regard to some learning issues (Forey et al., 2015).

Parental involvement, defined as "parents' interactions with schools and with their children to promote their academic success" (Hill & Tyson, 2009, p. 741), has been reported to a) impact children's academic growth (e.g., Gui et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Xia et al., 2020); b) help children achieve higher grades and test scores (Short-Meyerson et al., 2022); c) help children have better performance and motivate them (Silinskas & Kikas, 2019); d) enhance positive development of their self-concept (Ng & Yuen, 2015); e) promote children's social–emotional development (Langevine, 2020); f) provide opportunities for teachers and parents to create joint understanding (Mata et al., 2018); g) help teachers acquire a better understanding of families' cultures (Epstein, 2018). Parental involvement is also claimed to serve a positive role in children's learning even in online virtual classes (e.g., Alharthi, 2023). Moreover, the advent of sociocultural approach suggests that learning occurs in a social context mediated and scaffolded by the more knowledgeable others such as teachers, parents, and peers (e.g., Bertram & Pascal, 2016). A corollary to this is that the task of mediating learners in their learning journey assists them in moving from their current level to their potential level of development, i.e. their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, Porter DeCusati and Johnson (2004) stress the positive effects of parents' presence in classes and more specifically Alibraheim and Taifour (2023) claim that

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mothers assume a more active role relative to fathers and that a high degree of mothers' involvement has been associated with children's development and maintenance of interpersonal and self-regulatory competencies. Additionally, involving parents in assessment can aid teachers in recognizing children's needs, diagnosing their weaknesses, and providing insight into their home life (e.g., Womack & Johnson, 2022).

As to EFL learning, parental involvement has been proved to be directly associated with children's language learning achievements (e.g., Cosso & Yoshikawa, 2022; Ghahdarijani & Rahimi, 2021; Huang, 2013). To be specific, Hemmati and Farrokh Allaiee (2017) maintain that the children whose parents are involved in their educational affairs are more successful in their foreign language achievement than those whose parents have no educational aspiration. Moreover, using the L2 Motivation Self System, as a conceptual framework for studying the effects of family influence on children's motivation, Rostami et al., (2015) hold that the family educational environment fulfills a key role in enhancing children's motivation to master English as a foreign language. Also, Timmons and Pelletier (2015) remark that if parents are welcomed to join their children in schools and when parents' knowledge of the English language is embraced in learning, it provides their children with a unique opportunity in the enhancement of the English language learning. More particularly, some researchers have analyzed the programs which best engage parents in supporting their children's English language learning (e.g., Kavanagh & Hicky, 2013; Timmons & Pelletier, 2015). Several programs have been found in helping immigrant families who involve in their children's English language learning (e.g., Wessels, 2014). Some programs have provided schedules to train parents with their bilingual children (e.g., Rosado, Jimenez, & Kieffer, 2015). Also some programs, known as literacy bag programs, have provided reading materials for families to practice English with their children at home (e.g., Huang, 2013). Moreover, several studies are conducted to explore the external parental affective factors in their children's English language learning (e.g., Aro & Erdmann, 2015). Furthermore, Collier and Auerbach (2011) have concentrated on the interplay between parental involvement and children's phonemic awareness and vocabulary development. Similarly, in Ireland, Kavanagh and Hicky (2013) investigated the obstacles preventing parental involvement to effectively influence children's Irish language learning. Additionally, physical presence of parents in schooling has been proved to be directly associated with their children's language learning achievements (e.g., Dor, 2013; Mosty, 2013; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009).

Given the ever-growing use of English as a global lingua franca, many parents in EFL contexts aim for their children to start learning the language when they are young (Wang & Chang, 2011).

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However, and contrary to the common perspective, beginning early does not always produce the intended results for some reasons. First, most parents believe that teaching English is solely the teacher's onus; and, therefore, refrain offering support to their children while learning English (McClendon Cansler, 2008; Xuesong, 2006). Second, even though some parents would like to assist their children alongside the teacher, they lack sufficient knowledge of English and do not know how to practice it with them properly (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2019). Finally, educational settings are sometimes to blame for they fall short of providing instruction to parents as how best to help their children during their language learning experiences (Lee, 2008).

Furthermore, it is often observed in foreign language institutions in Iran that when children start learning English at early stages, their parents (mostly their mothers) escort them to these institutions and wait for them out of class till the class ends. Mothers' out-of-class presence, compared with their in-class presence, seems to serve no purpose in children's further language development because the same waiting time could be deemed an asset otherwise expired. Besides, having developed a deep dependence on their parents, especially their mothers, young children might feel vulnerable when forced to attend formal classes without their mothers' presence by their side. In such situations, separating them from their mothers may have adverse effects on their emotional, mental, social, or even physical well-being (Liu et al., 2020). One solution which may make children feel more emotionally secure and, by extension, confident, is to ask their mothers to attend the classes with them.

Taking account of the literature, one could easily notice that nearly all the above-mentioned studies have investigated the impact of parental involvement on children's education, in general, and on their foreign language learning, in particular, at school, in home, but not in class. Stated differently, none of the existing studies has examined the impact of parents' in-class presence on their children's L2 learning. Thus, by creating conditions in which parents can attend EFL classes beside their children, the current study aimed to fill the gap in research of parental involvement by advancing the following research questions:

RQ 1: Is there any significant difference between English language achievement of students whose mothers attend the class and those whose mothers do not?

RQ 2: What attitudes do mothers, who attend the class, hold towards their in-class presence, their children's English language achievement, and the teacher's performance?

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RQ 3: How mothers, who do not attend the class, view their out-of-class practicing English with their children?

RQ 4: How does the teacher view mothers' in-class presence beside their children?

2. Method

2.1. Design

This study followed mixed-method research with 'explanatory sequential design' (QUAN→qual→interpretation) in which the quantitative data was collected first, followed by qualitative data (Ary et al., 2019, p. 521). The quantitative section involved quasi-experimental design and the qualitative section included semi-structured interviews.

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2.2. Participants

There were two groups of participants in this study. The first (or main) group, who took part in the quantitative section, consisted of two convenient samples of 18 and 17 starter-level female children (aged 4 to 6) studying English in two separate (intact) classes whose parents had registered them in a language institute in Isfahan, Iran. They were randomly assigned to an experimental group (EG) (N=18) in which the children's mothers attended the class, and a control group (CG) (N= 17) in which the children's mothers did not. The second group, who took part in the qualitative section, consisted of the children's mothers, with different jobs and social class positions, in both groups (N=30) with the age range of 23-53 and one female experienced teacher (aged 32) who taught children in both classes.

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2.3. Materials

Given the children's English language ability in both groups, *Pocket 1* from *Pocket Series Book*, 2nd Edition (Herrera & Hojel, 2009), was used as the main textbook. This book series, containing a three-level English course for preschool students with Pocket Flash Cards, intends to develop children's communicative skills via hands-on fun activities which encourage children to use English as they draw,

match or tick which are related to the themes of the units. The book develops early English communication skills for children and each unit covers a specific theme.

2.4. Instruments

Two instruments were employed in this study. First, a test on Pocket 1 flash cards. The contents of this test were based on the materials presented in the textbook (Pocket 1). This test which was originally prepared by the institute's teaching group, was used both as a pre- and a post-test. To determine its reliability, a test-retest with a two-week interval was conducted with a group of eight children, with the same age and level of language ability, separate from the target sample in the main study. Running Pearson correlation, the test's reliability turned out to be 0.90. The content validity of the test was verified by three experts. Second, semi-structured one-on-one interviews as the most common method of data collection procedure in qualitative research (Willig, 2008) were conducted. The questions were formulated by the researchers based on their experiences and the ideas gleaned from related literature. The interviews along with interview guides (see Appendices A, B, and C) intended to tap into mothers' attitudes in both groups and the teacher's views towards the treatment. Typically, the interview with each mother was conducted in their mother tongue and lasted about 40 minutes. The interview with the teacher was also carried out in Persian but lasted about 90 minutes. Besides, when needed, following the outlines of the interview guides, further probing questions were interrogated. The interviewee's sample size in both groups was decided according to the point of data saturation when no insights were provided by new information (Charmaz, 2006).

2.5. Ensuring rigor

As to the qualitative data, responses to the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, analyzed, coded, and finally translated into English by the second researcher. The analysis started with iterative readings of the transcripts. The interviews' transcripts were double-checked to ascertain they were faithful to the original recording. Afterwards, three stages of coding, namely open, axial, and selective (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) were completed. Upon open coding, useful codes were labelled, extracted, and after combining the codes with similar incidents, categories or core concepts emerged. Some codes were developed from the interviews and some were inferred by the researchers. Axial coding was applied

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concurrently with open coding (Strauss, 1987) and connections between a category and its subcategories were developed. Eventually, the discrete categories/themes were integrated and the connection between them was identified in the selective coding.

In order to determine the dependability of the qualitative phase of the study, intra- and inter-coder agreement was established. To ensure intra-coder agreement, the (second) researcher coded the data and recoded them two weeks later. Consequently, the resulting indices on the interview with the teacher and with mothers in the CG and EG were 95.5%, 93.5%, and 94%, respectively. Next, some transcripts were randomly selected and recoded by the first researcher. The inter-coder agreement indices were 92.5%, 90%, and 88.5%. Minute disagreements were resolved through discussion between the coders.

Concerning the truthfulness of the inquiry's findings, the credibility of the data was obtained through consensus, using peer review or peer debriefing (Beck, 1993). To this end, the first researcher was provided with the raw data to identify whether the perception made by the second researcher was reasonable. Also, member check/participant feedback was used to verify if the mothers and the teacher agreed with what we have said about their views and feedbacks. To do that, some of them were asked to listen to their audio-recorded voices and review the notes and interpretations prepared by the second researcher. This helped us obtain additional useful data, gain further insight and clear up miscommunications. Finally, to ascertain whether the English translation made by the researchers was accurate, back-translation, by which a competent translator was asked to convert the translations back into Persian, was employed.

2.6. Data collection

In order to be best prepared for probable upcoming challenges caused by the presence of mothers beside their children in the EG, 5 classes with 8 children and their mothers were piloted and the unanticipated problems were resolved.

Prior to the start of classes, the textbook, that children were going to learn, was taught by the same teacher and with the same teaching method to mothers in both groups so that those in the CG could scaffold their children at home and those in the EG scaffold them in classroom. Note that mothers in the EG were requested to practice with their children only in classroom and not at home. Mothers in the CG were trained by the teacher to learn the techniques of how to deal with their children's language problems at home. Mothers in both groups were to act as facilitators, supporters, or mediators. To ensure mothers

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had properly learned the textbook, they took a test by the teacher to name objects on flash cards. It should be added that, before they were taught, several mothers were familiar with the contents of the textbook.

Before treatment, the children in each group received pre-vocabulary tests based on their textbook's picture cards. The classes were run four days a week (two days for control and two days for experimental) during one semester and each session lasted 45 minutes. Both classes were taught by the same teacher. Finally, mothers in both groups and the teacher were interviewed. It should be added that the only difference between the two classes was mothers' in- and out-of-class presence in the EG and CG respectively. Also, the materials and the teacher's method of teaching were identical in both groups. At the end of the treatment, the children in both groups were given a post-test. Both pre- and post-test were done orally and they were asked to name objects illustrated on flash cards in English. After that, mothers in both groups were interviewed. Mothers in the CG were interviewed to express their views about being instructed the same materials (Pocket 1) their children were supposed to be taught and were asked if learning the textbook could contribute to assist their kids in learning the textbook. Mothers in the EG were interrogated whether both the instruction and their in-class presence beside their children could enhance their children's English language ability. It should be added that all instructional sessions including teaching mothers before treatment, teaching children beside their mothers in the pilot study, teaching children in both groups, were run by one experienced teacher. And finally, the teacher was interviewed to elicit her ideas about teaching the textbook to mothers, their familiarity with the contents of the textbook in and out of classes, and mothers' in-class presence in the EG.

2.7. Data analysis procedure

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-test, and paired samples t-test. T-test was used to compare the means of the two groups of children to determine whether mothers' in-class presence had more effect on children's language ability in the EG than those in the CG. The independent samples t-test compared the means of the two independent groups to assess whether there was statistical evidence that the associated population means were significantly different. The paired samples t-test was used to represent the means of two measurements of pre- and post-test scores with an intervention administered between the two time points taken from the same children in each group. The qualitative data were descriptively analyzed.

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2.8. Ethical considerations

At the outset, the teacher and mothers were made aware of all stages of the research. Mothers were granted the right to withdraw their children from the experiment at any given point during the study. Moreover, they were reassured that their children's participation or non-participation would not affect their grades in the institute. They were informed that their interviews were to be recorded, and that their privacy would be maintained. They were also warranted that, by using pseudonyms, their information would be treated confidentially. To protect the participants' anonymity, all recordings were given codes. Also, all mothers signed informed consent documents.

3. Results

To identify if mothers in both groups had mastered the contents of Pocket 1, an independent-samples *t-test* was run (see Table 1). (Notice that since mothers were not the target group, no pre-test was administered.)

Table 1. Independent samples t-test for mothers' English language performance in the two groups

	N	M	SD	f	t	Sig.
CG	17	-0.277	.253	0.200	-1.094	0.282
EG	18	-0.277	.255		-1.089	

As portrayed in Table 1, there was no statistically significant difference between mothers' performance in the EG (M= -0.27, SD= 0.25) and CG (M= -0.27, SD= 0.25; t (20) = -1.09, p=.28>0.05, two-tailed).

To ensure the homogeneity of children's level of English language proficiency prior to the treatment in the two groups, an independent-samples *t-test,* as shown in Table 2, was conducted.

Table 2. Independent-samples t-test for children's English language performance before treatment

	N	M	SD	f	t	df	Sig.
CG	17	2.11	0.852	0.000	-0.212	33	0.833
EG	18	2.05	0.872				

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As illustrated in Table 2, the two groups were homogenous in terms of their level of English language as there was no statistically significant difference in the scores in the EG (M = 2.05, SD = 0.87) and CG (M = 2.11, SD = 0.85; t (33) = -0.21, p=0.83>0.05, two-tailed).

To measure children's improvement after treatment in the CG, a paired samples *t-test* was run in Table 3.

Table 3. Paired samples t-test for children's English language performance after treatment in the CG

N		M	SD	t	df	Sig.
17	Pretest	2.117	0.857	-40.403	16	0.000
17	Posttest	15.58	1.121			

As indicated, there was a statistically significant difference in children's performance in the CG from pre-test (M=2.11, SD=0.85) to post-test (M=15.58, SD=1.12), t (16) = -40.4, p <.05 (two-tailed).

To measure children's improvement after treatment in the EG, a paired samples *t-test* was run in Table 4.

Table 4. Paired samples t-test for children's English language performance after treatment in the EG

N		M	SD	t	df	Sig.
17	Pretest	2.117	0.857	-40.403	16	0.000
17	Posttest	15.58	1.121			

As depicted, children's performance in the EG has significantly improved from pre-test (M=2.05, SD=0.87) to post-test (M=19.61, SD=0.6), t (17) = 67.91, p <0.05 (two-tailed).

Finally, an independent-samples *t-test* was performed to show if there was any difference between children's performance after treatment in the two groups in Table 5.

Table 5. Independent samples t-test for children's English language performance after treatment in the two groups

	N	M	SD	f	t	df	Sig.
CG	17	15.58	1.12	2.32	5.88	33	.000
EG	18	19.61	0.60				

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As illustrated, a statistically significant difference was detected in scores of children in the EG (M= 19.61, SD= 0.6) and CG (M= 15.58, SD= 1.12; t (33) = 5.88, p<0.05, two-tailed).

With regard to the first research question, in virtue of the impact of mothers' in-class presence on their children's language achievement and their outperformance in the EG, it can be concluded that their class presence was an asset to their children's learning. As such, the results enjoy the support of a multitude of studies on the effects of parents' physical involvement on children's language learning achievements (Coppola, 2005; Cordry & Wilson, 2004; Huang, 2013; Lawson, 2003; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). The results are also supported by Porter DeCusati and Johnson's (2004) study that those children whose parents attended their kindergarten classes outperformed their peers regarding L1 vocabulary attainment and reading comprehension. Similar results were reported by a host of other studies approvingly confirm the critical role of parental involvement in children's success in school (e.g., Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2007; Wang, 2004).

In addition, mothers in both groups asserted that their familiarity with the textbook facilitated practicing English with their children at home and in class. This aligns with the studies of Magiera et al. (2005), Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007), and Welch (2000), who maintain that parent-mediated classes outweigh single-teacher classes.

As to the second research question, mothers in the EG were highly content with their in-class presence and mentioned that the right amount of support provided by a more capable other in class could have sizeable effects on children's ultimate achievement. This point is in alignment with Donovan and Smolkin (2002), Hartman (2002), Lai and Law (2016), and Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development in the sense that peers' support aids learners to move from their actual development to their potential development. They also believed that their in-class presence resulted in their children's further motivation and enthusiasm. One mother said:

> My daughter loved attending all her classes because it was a new experience for her to have me by her side. I can say she learned a lot. She became nervous if I wasn't there. Moreover, children were of the same age; they made friends and learned a lot from each other. When my daughter asked me a question and I replied, her eyes were out on stalks that mommy knows what I'm saying and I know what she says. (Participant 3)

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These assertions are in keeping with Choi (2009), Moll (2004) and Shin's (2008) studies on the positive impacts of integrated-language-learning settings with parents on young children's motivation to learn English. The results are also reinforced by Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, and Doan Holbein (2005) and Pomerantz, Wang, and Ng (2005), who spotted a positive link between parental involvement and students' achievement, motivation, and attitudes. Another point addressed was mothers' zealous inclination in attending such classes and that their in-class presence led to the enhancement of their children's level of affection and their overall psychological well-being. They also maintained that those children who were reserved and could not answer the teacher's questions would seek mothers' assistance. One mother said "when the teacher asked a question or wanted my child to name something, she didn't say anything; but when I asked the same question, she answered quietly." (Participant 16)

They also noted that when the children fell short of understanding, the teacher resorted to mothers who were there to help their children. This, according to them, would assist the children in overcoming psychological barriers such as anxiety, stress, and shyness and in becoming more confident and autonomous. In this respect, a mother stated that "as we moved forward, my daughter became more interactive, more confident, and more willing to communicate" (Participant 15). These points are in line with the findings of Buri, Louiselle, Misukanis, and Mueller (1988) and Lamborn et al. (1991) that parental involvement creates warmth, approval, responsiveness, and contributes to children's academic improvement, emotional status, and self-worth. Likewise, in their research, Wairimu et al. (2016) concluded that children whose parents are actively engaged in their schooling are more likely to develop self-esteem and social skills.

In the same vein, almost all mothers endorsed the teacher's performance and appreciated her kind and caring interaction with children. They constantly valued her class performance (e.g., using encouraging words, showing inspiring attitudes) which aroused interest in her, made her energized, intrigued her to teach more properly, and further engaged her in class activities. A mother commented:

> The class was great. The teacher, the games, the toys were great too. My little girl didn't know what to do in the class, how to behave. Even she couldn't paint well. I mean I had practiced with her earlier, but it was useless. It was the class atmosphere and the teacher who helped her a lot. (Participant 12)

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The above-cited remarks are well-documented by Cordry and Wilson (2004), Dor (2013), Drummond and Stipek (2004), Lawson (2003), Mosty (2013), and Ratcliff and Hunt (2009), who claim that teachers' good performance is one way of boosting parental involvement.

As to the third research question, mothers in the CG held positive attitudes towards the instructional period they experienced on learning the textbook. They claimed that the course was productive in assisting them in supporting their children and in tracking their progress at home. They also asserted that, as a result of their learning and practicing the textbook with their children at home, the children could benefit from further learning gains. Some added that the instructional course made them remember the words they had learned earlier. A mother said "I wish I could take part in class with my daughter. These classes taught me how to work with her, how to pronounce words, and how to help her learn better." (Participant 8).

A multitude of studies have examined the substantial role parents' assistance fulfills at home in nurturing children, in demonstrating their strong social skills, and in forming a good foundation in literacy (Marjoribanks, 2017; McMillan, 2000a; Sanders & Epstein, 2005; Sheldon, 2009, to name a few). It is also well documented by Rodrigues et al. (2017) that parents' practice with children at home inspires children's autonomy and responsibility, their improvement in academic performance, their positive attitudes towards subjects, and their planning skills and self-regulation. Additionally, mothers unanimously stated that the textbook made them remember the words they had forgotten and gave them a sense of starting learning English from scratch. Interestingly, one of them maintained that whenever she started practicing English with her daughter at home, the family members became stimulated to practice English with one another and this would create solidarity and rapport among family members. This shared practicing, according to Ceka and Murati (2016), strongly influences family relations, creates a sense of love and respect, and dominates affective bound among family members which, in turn, makes family environment a place where the members play, laugh, and enjoy being together.

Concerning the fourth research question, the teacher stated that the initial training course, held for mothers in both groups, resulted in their active involvement with their children's learning which, according to McNeel (2014), is referred to as mothers' monitoring, reinforcing, or sanctioning their children's desirable and non-desirable behaviors. Moreover, this involvement is a privilege consolidated by Dearing et al. (2006) and Machen, Wilson and Notar (2004) who found that parents' involvement has beneficial effects on students' classroom placement and their subsequent performance.

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Respecting mothers' in-class presence, the teacher maintained that the responsibility for teaching did not rest entirely with the teacher but was in part taken up by mothers. She said:

> Because of their mothers' in-class presence, children became more secure and self-confident. It was a good feeling. There was no problem to manage the classes because mothers were there and helped me out. Compared with children in the CG, children in the EG were more active and focused. They would talk to their mothers when they couldn't talk to me. Mothers acted as team teachers. You know, mothers were always there to provide whatever their children wanted.

The teacher also commented that mothers' in-class presence made them aware of their children's performance, led to strong relationships between school and home, and strengthened parent-child association. These points are reinforced by Lawson (2003), Radzi, Razak and Sukor (2010), Ratcliff and Hunt (2009), and Topor et al. (2010).

Relatedly, the teacher pointed out that because of mothers' in-class presence, children's rate of class absences lessened and mothers' responsibility for their learning alongside with their on-time class attendance increased. Along similar lines, DeCusati and Johnson (2004) found that parents' involvement in the process of children's schooling results in a higher rate of attendance, achievement, and fewer number of discipline problems. Furthermore, she stated that mothers' presence greatly benefitted them in realizing their children's likes, dislikes, and needs which in turn assisted her with better understanding of the children and offering the best teaching method possible.

Besides, she added that mothers' in-class presence brought about constructive links between parents and the institute and caused children's behaviors to be notably attended to. This type of involvement is pointed out by Dor (2013), Dumont et al. (2014), Katz, Kaplan, and Buzukashvily (2011), and Pomerantz and Eaton (2001) that parents' involvement at school gives rise to children's enhancement of their academic skills and behavior and leads to their active attendance, higher scores, and motivation. She was also inclined to continue teaching such classes with mothers beside their children in next levels. She also indicated that in order for parents to be involved effectively in school affairs, their in-class presence beside their children should be encouraged within school communities. She believed that mothers' in-class presence is the most efficient way to make parents aware of their children's learning needs and to provide them with best opportunities to orient them in home. This point is well supported by Carreon et al. (2005) that it is through parents' actions in their consistent weekly presence in a class that acts of care are noticed and integrated into educational experience of each child.

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Notwithstanding all its advantages, however, she touched upon the downsides of mothers' in-class presence. She maintained that mothers often interfered in every step of children's learning and her teaching procedures. To her testimony, these intrusive mothers, technically known as Helicopter parents (Dor, 2013), were overreactive to every minor issue in the class and kept constantly questioning her integrity and credibility. She remarked:

> Mothers meddled into the teaching method and believed what they thought was right. For example, once a mother said: "Why didn't you teach that word this way?" Or "Could she move her daughter to a different seat?" Or "Could less homework be assigned?" Furthermore, their behavior made children depend on them. For instance, when children were asked to color pictures, several mothers would perform the task and leave the last part to them. Or when I asked a question, some answered quickly.

The above points are in compliance with Epstein (2008) that despite its advantages, parents' involvement tends to be a nuisance, a source of frustration for teachers, and is worthwhile so long as it stays out of the teacher's business. Also, Koutrouba et al. (2009) believe that although parents' involvement has gained center-stage in education, regrettably, its interference has turned out to be one of the most serious challenges and that teachers are reluctant to discuss curricular issues with parents. Dor (2013) emphasizes that teachers find parent involvement productive as long as parents comply with their guidelines and stay away from matters they feel lie within teachers' territory. Addi-Raccah and Arviv-Elyashiva (2008) add that despite the benefits of parent involvement in pedagogy, teachers express discomfort with parents' participation and may resist their intervention. As Ogawa (1998) states, "the assumption that more parent involvement of all types is always better has gone largely unexamined and unchallenged" (p. 8). He points out that parents' intervention in teachers' profession has always been a source of conflict, that is to say, while parents intend to impact school by transmitting their life and social experiences, teachers attempt to preserve their positions as a professional group and do not like parents intervene in their career. This may take place through 'decentralization' that strength in parent empowerment may lead to parent-teacher rivalry (Epstein, 2018) which when occurs, 'zone of acceptance' between parents and teachers gets blurred. To resolve this conflict, Liberman and Miller (1999), believe that teachers and parents should develop new strategies and techniques and seek new avenues of collaboration between themselves.

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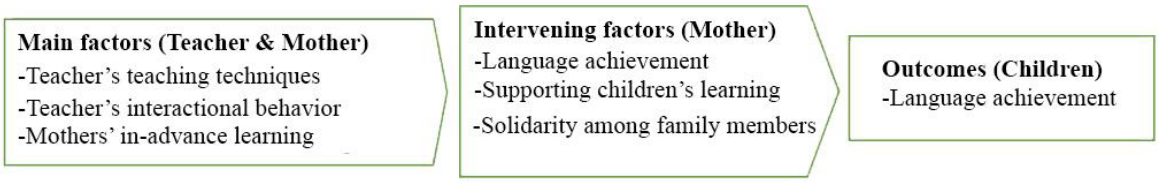


Figure 1. Mothers' in-advance learning and its effect on children's English language achievement in control group.

All in all, the results show that in the CG, the teacher's techniques alongside with her interactional behavior and mothers' in-advance learning were the overriding factors giving rise to mothers' language achievement, their supporting of children's learning, and creating rapport among family members which all led to children's language achievement (Figure1). In the EG, however, in addition to the main factors mentioned in the CG, mothers' in-class presence was added and resulted in a) the teacher's further teaching engagement, her motivation for more efficient teaching and her deeper understanding of children b) mothers' knowledge of children's likes and dislikes, their evaluation of the teacher's performance, their tendency towards (on-time) class attendance, their further motivation and better understanding of children, and c) stronger link between children, mothers, and the institute. These, in turn, gave way to children's further learning, their longer class attendance, their autonomy, security, and psychological well-being (Figure 2).

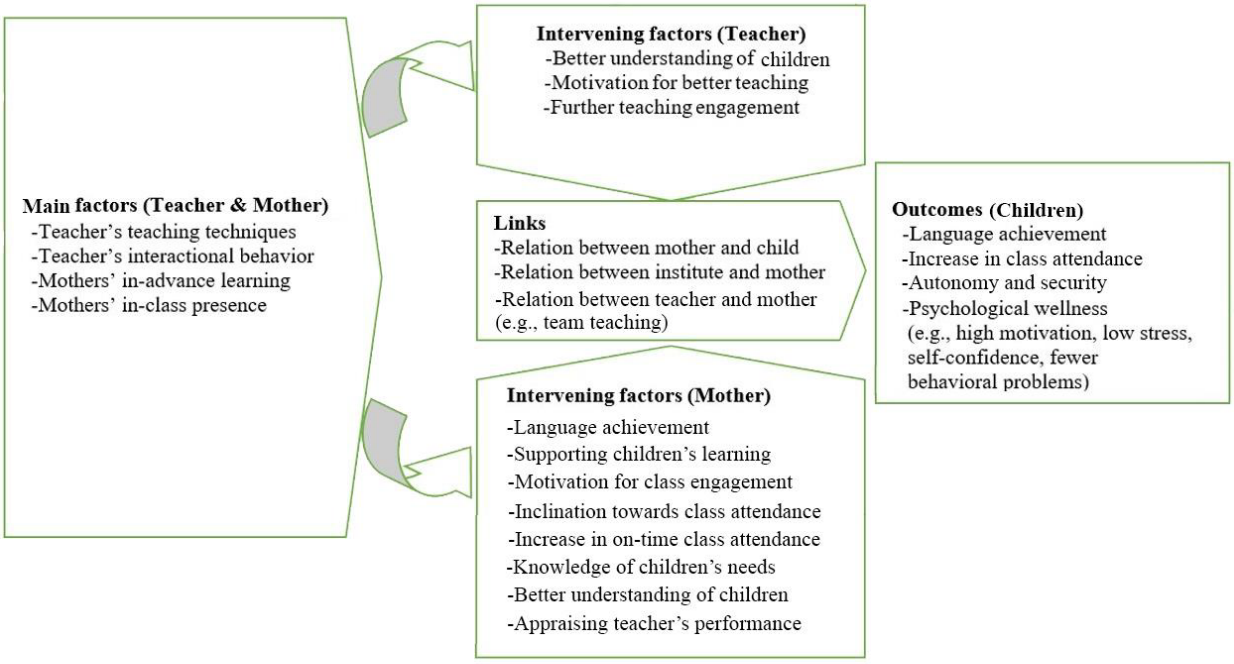


Figure 2. Mothers' in-advance learning and in-class presence and their effect on children's English language achievement in experimental group.

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Conclusion

This study set out to redress the imbalance created by the almost nonexistence of research evidence on the impacts of simultaneous presence of mothers beside their children in an EFL class on their children's English language achievement. The findings disclosed that mothers' in-class presence enhanced their children's English language vocabulary learning and development, increased their class attendance, brought a sense of comfort to them, and reduced their shyness and anxiety. Mothers' in-class presence also provided a unique opportunity for mothers to co-teach with the teacher the new vocabularies to their children. These outcomes were shaped out of three intervening factors: the teacher's enhanced-class engagement, mothers' cooperation in supporting their children, and collaboration between mothers, children, and the institute. The findings also suggested that teaching English to mothers prior to their children's course of instruction could assist them in supporting their children's English language achievement both in and out of class.

With respect to the implications of the study, policy makers, curriculum designers, and teachers can devise plans to better harness the positive effects of mothers' in-class presence in improving their children's language ability in EFL contexts and exploit this perceived asset in their future L2-related decisions. The findings can also be beneficial to material developers in preparing materials which provoke parents' active participation in class. Above all, mothers will no longer waste their time waiting for their children out of class but can join teachers in practicing English with their children inside class. Lastly, as a result of their ongoing in-class presence, mothers may become more active and influential agents in school and instructional meetings.

The present study was not devoid of limitations. First, the participants were not randomly selected. Second, because of the institute's restrictions, boys were not included in the study. Third, factors such as mothers' educational, cultural, socio-economic backgrounds could not be controlled. Hence, it is suggested that future studies investigate if socio-economic, socio-cultural, educational status, and a gamut of other factors at play could have any influence on children's language achievement. The studies to come might also focus on the relationship between fathers' social, economic, and educational status and mothers' in-class presence beside their children and the impact, if any, it exerts on their children's language learning. Finally, comparing the impacts of mothers' in-class presence on male and female child language learners can be another viable area of inquiry.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest regarding this publication.

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APPENDIX A

Questions asked to mothers in control group

1. What is your idea about the instructional course you took and the materials you learned from the textbook?
2. Did practicing the textbook with your child at home have any impact on the improvement of her English language proficiency?
3. Did practicing English with your child at home have any influence on her learning motivation?

APPENDIX B

Questions asked to mothers in experimental group

1. What is your idea about the instructional course you took and the materials you learned from the textbook?
2. What is your idea about your in-class presence beside your child?
3. Did your in-class presence have any effect on your child's motivation and affection?
4. Did you notice any change(s) in your child's interactional behavior during such classes?
5. What is your impression about the teacher's performance in such classes?
6. Do you like to attend such classes beside your child in next levels?

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APPENDIX C

Questions asked to the teacher

1. What is your idea about the instructional course mothers in both groups took and the materials they learned from the textbook?
2. What is your idea about mothers' in-class presence beside their children?
3. Was there any difference between children's linguistic performance in the two groups?
4. Did mothers' in-class presence have any impact on their children's emotional, attitudinal, and interactional behavior?
5. Did mothers' in-class presence have any influence on their relationship with their children?
6. Did mothers' in-class presence have any impact on their link between home and school?
7. Is there any disadvantage of mothers' in-class presence?
8. Do you like to teach classes with mothers' presence beside their children in next levels?

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