

# Moroccan Parental Involvements in their Children's Learning of English Language

**El Hacen, Moulaye Ahmed\***

PhD Candidate in Sociolinguistics at Sidi Mohamed Bin Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco

**Adiba Bousfiha**

Professor of Linguistics at Sidi Mohamed Bin Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco

## Abstract

Almost all Moroccan institutions of education, as others elsewhere, of all levels from primary, secondary to higher, of all sectors, from private to public, of all shapes and sizes, from metropolitan universities to small institutions, are starting to teach English as a second language to students. These students' learning is influenced by their parents' involvement in and attitudes toward English language. Such influence is what the current study tries to investigate and evaluate in the Moroccan context. To this end, a quantitative approach was adopted, and 31 questionnaires were distributed on students at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University. The results showed that parents were strongly involved in their children's learning of English though with varying degree. Parents with educational background and considerable income accompanied their children through all twists and turns of their learning journey. The less fortunate ones, however, were less engaged when it comes to orienting their children's specialty choice. It was also found out that most parents recognized the crucial role of English language. The findings revealed also that parents' support in and positive attitudes toward English language have significantly facilitated and contributed to the academic achievement of the students.

**Keywords:** Parents involvement; Moroccan education; Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University; Attitudes; English language; learning.



CC BY: [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

## 1. Introduction

The spread of English language was chiefly the result of two impulses: the creation of British Empire and the spread of American technological and economic hegemony, which reached an apogee at the turn of the twentieth into the twenty-first century (Burchfield *et al.*, 2001). According to Sadiqi (2003) English was introduced in Morocco during World War Two once American established military bases to link them to the battlegrounds in Europe. Additionally, the international status of English as the language of science and technology, business, cyberspace, research, and the list goes on, has contributed in the spread of English in Morocco (p. 50). Furthermore, Swan and Mercer (2009) reported that English becomes the fastest growing foreign language in Morocco. It has supplanted Spanish in economy and education, and is in competing with French in education (p. 264).

There is a plethora of research that has been carried out internationally to investigate the contribution of parents in boosting such spread through their attitudes about and involvement in their children learning of English language. The term "attitude" refers to "the sum total of a man's inclinations and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, threats, and convictions about any specified topic" (Mason, 2011). Oppenheim (1992) admits that "most researchers seem to agree that an attitude is a state of readiness, a tendency to respond in a certain manner confronted with certain stimuli" (p. 174). The term "involvement" points out to one's participation, engagement, and/or contribution to a child's education (Armstrong-Piner, 2008).

The current paper is an attempt to outline Parental attitudes and involvement in the Moroccan context. The importance of the topic is not only of immediate and practical, but of permanent interest, for it will enlighten all stakeholders about the importance and effects of parents' involvement in their children's education in general and English language learning in particular which its instrumental importance is beyond doubt in today's world. As such, they can encourage those who have contributed to their children's education and bridge the gap which other parents did not fill. The present study outlines the methodology through which the study is conducted. It provides also a thorough discussion of the results obtained.

## 2. Research Questions

The study is an attempt to uncover parents' attitudes toward and involvements in students learning English language, and how such attitudes and involvements affect the learning process. Thus, the research questions will evolve around the following questions:

- 2.1 What is the level of their parents involvement in you English language learning?
- 2.2 What are the effects of such involvement on you?

### 3. Methodology

The investigative approach used in the study is quantitative. A questionnaire was distributed on 31 students studying at Sidi Mohamed Bin Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco. The questionnaire consists of four sections, A, B, C, and D. In section A, items were used to collect personal information of the respondents. In sections B and C, items were used to gather data about parents' characteristics and attitudes and how such characteristics and attitudes affect their involvement in English learning. The final section mirrored the previous sections possible effects on the respondents learning journey.

### 4. Data Analysis

The results were clustered into two basic themes through the following process. Fourteen questions of the questionnaire were categorized into four sections, then similar categories with common characteristics were classified into two basic themes, parents' attitudes about and involvement in the students learning process and the effect of such involvements and attitudes on the students learning journey. The themes are presented and interpreted based on "the context of the content in order to expose the ideological, the latent meaning behind the surface of the texts" (Minsch *et al.*, 2012).

## 5. Results and Discussion

### A. Parents Involvement

To identify the parents' attitudes and the level of their involvements, students were requested to reveal the backgrounds of their parents- language(s) spoken, income, and level of education. They were also asked about their parents' role in the learning process in terms of orientation toward learning English language, the way they perceive English language and American culture, and the level and the type of support they provided them with. Table 1 shows percentages representing the subjects' responses to questions detailing the former points.

Table-1. shows parents' characteristics

Questionnaire items	Number	Percentage	Total N	P
Parents language(s) spoken				
Moroccan Arabic	19	61.3%	31	%
Moroccan arabic and tamazight	5	16.1%		
Moroccan Arabic and French	7	22.6%		
Income				
Low	3	9.7%		
Middle	23	74.2%		
High	5	16.1%		
Education				
No informal	22	70.9%		
Primary	4	12.9%		
Secondary	1	3.2%		
University	4	12.9%		

Table-2. Parents attitudes

Questionnaire items	Number	Percentage	Total N	P
<b>Orientation</b>				
Myself	29	93.5%	31	%
Mutual agreement	2	6.4%		
Parents	0	0%		
<b>Encourage choice</b>				
Yes	31	100%		
No	0	0%		
<b>Reasons of support</b>				
Better Job opportunities	22	100%	22	70.9%
<b>Views about american culture</b>				
Like	0	0%	31	100%
Dislike	28	90.3%		
Dont care	3	9.6%		

**Table-3.** shows parents' level of involvements

Questionnaire items	Number	Percentage	Total N	P
<b>Housing</b>				
Yes	31	100%	31	100%
No	0	0%		
<b>Providing learning needs</b>				
Little	31	100%		
Enough	29	93.5%		
More than enough	0	6.4%		
<b>Ask about classes</b>				
Yes	19	61.3%		
No	12	38.7%		
<b>Ask about results</b>				
Yes	31	100%	31	100%
No	0	0%		

Comparing the three above tables that show parental involvements in students learning English language, the following remarks have been observed. As shown in [Table 1](#), the respondents' parents have different backgrounds. The majority of them, 61.3%, are monolingual, speak Moroccan Arabic. However, the rest is bilingual. 16.1% speak Moroccan Arabic and Tamazight, and 22.6% speak Moroccan Arabic and French. Financially speaking, the majority of the respondents, 74.2%, reported that their families have middle incomes. Besides, a striking percentage 70.9% shows the lack of informal education.

Regardless of their background differences, the findings of the [tables 2](#) and [3](#) show that the subjects reported that their parents were strongly involved in their learning. For instance, [tables 2](#) shows that all of the parents did support their children's choice of learning English language even though almost all of them were not the first initiators of the orientation and the majority of them, 90.3% disliked American culture. The reason behind their support can be explained by the fact that all of the respondents reported that their parents see learning English as a means of providing better job opportunities.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the previous percentage represented only 22 respondents, who did respond to the question- what is the purpose of learning English- out of the total number 31. This may be because their parents did not have an opinion about the purpose of learning English, or they supported their children to self orient themselves because for them they are adults and do know what is good for them. Thus, 29.1% of the respondents did not state their parents' reason behind studying English. Besides, other factors may be the reasons behind the big percentage, 93.5%, of self orientation the respondents reported. For example, [Fosados \(2007\)](#) stated that peers have a great influence on children's choices of the future field of study (2007, p. 50). Without denying their agencies, the subjects might be aware of the international role English language has been playing on the world arena as the language of technology and science, business, industry and commerce, transportation, tourism, and the Internet ([Zughoul, 2003](#)). Indeed,

In addition, [table 3](#) shows that all the subjects were housed and provided with enough learning needs. Besides, with 100%, respondents said that their parents ask about their results, and the majority of them, 61.3%, reported that their parents ask about their classes. This illustrates that the parents encourage the students along the learning process. However, 38.7% of the respondents ticked off "No" option for the question "did they ask about your classes?" They might have done so because some students do not live in Fez. They have come just for study and thus their parents do not have a full contact with them where they can frequently ask them about their classes.

It was also noticed that among the entire respondents 6.4% said that their orientation to learning English language was a result of a mutual agreement between them and their parents. In the mean time, they also said that their families have an advanced level of education, high income, and speak Tamazight and Moroccan Arabic; in effect, this matches what [Lareau \(2000\)](#) said when he stated that social class has a powerful influence on parents' level of involvement. That is to say that if the parents are well educated and have a considerable income, they are likely to be the ones who orient their children to the future subjects (p. 3).

## B. The Effects of Parents' Attitudes and Involvements on the Students

The former respondents' self reports about their parents' attitudes and involvement in their learning journey of English will be analyzed in relation to the effects such attitudes and involvements might have on their learning process. The findings are shown in [Table 4](#) below.

**Table-4.** Shows the effects of parental involvement on the learning process

Questionnaire items	Number	Percentage	Total N	P
<b>The learning process</b>				
Easy	0	0%	31	100%
In the middle	27	87.1%		
Difficult	4	12.9%		
<b>Professors' evaluation</b>				
Excellent	0	0%	31	100%
Very good	4	12.9%		
Good	25	80.6%		
Not bad	2	6.4%		
<b>Future study</b>				
Continue	19	23.1%	13	41.9%
Drop	12	46.2%		
Undecided		30.7%		

Concerning the effects of parents' attitudes and involvements on the students learning of English, interesting findings were obtained. Unsurprisingly, the findings reveal that the majority of the subjects, 87.1%, reported that the learning process was in between. The majority of the respondents, 80.6%, also have reported that their professors evaluated them as good students. This might be because, as mentioned before in [Tables 2](#) and [3](#), almost all of the respondents reported that their parents were encouraging them to study and that they were providing them with the learning needs.

The final item of the questionnaire, future study, was the least answerable item, with 13 respondents as the total number. Thus, more than a half of the respondents (58.1%) did not answer. This might be because the whole respondents were master students, and the procedures of students' enrollment in doctorate are tightened. Therefore, they are left with uncertainty in the sense that even if they did want to pursue their education the final decision is up to the administration. However, among the respondents on the aforementioned item 46.2% reported that they are going to drop their study and 30.7% still undecided. These percentages might result from different factors like socioeconomic and demographic problems and/or the very limited access to doctoral studies.

## 6. Conclusion

Initially the result of this questionnaire revealed that almost the majority of Moroccan parents see English language as an appropriate means that can secure future jobs to their children. Thus, all of them supported their children along the learning journey. They provide them with enough learning needs. Such supports were reflected on the students' academic achievement when they reported that they did not face difficulty during the learning process. What's more, the professors' evaluations to the majority of them were good enough.

The findings also showed that specific attitudes and involvements seemed to be affected by specific parents' characteristics. For example, parents who have considerable income and have an advanced level of education were the ones to orient or advice, or negotiate with their children the future field of study. However, students who are the descendents of families with middle or low incomes reported self-orientation.

Although this study provides interesting results, generalization must be made with caution. More research studies need to be conducted on this issue. Research studies with bigger sample and adoption of triangulation are likely to help in obtaining results that can be generalized on Moroccan parents' attitudes about and involvements in children learning of English language and how such attitudes and involvements affect the learning process.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to Moulaye Sidi for his constant and unconditioned support.

## References

- Armstrong-Piner, S. (2008). *An Exploratory study of parent involvement as measured by Joyce Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence*. Regent University: Virginia.
- Burchfield, R. W., Lass, R., Algeo, J., Blake, N. N. F. and Hogg, R. M. (2001). *The cambridge history of the english language*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Fosados, R. (2007). *Exploring the role of peer influence, linguistic acculturation, and social networks in substance use*. PreQuest Information and Learning Company: Michigan.
- Lareau, A. (2000). *Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.: Maryland.
- Mason, W. (2011). *Implicit Social Influence*. PreQuest Information and Learning Company: Michigan.

- Minsch, J., Goldblatt, D. L., Flüeler, T. and Spreng, D. (2012). *Tackling long-term global energy problems: The contribution of social science*. Springer Science & Business Media: New York.
- Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement*. Pinter Publishers: London.
- Sadiqi, F. (2003). *Women, gender and language in morocco*. Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden.
- Swan, J. and Mercer, N. (2009). *Learning English: development and diversity*. Routledge: New York.
- Zughoul, M. (2003). Globalization and EFL/ESL pedagogy in the Arab world. Available: [http://www.shakespeare.uk.net/journal/jllearn/1\\_2/zughoul.html](http://www.shakespeare.uk.net/journal/jllearn/1_2/zughoul.html)

## Appendix

### Questionnaire

In this questionnaire, you are requested to answer questions regarding your parents' involvement toward the learning of foreign language, specifically English language. The information you will provide will be treated in the strictest of confidence and will be used only for academic research. Thus, your cooperation in completing this questionnaire is highly appreciated.

**Thank you very much for your cooperation**

#### Section A: Parents Characteristics

- 1.) Language they speak: Moroccan Arabic ☐ Standard Arabic ☐ Tamazight ☐ d. French ☐ English ☐ Others) please specify.....
- 2.) Income: High ☐ Middle ☐ Low ☐
- 3.) Level of education: No formal education ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ University ☐

#### Section B: Parents' attitudes towards Languages

- 4.) Who orient you to study English language? Myself ☐ Parents ☐ Mutual-agreement ☐
- 5.) If your answer is myself, did they encourage your choice? Yes ☐ No ☐
- 6.) If your answer is yes, for them, what is the purpose of learning English?  
.....
- 7.) How they felt about American culture? Like ☐ Dislike ☐ Do not care ☐

#### Section C: Level of Involvement

- 8.) Do they house you? Yes ☐ No ☐
- 9.) To what extent do they provide you with the learning needs? Little ☐ Enough ☐ More than enough ☐
- 10.) Do they ask about your classes? Yes ☐ No ☐
- 11.) Do they ask about your results? Yes ☐ No ☐

#### Section D: Impact on the learning process

- 12.) How is the learning process? Easy ☐ In the middle ☐ Difficult ☐
- 13.) How do your professors evaluate your accomplishments? Excellent ☐ Very good ☐ Good ☐ Not bad ☐
- 14.) Will you continue your study or will you look for job? Continue ☐ Drop ☐ Undecided ☐
- If you have any additional remarks or comments, please write them down.

**Thanks for Your Cooperation**