

Parental Encouragement to Their High School Children to Learn English in a Socio-Educative Context

Valbona Loshi Softa

"Wisdom" University College

Orcid iD <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8452-559X>

Abstract

Due to an increasing highlight of English language learning in formal education in Albania, this research addresses the importance of parental support and encouragement to their high school children. It aims to measure the intensity of parental encouragement with a standard instrument (AMTB, Gardner R.C., 2004), scored by a Likert scale at the range (1-6) on a sample (N=470) high school students, falling into three main groups of schools: public urban high schools, public rural high schools and non public high schools. The data gathered was processed with (SPSS 18) and the analysis conducted in the research include the descriptive statistics to find the mean values and the frequencies for the overall parental encouragement in the total sample and a one-way Anova procedure and Post Hoc Tukey HSD was conducted to find the variances of parental encouragement impacted by the three groups of schools. The results indicated that that the mean value for the overall parental encouragement to learn English language $M = 4.13$, $DS = 7.532$. 53.2 % of the respondents state they are not encouraged by their parents to learn English language, whereas, 46.8% students state they are encouraged by their parents. There existed very slight differences between groups: for urban public high school and rural high school the difference was (.13473), and statistically insignificant at value ($p = .020$); Urban public schools compared to non-public schools the difference is (-.08733), statistically not significant ($p = .459$), as the value (p) in the comparisons for these groups is ($> .05$). For the group of students in non-public schools and students of rural public schools the difference is: (.22206) and the result is statistically significant, ($p = .005$).

Keywords: parental encouragement, learn English, socio-educative context, urban and rural high schools, educational context, public/non public high schools

Introduction

Research on parental support and encouragement to their children on foreign language learning has not always been a priority in either social studies or foreign language studies. Researchers found that this relation was perhaps the least studied factor for its influence on motivation to learn a foreign language and the first

movement of research arose during the 70's and 80's, which actually emerged as part of research agenda on attitudes and motivation to learn a foreign language, Gardner R.C., & Lambert W. (1972; Gardner R.C., 1985; Spolsky B., 1989). Such a factor came to attention of many other researchers in the decades to come, within the research framework of motivation and attitude, Baker & Macintyre, (2000) ; Cook, V. (2000) ; Bernaus, Mercè & Gardner, R. C., (2008) ; Clement R., Dorney, Z. & Noels, K. A. (1994) ; Dörnyei Z., (1998).

The most important role of high school parents is to be a loving parent who creates models on how their children become successful in their education, academic achievement, career and other accomplishments in life and always offer encouragement, support and guidance to their children, (Roth B., 2008). Also, latest findings from across the world have stated that parental influence is well correlated to students' motivation, intensity, desire to learn English and attitude toward the language (Daniel C.; Halimi F. & Alshammari I., (2018). Spolsky B., (1989), found that students with a more advantageous socio- economic background receive more parental support to learn English language and have better achievement in language compared to their counterparts in lower socio-economic background.

Very scarce researches on the relation between parental encouragement and students' motivation and desire to learn English have been undertaken in Albania, which is also the setting of this study, more often to provide results from individual research projects, rather than creating the basis for empirical research. Referring to this situation, relevant data published so far indicate that high school students in Albania are moderately encouraged by their parents to learn English language with a high evaluation score for the statements that English language would help them for a better future and they should study more English and the lowest scores showing parents interest on what their high school children did in their English class, (Softa V., 2014).

Literature Review

According to Gardner R.C. (1985), the role of parental support was seen as an intermediary role between the cultural environment and the student, which he categorized in two lines, the active parental role and the passive one. In the active role, a parent encourages the child to learn the foreign language by encouraging them to speak, monitoring their language performance, rewarding them for success in the foreign language subject at school, as on the other hand have a negative influence on children learning the language by showing the children their negative opinion about the language by telling them that it is a waste to learn the language, that the subject of the foreign language does not have an important role in the school curriculum or by not supporting the children in their success in this subject. Kirby and Gardner (1973), in a study of children's stereotypes in Canada, found many similarities in attitudes toward the language-speaking community among groups of adults and their children.

The second role is the passive role in children, which according to Gardner R.C. (1985), expresses the negative attitudes that the parent has towards the foreign language community and as a result they convey such attitudes to the children during the language learning process. On the other hand, his argument was that "However, since the 80`s, there has been no direct evidence and proof of the impact that the active parental role has on the perfection of foreign language learning" (p.110). The level of parental support has been recommended to be included in the studies carried out by means of the Socio-Educational Model for foreign language learning, since this model is designed for students who belong to pre-university education, mainly students who attend secondary schools, making the sample of the study belongs to the non-adult age group and consequently to be under the effect of parental care, Gardner R.C., (2005). The Socio-Educational Model suggests that the role of parental support is correlated to desire, motivation and achievement, in almost every setting that the Socio-Educational Model has been applied (Gardner, R.C. 2005; 2009).

However, in his studies, Gardner excluded the socio-economic factor of the parents, but only considered the impact that the community that speaks a foreign language has on the parents and consequently on the children. Desrochers and Gardner (1981) conducted a study on the relationship between parents' attitudes towards the foreign language their children were learning and their motivation to learn the language. It turned out that there was a relationship between positive attitudes and integrative motivation to learn the language, although the relationship was weak, $r=.14$ and the relationship was significant, $p<.05$. This showed that "language learning was favoured by parents' positive attitudes towards the foreign language and the language community in the home environment" (Gardner, 1985, p.116). Sarojani K.; Krishnan D.; Khalaf Q.A. & Patahn Z., (2013) in later studies with high school Jordan students found that the most important factor in language learning motivation was parental encouragement.

Outline of the problem

Foreign language learning, and especially English language, at the formal education in Albania, as a country emerging from communist regimes and fast heading toward European Union has been one of the highest government priorities on national basis. Governments have been engaged to make and update education policies to enhance the school curriculum with focus especially to English language learning. In Albania, the country that this study takes place in, English class has been introduced to the curricula from the first class, elementary education, as a pilot project for the academic year 2021-2022 till the 12th grade of pre- university education system. English subject is a compulsory A-level exam (State Matura, Ministry of Education and Sports, Albania) and International foreign language exams need to be taken in order that students to enrol in Master Programs at universities. Also specific non public international universities, require that students` English language level is recognized with international exams for admissions at university. Albania has also participated

in the European Year of languages and developed Foreign Language Portfolio, (Language Education Policy Profile, Albania, Country Report, 2016).

Despite the current drops in numbers of students for many other study programs in universities of Albania, English language continues to be highly selected as a university study program. In the case of Albania, even though based on an ongoing scenario where parents, on their own right, take their children to private foreign languages course, theories on parental support to foreign language learning have only been applied scarcely in the frame of research projects or in the form of published papers, but there are no specific studies on this domain, to draw conclusions. Thus, this paper aims to investigate the factor of parental support nationwide in a demographic distribution and based on a worldwide empirical research.

Methodology

Paper Objectives

The objective of this paper is to measure the intensity of parental encouragement and support to their high school children (N=470) to learn English language in formal education system, both public and non public, in urban and rural areas, by using a standardized instrument, Attitude Motivation test Battery, (Gardner R.C. 2004) for the aggregate scale 'Parental Encouragement'.

Research Questions and Variables

This paper addresses three main research questions:

No.1. What is the overall level of parental encouragement and support to their high school to learn English language in formal education?

The continuous variable '*parental encouragement*' is investigated for the first question: expressed with 8 items from ATMTB questionnaire.

No.2. Is there a difference in scores for parents' encouragement to their children to learn English in three different groups of schools: urban public high schools, rural high schools and non-public high schools?

No.3 Which groups of schools are the differences for parental encouragement significant?

Variables to be investigated for the second and third research questions are: '*Parental encouragement*'- dependent continuous variable, varying from 1-6. '*Group of school*' - Independent categorical variable, participants divided in three groups: '*urban public high schools*', '*rural high schools*' and '*non-public high schools*'.

Instrument

Gardner's R.C., Attitude Motivation Test Battery, (AMTB, 2004), is a standardized instrument and is used broadly in this field of research with a time span for almost six decades now and geographically it has been applied in different continents like

USA, Europe, Saudi Arabia, Africa, etc. In order to investigate the parental encouragement to their high school children to learn English, the scale 'Parental Encouragement', which is composed of eight items, was drawn from this test. The test according to its 'Manual of Use' is scored with a Likert scale, ranging in rising values (1-6), where the values (1-3) are negative values, they indicate a descending feeling disagreement with code (1) indicating the absolute disagreement with the statement and (5-6) are positive values indicating a rising feeling of agreement, with code (6) showing absolute agreement. There are no neutral values in between (Gardner R.C., 2001, Attitude/Motivation Test Battery AMTB item-key' document, Questionnaire Keys Master). The instrument was applied in high schools during January–March, 2022.

Internal test reliability

The scale of parental encouragement used in this study was checked for Cronbach's internal reliability and this coefficient was analyzed before making it applicable in Albania. The value of Alpha Cronbach coefficient for internal reliability of the scale is (.77), which is above (0.6), an indication that this scale is reliable to measure what it is designed and predicted to measure, Dörnyei Z., Taugchi, (2010).

Table 1. Alpha Cronbach coefficients for internal reliability of AMTB scale of 'Parental Encouragement'

Scale	Alpha Cronbach Coefficient
Parental Encouragement	.77

Procedures

Sample Size

The overall population in this research includes public and non-public high schools in urban and rural areas nationwide, from North to the South, from East to West, comprising five main districts in the country. The total sample size that derived from the total population of high school students in the five the districts included in the research (N = 7.165) with the sample calculation technique, RaoSoft Sample Size Calculator, where 95% confidence level, 5% acceptance rate of error and response distribution (50%) were set and it resulted that the sample size was: (N = 470) high school students. After the total sample of students (N=470) was determined, its percentage distribution was carried out according to the criteria of school groups: urban public high school 63.6%, rural public high school 23.0% and non-public high school 13.40%. It turned out that in this study participated 298 students from urban public high schools, 108 students of rural public high schools and 64 students of non-public high schools. The high schools were randomly selected.

Data Analysis

This study has a quantitative aspect and consequently statistical analysis is conducted by using SPSS 18 (Statistical Program for Social Sciences). For the first research question, the descriptive statistics analysis was conducted, to find the mean value, standard deviation and frequencies for the scale of 'parental encouragement'. For the second research question, with an inferential character, before performing the procedure of the one-way ANOVA, the analysis for some preconditions were met, presented in Table 2. The sum of squares, degrees of freedom, distribution F and level $p = .05$ of statistical significance were used. The post-hoc test, Tukey HSD, was used to answer to the third research question and determine which groups of schools the differences were found at, and to examine the statistical significant differences between the means of each subgroup.

Preliminary analysis

In order to conduct the one way between groups ANOVA procedure for the comparison of school groups means, the dependent variable 'Parental encouragement' was subject to preliminary analysis to meet the condition of variance homogeneity. Levene test for homogeneity of variances indicated that the dependent variable is homogeneous as the statistical significance for the variable of 'Parental encouragement' was: $p = .090, p > .05$, (Pallant J., 2010). See table 2.

Table 2 Homogeneity test of the variable of 'Parental encouragement'

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Parental encouragement	.9018	2	470	.090

RESULTS

Results to the First Research Question

The mean value for the 'Parental Encouragement' scale is: (M = 4.13) out of (6) and standard deviation is (SD = .08). The minimum value selected by respondents is (1) and the maximum value is (5). High school students (N = 470) have responded that they are slightly encouraged by their parents to learn English, (See table 3).

Table 3 Descriptive data for the scale: 'Parental Encouragement'

	N	Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Mean	SD
Parental Encouragement	470	1.00	5.00	4.13	.8012

8.1% of high school students, on national basis are absolutely not encouraged by their parents to learn English language; 17.1% of students are moderately not encouraged and 28.1% are not slightly encouraged to learn English. In total, an above average percentage of 53.2 % stands for students not being encouraged by their parents to learn English language. Whereas, 46.8% students are encouraged by their parents and a high frequency of responses for a slight feeling of encouragement is at the value 30.3%. It results that only 1.7% of students feel absolute support by their parents to learn English language, (See Table 4).

Table 4 Frequencies for the scale: `Parental Encouragement`

		Frequencies	percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid percentage	Absolutely disagree	39	8.1	8.1	8.1
	Moderately disagree	80	17.1	17.1	25.1
	Slightly disagree	131	28.1	28.1	53.2
	Slightly agree	142	30.3	30.3	83.5
	Moderately agree	70	14.8	14.8	98.3
	Absolutely agree	8	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	470	100.0	100.0	

5.2 Results to the Second Research Question

Mean and standard deviation values for the scale: 'Parental encouragement' according to groups of schools

The mean values of the scale: 'Parental encouragement' for each group of school are: urban public high school students is (M = 3.99), rural high school is (M = 3.81) and non-public high schools the average value is (M = 4.49). (See Table 5

Table 5. Descriptive data on 'Parental encouragement' in relation to groups of schools

School Groups	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	95% Mean Confidence Interval		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Urban public high school	298	3,9965	,84182	,02489	3,6076	3,9983	1,00	6,00
Rural public high school	108	3,8217	,92229	,04533	3,4326	3,9108	2,00	6,00
Non -public high school	64	4,4938	,85969	,05526	3,9349	4,5217	3,00	6,00
Total	470	4,510	,86566	,02040	3,4972	4,2772	1,00	6,00

5.3 Results to the Third Research Question

The procedure of one way Anova for the 'Parental encouragement' between three groups of schools: urban public high schools, rural public high schools and non-public public high schools, found that there is a statistical significance value $p = .003$, so $p < .05$, $F(2.468) = 5.832$ and degrees freedom, $df = (2.468)$, (See Table 6).

Table 6. ANOVA results on 'Parental encouragement' to learn English

		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Between groups	8.694	2	4.347	5.832	.003
	Within groups	1339.412	468	.745		
	Total	1348.106	470			

Post Hoc Tukey HSD comparison procedure indicated that the difference between urban public high schools and rural public high schools is: (.13473), and statistically insignificant at p -value (.020) ; Urban public compared to non-public schools the difference is (-.08733), statistically not significant ($p = .459$), the (p) value in the comparisons for these groups is ($> .05$). For the group of students of non-public

schools and students of rural public schools the difference is: (.22206) and the result is statistically significant, ($p = .005$); (See table 7).

Table 7. Results of the Post Hoc procedure for differences in 'Parental encouragement' between three groups

Tukey HSD							
Dependent Variable	(I) School group	(J) School group	Mean Differences (I-J)	Std Error	Sig.	Confidence Interval 95%	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
'Parental encouragement'	Urban public high schools	Rural public high schools	.13473*	.04952	.020	.0161	.2534
		Non-public schools	-.08733	.06109	.459	-.2337	.0590
	Rural public high schools	Urban public high schools	-.13473*	.04952	.020	-.2534	-.0161
		Non-public schools	-.22206*	.06986	.005	-.3895	-.0547
	Non-public schools	Urban public high schools	.08733	.06109	.459	-.0590	.2337
		Rural public high schools	.22206*	.06986	.005	.0547	.3895

6. Discussions

Overall, this paper found that high school students in Albania (N=470), are encouraged but their parents to learn English language, even though in low levels (M=4.13 out of 6). In relation to distinctive items of the scale for the 'parental encouragement', the whole sample in this study has been absolutely in agreeable terms with the statement that parents have emphasized to them the importance that the English language will have when they finish school (M=6), and that their parents

think it is very important for them to learn English ($M=5.5$). This finding goes in line with empirical research in Albania, that indicated a high evaluation score for the statement that English language is important for a better future, (Softa V., 2014) However, despite the two very supportive above mentioned items, students have stated that they are slightly pushed by their parents to devote more time to studying English and practise the language as much as possible ($M=4.5$). The relation between parental encouragement and foreign language learning was statistically discovered in the studies by applying Socio-Educational Model Gardner, R.C. (1985) that indicated "parental support was a predictive factor of students' foreign language achievement" (cited in Gardner, R.C., 2005, p.20). Studies in several European countries like Romania, Poland, Croatia and Spain have proved correlation values for this relation which ranged from ($r=.04$ to $.23$).

Despite the fact that students were positively encouraged for the drive to learn and practise, the results in this paper indicated the students felt negatively for the parents' interest to what they did in the English class ($M=2$, 2 out of 6), which seems to be the same finding as in Softa V., (2014), that indicated the statement for the parents' interest for what their children did in the English class was the lowest score by then. This finding is addressed in other researches as well which indicate that if parents show genuine interest in their young teenager children during the process of the discovery, the bond between them will be greatly strengthened. (Roth B., 2008). For the help the parents provided to their children to learn the language, the score is ($M=3$, 2 out of 6). Very slightly encouraged by their parents were the students reported to be persistent to learn English throughout their life and were not pushed by their parents to ask for help if they have problems with their English ($M=3$, 4 out of 6). The findings in this paper go in line with other researchers Zhou & Glick, (2005), who have suggested "that parents who closely supervise and monitor how and when their adolescents spend their time or who their friends are, in fact are indirectly exerting influence and presenting encouragement to their children in their learning process", cited at (Nair G. Krishnan; Setia R., Razita M.; Kadir A.; Zafri; Luqman A.; Vadeveloo Th.; & Ngah Che H., 2014, p.3). As far as the sample grouping is concerned, this study found that students, who attend non public high schools and actually belong to a better socio-economic status in Albania, are more encouraged by their parents to learn English language than their counterparts in public high schools in urban and rural areas. This finding goes in line with other findings across the world, for example in a study with 150 upper secondary students in Malaysia in a non urban setting, the results indicated that all almost all the students receive quite sufficient encouragement and support from their parents in their English language learning despite their English language performance, but the values leave space for improvement.

According to Nair G. Krishnan; Setia R., Razita M.; Kadir A.; Zafri; Luqman A.; Vadeveloo Th.; & Ngah Che H., (2014), had this research been carried in an urban setting with groups from a more enhanced socio economic situation and better

educated parents, the result for parental support would have been higher (p.5-6). The implication that the socio-educative and socio- economic status has a role in parental support to their children learning English language, are also reflected in this research that found differences for parental encouragement to their children according to the division in schools groups they belonged.

Conclusions

This paper conducted in a nationwide representative sample (N=470) high school students, divided in: 298 students from urban public high schools, 108 students of rural public high schools and 64 students of non-public high schools, found that the mean value for the scale '*Parental encouragement*' to their high school children to learn English language, is (M=4.13) out of (6). Such a score indicates a positive value, but it implies a weak and slight encouragement and support on parents' behalf. This study also found that there existed differences in parental support among respondents in three different school groups. The students attending public high school were slightly more encouraged by their parents to learn English (M=3.99) compared to their peers in rural public high schools (M=3.8). Another finding showed that students attending non public high schools were also more encouraged by their parents (M=4.4), compared to those attending both urban and rural public schools.

However, the comparison results of the research were significant only for the groups between non public and public high schools; between urban and rural public high schools, ($p < .05$). To conclude, this research found that the high school students overall parental encouragement to learn English language is positive but rather low in values, and non public high school students have more supportive parents compared to students attending public schools in urban and rural areas in Albania. In total, an above average percentage of 53.2 % of the respondents, state they are not encouraged by their parents to learn English language, whereas, 46.8% students feel to be encouraged by their parents.

References

- [1] Baker & Macintyre, (2000), *Language acquisition and motivation*, p. 318, cited at
- [2] Bernaus, Mercè & Gardner R. C. (2008): *Teacher Motivation Strategies, Student bicultural excursion experience*, Quebec: International Center of research for bilingualism, Laval university cituar tek Gardner 1985, *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*, f.116
- [3] *Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics/Canadian Linguistics Association Joint Plenary Talk* - London, Canada .Online source: [http:// publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/docs/caaltalk5final.pdf](http://publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/docs/caaltalk5final.pdf)
- [4] Che H., (2014), *Attitude, Parental Encouragement and Perception of the Importance of English in English Language Learning*. Asian Social Science. 10. 10.5539/ass.v10n3p1.

- [5] Clement, R., Dorney, Z. & Noels, K. A. (1994). Motivation, self-confidence, and group cohesion in the foreign language classroom. *Language Learning*, 44,417, cited at Gardner R.C., Public lecture, (2001) f.4.
- [6] Construction, administration, and processing (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- [7] Cook, V. (2000). Linguistics and second language acquisition. Beijing: Foreign Language
- [8] Daniel C., Halimi F., Alshammari I., (2018), Impact of Motivation and Parental
- [9] Desrochers A., Gardner R.C., (1981), Second language acquisition : an investigation of
- [10] Dörnyei Z. (1998). *Motivation in second and foreign language learning. Language Teaching*, 31, pp 117135, doi:10.1017/S026144480001315X
- [11] Dörnyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2010). Questionnaires in second language research:
- [12] Encouragement on English Language Learning: An Arab Students' Perspective April *The Reading Matrix An International online Journal Vol. 8(1):176-194* Online Source:
link:<https://journals.co.za/doi/epdf/10.10520/EJC148732>
- [13] English language learning in an Arab model school, Jordan: an empirical investigation. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* Vol. 4, No. 6. Online source:
<https://journals.co.za/doi/epdf/10.10520/EJC148732>
- [14] Gardner R.C. (1985), *Social Psychology and second language learning*. London: Edward
- [15] Gardner Robert C., (2001), Attitude/Motivation Test Battery AMTB item-key' document,
- [16] Gardner Robert C., (2004), Attitude/Motivation Test battery, International AMTB Research
- [17] Gardner Robert C., (2005). Integrative motivation and second language acquisition
- [18] Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language*
- [19] Hashimoto Y., f. 31, Motivation and Willingness to Communicate as Predictors of L2 Use, *Second Language Studies*, 2002)
<http://ezinearticles.com/?The-Importance-of-Parental-Encouragement-andSupport&id=1622042>
- [20] Kirby D.M., Gardner R.C., (1973), Ethnic stereotypes determinants in children and their *learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers Nair G. Krishnan; Setia R., Razita M.; Kadir A.; Zafri; Luqman A.; Vadeveloo Th.; & Ngah
- [21] Pallant J., (2016). *A step by step guide to data analysis using IBM SPSS*, 6th Edition. Open parents, *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 27, *cituar tek Gardner 1985, Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation, f.113.*

- [22] Perceptions, Student Motivation, and English Achievement, in: The Modern Language Journal 92(3), 387–401, Project
[http://publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/docs/Questionnaire Keys Master](http://publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/docs/Questionnaire%20Keys%20Master),
<http://publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/docs/questionnaires>
- [23] Reflect Pupils Attitudes to Learn the English Language. *Journal of Educational and Social Research, Vol.4, No.4.p.285*. Online source:
<https://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/jesr/article/view/3506>
Retrieved October 7, 2022, from <http://ezinearticles.com/?The--Importance-of-Parental-Encouragement-and-Support&id=1622042>
- [24] Roth, B. (2008). *The Importance of Parental Encouragement and Support*. Online source:
- [25] Roth, B. (2008, October 27). *The Importance of Parental Encouragement and Support*.
- [26] Sarojani K.; Krishnan D.; Khalaf Q.A. & Patahn Z., (2013) Motivational factors that impact
- [27] Softa V., (2014). How Parental Encouragement and Evaluation for the English Teacher
- [28] Spolsky, B. (1989). Conditions for Second Language Learning. *Oxford: OUP*. Teaching and Research Press and Macmillan Publishers Ltd University Press. Mc Graw-Hill Education. Online source:
<https://lms.su.edu.pk/download?filename=1588697869-julie-pallant-spss-survival-manual-mcgraw-hill-house-2016-1.pdf&lesson=17247>