

Research Article

**Scrutinizing Applied Linguistics Professors, EFL Teachers, and Parents’
Perspectives on English Instruction at the Primary School Level**

Masoomeh Noorabadi¹, Farnoush Ahangaran^{2*}

^{1,2}*Department of English Language and Literature, Urmia Branch, Islamic Azad
University, Urmia, Iran.*

*Corresponding author: mr.ahangaran@gmail.com

(Received: 2024/08/18; Accepted: 2024/12/03)

Online publication: 2024/12/08

Abstract

The present study strived to expound on the perspectives of Applied Linguistics professors, English teachers, and parents on the instruction of English in primary schools. Convenience sampling was used to select 12 Applied Linguistics professors, 17 EFL teachers, and 19 parents in Urmia (Iran) as the participants of the study. A six-item semi-structured interview protocol was developed to gather their views on English instruction in these academic settings. The 30-minute interviews were conducted in Farsi. Thematic analysis identified underlying codes and themes in the participants’ responses. The findings revealed that the Applied Linguistics professors valued English instruction for enhancing primary school learners’ academic performance and emphasized the importance of customized teacher education, technology-informed materials, and course activities. The EFL teachers also emphasized the importance of English instruction and advocated for incorporating technological advancements. The participant parents favored English instruction for its educational benefits and emphasized the need for supportive language learning environments in primary school English classes. These findings offer valuable insights for teacher educators, syllabus designers,

and teachers regarding the requirements for effective English instruction in primary schools.

Keywords: Applied Linguistics professors, EFL teachers, English instruction, parents, primary schools

Introduction

The close scrutiny of the related literature (e.g., Azman, 2016; Bowles, & Brindle, 2017; Butler, 2004; Clegg & Afitska, 2011; Serafini & Van Leeuwen, 2022; Wakhidah & Erman, 2022; Zhan et al. 2019) highlights the fact that the researchers have been concerned with the instruction of English in school settings in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The examination of traditional school curricula shows that English constituted one of the main subjects at primary school levels in different countries (De Mejía, 2008). Cunningham, Zibulsky, and Callahan (2009) pointed out that the interest in this issue stems from the notion of *the younger the better* in the field of language teaching. As they explained, the need to integrate the instruction of English into the school curricula is highlighted by the government policies of the countries that consider the use of English to be a prerequisite to success in diverse fields of education and various occupational areas. Likewise, Goh (2019) pointed out that, the focus on English instruction at various school levels stems from the fact that long-term exposure to English use may have a beneficial effect on the learners' inclination to its learning and use in the course of their education. As he explained, most of the language learners are not interested in English learning due mainly to their inhibitions and their conceptualization of English as a language that endangers their language identity. Nonetheless, the instruction of English at lower school levels including the primary school is likely to empower the learners to cast away their language learning inhibitions and to consider English as a major means of progress in the modern era of international communication (Sak et al., 2016).

Moreover, Dresser (2012) pointed out that the focus on English instruction in these curricula stemmed from the contention that foreign language learning was a type of mental gymnastics. According to him, this belief was popularized by the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) that regarded language learning as a means of cognitive practice that ameliorated the learners' educational performance.

Likewise, Du Plessis and Louw (2008) pointed out that in traditional language teaching, the learners' exposure to language was considered to be an instrument for improving their reasoning, concentration, and information synthesis skills. That is, the development of the ability to communicate in the target language was not the main objective of English instruction. Consequently, language teachers were not provided with appropriate education and were prompted to focus on the grammar and translation of language as the primary means of educational development. As De Mejía (2008) concluded, this perspective on English instruction at lower school levels changed due to the introduction of new language instruction approaches to the field of SLA.

The sociolinguistic studies of language use, which were conducted in the early 1980s, had a significant impact on the notion of language learning (Early & Norton, 2014; Ulla & Perales, 2021; Woodcock & Jones, 2020; Yean, 2019). More specifically, these studies indicated that language learning constitutes a major means of academic education and has a beneficial effect on the individuals' success in the occupational fields (Pham & Ho, 2020). This issue motivated the researchers to develop Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as an approach which gave priority to the development of Communicative Competence (CC) as the prerequisite to effective use of the target languages (e.g., English) in diverse situational contexts (Berger, 2020). CC refers to the language learners' capability to use the language based on socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic considerations of the relevant language (Baber, 2021). Pham and Ho (2020) stated that the development of a satisfactory CC depends on adequate exposure to language use. As a result, as Ulla and Perales (2021) pointed out, the instruction of English at primary school level gained prominence in the field of SLA. Ulla and Perales (2021) concluded that, teaching English at lower school levels may have beneficial effects on the learners' affective factors and cognitive abilities.

Considering the above-mentioned discussions, researchers have examined the effect of early English instruction on the learners' affective and cognitive factors (Berger, 2020). Fu (2015) pointed out that, this kind of instruction is likely to have a beneficial effect on the learners' motivation for learning the target language. As she explained, the acquisition of a second language prompts the learners to develop a second identity in the relevant second language and

motivates them to perform language learning tasks more enthusiastically. In addition, Brooks and Grajek (2020) noted that the instruction of English in the primary school settings promotes the learners' critical thinking skills. They explained that, a large number of the language learning tasks such as the reading comprehension tasks encourage the learners to critically analyze the input and to make a decision using their reasoning skills. According to them, the learners' development of the critical thinking skills might ameliorate their education and second language acquisition in their relevant academic settings. Lastly, Christensen and Knezek (2018) pointed out that English instruction at lower school levels prompts the learners to develop and implement diverse metacognitive language learning strategies for monitoring, evaluating, and improving their second language performance in the process of their language studies. As they concluded, there is a need to highlight the need for English instruction at primary school levels in diverse contexts.

SLA researchers' interest in school-based English instruction has motivated them to pursue different lines of research to the exclusion of others. More specifically, a number of studies (e.g., Mwalongo, 2016; Owu-Ewie & Eshun, 2015) have made an effort to examine the impact of English instruction at primary school level on the learners' educational performance. More specifically, these studies have tried to determine the extent to which English instruction facilitates or impedes children's' cognitive development and school performance in their settings. The obtained results (e.g., Owu-Ewie & Eshun, 2015) have mostly shown that English instruction has an advantageous effect on these young learners' cognitive development.

Moreover, some of the studies (e.g., Palviainen et al., 2016; Tackie-Ofosu et al., 2015) have made an effort to examine the utility of bilingual education at the lower school levels. These studies have been frequently carried out in bilingual contexts (e.g., Canada) and have shown that bilingual education has a beneficial effect on learners' motivation for carrying out their learning tasks and for learning second languages.

Furthermore, certain studies (e.g. Sak et al., 2016; Syed Ali Rethza & Jamaluddin, 2010) have attempted to itemize English teachers' efficacious teaching practices at primary school levels. These studies (e.g., Sak et al., 2016)

have shown that vocabulary teaching strategies that focus on the use of visual aids are more effective than the other strategies.

Finally, specific studies (e.g., Pandian, 2006; Piper et al., 2018) have made an effort to determine the degree to which educational games ameliorate the language learners' acquisition of the diverse aspects of the target language at primary school levels. A number of these studies (e.g., Piper et al., 2018) have reported that the games that focus on the learners' discovery learning constitute effective instruments for facilitating learners' acquisition of the various forms of the target language.

Notwithstanding, the above-mentioned studies have disregarded the stakeholders' perspectives on English instruction in school settings. More specifically, these studies have not investigated the Applied Linguistics professors, EFL teachers, and parents' perspectives on the effectiveness of English instruction in primary school settings. The present study strived to deal with this issue in the context of Iran. The present study may have significant implications for teacher educators, syllabus designers, and EFL teachers. More specifically, it may provide teacher educators with guidelines on the development of education courses that prepare language teachers for dealing with young learners' language learning needs. Moreover, it can enable the syllabus designers to develop instructional materials that are compatible with the young learners' learning styles. Lastly, it can help language teachers to develop and implement teaching strategies that are congruent with the young learners' language ability and preferences. Considering these issues, the present study tried to answer the following questions:

1. What are Applied Linguistics professors, EFL teachers, and parents' perspectives on English instruction at primary school level?
2. Are there any differences between Applied Linguistics professors, EFL teachers, and parents' perspectives on English instruction at primary school level?

Methods

Participants

In light of the above-mentioned objectives, the researchers used convenience sampling to select the participants of the study. More specifically, first, they visited the heads of the English Language Departments at three public universities and one private university in Urmia (Iran), apprised them of the aims of the study, and obtained their consent to it. Second, they visited 28 professors (12 male & 16 female) at these departments and invited them to take part in the study. At this stage, 16 professors (7 male & 9 female) refused to take part in the study owing to various reasons such as their busy academic schedule. As a result, 12 professors (5 male & 7 female) constituted the participants and completed the written consent forms.

Third, the researchers visited the management departments of twelve public and four private senior high schools in Urmia, obtained their managers' consent to the study, and asked them to furnish them with the contact information of their EFL teachers and EFL learners' parents. The managers provided the researchers with phone numbers of 35 EFL teachers (16 male & 19 female). Fourth, the researchers called the teachers and prompted them to participate in the study. At this stage, 18 teachers (11 male & 7 female) stated that they did not intend to take part in the study due to different reasons. Consequently, 17 EFL teachers (5 male & 12 female) were selected as the participants and filled out the written consent forms of the study.

Finally, the researchers called 48 EFL learner parents (31 male & 17 female), informed them of the objectives, and invited them to participate in the study. Three of these parents (2 male & 1 female) did not answer the researchers' calls. Moreover, 26 parents (21 male & 5 female) stated that they did not want to take part in the study. Therefore, 19 parents (8 male & 11 female) constituted the participants and completed the consent forms.

The selected professors had a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics, ranged in age from 38 to 65, and were native speakers of Azeri, Persian, or Kurdish. Moreover, their experience was in the range of 2 to 28 years. Furthermore, the EFL teachers had a B.A. or M.A. in English Language Teaching, English Translation, or English Language and Literature, were in the age range of 29 to 52 years, and were native

speakers of Azeri, Persian, or Kurdish. They ranged in experience from 4 to 21 years. Lastly, the selected parents ranged in age from 25 to 47, were native speakers of Azeri, Persian, or Kurdish, and held different jobs. They had an associate degree, B.A. degree, or M.A. degree in different fields. The language learning experience of this group of the participants was in the range of 1 to 2 years in private language instruction sector.

Assessments and Measures

Based on the main objective of the study, the researchers used a researcher-developed semi-structured interview protocol in order to gather the required data. This protocol encompassed six items that examined the participants' perspectives on the advantages, disadvantages, prerequisites, characteristics, duration, and structure of English courses in primary schools.

In order to develop this interview protocol, the researchers took advantage of a focus-group interview. More specifically, first, they invited four Applied Linguistics professors to take part in an online focus-group interview session that was held using Adobe Connect system. Second, they apprised these professors of the aim of the session, and prompted them to discuss diverse aspects of English instruction at primary schools and recorded the session. Third, they transcribed the recorded session and used thematic analysis to specify its underlying themes. Fourth, they developed the six-item semi-structured interview protocol based on the extracted themes of the focus-group interview session. Fifth, they used member-checking qualitative research technique (Carlson, 2010) in order to ensure the content validity of the developed interview protocol. Accordingly, they provided the participants of the focus-group interview with the developed protocol and asked them to examine it in terms of content and item forms. Sixth, the researchers made a number of modifications to the items based on the professors' feedback and developed the final version of the interview protocol. Finally, the researchers took advantage of Cronbach's alpha measure to examine the reliability of this protocol. Based on the results, the reliability index of the protocol (.87) was satisfactory and it could be used in the present study.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced the concept of trustworthiness into qualitative research and defined it as the extent to which the researchers are confident about the effectiveness of research methods, data collection procedures, and interpretations of their findings. Accordingly, they itemized four main aspects of trustworthiness including *confirmability*, *credibility*, *dependability*, and *transferability*. As they explained, confirmability determines the degree to which the findings reflect the participants' perspectives on the examined phenomenon instead of the researchers' perspectives. Moreover, credibility specifies the accuracy of the findings. Furthermore, dependability refers to the consistency of the findings of qualitative studies. Lastly, transferability encompasses the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be generalized to similar contexts.

In the present study, the researchers took certain measures in order to ensure the trustworthiness. More specifically, they used audit trail (Koch, 2006) and member-checking (Rubin & Babbie, 2008) to examine the confirmability and credibility of the study respectively. That is, they kept a detailed record (i.e., audit description) of the reasons behind their decisions about the various aspects of the data collection and data analysis. Moreover, they provided the participants (i.e., members) with the transcribed texts of the recorded interview sessions and asked them to confirm their accuracy. In addition, the researchers used the peer review (Grinnel & Unrau, 2008) and thick description (Hammersley, 2008) techniques to ensure the dependability and transferability of the findings respectively. More specifically, they asked two of their colleagues (i.e., two Applied Linguistics professors) to examine their findings and to provide them with feedback on their consistency. Furthermore, they provided detailed information on the participants' characteristics to make sure that the findings could be generalized to similar participants in different contexts and settings.

Procedure

In this study, first, the researchers used convenience sampling in order to select 12 Applied Linguistics professors, 17 EFL teachers, and 19 parents as the participants and obtained their written informed consent. Second, they arranged the interview sessions with the participants, conducted the interviews with them, and recorded all of the sessions to gather the required data on professors, teachers,

and parents’ perspectives on English instruction at primary school settings. The interviews were conducted in Farsi and lasted for 30 minutes. Third, the researchers transcribed the recorded interview sessions and utilized thematic analysis in order to extract the underlying *codes* and *themes* in the data and to answer the raised research questions of the study. In order to check the inter-rater reliability in the process of data analysis, the researchers took advantage of Cohen’s kappa measure. The results of the analysis indicated that this inter-rater reliability index was .84 and confirmed the reliability of the data analysis procedure.

Results

The researchers used thematic analysis in order to specify the main themes in the interview data on the Applied Linguistics professors, EFL teachers, and parents’ perspectives on English instruction at primary school settings. The analysis of the data on Applied Linguistics professors’ perspectives on this issue highlighted the existence of four underlying themes in their data. Table 1 shows these themes along with their pertinent codes:

Table 1

Codes and Themes in Applied Linguistics Professors’ Data

Codes	Themes
Being interested in grasping new concepts	Advantageous effect of English instruction on learners’ academic performance
Developing an ability to establish links between the first and second language vocabulary items	
Improving the first language reading and writing skills with the help of English instruction	
Developing a satisfactory critical thinking ability	
Educating capable English teachers	Tailor-made education of primary school English teachers

Informing the teachers about different language learner factors	
Making teachers familiar with technological advancements in language teaching	
Developing interesting language teaching materials	Technology-informed overhaul of language teaching materials
Taking advantage of the Internet as a source of language learning materials	
Providing the learners with instructional videos	
Taking advantage of hands-on activities in language classes	Focus on alternative learning activities and assessment methods
Using Portfolio to assess language learners' acquisition of the target language	

As shown in Table 1, the first theme in the data on professors' perspective on primary school English instruction was *advantageous effect of English instruction on learners' academic performance*. Nine of these participants pointed out that this kind of instruction could have beneficial impacts on primary school learners' success in school settings. In this regard, Participant 6 noted that:

Learning English apprises the learners of the significance of vocabulary items in learning languages and prompts them to focus on the new words of their first and second languages. As a result, the learners try to associate the words of their first language with English words to remember their meanings and to use them in their tasks more effectively.

This process is likely to have a positive effect on learners' first and second language vocabulary knowledge.

Likewise, Participant 11 highlighted the role of English learning in learners' critical thinking ability and stated that:

The acquisition of a second language can improve the learners' critical thinking ability. A large number of language tasks prompt the learners to evaluate, interpret, and analyze second language information in order produce the intended task outcome. The learners' efforts to analyze and use the relevant information to link logical ideas and facts to each other and to make sensible decisions can improve their critical thinking ability.

Moreover, as indicated in Table 1, the second major theme in professors' data was *tailor-made education of primary school English teachers*. Eight of the professors accentuated the need to educate teachers to empower them to teach primary school English courses. Regarding this issue, Participant 2 stated that:

A large number of language teachers may not be familiar with the young learners' language acquisition needs. Consequently, it is necessary to provide both in-service and pre-service teachers with specific education to enable them to use the techniques and strategies that can facilitate and expedite these learners' acquisition of English in their relevant settings.

Similarly, Participant 7 accentuated the need to empower the teachers to use technology in the process of language instruction. As she pointed out:

Primary school learners are satisfactorily familiar with different social media websites and applications and may prefer to use them instead of traditional materials such as textbooks. Moreover, recent research has highlighted the beneficial effect of language learning software on learners' self-efficacy and language learning. Consequently, there is a need to

prepare the teachers to use different language teaching technological advancements in their classes in an efficacious way.

In addition, based on Table 1, the third theme in professors' interview data was *technology-informed overhaul of language teaching materials*. Ten of the participants stated that it was necessary to use the Internet and multi-media content in primary school English classes. In this regard, Participant 11 pointed out that:

A large number of the studies on young learners' language acquisition have shown that multi-media-based materials can be viable sources of second language input in the process of their language leaning.

This issue highlights the fact that instructional videos that provide the learners with information on different aspects of English including its vocabulary and grammatical structures need to become integral parts of the primary school learners' instructional materials.

Likewise, Participant 9 accentuated the significance of the Internet in language leaning and noted that:

Young learners use the Internet for different purposes. There is a need to make them cognizant of the fact that the Internet can be a valuable source of information on the use of English in different settings. Therefore, it is necessary to include specific sections in the EFL textbooks of these learners that provide them with adequate information on the websites with enriched language input that help them to learn the target language by means of engaging tasks such as story reading tasks among the others.

Lastly, the fourth theme in professors' data was *focus on alternative learning activities and assessment methods*. Ten of these participants stated that the learning activities and language assessment techniques of primary school learners had to be compatible with the specific features of their age group and interests. In this regard, participant 4 stated that:

Young language learners are mainly interested in action-oriented language learning activities. As a result, teachers need to provide them

with adequate opportunities to learn by means of experience and experimentation in their classes.

Likewise, Participant 11 accentuated the utility of portfolios as an alternative language assessment instrument and stated that:

Portfolios have proved to be excellent language assessment instruments in young language learners' classes. The effectiveness of these assessment tools stems from their compatibility with these learners' interests. That is, they enable the learners to individualize the process of language learning by including the pieces of their work that reflect their own experiences of the use of the target language.

In addition, the scrutiny of EFL teachers' interview data highlighted the existence of three main themes in their perspectives on English instruction at primary schools. Table 2 shows these themes along with their pertinent codes:

Table 2

Codes and Themes in EFL Teachers' Data

Codes	Themes
Constructing language laboratories Developing appropriate teaching materials Using realia in the context of classroom	Establishment of basic language teaching infrastructure
Using language learning applications Encouraging the learners to use the Internet to learn new words Taking advantage of online and offline learning management systems	Technology-facilitated language instruction
Increasing learners' academic motivation Helping the learners to develop effective social skills Encouraging the learners to take advantage of peer feedback and support in language tasks	Development of efficacious academic and social skills

As shown in Table 2, the first theme in EFL teachers' interview data was *establishment of basic language teaching infrastructure*. Fourteen of these participants stated that effective language instruction at primary school settings partially depended on the availability of appropriate materials and instructional equipment. Regarding this issue, Participant 12 stated that:

I believe that the existence of a language laboratory can have a beneficial impact on primary school learners' language learning. These learners need an interesting setting to learn the language. In a language lab, the teacher can use multi-media content and the Internet to attract these

learners' attention and to expedite their learning of the various aspects of the second language.

Similarly, Participant 7 highlighted the need for the use of real objects to facilitate the learners' language learning and pointed out that:

It is necessary to help the learners to link the content of their lessons to the outside world. For instance, we can use the figurines of the animals in order to teach the names of the relevant animals in the target language. Using these objects arouses the learners' interest in the target language and increases their motivation for learning its diverse vocabulary items.

Moreover, according to Table 2, the second underlying theme in EFL teachers' data was *technology-facilitated language instruction*. Fifteen of the participants noted that primary school learners' acquisition of English could be expedited by using the technological advancements. In this regard, Participant 1 stated that:

We need to use the state-of-the-art software to improve these learners' language learning. A large number of primary schools across the world use software and learning management systems as vital components of their curricula. In my opinion, syllabus designers need to highlight the use of mobile-assisted language learning in these courses since all of these learners are familiar with mobile phones and tablets.

Likewise, Participant 14 accentuated the role of the Internet in learning the new words of the second language and noted that:

There are numerous websites that provide the lower-proficiency-level learners with interesting content including vocabulary-learning materials. These websites involve videos, audio files, and absorbing photos of animals, plants, furniture, fruits, and vegetables among the

others that turn language learning into a fun process and improve the learners' self-directed language learning.

Finally, according to Table 2, the third theme in EFL teachers' interview data was *development of efficacious academic and social skills*. Eleven of these teachers noted that language acquisition at primary school level could have a positive effect on learners' academic performance and socialization at primary school settings. For instance, Participant 6 pointed out that:

Learning English is different from the other school subjects since it depends on pair and teamwork in the class. Engaging learners in these tasks makes them aware of the value of their classmates' support and encourages them to cooperate with them in the school setting to learn their lessons.

Likewise, Participant 8 emphasized the advantageous effects of language learning on learners' academic performance and noted that:

Research has shown that bilingualism has a positive impact on learners' cognitive processing and may improve their first language skills including its reading skill along with their numerical computation ability. As a result, language learning has to become an integral part of primary school curricula.

Finally, the perusal of parents' interview data accentuated the existing of three main themes in their perspectives on English instruction at primary schools. Table 3 shows the pertinent codes and themes:

Table 3

Codes and Themes in Parents' Data

Codes	Themes
Learning about the customs and traditions of foreign countries	Development of international communication skills

Being able to understand the conversations of the movies and videos on social media applications	
Being able to translate the instructions of different products such as TV sets	
Employing young and energetic language teachers	Creation of a supportive and constructive language-learning environment
Behaving kindly towards primary school students	
Assigning few students to language classes at primary schools	
Providing the learners with interesting English textbooks	Development of effective learning materials and tasks
Using English cartoons to improve learners' language learning motivation	
Taking advantage of different games to arouse the learners' interest in English learning	

According to Table 3, the first theme in parents' interview data was *development of international communication skills*. Fifteen of the parents emphasized the utility of English learning for taking part in international communication. In this regard, Participant 5 stated that:

I strongly support the instruction of English at primary schools. The world has changed and human relationships have been revolutionized. Success in the modern era depends on the ability to communicate with

people from different parts of the world. Therefore, our children need to start learning English as soon as possible.

Similarly, Participant 5 highlighted the utility of English knowledge in different situational contexts and pointed out that:

Learning English can help the primary school students in different situations. For example, they can understand the instructions of computer programs and mobile applications. Moreover, they can understand the things that are written on food products and can watch some English language cartoons without any help.

Furthermore, based on Table 3, the second main theme in parents' data was *creation of a supportive and constructive language-learning environment*. Twelve of the parents stated that their children's language learning could be facilitated in an appropriate educational environment. In this regard, Participant 14 pointed out that:

In my opinion, the most important requirement of effective language courses at primary schools is the recruitment of young and knowledgeable teachers. These teachers are familiar with modern language teaching approaches and have enough energy and patience to work with young learners.

Similarly, Participant 9 complained about the large number of students in the classes of primary schools and noted that:

It is impossible to teach English in these classes. Teachers are not able to pay adequate attention to each learner and to engage him/her in the pertinent learning tasks. The primary schools need to have language classes with eight to ten learners to improve their language learning.

Lastly, as shown in Table 3, the third underlying theme in parents' interview data was *development of effective learning materials and tasks*.

Fourteen of parents noted that English materials played an important role in their children's language learning. Regarding this issue, Participant 2 noted that:

I have two sons who attend senior high school. I have seen their English textbooks and have noticed the great differences between them and the textbooks of private language institutes. I believe that primary school students need textbooks that are similar to the international textbooks of institutes in order to become familiar with different concepts and notions and to learn about the other cultures.

Likewise, Participant 6 highlighted the role of game-like tasks in the learners' language learning and pointed out that:

Teachers should develop tasks that facilitate language learning by means of games. I have seen a number of language games in which learners solve crossword puzzles in order to complete the task. The use of these tasks can have a positive effect on learners' problem-solving ability and can improve their language learning.

Discussion

The first research question of the study made an effort to determine Applied Linguistics professors, EFL teachers, and parents' perspectives on English instruction at primary schools. The findings indicated that professors believed that English instruction had a positive effect on these learners' academic performance. Moreover, based on the findings, these professors accentuated the need to use alternative activities, technology, and tailor-made teacher education courses in the primary school settings. In general, these findings corroborate the findings of the studies that were conducted by Hirsu et al. (2020), Kerr (2020), Arizpe (2021), Cristovão et al. (2022), Frensley et al. (2022), Alam (2023), Al Balushi and Ambusaidi (2023), and Diaz et al. (2023). These studies reported that university lecturers and professors supported English instruction at primary schools due to its utility for improving learners' academic performance.

Arizpe et al. (2023) stated that second language instruction at primary schools is likely to have an advantageous impact on learners' development and implementation of efficacious learning strategies that empower them to deal with

numerous challenges in both their language courses and the other school courses. Moreover, Baker et al. (2023) pointed out that second language learning at primary schools can be facilitated by using the Internet and diverse types of mobile applications that empower the learners to individualize language learning and to learn the target language at their own pace. Furthermore, Bolden et al. (2020) argued that language teachers need to use more learner-directed language teaching techniques in primary school classes since these techniques can arouse the learners' interest in language learning and can help them to suppress their language learning anxiety by taking advantage of their peers and teachers' support. Lastly, Cheng and So (2015) noted that, in primary school setting, language teachers' education has to make them cognizant of the role of learner factors in the process of language learning and has to provide them with strategies that prevent the negative learner factors such as inhibitions from interfering with the process of language instruction.

The above-mentioned discussions indicate that in the present study Applied Linguistics professors supported English instruction since it could enable the learners to use effective learning strategies in their academic settings. Moreover, they highlighted the role of technology in the relevant language classes to improve learners' self-directed language learning. In addition, these professors emphasized the use of alternative teaching activities such as hand-on activities to enable the learners to deal with their language learning challenges using peer or expert support. Lastly, they accentuated the need for tailor-made English teacher education to apprise the prospective teachers of the consequential role of learner factors in language learning.

Furthermore, based on the findings, EFL teachers highlighted the need for the establishment of language instruction infrastructure in primary school settings. Moreover, they highlighted the utility of technological advancements for improving primary school learners' language acquisition. Lastly, they supported this kind of instruction due to its positive influence on the learners' development of academic and social skills. In general, these findings are in line with the findings of the studies that were carried out by Crawford et al. (2019), Deszcz-Tryhubczak (2019), Cristovão, et al. (2022), Farrar et al. (2022), Ferdiansyah et al. (2022), Diaz et al. (2023), and Gugssa and Aasetre (2023). Based on the

findings of these studies, EFL teachers considered the use of technology as one of the main factors in primary school English learners' acquisition of various aspects of the target language.

Handayani and Triyanto (2022) noted that the use of effective language teaching equipment provides the language teachers with the opportunity to expedite their learners' acquisition of the target language by taking advantage of diverse audio-visual materials that arouse the learners' interest in language learning. Moreover, Hanna (2022) noted that technological advancements including language learning software and language learning management systems increase learners' intrinsic motivation for learning the language since they make the learners aware of their internal resources and their language learning capabilities. Lastly, Klein et al. (2021) averred that a large number of language tasks prompt the learners to engage in interaction and prompt them to communicate with their peers and teachers to produce the intended outcome.

Considering these discussions, it can be argued that in the present study EFL teachers focused on the establishment of basic language teaching infrastructure to arouse the learners' interest in the target language using diverse types of materials and software. Moreover, they emphasized the significance of technology in primary school learners' language learning to ameliorate their intrinsic motivation for learning English. Finally, these teachers' support for English instruction stemmed from the utility of language learning for enabling the learners to take advantage of peer and expect feedback in their language classes.

Lastly, the findings indicated that parents considered English instruction as an opportunity to develop their children's international communication skills and considered the development of a supportive language-learning environment and effective tasks and materials as the prerequisites for their effective language learning. Generally, these findings underpin the findings of the studies that were conducted by McAdam et al. (2020), Maine and McCaughran (2021), Unal et al. (2021), Zou and Zhang (2021), Ma and Liu (2023), Maine and Čermáková (2023), Pantaleo (2023), and Petrie et al. (2023). These studies noted that parents

supported English instruction in primary school settings due to the fact that it increased their children's educational and occupational opportunities.

Clark (2022) noted that a large number of parents are cognizant of the advantages of learning English as an international language in numerous academic and occupational settings. As a result, they strive to encourage their children to develop effective English language skills to ameliorate their chances to attend the best higher education institutions. Moreover, Petrie et al. (2023) pointed out that most of the parents prefer young and energetic English teachers to older teachers since they are more patient and can create a learning environment in which their children can lose their language learning inhibitions. Lastly, Unal et al. (2021) stated that, in most of the developing countries, parents are not satisfied with their children's English instruction at schools due mainly to its incompatibility with the required language skills of the modern era. That is, the school English classes cannot empower the learners to develop a satisfactory communicative competence of the target language.

In light of these discussions, it can be argued that in the present study parents supported English instruction at primary schools due to the academic and occupational advantages of English in their children's lives. Moreover, they highlighted the necessity of the establishment of a supportive learning environment to help their children to lose their language learning inhibitions. Finally, parents accentuated the need to use more appropriate materials and tasks in these courses since they believed that the school courses did not help their children to develop a satisfactory communicative ability in the target language.

The second research question examined the differences between Applied Linguistics professors, EFL teachers, and parents' perspectives on English instruction at primary schools. The findings showed that professors, teachers, and parents had similar perspectives on this kind of instruction. More specifically, all of these participant groups believed in the utility of English instruction for improving the learners' academic performance. Moreover, they believed that there was a need to redress the teacher education, materials, and activities of these courses. In general, these findings support the findings of the studies that were conducted by Maine and McCaughran (2021), Cristovão, et al. (2022), Ma and

Liu (2023), and Maine and Čermáková (2023). These studies reported that both language experts and parents supported English instruction at primary schools.

Crawford et al. (2019) noted that most of the language experts including researchers, professors, and teachers have positive attitudes towards second language instruction at primary schools due mainly to the fact that it is likely to improve the learners' academic skills. Moreover, as he noted, experts highlight the need for using appropriate materials in these courses owing to the cognitive and emotional differences between primary school learners and older learners. Furthermore, Ferdiansyah et al. (2022) noted that parents are interested in primary school instruction and support the use of up-to-date materials in their children's English courses owing to the fact that they consider English knowledge as a main factor in their success in life.

Based on these issues, it can be argued that in the present study, the similarity between Applied Linguistics professors, EFL teachers, and parents' perspectives on English instruction at primary schools stemmed from their understanding of the role of English knowledge in the primary school learners' academic and occupational success.

The present study suffered from a number of limitations since it did not examine the impacts of the participants' personal factors including their age, gender, first language, and experience on the findings. Moreover, the researchers delimited the study by focusing on primary school settings without dealing with the other school settings. The future studies need to deal with these limitations and delimitations. Moreover, these studies need to use mixed-methods designs such as exploratory and explanatory sequential designs to delve more deeply into the Applied Linguistics professors, EFL teachers, and parents' perspectives on English instruction at primary schools. Lastly, these studies have to examine the primary school learners' attitudes toward English learning to empower the syllabus designers and course developers to include effective English courses in the curricula of primary schools.

The results of the present study indicated that English instruction is considered to be a facilitating factor in young learners' cognitive development and educational performance in primary school settings.

The obtained results are likely to have certain implications for various stakeholders. First, it is necessary to overhaul the current teacher education courses in terms of their content. More specifically, these courses mainly focus on the practical issues of language instruction and do not provide the prospective teachers with information on learner factors such as anxiety and inhibitions. Therefore, it is necessary to add a learner-factor module to these courses to apprise teachers of the consequential role of young and adult learners' factors in the process of language learning. Second, the syllabus designers need to develop the EFL materials of primary school English courses by taking advantage of technological advancements including the internet, multi-media content, and diverse language learning software among the others. Moreover, they should develop online English courses at these schools that are taught using the learning management systems to ameliorate the learners' self-directed language learning. Lastly, the English teachers have to develop a satisfactory understanding of young language learners' main individual factors and the pedagogical and affective strategies that are likely to ameliorate these learners' language learning and coping. To this end, teachers can take advantage of the findings of relevant research (e.g. the present study). Moreover, they can attend national and international language teaching events such as conferences, seminars, and teacher education courses that empower them to facilitate and expedite young learners' acquisition of the diverse aspects of the target language.

It can be concluded that SLA researchers need to scrutinize various stakeholders' perspectives on English instruction in primary school levels in both second and foreign language contexts to develop a better understanding of its deleterious or beneficial impacts on these learners' school performance.

Declaration of interest: none

References

- Alam, M. (2023). Activists' heterodox beliefs in fostering urban environmental education in Indonesia. *Local Development & Society* 4(1), 128–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26883597.2022.2058887>.
- Al Balushi, H. M., & A. K. Ambusaidi. (2023). The influence of environmental education on Omani students self-reported environmental attitudes and behaviors. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, 32(2), 90–106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10382046.2022.2154976>.
- Arizpe, E. (2021). The state of the art in picture book research from 2010 to 2020. *Language Arts*, 98(5), 260–272. <https://doi.org/10.58680/la202131213>.
- Arizpe, E., Noble, K., & Styles, M. (2023). *Children reading pictures: New contexts and approaches to picture books*. Routledge.
- Azman, H (2016). Implementation and challenges of English language education reform in Malaysian primary schools. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 22(3), 65-78. <https://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2016-2203-05>
- Baber, H. (2021). Modeling the acceptance of e-learning during the pandemic of COVID-19-A study of South Korea. *International Journal of Management Education*, 19(2), 21-32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2021.100503>
- Baker, E., Exley, B., Willis, L. D. & Kitson, L. (2023). Apprenticing students into political participation: Using critical visual literacy to review and redesign the school website. *English in Education*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/04250494.2023.2272697>
- Berger, J. (2020). *The catalyst: How to change anyone's mind*. Simon Schuster.
- Bolden, B., DeLuca, C., Kukkonen, T., Roy, S., & Wearing, J. (2020). Assessment of creativity in K-12 education: A scoping review. *Review of Education*, 8(2), 343–376. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3188>
- Brooks, D. C., & Grajek, S. (2020). *Faculty readiness to begin fully remote teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Carlson J. A. (2010). Avoiding traps in member checking. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(5), 1102–1113. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2010.1332>

- Cheng, I. N. Y., & So, W. W. M. (2015). Teachers' environmental literacy and teaching: Stories of three Hong Kong primary school teachers. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, 24(1), 58–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10382046.2014.967111>.
- Christensen, R., & Knezek, G. (2018). Reprint of readiness for integrating mobile learning in the classroom: Challenges, preferences, and possibilities. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 78, 379–388. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.07.014>
- Clark, A. (2022). *Slow knowledge and the unhurried child: Time for slow pedagogies in early childhood education*. Taylor & Francis.
- Clegg, J. & Afitska, O. (2011). Teaching and learning in two languages in African classrooms. *Comparative Education*, 47(1), 61-77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2011.541677>
- Crawford, P. A., Roberts, S. K., & Zygouris-Coe, V. (2019). Addressing 21st-century crises through children's literature: Picture books as partners for teacher educators. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 40(1), 44–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2019.1570401>
- Cristovão, V. L. L., Sanches, B., & Smart, G. (2022). Environmental discourse in Brazilian English-as-a-foreign-language textbooks: Socio-discursive practices and their implications for developing students' critical environmental literacy. *Environmental Education Research*, 28(1), 75–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2021.2007855>
- Cunningham, A. E., Zibulsky, J. & Callahan, M. D. (2009). Starting small: Building preschool teacher knowledge that supports early literacy development. *Reading Writing*, 22(4), 487- <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-009-9164-z>
- De Mejía, A. (2008). Enrichment bilingual education in South America. In N. H. Hornberger (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of language and education* (pp. 12-37). Springer.
- Deszcz-Tryhubczak, J. (2019). Thinking with deconstruction: Book-adult-child events in children's literature research. *Oxford Literary Review*, 41(2), 185–201. <https://doi.org/10.3366/olr.2019.0278>

- Diaz, P., Hrastinski, S., & Norström, P. (2023). How teacher educators use response systems: An interview study. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 2, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2023.2187423>
- Dresser, R. (2012). The impact of scripted literacy instruction on teachers and students. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 21(1), 71-87.
- Du Plessis, S. & Louw, B. (2008). Challenges to preschool teachers in learner's acquisition of English as language of learning and teaching. *South African Journal of Education*, 28(1), 53-75.
- Early, M. & Norton, B. (2014). Revisiting English as medium of instruction in rural African classrooms. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 35(7), 674-691. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2014.908890>
- Farrar, J., Arizpe, E., & McAdam, J. (2022). Challenging Picture books and literacy studies. In A. M. Ommundsen, G. Haaland, & B. Kümmerling-Meibauer (Eds.), *Exploring challenging picture books in education* (pp. 43–56). Routledge.
- Ferdiansyah, S., Winarno, A., & Ardhitia, Z. (2022). Service learning in Indonesia: Developing undergraduate students' leadership during COVID-19 pandemic. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 12(5), 884–899. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-06-2021-0123>
- Frensley, B. T., Stern, M. J., Powell, R. B., & Sorice M. G. (2022). Investigating the relationships among students' basic psychological needs, engagement, and environmental literacy at a residential environmental education center. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 53(4), 186–198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2022.2081654>.
- Fu, C. S. (2015). The effect of emotional labor on job involvement in preschool teachers: Verifying the mediating effect of psychological capital. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 14(3), 145-156.
- Goh, P. S. C. (2019). Preschool teachers' perspectives on using English language to teach. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 19(4), 346-362. <https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2019-1904-18>
- Grinnel R., & Unrau Y. (2008). *Social work research and evaluation: Foundations of evidence-based practice*. Oxford University Press.

- Gugssa, M. A., & Aasetre, J. (2023). Unveiling in-service teachers' conceptions of environment and environmental education: An Ethiopian perspective. *Environmental Education Research*, 29(9), 1239–1258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2022.2069681>
- Hammersley, M. (2008). *Questioning qualitative inquiry: Critical essays*. Sage.
- Handayani, R. D., & Triyanto G. (2022). Seventh-grade students' conceptions of climate change, global warming, and the greenhouse effect. *Journal of Geoscience Education*, 70(4), 490–500. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10899995.2021.1989941>
- Hanna, H. (2022). Recognizing silence and absence as part of multi-vocal storytelling in and through picture books: Migrant learners in South Africa engaging with the arrival. *Literacy*, 56, 40–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12269>
- Hirsu, L., Arizpe, E., & McAdam, J. (2020). Cultural interventions through children's literature and arts-based practices in times of disaster: A case study of reading mediators' response to the Mexican earthquakes. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 5, 21-25.
- Kerr, K. (2020). Teacher development through coaching outdoor science and environmental education across the elementary-middle school transition. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 51(1), 29–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2019.1604482>
- Klein, S., Watted, S., & Zion, M. (2021). Contribution of an intergenerational sustainability leadership project to the development of students' environmental literacy. *Environmental Education Research*, 27(12), 1723–1758. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2021.1968348>
- Koch, T. (2006). Establishing rigor in qualitative research: The decision trail. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 53(1), 91–103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.1994.tb01177.x>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Ma, L., & Liu. N. (2023). Teacher belief about integrating critical thinking in English teaching in China. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 49(1), 137–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2022.2044267>

- Maine, F., & Čermáková, A. (2023). Thinking aloud: The role of epistemic modality in reasoning in primary education classrooms. *Language and Education*, 37(4), 428–443. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2022.2129979>
- Maine, F., & McCaughran, B. (2021). Using wordless picture books as stimuli for dialogic engagement. In F. Maine, & M. Vrikki (Eds.), *Dialogue for intercultural understanding* (pp. 32-54). Springer.
- McAdam, J., Abou Ghaida, S., Arizpe, E., Hirsu, L., & Motawy, Y. (2020). Children's literature in critical contexts of displacement: Exploring the value of hope. *Education Sciences*, 10(12), 383-390. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10120383>
- Owu-Ewie, C. & Eshun, E.S. (2015). The use of English as medium of instruction at the upper basic level (primary four to junior high school) in Ghana: From theory to practice. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(3), 72-82.
- Palviainen, A, Protassova, E., Mård-Miettinen, K. & Schwartz, M. (2016). Two languages in the air: A cross-cultural comparison of preschool teachers' reflections on their flexible bilingual practices. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 19(6), 614-630. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2016.1184615>
- Pandian, A. (2006). What works in the classroom? Promoting literacy practices in English. *3L Journal of Language Teaching, Linguistics and Literature*, 11(1), 15-39.
- Pantaleo, S. (2023). Reviewing the multifaceted complexity and potential of wordless picture books. *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, 61(2), 15–25. <https://doi.org/10.1353/bkb.2023.0020>
- Petrie, A., Mayr, R., Zhao, F., & Montanari, S. (2023). Parent-child interaction during storybook reading: Wordless narrative books versus books with text. *Journal of Child Language*, 50(1), 104–131. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000921000763>
- Pham, H.H. & Ho, T.T.H. (2020) Toward a new normal with e-learning in Vietnamese higher education during the post COVID-19 pandemic, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 39(7), 1327-1331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1823945>

- Piper, B., Zuilkowski, S. S., Dubeck, M., Jepkemei, E. & King, S. J. (2018). Identifying the essential ingredients to literacy and numeracy improvement: Teacher professional development and coaching, student textbooks, and structured teachers' guides. *World Development*, 106, 324-336. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.01.018>
- Rubin, A., Babbie, E. R. (2008). *Research methods for social work*. Thomson Brooks.
- Sak, R., Erden, F. T. & Morrison, G. S. (2016). Child-centred education: Preschool teachers' belief and self-reported practices. *Early Child Development and Care*, 186(8), 1185-1202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2015.1081185>
- Serafini, F., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2022). *Beyond the visual: An introduction to researching multimodal phenomena*. Teachers College Press.
- Syed Ali Rethza, S. B. & Jamaluddin, S. (2010). Preschool teachers' assessment practices, knowledge and perceptions in selected districts. *Jurnal Pendidikan*, 30(1), 127-157.
- Tackie-Ofosu, V., Mahama, S., Vandyck, E. S. T. D., Kumador, D. K. & Toku, N. A. A. (2015). Mother tongue usage in Ghanaian pre-schools: Perceptions of parents and teachers. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(34), 81-87.
- Ulla, M. B., & Perales, W. F. (2021). Facebook as an integrated online learning support application during the COVID19 pandemic: Thai university students' experiences and perspectives. *Heliyon*, 7(11), e08317. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e08317>
- Unal, A., Unal, Z., & Bodur, Y. (2021). Using flipped classroom in middle schools: Teachers' perceptions. *Journal of Research in Education*, 30(2), 90-112.
- Wakhidah, N., & Erman, E. (2022). Examining environmental education content on Indonesian Islamic religious curriculum and its implementation in life. *Cogent Education*, 9(1), 2034244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2034244>
- Woodcock, S., & Jones, G. (2020). Examining the interrelationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their beliefs towards inclusive education for all.

Teacher Development, 24(4), 583–602.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2020.1803957>

- Yean, L. S. (2019). Promoting active learning and independent learning among primary school student using flipped classroom. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 4(30), 324–341.
- Zhan, Y., He, R., & So, W. W. M. (2019). Developing elementary school children's water conversation action competence: A case study in China. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 27(3), 287–305.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2018.1548346>
- Zou, D., & Zhang, R. (2021). Flipped primary EFL classrooms: Impact, feasibility, and potential. *ELT Journal*, 75(3), 267–277.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccab017>

Biodata

Farnoush Ahangaran is an assistant professor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at Urmia Islamic Azad University, Iran. His main fields of interest are language education, ELT, and research in foreign or second language learning and teaching.

Masoomeh Noorabadi is a TEFL M.A. Candidate at Urmia Islamic Azad University, Iran. Her main research interests are ELT, second language acquisition, and teacher education.

بررسی دقیق اساتید زبان شناسی کاربردی، معلمان زبان انگلیسی، و دیدگاه والدین در مورد آموزش زبان انگلیسی در سطح دبستان

پژوهش حاضر تلاش کرد تا دیدگاه های اساتید زبان شناسی کاربردی، معلمان انگلیسی و والدین را در مورد آموزش زبان انگلیسی در مدارس ابتدایی بیان کند. برای این منظور، پژوهشگران با استفاده از نمونه گیری در دسترس، 12 استاد زبان شناسی کاربردی، 17 معلم زبان انگلیسی و 19 والدین در ارومیه (ایران) را به عنوان شرکت کننده انتخاب کردند. علاوه بر این، آنها یک پروتکل مصاحبه نیمه ساختاریافته شش ماده ای را برای تعیین

دیدگاه این شرکت کنندگان در مورد آموزش انگلیسی در محیط های آکادمیک مربوط ایجاد کردند. مصاحبه ها به زبان فارسی و به مدت 30 دقیقه انجام شد. برای تعیین کدها و مضامین اساسی در داده های مصاحبه شرکت کنندگان از تحلیل موضوعی استفاده شد. یافته ها حاکی از آن است که اساتید زبان شناسی کاربردی به کاربرد آموزش انگلیسی برای بهبود عملکرد تحصیلی دانش آموزان دبستانی اعتقاد دارند و اهمیت آموزش معلمان متناسب، مواد مبتنی بر فناوری و فعالیت های این دوره ها را برجسته می کنند. علاوه بر این، معلمان زبان انگلیسی از این نوع آموزش حمایت کردند و استفاده از پیشرفت های تکنولوژیکی را در آنها برجسته کردند. در نهایت، والدین به دلیل مزایای آموزشی آن به آموزش زبان انگلیسی در این محیط ها علاقه مند شدند و نیاز به محیط های یادگیری زبان حمایتی در کلاس های انگلیسی مدارس ابتدایی را برجسته کردند. این یافته ها می تواند به مربیان معلم، طراحان برنامه درسی و معلمان دستورالعمل هایی در مورد الزامات آموزش زبان انگلیسی در مدارس ابتدایی ارائه دهد.

کلمات کلیدی: اساتید زبان شناسی کاربردی، معلمان زبان انگلیسی، آموزش زبان انگلیسی، والدین، مدارس ابتدایی.