



The Role of Language Teaching in Promoting Educational Quality in Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT

Background and purpose: China is among the countries putting great emphasis on strengthening early education programs to ensure a solid learning foundation for children. The present study is based on a qualitative research design to examine the role of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in promoting educational quality in the context of early childhood education in China. It focuses on investigating the effectiveness of EFL teaching in enhancing the educational quality of early childhood education in the education system of China. **Method:** The semi-structured interviews were conducted to assess the parents' perception regarding the impact of EFL programs on the quality of education being offered in early childhood centres in China. The sample for the survey was selected from the parents of children enrolled in early childhood education centres in China offering EFL teaching as a part of their curricula. The data collection focused on the student's cognitive development and overall quality of education. **Findings:** Most of the participants emphasized the significant impact of early EFL education on their children's cognitive skills. They regarded EFL education as a robust tool to lay a strong foundation for future academic achievements and cross-cultural understanding of their children. **Conclusion and Implications:** Thus, parents in China regard early EFL education as crucial for the cognitive development and educational foundation of their children. The present study offers significant pedagogical implications regarding the inclusion of EFL instructions in enhancing the early language acquisition experience of children.

Keywords: Language teaching, EFL, Educational quality, Early childhood education

1. INTRODUCTION

China is noteworthy among nations devoting significant resources and effort to strengthening early education programs (Li, 2023; Li & Huang, 2023; Luo, 2023). These programs play an essential role in developing children's core learning experiences. The study investigates the efficiency of EFL teaching methods within this framework, exploring their function in improving overall educational quality in the context of early childhood education. The study's core goal is to determine how the introduction and integration of EFL teaching practices affect the educational landscape for young learners in China's early education systems.

Language acquisition, particularly of an internationally recognized language such as English, is increasingly viewed as a means of achieving academic and professional success (Rulona & Bacasmot, 2023). This importance grows in the field of childhood education since it effects cognitive development, communication skills, and future academic trajectories. Therefore, investigating how the adoption of EFL teaching practices corresponds with and improves educational quality in the Chinese early education system becomes crucial. The study intends to shed light on the efficacy of EFL teaching practices as a catalyst for holistic educational development during the early years of a child's learning journey in China by exploring this relationship.



Figure 1.1: English Language Training Market in China 2022-26

Source: Technavio

Over the last few decades, China's educational environment has experienced tremendous development, recognizing the crucial role of early education in establishing a solid educational foundation for its young population. This trend is emphasized by the recognition that effective early childhood education provides a foundation for lifetime learning and development. Along with this acknowledgment, there has been a rising demand for integrating English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction within China's educational framework. The globalization of economies and the rising interconnection of the world have emphasized the value of English language as a significant advantage for persons operating in the international community. As a

result, there is a growing recognition of the importance of beginning EFL teaching at a young age to facilitate language acquisition and expertise.

The importance of this study stems from its ability to provide essential insights into the connection between language teaching, specifically English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and the quality of early childhood education within the Chinese educational framework. Understanding the significance of EFL instruction is becoming increasingly important as China prioritizes the development of its early education programs (Wu, 2023). The findings of this study can help educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers understand the efficacy and impact of incorporating EFL teaching methods in early childhood education. This research attempts to give comprehensive viewpoints that could impact educational policies, curriculum designs, and teaching practices by extensively investigating the relationship between language learning and educational quality. Finally, the study's significance extends beyond academic bounds, with the potential to influence the enhancement of learning experiences and outcomes for young Chinese learners.

The motivation for this study originates from the need to fill a gap in enhancing information of the efficacy of EFL teaching practices in early childhood education in the Chinese educational context. Despite the increased focus on language training, there is a scarcity of comprehensive research on the influence of EFL teaching on educational quality in the early years. This study will use a qualitative research design to overcome this gap by systematically assessing and analysing the efficiency of EFL training. This study aims to provide practical insights for educational practitioners and policymakers by providing empirical evidence and a deeper understanding of the implications of incorporating EFL into early childhood education. Finally, the argument emphasizes the need of making informed decisions and employing evidence-based techniques to improve educational experiences and outcomes for young learners in China's early education system.

The purpose of this research is to answer several key research questions on the role of English as a Foreign Language teaching in early childhood education in China. These concerns centre on the efficacy of EFL instruction in improving educational quality, the impact of language acquisition on cognitive development in young learners, perceived challenges and opportunities in integrating EFL into early education programs, and the relationship between EFL proficiency and future academic pathways. The goals of this research are to conduct a comprehensive qualitative analysis to assess the relationship between EFL teaching

methodologies and educational quality, to identify potential barriers to effective EFL implementation in early childhood education, and to provide empirically-driven recommendations to optimize language instruction strategies for young learners in China's educational system.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Cognitive Theory of Learning:

Jean Piaget in the 1930s presented this theory that contradicts with the previously accepted behaviorism theory of psychology. The cognitive learning revolves around the mental processes of information processing and functions of brain involved in retaining information. This theory helps us to understand about the phenomenon of understanding a concept and the process that is involved in the understanding of the concept (Levine, 2022). Metacognition a term widely used in philosophy and psychology, meaning 'thinking about thinking' or thinking about refining the ways of how you think, is also the result of developed cognitive habits in a person. The cognitive theory of learning covers a wide area of study and relates many different areas of study that is the main reason for its popularity in the field of psychology, that it is versatile in nature and define various concepts when studied in relation with this theory (Alahmad, 2020). Piaget's Cognitive theory of learning is also associated with the constructive theory as both of these theories involves the knowledge of internal processes regarding information and memory and shares another similarity that is, both of these theories are opposing the theory of behaviorism that is just the outer study of behavior as behavior is the actions that are manifested as a result of observations. This theory can also be related to quality education during childhood because when a person is in his early stages of life he is innocent, his minds is delicate and thoughts are not biased or thinking and perceptions are not compromised (Kazi & Galanaki, 2019). He perceive things as they are, receive information as it is provided. When a person with such a mind is provided with environment that teaches cognitive learning and induces cognitive techniques in a student, he will quickly grasp on these techniques used to become a cognitively active person and start to think with unique perspectives and generate conclusions that will unusual but logically acceptable and become able to find solutions to problems of daily life that involves practicality (Kazi & Galanaki, 2019). A mind able to perform basic cognitive operations will do more great in classrooms than other students, his thinking will be broadened by the cognitive learning and he will be able to participate more actively in the classroom and engage more enthusiastically in group

discussions and practical learning. Students at primary educational level or even in preschools should be taught such cognitive techniques they could tend to improve the standards of their education and play a part necessary for students to build up an environment for quality education. The educational institutes should also hire professionals that keep a close check on the mental processing abilities and help to sharpen the cognitive abilities of students and ultimately contributing to a better and enhanced quality education system (Estes, 2022).

2.2. Social Interaction Theory

This theory was presented by Lev Vygotsky, a soviet citizen and a renowned psychologist. It is based upon theories related to society and culture or simply socio-culture theories. In this theory we understand how the interactions between different people help in learning different skills. This theory is extremely helpful in relating learning skills to social interaction (Stojković & Jelić, 2020). EFL teaching can also be related to this theory and understood in a much simpler and comprehensible manner. EFL teaching or English as a foreign language teaching is being set up as a component of the curriculum in schools and universities due to the increasing demands of English language in workplace market and in the daily life of people all around the world. Countries are focusing a great deal on the development of English language as a skill in their academic institutes because of the magnitude of importance of English in this current time period (Getie, 2020). Social interactionist theory helps in this regard and enables the educational authorities of countries to understand how to induce English learning more effectively in their systems and produce students that have a comprehensive and adequate knowledge of English skills, meaning they should be to communicate and understand things in English (Reinhardt, 2019). This theory tells us that we can significantly improve the effectiveness of English learning if students are more likely to interact with people that have good English communication skills and through this social interaction they will be able to adapt to the basics that are require to communicate in English. For instance, we often say practice makes a man perfect, in this context we will consider the practice as social interaction with people who are good at English or the interaction of children with adults who are good at speaking and communicating in English language. Thus, this theory helps a great deal in the implementation and application of effective EFL teaching in the schools worldwide and provides a way to make students better at English (Sun & Wang, 2020).

2.3. EFL Teaching

EFL teaching or English as a foreign language teaching has become mandatory in educational institutes all over the world. The educational institutes all around the globe are focusing on English language teaching as a fundamental part of their educational curriculum as it has become an essential tool (Sabiri, 2020). According to the study of Ataboyev and Tursunovich (2023) English is considered very important nowadays due to its popularity and usefulness. Across 86 countries worldwide English language is the official language and the communication and writings are done in English. Moreover, English is considered to be an effective way to break the barrier of communication as most of the people belonging to different countries know English so it is easy to comprehend what the other person belonging to a different country is saying through English (Ataboyev & Tursunovich, 2023). The national language of United States of America and United Kingdoms is now accepted in almost every country and is being taught to students there so that they should not face any hurdles when working in official environments and workplaces or even when working abroad. No other language has had such a privilege which is being given to English. At early stages of schooling it is being inculcated into students as a basic worthy skill that can be of greater use for them in future. Especially in China surveys have been done and a data is being collected which reflects the magnitude of importance that is being given to English language at early levels of education. It is interesting that a great numbers of schools have set English language as foreign language in their curriculum and is being taught regularly during school hours to develop the skills of English writing, speaking, listening and reading (Rustamov, 2022). Al Arif (2019) Stated that Students are deeply aware of the importance and fundamentality of English in the present age and they also focus much on English language than any other foreign languages being taught at their academic institutes, if any. The most important point that should be mentioned is that whenever an individual wants to go abroad for study or for work he has to get an English language proficiency certificate to get the visa for that country if he has already read in an institute where EFL Teaching was under implementation then he will not have to face any difficulty in passing any exam to get the English language proficiency certificate. In a nutshell, we can say that English is a skill more than just a language that should be acquired in order to get the recognition and success in your respective fields (Al Arif, 2019).

2.4. Educational Quality in Early Childhood

Educational quality means a collection of things which includes healthy learning environments, trained staff, student-centered attention and use of techniques that focus on encompassing better outcomes from students taught in such environments. Educational quality is determined by setting a standard that is suitable in every aspect for the students and create a student-teacher friendly environment (Manning et al., 2019). Teachers should be trained specifically in this regard to understand the students and engage with students properly. There should be a close cooperation between the authorities and teachers in this regard because quality education can be gained when teacher is aware of the problems of his pupils and informs the authorities to find and devise a solution for the problems of that particular student (Gomez et al., 2019). Certain measures should be taken into account to improve the standards of education both at early childhood and also during adulthood. The main focus on educational quality should be in the early childhood educational institutes like kindergartens, nurseries and pre-schools. Teachers should be trained specifically to deal with children of young age group and design courses like Montessori programs and participation based learning. When students engage in group activities and participate actively with their bodies and minds they learn more than just getting a lecture and learning what is being lectured (Schachter et al., 2019). Teachers have a significant role to play in this regard as the students are merely kids and they do not even have the basic knowledge to tell what is wrong or right teachers should teach in such a disciplined and well organized manner that the students feel at home even when in the classroom moreover, a teacher should form such a bond with his pupils that they think of him as more than a teacher, like a friend, a father like an advisor to whom they could always listen to and act in accordance with the instructions he has taught you (Rodd, 2020). Quality education in early childhood makes children bold, more cognitive their natural ability to perceive and generate conclusions is also enhanced by studying in such environments and they also do not need to struggle much when studying in higher levels as their cognitive abilities would have been so nurtured by the quality education they received in their childhood that in their adulthood they would think more openly and find solutions to problems that are unusual and realistic without any factor blurring their thoughts and thinking processes (Schachter et al., 2019).

2.5. EFL teaching and educational quality during childhood

According to the study of Alexiou (2020) EFL teaching induces skills of writing, speaking, listening and reading English language it very integral component of educational sector in any

country of the world at present. More importantly, if the EFL teaching is implemented at levels so initial that the kids in Montessori, kindergartens and pre-schools are also taught English as a foreign language this will help to improve the standards education and quality of education will be increased by multiple folds. EFL teaching methods in primary schools get the students equipped with basic skills of English that helps them a lot in their higher education and also in their practical lives as most of the countries have English as their first official language and if someone does not have the know-how of English language he will be of no use in the workplace as he will be not able to communicate, to understand other speaking English and tell others about his perspectives because all these are only possible if he had only been admitted in such schools where English is being prioritized and focused upon as the most pivot foreign languages (Wilden et al., 2020). China focuses on this aspect and devise its educational authorities to set up a framework in schools at an early stage that is enriched with EFL teaching and hence contribute to its educational quality (Senawati et al., 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on a qualitative research design to examine the efficacy of EFL instruction in enhancing the quality of early education for children enrolled in English medium pre-schools. The qualitative research design focuses on subjective experiences and perspectives (Hennink et al., 2020). Therefore, it allowed the researcher to gain valuable context-specific interpretations based on the experiences of the participants. Thus, the adoption of qualitative research design aligned with the primary objective of the present study to explore the role of EFL instruction in enhancing the quality of education and the cognitive development of students. Moreover, the interpretive research philosophy was adopted to conduct the present study, which aligned with the objective of the study to conduct an in-depth exploration of the effectiveness of EFL teaching. In addition, the inductive research approach adopted by the researcher focuses on gaining context-specific understandings concerning the effectiveness of EFL teaching in the context of China.

3.1. Population and Sampling

The target population of the present study belonged to Beijing, China. The researcher targeted this study because of its vast variety of English-medium preschool centers for children. The researcher selected the participants for the study by applying convenience and purposive sampling techniques and selected 10 participants from the parents of the children enrolled in

three leading pre-schools in the city. The study targeted the parents for the investigation as they could provide valuable data related to the close experiences with the practice of EFL teaching and its subsequent impact on their child's education and cognitive development. In addition, the convenience and purposive sampling techniques helped the researcher approach those parents who could provide relevant information related to the study's objectives and were conveniently available for the interview.

3.2. Data Collection Tool

The semi-structured interviews were conducted to get insights into parents' perceptions and experiences regarding the effectiveness of EFL teaching in the early education of children. The interview consisted of ten questions related to the effectiveness of EFL instruction and its impact on their children's communication and cognitive skills. Parents were also asked to share their concerns regarding EFL teaching and their suggestions to enhance its effectiveness. According to Adedoyin (2020), semi-structured interviews help the researcher get access to rich and detailed data, which leads to in-depth analysis and valuable findings. Thus, a semi-structured interview was an appropriate data collection tool for gaining authentic and relevant data.

3.3. Data analysis and ethical considerations

The primary qualitative data gathered through the semi-structured interviews with parents was analyzed through the thematic analysis based on the framework provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). According to this framework, the phases of thematic analysis consist of familiarization with the data, generation of preliminary codes, locating thematic patterns, reviewing the patterns, defining and naming themes, and generating the report. The responses of the participants were transcribed before proceeding with the thematic analysis to avoid any potential errors. The thematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify recurring patterns in parents' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of EFL teaching in early education programs. In addition, the present study's authenticity and credibility are evident from its compliance with primary ethical considerations of research. The researcher gained the informed consent of participants before inviting them for interviews. No personal or sensitive data related to students or the preschools was accessed. Parents were familiarized with the implications of their participation in the interview and the purpose of the study. The researcher also ensured parents of their anonymous participation in the interview and their privacy was ensured. Thus,

the present study is ethically grounded and does not breach any ethical principles of the research.

4. FINDINGS

The researcher used the thematic analysis as prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to generate themes in the qualitative data. Figure 4.1 shows the major themes as identified from the interviews.

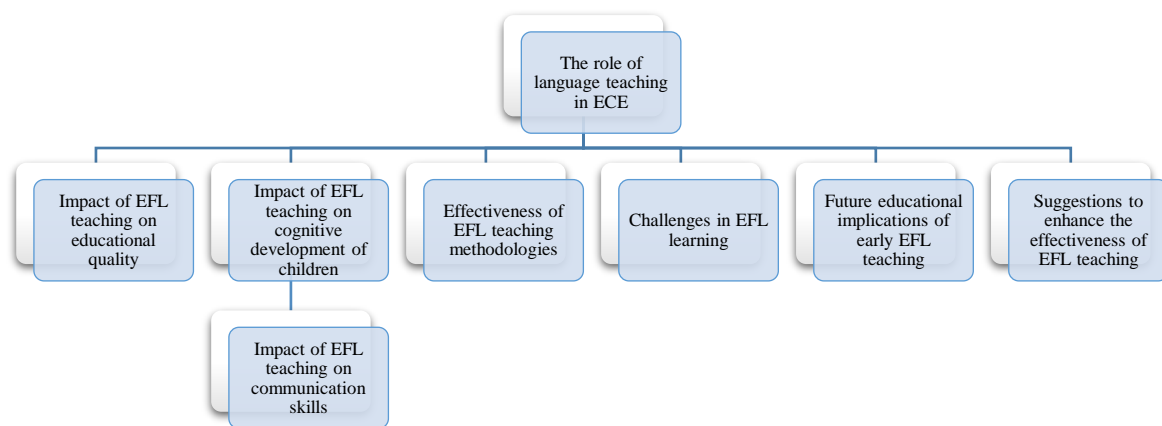


Figure 1: Conceptual map of themes

4.1. Impact of EFL teaching on educational quality

Parents shared a consensus regarding the significant role of EFL teaching in enhancing the educational quality of their children. EFL teaching was perceived by parents as a robust instrument to lay the foundation of their children's language competency and cultural awareness. This would help make children globally competent and aware of cultural diversity through language. In addition, EFL teaching fosters the early literacy development of children and enhances their early language acquisition. Moreover, EFL teaching is a significant way to bring children together to gain a shared learning experience, which would enhance their collaborative skills and enrich their learning experience. Parents also emphasize that EFL teaching encourages parental involvement in a child's early education through various collaborative and integrated projects and activities. In addition, parents believed that the early years of education were a critical period of language acquisition, therefore, the integration of EFL programs in this stage of education would help their child acquire English more

effectively. As the fifth respondent shared his opinion regarding the language acquisition in the early years:

Undeniably, the earlier it is, the more effective it going to be in terms of pronunciation. If you enrol your child in EFL programs during the early years, it enhances the language acquisition process.

4.2. Impact of EFL teaching on the cognitive development of children

When asked about the impact of EFL teaching on the cognitive development of their child, parents had positive opinions. Almost all of the participants emphasized the significant impact of EFL teaching activities on their child's memory retention and problem-solving skills. The comprehension of a foreign language requires an individual to adapt to foreign structures of syntax and vocabulary. Almost all of the parents seemed optimistic regarding their child's ability to adapt to foreign linguistic structures. Moreover, the participants shared that their children seemed to analyze and comprehend things more swiftly than before. In addition, EFL teaching activities were very helpful in enhancing the attention span of children, which was beneficial for other academic activities as well. Respondents also highlighted the role of EFL teaching in making children aware of their thinking processes, which helped them use their problem-solving skills more effectively. The third respondent specifically highlighted the significant impact of the cognitive development of the child catalyzed by EFL programs on other academic activities:

I've observed that the cognitive skills developed through learning EFL have been helpful in other academic areas of my child as well.

4.2.1. Impact of EFL teaching on communication skills

All of the participants put specific emphasis on the contributions of EFL teaching towards the communication skills of their children. The participants had a consensus regarding the impact of EFL teaching on the enrichment of their child's vocabulary in English. The use of the English language in the classroom helped children develop a cross-cultural understanding and grasp the comprehension of sentences being delivered in the English language. Furthermore, EFL teaching familiarized children with various communication styles and subsequently developed their sensitivity to these styles. Moreover, children showed more eagerness to express their needs and feelings in the English language as highlighted by the seventh respondent:

My child is now able to express himself using the English language and his comprehension of the language has also improved a great deal.

4.3. Effectiveness of EFL teaching methodologies

Parents were also asked about their direct interactions with EFL teachers and close observations of teaching methodologies adopted by them. Parents appreciated the focus of EFL teachers in adopting an interactive teaching style, which ensured student engagement in classroom activities. The use of various games and hands-on activities enhanced children's motivation to actively participate in classroom activities. Parents also highlighted the use of various stories and media that not only helped children acquire the English language but also familiarized them with various cultural elements. The emphasis of teachers on hands-on activities made the whole learning experience very comprehensive and holistic for children. In addition, parents also mentioned the use of online tools and multimedia to replace the traditional mode of teaching. Preschoolers should be provided with a joyful learning experience. Therefore, EFL teachers also focused on the integration of such activities that made the whole learning experience an interesting and joyful experience for students. In addition, parents also appreciated teachers' focus on creating a collaborative learning environment where children acquired language through interaction with their peers, as emphasized by the sixth respondent:

I've observed my child's EFL teachers create a collaborative learning environment to enhance peer interactions in the classroom, which has been very effective.

4.4. Challenges in EFL learning

Not all of the parents were completely satisfied with the effectiveness of EFL teaching in their child's preschool. Some of them showed great concern about the challenges their child was facing while trying to keep pace with a foreign language. Parents found it very challenging to make their children adjust to an English-speaking environment, particularly during the early phases of the education program. Learning unfamiliar vocabulary in a foreign language also proved to be a difficult challenge for their children. In particular, the parents who themselves did not possess language proficiency in the English language found it very challenging to help their child adjust to EFL teaching. In addition, it was also challenging for children to navigate between the English language and their native language. Parents of introverted children showed concerns regarding the hesitation of their children to participate in classroom activities. Sometimes, children were also unable to understand the context-specific concepts in the

English language. Above all, the biggest concern of most parents was their children's constant disposition to compare themselves with their peers in terms of language proficiency, as mentioned by the ninth respondent:

The thing that I'm the most concerned about and find challenging is my child's habit of comparing his language proficiency with that of the smart children in the class.

4.5. Future educational implications of early EFL teaching

The biggest motive of parents behind enrolling their children in EFL teaching programs turned out to be their perceptions regarding its future implications. Parents were quite optimistic about the future implications of EFL teaching for their children's educational journey. They believed that early EFL exposure would lay a strong foundation for future language acquisition of their children. Moreover, parents were of the opinion this early exposure would help make their children comfortable with foreign languages and cultures early in their lives, which would be quite beneficial in their future. Parents also mentioned the increased academic interest of their children due to EFL teaching, which would help them excel in their future academic endeavors. In addition, the use of various multimedia and online tools familiarized students with various learning styles, setting the foundation for future learning experiences, as highlighted by the third respondent:

The uses of multimedia and various other tools have the potential to help students adapt to various teaching styles, which would facilitate them in their future academic ventures.

4.6. Suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of EFL teaching

Parents were also encouraged to share their suggestions regarding the ways to enhance the effectiveness of EFL teaching in early education programs. The participants came up with a variety of suggestions. Some of them emphasized the integration of more play-based teaching activities while others focused on the use of more visual aids. The storytelling strategy was also suggested to be practiced more frequently by one of the participants. Some of the parents also suggested catering to the individual needs of children to provide a holistic and inclusive learning environment. Participants also mentioned the need to create a positive environment where introverted children would feel the need to express themselves without any fear or hesitation. Participants also suggested that parents should be engaged in language learning

activities so that they can be involved in the learning experiences of their children, as highlighted by the tenth respondent:

I believe teachers should design such learning activities, which require collaborative efforts by parents to ensure their engagement.

5. Discussion

5.1. A strong foundation

The present section is concerned with the discussion of the primary findings of the study regarding the impact of EFL teaching on the educational quality of early child education in China. One of the most significant findings of the study is the affirmation of the significance of EFL teaching for building a strong foundation for a child's language acquisition and proficiency. In addition, this strong foundation would help children excel in other academic activities. EFL teaching has the potential to enrich the learning experience of children by engaging them in a collaborative learning environment, where they learn through interactions with their teachers and peers. Furthermore, the study reveals how EFL teaching activities emphasize parental involvement in a child's early education so that the parents can be engaged in the child's early educational journey and provide the necessary support for their child to have an excellent learning experience. The present study reveals that EFL teaching in early childhood education is highly significant as it is the most critical period of life in terms of language acquisition and exposure to a foreign language in this period would help the child acquire the language more effectively.

5.2. Robust cognitive development

Another significant finding of the present study is its revelation regarding the robust impact of early EFL teaching on the child's cognitive development. Early exposure to EFL teaching activities helps enhance the problem-solving skills and memory retention of the children. When children are exposed to the structure and vocabulary of a foreign language in the early years of education, it helps them adapt to the foreign language more effectively. The study reveals that EFL teaching encourages children to analyze and comprehend things more effectively as it enhances their attention span. Having a sufficient attention span during the early years of education would help children obtain several academic achievements. EFL teaching activities familiarize children with their thinking processes, which hone their problem-solving skills

through various language-based activities. Moreover, the study particularly emphasizes the significant impact of EFL teaching on the communication skills of children during the early years of education. EFL teaching encourages children to express themselves in a foreign language more efficiently. As a result, children start expressing themselves in a more effective manner and engage in conversations with their peers more frequently. Furthermore, the use of the English language in a classroom enhances the cross-cultural understanding of children, which would help make them globally competent individuals in future. Previously, Trebits et al. (2022) highlighted the significant role of early EFL teaching in the robust cognitive development of children compared to those who were not exposed to an EFL environment.

5.3. Effective EFL teaching

The study emphasizes the parents' perceptions regarding the EFL teaching practices, which are already in use. The study reveals the use of interactive teaching styles in EFL classrooms, which enhanced the engagement of children in classroom activities by providing a child-centered classroom environment. In addition, the findings highlight the use of games and hands-on activities to make learning exciting and interesting for children. Furthermore, the findings reveal the incorporation of various online tools in teaching practices to replace the traditional mode of teaching with a more interesting method of teaching. The participants of the study showed a great level of satisfaction with the practice of these activities to provide a joyful learning experience to their children. However, some of the participants also highlighted their concerns regarding several challenges faced by their children in an EFL classroom. Thus, the study also delineates the challenges faced by children and their parents due to EFL instructions. The findings highlight the challenge associated with adjusting to a foreign language-speaking environment, particularly for those children who came from non-English speaking households. As a result, it was difficult for them to navigate between two starkly different languages. Another significant finding of the present study is concerning introverted children who often feel reluctant to express themselves in a foreign language. Another biggest challenge highlighted in the findings is children's habits of comparing their language proficiency with those of others. The present study's findings also highlight various ways to overcome these challenges and make EFL learning holistic and inclusive. Promoting play-based language learning would make the learning experience more joyful for all of the children, making the classroom an inclusive environment where nobody feels left out. In addition, EFL teachers should cater to the individual needs of every child, the introverted ones, in particular.

In addition, teachers should design such teaching activities, which invite parents to collaborate and get engaged in their children's language acquisition experience. Choi et al. (2019) have also highlighted the significant role of mothers in enhancing children's interest in the English language in the EFL context. The findings of the present study align with those of Mohamed and Shaaban (2021) emphasising the efficacy of educational games in EFL classrooms during the early years of education.

5.4. Conclusion

The present study has offered valuable findings regarding the subjective experiences and perceptions of parents whose children are enrolled in early EFL education. Relying on semi-structured interviews, the study gathered rich qualitative data, which was later thematically analyzed to delineate the findings of the study. Early EFL education emerges as a robust instrument for providing a comprehensive, holistic, and joyful learning experience to students. Moreover, it lays a strong educational foundation for students, which has future implications for children's subsequent educational ventures. Thus, early EFL education not only enhances the cognitive development of children but also sets the ground for their future academic achievements.

5.5. Research implications

The present study offers valuable theoretical as well as pedagogical implications for early EFL teaching.

5.5.1. Theoretical implications

The present study makes significant contributions to the theoretical literature of social cognitive theory and social interaction theory in the context of EFL teaching. The study offers a validation of the theoretical foundation of these two theories in the context of early EFL teaching in China. By considering the key tenets of cognition as presented in the social cognitive theory, the present study affirms the significant impact of early EFL teaching on children's cognitive development. Thus, the present study advances the ongoing discourse on the efficacy of early EFL teaching for enriching the cognitive skills of children. Social interaction theory highlights the role of peer interaction in the skill enrichment of individuals. The present study makes a valuable contribution to the theoretical literature of social interaction

theory by revealing the role of a collaborative learning environment on children's early language acquisition.

5.5.2. Pedagogical implications

The findings of the present study offer several pedagogical implications for early EFL teachers to enhance the learning experiences of children. The semi-structured interviews with parents highlighted the effective teaching practices for early EFL classrooms. The use of play-based activities and multimedia can transform the traditional mode of teaching by making it more appealing and interesting for children. Moreover, modern-day classrooms should focus on creating inclusive and child-centered classrooms where no child feels left out and is encouraged to express himself more frequently. In addition, teachers should invite parents to collaborate to make the EFL learning experience more effective and joyful for children. The findings of the study imply that parental involvement can offer a more effective EFL learning experience for children as it would be easier for them to navigate between their native and foreign languages.

5.6. Limitations and future directions

The present study offers valuable findings regarding the role of EFL teaching in the context of early childhood education in China and holds valuable pedagogical implications. However, it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of the study to offer directions for future studies in this field. The present study focuses on the context of China and its findings align with the EFL scenario in China. Therefore, these findings may not resonate with other countries where EFL programs are provided during the early years of education. Future studies can target other demographics to examine the situation of EFL teaching in those countries. Moreover, future researchers can draw a comparison between the early EFL education in China and that in some other countries. The present study is qualitative and, therefore, does not provide any statistical findings. Future studies can adopt a quantitative research design to provide statistical and measurable findings, which would lead to generalizable conclusions regarding the role of EFL teaching in enhancing the quality of early childhood education.

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Appendix

1. How do you perceive the impact of EFL teaching on early education of your child?
2. In your opinion, what are the primary benefits of integrating EFL instruction into early child education programs?
3. How has EFL instruction contributed to the cognitive development of your child, including problem-solving skills and memory?
4. Can you share specific examples where you observed a significant impact of EFL instruction on the learning experience of your child?
5. How has EFL instruction influenced the communication skills of your child?
6. From your interactions with your child's teachers, what do you perceive regarding their teaching methodologies to incorporate EFL instruction in the overall curriculum?
7. Have you witnessed your child facing any challenges due to the EFL instruction in the classroom?
8. In what ways do you perceive EFL instruction to be influential for the future educational experiences of your child?

9. Have you observed any differences in the learning outcomes of children who receive EFL instruction and of those who do not?
10. Can you share any suggestions or ways to enhance the effectiveness of EFL teaching for enhancing the educational quality of children in early childhood education centers?