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PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PARENTS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Abstract: The aim of the work is to examine the opinions of teachers and parents about partnership relations in order to improve students' communication skills in English. The research was conducted using two instruments specially constructed for the purposes of the research. The sample included 64 teachers and 65 parents from the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The obtained results show positive attitudes towards the development of partnership in both groups of respondents, but also the existence of a statistically significant difference between both groups, whereby the attitudes of parents are significantly more positive. The results of the research indicate the importance of the contribution of affirming positive interpersonal attitudes, both of teachers and parents, which are important in the establishment of partnership relations towards the improvement of students' communication skills in English as a foreign language. Regarding the limitations of the research, the research was conducted on a limited sample, so caution should be exercised when generalizing the results. It should also be taken into account that the teachers and parents surveyed are from different parts of the Republic of Serbia, so it is not possible to know whether there is a certain deviation depending on the region or municipality. It is recommended to conduct the research that include the students' views in the survey in order to get a more complete picture.

Keywords: *partnerships in education, communication skills, English language in teaching, parents and teacher cooperation.*

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Introduction

In today's globalized world, knowing foreign languages, particularly English, is crucial due to modern technology and the constant need for information. Communication and business rely heavily on partnerships worldwide, utilizing the internet, robotics, and artificial intelligence. English stands out as the universal language, dominating world media, film, music, TV, and information technology.

Effective education and the quality of acquired skills require the maximum involvement of participants in education, i.e., teachers and students, but also the family as the primary environment of the student. Having in mind complexity of this process, there is a need for partnership in education. Partnership is based on the assumption that different actors combine their strengths and resources in making decisions and undertaking activities towards a common goal, which in education means creating optimal conditions for learning and child development (Knight-McKenna & Hollingsworth, 2016; Lekli & Kaloti, 2015; Pavlović-Breneselović, 2010; Plummer, 2011). This further emphasizes the need for a partnership between parents and teachers, in order to effectively educate the child.

Recognizing the importance of communication skills in the English language, as well as the importance of establishing partnership relations between family and school, this work focuses on enhancing students' English communication skills through teacher-parent partnership. It explores the concept of educational partnership, particularly between teachers and parents, and presents empirical research findings on their attitudes toward improving students' English language abilities.

Theoretical framework of research

The English language in education and school curriculum. Globalization, emerging post-WWII, connects nations economically and culturally. It facilitates access to foreign businesses, education, and entertainment, with language being a pivotal aspect (Krešić, 1996). In the 21st century, life poses numerous challenges requiring continual adaptation. Education systems aim to prepare students for this rapidly changing world by focusing on acquiring essential skills beyond basic formal education (Savić, 2014). Therefore, modern education systems focus on the acquisition of skills that are necessary to achieve these goals.

The role of the Internet in everyday life leads to the daily use of the English language, especially among younger generations around the world (Al-Kadi & Ahmed, 2018; Lekawael, 2017; Pašalić & Marinov, 2008). English becomes part of their daily life and communication. International education means attending classes in English, while scientific papers are written in English in addition to the native

language. English dominates all institutions of the European Union and many other countries.

Contemporary authors often try to define the skills necessary for success in the 21st century. Shin believes that in the United States of America the key areas relate to awareness of the global world, economic, financial, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic, health and environmental literacy, which should be developed through the so-called “7K skills” (Shin, 2014), which include communication, cross-cultural understanding, critical thinking, career, computer literacy, creativity and collaboration.

Teaching English to children can unlock numerous benefits, including improved global communication, cultural understanding, self-confidence, leadership skills, and enhanced critical thinking (Savić, 2013). To maximize these benefits, teaching methods should foster creativity, cooperation, empathy, respect, and intercultural dialogue while avoiding stereotypes and condemnation.

Certain studies have also shown that knowing two or more foreign languages has a positive effect on the brain and reduces the risk of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia due to aging (Bučić, Spasić, Petrović, 2020). Also, the results of the research conducted by Ellen Bialystok (Bialystok, 2004) show that bilingualism enables better thinking and more efficient solving of complex tasks, but also slows down cognitive deterioration in old age. This further affects the individual’s business performance, the development of active listening skills, communication skills and increased tolerance for diversity.

External motivation is crucial for learning English. Students primarily learn in the classroom and at home. In foreign language learning, reading, writing, and listening typically precede speaking (Shastri, 2009). Savić notes that teachers rely heavily on textbooks and notebooks, limiting opportunities for authentic communication (Savić, 2014). Lado believes that the goal of learning a foreign language is “the ability to use the language, understanding the meanings and connotations in terms of the target language and culture, as well as the ability to understand the speech and writing of the native speakers of the target culture in terms of their great ideas and achievements” (Lado, 1964: 25). Therefore, when acquiring knowledge of a foreign language, we must take into account the social factor, which entails economic, cultural, political and other aspects.

Partnership in education as a way of developing communication skills in English

A modern school must evolve and adapt to societal changes by fostering a learning community. Transforming the education system involves redefining the roles of teachers, students, professionals, parents, and the broader community. This necessitates fostering partnerships in education.

Partnership, as defined by contemporary authors, entails cooperative work toward shared goals, involving a division of power and responsibility, resource sharing, risk sharing, and mutual benefit (Rodal & Mulder, 1993). In addition to common goals, partnership is defined by other concepts: relationship (collaborative), responsibility (joint), distribution of power (equality), quality communication (negotiation, harmony), energy (action) (Sekulić-Majurec, 2007).

According to some contemporary authors, partnership can be defined as a relationship between two or more parties, who have agreed to work cooperatively towards a common and/or compatible goal and in which there is: division of power and responsibility, connection and sharing of resources, division of responsibilities and joint assumption of risks as well as mutual benefit (Rodal & Mulder, 1993).

The term partnership is becoming an indispensable part of education in the modern world, where modern education implies constant cooperation between all participants at all levels of the education system. Namely, different actors connect and combine their strengths and resources in making decisions and undertaking activities towards a common goal (Breneselović-Pavlović, 2010), therefore creating optimal conditions for education, learning and child development.

Pavlović-Breneselović advocates for a systemic approach to partnership, emphasizing a holistic and process-oriented perspective. This approach views partnership as a complex system comprising interconnected social, programmatic, personal, and restrictive dimensions. It involves reconceptualizing roles across these dimensions, shifting from power over others to power with others in the social context, emphasizing dialogue at the program level, encouraging invitation and participation at the organizational level, and fostering trust at the personal level. From the dimensions of partnership defined in this way, the following features of the partnership relationship arise: equality, competence, complementarity, authenticity, democracy (Pavlović-Breneselović, 2010). An effective partner relationship is built and manifested through a common field of action and depends on each individual participating in the relationship, as well as on the entire context of action. What will be the nature of the relationship depends on the aspirations, beliefs, actions and reactions of each actor of the relationship.

When it comes to the benefits of the partnership between the family and the educational institution, some studies have pointed to the importance of the active involvement of parents in the child's education. Positive effects can be e.g., a better impression of parents about the school and teachers, but also about students, which results in reducing negative behaviour among students and achieving a better atmosphere in the school (Hornby, 2011). This further leads to better communication between parents and teachers, which encourages higher expectations of parents from children, and consequently leads to improvement of the child's habits and better success in school. The results of various researches (Henderson & Berla 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) showed that there is a close relationship between parental involvement and students' school achievements, attendance, homework,

grades and educational aspirations, a more positive attitude towards school in general and a smaller number of students who drop out of school.

The relationship between families and schools is complex and subject to debate, primarily due to differences in defining their roles, nature, and objectives (Pavlović-Breneselović, 2014). These disparities stem from varying perspectives on education's purpose and, consequently, on the role of this relationship. Effective communication and mutual understanding are essential for a successful partnership between families and schools. Both parties must communicate openly about issues, propose solutions, and seek ways to enhance cooperation to ensure the student's academic success.

Research methodology

The main subject of this research is dynamic process of partnership between teachers and parents related to the development of communication skills among children. Therefore, the aim of this research is to determine the possibilities of improving students' communication skills in English as foreign language through the partnership of family and school, based on the opinion of teachers and parents.

The following research tasks arise from the research objective set in this way:

- (1) Examine the opinions of teachers and parents about the importance of communication skills in English as foreign language.
- (2) Examine the opinions of teachers and parents about current forms of partnership cooperation aimed for development of communication skills in English as foreign language.
- (3) Examine the opinions of teachers and parents about the future possibilities of improving partnership cooperation in order to develop students' communication skills in English as foreign language.
- (4) To determine whether there are differences in the attitudes of parents and teachers about cooperation partnership in order to improve students' communication skills in English as foreign language related to the specific characteristics of parents and teachers (level of formal education of parents, number of foreign languages parents use and length of work experience of teachers).

The descriptive method will be used in the research. Data will be collected using two instruments, each consisting of 16 items (32 in total) divided in four categories related to the appropriate research tasks. Each statement is evaluated on a five-point Likert-type frequency scale (range from 1 to 5) where higher value represents stronger level of agreement with the statement.

Assessment scales are specially constructed for this research purposes by using guidelines and models from similar instruments that are examined cooperation and partnerships between teachers and parents.

The sample consists of parents and teachers of children who attend classes in English as foreign language.

The sample is chosen from the pool of available participants who are voluntarily accepted to participate in research and in total of 64 foreign language teachers in primary and private schools and 65 parents. Therefore, the relevant population consist of teachers and parents from primary and private foreign language schools from the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

Analysis of research results

Attitudes of teachers and parents about the importance of communication skills in English language. The first task of the research is to examine the views of teachers and parents about the importance of communication skills in the English language.

In this regard, first six items were analysed, which represents the sum of the respondents' degree of agreement with the first six items, which refer to the attitudes of teachers and parents about the importance of communication skills in the English language for students.

Table 1. Descriptive statistical indicators for first six items depending on the group of respondents

Group	Number of respondents (N)	Arithmetic mean (\bar{X})	Standard deviation (SD)	Minimum (Min.)	Maximum (Max.)
Teachers	64	27.16	2.53	18	30
Parents	65	28.38	2.58	19	30

Descriptive statistics for each of the 6 items, which refer to teachers' attitudes about the importance of communication skills in the English language, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistical indicators for variables related to teachers' attitudes about the importance of students' communication skills in English

Statement (Item)	N	AM (\bar{X})	SD	Min.	Max.
Communication skills in the English language are important for a child's general education.	64	4.64	.68	2	5
Having communication skills in the English language can be an advantage when acquiring formal education.	64	4.78	.45	3	5
Having communication skills in the English language can be an advantage when enrolling in secondary school.	64	3.66	1.10	1	5
Having communication skills in the English language can be an advantage enrolling in a university.	64	4.27	.93	1	5
Having communication skills in the English language can be an advantage during professional development abroad.	64	5.00	.00	5	5
Communication skills in the English language are an advantage in job searching.	64	4.81	.47	3	5

Based on presented data (AM (\bar{X}), SD and sig. less than .05) of the teacher's degree of agreement with each of the six items, where the arithmetic mean is greater than 4.5 on 4 of the 6 items, greater than 4 on 5 of the 6 items, and only one item has an arithmetic mean between 3.5 and 4, we can conclude that teachers highly value the importance of improving students' communication skills in the English language. By the fact that the sum of the arithmetic means which represents the degree of agreement with the given six items, is equal to 27.16, which is a high value, we confirm that teachers have extremely positive attitudes about the importance of improving communication skills.

Table 3. Descriptive statistical indicators for six variables related to parents' attitudes about the importance of students' communication skills in English

Statement (Item)	N	AM(\bar{X})	SD	Min.	Max.
Communication skills in the English language are important for a child's general education.	65	4.83	.52	3	5
Having communication skills in the English language can be an advantage when acquiring formal education.	65	4.86	.46	3	5

Statement (Item)	N	AM(\bar{X})	SD	Min.	Max.
Having communication skills in the English language can be an advantage when enrolling in secondary school.	65	4.32	1.03	1	5
Having communication skills in the English language can be an advantage when enrolling in a university.	65	4.57	.83	1	5
Having communication skills in the English language can be an advantage during professional development abroad.	65	4.97	.17	4	5
Communication skills in the English language are an advantage in job searching.	65	4.83	.42	3	5

According to the values in Table 3 (AM (\bar{X}), SD and sig. less than .05) related to the parents' agreement with each of the six items, as each is greater than 4.5, except for one parameter (which is 4.32 and greater than 4), we can conclude that parents highly value the importance of improving students' communication skills in the English language. Additionally, the total score of agreement with all six items for parents has an arithmetic mean of 28.38, which is extremely high (minimum is 6, maximum 30), we confirm that parents highly value the importance of improving communication skills. Based on the obtained results, we can conclude that both teachers and parents highly value the importance of improving students' communication skills in the English language.

Observing the distribution of values regarding first six items in the group of teachers and the group of parents, and based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, we conclude that neither the first nor the second variable has a normal distribution, because the significance is less than .05, therefore we examine potential differences in attitudes with the corresponding non-parametric Mann-Whitney test presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Difference in attitudes about the importance of improving students' communication skills in the English language between groups of teachers and parents

Group	Number of respondents	Rank mean Sum	Sum of ranks	Mann-Whitney test results	
				Z	P(2-tailed)
Teachers	64	54.20	3468.5	-3.255	.001
Parents	65	75.64	4916.5		

As the significance is equal to .001, which is less than .05, we accept that there are differences in attitudes, and by comparing the arithmetic means of the total scores $27.16 < 28.38$, we conclude that parents have significantly more positive attitudes about the importance of students' communication skills in English.

Attitudes of teachers and parents about current partnership cooperation aimed at developing communication skills in the English language

The next task is related to the examination of teachers' and parents' views on the current partnership cooperation in order to develop students' communication skills in the English language. Accordingly, we analysed degree of agreement with the four items which are related to the attitudes of teachers and parents about the current partnership in order to improve students' communication skills in the English language.

Table 5. Descriptive statistical indicators regarding current partnership cooperation depending on the group of respondents

Group	Number of responders (N)	Arithmetic mean (\bar{X})	Standard deviation (SD)	Minimum (Min.)	Maximum (Max.)
Teachers	64	12.17	3.43	4	20
Parents	65	13.48	5.59	4	20

Descriptive statistics for each of the 4 items, which refer to teachers' attitudes about current partnership cooperation aimed at developing students' communication skills in the English language, are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Descriptive statistical indicators for variables related to teachers' attitudes about current partnership cooperation aimed at developing communication skills in the English language

Statement (Item)	N	AM (\bar{X})	SD	Min.	Max.
There is an effective partnership between family and in order to acquire communication skills in the English language in students.	64	3.16	1.04	1	5
Parents are involved in the work of students to acquire and improve communication skills.	64	3.08	.98	1	5
Parents express interest in becoming more actively involved in their children's work on acquiring communication skills in the English language.	64	2.91	1.02	1	5
Parents and teachers work together to solve problem in acquiring and improving students' communication skills.	64	3.03	.98	1	5

Based on descriptive values in Table 6 (AM (\bar{X}), SD and sig. greater than .05) related to the agreement of the teachers with each of the four items, as three values are higher than 3, and one is slightly lower than 3, we can conclude that there is a certain degree of satisfaction with the current state of partnership cooperation. The total score of the arithmetic means is 12.17 (the maximum is 20), which further implies that satisfaction exists, but not at a high level.

In the following table, we can see descriptive statistics for each of the 4 items, which refer to parents' views on the current partner cooperation.

Table 7. Descriptive statistical indicators for variables related to parents' attitudes about current partnership cooperation aimed at developing communication skills in the English language

Statement (Item)	N	AM (\bar{X})	SD	Min.	Max.
There is an effective partnership between family and school in order to acquire communication skills in the English language in students.	65	3.51	1.43	1	5
Parents are involved in the work of students to acquire and improve communication skills.	65	3.11	1.64	1	5
Parents express interest in becoming more actively involved in their childrens work on acquiring communication skills in the English language.	65	3.51	1.51	1	5
Parents and teachers work together to solve problems in acquiring and improving students' communication skills.	65	3.35	1.65	1	5

Similar to teachers, the values for parents are between 3.5 and 5, that is, all values are greater than 2.5, so we can conclude that there is satisfaction with the current forms of partnership cooperation. The arithmetic mean total is 13.38, which is greater than 10 (the maximum is 20), i.e. as with teachers, satisfaction exists, but not at a high level. However, it is at a slightly higher level than the level of teacher satisfaction.

If we observe the distribution of these scores in the group of teachers and parents, based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, we conclude that the significance in the group of teachers is equal to .5145, which is greater than .05, that is a normal distribution. However, in the group of parents we have a significance lower than .05, there is no normal distribution, which further leads us to the Mann-Whitney test.

Table 8. Difference in attitudes about current partnership cooperation aimed at developing communication skills in the English language

Group	Number of respondents	Rank mean Sum	Sum of ranks	Mann-Whitney test results	
				Z	p (2-tailed)
Teachers	64	58.72	3758	-1.891	.058
Parents	65	71.18	4627		

Since the significance is equal to .058, which is greater than .05, we accept that there are no statistically significant differences regarding items related to the current partnership cooperation in the group of teachers and the group of parents.

It is important in relation to this task that both in the group of teachers and in the group of parents we have reached a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 20, which further implies that some parents and some teachers did not agree with any of the items of this group, while some agreed with to all items, which means that the answers in both groups varied. Based on the standard deviation, which is significantly higher for parents than for teachers, we conclude that the variation in answers is more pronounced for parents.

The opinions of teachers and parents on the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation in order to develop communication skills in the English language

One of the tasks of the research was related to examining the attitudes of teachers and parents about the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation in order to develop students' communication skills in the English language. In accordance with that, we analysed the sum of the respondents' degree of agreement with the last six items, which refer to the attitudes of teachers and parents about the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation in order to develop students' communication skills in the English language.

Table 9. Descriptive statistical indicators for variable related to the attitudes of teachers and parents about the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation depending on the group of respondents

Group	Number of responders (N)	Arithmetic mean (\bar{X})	Standard deviation (SD)	Minimum (Min.)	Maximum (Max.)
Teachers	64	25.08	3.78	17	30
Parents	65	27.08	3.95	13	30

Table 10 gives us an insight into the descriptive statistics for each of the 6 items, which refer to teachers' attitudes about the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation in order to develop students' communication skills in the English language.

Table 10. Descriptive statistical indicators for variables related to teachers' attitudes about the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation in order to develop students' communication skills in the English language

Statement (Item)	N	AM(\bar{X})	SD	Min.	Max.
The partnership between teachers and parent can be improved by more frequent interaction between the actors of the partnership.	64	4.27	.76	2	5
Children's communication skills in the English language can be improved by more frequent involvement of parents in children's work.	64	4.00	.91	2	5
Children's communication skills in the English language can be improved by organizing interactive workshops in which parents and children will participate.	64	4.00	.89	2	5
Children's communication skills in the English language can be improved by giving them more creative homework, which will encourage the joint work of parents and children.	64	4.19	.91	3	5
Communication skills in the English language can be improved using modern technologies, under the control of parents and teachers.	64	4.61	.66	2	5
Children's communication skills in a foreign language can be improved by more effective participation of parents in their acquisition.	64	4.02	.93	2	5

Observing the statistical values in Table 10 (AM (\bar{X}), SD and sig. less than .05) degree of agreement of teachers with each of the six items (all values are greater than 4), we can conclude that teachers have positive attitudes regarding the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation. As the arithmetic mean which represents the sum of the teachers' degree of agreement with the given six items, is equal to 25.08, it confirms that the teachers have positive attitudes about the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation in order to develop students' communication skills in the English language.

Descriptive statistics for each of the 6 items, which refer to parents' views on the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Descriptive statistical indicators for variables related to parents' attitudes about the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation in order to develop students' communication skills in the English language

Statement (Item)	N	AM(\bar{X})	SD	Min.	Max.
The partnership between teachers and parent can be improved by more frequent interaction between the actors of the partnership.	65	4.37	.94	1	5
Children's communication skills in the English language can be improved by more frequent involvement of parents in children's work.	65	4.62	.76	1	5
Children's communication skills in the English language can be improved by organizing interactive workshops in which parents and children will participate.	65	4.42	.92	1	5
Children's communication skills in the English language can be improved by giving them more creative homework, which will encourage the joint work of parents and children.	65	4.46	.87	1	5
Communication skills in the English language can be improved using modern technologies, under the control of parents and teachers.	65	4.69	.71	1	5
Children's communication skills in a foreign language can be improved by more effective participation of parents in their acquisition.	65	4.52	1.09	1	5

Arithmetic means of parents' degree of agreement with each of the six items are over 4, that is, the total score is 27.08, which is extremely high, and this further implies that parents' views on the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation are extremely positive.

Based on the given results, it can be assumed that the degree of agreement between teachers and parents on the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation differs. Variable, based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, in both groups is less than .05, so they do not have a normal distribution. Potential overall differences in teachers' and parents' attitudes to the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation were examined with the appropriate, non-parametric Mann-Whitney test.

Table 12. The difference in attitudes about the possibilities of improving partnership cooperation in order to develop students' communication skills in the English language

Group	Number of respondents	Rank mean Sum	Sum of ranks	Mann-Whitney results	
				Z	P(2-tailed)
Teachers	64	53.82	3444.5	-3.368	.0007
Parents	65	76.01	4940.5		

The result of the Mann-Whitney test gives a significance of .0007, which is less than .05, therefore we conclude that there are statistically significant differences in attitudes. Looking at the arithmetic averages, we can notice that parents have more positive attitudes, and we get the same result looking at the medians, which is 25.5 for teachers and 28 for parents.

With this, the fourth task of this research was accomplished, by which we determine that teachers and parents can clearly recognize the methods through which children's communication skills in the English language can be improved, through the partnership of parents and teachers.

Differences in the attitudes of parents in relation to the level of formal education of the parents and the number of foreign languages used by the parent

In order to examine potential differences in the attitudes of parents in relation to their level of formal education and the number of foreign languages they use, due to the size of the sample, the group of parents was further divided into the following groups: parents with lower education, (elementary and high school) and parents with higher education (completed university, master's or doctoral studies). Also, two another two group of parents are formed, parents who speak just one foreign language; and parents who speak two or more foreign languages.

We use the Shapiro-Wilk test when examining the differences in the attitudes of parents in relation to their professional education. This test is used when the sample size is less than 50 respondents, and in our case, we have 19 respondents in the first group and 46 in the second group. Based on that test, we get that the significance is less than .05 in both groups, so we conclude that the feature does not have a normal distribution in any group. Therefore, we use the Mann-Whitney test and obtain a significance of .0903, which is greater than .05, therefore we accept that there are no statistically significant differences between these two groups of respondents.

Table 13. Differences in parents' attitudes in relation to professional education

Group	Number of respondents	Rank mean Sum	Sum of ranks	Mann-Whitney results	
				Z	P(2-tailed)
Parents with low formal education	19	39.21	745	1.695	.0903
Parents with high formal education	46	30.43	1400		

When analysing differences in parental attitudes based on the number of foreign languages they use, the Shapiro-Wilk test is employed due to sample size considerations. For the first group, the significance is below .05, indicating a non-normal distribution of scores. However, for the second group, the significance is above .05, confirming a normal distribution. Subsequently, the Mann-Whitney test is applied to the results of the first group. The obtained significance, .1807, exceeds .05, suggesting no statistically significant differences in parental attitudes based on the number of foreign languages they speak.

Table 14. Differences in parents' attitudes in relation to the number of foreign languages they use

Group	Number of respondents	Rank mean Sum	Sum of ranks	Mann-Whitney results	
				Z	P(2-tailed)
Parents who use one foreign language	43	33.55	1442.5	1.336	.1807
Parents who use two or more foreign languages	19	26.87	510.5		

Based on the obtained results, we conclude that there are no differences in the attitudes of parents in relation to the level of formal education and the number of foreign languages they use.

Differences in teachers' attitudes in relation to the length of work experience

In order to examine the potential differences of teachers in relation to length of service we divide teachers into the following groups: teachers with less than 10 years of experience and teachers with more than 10 years of experience, that includes teachers who work in private schools, teachers working in public schools, and teachers employed in both private and public schools.

In order to examine the differences in teachers' attitudes in relation to work experience, due to the size of the sample, we use the Shapiro-Wilk test, which gives significances greater than .05 in both groups, so it is concluded that the characteristic score of teachers in both groups has a normal distribution. That's why we use the Student's t-test to examine the differences, which gives a significance of .2436. Since the result is greater than .05, we accept that there are no statistically significant differences in the respondents' attitudes. However, the obtained effect size is .307, which indicates a small effect.

Table 15. Differences in teachers' attitudes in relation to the length of work experience

Group	Number of respondents	Rank mean Sum	Sum of ranks	Student's t-test results	
				Z	P(2-tailed)
Teachers with less than 10 years of experience	41	83.00	8.03	62	1.177
Teachers with less than 10 years of experience	23	80.61	7.35		

When examining the differences in teachers' attitudes in relation to the type of employment, the Shapiro-Wilk test is used, which as a result in all three groups gives a significance greater than .05, so it can be considered that the feature score has a normal distribution in all three groups. Therefore, we use a one-way analysis of variance (One way ANOVA test) and conclude that there are no statistically significant differences in teachers' attitudes in relation to the type of employment ($F(2.61) = .819$, $p = .4459 > .05$).

Based on the obtained results, we conclude that there are no differences in the attitudes of teachers in relation to the length of work experience.

Discussion

The results show that teachers and parents are receptive to fostering mutual partnership and recognize the significance of enhancing English communication skills. Both groups highly value these skills, seeing them as crucial for children's well-being and development. This aligns with previous research highlighting parents' keen interest in collaborating with educators to support language learning and skill development (Harji & Balakrishnan & Letchumanan, 2017; Harper & Pelletier, 2010; Indriati, 2016; Linse & Bladas, 2014).

The observed positive attitude of parents towards the importance of developing communication skills in English in children is also correlated with the findings that indicate that parents of middle economic class, who strive to rise on the socio-economic ladder, especially insist on the early acquisition of language skills in English, which is especially present in Asian countries and especially pronounced in children who attend private schools with relatively better ratings compared to others in Asia (Nair et al., 2014).

Data analysis indicates that both teachers and parents are generally content with the current level of partnership, though it's not exceptionally high, with significant discrepancies in perceptions of the partnership process. Diverse views are evident, especially regarding various forms of cooperation aimed at developing communication skills in a foreign language. While parents tend to believe in the effectiveness of existing family-school partnerships, opinions vary on whether teachers adequately inform parents about supporting children's English language skills. Parents from middle economic backgrounds, particularly in Asian countries, prioritize early English language learning for their children, especially those attending highly regarded private schools (Nair et al., 2014; Shastri, 2009).

Differences in how teachers and parents see the partnership and their role in it are somewhat expected. Researches indicates that the earlier development of parents' pedagogical competences plays a major role (Harper & Pelletier, 2010), as well as the fact that the concept of partnership is not understood in the same way by parents and teachers who rely on partnership in the educational process in their pedagogical work (Lekli & Kaloti, 2015; Pavlović-Breneselović, 2014). However, it is important to point out here that in this research no significant difference was found in the attitudes of parents in relation to their level of formal education and the number of foreign languages they speak. This is somewhat contrary to research findings that point out that parents' education is a key predictor of their motivation and willingness to engage in partnership with the school and other educational institutions (Javier & Jubay Jr, 2019; Lekli & Kaloti, 2015; Plummer, 2011). The differences that occur between the

data obtained by this research and other studies dealing with similar issues can be attributed to the limitations of this study regarding the scope and characteristics of the sample of teachers and parents.

Teachers' work experience doesn't significantly affect their attitudes toward partnering with families. Regardless of seniority, teachers are equally motivated to collaborate with parents in enhancing students' communication skills. This can be attributed in part to the emphasis on partnership in teachers' training and ongoing professional development, which has gained prominence due to technological advancements and societal changes in modern education (Savić, 2014; Pavlović-Breneselović, 2014).

Both teachers and parents' express positivity regarding methods to enhance children's English language communication skills. They agree that improving the partnership between teachers and parents requires more frequent interaction and that students' communication skills can benefit from setting realistic goals by teachers and increased parental involvement in their children's work.

Numerous studies indicate that children today spend most of their free time in front of computers, phones and tablets playing video games and watching various content (Al-Kadi & Ahmed, 2018; Dash 2013; Lekawael, 2017), and often is suggested that it is necessary to direct them and show them how that time "for play" can become time for acquiring knowledge and also improving communication skills in the English language (Lekli & Kaloti, 2015; Plummer, 2011).

Bearing in mind these tendencies, there's a clear need to further empower parents and teachers for effective partnership cooperation. This is crucial not only for enhancing students' communication skills but also for providing essential support in unlocking their full potential and ensuring their well-being. Thus, fostering effective partnerships between teachers and parents emerges as a fundamental educational goal in contemporary education worldwide.

Conclusions

Based on the above analysis we see a general affirmation of positive attitudes, both of teachers and parents, about partnership relations in order to improve students' communication skills in the English language.

In addition, we can draw the conclusions that in general both:

- Teachers and parents highly value the importance of improving students' communication skills in the English language.
- Teachers and parents have a positive opinion about the role of the family in improving students' communication skills in the English language.

- Teachers and parents are mostly satisfied with the current state of various forms of partner cooperation aimed at developing communication skills in the English language.
- Teachers and parents can clearly recognize the methods through which children's communication skills in the English language can be improved, through the partnership of parents and teachers.
- There are no differences in the attitudes of parents in relation to the level of formal education and the number of foreign languages they use.
- There are no differences in the attitudes of teachers in relation to length of work experience.

Having in mind all of the above, it can be concluded that it is necessary that both teachers and parents must collaborate to support children's learning and development, emphasizing partnership and a systemic approach. Recognizing differences in perspectives, defining specific roles, and establishing clear organizational structures are crucial. Dialogue, power sharing, participation, and trust are essential for effective partnership. Teachers should inform parents about ways to enhance students' English language skills, such as optimizing free time activities. This study highlights positive attitudes among teachers and parents toward partnership in improving English language communication skills. However, the research's limitations, including a small sample size limited to Serbia, underscore the need for caution in generalizing results. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, potentially incorporating students' perspectives to gain a comprehensive understanding of how parent-teacher partnerships impact the English language proficiency.

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**ПАРТНЕРСТВО ИЗМЕЂУ НАСТАВНИКА И РОДИТЕЉА У ЦИЉУ
УНАПРЕЂИВАЊА КОМУНИКАЦИЈСКИХ ВЕШТИНА НА ЕНГЛЕСКОМ
ЈЕЗИКУ КОД УЧЕНИКА**

РЕЗИМЕ

Циљ рада је испитивање мишљења наставника и родитеља о партнерским односима у циљу побољшања комуникацијских вештина на енглеском језику код ученика. Истраживање је спроведено применом два инструмента, скале процене, посебно конструисаним за потребе истраживања. Узорком је обухваћено 64 наставника и 65 родитеља са територије Републике Србије. Добијени резултати показују позитивне ставове према развијању партнерства код обе групе испитаника, али и постојање статистички значајне разлике између обе групе, при чему су ставови родитеља значајно позитивнији. Резултати истраживања указују на важност доприноса афирмације позитивних интерперсоналних ставова, како наставника тако и родитеља који су важни у успостављању партнерских односа ка унапређењу комуникацијских вештина на страном језику код ученика. Када су у питању ограничења истраживања, истраживање је спроведено на ограниченом узорку, па је потребно бити опрезан при генерализацији резултата. Треба узети у обзир и то да су испитивани наставници и родитељи из различитих крајева Републике Србије, па се не може знати да ли постоји одређено одступање у зависности од региона или општина. Препорука је спровести истраживање и евентуално укључити и ставове ученика у испитивање како би се дошло до потпуније слике.

Кључне речи: *партнерство у образовању, комуникацијске вештине, енглески језик у настави, партнерство породице и школе.*