

Parental involvement in children's (0–6-year-olds) EFL learning: Outlining practical proposals for improvement as part of student teachers' training

JOSÉ LUIS ESTRADA-CHICHÓN

University of Cádiz

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ABSTRACT: The increasing of parental involvement in children's EFL learning is highlighted (Rixon, 2019), with parents preferring to start as early as possible (Fleta, 2019). In response to this socio-educational demand, EFL teaching begins in preschool (0–6-year-olds) (Cortina-Pérez & Andúgar, 2020). However, parents still need professional support regarding how to approach their involvement (Li et al., 2018). Thus, this study aims to determine the degree and type of parental involvement (n=165) in the province of Cádiz (Spain), considering three elements of analysis: *Learning at home*; *Parenting*; and *Communicating* (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2019). This first phase of research contributes to outlining a catalogue of practical proposals for improvement to support parents as part of student teachers' (N=10) training (University of Cádiz, 2021-22). In terms of methodology, an exploratory mixed-methods research was conducted: Firstly, parental involvement was measured through a questionnaire (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2019); secondly, to collect the student teachers' opinions, weekly online discussion forums were conducted, and a focus group discussion (N=4) led to agreement on eight practical proposals. The results reveal low levels of parental involvement, despite parents' command of EFL. Finally, practical proposals are suggested for activities involving a closer parent-child relationship, and systematic family-preschool communication.

Keywords: English, parent participation, preschool children, preschool teacher education, second language instruction

La participación de los padres en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera de los niños (0-6 años): Esbozando propuestas prácticas de mejora como parte de la formación inicial de maestros

RESUMEN: Destaca la creciente implicación en el aprendizaje del inglés de los niños por parte de sus padres (Rixon, 2019), que prefieren una iniciación temprana (Fleta, 2019). En respuesta a esta demanda socioeducativa, la enseñanza del inglés comienza en la etapa de preescolar (Cortina-Pérez & Andúgar, 2020). Con todo, los padres siguen necesitando apoyo profesional sobre cómo enfocar su participación (Li et al., 2018). Así, este estudio pretende determinar el grado y tipo de implicación de padres (n=165) en la provincia de Cádiz (España), considerando tres elementos de análisis: *Learning at home*; *Parenting*; y *Communicating* (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2019). Esta primera fase de la investigación contribuye a esbozar un catálogo de propuestas prácticas de mejora para ayudar a los padres como parte de la formación inicial de maestros (N=10) (Universidad de Cádiz, 2021-22). Metodológicamente, se realizó una investigación mixta exploratoria: primero, se midió la implicación de los padres

mediante un cuestionario (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2019); segundo, para recabar las opiniones de los estudiantes, se plantearon foros de discusión semanales en línea, y un grupo focal (N=4) donde se acordaron ocho propuestas prácticas. Los resultados revelan un bajo nivel de implicación de los padres, a pesar de su dominio del inglés. Finalmente, se sugieren propuestas prácticas para realizar actividades que implican una relación más estrecha entre padres e hijos y una comunicación regular entre familia y escuela.

Palabras clave: inglés, participación de los padres, niño en edad preescolar, formación de docentes de preescolar, enseñanza de una segunda lengua

1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language teaching –English being the world’s *lingua franca* (Crystal, 2019; Chacón-Beltrán, 2021)– has been extended in recent years to Early Childhood Education (henceforth ECE), i.e., children aged 0-6 years (cf. Cortina-Pérez & Andúgar, 2021). In the past, formal teaching of a foreign language like English was limited to compulsory educational stages; e.g., Primary Education (6–12-year-olds) (cf. Mourão, 2018), for example. The purpose of this choice was to familiarise pupils with English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL) from the beginning of schooling to develop positive attitudes towards language learning (Mehisto et al., 2008). To do so, ECE teachers might search for interactive input processing classroom practices that aim at language acquisition (Fleta, 2019) throughout continuous exposure to the target language (O’Toole et al., 2017). By way of explanation, the natural process of acquiring a foreign language implies cognitive mechanisms equal to those of mother tongue (henceforth L1) acquisition (Dąbrowska, 2019).

As a result, stakeholders involved in EFL teaching in ECE should not only include teachers (cf. Schwartz, 2018). In this sense, parents can also assume a very active role in the development of their children’s EFL learning (Haberman et al., 2020) since most of them attended foreign language (mainly EFL) lessons in formal education, as in Spain (Estrada, 2022). So, families now have a variety of alternatives to foster children’s early relationships with EFL (Midraj & Midraj, 2011), either through language use for authentic communicative purposes (Fleta, 2019), or through applying materials, resources, or tools (Estrada, 2022).

Parental involvement in children’s EFL learning is a decisive factor for the success of young learners. Studies such as Enever’s (2011) or Rokita-Jaśkow’s (2019) demonstrate this, although parents’ lack of knowledge about how to do so is also highlighted (cf. Rokita-Jaśkow, 2019). For this reason, it is necessary for parents to be assisted by in-service foreign language teachers, who can offer them an approach to EFL learning at home; i.e., an approach in which activities “should be more playful in nature and should not simulate effortful cramming” (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2019, p. 204).

In light of the above, this study aims to determine the degree and type of parental involvement (Epstein, 1995; 2001) in the province of Cádiz (Andalusia, Spain) in children’s EFL learning. It is measured by taking into account three elements of analysis distinguished by Rokita-Jaśkow (2019: 196): *Learning at home* (“which described FLL [(Foreign Language Learning)] activities pursued at home”); *Parenting* (“helping parents to develop an environment conducive to learning, providing knowledge of good parenting practices; here, of how to enhance cognitive and affective stimulation”); and *Communicating* (“providing

information of how school, here language teaching, develops; what is the curriculum and objectives of early FL [(Foreign Language)] teaching”). In addition, a catalogue of eight practical proposals for improvement developed by ECE student teachers at the University of Cádiz (2021-22) are presented to support parent-child relationship, together with family-preschool communication concerning EFL learning.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The research objectives are the following:

1. To determine the degree and type of parental involvement in children's EFL learning regarding *Learning at home*, *Parenting*, and *Communicating*.
2. To outline a catalogue of practical proposals for improvement on parental involvement in children's EFL learning developed by student teachers.

The research questions are posed as follows:

1. What is the degree and type of parental involvement in children's EFL learning regarding *Learning at home*, *Parenting*, and *Communicating*?
2. What type of practical proposals for improvement do student teachers consider most appropriate following the findings on parental involvement in children's EFL learning?

3. METHOD

This study is an exploratory mixed-methods research that has been conducted thoroughly: Firstly, a questionnaire (Rokita-Jaśkow,2019) was used in the quantitative study to measure parental involvement in children's EFL learning; and secondly, in order to collect student teachers' opinions on how to support parents, data was collected through seven weekly online discussion forums (1. February 15th; 2. February 22nd; 3. March 8th; 4. March 15th; 5. March 22nd; 6. March 29th; and 7. April 5th, 2022). The student teachers then agreed on eight practical proposals in regard to the improvement of children's EFL learning after taking part in a focus group discussion (April 19th, 2022).

The preliminary planning of data collection involved the following: First, the original questionnaire by Rokita-Jaśkow (2019) was adapted and translated into Spanish (see Appendix) and sent to the parents. Between January and February 2022, the parents received two reminders to complete the questionnaire, with a waiting time of 15 days between each reminder. The snowball sampling technique was used to obtain the most significant number of informants through the messaging application WhatsApp (the first contact with the parents was with friends of the author who met the conditions; i.e., who had at least one child attending preschool in Cádiz). Second, the weekly online discussion forums that included questions on the questionnaire's results were carried out between February and April 2022,

limiting the student teachers' response time to seven days. The student teachers were then asked to submit a final draft including practical proposals in terms of parental involvement regarding *Learning at home*, *Parenting*, and *Communicating*. The results represent a selection of individual practical proposals through a final consensus following a focus group discussion (N=4). According to Llurda (2018), quantitative data supported by qualitative data obtained from a focus group allow for a better interpretation in the analysis context.

All things considered, the type of participants in this study is twofold: On the one hand, the parents (n=165) of the children who attended public or private preschools in Cádiz in 2021-22. On the other hand, the student teachers (N=10) who regularly attended (80% attendance or above) the course *Didáctica de la Lengua Extranjera en Educación Infantil-Inglés* (Didactics of Foreign Language in Early Childhood Education-English) as part of the bachelor's degree in ECE at the University of Cádiz in 2021-22. This is a 6-ECTS (i.e., 150 working hours) optional course, which is taught in the third year (second term). Its overall objective is to provide student teachers with theoretical and practical knowledge of didactic principles for teaching EFL to ECE pupils.

3.1. Research tools

Three tools were used, one for each research development stage:

1. Information on parental involvement was obtained through the questionnaire by Rokita-Jaśkow (2019). It was adapted and translated into the parents' L1 (i.e., Spanish) to avoid language misinterpretations. The only alteration made to the questionnaire was the change from "FL" (Foreign Language) to "*inglés*" (English). Moreover, item 22 (I play FL games with my child) was removed due to its irrelevance to the current research, limiting it to item 2 (I play English games with my child, e.g., Memo, Simon says...). The statements included in the questionnaire are classified into three sections: *Learning at home* (N=17); *Parenting* (N=11); and *Communicating* (N=17). The range of values of the Likert-type response options varies between 1 (never) and 5 (almost always).
2. After data collection and analysis were performed, the discussion forum option available in Moodle, which is the *Campus Virtual* (Virtual Campus) platform of the course, was used. An online discussion forum was presented to the student teachers once a week for seven weeks, where they had to give their opinions on the results of the questionnaire. Each student teacher had to submit three practical proposals for each element of analysis (*Learning at home*; *Parenting*; and *Communicating*), at least.
3. Once the weekly online discussion forums activity finished, based on the data collected, the student teachers were given two weeks to submit practical proposals to assist parents. All practical proposals were shared with the student teachers before the focus group discussion took place. During the focus group discussion, it was argued which practical proposals were most feasible to implement and which seemed to have the best impact on children's EFL learning.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the results in relation to the following: Parents' degree of involvement in children's EFL learning; parents' type of involvement in children's EFL learning concerning *Learning at home*, *Parenting*, and *Communicating*; and student teachers' practical proposals for improvement.

4.1. Parents' degree of involvement in children's EFL learning

Among the parents, 17.16% are male and 80.47% are female. In relation to their educational background, 56.36% hold a bachelor's degree, while 20.61% have studied higher vocational training or first-stage university education; 12.12% completed high school or intermediate vocational training; 7.88% finished compulsory education; and 3.03% have basic education (i.e., Primary Education) or even report not having attended school. Concerning parents' EFL proficiency, 36.97% have a basic level, while 44.24% have an intermediate command of EFL, and 18.79% have an advanced level. Furthermore, 36.97% have an official certificate in EFL, while 63.03% hold no official certificate. Regarding the student teachers who have an official certificate in EFL, 3.28% have an A2 level; 44.26% have a B1 level; 29.51% have a B2 level; 14.75% have a C1 level; and 8.20% have a C2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (henceforth CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). In respect to parental involvement, 23.64% admitted to spending no time per week on their children's EFL learning; 32.12% spend less than one hour per week; 22.42% spend 1-2 hours per week; 13.94% spend 2-3 hours per week; 3.03% spend 3-4 hours per week; and 4.85% spend more than 4 hours per week.

4.2. Parents' type of involvement in children's EFL learning

Learning at home (items 1-35, see Table 1) ranks first in terms of the mean value (M=2.25). In this sense, the highest mean values were obtained for the statements "11. I question my child in their knowledge of FL [Foreign Language] words" (M=3.41; S=1.35) and "3. I sing songs in an FL [Foreign Language] with my child" (M=3.15; S=1.40), while the lowest mean values apply to the statements "28. I prepare my child for performing in an FL [Foreign Language] play" (M=1.21; S=0.66) and "15. I encourage my child to check the meanings of words in a picture dictionary" (M=1.56; S=1.03).

Relative to *Parenting* (items 5-34, see Table 1), it ranks second concerning the mean value (M=2.09). The highest mean values refer to the statements "17. I can answer my child's question about an FL [Foreign Language]" (M=3.60, S=1.51) and "25. I stress the importance of FLs [Foreign Languages] in free conversation" (M=2.58, S=1.47), while the lowest mean values involve the statements "30. I made an English corner at home with self-access materials in an FL [Foreign Language]" (M=1.31, S=0.85) and "34. I read guidebooks and articles on how to bring up a bilingual child" (M=1.54, S=1.14).

Finally, *Communicating* (items 19-32, see Table 1) ranks third regarding the mean value (M=1.60). The highest mean values relate to the statements "24. While abroad I encourage my child to use FL [Foreign Language] words" (M=1.92, S=1.42) and "32. I become involved in organising events promoting FLL [Foreign Language Learning]" (M=1.72; S=1.15), while

the lowest mean values refer to the statements “27. I prepare with my child for a kind of certified exam” (M=1.24, S=0.70) and “19. I talk to the FL [Foreign Language] teacher about the course syllabus, materials, etc.” (M=1.53, S=0.99):

Table 1. *Results for Learning at home, Parenting, and Communicating*

Statements	Parents (n=165)	
	M	SD
1. I revise course material with my child at home.	2.48	1.36
2. I play English games with my child, e.g., Memo, Simon says...	2.22	1.38
3. I sing songs in an FL with my child.	3.15	1.40
4. I read FL books to my child, explaining new words.	2.21	1.33
6. I play computer/internet games with my child.	2.13	1.33
7. I watch educational programmes with my child and explain their meaning.	2.38	1.34
8. I encourage my child to respond in an FL, e.g., by means of puppets.	2.08	1.35
11. I question my child in their knowledge of FL words.	3.41	1.35
14. I watch films on the internet/on TV with my child and explain key words to him/her.	2.20	1.36
15. I encourage my child to check the meanings of words in a picture dictionary.	1.56	1.03
20. I name household objects in an FL.	2.66	1.39
21. I use commands, comment on a situation in an FL.	2.34	1.38
28. I prepare my child for performing in an FL play.	1.21	0.66
29. I teach my child poems, rhymes, etc., in a foreign language.	1.58	1.08
33. I correct my child’s errors in an FL and ask him/her for a repair.	2.72	1.60
35. I speak to my child in and FL.	1.72	1.02
19. I talk to the FL teacher about the course syllabus, materials, etc.	1.53	0.99
24. While abroad I encourage my child to use FL words.	1.92	1.42
26. I talk to the FL teacher about my child’s progress.	1.61	1.11
27. I prepare with my child for a kind of certified exam.	1.24	0.70

32. I become involved in organising events promoting FLL.	1.72	1.15
5. I buy educational games, computer software/DVD courses in an FL.	1.89	1.22
12. I let the child play FL computer/internet games alone.	2.04	1.28
13. When we are abroad, I draw the child's attention to foreign words, labels, etc.	1.96	1.37
16. I set myself as an example of a competent FL user.	1.85	1.19
17. I can answer my child's question about an FL.	3.60	1.51
18. I encourage my child to read in an FL, e.g., by means of word cards, magnetic words, comics, etc.	2.27	1.36
23. We go abroad on holidays.	1.78	1.23
25. I stress the importance of FLs in free conversation.	2.58	1.47
30. I made an English corner at home with self-access materials in an FL.	1.31	0.85
31. I buy materials arousing interest in foreign countries.	2.15	1.44
34. I read guidebooks and articles on how to bring up a bilingual child.	1.54	1.14

4.3. Practical proposals

After the student teachers received and read all practical proposals (i.e., 90 practical proposals, although some of them were repeated, finally resulting in 79), they agreed to select the following eight ones for improvement after participating in a focus group discussion. In relation to *Learning at home*:

1. Planning activities in EFL that parents can do along with their children, both hands-on and online activities;
2. defining specific times of the day when parents only use EFL as the language of communication with their children; and
3. using resources and creating activities (e.g., EFL corner; songs for daily routines such as teeth brushing, picking up toys, going to sleep, etc.).

Concerning *Parenting*:

1. Creation of an “English school for parents” to teach them how to help their children regarding EFL learning through frequent informative talks;
2. regular notifications and training for parents in specific activities or resources in EFL (e.g., songs or games) to be used at home; and
3. in order to provide parents with feedback, it is recommended to keep a diary of all practices in regard to the promotion of EFL learning at home.

Relative to *Communicating*:

1. For parents, updated knowledge of the EFL contents and vocabulary that are being learnt in preschool (e.g., through a virtual platform); and
2. hosting an open day exclusively on the teaching and learning of EFL at the preschool, with the parents' participation.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section, the most meaningful research findings are discussed. First, parents have an intermediate level of EFL, although they are not involved in their children's EFL learning. Concerning the three main elements of analysis, when parents decide to support their children, they choose to use EFL in a decontextualized way, that is, teaching them only isolated words or expressions (*Language at home*). Furthermore, they are more likely to replicate the teaching experiences they had as EFL learners (*Parenting*). Finally, there is not a regular relationship between parents and ECE teachers of EFL (*Communicating*). That is why mostly all practical proposals for improvement selected by the student teachers are focused on solving these problems. Finally, the results obtained are cross-referenced with previous studies, most particularly that of Rokita-Jaśkow (2019) carried out in Poland.

5.1. Non-involved language proficient parents in children's EFL learning

The results reveal that half of the parents have a university degree in different areas of specialization. However, studies like Kalaycı and Öz (2019) concluded that demographic characteristics (e.g., the level of education) should not affect parents' perceptions of their involvement in their children's EFL learning. Nonetheless, this conclusion cannot be applied to all contexts, as Enever (2011), in her study of early language learning in Europe, states: "[it] differs among schools and among countries" (p. 67). Another element of analysis is the command of EFL, as most parents have an intermediate level (i.e., B1 or B2 levels, according to the CEFR). This fact may affect parents' perceptions of EFL learning, as they may feel authorized to act as "mediating agents" (Gao, 2006). Yet, EFL proficiency is neither a variable that should influence parental involvement since "even when parents do not have a command of the English language, they have the potential to help with EFL learning from a non-linguistic point of view" (Aldemar et al., 2016, p. 156). However, EFL proficiency may be an important variable that determines the degree of parental involvement in this study, as also argued by Chambers (1999) and Hewitt (2008). Finally, the results show that half of the parents spend zero to one hour per week working with their children in terms of EFL learning, which contrasts with former studies where parents had a higher involvement degree (e.g., Brannon & Dauksas, 2012).

5.2. *Learning at home*: Decontextualized learning of EFL

Even taking into consideration the little time parents devote to their children's EFL learning, it is worth noting that *Learning at home* ranks first among the three elements of analysis as is also the case in Rokita-Jaśkow (2019). In this respect, along with the degree

of parental involvement and the results obtained concerning the highest and lowest-ranked statements (see section 4.2), the following can be assumed: Parents' knowledge of EFL is decontextualized, opting instead for isolated words or expressions in the target language. Among the reasons for that, as Rokita-Jaśkow (2019, p. 202) reports: "parents [may] have little knowledge of language acquisition processes in the young child." So, in the case of using EFL, parents restrict it to easy-to-memorise words or expressions (e.g., rhyming games or songs) (cf. Farver et al., 2013). In other words, "those [activities] that mimic adult explicit learning, oriented at repetition and memorization" (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2019, p. 202). It is also likely that children's knowledge of EFL is tested by using Spanish as L1. However, "if the children expect translation, they will not pay attention to the messages in English" (Stanojević, 2019: 171). This practice may perhaps illustrate the type of formal EFL instruction parents were taught during compulsory and non-compulsory stages of education (Mirhosseini & Sharif, 2021), which involved achieving conscious knowledge of the grammatical rules and norms, as well as memorising vocabulary lists. In fact, Rokita-Jaśkow's (2019) research reveals a very similar situation: "they [(parents)] resort to the techniques they know themselves from their education experience, or they prefer to delegate their job of FL education to professionals" (p. 202).

5.3. Parenting: Replicating EFL learning experiences

The results proved that parents actively engage in first-person experiences in relation to EFL teaching practices (cf. King & Fogle, 2006), even when those practices were frustrating (Mirhosseini & Sharif, 2021). They replicate situations and usages of the target language, which they have experienced, even when parents are aware of their children's future EFL social and professional skills in spontaneous conversations (cf. Putri & Perdhani, 2022). In any case, as reported by Rokita-Jaśkow (2019) concerning the Polish context, "teaching their own children is not the goal of the parents, perhaps due to the fact that they are overwhelmed by work or other duties" (p. 202). Even when research studies developed in Spain (e.g., Fleta, 2019) on EFL learning in ECE conclude that "classroom discourse is mostly focused on meaning rather than on form and that teachers are more inclined to check comprehension than to correct language production" (p. 306), it seems unlikely that children will be able to cope in everyday situations while using EFL simply based on the work taught in pre-schools. In this respect, parents are not yet familiar with bilingual upbringing, nor do they choose to start identifying specific places in the home for the promotion of EFL. Instead, they prefer to restrict themselves to what they consider beneficial for their children's EFL learning according to their understanding (Estrada, 2022), which usually coincides with formal teaching practices. Another reason, as pointed out by Rokita-Jaśkow (2019, p. 203), is that it is also possible that parents who enrol their children in "[E]FL classes are those who have not succeeded in FLL [Foreign Language Learning] themselves."

5.4. Communicating: Lack of communication between parents and EFL teachers

The results reveal parents' unwillingness not only to seek alternatives to promote children's EFL learning but even the lack of communication with EFL teachers, as Rokita-Jaśkow' (2019) study also concluded: "Parents do not seem to be actively involved in

actual teaching or learning the [E]FL of the child” (p. 202). On the one hand, the results contradict the conclusions reached in former studies such as the one conducted by Tong et al. (2022) in China, where “a sustained level of parental engagement [...] in their children’s English language learning” (p. 12). On the other hand, the results confirm some of the findings of studies like the one by Carmel (2022) in Israel, where decisions about EFL teaching do not depend so much on “professionals or academics but rather exist within the power of the community” (p. 141). However, it seems contradictory that if children do not choose to attend a preschool where EFL is taught because it is the exclusive choice of the parents (Schwartz, 2018), there would exist little (or even no) parent-teacher communication. Thus, although parents understand the importance of EFL in their children’s education and therefore economic future (López-Gopar, 2019), they avoid tasks concerning both home-based involvement (i.e., “parental actions at home that help support their children’s classroom learning”) and school-based involvement (i.e., “parental attendance or participation at school events”) (Kamal et al., 2022, p. 321), delegating EFL learning exclusively to teachers. Therefore, “parents can have an insight into the course contents and information about the child’s developing [E]FL competence yet contact with the E[FL] teacher is also limited” (Rokita-Jaśkow, 2019, p. 202).

5.5. Practical proposals: Building bridges with children, parents, and in-service teachers

Through their practical proposals, student teachers aim to mainly reinforce parent-child socialization (Steffensen & Kramersch, 2017), as they know that EFL learning in early development stages implies the exposure to foreign language input on a regular basis (Enever, 2015) for which “moderate and positive [parental] involvement” is necessary and positive (Özçelik, 2022). In a similar way, to gradually familiarise parents with EFL involvement, student teachers advise specific times of the day for exclusive communication in EFL, through activities concerning parent-child cooperation. Furthermore, student teachers also consider a strong collaboration between parents and teachers to be essential (cf. Schwartz, 2018) for the former to get trained in EFL teaching, and for the latter to be conscious of parenting practices at home. They believe that parents need specific training (i.e., professional support) on early EFL learning and that such specific training needs to be provided by in-service teachers. In this sense, Sumanti and Muljani (2021, p. 87) state that “the role of parents [in home activities with ECE learners] should be maximized especially in public preschools, which only have a minimum of time to learn English.” However, parent-teacher communication should not only consist of regular notifications, but in-service teachers may also encourage parents’ participation in activities related to EFL learning.

In conclusion, this study serves to corroborate that, regarding objective 1 (To determine the degree and type of parental involvement in children’s EFL learning regarding *Learning at home*, *Parenting*, and *Communicating*), although most parents in Cádiz are university graduates and have an intermediate level of EFL (i.e., B1 and B2 levels, according to the CEFR), they reveal a low involvement in their children’s EFL learning, mainly regarding tasks related to *Parenting* and *Communicating*. In other words, and in connection to research question 1 (What is the degree and type of parental involvement in children’s EFL learning regarding *Learning at home*, *Parenting*, and *Communicating*?), if they are engaged in their children’s EFL learning, parents spend 1-2 hours per week and only focus on activities

that take place at home. As a consequence, following objective 2 (To outline a catalogue of practical proposals for improvement on parental involvement in children's EFL learning developed by student teachers), student teachers agreed on eight practical proposals, most of which attempt to find ways for parents and children to work together on activities to promote the use of EFL for authentic communicative purposes, regardless of the parents' command of EFL; that is, practical proposals on tasks that involve a systematization of everyday activities that demand collaboration between parents and children, and in which EFL must be acquired rather than learnt. Concerning research question 2 (What type of practical proposals for improvement do student teachers consider most appropriate following the findings on parental involvement in children's EFL learning?), student teachers advise a deeper collaboration between parents and teachers to keep them both up to date with EFL practices that take place at home and preschool.

Regarding the limitations of the study, the first is related to the size of the sample (i.e., parents and student teachers) and the fact that it is limited to the province of Cádiz, which makes it difficult to find more significant relationships and generalizations from the data collected. Therefore, any claim of causality is to be taken with reserve. In relation to parents' opinions, another limitation of the study involves a possible bias about their (true) involvement in their children's EFL learning, which may be different or even less than indicated. Moreover, the number of student teachers also determines the results obtained, in addition to their lack of knowledge about early foreign language acquisition, which might condition their practical proposals.

Finally, bearing in mind the limitations, a future line of research that emerges from this study is to increase the number of participants, as well as to contextualise the research in other provinces of Spain, and thus be able to compare the new results with those already existing. On the other hand, in addition to the data collected through the questionnaire, meeting face-to-face with a representative sample of parents through individual interviews or focus group discussions would confirm or refute the current data, as well as shed light on issues that are difficult to distinguish only through quantitative data. Another future line of research would involve as participants not only student teachers, but also EFL in-service teachers in ECE to get first-hand information about the type of work carried out in pre-schools with respect to EFL teaching-learning, and the sort of relationship they have with parents. Finally, this research could be also carried out at different educational stages (e.g., Primary Education) to analyse which other areas of EFL learning parents are involved, e.g., test preparation (cf. Dawadi, 2020).

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APPENDIX

1. Repaso con mi hijo el material en inglés del curso en casa.
2. Juego con mi hijo a juegos en inglés; p. ej.: Memo, Simon dice...
3. Canto con mi hijo canciones en inglés.
4. Leo a mi hijo libros en inglés y le explico las palabras nuevas.
6. Juego con mi hijo a juegos de ordenador/Internet en inglés.
7. Veo con mi hijo programas educativos en inglés y le explico su significado.
8. Animo a mi hijo a responder en inglés; p. ej.: utilizando marionetas.
11. Pregunto a mi hijo sobre su conocimiento de las palabras en inglés.
14. Veo con mi hijo películas en inglés en la televisión/internet y le explico las palabras clave.
15. Animo a mi hijo a comprobar el significado de las palabras en inglés en un diccionario ilustrado.
20. Nombro los objetos de la casa en inglés.
21. Utilizo órdenes o hago comentarios sobre una situación en inglés.
28. Ensayo junto a mi hijo con vistas a actuar en obras en inglés.
29. Enseño a mi hijo poemas, rimas, etc., en inglés.
33. Corrijo los errores de mi hijo en inglés y le pido que los tenga en cuenta.
35. Hablo con mi hijo en inglés.
19. Hablo con el profesor de inglés sobre el programa del curso, los materiales, etc.
24. Durante una estancia en otro país, animo a mi hijo a utilizar palabras en lengua extranjera.
26. Hablo con el profesor de idiomas sobre el progreso de mi hijo.
27. Preparo junto a mi hijo algún tipo de examen certificado en inglés.
32. Participo en la organización de eventos que promueven el aprendizaje del inglés.
 5. Compró juegos educativos, programas informáticos o cursos en DVD en inglés.
12. Dejo que mi hijo juegue solo a juegos de ordenador/internet en inglés.
13. Cuando estamos en otro país, llamo la atención de mi hijo sobre las palabras en lengua extranjera, los rótulos, etc.
16. Me pongo como ejemplo de usuario competente en inglés.
17. Puedo responder a las preguntas de mi hijo sobre el inglés.
18. Animo a mi hijo a leer en inglés; p. ej.: mediante tarjetas de palabras, palabras magnéticas, cómics, etc.
23. Vamos de vacaciones al extranjero.
25. Insisto en la importancia del inglés en conversaciones espontáneas.
30. He creado un rincón del inglés en casa con materiales de libre acceso en lengua extranjera.
31. Compró materiales que despierten el interés por los países extranjeros.
34. Leo guías y artículos sobre cómo educar a un niño bilingüe.