

# A CORRELATIONAL-COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KINDERGARTEN 1 STUDENTS' AND THEIR PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT FOR LEARNING ENGLISH AT PANAYA PHATTHANAKAN SCHOOL, BANGKOK, THAILAND

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the relationship and significant differences between students' and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand during the 2018 academic year. The research study focused on four objectives: 1) to determine the level of Kindergarten 1 students' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English, 2) to determine the level of parents' of Kindergarten 1 students' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English, 3) to determine if there is a significant relationship between Kindergarten 1 students' and their parents' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English, and 4) to determine if there is a significant difference between Kindergarten 1 students' and their parent's perception of parental encouragement for learning English. The instrument used in this study was a perceptions of parental encouragement questionnaire given to 56 Kindergarten 1 students and one parent of each of the students. The research found that both students and parents had a very high level of perceptions of parental encouragement. Correlation analysis showed that there was no significant relationship between the students' and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English. Further, the study found that there was a significant difference between Kindergarten 1 students' and their parents' perceptions of parental encouragement at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand.

**Keywords:** Perceptions of Parental Encouragement, Learning English as a foreign language, Panaya Phatthanakan School

## Introduction

Parental encouragement is the amount of support parents' give their students' in their learning of a foreign language (Gardner, 1985a). There has been a rise in parents' and teachers' recognition that parental encouragement can

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affect both achievement and motivation to learn a foreign language. Gardner (1985b) pointed out that parental encouragement had a positive integrative motive factor that is related to attitudes and motivation to learn. According to Lawrence and Barathi (2016), a strong relationship between parental encouragement and education at home and at school can positively affect students' performance in learning English.

According to Gardner (1985b), much of the research revolves around the students' perceptions of parental encouragement with little understanding of how parents' perceive parental encouragement. This study explores both students' and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement in learning English for Kindergarten 1 students studying English as a foreign language at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand.

### **Objectives**

Four objectives of the study are as follows.

- 1 To determine the level of Kindergarten 1 students' perceptions of parental encouragement at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand.
- 2 To determine the level of parents' of Kindergarten 1 students' perceptions of parental encouragement at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand.
- 3 To determine if there is a significant relationship between Kindergarten 1 students' and their parents' perceptions of parental encouragement at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand.
- 4 To determine if there is a significant difference between Kindergarten 1 students' and their parent's perceptions of parental encouragement at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand.

### **Literature Review**

According to Gardner (1985b), studies have shown little correlation between students' and parents' perception of parental encouragement. However, Gardner and Santos (1970, as cited in Gardner, 1985a) studies of students' perceptions of parental encouragement show a high relationship with one's own attitude and motivation towards a foreign language. This shows that from a student's perspective more parental encouragement can inspire children to learn a foreign language. Furthermore, parental encouragement can have heightened effects on integrative factors to motivate students in a learning situation. According to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005), parental encouragement is the support of the parents to engage their children in learning. When parents support their child and give positive feedback, these can produce a more open-minded student (Gan, 2014). This research has

indicated that when parents encourage their students to speak to their teachers, the student may be more inclined to speak English later in class.

Nair et al. (2014) explored students' perception of parental encouragement importance and attitudes in learning English. The study was conducted with 150 upper six grade students from six different schools in Malaysia. The findings indicated that the students had a positive attitude toward the learning of English and an approving perception of the English language. The parental encouragement had a high mean score, indicating that the students had sufficient support in their English learning from their parents. The research showed there is a strong positive correlation between students' perception of the importance of the English language and their attitudes towards learning English.

Barge and Loges (2003) did a qualitative/quantitative exploratory study on parents', students' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in a medium-size city in the southwestern United States. The study consisted of focus groups of students and parents and a 10-question survey composed of open-ended questions to have investigated teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. The finding revealed that the participants agreed that monitoring students' academic performance and teacher-parent communication is important in parental involvement.

Zhang and Lynch (2017) examined the relationship between grade five and grade six students' perceptions of parental encouragement and their academic achievement in Mandarin learning at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand. The study used one questionnaire to identify the level of perception of parental encouragement adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and the students' achievement scores in Mandarin learning. The study concluded that the overall students' perceptions of parental encouragement were directly related to their student achievement in learning Mandarin.

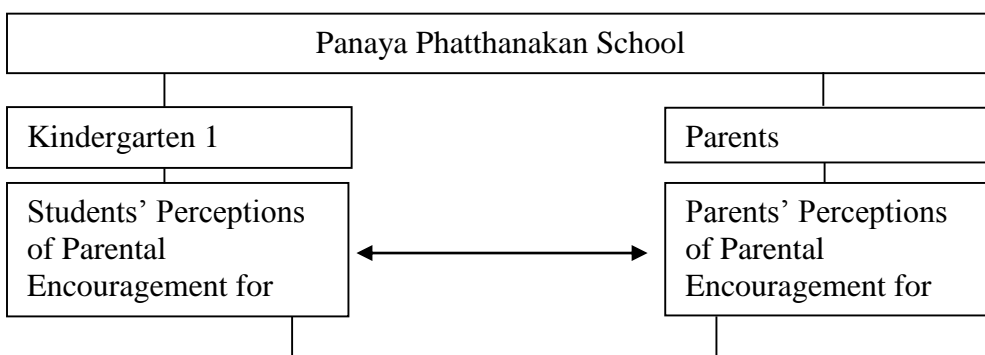
Contreras (2016) did a study on motivation and perceived parental encouragement for speaking English. The research design relied on a modified questionnaire to study motivation and parental encouragement for speaking English. The results yielded that 81 students in grades six to eight had a slightly high level of motivation and perceived parental encouragement. The overall relationship between motivation, parental encouragement, and speaking English all had a positive correlation with each other (Contreras, 2016).

Paran and Tibli (2009), completed a study on perceived parental encouragement and motivation and attitudes towards learning English in the Philippines between a private and public college. The study was designed to explore three main objectives by a quantitative descriptive method. First, to determine the level of motivation and attitudes of learning English as a foreign language. Second, to understand the demographic information of the students. Third, to explore the relationship between motivation and attitudes of learning English and parental encouragement by using a questionnaire. The survey was given to 100 college students at a private college in the southern part of the Philippines and 100 students from a public college in the City College of Calamba, Laguna. The research shows there is a significance level of motivation with learning English in both colleges. The findings in the demographic portion of the question showed no significance on how the students' feel about English as a foreign language. The attitudes towards learning when combined with parental encouragement showed a significant increase in the students' motivation to learn English. Regardless of age, gender, and setting of the school, students shared the same amount of interest in learning English in both private and public school (Paran & Tibli, 2009).

Thornton (2015) completed a study of parental encouragement with children with disabilities in regard to student achievement within homework. The study was designed to understand parents' encouragement activities and feelings towards parental encouragement in homework from both teachers and parents. In the study, the researcher tried to determine if parental encouragement can improve students' grades along with understanding parents' and teachers' feelings about parental encouragement in homework. In the study there were two surveys given to both teachers and parents of kindergarten to third-grade students. In the population there were students with learning disabilities and students without learning disabilities. The surveys were given to 120 parents and 24 teachers in the study. The research showed that the parents had a strong belief in parental encouragement in homework activities and teachers had lower confidence in the parents' ability to be involved in their student's education. In conclusion, the results showed room for improvement in parent and teacher communication for better student outcomes (Thornton, 2015).

### Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 is the conceptual framework of the study



**Figure 1.** *Conceptual framework of the study.*

### Scope of the Study

The study surveyed the students who were studying English as a foreign language in Kindergarten 1 in first and second semesters of the academic year of 2018 at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand, as well as one parent of each of those students. It only included Kindergarten 1 classes in K1/1 and K1/2 with a total of 56 students and 56 parents of each of the students in Kindergarten 1. Further, because this research employed a convenience sample and self-report instrument from the parents', these may have introduced systematic bias into the study.

This study was limited to parental encouragement from Gardner's socio-educational model of second language acquisition. In this model, the researcher focused on parental encouragement perceptions from both students and parents to indicate if there existed significant relationship or a significant difference between parents and students' perceptions of parental encouragement.

### Method

The research design was a quantitative-correlational comparative research study with the use of two parental encouragement questionnaires.

### *Population*

The population of this study was kindergarten 1 students and their parents at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand during the 2018 academic year.

### *Sample*

The sample of this research was 56 students and 56 parents with one family member of each of the Kindergarten 1 students at Panaya Phatthanakan School. The study was conducted in the second term of the academic year of 2017-2018.

### *Instrument*

The research instruments of this study were one parental encouragement questionnaire with two versions adapted for both students and parents. The parental encouragement questionnaires were given to each student and one parent per family of the students studying in Kindergarten 1/1 and 1/2 classes in the English Program at Panaya Phatthanakan School. The parental encouragement questionnaire was used to evaluate students' and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English as a foreign language.

The parental encouragement questionnaire for learning English as a foreign language in this study was from the Gardner (2004) International Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) for learning English as a foreign language. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first section was the demographic information. The second section evaluated the student's and parent's level of perception of parental encouragement for learning English.

The parents' version of the parental encouragement questionnaire was from the Gardner (2004) International Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) for learning English as a second language. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first section, the parent completed the name of their child and the parent's gender information. The second section evaluated the parent's own level of perception of parental encouragement for learning English. In order to test this study, the researcher had to modify the parents' questionnaire to fit with their perceptions of parental encouragement. For example, item two, the statement stating "My parents feel that it is very important for me to learn English" was changed to "I feel that it is very important for my child to learn English." A Likert scale that ranged from 1 to 6 with 6 being (strongly agree) and 1 being (strongly disagree) was employed to measure the different perception of parental encouragement.

### *Validity and Reliability*

The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery has construct validity involving previous studies done by Gardner's research. Other studies have also documented the predictive validity and construct validity of various scales in the attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner, 1985b). The studies that are

included according to Gardner (1985b) are Clement, Gardner, and Smythe (1977); Gardner (1985a); and Gardner and MacIntyre (1993).

According to Gardner (1985a), the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for earlier research has shown estimates of .91 and .89 and medium test/retest reliability of .79. In Table 5, the reliability for parental encouragement the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is greater than .70 which is considered acceptable.

### *Procedures*

The students' parental encouragement questionnaire was collected by the researcher on February 15th of 2018. Due to no absences, all 56 students' questionnaires were collected, presenting a return rate of 100%. The procedure of completing the questionnaire with the students was in-class and supervised by both the Thai teacher and the researcher with the purpose of reading each item in both Thai and English to ensure each student understood all the items in the questionnaire.

The parents of the Kindergarten 1 students at Panaya Phatthanakan School were given the parental encouragement questionnaire on the 15th of February 2018. Due to the unavailability of some parents, the researcher received 51 surveys out of 56 the first week and the remaining five surveys the following week, producing a return rate of 100%. The method of delivery and return was by personal interaction with the researcher.

### **Findings**

In terms of the four research objectives, the main findings are given below.

**Research Objective One.** To determine the level of Kindergarten 1 students' perceptions of parental encouragement at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand. The research finding showed that the Kindergarten 1 students' total mean of perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English was 41.75, which was interpreted as very high perceptions of parental encouragement. This shows that all the students perceived that they had received quite a significant amount of parental encouragement for learning English as a foreign language.

**Research Objective Two.** To determine the level of parents' of Kindergarten 1 students' perceptions of parental encouragement at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand. The research finding showed, that the parents' level of perceptions of parental encouragement was very high with the total mean of 45.71 and standard deviation of .33, which implies the parents'

perceptions are very high in their encouragement of their students' learning English as a foreign language.

Research Objective Three. To determine a significant relationship between Kindergarten 1 students' and their parents' perceptions of parental encouragement at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand. The Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between students' perceptions of parental encouragement and their parents' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English. As seen in Table 1, the correlation between students' and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement was  $-.215$  and interpreted as a low negative correlation. The results from significant correlation test showed that there is no significant relationship between Kindergarten 1 students' and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand at a significance level of  $.05$ .

Table 1: *Kindergarten 1 Students' and their Parents' Correlation for the Perceptions of Parental Encouragement*

Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Interpretation
Students' perception of parental encouragement	56	$-.215$	$.111$	There is no significant relationship between Kindergarten 1 students' and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement.
Parents' perception of parental encouragement				

Research Objective Four. To determine a significant difference between Kindergarten 1 students' and parent's perception of parental encouragement at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand. A dependent samples *t*-test indicated that students' mean score of perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English was  $5.21$  with a standard deviation of  $.71$ . The mean score of the parents' perception of parental encouragement for learning English was  $5.71$  with a standard deviation of  $.33$ . Since the observed/empirical significance level was  $.05$ , the researcher concluded that there was a significant difference between Kindergarten 1 students' and their parents' perceptions of parental encouragement at Panaya Phatthanakan School, Bangkok, Thailand.

## Discussion

In the following section the researcher will discuss students' perceptions, parents' perceptions, relationship, and significant difference between



students' and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English as a foreign language.

The finding of the study revealed that students had a very high level of perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English as a foreign language. This result is similar to a study done in Malaysia with 150 upper six grade students by Nair et al. (2014), and a study in the Philippines with 200 college students (Paran & Tibli, 2009) which showed that students believed they received a high level of encouragement from their parents. The two studies indicated that the students had sufficient support in their learning of English from their parents. The finding was also in line with a study done with grade 5 and grade 6 students' perceptions of parental encouragement and their academic achievement in learning Mandarin at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand (Zhang & Lynch, 2017). However, the researcher believes that the students' perceptions would have been less favorable of parental encouragement for learning English due to younger students and that English is not the parents' first language. By comparison, a study in Thailand with grade school students by Contreras (2016), showed the students' perceptions of parental encouragement was slightly high. However, the finding in this study contradicting with this researcher's beliefs may be due to the students' appreciation for learning English as a foreign language. Another factor that could be that Panaya Phatthanakan School is also known for its English program. By the parents' choice of school, it was clear that the parents valued their children's English language education and wanted their children to learn and speak English outside of school. The school could have influenced the students on the importance of learning English as a foreign language.

The findings also showed that as far as the responses of the students' are concerned, item number one "My parents try to help me to learn English", and item eight "My parents devote more time to studying English", both had moderately high perception. The lower perceptions of parents helping and devoting more time to learning English as a foreign language may be due to time constraints from the parents. Another factor may be the lack of understanding from the teachers on promoting parental encouragement between students and parents. According to Thornton's (2015) study in a Chicago urban elementary school on parents' encouragement activities between 120 parents and 24 teachers, there was room for improvement in communication between parents and students for devoting more time helping and supporting their children. A reasonable assumption from the data showed the students understand the importance of learning English as a foreign language and believed that their parents' support and encourage them at home.

The results of the study showed that the parents had a very high level of perception of parental encouragement of their children for learning English. This result is similar to a study in Chicago urban elementary school by Thornton (2015) to understand parents' encouragement activities and feelings towards parental encouragement in homework from both teachers and parents. Thornton (2015) study showed that the parents had a strong belief in parental encouragement. Gardner (1985b) suggested that parents can play either an active or passive role in their children's language learning process. In this study, the data suggests that the parents took an active role by supporting, encouraging and monitoring their children learning of the English language.

Based on a study in Southern California, Saenz and Felix (2007) showed parents had a strong belief in parental encouragement. The researcher expected high perceptions from parents of parental encouragement of their children for learning English. The parents taking responsibility to teach and support their children to become responsible students could be a reason why perceptions of parental encouragement were so high. Another factor that could influence perceptions is the importance of learning English as a foreign language because English is the most common language used in non-English speaking countries (Naved, 2015). Furthermore, the parents' use of self-report instrument may have influenced the very high perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English as a foreign language. For example, a parent may not want to acknowledge they do not encourage and support their child in the learning of English. However, it is a reasonable conclusion that parents will always feel strongly about supporting and motivating their children to become more productive in school.

The findings of the study showed no significant relationship between the students' and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English as a foreign language. This study was in line with Gardner's (1985b) research on second language learning. Gardner (1985b) pointed out that there was no correlation between children's perceptions and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement.

One possible explanation for no correlation between students' and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English as a foreign language might be that the attitudes of parents and their children towards learning English are different. According to Gardner (1985b), parents are important socializing agents and present a wide range of messages about learning English as a foreign language. The lack of communication between parents and their children on the importance of learning a foreign language could be a possible reason. Another cause may be that the parents will have

more life experience and understanding of the importance of learning English. This suggests students' age and life experience can influence perceptions of learning English as a foreign language.

The data showed a difference between the students' and parents' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English as a foreign language. Based on Thornton (2015), Saenz and Felix (2007) and Contreras (2016), the researcher expected that the parents would have very high perceptions and students' have a lesser perception of parental encouragement for learning English and the study was in line with those expectations. The study showed the margin of difference between the students' and parents' perceptions were quite small. The parents may feel they are fulfilling an obligation to encourage and support their children in the learning of English, but it can be quite possible the children may or may not perceiving parental encouragement in this way (Gardner, 1985b).

One possible reason for the significant observed/empirical difference between kindergarten students' and their parents' perceptions of parental encouragement for learning English as a foreign language could be attitudes of the importance of learning English. For example, the students may or may not have an appreciation for the English language. From observations, the Thai language is spoken more often outside the classroom with their friends and parents. The education level of the participants in the study could be another factor in the perceptions of parental encouragement between the students and their parents. According to Tantinirandr (2018) the principal of Panaya Phatthanakan School, this was the first year learning English for some students, while most parents had multiple years studying English as a foreign language. Another consideration would be the parents who feel strongly about parental encouragement in language study perceive that they provide the most support (Gardner, 1985b). By the parents enrolling their children in the English program at Panaya Phatthanakan School demonstrated their strong perceptions for learning English as a foreign language.

## **Recommendations**

### *Recommendations for Parents*

The findings of the study pointed out that students' perceptions were different from their parents' perceptions. The overwhelming recommendation is that the parents need to be aware of their encouragement and support of their children. Thus, parents should pay more attention to their students at home and school by talking to children, helping with and reviewing their homework, communicating with their teachers, coming to school regularly, and creating a home environment that encourages their learning. Parents should ask

themselves “Do I talk to my children enough?” “Do I support their learning?” “Do I communicate with their teachers at the school?”, and “Did I encourage them to learn English?” As parental encouragement is a critical factor for learning English, parents should take it upon themselves to take a driving interest in their child’s education by supporting their educational development cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually.

### *Recommendations for Teachers*

A full understanding on how parental encouragement is perceived between the students and parents can produce a healthy interaction among students, parents, and teacher, so they can share their ideas and knowledge with each other. The goal for teachers should be to promote parental encouragement between students and parents. The following are some recommendations for teachers to promote and encourage students and parents to become more involved in the learning process: First, teachers should receive professional development to learn and utilize parental encouragement. Second, teachers should use continued assessment to evaluate the amount of support and encouragement students receive at home. Third, teachers should use a digital platform where parents can see their students’ progress in learning English as a foreign language. Fourth, teachers should promote a positive learning environment in and outside the classroom, as teachers are the go-to professionals between the student’s and parents’ perceptions of parental encouragement.

### *Recommendations of Future Researchers*

This study was conducted only with kindergarten students and their parents at a bilingual school in Bangkok, Thailand. Thereby, the results cannot be generalized to other regions or other schools around the world. Future researchers should consider using a larger sample and different types of schools. The larger sample and the use of different schools can increase the reliability for future studies on parental encouragement. Furthermore, future researchers should consider using a mix of qualitative and quantitative designs. This could give a better in-depth understanding of students’ and parents’ perceptions of parental encouragement. Students and parent’s focus group could produce more accurate perceptions about learning English as a foreign language. Also, future researchers should consider using other variables to include attitudes, motivation, desire to learn English as a foreign language, and students’ outcomes in academic achievement in learning English. A more thorough study would give future researchers a more accurate understanding of parental encouragement in foreign language learning. However, the recommendations given by the researcher may be helpful for improving future research on parental encouragement.

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