Proceedings of ICEIPI 2025 Symposium: Reimagining Society: AI's Role in Cultural Transformation and Learning Environments
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BO23952

# *Exploring the Impact of Family Factors on Students' English Learning Motivation among English Major Undergraduate Students in China*

**Mohan Li**

*Qilu University of Technology, Jinan, China*
*DeanAngela9110@outlook.com*

***Abstract:*** English learning motivation is a critical and common factor that exists in our daily learning life. Learners in two main environments while learning, the school environment and family environment, these environments are psychologically and physically affecting learning motivation. In college students in China, many researchers have focused on searching the school environment's influence on English learning motivation, while the family environment is less studied in contrast. This research aims to provide a more comprehensive classification of family factors and expand the existing perspective on their influence on English learning motivation. Through the questionnaire method in mixed-method research, the results of this paper will provide insights into family factors on students' English learning motivation in China and identify the correlation and the degree of influence. This paper will demonstrate that the family factors (i.e., parents' sense of values, parents' social-economic status, parents' educational background and cultural influence, parents' involvement and guidance behavior, family's atmosphere and style) is positively related to students' English learning motivation, and further find the way to improve students' English learning motivation through paying attention to strong influencing factors and providing appropriate family support.

***Keywords:*** Family factors, English as a second language, Learning motivation.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, as international connections are increasingly strengthened, the requirements and demands of students' second language acquisition (**SLA)** are stricter. Therefore, exploring ways to enhance students' motivation to learn a second language is crucial.

As one of the most important growth environments, the family environment plays a key role in students' learning. It is necessary to study the influence of family factors on students' SLA motivation. English holds significant importance as a general second language in China; there has been much research on English learning motivation. Nevertheless, few studies have explored how family factors influence Chinese students' motivation of learning English as a second language. Little is known about the comprehensive family factors influencing students' English learning motivation, and the relationship between family factors and students' English learning motivation has rarely been evaluated comprehensively in China.

© 2026 The Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BO23952

This paper will use a questionnaire-based approach and define family factors in five aspects (i.e., parents' sense of values, parents' social-economic status, parents' educational background and cultural influence, parents' involvement and guidance behavior, family's atmosphere and style) and find out the relationships with students' English learning motivation among freshman undergraduate students majoring in English in China. The study ultimately aims to determine whether these family factors positively influence English learning motivation and to identify strategies for improving motivation through enhanced family support.

## 2. Literature review

Motivation is understood as the impetus behind starting and maintaining goal-oriented behaviors, of which learning motivation has always been one of the core issues in the field of second language acquisition [1]. Motivation level greatly impacts learners' engagement and contribution, and it should be considered from two aspects: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Self-determination theory, also known as SDT, consists of two parts: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. To put it briefly, competence is associated with the sense of effectiveness and self-assurance in pursuing and completing a task, autonomy is associated with volition and liberty, and relatedness offers the sense of safety and connection in a learning environment [2].

Based on SDT theory, the kinship of family ties has established an extrinsic connection for English learning. And the extrinsic connection is further internalized as an intrinsic learning motivation. This paper explores the interconnection between family factors and learning motivation, and finds the internalizing process [3].

English learning motivation refers to a learner's goal-oriented attitude and drive to achieve proficiency in English as a second language. Because learning motivation positively influences performance, efficiency, and creativity, many studies have focused on the influencing factors of SLA motivation. The existing research mainly focuses on intrinsic motivation, like language anxiety, and extrinsic motivation, such as school environment and teaching methods. Studies have shown that self-confidence with a second language appeared to stem from the individual's actual use of the language at home, which affirmed the importance of family as one of the most critical and longest-lasting environments in people's lives [4]. Family environment as a contributing factor and one of the social dimensions towards children's cognitive and educational development was relatively less studied.

Family background is a significant determinant of educational attainment that encompasses factors not chosen by the individual. These factors, which are called family factors, significantly shape the individual's educational opportunities and outcomes [5]. The family factors that the researchers looked at in the previous articles on the impact of the family environment on learning English as a second language were somewhat straightforward. Divergent precise details of family variables and the various study objects are the two key areas of concentration for researchers in this discipline. Different researchers have studied the effects of family factors in different ways, single family factors and multiple family factors. Many researchers have studied the effect of single-family factors. Based on newcomer families to Canada, J Paradis figured out that the frequency of second language use in households and the mother's level of education affected SLA [6]. Niehaus & Adelson noted the importance of addressing students' and their families' needs for fostering robust family involvement, particularly family second language use and parents' cultural background [7]. Other family factors have also been studied singularly by a few scholars. Hart and Risley summarized their work on the language acquisition skills of one to three-year-old children in American families and concluded that families with different social classes and discrepant social status would have variable results on SLA [8]. Wang and his colleagues have expanded the influence of single-family factor on SLA through Chinese local research objects and cases [9-10].

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BO23952

Some researchers searching multiple family factors on English second language acquisition had their different classification. Depending on Coleman's theory of family capital, Li's paper has emphasized that the family capital, such as education support, economic status, and family affection, has played an important role in English second language acquisition [11]. Yusup and Ahmad analyzed the family environment on English second language acquisition from three aspects: parents' socioeconomic status, educational ability, and aspiration towards the English language, and tested the relevance [12]. A part in the Development of Achievement Motivation and Engagement in the handbook of child psychology and developmental science, set up a model and analyzed the beliefs and behaviors of parents in the family on children's achievement motivation and engagement [13]. Pfenninger and Singleton studied a few factors of family, including parents' occupation and education level, English proficiency level, and socioeconomic status (SES) on English second language acquisition [14]. Abbasian, Hadian, and Vaez-Dalili's research set out to explore whether socioeconomic status and parents' educational backgrounds could be used to forecast how well Iranian students would perform on reading and listening comprehension tests in English as a second language [15].

## 3. Research questions

The following research issues are intended to be addressed by this study.

What is the general profile of family factors?

What are the relationships between each type of family factor and students' English learning motivation?

How does each family factor predict students' English learning motivation?

## 4. Research method

### 4.1. Participants

Unbiased sampling gives every population member an identical selection probability. Minimal knowledge of the population is required for this method to be effective. This approach enhances both internal and external validity by reducing selection bias [16]. This paper will use the random sampling method. The research will invite 299 first-year undergraduates in China to serve as participants. All participants will be English majors with similar academic backgrounds.

### 4.2. Material and design

This questionnaire is adapted based on the 6-factor model of the Foreign Language Learning Motivation Questionnaire and a statistical model [13, 17]. The 50 items in the original FLLMQ were created by Gonzales. It is made up of six components. The range of the factors' alpha coefficients is $\propto$ =.451 to .714, and the reliability of the entire questionnaire is $\propto$ =.982 [18]. The updated FLLMQ, which now only has 40 items, was employed in Gonzales's later study and was further examined and developed. The scale has been tested over a long period of time in research and has good reliability and validity. It is an effective tool to study learning motivation [17]. The questionnaire research is mixed-method research combining quantitative and qualitative research methods with three stages, including a pilot survey and a specific investigation.

The final questionnaire, structured using a 5-point Likert scale, consists of three main sections. The first section is a demographic information survey with seven questions using frequency analysis to analyze the frequency and percentage of analyzed objects (gender, highest level of parental education, area of residence of the family, languages predominantly spoken in the home and immediate, immediate family members live abroad situation and family language environment). In

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BO23952

the first section, the parent career conducts a multiple response analysis. The second section is about five family factors (parents' sense of values, parents' social-economic status, parents' educational background and cultural influence, parents' involvement and guidance behavior, family's atmosphere and style) with a total of twenty-five questions. The third section has nine questions in two factors (career-related motivation and cultural awareness motivation) about students' English learning motivation. The second and third sections will use descriptive analysis, correlational analysis, and regression analysis.

The specific procedures are as follows: An invitation email will be sent to students in different grades. A link to the online questionnaire will be provided. Students finish this online questionnaire.

## 5. Results

A total of 299 valid questionnaires were returned, including 130 from male students and 169 from female students. The ratio of males to females is relatively balanced. Among the valid questionnaires, a total of 299 questionnaires were returned from first-year undergraduates in the English major in Shandong province.

First, a frequency analysis was conducted to examine demographic variables, including gender, parents' educational background, parents' occupation, area of family residence, predominant home language, presence of immediate family members living abroad, and the extent of English exposure in the home.

Table 1: Frequency analysis

| Name | Option | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 130 | 43.48 |
| | Female | 169 | 56.52 |
| Highest Level of Parental Education | Junior High School and Below | 27 | 9.03 |
| | Senior High School | 120 | 40.13 |
| | Undergraduate | 105 | 35.12 |
| | Master's Degree and Above | 47 | 15.72 |
| Area of Residence of the Family | First-Line City | 92 | 30.77 |
| | Second-Line City | 135 | 45.15 |
| | Third-Line City | 51 | 17.06 |
| | Rural Townships | 21 | 7.02 |
| Languages Predominantly Spoken in the Home | Mandarin | 108 | 36.12 |
| | Dialects | 160 | 53.51 |
| | English | 18 | 6.02 |
| | Mix of Mandarin, Dialects, and English | 13 | 4.35 |
| Immediate Family Members Live Abroad Situation | Yes | 24 | 8.03 |
| | No | 275 | 91.97 |
| Family Language Environment | Parents speak English and use it regularly at home. | 45 | 15.05 |
| | Parents speak English but rarely use it at home. | 141 | 47.16 |
| | Parents don't know English and never use it at home. | 113 | 37.79 |
| Add Up the Total | | 299 | 100.0 |

As shown in Table 1, in terms of gender, 56.52% were women. The remaining 43.48% of the sample is male. Regarding the highest level of parental education, more than 40% of the samples

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BO23952

were “high school”. The proportion of undergraduate samples is 35.12%. The proportion of samples choosing ‘second-line city’ is 45.15%. The proportion of first-line cities is 30.77%. Regarding the main language spoken in the household, “dialect” is relatively more common in the sample, with a proportion of 53.51%. The proportion for the Mandarin sample is 36.12%. More than 90% of the samples chose ‘no’ for whether any of their immediate family members had lived in an English-speaking country for a long period of time. The proportion of “parents speak English but seldom use it at home” was 47.16%. A further 37.79% said that their parents did not know English and never used it at home.

Table 2: Multiple response analysis

| Parent Career | Response | | Penetration Rate(n=299) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | n | Response Rate | |
| Civil Servant/Enterprise Staff | 56 | 12.53% | 18.73% |
| Enterprise Employee | 149 | 33.33% | 49.83% |
| Self-Employed Person | 89 | 19.91% | 29.77% |
| Freelancer | 104 | 23.27% | 34.78% |
| Farmer | 4 | 0.89% | 1.34% |
| else | 45 | 10.07% | 15.05% |
| Add Up the Total | 447 | 100% | 149.50% |

Note: For Goodness-of-Fit Tests $\chi 2 = 171.993$ $p = 0.000$

As shown in Table 2, the goodness-of-fit test revealed a significant result ($\chi^2 = 171.993$, $p < 0.000$), indicating considerable variation in the selection rates across different items. To be specific, responses for two items, namely "enterprise employee" and "freelancer," cropped up way more frequently than expected.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis

| Name | Sample Siz | Average Value | Standard Deviation | Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family’s Atmosphere and Style | 299 | 3.359 | 1.027 | 3.400 |
| Parents’ Involvement and Guidance Behavior | 299 | 3.397 | 0.968 | 3.600 |
| Parents’ Educational Background and Cultural Influence | 299 | 3.416 | 0.994 | 3.400 |
| Parents’ Social-Economic Status | 299 | 3.328 | 0.965 | 3.200 |
| Parents’ Sense of Values | 299 | 3.322 | 0.977 | 3.200 |

After data processing to generate variables, the second part of the questionnaire questions was specified as five family factors, and the third part of the questionnaire questions was specified as English learning motivation. In Table 3, there are 5 family factors (i.e., parents’ sense of values, parents’ social-economic status, parents’ educational background and cultural influence, parents’ involvement and guidance behavior, family 's atmosphere and style). Analyzing the average values shows that the average scores are more balanced overall, with higher average values for two factors (the parents’ educational background and cultural influence, parents’ involvement and guidance behavior), with values of 3.416 and 3.397. The higher average value of these two factors could reflect the higher influence on English learning motivation.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BO23952

Table 4: Correlational analysis

| | English Learning Motivation | Family's Atmosphere and Style | Parents' Involvement and Guidance Behavior | Parents' Educational Background and Cultural Influence | Parents' Social-Economic Status | Parents' Sense of Values |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English Learning Motivation | 1 | | | | | |
| Family's Atmosphere and Style | 0.629** | 1 | | | | |
| Parents' Involvement and Guidance Behavior | 0.554** | 0.507** | 1 | | | |
| Parents' Educational Background and Cultural Influence | 0.533** | 0.490** | 0.468** | 1 | | |
| Parents' Social-Economic Status | 0.572** | 0.448** | 0.455** | 0.419** | 1 | |
| Parents' Sense of Values | 0.524** | 0.461** | 0.369** | 0.395** | 0.421** | 1 |

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

As manifested in Table 4, using the Pearson correlation coefficient to indicate the strength of the correlation, it can be seen that all five family factors are positively correlated and significantly affect English learning motivation.

The correlation coefficient of 0.629** between English learning motivation and a family's atmosphere and style is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This clearly suggests a strong, positive link between a student's drive to learn English and the overall vibe and approach within their family.

The correlation coefficient between English learning motivation and parents' involvement and guidance behaviour is 0.554**, a statistically significant figure at the 0.01 level. This suggests a noteworthy positive relationship: the more parents are involved and provide direction, the higher the motivation to learn English tends to be.

After correction for multiple comparisons, the data analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.533**, which was significant at the 0.01 level. The finding indicates a strong positive relationship between English learning motivation and parents' educational background and cultural influence.

The correlation coefficient between motivation for learning English and parents' socioeconomic status hits 0.572**, a statistically significant figure at the 0.01 level. This indicates a noteworthy positive relationship between students' drive to learn English and their parents' socioeconomic background.

The correlation coefficient for the link between students' drive to learn English and their parents' sense of value stands at 0.524**, with a 0.01 significance level. This suggests a robust, positive correlation between these two factors.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BO23952

Table 5: Regressional analysis

| | Unstandardised Coefficient | | Standardised Coefficient | t | p | Covariance Diagnostics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Standard Error | Beta | | | VIF | Tolerance Level |
| Constant Number | 0.269 | 0.159 | - | 1.686 | 0.093 | - | - |
| Family' s Atmosphere and Style | 0.249 | 0.043 | 0.287 | 5.837 | 0.000** | 1.681 | 0.595 |
| Parents' Involvement and Guidance Behavior | 0.156 | 0.044 | 0.170 | 3.570 | 0.000** | 1.568 | 0.638 |
| Parents' Educational Background and Cultural Influence | 0.132 | 0.042 | 0.147 | 3.138 | 0.002** | 1.520 | 0.658 |
| Parents' Social-Economic Status | 0.214 | 0.043 | 0.232 | 5.012 | 0.000** | 1.482 | 0.675 |
| Parents' Sense of Values | 0.158 | 0.041 | 0.173 | 3.841 | 0.000** | 1.413 | 0.708 |
| R 2 | 0.577 | | | | | | |
| Adjustment R 2 | 0.570 | | | | | | |
| F | F (5,293)=79.969,p=0.000 | | | | | | |
| D-W Value | 2.071 | | | | | | |

Note: Derived Quantify = English Learning Motivation
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

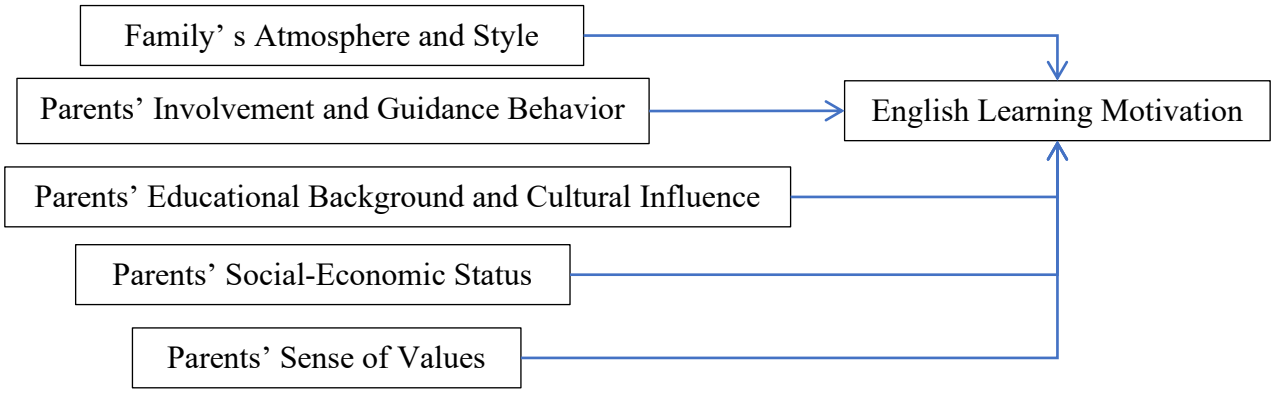


Figure 1: Impact pathway diagram

From the Table 5, it can be seen that the five family factors are taken as independent variables, while English learning motivation is taken as the dependent variable in the linear regression analysis, and the model formula is: English Learning Motivation = 0.269 + 0.249 * Family's Atmosphere and Style + 0.156 * Parents' Involvement and Guidance Behaviour + 0.132 * Parents' educational background and Cultural Influence + 0.214 * Parents' Social-Economic Status + 0.158 * Parents' Sense of Values, and the R-squared value of the model is 0.577, which means that the five family factors can explain 57% of English learning motivation. explain 57.7% of the variation in English learning motivation. The F-test of the model was found to pass the F-test (F=79.969, p=0.000<0.05), which means that at least one of the five family factors can impact English learning motivation. In addition, the model was tested for multicollinearity and found that all the VIF values in the model were less than 5, which means that there is no problem of covariance. The D-W values were around

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BO23952

2, meaning there is no autocorrelation in the model and no correlation between the sample data, so the model is good. Specifically analyzing the regression coefficient values of the five family factors, it can be learned that the P-values are all less than 0.01, meaning that the five family factors significantly positively influence the English learning motivation.

By analyzing the sub-data, a model diagram of the relationship between the five family factors and English Learning Motivation is shown in Figure 1.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Findings

The results of the above study show that the mean values of the family factors were all above 3.3, with two of them being higher, indicating that the group completing the questionnaire considered these two family factors to be more important. Firstly, it was found that there was a positive correlation between the five family factor variables and the English Learning motivation variable. According to the Self-Determination Theory, social factors like parental influences with informative elements are meant to bolster an individual's intrinsic motivation. Secure parental attachment and relationship contentment correlate with increased intrinsic motivation in students [3]. Secondly, the study also found that the five family factor variables significantly positively affected the English Learning motivation variable and presented an impact pathway diagram.

### 6.2. Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. Firstly, the sample was limited to first-year undergraduates majoring in English in Shandong and did not involve students from other regions. The study's results may be biased and may not accurately reflect the situation in China. Secondly, this experiment used the questionnaire method, and the investigator's questionnaire setting and the respondents' subjectivity in response patterns were more subjective. For example, for questions related to parents' sense of values and English learning motivation, respondents' perceptions of parents' sense of values and self-motivation may differ, which may cause bias in the experimental results. Also, the questionnaire was self-administered, and the investigator could not answer the respondents' queries in time for completion, which may affect respondent understanding and the consistency of answers, thereby affecting the data quality. Finally, this investigation only considered the influence of family factors on English learning motivation, without considering the specific process of influence, which may also cause a certain degree of limitation.

### 6.3. Implication

Regarding the significance of the study, firstly, we have found a positive correlation between family factors and English learning motivation, and family factors have a significant positive effect on English learning motivation. In the subsequent study, researchers can further explore why and how family factors positively influence English learning motivation. In addition to this, it is also possible to explore in depth whether there are still mediating factors between the relevant level of academic performance and family factors, and English learning motivation as reflected in English learning motivation. Secondly, this study is an empirical study on the influence of family factors on English learning motivation. The results of the study indicate that family factors occupy an important position. Therefore, based on the study's results, it is important to refine the specific family factors further to strengthen their empirical research on English learning motivation. In terms of practical application, this study provides some help in developing effective measures to enhance students' English learning motivation. This study can guide parents and students to enhance students' English learning

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BO23952

motivation by strengthening positive family influences and helping create a favourable family atmosphere for learning.

## 7. Conclusion

This study found that family factors (i.e., parents' sense of values, social-economic status, educational background, cultural influence, involvement and guidance behavior, family's atmosphere and style) and English learning motivation were positively correlated. It was also found that all five family factors had a significant positive effect on English learning motivation, which suggests that improving family factors is important and necessary for students' English learning motivation. Therefore, empirical studies should continue to focus on the path and process of family factors' influence on English learning motivation and whether mediators can be found between the two, as well as promote the establishment of a model of family factors' influence on English learning motivation. To a certain extent, this study enriches the previous research on family factors on English learning motivation in China, which is conducive to the comprehensive study of the influence of multiple family factors on English learning motivation. It lays a certain foundation for the continued research on the influence of family influences on English learning motivation in the future. However, this study also has shortcomings, such as regional limitations and errors in filling out the questionnaire. In the future, the scope of the experimental area can be expanded, and more detailed questionnaire instructions can be developed.

## References


[1] *Cook, D. A., & Artino, A. R., Jr. (2016). Motivation to learn: An overview of contemporary theories. Medical Education, 50(10), 997-1014.*

[2] *Gopalan, V., Bakar, J. A. A., Zulkifli, A. N., Alwi, A., & Mat, R. C. (2017, October). A review of the motivation theories in learning. In AIP Conference Proceedings (Vol. 1891, No. 1, p. 020043). AIP Publishing.*

[3] *Butler, Y. G. (2015). Parental factors in children's motivation for learning English: A case in China. Research Papers in Education, 30(2), 164–191.*

[4] *Clément, R., Gardner, R. C., & Smythe, P. C. (1980). Social and individual factors in second language acquisition. Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science / Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement, 12(4), 293–302.*

[5] *Björklund, A., & Salvanes, K. G. (2011). Education and family background: Mechanisms and policies. In Handbook of the Economics of Education (Vol. 3, pp. 201–247). Elsevier.*

[6] *Paradis, J. (2011). Individual differences in child English second language acquisition: Comparing child-internal and child-external factors. Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism, 1(3), 213–237.*

[7] *Niehaus, K., & Adelson, J. L. (2014). School support, parental involvement, and academic and social-emotional outcomes for English language learners. American Educational Research Journal, 51(4), 810–844.*

[8] *Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1996). Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children. Community Alternatives, 8, 92–93.*

[9] *Wang, W. L. (2015). The relationship between parenting styles and English self-concept among high school students [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Jiangxi Normal University.*

[10] *Dai, Z. Q., & Qi, W. H. (2020). External factors influencing children's second language acquisition. English Square: Academic Research, 10, 4.*

[11] *Li, G. (2007). Home environment and second-language acquisition: The importance of family capital. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 28(3), 285–299.*

[12] *Yusup, N. B., & Ahmad, A. (2016, October). The influence of parents support and its relationship with students achievement in English education. In International Conference on Education and Regional Development (pp. 657–662).*

[13] *Wigfield, A., Eccles, J. S., Fredricks, J. A., Simpkins, S., Roeser, R. W., & Schiefele, U. (2015). Development of achievement motivation and engagement. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), Handbook of child psychology and developmental science (pp. 1-44). Wiley.*

[14] *Pfenninger, S. E., & Singleton, D. (2019). Starting age overshadowed: The primacy of differential environmental and family support effects on second language attainment in an instructional context. Language Learning, 69(Suppl. 1), 207–234.*

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BO23952

[15] *Abbasian, R., Hadian, B., & Vaez-Dalili, M. (2020). Examination of the role of family socio-economic status and parental education in predicting English as a foreign language learners' receptive skills performance. Cogent Education, 7(1), 1710989.*

[16] *Acharya, A. S., Prakash, A., Saxena, P., & Nigam, A. (2013). Sampling: Why and how of it. Indian Journal of Medical Specialties, 4(2), 330–333.*

[17] *Gonzales, R. D., & Lopez, M. Y. (2016). Foreign language learning motivation questionnaire: Further examination of a six-factor model [Unpublished manuscript]. Graduate School, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines.*

[18] *Gonzales, R. DLC. (2006). Conceptual and psychometric properties of a foreign language learning motivation questionnaire. Philippine Journal of Psychology, 39, 1, 76-97.*