
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Why Some Arab Parents Speak to Their Children at Home in English (L2)

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| ABSTRACT

This study sought to find out why Arab parents speak to their children at home in English (L2), the effects of this on Arabic (L1) acquisition, and misconceptions about L1 and L2 acquisition. Results of surveys with 150 parents showed academic, pragmatic, sociolinguist, and psychological reasons such as making it easy for children to master English, to help them practice it, learn new vocabulary and pronounce words correctly. Their children go to an international school and are more fluent in English than Arabic. Some were born in an English-speaking country. Many consider English more important than Arabic for future college study and future jobs. English is a global language, and it is useful and needed everywhere. Children need it to communicate with the foreign housemaid and other English-speaking foreigners in the community. All parents believe that speaking English is prestigious, a sign of high class and like to brag about it. Some suffered because they did not speak English well when they were young and do not want their children to suffer as they did. This status quo created a gap between children's knowledge of English and Arabic. Some children do not speak L1 at all, respond in English to questions and conversations in Arabic, have difficulty reading the Quran and communicate with grandparents and relatives. Results revealed misconceptions about L1 and L2 acquisition and that learning English at an early age has no negative effects on Arabic and has positive effects on academic achievement. Results are discussed in the light of L1 and L2 acquisition research, the optimal age for learning L2, the effect of learning English on children's L1 language skills and academic achievement and factors that lead to successful L1 and L2 language learning.

| KEYWORDS

Second language acquisition, first language acquisition, acquisition of mother tongue, language acquisition stereotypes, parents' views, language learning promotion, optimal age, language learning success factors

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 12 January 2025

PUBLISHED: 17 February 2025

DOI: 10.32996/jlds.2025.5.1.3

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that English is a global language. According to the British Council, there are about 1.5 billion people learning English worldwide, i.e., one out of every four people on the planet speaks English. This number includes individuals of all ages (kindergarten, elementary, secondary, college) who are learning English as an additional language¹ whether as a foreign or second language, for general or special purposes.

At the elementary school level, the number of parents who wish to teach English as a foreign or second language to their children, whether at school or at home, in many parts of the world, is increasing. A review of the literature has revealed a plethora of research studies that investigate the effect of home language input, in particular, and children's first and second language development and raising bilingual children in a variety of languages such as English and Spanish, English and Japanese, English and Dutch, English and Icelandic, as: Early English education as a foreign language and parental factors and in mainland China (Butler, 2014);

¹ <https://www.ecenglish.com/en/school-locations/blog/ec/2024/04/24/70-statistics-about-the-english-language/>

parental involvement in foreign language learning in Hong Kong (Forey, Besser & Sampson, 2016); the effect of the home and school language environment instructional program type on dual language development of Latino children (Collins, 2014); Parents' role in the acquisition of multiple languages by children of immigrant families at home and at school (Mushi, 2002); does the language spoken at home matter for the education, wellbeing, and sense of belonging of the children of immigrants (Kilpi-Jakonen & Alisaari, 2021); the complex relationship between bilingual home language input and kindergarten children's Spanish and English oral proficiencies (Cha & Goldenberg, 2015); the role of parental input, vocabulary composition and early communicative skills in children's vocabulary development (Cox Eriksson, 2014); the role of spoken language and literacy exposure for cognitive and language outcomes in children (d'Apice & von Stumm, 2020); how social contexts support and shape language development (Hoff, 2006); how bilingual development is the same as and different from monolingual development (Hoff, 2017); lessons from the study of input effects on bilingual development (Hoff, 2020); effects of parents' early home language use on English reading growth of emergent bilinguals (Ju, Cho, Relyea, & Choi, 2023); reasons, views and practices of nonnative parents towards raising bilingual children (Karagöz & Erdemir, 2022); parents' perspectives on home language and bilingual development of preschool children (Mosty, Lefever & Ragnarsdóttir, 2013); multilingualism, beliefs about language, and language use in the family (Ndzotom Mbakop & Kamgang Ndada, 2021); parental language input and child language development in bilingual families (Place & Hoff, 2011); multimedia input and bilingual children's language learning (Sun & Yin, 2020); discourse strategies in multilingual families in the Netherlands (Tziampiri, Thieme & Verhagen, 2024); language use and language development in multilingual families (Wei, 2011); language socialization and language development in bilingual families (Yamamoto, 2010) and others.

Similarly, many Arab parents are keen on teaching their children English, whether at school, or at home. The literature review showed numerous studies that investigated the effect of home and family language policies, language inputs, parents' attitudes and practices on Arab children's acquisition of English (L2) and Arabic (L1), especially in the case of immigrant families or those living in an English-speaking country, such as: The role of parental language ideology and the home literacy environment in heritage language literacy learning of bilingual Arabic-English-speaking children in the UK (Said, 2021); Arabic language loss (attrition) among Arab immigrants' children (Al-Jumaily, 2015); middle class mothers' choices in enrolling their children in pre-schools that teach them English in Al-Madinah, Saudi Arabia (Al-Harthi, 2014); challenges to learning and teaching English in Kuwait and the impact of motivation and parental encouragement on English language learning by Arab students' (Daniel, Halimi & AlShammari, 2018); attitudes of Arabic and non-Arabic speaking parents toward the importance of learning Arabic by their children in the United States (Al Alili & Hassan, 2017); Arabic-speaking immigrant parents views on heritage language maintenance and identity construction for children in Sweden (Attaallah, 2020).

In Saudi Arabia, some studies focused on conversing in L2 English with Saudi Arabic (L1) children at home (Mansory, 2019); English language education at the elementary school level in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2022b); how parents promote English and Arabic language proficiency in elementary school children in Saudi Arabia. Al-Jarf, 2022c); the influence of housemaids on Saudi young children's Arabic language acquisition from the perspective of mothers (Al-Jarf, 2022f); effects of the iPad on first and second language acquisition by Saudi children in the home environment as perceived by their mothers (Al-Jarf, 2021b; Al-Jarf, 2021c); should English be taught to Saudi kindergarten children under the age of six (Al-Jarf, 2023b; Al-Jarf, 2020b; Al-Jarf, 2005) and so on.

The literature review showed lack of studies in Saudi Arabia that investigate the role of the home environment in the acquisition of the first and second languages by Arab children. Therefore, this study seeks to explore why some Arab parents speak with their children at home in English (L2) rather than Arabic (L1) and the reasons they give (academic, pragmatic, psychological and sociolinguistic); the effects of speaking with children at home in English on Arabic (L1) acquisition and on academic achievement; and the misconceptions those parents have about first (Arabic) and second (English) language acquisition by children in Saudi Arabia.

The results will be discussed in the light of L1 and L2 acquisition research, the optimal age for learning L2; the effect of learning English on children's L1 language skills and academic achievement and factors that lead to successful L1 and L2 language learning.

Results of the current study are significant for parents, teachers, principals and other educators interested in language education in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries as it will inform them of the pros and cons of speaking to children in English (L2) rather than Arabic (L1) at home and its effects on Arabic language maintenance as a national language.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

A random sample of 150 parents (55% fathers and 45% mothers) was surveyed. Parents who do not know English and those who speak to their children at home in Arabic were excluded. The sample included Arab parents from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt). All the parents have completed their university education in medicine, pharmacy, biomedical engineering, English, translation,

English literature, and linguistics. They all have a good command of English. % completed their studies abroad (in the USA, UK, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan). 47% have a B.A., 38% have an M.A. and %15 have a Ph.D. 82% of the mothers are working and 18% are not working. The children's ages ranged between 1-12 years old. Parents in the sample have a total of 218 children: 45% were between 1-6 years old (in kindergarten and preschool), 30% were between 7-9 years old (in grades 1-3), and another 25% between 10-12 years (in grade 4-6). All the children go to either an international school where all the subjects are taught in English with 1 Arabic subject, or a private School that teaches English between 5-10 hours a week.

2.2 Data Collection

Parents in the sample were interviewed. They answered a questionnaire-survey with open-ended questions about the following: (i) why parents speak English with their children at home; (ii) the positive & negative effects of speaking to children at home in English on children's mastery of Arabic (L1)? Why? (iii) Whether speaking to children at home in English has a positive effect on the children' academic achievement?

2.3 Data Analysis

Parents' responses to the survey questions were compiled and classified according to each question. The reasons for conversing with children at home in English were classified into academic, pragmatic, sociolinguist, and psychological reasons. Academic reasons are those related to current or future studies, access to education, academic resources as English textbooks and articles, online courses, standardized tests, developing language skills, enriching vocabulary, ability to communicate in English, academic writing and communication, enhancing overall communication skills (listening, speaking, and comprehension), and so on. Pragmatic reasons refer to better job opportunities in the Saudi labor market, higher-paying jobs and career advancement, travelling abroad, ability to browse the internet, cultural exchange, international trade and commerce; working in international diplomacy and politics, working in government agencies and international organizations that require English; understanding new technologies and innovations and so on. Psychological reasons refer to boosting self-esteem and self-confidence, especially when successfully communicating in different situations, a form of mental exercise, enhancing emotional resilience as a result of understanding and adapting to different cultural contexts. Sociolinguistic reasons refer to prestige and status, integrating into English-speaking communities, new social connections and relationships with English speakers, understanding different dialects and varieties of English, such as British, American, Australian, access to a vast array of media, including movies, TV shows, music, and literature, facilitating migration to English-speaking countries and improving the quality of life in new environments.

Responses were compiled and sorted out according to each question and to each of the reasons. Qualitative analysis is used to report the reasons given by the parents for speaking English to children at home. What matters here is the quality of the responses given by the parents, not the percentage of parents who gave the same response.

Parents' responses were not classified according to the parents' sex, mothers' work status, the parent's educational level, area of specialization, nationality, children's age group, children's grade level, kind of school the children go to as these variables are not important for the current study. Focus is only on the reasons for speaking with children at home in English and the effect of that on L1 (Arabic) and L2 (English) acquisition.

3. Results

3.1 Reasons for Speaking with Children at Home in English

The sample of parents in the current study gave academic, pragmatic, psychological and sociolinguist reasons for speaking with their children in English (2) rather than Arabic (L1) as follows:

1) Academic reasons

Parents reported that they speak to their children at home in English to make it easy for the children to learn English and master it; because the children go to an international school and are more fluent in English than Arabic as they study all the subjects in English except for one Arabic. They added that they wish to facilitate college study in the future if their children choose to major in medicine, engineering, and oil, computer science, IT and others as English is a medium of instruction whether in Saudi Arabia or abroad. Some mothers said:

- *I speak English with my two-year old daughter because I am planning to send her to an international school.*
- *To facilitate colleges studies for them in the future as most majors are taught in English such as medicine and engineering.*
- *Because my children go to an international school, they are more fluent in English, so I speak with them in English.*

In addition, speaking English with their children at home will make it easy for the children to pronounce English sounds correctly, to practice the American accent, to enrich their vocabulary by hearing words over and over again, to speak fluently, to express themselves and communicate in English easily, and to understand English movies, and follow directions while playing games. Speaking English at home with the children will reinforce the English language, and help the children improve their proficiency

level. Others wish to raise bilingual children by teaching them more than one language. Some declared that teaching children English is more important and more necessary than teaching them Arabic. They consider English a primary language.

2) Pragmatic Reasons

The sample of parents in the current study speaking English with their children at home because English is a global language, and it is useful and needed everywhere. The children will be able to communicate with other people if they travel abroad. Future jobs in the Saudi labor market require knowledge of English. They will be able to communicate with non-Arabic speakers in the community as foreign doctors, nurses and foreign housemaid. It will be easy for the children to understand English because they spend a lot of time with the housemaid and at international schools. Some parents noted:

- *I am a pharmacist working on my M.A. and my son is 2 years old. He speaks both English and Arabic as we have a foreign house maid at home who speaks with him in English. He spends most of the day with the housemaid.*
- *In this day and age, there is a great need for learning English.*
- *Nowadays, English is the global language, and it is needed in all countries.*
- *Currently, English is required by many jobs. So, it is better for my child to start learning English at an early age.*
- *Children's future is connected with English.*

3) Psychological Reasons

Some parents in the sample indicated that they do not want their children to suffer or feel inferior as they did when they were young because their English was not good, and they could not speak it very well. As a result, they did not get good grades. Having a high proficiency level in English will boost the children's self-confidence and self-esteem. They will be able to get good grades and feel good about themselves. They will be able to communicate in English successfully in different situations such as communicating and interacting with English-speaking people from other countries such as foreign workers in Saudi Arabia. Learning and speaking English every day is a form of mental exercise. It enhances the children's overall communication skills (listening, speaking, and comprehension), enhances their emotional resilience as a result of understanding and adapting to different cultural contexts. Some parents reported:

- *When I was young, I was shy because I did not speak English very well. Now I am trying to compensate for that by speaking with my children in English.*
- *I do not want my children to suffer and get low grades in English I did when I was in school.*
- *English was problematic for me when I was the same age as my children, and I do not wish my children to be in the same situation.*
- *Some parents feel jealous of their friends and colleagues who have children who speak English fluently.*

4) Sociolinguistic Reasons

Almost all the parents in the current study asserted that it is prestigious in our society to speak English fluently. It is a sign of high status. People who speak English with high proficiency brag about it. When the children speak English outside their homes, the parents brag about it in front of their friends and colleagues, especially when the children speak with a native-like accent. Some like to imitate acquaintances who have children who can speak English, especially very young children. In some cases, the children were born in a foreign English-speaking country. When the parents were studying abroad, they acquired English by immersion, and the parents want their children to continue to speak English, otherwise they might lose their English language. They also want their children to maintain their native English accent which they acquired when they were abroad. Some parents said:

- *It is a kind of imitation. Sometimes parents feel embarrassed when they speak Arabic and not English, thinking that Arabic is not adequate for the new requirements of our age.*
- *Unfortunately, this is a kind of bragging about speaking English as a form of modernization and keeping up with other countries.*
- *To brag about their children in front of others, especially relatives and friends.*
- *Some people feel that the person who knows English is better and more admired and respected.*
- *My children were born in the UK while my husband and I were studying there. English was the first language they encountered when they first started to talk.*
- *The family lives in a foreign country and want their children to master English.*
- *My children go to an international school and when they get home from school they start talking to me in English, so I respond to them in English.*

5) Age-related Reasons

Parents in the current study, especially those who have small children under the age of 6, consider childhood the best age for learning English as children in kindergarten and elementary school are more capable of acquiring a second/foreign language than older students or adults. They are not worried about their children learning Arabic, their native language, because they think children can pick it up from people around the larger community, such as neighbours and acquaintances. Some parents wrote:

- *To make it easy for the children to acquire English.*
- *Childhood is the best time for teaching children English.*
- *Children can easily acquire the American/British accent.*
- *Children have no difficulty in absorbing vocabulary and grammatical structures.*
- *Children can speak the language accurately and correctly with no effort at all.*

3.2 Effects of Speaking to Children at Home in English on Arabic Language Acquisition

Some parents in the current study noted that speaking with their children at home in English (L2) rather than Arabic (L1) has affected children's knowledge of and proficiency level in Arabic (L1). Some children do not speak Arabic (L1) at all, respond in English to questions and conversation in Arabic, have difficulty reading the Quran and communicating with grandparents and other relatives. English is the stronger and the preferred language by children who go to International Schools and many children in Private Schools. More parents worry about their children's proficiency level in English rather than Arabic and promote English more than Arabic. Some indicated that Arabic is the children's weak language because the parents do not give much attention to mastering Arabic by their children, thinking that the children do not need to learn Arabic as they can learn it automatically from the community. Some parents wrote:

- *Some parents are affected by the Western culture thinking that English is superior.*
- *Thinking that English is superior to Arabic is a kind of cultural defeatism.*
- *Poor Arabic is due to the effect of international schools on the children and their parents. International schools do not care about teaching children Arabic as much as they care about teaching them English.*

3.3 Misconceptions about First and Second Language learning

Results of the surveys with the sample of parents in the current study revealed some misconceptions about first and second language acquisition. They have misconceptions about the relationship between learning a foreign language and age only; misconceptions about the optimal age to learn English, and believing that learning English (L2) at a young age has no negative effects on Arabic and has positive effects on academic achievement. The importance of children's learning the mother tongue first is completely ignored or overlooked by the majority of those parents.

4. Discussion

4.1 Arab Parents' Preference for Using English (L2) in the Home Environment

The sample Arab parents' living in Saudi Arabia in the current study prefer to speak with their children at home in English (L2) rather than Arabic (L1). These results are contradictory to the results of a study by Mosty, Lefever & Ragnarsdóttir (2013) who found that parents had overwhelmingly positive perspectives both on their preschool Icelandic children's home language use and their Icelandic language development. Communication in the home language (L1) is considered important for learning the language, and parents made conscious decisions as to how and why the home language (L1) was used. Moreover, travel to the children's home country was important for parents as it connected home language development in children with their cultural and personal identity.

Moreover, findings of the current study are consistent with findings of prior studies by the author with samples of college students and parents who show preference for learning English and the suitability of English for many college majors, and preference for sending their children to kindergartens that teach English at an early age (Al-Jarf, 2008; Al-Jarf, 2004a; Al-Jarf, 2004b).

4.2 Reasons for Speaking with Children at Home in English

The academic, pragmatic, psychological, sociolinguistic and age-related reasons that parents gave in the current study for speaking English with their children are partially consistent with findings of a study by Karagöz & Erdemir (2022) which revealed that parents gave a higher number of academic- and life-related reasons for raising bilingual children such as living abroad, traveling in the world, studying at bilingual schools, and having developed cognitive skills. Similarly, findings of the current studies are partially consistent with findings of a study by Mansory (2019) who found that Saudi parents speak English with their children to give them an opportunity to be bilingual and proficient in English (L2). Those parents were also pleased to see their children speak English with a British accent. This study gave more academic, psychological, pragmatic and sociolinguistic reasons explained above.

Findings of the current study are consistent with findings of prior studies by the author which showed that 96% of the college students at the University of Jordan and King Saud University considered English a superior language, being an international language, and the language of science and technology, research, electronic databases and technical terminology. 82% of the college students believe that English is more suitable for teaching medicine, nursing, pharmacy, science, engineering, and computer science, whereas Arabic is more suitable for teaching Arabic literature, religion, education and history majors. They gave many educational, technological, social and labour market reasons for favouring the English language (Al-Jarf, 2008; Al-Jarf, 2004a; Al-Jarf, 2004b).

It seems that the preference for using the English language is not limited to conversing with children in the home environment. On social media and in daily communication, educated Arabs prefer to use English words, although Arabic equivalents exist, and they code-mix English and Arabic (Al-Jarf, 2025; Al-Jarf, 2016; Al-Jarf, 2011). In addition, Arabic speakers create new lexical items by blending Arabic words with many English affixes (Al-Jarf, 2023c).

4.3 Optimal Age for Learning L2

Regarding the optimal age for learning a second language, Ladevie (1990) and Petrovic (1997) revealed that the optimal age for learning foreign languages has been the subject of controversy among educators, linguists and psycholinguists for decades. Stern and Weinrib (1978) examined the results of research and educational programs in the USA, Canada, France and the UK and found that these programs did not succeed in dispelling doubts about the effectiveness of learning foreign languages at an early age. L2 can be taught at any age. The choice of the age at which students may begin to learn L2 depends on the amount of time required for the student to reach a certain level of proficiency, the importance given to the study of L2 in the school curriculum, & the available educational and human resources.

4.4 Effect of Learning L2 at on L1

Results of some prior studies showed the effect of learning L2 on L1. For example, Issa and Al-Mutawa (1998) and Issa (1997) found that the achievement level of second grade children in Arabic was not affected by their study of English. That is, teaching English to children in the first grade for three hours a week had neither a positive nor a negative effect on children's achievement in Arabic.

On the contrary, Hansen-Strain (1990) declared that the younger the child, the faster he/she is in forgetting his/her mother tongue in the absence of the educational environment. In Merino's study (1983), children's performance deteriorated significantly by the time they reached 4th grade. The ability to use English (L2) improved in all students, but their ability to use Spanish (L1) deteriorated. The severe cases of language loss occurred in children who used both Spanish and English with the same speaker.

Emergent bilingual children whose parents used a non-English (native) language more frequently at home when they were in kindergarten started with lower English reading achievement but made greater gains compared to children whose parents used their native language less often. The effects of parents' non-English language use on English reading achievement almost vanished by 8th grade. Parents' frequent native language use neither has facilitative effects on English language use nor does it hamper emergent bilinguals' long-term English reading development (Ju, Cho, Relyea & Choi, 2023).

Likewise, Mansory (2019) reported that children of Saudi parents speaking English only has led to the weakening and loss of their L1 language (L1).

The importance of children mastering their mother tongue before learning a foreign language was emphasized by prior studies as Gallagher (2001) who asserted that the placement of young children in programs by international schools without mother tongue support has negative effects on the children. Similarly, Dolson (1985) emphasized that learning the mother tongue would help children build an academic foundation that would contribute to their academic and professional success in the future. Mansory (2019) concluded that parents should provide a linguistic balance between English (L2) and Arabic (L1) for their bilingual children in order to preserve their native language (Arabic).

The role of spoken language and literacy exposure in cognitive and language outcomes in children was demonstrated by d'Apice & von Stumm (2020). The adult spoken language that children were exposed to accounted for 11% and 12% of the variance in their language and cognitive abilities. Parents' literacy behaviors accounted for 4% of the variance in children's cognitive ability but were not associated with their language ability. Parents' literacy behaviors correlated .33 with the amount of adult spoken language. The authors concluded that parents' literacy behaviors play a significant role in children's cognitive development.

4.5 Factors Affecting Success in Learning English

Speaking with children at home in the foreign language vis English is not the only factor that contributes to the development and acquisition of English. Prior studies in the literature have revealed a number of factors that contribute to first and second language acquisition. In this respect, Hoff (2020) indicated that bilingual children vary enormously in their L2 and L1 language skills. The quantity and quality of bilingual children's input in each language influences their development rate in each language. The dual language learning environments vary enormously in the support they give for each language. Bilingual development and monolingual development depend on the quantity and quality of language exposure and the relation between children's own language use and their language growth. Differences in outcomes include the profiles of expressive and receptive skills and the rate of language development (Hoff, 2017).

There is a complex relationship between bilingual home language input and kindergarten children's Spanish and English oral proficiencies. Bilingual home language environments that maintain high levels of Spanish use were associated with better bilingualism whereas bilingual home language environments with high levels of English use were associated with less bilingualism. Children's proficiency in a language (English or Spanish) impacts the relationship between the bilingual home language input and proficiency in the other language and the bilingual home language input impacts the relationship between children's Spanish and English oral proficiencies (Cha & Goldenberg, 2015).

Latino dual language children in kindergarten through second grade who were in bilingual classrooms and schools where Spanish was used among the students, teachers, and school staff showed significant dual language gains. Only in classrooms where English and Spanish were both used did children reach age-appropriate proficiency levels in both languages. Home language use was also significantly correlated with dual language gains, particularly Spanish vocabulary knowledge (as a mother tongue) before controlling for maternal education. The author highlighted the effect of instructional language program type and the home and school language environment (Collins, 2014).

Variability in parental language input is associated with variability in the child's vocabulary size. Children with large early vocabulary repertoire showed the most stability in children's vocabulary structure and makeup and earliest grammatical development. The results also underscore the importance of high-quality adult-child interaction, with rich input tailored to the children's developmental age and levels, together with high awareness of early language development (Cox Eriksson, 2014).

The most important factor in language acquisition is parental encouragement which is crucial for the desire to learn English, development of motivational intensity, and attitude toward learning English (Daniel, Halimi & AlShammari, 2018). In Hong Kong, parents are involved in supporting their children's English literacy development in a variety of ways, but they do not generally embrace culturally specific Western practices such as reading aloud (Forey, Besser & Sampson, 2016). Parents' support of their children's language learning is manifested in parents' attitudes towards language, in general, parents' interest in both the mother tongue and English, joint parent-child activities, and direct, child-parent linguistic exchange. Other factors included teacher-parent communication, school support, teacher flexibility, and parents' sensitivity to school support. Problems faced by parents and teachers included lack of an effective linguistic link between home learning and school learning and parents' lack of English proficiency to communicate effectively about children's school learning (Mushi, 2002).

A factor that was previously ignored, is the parents' socio-economic status and parents' behaviours and beliefs about English education and how these variables relate to children's English language learning, and how such relationships may differ across different grade levels (4th, 6th and 8th-grade). Butler (2014) found that the parents' socio-economic status did not show much effect on their children's listening and reading/writing performance during their elementary school years, but it did show an effect on their speaking abilities when they were in 4th grade, if not earlier. Butler emphasized the importance of incorporating socio-economic dimensions in exploring second and foreign language acquisition.

Other factors that affect children's success in learning English (L2) are: intelligence, mental readiness and maturity; the ability to use linguistic coding; the role of parents and teachers; the need for communication in and outside the classroom; the personality of the teacher; use of successful instructional programs; teaching methods; visual learning; use of technology; intentional instruction in the classroom; playing language learning games; children's positive attitudes and motivation; time allotted to language learning (Al-Jarf, 2023b; Al-Jarf, 2005).

5. Recommendations

Findings of the current study showed that parents in the sample are very keen on teaching their children English (L2) rather than Arabic (L1) to the extent that they speak with their children at home in English. They gave educational, pragmatic, psychological and sociolinguistic reasons for preferring English as a language of communication in the home environment. Parents give more importance to teaching their children English than Arabic and consider English more important than Arabic for their children's future education and future job. Results also revealed some misconceptions about second and first language acquisition and that children are more capable of learning a foreign language than older ones. Many admitted that English is the children's stronger language and Arabic is the weaker language. They believe that children do not need to learn Arabic as it is their native language which they can acquire from the community.

Karagöz & Erdemir (2022) gave some disadvantages to speaking with children in L2 which included having language delays, exposure to discouragement by family members and prejudice by the society. They added that parents are mostly unaware of scholarly approaches to bilingual parenting techniques and strategies. The parents act intuitively in their own manner. Therefore, families are advised to have sufficient knowledge of academic strategies and practices and develop awareness of the factors that impact children's cognitive, emotional, and social development before they initiate bilingual upbringing of their children. They can

inform their relatives and friends of possible delays and confusion in advance so that they reduce their anxiety and fear of communication with their children.

While raising bilingual children is beneficial to the children themselves, parents need to keep a balance between the children's mastery of English (L2) and that of Arabic (L1). Parents should pay more attention to Arabic, our national language. Otherwise focusing on English will lead to Arabic language loss. Some of the activities that children can engage in to promote English and Arabic language are given below.

Multimedia input at home has a significant effect on children's language outcomes. Sun & Yin (2020) found that diversity of multimedia input is more important than the amount of multimedia input in promoting children's Mandarin (heritage) language maintenance, while controlling for children's conventional language exposure, socio-economic status, and language aptitude. The number of multimedia sources significantly and positively correlates with children's general Mandarin-Chinese proficiency. By contrast, English multimedia exposure at home has a little impact on children's general English proficiency.

The iPad can be used more effectively in helping young children in language learning than older children in grades 1-3, and children in grades 4-6 respectively. Older children (age 10-12) mainly use the iPad to watch movies and play games. Children under the age of 6 use the iPad to learn Arabic and English; 21.88% use Arabic Alphabet apps; 15.6% use Quran apps; 12.5% use animal apps and 12.5% use numeracy and arithmetic apps. The iPad helps kindergarten children to learn the alphabet, numbers, names of fruits, animals, colors, seasons, parts of the body, clothing, continents and so on. They learn from apps, cartoons, nursery rhymes, games, stories, movies, and flash cards. The iPad helps children focus on and engage in learning because the apps are interactive and use audio, video animation and color (Al-Jarf, 2021b; Al-Jarf, 2021c).

To promote Arab children's English and Arabic language proficiency, they can watch English cartoons and movies, use English educational and entertainment apps/programs, play English games, and enrol the children in English courses during holidays. To promote Arabic, parents may hire a tutor, and encourage children to read Arabic stories and watch Arabic cartoons (Al-Jarf, 2022c). They can encourage their children to read multicultural children's short stories followed by reading and speaking activities (Al-Jarf, R. (2015). Parents may help preschool children use Arabic websites for developing pre-reading and pre-math skills (Al-Jarf, (2004a).

Parents and children can be introduced to digital reading, digital reading devices, reading apps and websites and mobile reading apps with interactive features to motivate older children to read Arabic fiction and short stories. They can explore mobile audiobooks, storybooks, picture books and glossy magazines, electronic reading games, reading lessons with digital, human-like characters, online book clubs, children's digital libraries and WhatsApp remote reading. Digital reading can be integrated in the school curriculum (Al-Jarf, 2023a).

Finally, the issues of language socialization and language development, and the impact of code mixing and language development in bilingual Arab families are still open for further investigation by researchers in the future.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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