

Chapter 85

Mothers' Attitudes Toward the Use of CALL for Their Children's English Learning: A Focus on Individual Differences

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter the attitude of mothers to the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in their children's language learning was investigated. 118 Iranian mothers were selected based on convenient sampling. Their attitude towards CALL was assessed by a 12-item questionnaire. The result of data analysis revealed that generally mothers have roughly positive attitudes towards CALL. Significant differences were reported when mothers with higher education were compared with those mothers who did not have university degrees. However, gender, age, and mother's profession did not have any role in their attitudes towards CALL.

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly personal and social development of each individual is influenced by the environment where they are raised and the relationship they have with their family and family members. Family-related variables such as socio-economic status of the family, their values and beliefs, parents' education, and the way family members and siblings interact play a critical role in developing people's personalities, beliefs and values.

It is suggested that the way children communicate with their father and mother is not the same and they prefer to talk about different topics with each of them. Children generally talk about chores, shopping, school affairs, emotional problems and dilemmas with their mothers (Ronka et al., as cited in Parkkola, 2006). Mothers have far-reaching effects on their children's life and play a key role in their cognitive, social, and physiological development as well as their education and personalities (Kretchmar, 2002).

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In all societies mothers have heavy responsibilities and they not only do the housework, but also connect all family members together to function as a unit. Mothers spend most of their time with their children (Hosseini & Khazarloo, 2009) and they are in charge of taking care of children and educating them. Therefore, there are strong and emotional ties between mothers and their children and they have very strong effect on children's behaviors in comparison to fathers. This relationship has long-term effects on children and can shape and impact any individual's behavior in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Mothers' professions affects girls' decision on choosing their future jobs (Smith, 2000). They have a crucial role as behavioral role models for their children-particularly girls- (Grass-Valazquez, Joyce, & Debry, 2009); and their constructive and logical stand can shape their children's opinions toward certain subject matters such as math (Samadi, 2007).

It is suggested that investigating the relationship people have with their mothers provides a deep insight into the reasons of their behaviors and actions (Darvizeh, 2003). Although the role of mothers in their children's education and personality such as attitudes towards math (Samadi, 2007), problem solving (Shokouhi-Yekta & Parand, 2008), compatibility (Hosseini & Khazarloo, 2009), behavioral challenges (Tork, Malek Pour, & Golparvar, 2008) and learning achievement (Aminzade & Sarmadi, 2009) have been investigated, mothers' attitudes toward the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its tools in education is neglected.

Based on Davis's Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), one of the most important factors affecting the use of technology for teaching and learning purposes is positive or negative attitudes of users towards the usefulness of technology for education (Davis, 1989). While positive attitudes facilitate the use of technology in education, negative attitudes create phobia and anxiety and can cause withdrawal from working with technology for any reasons in general and learning in particular. Attitudes towards technology are associated with social and cultural aspects of using technology in a given society (Shabani-nia & Mokhtari, 2008). They are also influenced by technology access, time and duration of use at school or home, computer literacy of family members, and especially parents' attitudes towards the usefulness of technology for learning school subjects (Meelissen & Drent, 2008).

Family has a great role in ICT use of their children for doing household and homework; communicating with others; and enjoying and entertainment. They decide about when and how their children can use the technology. They pay for the expenses of buying personal computers, hardware devices, software programs, and getting connected to the Internet. They, especially mothers, supervise their children's technology behavior and use. Therefore, if parents have negative attitudes towards technology and do not realize the usefulness of such devices in their children's education, they not only refuse to buy technological tools for their children, but also transfer their negative attitudes to their children and deprive them from the values of modern technologies both in childhood and adulthood. This will lead to students' negative attitudes toward technology and prevents them from exploiting these devices in their education and later in their professional and social life. If parents become familiar with technology, they can help their children overcome the problems they have with using modern technologies in doing their schoolwork and ultimately ease the normalization of technology in the society.

While many studies have investigated the attitudes of different users on their success or failure in using the technology, very few studies, especially in developing countries, have investigated the issue of parents' attitudes towards Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in their children's foreign language learning. The current study thus aims at exploring Iranian mothers' attitudes towards the use of technology in teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in Iran. The relationship

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