The Performance of Primary School Students in English Learning in the Online Teaching Mode

Shiwei Liu*

Department of Education, Long Island University, New York, U.S.A

*Corresponding author: liushiwei_0704@126.com

Abstract. Since around 2000, many online courses have appeared on the market. Depending on the needs and groups of people attending the class, there are many ways to take the course. Among all the class groups, this article focuses on analyzing the behavior of elementary school students in English lessons. By interviewing the parents of seven ordinary Chinese primary school students and the teachers of the online courses, this article hopes to further reveal the learning behavior of primary school students in ordinary families and the expectations of parents for the curriculum. Online English classes for elementary school students have unexpected demands on the learning atmosphere in the classroom, and in the primary school classroom, the interaction between teachers and students is particularly important.

Keywords: online learning, TESOL, online teaching, learning behaviors.

1. Introduction

Since the emergence of online education around 2000, and the number of online learners has increased, the topic of how online education can better help learners study. Online education has different requirements for class equipment, and the way of teaching is different from offline education. Peter Shea mentioned: a strong and active presence on the part of the instructor—one in which she or he actively guides the discourse—is related both to students' sense of connectedness and learning [1]. Unlike offline classes, if a student is not paying attention in offline class, the teacher can walk up to the child to remind the child. However, in online lessons, when students are distracted, teachers cannot walk up to the children to remind them, and even sometimes, the small screen in video lessons may make it impossible for teachers to see whether students are paying attention in the first place.

Nevertheless, the feasibility and usefulness of online learning as a flexible alternative to conventional schooling at the primary and secondary levels, and revealed several interesting findings regarding student characteristics, social interaction, motivational beliefs, and online technologies in relation to online learning experiences [2]. Especially from 2020 to 2013, students had to take classes from home due to the pandemic. With the end of the epidemic, offline classes have gradually resumed. However, there are still many students who choose online courses to make up for classes after school. Why do Chinese families choose online classes? How are the delivery methods and requirements of online courses different from offline courses? Studying these questions can not only understand the expectations and needs of ordinary Chinese families for online lessons but also discover the characteristics of online class teaching.

This article will focus on online English classes for Chinese primary school students, through interviews with seven families in China who are taking online English classes and students' feedback from students' teachers. This article hopes to help more primary school English teachers understand students' behavior in learning a second foreign language, understand the family's demands for primary school students' English learning, and provide some English teaching methods for teachers.

2. Literature review

The online education and training industry began to rise around 2000 [3]. It is the fastest-growing market in the education industry-it has grown 900% since its creation in 2000. The number of online learning users is expected to increase to 57 million by 2027 [3]. There are many types of online

courses. For example, well-known university open courses, app language learning (Duolingo), online skills courses (e.g. how to make PPT), K-12 online courses, etc. There's no question that online learning grew exponentially thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic. Just five years after the outbreak, it is expected that the industry will have grown by more than 200% [3]. During the pandemic, the Chinese government proposed "non-stop learning" and required online teaching to be carried out according to local conditions [4]. The Ministry of Education issued the "Notice on Several Issues concerning Targeted Teacher Work during the Pandemic Prevention and Control", which proposed "suspending classes without stopping teaching and learning". It required education departments and schools to carry out online teaching according to local conditions [4].

Supported by student needs and policies, the number of online classes is also increasing. Even if it has slowed down after the epidemic, it is undeniable that after three years of the epidemic, online education, especially K-12 online education, students, parents, and teachers have not adapted from the beginning to adapted well finally. Even during this period, some parents found that online lessons can expose their children to high-quality teachers in different regions. For example, a mother from Korla County, Xinjiang, China, has a third-grade daughter, and her children have been ranked in the top three in the class since she was a child, but through online introductions and sharing, (such as public accounts, short videos, and other social media), she learned that the third-grade children in Haidian District, Beijing, China, have passed the PET exam, and this mother from Xinjiang suddenly feels that her children's English learning is too backward. Because she wanted to improve her child's English scores, the mother found online English classes through the Internet, and the teacher who taught the course was from Beijing. In a word, online courses support chances for many K-12 families.

Different online classes are taught in different ways. For example, some well-known university open courses use the real scene of recording the professor's lecture, and there is no interaction between the learner and the professor when learners are watching the course; Another example is language learning apps such as Duolingo, which allows language learners to improve language learning by spelling words, recording pronunciation and intelligent feedback through frequent human-computer interaction. In addition, there is live teaching, that is, the audience and the lecturer can interact in real-time. This kind of interaction method is mainly through the audience directly typing the question in the chat box, and the lecturer through the text of the chat box answers the audience's questions. Finally, there is an online one-on-one or small class (no more than 10 people in a class), the audience and the lecturer can meet each other in the online class, the interactive way is to answer questions, and the lecturer explains the knowledge according to the audience's answers. It is true that different courses interact in different ways, some courses can be non-interactive, such as open classes. While others, especially language learning courses, need to be interactive because the purpose of language learning is to apply the language. At the beginning of the pandemic, many K-12 schools had non-interactive online classes. This may be related to the large number of students in a class and the need for teachers to ensure the progress of teaching. In extracurricular classes, however, parents expect more interaction between children in online classes in smaller classes. After all, K-12 children, especially elementary school students, sit in front of a computer screen for 2-3 hours without interaction, which is too challenging for children.

As a result, K-12 parents' expectations for online classes have changed after some time of adjusting to online classes. Although the number of online learners is increasing, online learning has been criticized for being detached and impersonal. In a world that is rapidly shifting to online learning as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic creating quality online learning environments has become more pressing [5].

In terms of the content of all online courses, especially for K-12 families, they believe that English is an important subject they should focus on to improve their scores or pass the final examination in the future [6]. In China, many families of primary school students want their children to "get" English before children go to junior high school. In the eyes of parents, junior high school has many courses and pressure, if children can get English in primary school, they can use the time they originally learned English in junior high school to study other subjects, such as mathematics, physics, history,

etc. Because of this, many families of primary school students will let their children continue to take English classes after school, and because of the convenience of video lessons, such as eliminating commuting time and contacting English teachers in different areas, many families choose online lessons to let children learn English in advance.

Among all the audience groups of online courses, primary school students are more special. Overall, primary school students are difficult to deeply understand abstract knowledge, such as in the learning of words, busy, exciting abstract words, and difficulty using a picture to directly express, in learning abstract knowledge, primary school students need more explanations to accept new knowledge. In addition, elementary school students are also motivated to learn directly, that is, they want to be praised by teachers and parents. Although the ability to think abstractly has not yet been formed, at the same time, primary school students have a strong ability to imitate [7]. Considering these characteristics, online classes for primary school students are a strong challenge for their concentration, and they also require timely praise and correct feedback from teachers during this period. At the same time, considering that English is a language, the main role is for learners to use English as much as possible, so online English classes should be more interactive during the learning process.

What should be the difficulty of an online English course? Why is the online classroom for elementary school students different from the online classroom for adults? Research has shown that multitasking in classrooms negatively impacts students' academic performance [8]. So, what should primary school students' online teaching interaction look like?

Although online classes reduce distance commuting, home-based classes make children feel more companionship and supervision from their parents. Does the way parents accompany affect children's learning? Odame-Mensah and Gyimah mentioned that authoritarian parenting style was found to have a more significant effect on students' academic performance than other parenting style. Additionally, students from authoritarian homes were found to perform better than the others from other parenting homes [9]. Other research finds that father's parenting and involvement in child's education have good contributions to help child developing their social-emotional, cognitive, language, physic-motoric aspects, as well as religious values and arts [10]. So, what role do parents play in children's learning in online English courses?

Due to the various problems faced by primary school students participating in online teaching, it is important to understand the actual situation of primary school students' participation in online education. Due to the limitations of elementary school student's ability to express and comprehend, this article interviews families in 7 different regions.

Through interviews with families in 7 different regions, this article understands how real and ordinary Chinese families view online English courses, and through interviews, further understand whether online teaching is helpful for primary school students' English learning. At the same time, we also interviewed the teachers of these 7 students, and through the direct observation of the teachers in the classroom, we provided this paper with the performance of more elementary school students in the classroom learning behavior.

3. Interview

As shown in table 1, 7 families from Northeast China, Jiangsu, and Beijing were interviewed online. The interviewed was conducted with one parent in the family who is primarily responsible for the child's learning at this stage. Among them, students A, B, C, D, E, G are all student mothers, and student F is father and mother together. Therefore, the family interview in this article is to show the online learning behavior of elementary school students from the perspective of parents. At the same time, this article also includes feedback from students' teachers, who will share details of students' classroom behavior through the process of classroom interaction. The interview questions are shown in table 2.

Table 1. Background of the interviewees

Student	Grade	Area	Interviewer
A	G1	Northeast	Students' mother
B	G2	Jiangsu	Students' mother
C	G4	Beijing	Students' mother
D	G4	Beijing	Students' mother
E	G2	Beijing	Students' mother
F	G3	Beijing	Students' mother and father
G	G3	Beijing	Students' mother

Table 2. Interview questions

Question 1	Why did you choose online English classes at that time?
Question 2	What do children gain from online English classes?
Question 3	What learning problems do you find in your child?
Question 4	Does my child perform as well in online English classes as they do at school? What's the difference that surprised you?

4. Results

Regarding the first question: Why did you choose online English classes at that time? The parents of students A, B, C, D, and F chose the course because of their online English teacher qualifications. Especially for students A and B, parents believe that the teachers of the online courses are from Beijing and that the teaching experience of the Beijing English teachers and the qualifications of the teachers themselves are trustworthy. The parents of students C, D and F believe that English teachers with overseas study or teaching experience should use English well, so in terms of teachers, they prefer to choose teachers with overseas study or teaching experience. In addition, parents of Student E choose English video lessons for their children because English video lessons are even more interactive than offline English classes, and children have more Parents of Student G mentioned that Student G has been teaching online English outside the classroom since kindergarten, but has not improved, so he has been changing to different courses, hoping to find a suitable online English course for their children.

Regarding the second question: What do children learn from online English lessons? Parents of Student A believe that their children's English skills have improved, and parents of Student B say that their children have learned to learn in a group and face healthy competition and have also made good friends through online video lessons during this period. The parents of Student C believe that in online English lessons, children can get timely one-on-one feedback from teachers, which is the gain of children in online English classes; The parents of Student E and the parents of Student G believe that the biggest takeaway from their children is that they enjoy taking English classes and are very positive about taking English classes. Student D's parents and Student F's parents believe that in online English classes, children have learned ways to learn English, such as memorizing words, practicing listening, and so on.

Regarding the third question, what learning problems do you find in children? Student A's parents observed the child's behavior when observing the child's behavior and found that when the teacher asked the class to write the serial number on the notebook and repeated it three times, student A still did not write the serial number, and at that time, student A kept looking at the teacher on the screen. Parents of Student B believe that their children will be frustrated during online video lessons because they did not answer the questions, and this frustration will last longer than expected. Parents of Student C believe that in online video lessons, parents find that their children's learning methods need to be improved, for example, Student C will spend 2 hours a day memorizing words, but words are still easy to forget. Student D's parents found that through online video lessons, their children don't

like learning English so much, but at the same time, because there are excellent children from other regions in online video lessons, Student D does not want to fall behind, so they try to learn English well. Parents of Student E find their children shy and less afraid to make mistakes in online English lessons. Parents of student F found that their children's concentration needed training, and parents found that students ran their hair every 10 minutes on average. Parents of Student G believe that the problems exposed by their children in online video lessons are not careful enough.

Regarding the fourth question, does the child perform the same in online English classes as in school? What's the difference that surprised you? Parents of Student A and parents of Student D believe that their children perform the same in online English classes as they do at school. Parents of Student B believe that their children will be more relaxed in online English classes, and at the same time, when they encounter classmates who have a good level, they will take the initiative to review before class, hoping that they will perform better. Parents of Student C believe that the difficulty of online English lessons is more difficult than that of their children learning English at school, so children will actively ask parents about the usefulness of learning online English classes. Because in the eyes of children, the knowledge of online English classes is not currently used. Parents of Student E believe that after online English lessons, children are more daring to ask questions in class and are more interested in English. Parents of Student F believe that the online English class sees their children needing to improve their listening. Parents of Student G believe that their children are more patient in online English lessons.

In addition to the feedback from parents, 7 children's teachers shared how the children performed in the classroom:

Student A's teacher: Students are very lively in class, and sometimes when answering questions, they will use small movements to help themselves remember the word. And these small actions will make the whole class imitate and remember the word together. Although, indeed, Student A sometimes needs the teacher to repeat a lot of instructions in class, on the whole, Student A enjoys English and is very enthusiastic about learning English. Regarding the parents of Student A, there was a previous phone call with the parents, and Student A's mother sounded like she wanted to control everything about the child and hoped that Student A could do it all at once. For example, when the teacher mentions the word review request on the phone, Student A's mother will suddenly say, write down the teacher's request, write it down in a notebook, and write the serial number.

Teacher of Student B: Students are very active in class, raise their hands for every class question, and think positively about every question. If the teacher does not call student B, student B will have some emotions in class. And sometimes a lot of memes are sent in the chat box of online video lessons. Once, in class, the teacher did not ask student B to answer the question, and student B said that time: Teacher if you don't call me again, I will never raise my hand to answer the question again.

Teacher of Student C: Students do not like to answer questions in English in class, and prefer to answer questions in Chinese. And not interested in reading comprehension problems, but student C is very active when discussing freely with his classmates. And in class, sometimes you can see from the reflection of student C's glasses that student C's computer opens other web pages to browse while in class. Student C's concentration is average.

Student D's teacher: Students are very active in class, especially when there is a group competition in class, or when students are competing, Student D is the most active one! However, the pronunciation of English words in student D is not particularly standard, which brings a lot of challenges to students' English listening, and one of the assignments is English dictation, which generally puts student D under a lot of pressure.

Teacher of Student E: Students were shy when they first started class and did not dare to speak, but after getting familiar with their friends, students began to raise their hands in class. At the same time, students are easily attracted to interesting topics in class. However, if there is an output interaction, such as in speaking and writing lessons, student E will be more likely to lie on the table.

Teacher of Student F: Students leave the computer every 15 minutes on average when they first start class, and sometimes although they cannot see the child in front of the camera, they can hear the

child's voice when the teacher asks the child to answer the question. Being distracted easily is a characteristic of this child's first class. At the same time, parents will place a connected camera on the child's desk, so that even if the parents are not accompanying the student to class, the student will sit in the chair for a lot longer than before.

Student G's teacher: Students are particularly active when they first start class, but when students study, they do not have much awareness of active thinking, resulting in students learning English need to repeat 2 times or even 3 times more than other students, for example, when learning the word armchair, other students can remember the pronunciation by reading aloud 3 times, but student G needs to read aloud 6 times, or even 10 times, to be able to remember that the word is armchair instead of mary chair.

5. Interview analysis

In previous interviews, 5 families chose online English classes because of good teachers, and when parents chose English classes, whether the teacher had study experience in big cities became the primary reason for choosing courses. This shows that in the eyes of some parents, teachers in big cities have more teaching experience, and even teachers in big cities have a better understanding of the English language than teachers in small cities because of the pressure of competition. At the same time, some parents value the teacher's own experience, such as whether there is overseas study experience, this part of the parents believe that because the teacher has overseas study experience, so the teacher's own language ability should be good. When another parent chooses online English classes, they value the interaction between students and teachers. This shows that there are indeed some parents of primary school students who hope that when their children learn English in primary school, they will interact more, which means more oral dialogue. Another parent chooses online English classes because they want to help their children find a place to learn English with progress, after all, their children have not improved since they chose online English classes in kindergarten. Therefore, it can also be learned that some Chinese children learn a second foreign language from kindergarten, and young parents are also very concerned about students' learning progress.

Among the students' gains, 3 families first mentioned the improvement of English ability, 1 family first mentioned the child's collective learning feelings, 2 families first mentioned their children's preference for English and learning enthusiasm, and 1 family first mentioned learning habits - concentration. This shows that a considerable number of parents pay attention to the improvement of English proficiency when evaluating their children's gains. Improving your English skills is a result. This is a special place for primary school students, and the group that pays for education and the group that enjoys the process of being educated are different. Both parents and students want a good outcome in English Phased Learning. At the same time, good results require the construction of good processes. However, sometimes the group paying for education, that is, parents, cannot participate 100% of the time. For example, Student C will open other pages in class, but the parents of Student C, according to teacher feedback, cannot sit next to their child all the time to supervise the class. Student C's progress, according to the teacher, "did not improve as much as parents expected."

Regarding the problems exposed in students' learning, one family proposed English learning methods and other families mentioned English learning habits (such as insufficient concentration, unable to understand teachers' instructions, emotional management in learning, and continuous learning).

Regarding the surprise that students bring to parents in learning, 2 family believes that the child's online and offline performance is the same, 1 family believes that the child is more relaxed in online learning, 2 parents think that the school's English is relatively simple, the child finds online courses difficult, the response to difficulties allows parents to see more personality characteristics of the child, 1 family believes that the child prefers English, and 1 family believes that the child needs to improve in specific learning habits, such as listening learning; One family believes that the child's study habits need to be improved. It can be seen from this that parents of elementary school students are pleasantly

surprised by the changes in the learning process when evaluating the surprising points in the online curriculum.

In the teacher's feedback, 5 out of 7 children interacted more positively, even though 1 of them preferred to answer questions in Chinese. At the same time, in the classroom, 3 children have changed because of the better learning atmosphere, such as students C and D, and E are influenced by the behavior of classmates. In the feedback of 2 children, the teacher mentioned family interventions, and these interventions were all behavioral aspects of the child, such as parents interfering with the format of student A's notetaking, and parents interfering with student F's concentration in class.

6. Conclusion

Based on the feedback from interviewed families and teachers, the following conclusions about the learning behavior of online primary school students can be drawn.

Firstly, in online courses, the atmosphere of class learning is very important. In the group, elementary school students are subconsciously affected by the collective atmosphere. In a positive learning atmosphere, children will also become positive. Therefore, in the online English course for primary school students, it is recommended that English teachers emphasize and praise the learning atmosphere of the class during the lesson.

Secondly, in online courses, children's good learning behavior and learning habits have an impact on learning outcomes in online courses. Good study behaviors and study habits include positive interaction in class, homework submitted on time, and timely note-taking in class. At the same time, because it is an online course, it is inevitable that some children will use the Internet to open the web to browse other content. Therefore, it is recommended that the English teacher in the class needs to repeat the instructions on behavior in the lesson, such as raising his hand to answer questions, opening the notebook to take notes, looking at the screen and other specific instructions; At the same time, online courses also require English teachers to communicate with parents in a timely manner about their children's behavior, and clearly put forward things that need to be done by parents, such as whether parents need to accompany their children to study.

Thirdly, in online lessons, primary school students need more interaction. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers of online English courses create more opportunities for interaction between students in the classroom, such as interaction between students and teachers, interaction between student groups, and so on.

Although this article does have certain limitations, the voices and the expectations of ordinary Chinese families for online English learning for primary school could be heard. This article hopes to provide some inspiration for online English education in primary schools.

References

[1] Shea, P. (2006). A study of students' sense of learning community in online environments. journal of asnychronous learning networks, 10(1).

[2] Zuo, M.Z., Ma, Y.P., Hu, Y., & Luo, H. (2021). K-12 students' online learning experiences during covid-19:lessons from China. Frontiers of Education in China, 16(1), 1-30.

[3] Peck, D. (May 4, 2023). Online Learning Statistics: The Ultimate List in 2023. Accessed on July 30, 2023. https://www.devlinpeck.com/content/online-learning-statistics

[4] Lin, C.L., Jin, Y.Q., Zhao, Q., Yu, S.W., & Su, Y.S. (2021). Factors influence students' switching behavior to online learning under COVID-19 pandemic: A push–pull–mooring model perspective. The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 30, 229-245.

[5] Waddington, A.P.S. (2021). Developing social presence in online learning among nurses: exploration of the community of inquiry models domain of social using a qualitative descriptive design. Nurse education in practice, 52(1).

[6] Sinaga, R.R.F., & Pustika, R. (2021). Exploring students' attitude towards English online learning using moodle during COVID-19 pandemic at smk yadika bandarlampung. Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning, 2(1), 8-15.

[7] Guo X. (2014). A case study on the learning needs of primary school English beginners. Qufu Normal University.

[8] Alghamdi, A., Karpinski, A.C., Lepp, A., & Barkley, J. (2020). Online and face-to-face classroom multitasking and academic performance: moderated mediation with self-efficacy for self-regulated learning and gender. Computers in human behavior(Jan.), 102.

[9] Odame-Mensah, S., & Gyimah, E.K. (2018). The role of permissive and neglectful parenting style in determining the academic performance of adolescents in the senior high schools in the birim municipality. (4).

[10] Bili, D.L., & Sugito. (2018). The effect of parenting and fathers involvement in the early childhood emotional social development proses. (20).