

Study Habits and English Learning Achievement of Left-behind Children in a Selected Rural Primary School: A Correlation Study

Fei Fan *, Princess Policarpio

Graduate School of the Angeles University Foundation, Angeles City, 2009, Philippines

* Corresponding author: Fei Fan (Email: fan.fei@auf.edu.ph)

Abstract: In the process of urbanization, a large number of migrant workers have appeared. Such migration often leads to the migration of rural youth to cities, leaving their children to the care of older relatives due to various restrictions. This situation requires social attention to the overall well-being of left-behind children, especially in their education. Lack of parental guidance and support due to long-term separation often leads to unbalanced academic and personal life, leading to problems such as passive participation, disinterest in learning, inattention in class and poor note-taking. This paper aims to explore the influence of learning habits and English learning performance of left-behind children in rural primary schools in Shandong Province. This provides comprehensive support for left-behind children in rural areas and cultivates their ability to learn independently.

Keywords: Study Habits; English Learning Performance; Left-behind Children; Rural Primary Schools.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the number of left-behind children has steadily increased. In 2016, The State Council's opinion on strengthening nursing and protecting left-behind children in rural areas clearly defined that left-behind children in rural areas mean that both parents go out to work or one or the other have no guardianship ability, and usually cannot be shared with their parents. Minors under the age of 16 living in rural areas. These children can be classified as all-or half-left depending on the parent where one or both of them have migrated. According to the Rural Education Development Report 2020-2022 released by Northeast Normal University, China's compulsory education fell behind nearly 12 million yuan in 2021. Statistics show that the number of left-behind children in Shandong province alone will reach 106,000 by 2021. The healthy development of these children depends on the collective responsibility of the society, which highlights the importance of child protection. Left-behind children, especially as they grow up, face challenges from cognitive development, and their learning habits are formed during this critical period. However, mastering English--A language that includes listening, speaking, reading and writing skills is crucial to gain a comprehensive knowledge of English.

English learning habits in home and school environments caused to problems such as distraction, lack of participation in classroom activities, reluctance to speak English, incomplete homework, and poor writing. These English learning habits hinder the English progress of most left-behind children, making them the weakest subject, and challenge English teachers to improve their overall performance (2022).

The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 edition) clearly points out that the task of English courses in basic education is to stimulate and cultivate students' interest in learning English, so that they can establish self-confidence, develop good learning habits and form effective learning strategies.

2. Research Review

The problem of left-behind children in rural areas is not only related to their families and schools. To understand and effectively solve this problem, it is necessary to master the concept and significance of left-behind children. English learning habits belong to a broader category of learning habits, and have universal characteristics. Therefore, to understand the English learning habits, we must first understand the general learning habits. Due to the lack of direct literature on the concepts, characteristics and connotations of English learning habits, it is necessary to rely on studies of English learning habits and habits. By reviewing domestic and international materials, the following is a description of left-behind children, study habits and English study habits.

2.1. Definition of Left-behind Pupils

In order to formulate targeted measures to improve the academic performance of left-behind students, we must fully clarify the connotation of the basic concept of "left-behind students". According to the Opinions of The State Council on Strengthening the Care and Protection of Left-behind Primary School Students in Rural Areas issued in February 2016, one or both parents go out to work to maintain the livelihood of their families, while minors under the age of 16 who cannot take personal guardianship are left-behind children (2016).

In this study, left-behind children refer to the rural primary school children in compulsory education when their parents work outside for more than three months, under the supervision of their parents, grandparents or other relatives.

2.2. Left-behind Children in Rural Areas

In rural China, the concept of "left-behind children" appeared in the late 1990s. Conceptually, these children refer to minors who live in rural areas and are long separated from one or both parents. According to the NFW, it includes children under 17 years whose parents have moved to work. These children can be classified as total or semi-left, depending on whether one or both of the parents have

migrated. Scholars have proposed multi-level solutions involving the integration of migrant workers, strengthening family education, and improving the quality of rural schools to solve the educational challenges faced by left-behind children.

2.3. Different Study Habits

2.3.1. Domestic Study Habits

Scholars have made three main ideas on the concept of study habits. One view is that learning habits represent a tendency to act automatically. For example, in the *Encyclopedia of Chinese Middle School Teaching*, Lin (1990) defines it as "the automatic learning tendency of students to achieve good academic performance".

Another view is consistent with the "theory of behavior patterns", where scholars such as Feng (2002) describe learning habits as "developing relatively stable automatic behavior patterns through repeated exercises in the learning context".

The third view emphasizes "learning behavior or behavior patterns". For example, Renhong (2007) defines learning habits as "a stable learning behavior that children develop throughout the learning process". According to Wu Qiang, study habits refer to the tendency of students to automatically engage in specific activities in certain situations. Jin Shenghua believes that learning habits are cultivated through repeated practice, and have developed into automatic learning behaviors that suit individual needs.

Domestic scholars' explorations of exploring English learning habits mainly focus on cultivating students' English learning habits. For example, Mu Zi (2016) "The Key Cultivation of Primary school Students' Learning Habits" includes cultivating good listening and speaking habits, promoting timely review and rehearsal, encouraging English thinking and expression, cultivating perseverance, and cultivating extracurricular reading habits.

Similarly, Qin Yu (2020) emphasized the indoctrination of reading and thinking habits in 2020, *Good Results and Good Habits* (2020), promoted the independent completion and inspection of work, encouraged timely review and preview, advocated reading newspapers and listening to the radio, and cultivated his love for writing.

2.3.2. Study on Study Habits Abroad

Nagaraj et al. (2014) regard learning habits as a routine conscious task, that is, to obtain certain things to meet the established standards. They believe that learning habits contain a strong learning motivation and will master students' behaviors when carrying out learning activities (Susanti, 2020).

Foreign researchers are mainly concerned with the importance of English learning habits. For example, they have identified several factors affecting learning success, with 'good study habits' one third, 'interest' a quarter, 'intelligence' 15%, 'family' 5% and 'other factors' a quarter. The study of Lindgren's success and failure highlights the valuable role of gradually developing learning habits in the long-term English learning process.

In his book *Master Learning Theory*, American educator Bloom (2001) emphasized that through step-by-step teaching, to provide appropriate help to students in difficulty, all students can be good at learning. Therefore, teachers must carefully study various methods, help students to develop good study habits, and take appropriate methods to overcome the psychological barriers of students, aiming at correcting

harmful study habits.

3. The Influence of Study Habits on Grades

Effective English learning needs to develop good English learning habits as a prerequisite. English learning habits can significantly affect students' English performance. First of all, cultivating good English learning habits can greatly improve students' learning efficiency. For example, a student has developed the habit of effective recitation, and can complete the recitation task quickly and accurately in class and after class, to promote efficient and easy learning. Secondly, good English learning habits can reduce the burden of teachers and parents. For example, a student who listened carefully, actively participated in, and understood the classroom content reduced the need for additional tutoring beyond class time, enabling teachers and parents to focus on consolidation rather than remediation. Third, good English learning habits can enhance students' learning confidence.

Zhu (2022) mentioned that students with strong preview skills performed well in class and won recognition from teachers and classmates, thus improving their confidence in English learning.

Chen, Sheng, Loki, Ge, and Taplin (1999) studied the factors and study habits affecting low school students and high school students. Their study showed that some differences in students' learning habits influenced their performance, such as learning location, learning time, learning time, organizational characteristics and learning strategies for self-thinking or silent reading. Other researchers have also noted the many benefits of good study habits. For example, in 1982, Reed, 1996, Rooney and Lipham (1992) (citing Bajwa, Gujjar, Shahin and Ramzan, 2011:1:176) noted that sound and lasting study habits have many advantages: "They reduce test anxiety, improve a student's ability, improve his performance, and develop confidence in him."

In terms of academic studies, studies believe that good study habits are a prerequisite for excellent academic achievement (K. Hukato Swu, 2021). Without good study habits, learning lacks efficiency and high-quality learning (Kaur & Pathania, 2015).

Ji Caijun (2016) believes that the bad learning habits of left-behind children will seriously affect their learning quality. Alzahrani (2018) pointed out that good study habits can better promote the learners' achievement and success. Xue-feng hu (2011) research that good study habits is learning knowledge, cultivating ability, the important condition of intelligence development, stimulate students' creativity, is advantageous to students to form a good learning strategy, improve the learning efficiency, cultivate children's innovative spirit and creative ability. Chen Yanmei (2014) believes that in the study of social norms, only by forming good habits can we make students achieve self-restraint and improve their personality development.

The main purpose of this study is to make the parents and other guardians of left-behind children in rural primary schools change the original family education concept, so as to establish a correct view of family education, pay attention to the academic performance of left-behind children in rural primary schools in the compulsory education stage, create a good foundation for children, and pave the way for future contact with higher level education.

4. Problems Existing in the English Learning Habits of Left-behind Children

The researchers' discussion on the learning problems of left-behind children mainly focuses on the learning motivation, learning attitude, learning guidance, learning performance, learning environment and other aspects of left-behind children. Researchers generally believe that parents' migrant work affects the learning of left-behind children in different degrees and aspects, and there are many learning problems.

The study by Ye Jingzhong et al. (2006) also compared the performance evaluation of left-behind children before and after their parents went out to work. The results show that, on the whole, the performance of left-behind children now shows a downward trend compared with that of their parents before they went out to work. A considerable number of left-behind children have lost good supervision in their study because their parents go out. These children who lack supervision in their learning have gradually a lax and incorrect learning attitude, and some of them have bad phenomena such as being late, skipping class and not handing in homework.

Yu Shenhong (2006) believes that the overall learning situation of rural left-behind children is not optimistic. Quite a number of left-behind children have no clear learning purpose, no good learning habits, declining academic performance, truancy, weariness and even dropping out of school occur from time to time.

Zhou Huaping (2020) that left-behind children because of lack of parents care and training, most left-behind children independence is strong, but poor, reading habits are mainly embodied in: no active reading, also lack of positive reading, good habits of reading, reading, often violate the discipline, cannot listen, not timely finish school homework, not even finish homework, rebellious psychology is very heavy, do not carefully, not focused, always take oneself as the center, writing habit is also poor, dare not reading and thinking. Left-behind children generally have poor learning autonomy efficiency.

5. Analysis of Causes

The learning performance of left-behind children is affected by many factors, including students' personal factors, school atmosphere, teacher-student relationship, family education methods and social support, etc., which are all important factors affecting students' academic performance. Among them, students' personal factors are the main internal factors of academic influence; due to the lack of parents, they lack of supervision and management, which greatly affects the development of students' academic performance. The external factors mainly include: school atmosphere, teacher-student relationship, family education mode, etc. The harmonious social environment, family atmosphere and school environment play a role in promoting the academic performance of left-behind children in rural areas.

5.1. School Aspect

5.1.1. Poor self-control, Do Not Pay Attention to Listen in Class

Gui-qin liu (2020) that left-behind children's self-control is poor, it is difficult to discipline themselves in English classroom learning, usually teachers on the platform, they do

all kinds of little action, often need the teacher's harness to quietly listen to the class, but often not a few minutes, began to look around, attention is very poor, distracted in class.

Wang Zhenghui et al. (2016) believe that the problems in the learning habits of rural left-behind children are mainly manifested in the lack of careful listening in class, poor classroom discipline, and more casual.

5.1.2. Lack of Initiative, English is not Active Learning

Chen Lihua (2023) pointed out that most of the left-behind children treat English due to their lack of family education, or because English learning is not important, so they treat English with their own heart. In terms of classroom interaction or the completion of homework, left-behind children have a loose attitude towards teachers' questions and never take the initiative to answer questions. They always miss or finish homework every day, and have a negative attitude towards learning.

5.2. In Terms of Family Education

5.2.1. The Lack and Weakening of Family Education

It is mainly manifested in the lack of parent-child education, insufficient emotional communication, the deviation of educational concept, and the lack of communication between parents and teachers. Fan Fang and Sang Biao (2005) pointed out that the replacement of parent-child education for left-behind children leads to the deterioration of the family environment, while the bad family environment causes or causes the bad personality factors for children, and the bad personality factors cause and show the children's behavior problems and academic difficulties.

Guo Sanling (2005) think because parents go out for a long time, children miss parents, classroom attention is difficult to focus, class efficiency is significantly lower than other children, plus the lack of parents care, see other children all parents, parents care, is alone, no one to take care of, left-behind children will produce strong inferiority complex and affect learning.

5.2.2. Inadequate Supervision of the Temporary Guardians.

The main performance is in the low education of the guardians, the rough or doting discipline, and the neglect of relatives and friends. Li Xiuying (2004) believes that the poor supervision of temporary guardians leads to the lagging learning of left-behind children. Many left-behind children have unclear learning purpose, poor learning habits, cannot finish their homework on time, and avoid truancy and dropping out from time to time.

5.3. In Society, The Rural Cultural Market Environment and Public Security Environment are Poor, which have a Bad Impact on Left-behind Children

Internet cafes, game halls and entertainment places are easy to make some children infected with bad habits. CAI Chengtai (2005) and others found that after parents go out, due to the lack of normal communication and love with their parents, some left-behind children often accompany the Internet, play games, watch movies, etc., some fight, fight, steal, do not do homework or collective truant. Because teachers after school, parents cannot ask, grandparents are difficult to discipline, resulting in the after-school time become a management vacuum.

Zhou Aimin and Wang Ya (2021) believe that service

facilities for left-behind children in rural communities, the number of activities organized for left-behind children on weekends and holidays is insufficient and the form is single. Left-behind children basically rely on electronic products such as mobile phones during weekends and holidays, which makes left-behind children easy to develop bad study habits. Left-behind children in the growth period are independent and sensitive. Influenced by new media such as Weibo, Kuaishou and TikTok, it is more likely for left-behind children to be entertainment personalized and superficial, resulting in behavioral deviation and leading to the emergence of learning problems.

6. Strategies for Developing English Learning Habits for Left-Behind Children

6.1. Stimulate Your Interest in English Learning

Feng Qin (2012) believes that because left-behind children have been in a free and loose living atmosphere for a long time, they are mostly lazy and have no interest in learning. If the classroom teaching methods of English teachers are relatively old and boring, these students will be distracted in the classroom and lack of active learning attitude. In this case, English teachers should learn to reflect on their own teaching mode, based on the education concept of "student-oriented", try to create some interesting English learning activities that they are interested in based on the preferences and needs of left-behind children, encourage them to take the initiative to learn English, and practice their English abilities in the activities.

Feng Ying (2023) proposed that in primary school English classes, teachers must respect students' interest in learning, so that students can find and create in the learning areas they are interested in, respect students' willingness to learn in class, and ensure that students take the initiative to learn.

Wang Tianxin (2021) pointed out that in the teaching process, teachers should deliberately introduce or create vivid scenes with certain emotional color, causing students to have a certain attitude experience, so as to help students understand the teaching materials and stimulate their interest in learning English. For example, the use of physical objects, skillfully set the situation, the use of action, expression and other body language, the use of pictures, stick figures, pictures, etc., the use of multimedia simulation situation, role playing, etc. In English teaching, various situations of life, pictures, music and performance can be constructed through different means to show them, so that English learning can have different personal experience, stimulate students' interest in learning, and exercise their ability to use the language in the situation.

6.2. Strengthen Teacher Guidance

6.2.1. Use Information Technology

Zhang Xin, (2023) mentioned that teachers can make use of various information technologies to carry out various forms of classroom teaching competitions in class, and improve their education and training ability in mutual communication, so as to have a more in-depth discussion in English class. In addition, because it is difficult for students to have the opportunity to make students feel more information in class in English teaching, so integrating information technology into classroom teaching can create a better classroom

atmosphere for students. The teacher can guide them in class, let the children carefully observe the objects around them, and in the process of communication and discussion, they can improve the children's emotions. And through the way of video, the students' learning results of the information summary, and then in-depth understanding of their learning habits, and timely adjust them, in their own environment, they form a good learning habits for effective education.

6.2.2. Give Encouragement

Liu Ju (2016) believes that left-behind children have been lacking parental discipline and love for a long time, and are prone to bad study habits of confidence and extreme confidence in study. In view of this situation, English teachers should try to start from the direction of moral education, change the traditional English education mode, learn to find the bright spots of left-behind children, and give them encouragement, and encourage them to consciously get rid of some bad learning habits.

6.3. Attach Importance to the Guidance of Family Education

Wang Yan, Bai Yu, Liu Zhongfang, Shi Yaojiang (2019) believe that the guardianship and education of parents are directly related to the healthy development and smooth socialization of children. Parents, as the first teachers of children, cannot replace their educational function of children. In the course of children's development, the harmonious interpersonal relationship, close family communication, and the benign family living environment and family atmosphere brought by the family are the indispensable basis for children's social development.

In terms of the measures that families should take, Wang Qiuxiang (2006) believes that improving the awareness of parents of left-behind children is extremely important. If parents' understanding changes, they can pay more attention to the education of their left-behind children to a certain extent. For example, create conditions to bring children around; or strengthen the education supervision of their children.

Zou Lili and others (2006), parents should be good at working outside in the process of all kinds of spirit and life suffering, and the workers outside of touching story, in the appropriate way to tell children, to positive education for children, eliminate children "reading useless theory" ideas, enhance the understanding of the importance of learning knowledge.

Jiang Ping (2005) believes that guardians should try their best to create favorable learning space and atmosphere for left-behind children as much as possible, and pay necessary attention to and understanding of their daily life, physical and mental conditions and needs. At the same time, to conduct effective education and guidance.

6.4. Enhance the Frequency of Home-school Contact

Wang hu (2024) pointed out that in home-school cooperation, teachers should take the initiative to contact teachers, and parents should also contact teachers more. Only when both sides increase the frequency of interaction, can they make a better understanding of each other and be more conducive to the education of students.

Li-hua Chen pointed out (2023) teachers should also play its main role, establish communication platform between

parents, for example, WeChat group, timely ask the students' learning situation, give students certain care, make students under the guidance of interest to carry out practical and inquiry learning, strictly implement the interest type teaching, so as to guide students to autonomous learning.

7. Conclusion

To further solve the problem of rural left-behind children's education, we must start from the actual teaching work, let the students can improve the learning interest and learning ability, master English knowledge and learning methods, develop good learning habits, reasonable teaching task, for rural left-behind children in learning and development, to the greatest extent to improve pupils autonomous learning ability.

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