



## Individual and parental factors associated with preschool children's foreign language anxiety in an EFL setting

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**Abstract.** The present study aims to examine individual and parental factors that affect young children's foreign language anxiety (FLA) in an EFL setting. Subjects included 453 mothers and 47 English teachers of children between the ages of three to five years old. Both individual (child's gender, age, temperament) and parental (household income, parents' educational attainment, mothers' beliefs about early English education) factors were collected with the mothers' questionnaires. Children's FLA was measured with both their mothers' and teachers' assessments. Results show that maturity and a higher tendency for impulsiveness and harm avoidance correlate with a higher level of FLA in children. Furthermore, it shows that FLA in children is directly impacted by their parental figures; children whose mothers held stronger beliefs in the cognitive benefits of early English education were likely to show a higher level of FLA. Future directions and implications are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Preschool children, foreign language anxiety (FLA), English as a foreign language (EFL)

Received: 24.09.2019

Accepted: 03.01.2020

Published: 15.06.2020

### INTRODUCTION

There has been a global expansion of education of English in young children, as English is rapidly taking on the role of an international language (Butler, 2014). Although many countries in an EFL (English as a foreign language) setting integrate English as a subject in the primary school's curriculum, an increasing number of young children across the globe are being exposed to English education at an earlier age. For example, in South Korea, English is introduced as a regular subject from third grade onward. However, about 90 percent of kindergartens and other early childhood institutions are offering English lessons due to their parents' intensified demand for advanced education (Park, 2017). This is similar to European countries, where the European Union continues to emphasize the importance of an earlier start in foreign language learning despite the average learning age ranging from six to nine years old (Andúgar & Cortina-Pérez, 2018). Promoting English learning throughout the preschool period is a matter of great interest in the vast majority of countries where English is not the dominant language.

As preschool children are at beginning stages of learning English, experience and attitude with foreign language learning can have profound effects on later learning. The difference in elementary school children's motivational patterns in English classes is largely determined by their experience in the earlier years (Carlton & Winsler, 1998; Shin, 2007). Since English is not part of the official curriculum during preschool in most countries, research on English learning as a foreign language has instead been predominantly focused on school-aged children. In reflection of the global trend in early English learning, research on preschool children's English learning is urgently needed. This holds especially true as the pre-primary period marks the beginning stage of language learning, where attitude towards English is crucial for children entering elementary schools. Maintaining a positive attitude towards language learning is not only the motivating force behind prolonged learning (Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, &

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This paper has been orally presented in the International Conference on Early Childhood Development, in 6 July 2019, Selangor, Malaysia.

Deci, 2004), but it is also an essential variable in determining language learning outcome (Baker & Wright, 2017).

Among the various aspects of attitude with learning English, it is necessary to pay special attention to foreign language learning anxiety (FLA) of learners in an EFL environment. Since there is limited exposure to English outside classrooms in an EFL environment, parents and educators try to create an English learning environment for their children. These conditions often contrast with ESL (English as a second language) settings, where English is the primary language in the country and students are frequently exposed to the language outside of the classrooms. Considering these environmental differences, children in an EFL setting may have anxiety about learning English if the learning environment created by parents or educators does not meet a child's developmental demand; children can quickly form negative attitudes toward English if it is perceived as an excessive academic burden. Some parents provide an overwhelming amount of English education for young children, and as a result, concerns have been raised whether inappropriate English education in early childhood may negatively affect children's healthy development (Kim, 2007; Kim, 2015). Despite these concerns, little attention has been applied to the foreign language learning anxiety of young children. A systematic study of the possible factors that affect the English learning anxiety of young children in an EFL setting is needed to prevent it from developing further.

This study aims to explore variables that contribute to preschool children's FLA by categorizing individual and parental factors. The present study will consider their sociodemographic factors along with psychological factors. In addition, parental variables will also be considered, as parents are the greatest influence on a child's early years. This explanatory research will serve to fill the paucity of studies on young children's FLA in an EFL context and will provide valuable information in understanding factors that affect FLA, in addition to opening avenues for future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Foreign Language Anxiety

Given the importance of affective factors in language learning, there has been a growing number of language attitudinal studies in regards to anxiety. Horwitz defines foreign language anxiety (FLA) as a "distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (1986, p. 128). As such, FLA is recognized as a type of anxiety that occurs when learning a foreign language. The complex process of language learning involves unique metacognitive elements that differentiate FLA from other academic-related anxieties. Toth (2008) claims that as self-expression is closely bound with language, learners may experience a sense of inadequacy when speaking in L2. Because the lack of proficiency in L2 can limit self-expression in comparison to the use of L1, learners are more profound to experience anxiety.

Attitudes toward learning English like FLA during early childhood can have long-term effects on later learning (Baker & Wright, 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2004). However, most studies have focused on individual or environmental factors related to achievement in learning English such as proficiency or test scores (e.g., Butler, 2014; Hwang, 2007; Lee & Kim, 2011; Ma, 2013; Sun, Bot, & Steinkrauss, 2015). Since achieving high proficiency in English is regarded as a vital asset, children's psychological well-being is often overlooked. Studies involving young children's FLA are rare and less is known about their English learning experience. Recently, Choi, Cho, Kang and Sheo (2019) have argued for the need of research on FLA of young children, and have developed a valid scale to measure young children's English learning anxiety in South Korea.

## **Factors related to children's FLA**

### ***Individual factors***

The process of learning a foreign language can be easier and more interesting for some children than others. To examine the individual difference of children's FLA, we have established children's gender, age, and temperament as possible individual factors that are associated with their FLA based on previous studies (Butler, 2014; Hwang & Choi; 2017, Sun et al., 2015).

Previous research on children's gender and language learning has been focused on their first language learning and has reported that girls have advantages in early language acquisition (Bosacki & Moore, 2004; Galsworthy et al., 2000). A meta-analysis study by Galsworthy and colleagues (2000) found that girls scored higher than boys on language acquisition test in early childhood. However, since little research has examined the relationship between gender and foreign language learning of young children, more studies are required to investigate gender as a possible effective variable in a foreign language learning context.

Age is another factor to be examined when considering the developmental features of children. Young children, such as those in preschool, have advantages in foreign language learning because they feel less anxious about making mistakes than other age groups (Cohen, 1976; Sun et al., 2015). However, these characteristics may decrease as children mature. Children's cognitive skills to evaluate their own ability rapidly develop in early childhood, and some may feel emotions such as shame in failure situations as they become older (Kim & Yu, 2003). These emotions and experiences should be considered to examine the relationship between age and FLA in an EFL setting.

In addition, there has been extensive research conducted on the association between personality traits and language learning. Three types of temperament such as risk avoidance, persistence, and impulsiveness have been observed in this study, as those dimensions are closely related to language acquisition in early childhood based on previous studies (Purdie, Hattie, & Carroll, 2002; Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016; Sun et al., 2015).

### ***Parental factors***

Parental factors in the current study include household income, parents' educational attainment, and maternal beliefs on early English education. English is one of the subjects that is most affected by parents' socioeconomic status (SES), which is measured by their income and educational attainment. Given the characteristic of an EFL setting where exposure to the targeted language is scarce, resources to access English are usually provided by parents (Butler, 2014). For this reason, English educational environments in EFL countries are likely to depend on the SES status of parents. Kang and colleagues (2019) claim that mothers with higher educational status are more likely to use storybooks and audio materials to provide English education at home. Ban and Seo (2009) also state that children of parents with higher SES status are exposed to more amount of English education. The SES level of parents not only affects the provision of English education, but also the actual English language proficiency of young children in an EFL setting (Hwang, 2007). In consideration of the above findings, household income and parents' educational attainment have been considered as possible factors that affect young children's FLA.

Moreover, parent's beliefs about English education for young children should be considered. During the early years, parents, especially mothers, play a crucial role in shaping an English learning environment (Kang & Lee, 2018; Park & Abelman, 2004). From this, it can be assumed that maternal beliefs can be closely related to a child's English learning experience and FLA (Choi et al., 2019b; Hwang & Choi, 2017). Hwang and Choi (2017) report that the higher Korean mothers' beliefs in the need for a balanced development of English and Korean, the higher a child's English learning anxiety. In the current study, subscales under maternal beliefs include concerns for early English education, beliefs in need of early English education, and beliefs in cognitive benefits of early English education.

## METHODS

### Subjects

Subjects of this study included 453 mothers of young children aged three to five years old (the standard age for the national kindergarten curriculum) and 47 English teachers who taught them. Among 453 children, 217 children attended regular kindergartens and 236 children attended English immersion institutions. Regular kindergartens are institutions that follow the national curriculum for children aged 3 to 5 years old. In contrast, English immersion institutions are privately owned and do not implement the national curriculum. With the increase in demand for advanced English learning, the number of English immersion institutions in South Korea has risen from 306 in 2014 to 465 in 2017 (Kim, 2017). In response to the current trend of the increase of English immersion institutions, we attempted to recruit equal number of children from both kindergartens and English immersion institutions.

**Table 1.** *Sample size of children*

		Kindergarten	English immersion institution
		<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Gender	Boys	103 (47.5)	105 (44.5)
	Girls	114 (52.5)	128 (54.2)
	No response	0 (0.0)	3 (1.3)
Age	3-year-old	74 (34.1)	60 (25.4)
	4-year-old	67 (30.9)	77 (32.3)
	5-year-old	76 (35.0)	99 (41.9)
	No response	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total		217 (100.0)	236 (100.0)

### Data Collection

Subjects were recruited from kindergartens and English immersion institutions located in Seoul, Gyeonggi, Jeolla, and Gyeongsang provinces of South Korea. Researchers contacted kindergartens and English immersion institutions and a total of 14 institutions were willing to participate. Mothers and teachers were finally recruited through these institutions. Researchers visited institutions and provided questionnaires to participating subjects. All participants in the current study submitted written informed consent, and a few weeks later, completed questionnaires were collected by the researchers. This study was approved by Seoul National University Institutional Review Board (No. 1808/002-005).

### Measures

#### *Foreign language anxiety*

The revised scale based on previous studies (Heo, 2016; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Hwan & Choi, 2017; Kim & Kim, 2012; Pyo, 1997) was used to measure a child's FLA. FLA was assessed by both mothers and English teachers to account for anxiety-linked behaviors visible both at home and in classroom settings. Mothers answered a total of seven items, while teachers answered eight. Items in the mothers' report included, "the child seems nervous and anxious before going to English class or repeatedly asks 'are we learning English today?'," "the child says 'I cannot speak in English' or 'I am the only one who cannot speak in English,'" and "the child refuses to hear English when parents speak in English." As for the teachers' report, items included "the child speaks in a trembling voice," "the child repeatedly touches a specific body part (face, hair, hand, lip, etc.) as showing signs of nervousness," and "the child shows a lack of

confidence and answers using one word responses." All items were measured using a 4-point Likert scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$ ).

### ***Individual factors***

#### *Age and gender*

Children's age and gender were recorded through the mothers' questionnaire. Gender was coded as 1 for boys and 2 for girls.

#### *Temperament*

Children's temperament was measured through mothers' questionnaire using Park (2017)'s temperament scale based on the *Junior Temperament and Character Inventory 3-6* (Goth, Cloninger, & Scherck, 2003; Oh & Min, 2007). The types of temperament used in the current study included harm avoidance, persistence, and impulsiveness. Harm avoidance was assessed using 14 items such as "frightens easily," "tends to be pessimistic," and "tends to be shy" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ). Persistence was evaluated with nine items such as "finishes what he/she started," "plays with one toy for a long time," and "continues to work on a job until he/she has mastered it" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .81$ ). Impulsiveness was measured with 5 items such as "has difficulty waiting for something to end or start," "lacks patience," "easily loses interest in games or toys," and "distracts easily" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$ ). All items were measured using a 4-point Likert scale.

### ***Parental factors***

#### *Household income and parents' educational attainment*

Household income and parents' educational attainment were both reported by mothers. Mothers were asked to select whether their household income per month applied to less than \$2,000, around \$2,000, around \$3,000, around \$4,000, around \$5,000, around \$6,000, around \$7,000, or more than \$8,000. Parents with a four-year college degree or higher were coded as 1 and parents with a two or three-year college degree or lower were coded as 0.

#### *Mothers' beliefs about early English education*

Mothers' beliefs about early English education had three subcategories: Concerns for Early English Education, Beliefs in Need of Early English Education, and Beliefs in Cognitive Benefits of Early English Education. A scale was revised based on previous studies (Ban & Seo, 2009; Hwang, 2007; Hwang & Choi, 2017; Lee & Lee, 2015). First, concerns for early English education had four items such as "early English education creates too much academic pressure" and "early English education hinders learning Korean" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .81$ ). Second, beliefs in need of early English education had 6 items such as "earlier exposure to English education is better" and "English education is necessary for early childhood institutions" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .82$ ). Third, beliefs in cognitive benefits of early English education had four items like "learning English improves my child's intelligence" and "learning English improves my child's problem-solving skills" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ). All items were reported by mothers using a 4-point Likert scale.

### **Statistical Analysis**

Frequency analysis was conducted using SPSS 19.0 to observe the values of mean, standard deviation, maximum, minimum, skewness, and kurtosis of variables. In addition, multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of individual and parental factors on preschool children's FLA.

## RESULTS

### Frequency and Correlation Analysis

**Table 2.** Frequency and correlation relationship of variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	-											
2	.02	-										
3	.06	-.05	-									
4	.09	.09	.06	-								
5	-.13**	-.08	.13**	-.41**	-							
6	-.00	.04	-.03	.12*	-.06	-						
7	.03	.06	.00	.19**	-.17**	.25**	-					
8	.07	.09	-.03	.21**	-.10*	.35**	.62**	-				
9	-.05	.03	.06	-.17**	.14**	-.25**	-.11*	-.12*	-			
10	-.02	.04	.02	.14**	-.03	.22**	.18**	.16**	-.49**	-		
11	.08	.07	-.01	.10*	-.01	.07	-.02	.03	-.24**	.55**	-	
12	.07	.11*	.22**	-.11*	.20**	-.02	-.02	.00	.31**	-.06	.05	-
Mean	1.54	4.10	2.34	2.72	2.00	6.28	.75	.68	1.93	3.09	2.58	1.66
SD	.50	.82	.35	.47	.59	1.92	-1.16	.49	.59	.60	.74	.41
Maximum	2.00	5.00	3.50	3.89	4.00	8.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.12
Minimum	1.00	3.00	1.36	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.17	1.00	1.00
Skewness	-.15	-.18	.05	.12	.38	-.74	-1.16	-.76	.62	-.32	.20	.59
Kurtosis	-1.99	-1.49	.21	.31	.11	-.74	-.67	-1.43	.60	-.33	-.37	.10

Note: 1 = gender, 2 = age, 3 = harm avoidance, 4 = persistence, 5 = impulsiveness, 6 = household income, 7 = fathers' educational attainment, 8= mothers' educational attainment, 9 = concerns for early English education, 10 = beliefs in need of early English education, 11 = beliefs in cognitive benefits of early English education, 12 = FLA; M = mean, SD = standard deviation, Max = maximum, Min = minimum, Ske = Skewness, Kur = kurtosis; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .



Before conducting multiple regression analysis, we performed frequency and correlation analysis. As shown in Table 2, absolute values of skewness and kurtosis were .05~1.16 and .11~1.99, respectively, which means the data satisfy the assumption of normality (skewness < 2.00, kurtosis < 7.00) (Curran, West, & Finch, 1996). In addition, boys showed higher impulsiveness than girls ( $r = -.13, p < .01$ ). Persistence was negatively related with impulsiveness and mothers' concerns for early English education ( $r = -.41, -.17, p < .01$ ), and positively related with parents' educational attainment, household income, mothers' beliefs in need of early English education, and mothers' beliefs in cognitive benefits of early English education ( $r = .10\sim.21, p < .01, .05$ ). Impulsiveness was negatively related with parents' educational attainment ( $r = -.10, -.17, p < .01, .05$ ) and positively related with mothers' concerns for early English education ( $r = .14, p < .01$ ). Parents' educational attainment and household income were negatively related with mothers' concerns for early English education ( $r = -.25\sim-.11, p < .01, .05$ ), and positively related with mothers' beliefs in need of early English education ( $r = .16\sim.22, p < .01$ ). Concerns for early English education of mothers had a negative relationship with their beliefs in need of early English education and cognitive benefits of early English education ( $r = -.49, -.24, p < .01$ ). Mothers' beliefs in need of early English education had a positive relationship with their beliefs in cognitive benefits of early English education ( $r = .55, p < .01$ ). Finally, children's FLA was positively related with children's age, harm avoidance, impulsiveness, and mothers' concerns for early English education ( $r = .11\sim.31, p < .01, .05$ ), and negatively related with children's persistence ( $r = -.11, p < .05$ ).

### The Effects of Individual and Parental Factors on Foreign Language Anxiety

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether children's individual factors including gender, age, and temperament significantly affect their FLA. The Durbin-Watson was 1.97, assuming that there is no correlation between the error terms. In addition, the tolerance value was between .80 and .97 and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value was between 1.03 and 1.26, hence no problem was found with multicollinearity issues. Table 3 shows that preschool children's gender did not significantly predict their FLA. However, age ( $\beta = .13, p < .01$ ), harm avoidance ( $\beta = .17, p < .01$ ), and impulsiveness ( $\beta = .19, p < .001$ ) significantly predicted children's FLA. Overall, preschool children with older age and a higher tendency for harm avoidance and impulsiveness are more likely to experience FLA.

**Table 3.** Individual variables that affect children's foreign language anxiety

Variables	B	S.E.	$\beta$
Intercept	.80	.22	
Institution type	.03	.04	.03
Gender	.03	.04	.04
Age	.07	.02	.13**
Harm avoidance	.19	.06	.17**
Persistence	-.07	.05	-.09
Impulsiveness	.13	.04	.19***

$$R^2 = .101, F = 7.656^{***}$$

\*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Second, multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether parental factors including household income, parents' educational attainment, and mothers' beliefs about early English education significantly affect preschool children's FLA. The Durbin-Watson was 1.96 assuming that there is no correlation between the error terms. In addition, the tolerance value was between .55 and .75 and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value was between 1.34 and 1.83, hence no multicollinearity issues were found. Results in Table 4 reveal that household income, parents' educational attainment, and mothers' beliefs in need of early English education

did not significantly predict preschool children's FLA. Yet, mothers' concerns for early English education ( $\beta = .29, p < .001$ ) and mother's beliefs in cognitive benefits of early English education ( $\beta = .12, p < .05$ ) did significantly predict preschool children's FLA. In summary, when mothers have more concerns for early English education and beliefs in cognitive benefits of early English education, their child shows higher levels of FLA.

**Table 4.** Parental variables that affect children's foreign language anxiety

Variables	B	S.E.	$\beta$
Intercept	.82	.24	
Institution type	.03	.04	.03
Household income	.02	.01	.08
Fathers' educational attainment	-.05	.06	-.06
Mothers' educational attainment	.01	.06	.01
Concerns for early English education	.20	.04	.29***
Beliefs in need of early English education	-.04	.05	-.05
Beliefs in cognitive benefits of early English education	.06	.03	.12*

$R^2 = .083, F = 4.915^{***}$

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the current study demonstrate individual and parental factors associated with young children's foreign language anxiety in an EFL setting. In consideration of individual factors, a child's gender did not significantly affect their FLA level. Contrary to our finding, the majority of previous studies on first language development have pointed to gender as a critical factor in language learning outcome; in these studies, girls showed a more advanced vocabulary ability than boys (Bosacki & Moore, 2004). Eriksson and colleagues (2012) explore gender differences in emerging language skills in European children, and they show that girls have higher scores in productive vocabulary and combining words. While previous studies on first language development have reported gender as a vital variable, our finding reveals otherwise. It may be presumed that gender is a less important variable in forming attitude towards foreign language learning during the preschool period. Similarly, in Hwang's (2007) study on exploring the effects of individual characteristics and home environments of preschool children on their bilingual acquisition, gender does not have a significant effect.

In addition, older preschool children showed higher levels of FLA. Such finding is parallel to a study that shows that younger children are less likely to feel anxious (Sun et al., 2015), and fear to make mistakes (Cohen, 1976) when they learn a new language. As preschool children begin to develop an objective sense of self with age, they become capable of self-evaluation in comparison with others. Evidently, in Kim and Yu's study (2003), younger preschoolers are more likely to show pride in their achievements, while older preschoolers are more likely to compare their own achievement with others. For such developmental features, older preschool children may fear to make mistakes during English classes which can, in turn, lead to an increase in anxiety. Another possible explanation is that older preschool children may have accumulated more negative experience in English classes. Although the current study did not identify the exact cause, educators and caregivers need to be aware of the fact that children may experience more language anxiety as they age.

In terms of temperament variables, children with a higher tendency for impulsiveness and harm avoidance were more likely to experience FLA. These results are in line with previous studies that showed that impulsive children have disadvantages in language learning. Impulsivity is a temperament characterized by having a lack of self-control. In previous clinically diagnosed samples of children with ADHD, especially those with high levels of impulsiveness, the subjects often show poor language outcomes as they have difficulties in



maintaining attention to language stimuli (Purdie, Hattie, & Carroll, 2002). In addition to impulsiveness, preschool children on high dimensions of harm avoidance are also more likely to experience FLA. Similarly, harm avoidance was identified as a disadvantageous trait in second language learning (Saville-Troike & Karen, 2016). Persistence was the one temperament that was not found significant. Rather than embodying persistence, which reflects traits of determination and will to achieve something, being impulsive and showing a tendency to avoid harm were found to be more detrimental factors in experiencing FLA.

Among the investigated parental factors, household income and parents' educational attainment were not significantly associated with preschool children's FLA. Such finding is an important point to note, as prior studies on foreign language learning outcomes have identified parent's socioeconomic status as the pivotal predictor of successful learning (Butler, 2014; Hwang, 2007). While parent's socioeconomic status is vital for language performance in an EFL setting, the SES factor does not uphold the same effect on young children's attitudes toward English. Instead, mothers' beliefs about early English education seem to have effects on children's FLA. Our research shows that the children of mothers with higher concerns for early English education and stronger beliefs in cognitive benefits of early English education are more likely to show higher levels of FLA. As early childhood environment is vastly impacted by parental values (Choi et al., 2019b; Hwang & Choi, 2007), how parents perceive early English education can have a significant impact on a child's language anxiety. Ahn (2017) explains that children are consistently influenced by their surroundings, and attitude towards an object can be 'learned' through parental values. For example, if a child constantly hears a mother expressing concerns for learning English, the child will be reinforced of these negative thoughts, eventually causing them to react unfavourably towards English. However, it must also be noted that children's initial experience of FLA can build up mothers' concerns for early English education. Ambiguity in the causal relationship between these two variables must be considered.

We also found that children's anxiety level increases when mothers strongly believe in cognitive benefits of early English education. Young children are sensitive to whether the input of information is intentional or unintentional (Xu & Tenenbaum, 2007), and whether the learning occurs in pedagogical versus a neutral environment (Tomasello & Barton, 1994). Depending on how mothers value certain aspects of English learning, interactions with the child may vary. Mothers who believe in cognitive benefits of learning a foreign language may inadvertently encourage learning with a rigid academic focus. Many researchers in the field of early childhood education have already emphasized the importance of adopting play-based pedagogy for young children. It is recommended that caregivers and teachers implement games, songs, and other interesting material for young children when they teach English. Given the young nature of preschool children and their sensitivity to the learning environment, teaching methods must be geared carefully. Lastly, the subcategory of maternal beliefs in need of early English education was found insignificant. That is, mothers' concerns for early English education seem to have a greater influence on their child's FLA than mothers' beliefs in need of early English education.

This study is meaningful in that it systematically examines the factors influencing young children's FLA. Since preschool children's FLA has been rarely studied, this exploratory study is expected to be a valuable resource for future studies. Also, the findings of this study can provide practical implications for parents and educators. Despite the meaningful contributions, the study includes several limitations. First, measurement of FLA was indirect with mothers' and teachers' reports. Other assessment tools should be considered in future studies for more direct and accurate measurement of preschool children's anxiety. Second, the results may be limited in a Korean context considering Korea's extreme pursuit for early English education. Hence, futures studies should investigate whether the results of this study can be replicated in other EFL countries.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the midst of an intensified quest for teaching English to young children, the current study makes an important contribution to broaden our understanding of preschool children's foreign language anxiety. This study revealed individual and parental factors that affect young children's foreign language anxiety in an EFL setting. As children's anxiety level can rise with age, parents and caregivers need to provide an optimal environment for children to maintain a positive attitude towards learning English. Extra attention must also be paid for preschool children with higher levels of impulsiveness and harm avoidance as they are more likely to feel anxious about learning a foreign language. When parents are optimistic about their children's foreign language learning and do not aim for cognitive benefits of learning English, children can feel more positive about learning a foreign language. These results provide practical implications for parents and educators to help early English learners.

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