

A Study of the Relationship between the School English Learning Environment and Sixth-Graders' English Learning Achievement—A Case Study of Pingtung County

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Abstract

Because Taiwan wanted to improve her competence on the world stage, English teaching in elementary schools began in Taiwan in 2001. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between sixth graders' English achievement and the school English learning environment and which school learning factors are related to the subjects' English learning achievement. The subjects in this study were sixth graders in Pingtung County. Sixth graders in Pingtung County were given 1413 questionnaires, and 1393 questionnaires were returned. After discounting 76 ineffective questionnaires, there were 1317 effective questionnaires. After collecting the data, the researchers analyzed the data by applying SPSS software. The school English learning environment in this study included six elements: school scale, school equipment, types of English teachers, teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, and school characteristics. The study found that these six attributes of the school environment contributed to English learning achievement significantly and positively. First, the relationship between students' English learning achievement and school scale reached a significant level. Second, the relationship between English learning achievement and school equipment reached a significant level. Third, the relationship between students' English learning achievement and English teachers' qualifications reached significant levels. In addition, the relationship between students' English learning achievement and teacher-student or peer relationships each reached significant levels. Furthermore, the relationship between students' English learning achievement and school characteristics also reached a significant level. Finally, the researchers offer some recommendations and implications for practical English teaching in elementary schools and future studies according to the findings.

Keywords: learning environment, English learning achievement, questionnaire

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學校英語學習環境與英語學習成就之相關研究—以屏東縣國小學童為例

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摘要

本研究想了解國小六年級學童的英語學習成就與學校英語學習環境的關連性，以問卷及台南市政府委託台南大學測驗與統計研究所編製之 E 化英語測驗(乙卷)為研究工具，研究對象為屏東縣小六學生，本研究共發出 1413 份問卷，回收 1393 份，剔除無效問卷 76 份，共得有效問卷 1317 份，本研究的學校英語學習環境包括：學校規模、學校設備、英語師資、師生關係、同儕關係及學校性質。本研究發現不同學校規模、設備、英語師資、師生關係、同儕關係及學校性質的受試者在英語學習成就上已達顯著差異。本研究亦根據結果對國小英語教學實務應用及未來研究提出建議。

關鍵詞：學習環境、英語學習成就、問卷

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I. Introduction

(I) Motivation of the study

Learning cannot be completed in a vacuum. Therefore, an effective learning environment plays a critical role in the process of learning. Besides their families, school is the place which students have the most contact. However, not all schools are the same. Some of them are big; others are small. Some are in the city; others in the countryside or in the remote area. Some have modern equipment and qualified teachers; others lack equipment and qualified teachers. Whether these factors have effect on students' English learning achievement is worthy of study.

(II) Object of the study

The researchers would like to know whether the school learning environment has certain relation to students' English learning performance; whether qualified teachers help students have higher English performance; whether the scale of a school plays a essential role in students' English; whether the location of a school is related to students' English proficiency; whether the teacher-pupil relation and peer relation have influence on students' English learning.

II. Literature Review

(I) Language learning environment

Language is a major communicative tool for human beings. Real language learning cannot be completed in a vacuum condition. Therefore, language learning environment becomes a crucial element in the process of language learning. Chuang (1999) believed that language is a way of expression; learning a language cannot only imitate sound or be familiar with grammar structure; learning a language first must go back to the context of language and culture and then catch the point of language learning. Hsieh (2000) also stated that learning environment had great influence on language learning. Obviously, environment plays an important role in the process of language learning. Generally speaking, the learning environment includes the school learning environment and the family learning environment. The authors focus on the relationship between the school learning environment and the learning achievement in this study.

(II) School learning environment

In addition to family, school is the main learning environment for students. In fact, school is one place to train students how to get involved in society. The process of socialization involves interaction and communication among people. In other words, a learner becomes socialized by interacting with teachers and peers in school. Shi (1999) indicated that the process of socialization made children's language and cognitive abilities develop continuously. Luo (1998) showed that cooperative learning could reduce students' anxiety when learning English and increase students' learning motivation and desire to learn more. Therefore, we could infer that the relationship students with teachers and peers would

have impact on English learning. And the authors were interested in exploring how a school environment is related to English learning.

Moreover, Krashen (1987) also stated that a non-threatening learning environment was vital for students to develop positive learning attitudes, because a threatening learning environment would hinder learning and make teaching materials difficult to understand. Similarly, when continuously facing failure, students would feel frustrated and then learning desire reduced (Nicholls, 1992 cited from Chen, 1999). In addition, Fuller & Clarke (1994) also found that school education had a crucial influence on students from difference culture backgrounds; they thought the influence of school was not trivial any longer. Therefore, school learning environment plays a great role for students' learning. Generally, school learning environment could be discussed from several aspects.

1. School equipment

At present, the traditional classroom is still the main teaching location. Naturally, the classroom becomes the major learning environment for students and the role of classroom cannot be ignored. Hsu (1999) pointed out that the classroom should be clear and comfortable. Though most teachers do not have the privilege of choosing their own classroom, they do have the right to decorate the classroom. A comfortable classroom climate is a necessary condition for language learning. George Lozanov also thought language learning in a comfortable and relaxing environment could be most effective. Moreover, Shi and Chu (1999) suggested that when designing activities, English teachers should consider creating an English-communicating environment and let students naturally learn English in an English-rich context. Obviously, creating a rich language learning climate is a language teacher's duty. Because we are in a computer era; therefore, a school's computer equipment is vital to education. Tai (1999) also stated that implementing English education earlier in order to enforce internationalization and using multimedia to help teaching would become an inevitable trend. In addition, the potential of applying multimedia on English teaching could create the best English learning environment because computer multimedia could provide sufficient use of the target language, provide rich interactive cultural implications and language context, lower emotional hindrance and give learners more autonomy and flexibility. Without a doubt, the computer becomes an important piece of equipment for language learning. Based on this reason, the authors used computer equipment and a language lab as the criteria of school equipment.

2. Teacher's qualifications

In the school learning environment, school equipment could have some effect on students' learning; a teacher's professional knowledge could also influence students' learning; therefore, the authors believe a teacher's professional knowledge is one element of the school learning environment.

Due to the short time of implementing English education in elementary school in Taiwan,

the limited number of eligible English teachers, the location of remote elementary schools, the willingness of English teachers to relocate to remote areas, it is not easy to hire licensed English teachers in every elementary school. However, a teacher is the controller of school management; so the teacher is associated with students' learning activities. Right now, there are four types of English teachers in elementary schools. First, all English teachers are permanent and eligible. Second, permanent and eligible English teachers and substitute English teachers in a primary school. Third, all English teachers are substitute teachers in a primary school. Fourth, classroom teachers are also responsible for English teaching in a primary school.

Generally speaking, permanent and eligible teachers may feel more stable in their work because they do not need to worry about renewing work contracts. What they want to do is just to do their best to teach. However, substitute teachers have pressure from the contract; it is probably for them to teach in another school next semester or year, so it may be difficult for them to make efforts to teach well. On the other hand, a classroom teacher may know his or her students much better, but his or her professional English background may be the question. Under such a complicated educational system, it did not reach a balance between the providence and need of English teachers in elementary school. Substitute English teachers and class teachers responsible for English teaching exist in some primary schools. Sedibe (2006) found that high failure rate in grade 12 was caused by factors such as underqualified and unqualified educators, inadequate resources, over-crowded classrooms, poor facilities, poor socio-economic background of learners' parents, an inconducive environment at school and inadequate role played by educators and learners in the teaching and learning situation. Therefore, this study would explore the relationship between school English learning environment and learning achievement.

3. The relationship among teacher and student

In school, teaching and learning activities were conducted by teachers and students; therefore, teacher-student relationship may become a factor to decide whether learning and teaching activities could complete smoothly. Johnson (1995) pointed that learning achievement in classroom was associated closely with teacher and student. Moreover, Guo (1999) even thought that a teacher can enhance students spiritual and moral character traits. Obviously, teacher-student relationships had some effect on a learner's learning. In addition, Moskowitz (1985) and Schachter et al. (1976) suggested that the best learning environment of language acquisition should include (1) sufficient comprehensible input, (2) meaning negotiated interaction and culture, (3) cultural, contextual and affective issues. And these three elements should be created by teachers. Teachers and students design curriculum, manage the classroom and teaching, and then integrate the individual into society (Ou,1999 b). At the phrase of primary school, it was not easy to carry out this kind of ideal, but building great teacher-student relationships can be beneficial for teaching and learning.

Furthermore, Chen (1999) stated that the best language learning environment should provide sufficient comprehensive input and then form one's own original language frame; moreover, providing more opportunities makes learners use target language to communicate with the outside world. By doing so, learners could repeatedly test and revise their own original language model until it is correct. That can explain the importance of learning opportunities provided by teachers. And teacher-student relationships often become a key factor of teacher's willingness to provide sufficient learning environment.

In fact, the teacher-student relationship was a kind of interpersonal relationship. Chung (1998) found that people with better interpersonal relationships had higher academic achievement. Pan (2002) also mentioned that only good teacher-student relationship could create great learning environment. Therefore, the authors planned to explore the relationship between the teacher-student relationship and learning achievement.

4. The relationship among peers

Because Taiwan children's diets have been influenced by the West, many children reach the stage of puberty when they are in primary school. Primary school students have contact with classmates frequently as well as teachers. Chuo (1999) stated that adolescence youths are at the transition period of mental and physical condition. During this stage, they gradually depart from family concern and look for peer identification. Many studies mentioned that successful peer relationship was essential for youths and children development. Chu (1981) also stated that the lonely children with poor peer relationship performed less successfully than other children in every aspect. Chung (1998) found that children with better interpersonal relationships in a learning environment greater academic achievement. Cheng (2001) also proved that children with better peer relationships also had greater form and bodily strength. Many researchers found that children with positive peer relationships have more positive self-esteem, better academic performance, and a better ability to adapt to school (Yu,1999 ; Berndt, 1996; Berndt & Keefe,1993; Youniss,1980). Undoubtedly, peer relationships play an essential role in the development of teenagers. Therefore, the authors would like to study how peer relationships associated with English learning.

5. The scale of school

In Taiwan, the range of high school scale or primary school scale varied tremendously. Some schools had several thousand students; some only had around twenty students. It was hard to say how large school would be appropriate. Lin (1995) stated that in 1987, Japan found that much larger schools had many problems in management and instruction; therefore, Japan suggested that under 31 classes in high school or primary school would be appropriate.

In the empirical studies about the effect of school scale on educational quality, Fang (1999) stated that many scholars proved the larger school scale was, the more courses the school provided, such as Lin (1979), Guo (1991), Barker (1985), and Haller et. al.(1990). In

addition, Melnick (1987), Monk & Haller (1993), and Wiles (1995) also had the similar findings. In the studies about school scale and teacher-student rate, some researchers found that the smaller the school scale was, the lower teacher-student rate would be, such as Lin (1979), Guo (1991), and Ramirez (1990). Moreover, Lin (1979) and Guo (1991) found that when the turnout of a school was under 200, the rate of eligible teachers would be decreased dramatically. Ramirez (1990) proved that the larger a school was, the more sources and equipment a school would have. In other words, a larger school would have more sufficient equipment.

However, Edington and Gardener (1984), Francis (1992), and Wiles (1995) found that the students in a smaller school had more positive attitude about school. And Stevens & Peltier (1994) and Aness (1995) also proved that the tie of teacher-student and peer in a smaller school would be closer, that in a larger school would be more estranged. In addition, the studies about the relationship between school scale and academic achievement had different findings. Some showed that the relationship between school scale and academic was negative. For example, Rogers (1987), Huang & Howley (1993), Thompson (1994), Walberg & Walberg (1994), and Wiles (1995) found that the smaller a school, the better students' academic achievement. However, some studies found that there was no any significant correlation between school size and students' academic achievement. For example, Wyatt & Gay (1984), Melnick et al. (1987), Edington & Martellaro (1989), Ramirez (1990), Caldas (1993), Lamdin (1995) showed that their school scale was not related to students' learning performance.

In fact, a teacher or student could not change school scale, however, the above studies implied that equipment in a bigger school would be different from that in a smaller one. Under this condition, a teacher's teaching or a student's learning would be influenced by the equipment of a school. Fang (1999) found that there were some factors not beneficial for education quality in bigger schools, such as overcrowded space, difficulty in student arrangement, and students' negative attitudes toward school. On the contrary, smaller schools could not provide multiple curricula, and lacked some important instructional equipment that were at bigger schools. Therefore, the authors would like to explore whether school scale has any effect on students' learning achievement.

6. The characteristic of school

The enrollment of aboriginal elementary school students in Pingtung County represents one third of all elementary students in Taiwan, followed by Taitung County and Hualian County. In other words, Pingtung County is a prefecture with many aboriginal elementary school students. Therefore, it is worthy studying the differences and similarities in elementary school students' English learning between aboriginal schools and non-aboriginal ones. Yan (2004) stated that there are many different tribes of aboriginal people, but the total number of aboriginal people is small. Their natural languages are not

written; their cultural background is distinctive; most of them are low SES (social economic status); their standard of living is not high and their educational background is lower than other people groups. Since elementary school English education was implemented in 2001, aboriginal elementary schools were short of English teachers. Therefore, it is worthy studying English education in aboriginal areas.

Some researches related to the effect of parents on children's thinking styles, such as Li (1999) studied the factors influencing elementary school students' thinking styles in Hualian County and proved that parents using praise and encouragement would have great effect on children's thinking styles. In other words, parents' attitudes would have effects on aboriginal elementary school students' thinking styles and learning. Lin (2000 & 2001) found that parents' influence on aboriginal children's thinking styles would be less and less with the growth of individual. That is to say, parents had more effect on aboriginal children when those children were young. Moreover, in analyzing aboriginal people's learning style, Tan and Lin (2002) found that aboriginal people had tendencies toward peer learning, dynamic learning style, informal learning context and concrete image learning style. Obviously, aboriginal children's thinking style and learning style were different from non-aboriginal children's.

The development of aboriginal people's educational achievement was restricted and slow due to cultural differences. Chen (2003) stated that aboriginal children's learning motivation was low because of negative culture factors. The researches related to aboriginal people education proved that there was a significant difference between aboriginal children's academic performance and non-aboriginal children's. However, the difference was due to nature or other factors in the process of learning. Therefore, Chen et. al (1998) suggested that it be worthy exploring more deeply. Chen (2001) and Hong (2004) also pointed that aboriginal children's learning performance was worse than non-aboriginal children's. Therefore, a school's ethnic makeup could be another factor related to students' English learning achievement.

III. Method

(I) Subjects in the study

The study selected sixth graders in Taiwan as the target population, and the 11,275 sixth graders in Pingtung County were the approach target population. The researchers divided Pingtung County into three groups according to the level of urbanization. The study adopted stratified random sampling, and the criteria of stratification were based on the location of the school in Pingtung County (urban, rural, aboriginal). The researchers selected six schools from two towns in the urban group, testing 566 sixth graders from 18 sixth grade classes (40.63% of sample), 714 sixth graders from 24 classes from eight schools in eight towns in the rural group (51.26% of sample), and 113 sixth graders from seven classes from six schools in four towns in the aboriginal group (8.11% of sample). The study total sampled

49 sixth grade classes from 20 schools in Pingtung County.

(II) Instrument

The study selected English Listening and Reading Comprehension Assessment B of Elementary School Students in Tainan City as the achievement instrument (attached in the Appendix II). The description and rules of Assessment were shown in Chinese to ensure subjects understood what they needed to do in the assessment. The Assessment included Assessment A, B, and C, and the norm of the assessment is about 2,310 participants. As the quality of the assessment, the items of the assessment were suitable to elementary school students and its accuracy-rate is 0.63—0.69 (0.695 in Assessment B). This study used The English Listening and Reading Assessment for Elementary School Students in Tainan City as the testing instrument; the assessment includes three tests—A, B, and C. The Assessment used 2,310 elementary school students as the norm, and proved to be neither too difficult nor too easy. Its average rate of correctness was in the range from 0.63 to 0.69 (test B was 0.695); the average point biserial correlation was in the range from 0.46 to 0.48 (test B was 0.471). This study chose Test B test to assess the sixth graders' English listening and reading proficiency (see Appendix II). Generally speaking, the Assessment is quite good, and the average index of discrimination was 1.239 (test B was 1.172); Cronbach α of test B was 0.88. Test information and error curve showed that it was in the range of standard deviation, and proficiency estimating error was lower than 0.35. The assessment has 31 items, including six sections—letter-finding (6 items), word-recognition (5 items), illustrations (5 items), dialogue-response (5 items), dialogue-comprehension (5 items), and short-essay comprehension (5 items).

The method of evaluating students' English achievement was different from a traditional paper-pencil test. The participants accessed the website of National Tainan University and entered their passwords to take the test online in a computer lab, as the researchers were given the permission to use the online assessment from the Tainan City Government. In addition to finishing the assessment, the participants also needed to answer some questions about their past English learning experience and background; the researchers used code numbers in place of students' class numbers in order to protect the privacy of the participants. In fact, the code number on the questionnaire was the participant's password to access the website. After a participant finished his or her 31 items, the computer immediately showed the result of assessment; if the participant got 26-31 correct items, he or she fell into the high score group, if 18-25 correct items, intermediate group, if 0-17 correct items, low score group.

The researchers used the questionnaire (shown as Appendix I) to get schools' information. Moreover, the study distributed 1,413 questionnaires (see Appendix I), and 1,393 questionnaires were returned at a rate of return of 98.58%. After discounting 56 incomplete questionnaires, 15 careless questionnaires, and 5 questionnaires due to the

participants' low reading comprehension ability, the study counted 1,317 effective questionnaires with an efficiency rate of questionnaires at 94.54%.

(III) Research method

The study analyzed the source related to learning achievement, and used questionnaires to collect the data of the sixth graders' school learning environment and English learning in Pingtung County, and then applied the software of SPSS to conduct the analysis.

IV. Results and Discussion

The study mainly focused on the difference in students' English learning achievement from different school learning environment. In order to understand whether there is a relationship between the school learning environment and English learning achievement, the researchers chose the school learning environment as an independent variable and the English learning achievement of sixth-graders as a dependent variable and then conducted one-way analysis of variance. When one-way ANOVA reached a significant level, then conducted post hoc comparison by using Scheffe' to understand the difference of sixth-graders' English learning performance in different school learning environment.

(I) Results

1. The difference of subjects' English achievement from schools with different scales

Table 1: The summary of one-way ANOVA between school scale and English achievement

Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	post hoc comparison Scheff'e
Between	38052.270	2	19026.135	48.947***	1>3
Within	510762.840	1314	388.708		2>3
Total	548815.110	1316			

*** $p < .001$

1 : big school 2 : middle-sized school 3 : small school

As shown in Table 1, the *F* and associated *p* values shown in the ANOVA summary table indicate that the interaction effects were statically significant ($p < .001$). That meant that subjects' English achievement from different schools was different significantly. This study found that subjects from big schools had better English achievement than ones from small schools and subjects from middle-sized schools also had higher English achievement than ones from small schools. The result was consistent with the statement of Lin (2002). He indicated that the scale of a school was often influenced by community environment; the schools in urban area often bigger and ones in country smaller. Big schools always had great equipment, various curriculum and extra-curriculum activities and more social interaction which were beneficial for learning. On the contrary, small schools were limited by finding qualified teachers. Therefore, it was easy for students in small schools to become underachievers.

2. The difference of subjects' English achievement from schools with different equipment

Table 2: The summary of one-way ANOVA between school equipment and English achievement

Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	post hoc comparison Scheff'e
Between	25763.467	2	12881.734	32.361***	1>2>3
Within	523051.643	1314	398.061		
Total	548815.110	1316			

*** $p < .001$

1 : good equipment 2 : fair equipment 3 : poor equipment

As shown in Table 2, the *F* and associated *p* values shown in the ANOVA summary table indicate that the interaction effects were statically significant ($p < .001$). That meant that subjects' English achievement from different schools with different equipment was different significantly. This study found that subjects from schools with good equipment had better English achievement than ones from schools with fair and poor equipment. Generally speaking, schools with good equipment had beneficial learning conditions for students; on the contrary, schools with poor equipment lacked beneficial learning conditions for students. Under such conditions, students from schools with good equipment basically had better learning advantages than ones from schools with fair and poor equipment; therefore, they had better English performance than the others.

3. The difference of subjects' English achievement from schools with qualified teachers

Table 3: The summary of one-way ANOVA between qualified teachers and English achievement

Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	post hoc comparison Scheff'e
Between	37534.993	3	12511.664	32.131***	1>2
Within	511280.117	1313	389.398		1>4
Total	548815.110	1316			2>4 3>4

*** $p < .001$

1 : qualified teacher 2 : qualified teacher & substitute teacher 3 : substitute teacher 4 : classroom teacher as concurrent English teacher

As shown in Table 3, the *F* and associated *p* values shown in the ANOVA summary table indicate that the interaction effects were statically significant ($p < .001$). That meant that subjects' English achievement with different qualified English teachers was different significantly. This study found that students from schools with qualified English teachers had better English achievement than ones from schools with qualified and substitute English

teachers. Students from schools with qualified English teachers had higher English achievement than ones from schools with English taught by class teachers. Students from schools with qualified and substitute English teachers had better English performance than ones from school with English taught by classroom teachers. Students from schools with English taught by substitute English teachers had better English achievement than ones from schools with English taught by class teachers. In fact, professional English knowledge and steady work were two advantages for qualified English teachers; therefore, they can help students learn English in a stable and professional learning environment. Although class teachers could provide students a stable learning condition, they lacked professional English knowledge. Substitute English teachers possessed professional English knowledge, but they could not provide students a stable learning environment because they were restricted by worrying about getting hired again. No wonder, students from schools with qualified English teachers had higher English achievement than ones from schools with English taught by class teachers. Students from schools with qualified and substitute English teachers had better English performance than ones from school with English taught by class teachers. Students from schools with English taught by substitute English teachers had better English achievement than ones from schools with English taught by class teachers.

4. The difference of subjects' English achievement from different teacher-pupil relationship

Table 4: The summary of one-way ANOVA between teacher-pupil relationship and English achievement

Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	post hoc comparison Scheff'e
Between	4391.467	2	2195.733	5.300**	1>2
Within	544423.644	1314	414.325		
Total	548815.110	1316			

** $p < .01$

1 : good teacher-pupil relationship 2 : fair teacher-pupil relationship 3 : poor teacher-pupil relationship

As shown in Table 4, the *F* and associated *p* values shown in the ANOVA summary table indicate that the interaction effects were statically significant ($p < .01$). That meant that subjects' English achievement with different teacher-pupil relationship was different significantly. This study found that students with good teacher-pupil relationship had better English performance than ones with poor teacher-pupil relationship. Generally speaking, during the period when a child is in elementary school, a teacher often was a role model for a student. Good interaction among teachers and students could give students sense of safety. Under stable mental condition, students could learn efficiently. Therefore, the relationship between teachers and students had effect on students' learning performance.

5. The difference of subjects' English achievement from different peer relationship

Table 5: The summary of one-way ANOVA between peer relationship and English achievement

Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	post hoc comparison Scheff'e
Between	8122.391	2	4061.195	9.870***	1>2
Within	540492.719	1314	411.486		
Total	544815.110	1316			

*** $p < .001$

1 : good peer relationship 2 : fair peer relationship 3 : poor peer relationship

As shown in Table 5, the *F* and associated *p* values shown in the ANOVA summary table indicate that the interaction effects were statically significant ($p < .001$). That meant that subjects' English achievement with different peer relationships varied significantly. This study found that students with good peer relationships had better English achievement than ones with fair peer relationships. Elementary school students had contact with classmates frequently as well as teachers in school. With the need of peer identification, the influence of peers would be more obvious for fifth and sixth graders. Therefore, peer relationships played a crucial role in many respects for sixth graders including learning performance.

6. The difference of subjects' English achievement from different school characteristics

Table 6: The summary of one-way ANOVA between school characteristics and English achievement

Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	post hoc comparison Scheff'e
Between	38048.772	1	38048.772	97.959***	1>2
Within	510766.338	1315	88.415		
Total	548815.110	1316			

*** $p < .001$

1 : non-aboriginal school 2 : aboriginal school

As shown in Table 6, the *F* and associated *p* values shown in the ANOVA summary table indicate that the interaction effects were statically significant ($p < .001$). That meant that subjects' English achievement with different school characteristics was different significantly. This study found that students from non-aboriginal schools had better English performance than ones from aboriginal schools. In fact, in this study, most aboriginal schools were also small schools and most non-aboriginal schools were big schools or middle-sized schools. Generally, the scale of a school had a negative connection with the equipment of a school; on the other hand, the characteristics of a school had some connection with the scale of a school. Under this kind of condition, the result of students' learning

achievement in different school characteristics was similar to that in different school equipment and school scale.

(II) Discussion

1. School scale

The study found that students from big schools had higher English achievement than ones from small schools, and students from middle-sized schools also had better English performance than ones from small schools. The result was consistent with the findings about the relationship between resident area and school characteristics with English achievement. However, the findings about the relationship between school scale and academic achievement were inconsistent. Some showed that there was negative relationship between them, including the results of Rogers (1987), Huang and Howley (1993), Thompson (1994), Walberg and Walberg (1994), and Wiles (1995). They found that the smaller a school, the better students' academic achievement. Castronuovo (2007) pointed out that school environment was an opportunity to inspire learning and instill a sense of curiosity in children. The design of the environment could communicate to students the value our society places on education, teachers, and the students themselves. Despite the overwhelming evidence that pointed to the academic and social benefits of small schools, most schools today have much larger buildings as a result of perceived economies of scale. These large, impersonal schools were failing to provide an adequate learning environment for students, in spite of numerous studies that showed the effects school facilities had on academic achievement. Small schools, located within the students' neighborhood, not only fostered stronger interpersonal relationships within the school setting, but also encouraged a symbiotic relationship between the school and its community, who both benefited from the resources each had to offer.

However, Reid (2007) did not support academic achievement in small school environments, stating that small environments were having little to no impact on improving achievement for urban students. On the contrary, Brussow (2007) found that smaller learning environments, both schoolwise and classwise, were positively relevant to students' learning and also indicated that the positive, helping attitude of administrators, teachers, and staff at school played a part of a school culture that students recognized and valued.

In fact, some researchers found that there was no relationship between school scale and academic achievement, including Wyatt and Gay (1984), Melnick et. al (1987), Edington and Martellaro (1989), Ramirez (1990), Caldas (1993), and Lamdin (1995). This study found that students from big schools had better academic performance than ones from small schools and students from middle-sized schools had higher learning achievement than ones from small schools. In other words, there was a positive relationship between school scale and learning achievement. One reason could be that most of small schools in this study were aboriginal schools. Much research has shown that aboriginal students had worse academic

performance than non-aboriginal students. Another reason could be that most of big schools were in the urban area which had good equipment and rich resources. Much research has proved that differences existed between urban areas and countryside areas in academic performance. Obviously, the relationship between school scale and learning achievement will still be worthy studying in the future.

2. School equipment

The study found that students from schools with good equipment had better learning performance than ones from schools with fair equipment and students from schools with fair equipment had higher academic achievement than ones from schools with poor equipment. Schools with good equipment could provide students better learning conditions and more learning resources. In this study, most schools with good equipment were big schools and located in urban area and that led to better learning achievement than other schools.

3. Qualified teachers

Zgonc (2007) showed that the impact of teacher preparation, professional development in the secondary social studies classroom may be determining factors in student success. The study found that students from schools with qualified English teachers had better learning achievement than ones from schools with qualified and substitute English teachers. Students from schools with qualified and substitute English teachers had higher learning achievement than ones from schools with English taught by classroom teachers. Students from schools with substitute English teachers had better English performance than ones from schools with English taught by class teachers. Qualified English teachers have professional English knowledge and a stable job; therefore, they could focus on teaching. On the other hand, although substitute English teachers have professional English knowledge, they may worry about keeping their jobs. It may be not easy for them to focus on teaching wholeheartedly. Students could have problems of learning continuity due to teacher turnaround. Class teachers have more opportunities to interact with students; therefore, it is easier for them to build closer relationships with students. However, they may not have professional English knowledge. Under this condition, students' English learning performance would be affected. Sedibe (2006) also concluded that poor achievement was directly linked to poor teaching and that the latter would again be the result of poor qualifications, lack of resources, poor support systems and most important however, a lack of commitment and dedication needed to ensure a professional approach towards classroom management and teaching.

4. Teacher-pupil relationship

This study found that students with good teacher-pupil relationship had better English performance than ones with fair teacher-pupil relationship. The result was consistent with Clark & Trafford's (1995). They found that the teacher-pupil relationship was a crucial variable influencing students' second language learning. Moreover, Roderiguez (2007)

showed that establishing a respectful school context could facilitate teaching and learning. Chung (1998) also indicated that people with better interpersonal relationship had better academic performance. In fact, teacher-pupil relationship is a kind of interpersonal relationship. Good teacher-pupil relationship shows that there is frequent interaction between teachers and students. Elementary school students rely on teachers more than ones in higher education. Teachers have positive effects on students under good teacher-pupil relationship and help students learn.

5. Peer relationship

This study found that students with good peer relationships had better English achievement than ones with fair peer relationships. The result was consistent with Chung's (1998). Swindell (2006) also stated that providing a structured, active, hands-on, and technology-rich cooperative classroom environment for students produces some positive results: demonstrated leadership roles with their peers, improved behavior, self-motivation to learn, and academic achievement. He indicated that people with better public relationship had better academic performance. The peer relationship is a kind of public relationship. In the late period of elementary school, the effect of peer relationship becomes gradually more obvious. Students begin to seek peer identification; if they get peer identification, their mental development will be stable and that is beneficial for learning.

6. school characteristics

This study found that students from non-aboriginal schools had better English performance than ones from aboriginal schools. The result was consistent with that of Chen et. al (1998), Chen (2001), and Hong (2004); they all indicated that aboriginal students' academic achievement was not as good as non-aboriginal students'.

In fact, social culture scholars proposed two interpretive viewpoints about the factors related to academic achievement; one was cultural deprivation; the other was cultural difference. The former one was how to face the disadvantageous learning environment and the solution was to provide remedial education. The latter stated that the difference in belief, values, disciplines, ways of thinking from different cultural backgrounds existed and there was no inferiority or superiority (Sun,1999; Tan,1997). If the reason why aboriginal students did not have good academic achievement was from generic difference to cultural difference; then to study the cultural compatibility in a school would help identify the problem more profoundly. The scholars of cultural difference thought educational failure was due to the differences of rearing children rather than natural defects (Tan, 1998; Banks,1994).

Some research indicated the economic and educational disadvantages in aboriginal family, including Wu (1996) and Chen (1997). They found that aboriginal parents did not pay much attention to children's education and involve in children's learning. Lin (1997) found that aboriginal parents were seldom concerned with children's homework and

assignments. Li (1999) also indicated that economic disadvantages in aboriginal families led to disadvantageous social space. Chang and Huang (1999) showed that aboriginal parents' low-level education and low income were not beneficial for children's academic performance. Tan (2001) found that the stereotype of aboriginal parents was to express concern verbally but not to provide substantial help in children's learning. Perhaps their low SES was the main reason. Even if they would like to be concerned about their children's learning, they may not have the abilities to help their children. Obviously, aboriginal students did not have outstanding academic performance due to many subjective factors. It was not easy to explain the phenomena only by one single element.

V. Conclusion

In this study, we draw the conclusion as the following:

1. The subjects' English achievement from different schools varied significantly; subjects from big schools had better English achievement than ones from small schools and subjects from middle-sized schools also had higher English achievement than ones from small schools.
2. The subjects' English achievement from different schools with different equipment varied significantly; subjects from schools with good equipment had better English achievement than ones from schools with fair or poor equipment.
3. The subjects' English achievement with different qualified English teachers varied significantly; students from schools with qualified English teachers had better English achievement than ones from schools with qualified but substitute English teachers.
4. The subjects' English achievement with different teacher-pupil relationships varied significantly; students with good teacher-pupil relationship had better English performance than ones with poor teacher-pupil relationship.
5. The subjects' English achievement with different peer relationship varied significantly; students with good peer relationships had better English achievement than ones with fair peer relationships.
6. The subjects' English achievement with different school characteristics varied significantly; students from non-aboriginal schools had better English performance than ones from aboriginal schools.

VI. Implications

(I) Practical implications

1. Learning environment

This study found that school learning environment was extremely relevant to students' English achievement. However, some parts in school learning environment were not easily changed, such as school scale, school equipment, qualified English teachers, and school characteristics. In fact, if a school cannot get enough funds from the government to improve a school's learning environment, maybe the power and pressure from parents would not be

ignored. Parents can help the school express their needs to the government and make the government face the problems about school learning environments. Moreover, if parents have English professional knowledge, they can provide aid to school and together help students learn English.

2. Teacher-pupil relationship

The results showed that teacher-pupil relationship had a great influence on students' English learning achievement. Therefore, it would be worthy to encourage English teachers actively to develop good relationships with students. For example, the distance between teachers and students could be shortened by going on field trips, greeting students, and showing concern.

3. Qualified English teachers

The results showed that the qualifications of the English teachers affect students' learning achievement. If an English teacher is not qualified and he or she still plans to teach English in the future, he or she should get information from experienced teachers and try his or her best to get the qualification. Sometimes a school is too small to hire a full-time English teacher; a possible solution would be to share a full-time English teacher with nearby schools.

4. School equipment

The results showed that type of school equipment relates to students' English performance. A school should apply for funds from the government to improve school equipment. If the government cannot give any help, perhaps a business donation could be requested or join in a cooperation with an enterprise to improve school equipment.

5. Peer relationship

The results indicated that the peer relationship influences English learning achievement. Therefore, students should learn to build positive and harmonious relationships with peers, such as helping others actively, wearing a smile and treating others sincerely.

(II) Suggestions for future studies

1. Research frame

In the future studies, different variables could be included to make studies more complete, such as participants' IQ, blood type, astrological sign, birth order, or English teaching materials or supplemental teaching materials.

2. Research subject

Because the subjects were limited to Pingtung County, in the future, subjects can cover other counties; then the results can be generalized.

3. Research method

The study mainly applied the methods of literature review, questionnaire survey, and interview. In future studies, observation and ethnography can be added in and make research results more persuasive.

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附錄一

1. 貴校的英語師資為 1.()正式教師 2.()代理教師 3.()正式教師與代理教師兼有 4.()級任教師兼代 5.()其他
2. 貴校有英語專業教室嗎? 1.()有 2.()沒有
3. 貴校的電腦教室設備是 1.()兩年前更新 2.()使用已 2-5 年 3.()使用已經 5 年以上
4. 貴校的班級數為 1.()36 班以上 2.()12-36 班 3.()12 班以下
5. 貴校屬於 1.()非原住民學校 2.()原住民學校

附錄二

台南市國小英語聽力與閱讀理解電腦化評量 乙式 (試題題本)

【評量系統說明】

台南市國小英語聽力與閱讀理解電腦化評量，目的在以生活化的情境，評量六年級小朋友英語聽力和閱讀理解的表現水準，以作為國中老師教學安排的參考，作答時，請小朋友安靜專心的聆聽線上播音的作答說明和題目內容，以滑鼠點選正確答案並按確定鍵，完成作答。

一、找出字母

【作答說明】第 1 題至第 6 題為字首與字尾字母的辨識。分為字首與字尾字母區辨兩部分。請根據線上播音內容與螢幕上的圖片作答。在每一題的敘述句中，

你會先聽到一個完整的句子，針對該句子的目標字，播音系統會複誦兩次；請在該題選項中找出正確對應的字首或字尾字母，以滑鼠點選該選項代號，並按確定鍵，完成作答。測驗即將開始，現在請注意聽：

A. 選出目標字的字首字母

【作答說明】請選出目標字的第一個字母。

例題：

()

- a. g
- b. c
- c. t
- d. k



說明：

答案為 a。目標字是 girl，它的第一個字母為 g，所以答案是選項 a。
作答時先點選 a，再按確定鍵就完成作答。

() 1.

- a. h
- b. k
- c. j
- d. g



() 2.

- a. c
- b. z
- c. t
- d. s



() 3.

- a. l
- b. s
- c. r
- d. g



B. 選出目標字的字尾字母

【作答說明】請選出目標字的字尾字母。

例題：

()

- a. r
- b. g
- c. l
- d. h



說明：答案為 c，目標字為 girl，它的字尾字母為 l，所以答案為 c。

作答時先點選 c，再按確定鍵完成作答。

() 4.

- a. b
- b. p
- c. c
- d. g



() 5.

- a. v
- b. m
- c. r
- d. n



() 6.

- a. s
- b. m
- c. q
- d. d



二、語句單字辨識

【作答說明】第 7 題至第 11 題是要同學先聽一個句子，再選出其中一個兩次複誦的目標字。螢幕上每個題目都有四個選項，請在聽線上播音的句子及其中複誦的單字後，從四個選項中點選出正確的選項，並按確定鍵完成作答。

- 例題：
- a. night
 - b. right
 - c. ride
 - d. light



說明：答案為 b。在此例題中，你所聽到的單字是 right，所以點選 b，再按確定鍵就完成作答。

() 7. a. cake

- b. bake
- c. take
- d. make



() 8. a. watch

- b. match
- c. which
- d. catch



- () 9. a. kind
b. find
c. mind
d. side



- () 10. a. star
b. start
c. stay
d. stand



- () 11. a. fine
b. nine
c. night
d. nice



三、看圖辨義

【作答說明】第 12 題至第 16 題是要同學依據圖畫、線上播音的問題和回答選項，選出最適切的答案。螢幕上會呈現每一張圖畫，而每一張圖畫有 1~3 個相關問題，每題請聽完線上播放的題目以及四個選項後，以滑鼠點選出與所看到的圖畫最相符的答案，並按確定鍵完成作答。每題題目將會複誦兩次，選項只念一次，請仔細聽。

例題：

- a. No. It's a notebook.
b. Yes. It's a notebook.
c. No. It's Tom's pencil box.
d. Yes. It's my pencil box.



說明：這題的答案為 a，所以點選 a，再按確定鍵就完成作答。

- () 12.
a. They are running a race.
b. They are playing basketball.
c. They are jumping ropes.
d. They are riding bicycles.



- () 13.
a. It's a book.
b. It's a ball.
c. It's a puppy.
d. It's an eraser.



() 14.

- a. swim
- b. dance
- c. fly a kite
- d. sing a song



() 15.

- a. He gets up at six o'clock.
- b. He gets up at six-thirty.
- c. He gets up at seven o'clock.
- d. He gets up at seven-thirty.



() 16.

- a. They're at the beach.
- b. They're at the amusement park.
- c. They're at the zoo.
- d. They're at the museum.



四、對話回應

【作答說明】這個大題主要是評量在情境中選擇適切回應的句子能力。題目部分並沒有呈現在螢幕上，請仔細聽播音系統的問題內容。每個題目，播音系統都會播放兩次，每一題都會有四個選項，選項部分會出現在螢幕上，請依據播音系統的題目，點出最適切的回應，並按確定鍵完成作答。

例題：

- a. No, it's so good.
- b. Yes, I like your new shirt.
- c. No, I like your new hat.
- d. Yes, I like your new hat.



說明：最適切的回應是 d. Yes, I like your new hat. 所以點選 d，再按確定鍵完成作答。

() 17.

- a. It's so funny.
- b. I can't do it.
- c. It's sunny.
- d. Take it easy.



- () 18.
- It's very big.
 - It's good.
 - It's OK.
 - It's ten dollars.



- () 19.
- I'm Helen.
 - Good morning.
 - What's your name?
 - Good-bye.



- () 20.
- My name is John.
 - I'm fine, thank you.
 - She's OK.
 - John is my brother.



- () 21.
- Hold on, please.
 - Yes, I am.
 - No, I'm not.
 - Yes, she isn't here.



五、對話理解

【作答說明】每個大題會播出一段對話，再問一個相關的問題，同學要依據所聽到的對話內容及問題選出適切的答案。對話與問題部分並沒有呈現在螢幕上，請仔細聽播音的內容。每個題目，線上播音都會念兩次，螢幕上，每一題在題號後都會有四個選項，請依播音內容，點選最適切的答案，並按確定鍵完成作答

例題：

- Jane is David's brother.
- Jane is David's sister.
- Jane is David's friend.
- Jane is David's mother.



說明：最適切的回應是 c. Jane is David's friend. 所以點選 c，再按確定鍵完成作答。

- () 22.
- Joy
 - Joy's brother
 - Joy's sister
 - Joy's mother



() 23.

- a. He is Bob's father.
- b. He is Bob's friend.
- c. He is Bob's brother.
- d. He is Bob's teacher.



() 24.

- a. Tom
- b. Tom's mother
- c. Tom's father
- d. Tom's sister



() 25.

- a. It's on the chair.
- b. It's on the desk.
- c. It's under the chair.
- d. It's under the desk.



() 26.

- a. Kelly has no ruler.
- b. Kelly has many rulers.
- c. Andy has no ruler.
- d. Andy has a ruler.



六、短文理解

【作答說明】這一個大題是要同學仔細閱讀一段短文，閱讀完短文之後，會有 5 個相關問題。每個問題都有四個選項，請依據短文內容與問題，從提供的四個選項中選出一個最適切的答案，並點選該選項代號，再按確定鍵完成作答。

It's Sunday morning. Everyone is busy. Mr. Lin is feeding his dog. Mrs. Lin is reading the newspaper. Mr. and Mrs. Lin are our neighbors. My dad is washing his car. My mom and sister are making a cake. My baby brother John is sleeping. My name is Joy. I'm playing with Mr. Lin's dog.

() 27. Today is _____.

- a. Saturday
- b. Monday
- c. Sunday
- d. Tuesday

- () 28. a. Joy
b. Mr. Lin
c. John
d. Mrs. Lin
- () 29. They are _____.
a. Joy's teachers
b. Joy's students
c. Joy's neighbors
d. Joy's classmates
- () 30. He is _____.
a. Mr. Lin's friend
b. Joy's brother
c. Mrs. Lin's brother
d. Joy's friend
- () 31. a. Mr. and Mrs. Lin
b. Joy's mom and sister.
c. Joy's dad and brother.
d. Joy and