

The Impact of Private Tutoring on Young Kosovan Learners' English Skills

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Abstract—Private tutoring constitutes a global phenomenon, however, research on this phenomenon in Kosovo is relatively limited. The present study examined the impact of English private tutoring on young Kosovan learners' English skills from their English teachers' perspective. It delved into three aspects, namely the reasons behind the learners' decision to attend private English courses, the impact of these courses on their English skills, and their English teachers' involvement in the process. The study encompassed a sample of 200 English teachers from Kosovo, deliberately selected from 49 public primary schools located in seven regions of the country. The research instrument employed was a structured questionnaire containing 21 questions concerning all three aspects of the topic, whereas the research data were analyzed via the SPSS program. The research results indicate that private English courses have a positive impact on young Kosovan learners' English skills, particularly the speaking skill; parental encouragement emerges as a crucial factor in the learners' decision to attend these courses, whereas the involvement of English teachers in Kosovo in English private tutoring is rather insignificant, despite their acknowledgement of its benefits for students and implicit support.

Index Terms—private tutoring, young Kosovan learners, English skills, English teachers, parents

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has had a tremendous impact on education in terms of both opportunities and challenges. The demand for quality education and the pressure on formal education systems have increased, and this has resulted in the rise of private tutoring as a parallel system of education. Private tutoring is a prevalent educational practice in numerous countries worldwide, which has rapidly evolved into a global phenomenon, thus “rivaling” the formal education system in several ways. Therefore, in recent years, researchers have embraced the term “shadow education” (Bray, 2014; Charoenroop, 2021; Entrich & Lauterbach, 2019; Rizwan, 2023; Wainwright et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023) to refer to this kind of nonformal supplementary education, which, according to Subedi (2018), became popular after Bray coined it in 1999.

Private tutoring is usually defined as fee-based tutoring that provides supplementary education in subjects students already study in the formal education system (Dang & Rogers, 2008; as cited in Dongre & Tewary, 2015). Consequently, it is generally believed that private tutoring is more widespread and popular in underdeveloped and developing countries, where education systems do not usually function properly and fail to attain their objectives. Furthermore, according to Ille and Peacey (2019), private tutoring is common and already a norm in developing countries. However, research indicates that private tutoring is not an exclusivity of the abovementioned countries; it is rather quite widespread in developed countries as well. Japan, as a developed country, is a leader in this regard, as private tutoring is a huge and lucrative industry in this country (Dang & Rogers, 2008).

As English has already acquired the status of a global lingua franca (Crystal, 2003), English private tutoring has also experienced a tremendous growth becoming the prevalent type of private tutoring and reflecting the importance of this kind of learning activity (Yung, 2019).

Kosovo has not been immune to these developments, and English private tutoring is very popular in Kosovo, as evidenced by numerous private English language schools in the country that provide private English courses for students of all ages, as well as English courses delivered in the English teachers' houses after their regular schedule in public schools. Although English is a compulsory subject at all levels of education in Kosovo (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2016), and students are exposed to English from a very young age, the formal education system often fails to equip them with the necessary language skills to communicate effectively. This assertion is particularly relevant to young learners (age 6-12), whose parents choose to enroll them in private English schools that provide English courses with the aim of enhancing their language proficiency as they find their children's regular English classes lacking, especially with regard to the development of the speaking skill, and, learning to speak the language is widely acknowledged as the primary aim in the second language learning process (Kormos, 2006). They want their children to attain language and cultural fluency, which would create numerous opportunities for them, mainly

in terms of education, that would subsequently reflect on other segments of their lives, thus fostering bilingualism as a valuable asset (Çanta et al., 2023). A number of parents find that this is achievable only if in addition to their regular English classes at school, children also attend private English courses. Conversely, English teachers, who are part of the formal education system, have their own complaints, starting with the small number of English classes per week (Grade I and II have one class per week, while grades III, IV, V, VI and VII have two classes per week), the large number of students per class (up to 40 students), and the lack of the necessary equipment, primarily technological, in their classrooms.

The current study aims to examine the impact of private English courses on young Kosovan learners' English skills, and the reasons why these learners attend private English courses from their English teachers' perspective. In addition, it also examines the teachers' own involvement in the process. Although the use of the term "young learners" may vary from country to country depending on their educational systems, it generally refers to children age 3 to 11 or 12 (Garton & Copland, 2019). In this study, however, the scope has been limited to learners between the ages of 6 and 12, corresponding to grades 1 to 7.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Spread of Private Tutoring*

It is generally acknowledged that research on English private tutoring is not extensive, furthermore, researchers claim that it is only in its early stages, or "infancy" as they call it (Černa, 2020; Hamid et al., 2009; Yung, 2015; as cited in Yung, 2019). However, in recent years, researchers from different countries have endeavored to shed light on this phenomenon by tackling some of its main elements, such as factors, challenges, impact, advantages, and disadvantages. The predominant consensus among researchers points to the unstoppable nature of this phenomenon, indicating its persistent growth.

East Asian countries are champions in private tutoring (Bray, 2014) although European countries do not lag behind in this regard, especially in English private tutoring, as English is already considered as "the preferred option for language unity" (Soler & Jorda, 2007, p. 24), the language that non-native English speakers can use to communicate effectively with each other. Germany, for example, has witnessed an increase of the students' enrollment in shadow education since 2000 (Enrich & Lauterbach, 2019). The same applies to Italy, Portugal, Austria, France (Bray, 2021), as well as Turkey (Berberoğlu & Tansel, 2014), Greece, where private tutoring, particularly English private tutoring, is widely spread (Berry, 2023), and other Balkan countries. Children of almost half of the Spanish families (47%) are included in shadow education, of which 46% attend private language classes, predominantly in English (Moreno & Martinez, 2023), whereas in the UK, private tutoring is still regarded as the metaphorical "elephant in the room" (Jones, 2021). In the former Soviet Union countries, private tutoring was initially regarded as a way to supplement the income of teachers employed in government schools, but it has gradually evolved into a well-established tradition (Bray & Kwo, 2013). The same trend has been observed in Poland, Hungary, Check Republic, and other Eastern European countries (Kolber, 2022). Private tutoring is also present and on the rise in Scandinavian countries that admittedly have the best education systems in the world that embody "the ideals of equality, democracy, and social cohesion" (Christensen et al., 2021, p. 523). The phenomenon has also appeared in Finland, although it is considered as nearly invisible, whereas the Netherlands has demonstrated a considerable increase in the rate of inclusion in shadow education (Bray, 2021).

The shadow education industry has already become an integral component of the formal education systems in India, which has the largest population in the world, and Egypt, as one of the most important African countries (Moreno & Martinez, 2023).

The United States has witnessed a precipitous increase of private tutoring, although this phenomenon has not received significant scholarly attention (Kim et al., 2024). A massive expansion of private tutoring has also been observed in Canada (Davies, 2004).

Latin American countries have demonstrated a high rate of private tutoring, with English private tutoring being particularly prevalent in Brazil, the largest Latin American country (Ventura & Gomes, 2023).

Contrary to the practices observed in other countries of the world, the prevalence of private tutoring in Australia is less pronounced (Kolber, 2022).

English private tutoring, as one type of private tutoring, has been present in Kosovo since the 1990s, when the first private English language school, "Zas-Trade", was established in 1992, followed by "The Cambridge School", which opened its doors in 1995. The phenomenon experienced a tremendous popularity in the 2000s, but despite its popularity, studies on this phenomenon in this country are scarce.

B. *Young Learners and Private Tutoring*

According to Thaker (2020), children are among the most dependable learners on tutoring, and, at the same time, the most faithful ones. In this context, credit should certainly be given to their parents. Even though private tutoring may take a financial toll on them, Ali (2013) argues that parents acknowledge private tutoring as beneficial for their children, primarily because it enables them to avoid "failure", but it is also regarded as "a fashion". They also tend to perceive it as a form of investment for their children's future. Furthermore, there is also a generally accepted view that an early

start in language learning gives learners the opportunity to attain a high level of proficiency, resembling that of the native speakers that is often denied older learners, but, although perceived as a very powerful motivation, its validity is not always assured. According to Lightbown and Spada (2006), age is just one among a group of factors, including intelligence, aptitude, motivation, and personality, that determines the learners' success in the second language learning process, whereas Tabors (2008) asserts that research on how young learners acquire a second language indicates that progress in the process is determined by four main factors such as age, personality, motivation, and exposure. The latest one, in the sense of linguistic input, is regarded as an essential component for learning (Saxton, 2017; Van Patten & Williams, 2015). Moon (2000) also argues that exposure along with other factors such as time, a real need for English, the variety of input, and meaningful input contribute to creating an ideal situation for children who aim to learn English as a foreign language.

Nevertheless, young learners exhibit certain advantages over older learners, as most of them develop a level of phonological and morphosyntactic competence that approximates that of the native speakers (Ortega, 2013). Harmer (2007) also argues that an early exposure to a new language facilitates the learning of pronunciation, which is more challenging for older learners. Therefore, by providing English private tutoring for their children, parents ensure not only an early, but also a prolonged exposure to the language, aiming the attainment of a high level of English language proficiency. However, there are parents who lack the necessary financial resources to afford private tutoring for their children, and this raises the question of whether private tutoring may be regarded as a phenomenon that contributes to educational and social inequalities (Wainwright et al., 2023; Yung, 2019).

The parents' education level is still considered a significant factor that influences the students' inclusion in private tutoring. Thus, private tutoring is more common among children of highly educated parents (Berberoğlu & Tansel, 2014). However, the popularity of private tutoring suggests that this dynamic is changing rapidly, and there is an increasing number of parents with only secondary education who regard private tutoring as an opportunity for their children to excel in any challenging academic environment.

It is generally believed that private tutoring is preferred by underperforming students, but empirical evidence suggests that it is more prevalent among students who perform well (Bray & Kwo, 2013), however, this depends on the subject being taught in private tutoring, and what they aim to attain through it, for example, English and math include students of both categories. According to Wittwer (2014), private tutoring affects students' performance, and students who receive more private tutoring outperform those who receive it less, although he acknowledges the existing dispute with regard to its impact on students' academic achievement, as some researchers argue that private tutoring fails to improve the students' academic achievement, and some others, on the other hand, are optimistic about its potential.

Recent research findings reveal that students who receive English private tutoring outperform those who have only been exposed to English at school, and this outcome is primarily attributed to the fact that most tutors focus mainly on developing the "examination competence", i.e. helping students to get good grades, rather than focusing on the development of their overall English proficiency (Chi-Hao, 2021). Furthermore, both students and parents are aware of this situation, which has led to a rising demand to further commercialize the phenomenon, as performing well in examinations is one of the key factors that encourages parents to embrace private tutoring for their children, among other factors such as rigorous curriculum and ineffectual teaching, overcrowded classrooms, peer pressure, and stress on academic performance (Chingtham, 2015). Tomar (2012) argues that social and cultural beliefs also exert a considerable influence, as people tend to follow trends, especially if these trends yield the desired effects.

C. Ethics and Private Tutoring

Even though ministries of education generally prefer to ignore the shadow education system considering it irrelevant (Bray & Kwo, 2013), as is the case, for example, with the educational policy in the Czech Republic (Št'astný, 2016; as cited in Černá, 2020), in certain countries, there have been attempts to impose some restrictions on the teachers employed in the public education system who are also involved in private tutoring. Consequently, in Turkey (Berberoğlu & Tansel, 2014), Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Korea, Poland (Ille & Peacey, 2019), and Morocco (Černá, 2020), it is prohibited to tutor your own students. In Egypt, the government has prohibited the teachers to force their own students into private tutoring, and it has even increased their salaries as a measure to succeed in this enterprise, but these attempts have so far proved unsuccessful (Ille & Peacey, 2019). On the other hand, the governments of some other countries such as Singapore, South Africa and Tanzania support the private tutoring industry by implementing training programs for tutors (Dang & Rogers, 2008), and in Malaysia, private tutoring is not only acceptable, but also recommendable, since tutoring students outside the school premises is regarded as a way of supplementing the teachers' salaries (Kenayathulla, 2014). Ali (2013) also argues that private tutoring contributes to the improvement of the teachers' financial situation and their social standing.

In Albania and Kosovo, municipalities are permitted to establish regulations that prohibit teachers from delivering private courses to their own students, however, there are no regulations concerning this issue on the national level in either country. It is noteworthy that in recent years, municipalities in these countries have made very few attempts to impose sanctions against teachers who force their own students to attend their private courses in exchange for a good grade, despite the existing regulations.

Teachers employed in the public education system who are also involved in private tutoring may deliberately decrease their efficiency in their classes and focus more on private tutoring, what leads to corruption (Bray & Kwo,

2013), and the rise of the so-called “culture of spoon-feeding” that is affecting the young student’s thinking power and cultivating the mindset of dependency (Chingtham, 2015).

The issue of whether it is ethical or unethical to tutor your own students is still a matter of dispute among educational experts and other stakeholders in the field of education. In Slovakia, for example, even forced private tutoring is not considered unethical by teachers and pedagogy students (Kubanová, 2006; as cited in Ille & Peacey, 2019). Consequently, this issue poses an immense threat to some of the key principles that the education system must adhere to, and it reveals certain intricacies within the education system that educational experts are desperately trying to disregard, while moral and ethical values seem to be experiencing a gradual decline.

D. The Present Study

Private tutoring, especially English private tutoring, with a history of more than three decades, has certainly become a trend in Kosovo. However, Kosovan parents do not seem to consider private tutoring merely as a means to improve their children’s “examination competence”. Even though its significance cannot be disregarded, their primary motivation seems to be the attainment of English language proficiency, which they regard as imperative. This implies the enhancement of all four basic language skills, primarily the speaking skill, that teachers, for various reasons, often fail to give the due importance in their regular English classes.

Therefore, in light of the abovementioned considerations, the present study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the main reasons young Kosovan learners attend private English courses?
2. What is the impact of these courses on their English skills?
3. Are English teachers from Kosovo employed in the public sector involved in English private tutoring?
 - a) Do they deliver private English courses?
 - b) Do they deliver private English courses to their own students?

III. METHOD

A. Participants

Participants in the present study comprised 200 English teachers from 49 public primary schools located in all seven regions of Kosovo, namely Prishtina, Prizren, Mitrovica, Peja, Gjakova, Gjilan, and Ferizaj, who agreed to participate in this study and respond to our questions, after we obtained a written permission from the respective local education authorities. The selection was deliberate, and besides including English teachers of both genders, there was also a tendency to include English teachers of different ages, work experience, and school locations, with the aim of providing an overall picture of the phenomenon.

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	133	66.5%
Male	67	33.5%
Age		
22-30	37	18.5%
31-40	102	51.0%
41-50	48	24.0%
51-65	13	6.5%
Work experience		
1-5 years	47	23.5%
6-10 years	46	23.0%
11-15 years	39	19.5%
16-20 years	30	15.0%
Over 20 years	38	19.0%
School location		
Village	92	46%
Town	108	54%

Table 1 indicates that the majority of English teachers, 66.5%, are female, most of them, 51%, are between 31-40 years old, 23.5% of them have 1-5 years of work experience, and a little more than half of them, 54%, work in towns.

B. Instruments

As this is a quantitative study, the main research instrument was a structured questionnaire consisting of 21 questions, which were divided into four sections. The initial one provided demographic information on participants, the subsequent section contained questions concerning the students’ attendance of private English courses and their reasons for attending these courses, the third section included questions concerning the impact of private English courses on the students’ English skills, and the final section comprised questions regarding the teachers’ own involvement in these

courses, i.e. English private tutoring, as deliverers. Out of these 21 questions included in the study, 14 employed a 5-point Likert Scale, with responses ranging from “strongly disagree” (SDA)=1 to “strongly agree” (SA)=5.

C. Data Collection and Analysis

The data for the present study were collected from the responses of all respondents who participated in the study after the questionnaires were distributed to them in their workplaces. The research data were analyzed via the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program, version 25. In order to address the research questions, data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics which helped us to obtain the percentages, means, and standard deviations. Additionally, the Pearson correlation technique was used to determine the significance of the correlation between the teachers’ work experience and their perceptions with regard to the impact of private English courses on their students’ English skills, whereas the independent samples t-test was performed to determine gender differences with regard to the teachers’ perceptions on the impact of private English courses on their students’ English skills.

IV. RESULTS

In this section, we present the results of analyses of the data obtained via the questionnaire. When asked whether their students attend private English courses, the majority of respondents, 124 English teachers, or 62% of them, responded positively. Conversely, 42 English teachers, or 21% of the respondents, responded negatively, whereas 34 English teachers, or 17% of the respondents, expressed uncertainty or lack of information on the subject. The following table indicates the reasons students provide for attending these courses, as reported by their English teachers.

TABLE 2
THE REASONS WHY STUDENTS ATTEND PRIVATE ENGLISH COURSES

	%					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5		
They have difficulties in completing their homework.	16.5	30.0	29.0	18.0	6.5	2.68	1.14
The knowledge acquired in the classroom is insufficient.	18.5	32.0	22.5	24.5	2.5	2.61	1.12
Parents have no time to help them with their homework.	9.0	10.5	31.5	34.5	14.5	3.35	1.12
Parents cannot help them because they don't know the language.	5.0	10.0	27.5	36.0	21.5	3.59	1.08
Parents encourage their children to attend these courses.	8.0	7.0	24.5	42.5	18.0	3.56	1.11
Parents believe that if their children attend these courses, they will be more successful in acquiring the language.	4.0	8.0	22.5	31.0	34.5	3.84	1.09
They are influenced by their classmates.	8.5	12.0	37.5	32.0	10.0	3.32	1.06
They want to advance their knowledge of English.	5.5	8.0	20.0	41.0	25.5	3.73	1.09

Note: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree.

Table 2 indicates that the statement with which the teachers agree the most, 66.5%, is that they want to advance their knowledge of English ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.09$), whereas the statement with which they disagree the most, 50.5%, is that the knowledge acquired in the classroom is insufficient ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.12$).

The following table indicates the impact of private English courses on the students’ English skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as their vocabulary and their self- confidence in expressing themselves in English.

TABLE 3
THE IMPACT OF PRIVATE ENGLISH COURSES ON THE STUDENTS’ ENGLISH SKILLS

Students who attend private English courses...	%					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5		
have better English listening skills.	4.5	21.0	24.5	38.0	12.0	3.32	1.07
have better English speaking skills.	3.5	15.5	28.0	41.0	12.0	3.43	1.00
have better English reading skills.	9.0	10.5	31.5	34.5	14.5	3.48	1.00
have better English writing skills.	6.0	14.5	33.5	32.5	13.5	3.33	1.07
exhibit a more extensive vocabulary than other students.	4.5	12.0	30.5	35.0	18.0	3.50	1.06
display a higher level of self-confidence in expressing themselves in English.	4.5	13.0	30.5	33.0	19.0	3.49	1.08

Note: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree.

As presented in Table 3, 53% of the English teachers report that the skill mostly affected, in the sense of improvement, by private English courses is the speaking skill, followed by the listening skill selected by 50% of the

teachers, the reading skill selected by 49% of the teachers, and finally the writing skill selected by 46% of the English teachers. Additionally, 53% of the teachers agree that students who attend private English courses exhibit a more extensive vocabulary, and 52% of them claim that they display a higher level of self-confidence in expressing themselves in English. Table 3 also indicates that only a minority of English teachers denies the positive impact of private English courses on their students' English skills.

In order to analyze the correlation between the teachers' work experience and their perceptions on the impact of private English courses on their students' English skills, we applied the Pearson correlation technique, and the table below presents the following results.

TABLE 4
CORRELATION BETWEEN THE TEACHERS' WORK EXPERIENCE AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF PRIVATE ENGLISH COURSES ON THEIR STUDENTS' ENGLISH SKILLS

	Work experience	English skills
Pearson Correlation	1	-.228**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
N	200	200

The results presented in Table 4 indicate that there is a weak negative but statistically significant correlation ($r = -0.228$) between the teachers' work experience and their perceptions on the impact of private English courses on their students' English skills ($p < 0.01$).

In order to analyse gender differences concerning the English teachers' perceptions on the impact of private English courses on their students' English skills, and to verify whether the gender differences are statistically significant, the independent samples t-test was applied.

TABLE 5
GENDER DIFFERENCES CONCERNING THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF PRIVATE ENGLISH COURSES ON THEIR STUDENTS' ENGLISH SKILLS

t-test for Equality of Means										
Gender	N	M	SD	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Female	133	20.89	5.539	1.250	198	.213	1.022	.817	-.590	2.633
Male	67	19.87	5.280							

The results presented in Table 5 indicate that the differences between female and male English teachers' perceptions with regard to the impact of private English courses on their students' English skills are not statistically significant, $t(198) = 1.25$, $p > 0.05$.

The analysis concerning the teachers' involvement in English private tutoring provided the following results.

TABLE 6
THE KOSOVAN TEACHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN ENGLISH PRIVATE TUTORING

	Frequency		Percent	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Do you deliver private English courses?	159	41	79.5	20.5
Do you deliver private English courses to your own students?	193	7	96.5	3.5

As can be seen from Table 6, most of the teachers, or 79.5% of them, responded negatively when asked whether they deliver private English courses, whereas out of 20.5% of the teachers who deliver private English courses, only a minority of the teachers, or 3.5%, delivers them to their own students.

V. DISCUSSION

The research results reveal that a substantial number of young Kosovan learners attend private English courses, and they do it for a variety of reasons as mentioned above, but based on the most selected statements by English teachers, the emphasis is placed on the parents and the pivotal role they play on their children's choices. Although studies on parental involvement in their children's foreign language learning process are rather scarce (Forey et al., 2015), their influence is indisputable. The statement that received the highest percentage of agreement is the one which indicates that the reason why students attend private English courses is that they want to advance their knowledge of English. However, this statement is deeply interrelated with the other two most selected statements that concern the parents, as they are the ones who encourage their children to attend private English courses, convinced that their children will be more successful in the language learning process. Consequently, this indicates that English teachers in Kosovo recognize the parents' influence as a crucial factor with a significant impact on this matter, because parents are the primary providers of both emotional and financial support. As Choi et al. (2023) argue, parental involvement can predict children's motivation, and, subsequently, their success in the language learning process.

It is interesting to note, however, that despite the constant complaints about the challenging working conditions already mentioned above, most English teachers who participated in this study seem to disagree with the statements that emphasize the students' insufficient knowledge received in the classroom and their difficulties with homework as reasons for their students' attendance of private English courses. This is because they implicitly state the teachers' inability to fulfil their primary function, and consequently their lack of success in the language teaching and learning process, and also simultaneously justify the necessity for English private tutoring. However, the teachers do not deny the positive impact of English private tutoring, since their responses concerning this impact on their students' English skills, their vocabulary, as well as their confidence in expressing themselves in English, demonstrate the immense importance they attribute to this educational practice.

It is generally acknowledged that speaking is the skill that students aim to improve the most, and naturally, in private English courses, special emphasis is placed precisely on this skill. Scott and Ytreberg (1995) argue that it is the most demanding skill to teach, and according to Maxom (2009), it is the most important skill in the language teaching process because you cannot claim the mastery of a language without being able to speak it. The results of the present study indicate that the speaking skill is indeed the skill that students who attend private English courses improve the most. However, it is noteworthy that skills are not taught or learned in isolation (Harmer, 2007; Scott & Ytreberg, 1995), thus, while working on the improvement of the speaking skill, young Kosovan learners also improve the other skills. According to our respondents, listening follows the speaking skill, and reading is followed by writing as the least improved skill. Since listening and reading are referred to as receptive skills, whereas speaking and writing are referred to as productive skills (Harmer, 2007), it is noteworthy that one receptive skill, i.e. listening, and one productive skill, i.e. speaking, lead the way in terms of improvement in the process of English language learning in private English courses attended by young Kosovan learners. Consequently, this means that their tutors manage to accomplish what Garton and Copland (2019) consider "the main aim of teaching" (p. 171), namely advancing in combination one receptive skill and one productive skill. Furthermore, although listening is the first skill that children acquire, according to Garton and Copland (2019), it is often quickly followed by speaking, therefore the two skills are closely intertwined. Reading and writing are usually not given the due importance in private English courses, however, according to our respondents, these skills are also improved, albeit unintentionally, because recent research suggests that tutored children display a significant improvement of the reading skill (Lindo et al., 2017). Both reading and writing are also significantly improved because tutors who work with children often stimulate their students' creativity by engaging them in activities that involve reading, and the stories they read help them to construct meaning and, consequently, to develop writing (Ryf & Horner, 2007).

Vocabulary constitutes one of the fundamental elements in foreign language learning, particularly at the primary level (Cameron, 2001). Therefore, Garton and Copland (2019) emphasize the importance of selecting age-appropriate vocabulary when interacting with young learners. Young learners demonstrate a remarkable aptitude at memorizing new words, thereby enhancing their vocabulary. Thus, a considerable percentage of our respondents, 53%, agree that young Kosovan learners who attend private English courses demonstrate a significant improvement of vocabulary, in that they exhibit a whole new level of perspicacity that helps them in the language learning process. The advancement of all four basic language skills and the vocabulary naturally contributes to the increase of the young Kosovan learners' self-confidence in expressing themselves in English. Thus, 52 % of respondents report that their students who attend private English courses display a higher level of self-confidence, and this is extremely important because it means that they are less likely to experience what is known as *foreign language anxiety*, a significant factor that affects the foreign language learners' speaking skill (Yalçın & İnceçaj, 2014).

Nevertheless, as Long (2015) argues, learners will acquire different levels of proficiency in their English skills, vocabulary and other language aspects depending on the goals to be achieved, and even though speaking is usually the main goal, there are young Kosovan learners who may be interested in improving other language skills as well, and this is why, according to our respondents, there are no significant differences in percentage between the skills in terms of their improvement. It is also noteworthy that there is a statistically significant correlation between the teachers' work experience and their perceptions on the impact of private English courses on their students' English skills, whereas the gender differences concerning the latter are not statistically significant.

The English teachers' responses concerning their involvement in English private tutoring do not align with what is generally perceived to be the truth. Contrary to a widespread perception in the country that all English teachers are somehow involved in English private tutoring, the research results indicate that only 41 English teachers, or 20.5% of the total sample, acknowledge their involvement in the delivery of private English courses, and out of these 41 teachers, only 7, or 3.5% of them, admit to delivering private English courses to their own students. Even though there is no national policy in Kosovo that legally prohibits these teachers' involvement in private tutoring, but only regulations issued by local education authorities, the teachers are aware that there are no legal penalties for their actions because, despite the regulations, local education departments often lack the personnel and mechanisms to effectively address this issue, and instead generally choose to disregard it, whereas parents often prefer to turn a blind eye as long as it complies with their goals.

All these stakeholders ignore the fact that teachers who are already employed in the public education system and who are also involved in private tutoring, especially in delivering private English courses to their own students, often

deliberately make their teaching at school ineffective, so that their students feel the necessity for private tutoring, and this leads to corruption (Chingtham, 2015). Nevertheless, English teachers who participated in this study seem to be aware of the ethical implications of delivering private English courses to their own students, and the importance of maintaining professional boundaries, consequently, the percentage of their involvement in the process is rather insignificant.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of private tutoring on young Kosovan learners' English skills by focusing on three aspects, namely the reasons why young Kosovan learners attend private English courses, the impact of these courses on their English skills, and their English teachers' involvement in the process. The research results indicate that most of the young Kosovan learners attend private English courses, and parents are the predominant factor that influences their decision to attend these courses. However, the English teachers' selection of statements that mainly attribute the decision of young Kosovan learners to attend private English courses to parental influence, and their tendency to disregard the statements that implicitly hold them responsible for their students' necessity for private tutoring in the first place, may be perceived as a form of self-excuse for their failure to accomplish their teaching goals.

According to English teachers, young Kosovan learners who attend private English courses demonstrate better English skills, with speaking being the most advanced skill, followed by listening and reading, and finally writing. They also exhibit a more extensive vocabulary, and a higher level of self-confidence, both of which are found to be essential when learning a foreign language, because they suggest a lack of language anxiety when engaging in English communication. Furthermore, English teachers in Kosovo seem to endorse private English courses recognizing their benefits for students, thereby indirectly fostering their development. Nevertheless, only a minority of English teachers acknowledged their involvement in English private tutoring, and very few of them admitted to delivering private courses to their own students, thus consciously disregarding local education authorities, and, consequently, legal penalties. The rationale behind the inclusion of questions concerning the English teachers' involvement in private tutoring was to delve deeper into the phenomenon in Kosovo, and to ascertain whether young Kosovan learners are indirectly encouraged or forced to attend private English courses, and the insignificant percentage of English teachers involved in tutoring their own students implicitly negates such occurrences.

In sum, the aforementioned points emphasize the positive impact of English private tutoring on young Kosovan learners' English skills and suggest that it is a phenomenon on the rise, irrespective of the situation in the formal education system of the country.

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