

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HOME-BASED ENGLISH LEARNING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SECOND-GRADE STUDENTS IN AN ISLAMIC PRIVATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN NORTH SUMATRA, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how parents support home-based English language learning (ELL) among second-grade students in an Indonesian Islamic private elementary school. The study addresses the following research questions: (1) How do parents support their children's English learning at home? (2) What motivates parents to be involved? and (3) What challenges do they encounter in providing support? Adopting a qualitative design, data were collected from 30 parents at SDIT Permata Hati (North Sumatra) through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with three selected parents, and home-based documentation of learning resources and practices. Thematic analysis revealed three main themes: (a) instrumental and aspirational motivations driving parental involvement, (b) preferred support strategies such as private tutoring, exposure to English digital media, and embedding English in daily routines, and (c) a capability gap characterized by limited time, low English self efficacy, and pedagogical constraints, which led parents to rely heavily on external courses. The findings indicate that although parents hold strong positive attitudes toward English and recognize its importance for future academic and career opportunities, their involvement tends to be indirect and resource-dependent rather than pedagogically informed. These results imply the need for schools and policymakers to develop structured school-to-home support systems, including parent-oriented guidance, practical home-based learning toolkits, and accessible digital resources to empower parents with limited English proficiency. The study is limited by its small sample size and single-site design, which may restrict generalizability. Future research is recommended to explore how socio-cultural factors, parenting styles, and family values mediate parental involvement in diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: *parental involvement; English language learning; primary education; qualitative study; home-based learning.*

Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, English has become a key resource shaping children's educational trajectories, particularly in contexts where English is learned as a foreign language (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006). Early exposure to English is associated with expanded access to learning resources, transnational literacies, and future academic and occupational opportunities (Nunan, 2003; Butler, 2014). In Indonesia, despite periodic curricular shifts regarding English in primary education (Zein, 2017; Sulistiyo, 2016), families continue to seek early English learning opportunities through private courses, digital media, and home-based

practices (Lamb & Coleman, 2008; Zacharias, 2013). This situates English learning not only within schools but also within households, where parental mediation plays a pivotal role in shaping children's access to linguistic input and learning routines (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Sénéchal & Young, 2008).

A growing body of research underscores that children's language learning is embedded in home-school ecologies rather than confined to classrooms (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Barron, 2006). Epstein's framework of School Family Community Partnerships conceptualizes learning as a shared responsibility across institutions (Epstein, 2011),

highlighting the need for coordinated home school practices. Complementing this, Hoover Dempsey and Sandler's model explains parental involvement as a function of parents' motivational beliefs, invitations to involvement from schools, and perceived self-efficacy (Hoover Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; 2005), while Grolnick and Slowiaczek's multidimensional model distinguishes emotional, behavioral, and cognitive forms of parental engagement (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Together, these frameworks provide a conceptual lens to analyze not only whether parents are involved in home-based English language learning (ELL) but how and why particular forms of involvement emerge, and under what constraints.

Within Indonesian EFL contexts, prior studies have acknowledged the importance of parental involvement but report uneven and largely informal home-based practices. Musthafa (2010) notes that English exposure at home often occurs through media consumption rather than structured parental guidance. Studies in comparable EFL settings suggest that parental attitudes are positively associated with children's motivation (Gardner, 1985; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005), yet practical involvement is frequently constrained by time, limited linguistic competence, and unfamiliarity with pedagogical strategies (Pugliese, 2010; Al-Hoorie, 2017). However, the Indonesian literature remains fragmented: most studies rely on survey-based measures of involvement (Zein, 2017; Sulistiyo, 2016), offer limited qualitative insight into parents' day-to-day practices, and rarely theorize home-school dynamics using established involvement frameworks. Moreover, research has paid scant attention to faith-based private schooling contexts, where institutional expectations and family values may differently shape parental mediation of English learning at home (Zacharias, 2013; Madya, 2013).

This gap is particularly salient given the stratified ecology of English provision in Indonesia, where families often compensate for perceived limitations in school-based instruction through private tutoring and digital resources (Lamb & Coleman, 2008; Zein, 2017). Such practices point to a potential misalignment between parents' strong aspirations for English proficiency and their limited pedagogical capacity to support learning at home a tension that has not been sufficiently theorized in local EFL research. Understanding this misalignment requires moving beyond descriptive accounts of involvement toward an analysis grounded in conceptual models that link parental beliefs, practices, and constraints within

home-school relationships (Hoover Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Epstein, 2011).

Guided by Epstein's partnership framework (Epstein, 2011) and Hoover Dempsey and Sandler's involvement process model (Hoover Dempsey & Sandler, 2005), and operationalized through Grolnick and Slowiaczek's multidimensional typology (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994), this study examines parental support for home-based ELL among second-grade students in an Indonesian Islamic private elementary school. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) How do parents support their children's English language learning at home? (2) What motivations and beliefs shape parents' involvement in home-based ELL? (3) What constraints and challenges do parents encounter, and how do these shape the forms of support they provide?

By situating parental practices within a home-school partnership framework, this study foregrounds the relational and institutional conditions that enable or constrain parental involvement (Epstein, 2011; Hoover, Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). The focus on an Islamic private elementary school adds a culturally situated perspective to the literature, illuminating how family values, school expectations, and access to supplementary resources intersect in shaping early EFL learning (Zacharias, 2013; Madya, 2013). Empirically, the study contributes fine-grained qualitative evidence on Indonesian parents' strategies and constraints in supporting home-based ELL (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Theoretically, it advances the application of established parental involvement frameworks to EFL contexts in Indonesia, offering a more integrated account of how motivation, self-efficacy, and institutional invitations interact within home-school dynamics. These insights are expected to inform more coherent school-to-home support mechanisms and parent-oriented interventions in primary EFL education.

Method

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive case study design to generate an in-depth, contextualized understanding of how parents support home-based English language learning (ELL) among second-grade students. A qualitative approach is appropriate for capturing participants' meanings, practices, and constraints as they occur in natural settings (Creswell, 2012). The study was guided by Hoover Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) parental involvement framework, which conceptualizes involvement as shaped by parental beliefs, invitations to involvement, and perceived efficacy. This framework informed instrument

development, coding categories, and theme interpretation.

The research was conducted at SDIT Permata Hati, a private Islamic elementary school in Tebing Tinggi City, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The target population comprised 90 parents of second-grade students in the 2025/2026 academic year. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure information-rich cases with direct experience supporting children's ELL at home (Miles et al., 2014). Thirty parents were selected for the questionnaire phase to represent variation in gender, educational background, and self-reported English proficiency. From these respondents, three parents were subsequently selected for in-depth interviews using maximum variation criteria (high, moderate, and low levels of reported involvement) to capture contrasting practices and constraints. This two-stage sampling strategy enabled breadth (questionnaire) and depth (interviews and home documentation) within a bounded school context.

The questionnaire comprised closed-ended items (Likert-type frequency and agreement scales) and open-ended questions addressing (a) types and frequency of home-based ELL support, (b) parental motivation and beliefs, and (c) perceived challenges. Item construction was informed by prior instruments and constructs in parental involvement research (Hoover Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The questionnaire was drafted in Indonesian to ensure comprehensibility and reduce response bias. Semi-structured interview protocols were developed to probe practices, rationales, and challenges in greater depth (e.g., routines for English exposure, perceived self-efficacy, time constraints, reliance on external courses). The protocol was aligned with the guiding framework and piloted with two non-participant parents to refine wording and sequencing.

Content Validation and Pilot Testing. Instrument content validity was established through expert review by two EFL education scholars and one qualitative methods specialist, who assessed item relevance, clarity, and construct alignment. Revisions were made based on their feedback. A pilot test with five parents outside the study sample was conducted to check clarity and completion time; minor wording adjustments followed.

Home Documentation Checklist. A structured checklist guided observations during home visits (e.g., presence of English books, digital media access, visible learning routines). The checklist ensured systematic documentation across cases. Data collection proceeded in three stages: Questionnaire administration to 30 parents, administered in paper-based format during school

meetings, and collected within one week. Semi-structured interviews with three purposively selected parents, each lasting 40–60 minutes, audio recorded with consent and conducted in Indonesian.

Home documentation and observations during scheduled visits to corroborate reported practices (e.g., learning materials, routines). Reflective field notes were maintained throughout to capture contextual details and analytic memos. Data Analysis Procedures (Step by Step) Data were analyzed using an iterative thematic analysis approach (Miles et al., 2014): Data preparation: Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim; questionnaire open-ended responses and field notes were compiled. Initial coding (open coding): Two cycles of coding were conducted. In the first cycle, descriptive and in vivo codes were applied to identify salient practices, motivations, and constraints. Codebook development: Codes were consolidated into a codebook aligned with the guiding framework (beliefs, invitations, efficacy) while allowing inductive codes to emerge (e.g., capability gap, outsourcing to courses).

Theme development: Codes were clustered into candidate themes (parental involvement practices, motivational orientations, structural and capability constraints). Themes were refined through constant comparison across data sources. Reliability checks: A second coder independently coded 20% of the interview transcripts. Inter-coder agreement was discussed to resolve discrepancies and refine code definitions. Triangulation: Findings were cross-validated across questionnaires, interviews, and home documentation to enhance credibility (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 2002). Analytic memoing and audit trail: Analytic decisions and theme refinements were documented to enhance dependability and transparency.

Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation, member checking (participants reviewed summaries of their interview interpretations), and prolonged engagement during home visits. Dependability was supported by a documented audit trail of coding decisions. Confirmability was addressed through reflexive memos acknowledging the researcher's positionality and potential bias. Thick description was used to support transferability to similar private Islamic elementary school contexts. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review process. Written informed consent was secured from all participants. Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any stage without penalty. Pseudonyms were used, and identifying details were removed during transcription and reporting.

All digital files were stored on password-protected devices, and hard copies were kept in locked storage. Home visits were scheduled at participants' convenience to minimize intrusion, and no photographs of private spaces were taken without explicit permission.

Findings and Discussion

Three themes with subthemes emerged: (T1) Patterns of Home-Based ELL Support, (T2)

Motivational Orientations and Beliefs, and (T3) The Capability Gap and Structural Constraints. Results integrate questionnaire distributions with interview quotes and home documentation.

Patterns of Home-Based ELL Support

The first aspect explored was the extent to which parents are involved in their children's English language learning at home. The summary of the questionnaire data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Patterns of Home-Based ELL Support

Item	Questionnaire Statement	Response Categories	Percentage (%)
1.	Frequency of helping children with English homework	Always / Often / Sometimes / Never	42 / 20 / 26 / 12
2.	Frequency of reading English books or stories together	Regularly / Sometimes / Never	6 / 67 / 27
3.a.	Home support activity: Helping with English homework	Yes	30
3.b.	Home support activity: Watching English-language programs	Yes	39
3.c.	Home support activity: Listening to English songs or music	Yes	32
3.d.	Home support activity: Using English learning apps or games	Yes	32
3.e.	Home support activity: Reading English books	Yes	15
3.f.	Home support activity: Encouraging English conversation	Yes	56
3.g.	Home support activity: Other supports (courses, online resources)	Yes	14
4.	Use of English words or phrases in daily interaction	Often / Sometimes / Rarely / Never	12 / 65 / 17 / 9
5.	Parents' confidence in supporting children's English learning	Very confident / Quite confident / Not confident	17 / 74 / 9
6.	Actively seeking English learning resources	Regularly / Sometimes / Never	15 / 80 / 5
7.	Encouraging English practice outside school	Regularly / Sometimes / Never	6 / 77 / 17

The data in table above indicate that while parental involvement exists, it remains below 50% in many key activities. The majority of parents only *sometimes* engage in English related activities, such as reading English stories or using English in everyday conversations. However, encouraging English conversations at home (56%) and watching English media (39%) appear to be the most preferred supportive activities. Parents generally feel "quite confident" (74%) in helping their children, though this confidence does not always translate into regular involvement.

Excerpt 1:

Biasanya kami memutar video pendek berbahasa

Inggris sebelum tidur. Saya tidak selalu tahu bagaimana cara menjelaskan arti kata-katanya. (P1, mother, moderate involvement)

Usually we play short videos in English before bed. I don't always know how to explain the words. (P1, mother, moderate involvement)

Excerpt 2:

Jika ada pekerjaan rumah, saya membantu. Di luar itu, sulit untuk menjaga rutinitas. (P2, father, low involvement)

If there is homework, I help. Outside that, it's hard to keep a routine. (P2, father, low involvement)

These findings resonate with Hornby & Lafaele (2011), who argue that while many parents value education, external barriers such as time,

skills, and resources often limit their active participation.

Motivational Orientations and Beliefs

Parental motivation and beliefs

significantly influence the extent of support provided at home. Table 2 presents data on parents' perceptions and attitudes.

Table 2. Motivational Orientations and Beliefs Toward Supporting English Learning

Item	Questionnaire Statement	Response Categories	Percentage (%)
1.	Perceived importance of English for children's future	Very important / Important / Not important	92 / 8 / 0
2.	Level of parental motivation to support English learning	Very motivated / Somewhat motivated / Not motivated	86 / 14 / 0
3.a.	Reason for support: Academic success at school	Yes	38
3.b.	Reason for support: Improved future career opportunities	Yes	56
3.c.	Reason for support: Preparation for a globalised world	Yes	73
3.d.	Reason for support: English is enjoyable and valuable	Yes	56
3.e.	Reason for support: Other reasons (e.g., overseas study experiences of relatives)	Yes	3
4.	Perceived adequacy of school-provided English learning resources	Many / Some / Not enough / None	21 / 66 / 12 / 0

These results indicate overwhelmingly positive attitudes: 92% of parents believe English is very important for their children's future, and 86% are highly motivated to help. Parents also perceive English as a tool to open global opportunities (73%) and future careers (56%). However, while their attitudes are encouraging, actual engagement in activities like reading or regular support remains limited (see Table 1).

Excerpt 3:

Bahasa Inggris penting untuk pekerjaan masa depannya. Oleh karena itu, kami berupaya untuk memberikan paparan bahasa Inggris kepadanya sejak dini. (P3, mother, high involvement)

English is important for his future job. That's why we

try to expose him. (P3, mother, high involvement)

Excerpt 4:

Saya termotivasi, tetapi saya belum percaya diri untuk mengajarkan pelafalan. (P1)

I'm motivated, but I'm not confident to teach pronunciation. (P1)

This supports Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) framework, which emphasizes that parental involvement is strongly predicted by parents' motivational beliefs, perceived invitations to involvement, and perceived efficacy.

The Capability Gap and Structural Constraints

Despite positive motivation, parents also face practical challenges, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. The Capability Gap and Structural Constraints in Supporting English Learning

Item	Reported Challenge	Response Type	Percentage (%)
1.a.	Lack of time to assist with English learning	Yes	56
1.b.	Level of parental motivation to support English learning	Yes	47
1.c.	Insufficient learning resources at home	Yes	12
1.d.	Child's low motivation to learn English	Yes	17
1.e.	Difficulty understanding the school English curriculum	Yes	11

The most reported challenges are lack of time (56%) and limited English proficiency (47%), which often restrict consistent involvement. These are consistent with the findings of Goodall & Montgomery (2014), who emphasize that logistical and skill-based barriers often hinder parents from engaging effectively in their child's language development.

Excerpt 5:

Setelah bekerja, saya merasa lelah. Kemampuan bahasa Inggris saya terbatas, sehingga saya mengandalkan kursus. (P2)

After work, I'm tired. My English is limited, so I rely on courses. (P2)

The findings from this study highlight that both parental involvement and motivation play a crucial role in the success of children's English language learning at home. Although many parents express positive attitudes and strong motivation, their actual engagement in daily learning activities is often constrained by practical challenges. This underscores the need for schools and educators to not only recognize the importance of parental support but also to provide practical guidance, tools, and flexible engagement strategies that help parents integrate English learning into daily routines, even with limited time or proficiency (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Strengthening collaboration between schools and families can bridge the gap between motivation and active participation (Epstein, 2011).

Understanding the challenges that parents face is essential in developing effective support systems. If schools can provide more accessible learning materials, flexible parent workshops, or even digital platforms tailored to parents with limited English skills, the barriers can be reduced (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). The enthusiasm shown by parents in this study demonstrates a strong foundation upon which to build. By empowering parents with the resources and confidence they need, it is possible to transform high motivation into meaningful action, thus maximizing the positive impact on students' language development (Fan & Williams, 2010; Wilder, 2014).

Conclusion

This study shows that while parents play a pivotal role in supporting home based English language learning and are strongly motivated by future educational and career prospects, their

engagement is constrained by a persistent capability gap related to time limitations, limited English proficiency, and low pedagogical self efficacy, leading many families to rely on private courses and digital media; given the study's limitations (a small, purposive sample from a single private Islamic elementary school and reliance on self reported data), the findings suggest the need for schools to operationalize school home partnerships through low threshold guidance and flexible engagement supports, and for future research to employ comparative designs across contexts, examine parenting styles and family language ideologies, and test scalable interventions that translate parental motivation into sustained, pedagogically meaningful home practices.

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