

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF ENGLISH- EDUCATED PARENTS IN SUPPORTING THEIR VERY YOUNG CHILDREN'S ENGLISH LEARNING

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Abstract: *This research aims to examine the experiences of parents with an English language education background in supporting early childhood English language learning. The study utilized a descriptive method involving 5 parents with English language education backgrounds, having children aged 4-6 years old in Early Childhood Education (PAUD). This research use descriptive qualitative approach. Data were gathered through a questionnaire distributed via the Google Form platform and analyzed descriptively. The research findings indicate that parental support involves providing various media to introduce English vocabulary, engaging in social interactions by conversing with the child and creating 'family time' through activities such as watching videos and singing songs together as part of language enrichment at home, albeit not consistently in terms of timing. Based on these findings, parents need to utilize diverse media, enhance social interactions, utilize 'family time,' integrate learning into routines, foster creativity in learning, play an active role in communication, and effectively support their child's language development at home.*

Keywords: *Early Childhood, English Language Learning, Parental Experiences, Parental Support*

A. Introduction

Bilingualism in early childhood affects the language centers of the brain. Research shows that the continuous and integrated use of two languages affects children's brain structure and cognitive abilities beyond verbal communication. Exposure to multiple languages enhances brain stimulation, fostering further development. Bilingual children with equal language proficiency something else appears brain structures, implying cognitive advantages (Bialystok, 2017; Persici, 2019). The learning environment plays an important role in children's language development, including English (Hansen, 2021). Parents can create a supportive and stimulating learning environment by providing children with opportunities to practice their English skills (Lau, 2021). Regular involvement of parents in learning activities with children, such as reading books together, telling stories, and introducing the letters of the alphabet, will provide children with an important foundation for the growth of their language and literacy skills (Raikes, 2006).

Routinely giving children the same sentence structure will make them familiar and used to it. This will also enable children to interpret the behavior and language of other people, guess the sequence of events, and conclude their new experiences. In addition, it will be able to enrich children's vocabulary and conceptual knowledge. In particular, reading books together, as well as sharing oral stories, can facilitate the growth of children's vocabulary, phonemic skills, knowledge of print concepts, and positive attitudes toward literacy (Nelson, into Melissa D. Arnesen-Trunzo, 2015).

Providing learning materials such as books and toys that facilitate learning can support children's growth and language learning. Learning materials can be used as a topic of conversation and as a supporting tool for role-playing between parents and children. In addition, children's familiarity with storybooks has been associated with efforts to enrich their receptive and expressive vocabulary and early reading abilities (Payne into Sara J. Powers, Yingying Wang, & Sara D. Beach, 2016).

In the Singapore context, it was revealed that a home learning environment that provides children with a lot of English input and good quality input at home makes children's receptive

vocabulary grow more quickly. Children's word reading skills are more influenced by the quality of English input at home. Children who are frequently read to story in English show faster development in word reading competency. Maternal education level is also important: higher maternal education is associated with faster growth in reading skills. These findings demonstrate the substantial contribution of the home literacy environment (Blackmore, 2019).

Parental involvement is believed to be closely related to better behavior among children at school, and higher levels of learning motivation (Al-Mahrooqi, 2016). There are several phenomena of parental involvement in English language learning and early literacy in China. This form of parental support was demonstrated, among others, by who said that parents in China usually ask their children to memorize English vocabulary and give them additional spelling tests.' In different cultural contexts, teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Asian school systems, such as Taiwan, Japan, and Hong Kong, has traditionally been characterized by memorizing vocabulary and teaching the mechanics of English grammar at home. (Huang, 2013).

Three aspects of parenting are believed to be the core of children's learning and provision of early language skills, namely: (1) the amount of time children spend in routine learning activities (for example, reading books together, telling stories with their parents); (2) the quality of parent/caregiver and child involvement (e.g., cognitive stimulation and parental sensitivity/responsiveness); and (3) providing age-appropriate learning materials, for example books and toys (Rodriguez 2019, in press).

Parents face problems and challenges when supporting their children's English learning at home. Early childhood ages around 4-6 years are in the preschool period (*pre-school*), namely the period when children develop all aspects of their development starting from physical, motoric, cognitive, language, social-emotional, moral, and artistic. The preschool period is when children develop coordination between their eyes and hands, *their* drawings start to become detailed, and they do a lot of work activities that train their fine motor skills such as cutting, sticking, folding, doing *simple* puzzles, recognizing equations and

differences, sorting, classifying, matching and choosing what is not the same among a group of words, knowing how to count, knowing the concept of the quality of objects, their location, size, and quantity, being able to follow a story, predicting what will happen next, and asking questions related to stories, can imagine by making up his version of stories, enjoys picture books, is still self-centered, wants to play alone. When playing games, you are not ready if you lose (Vanessa, 2022). So the emphasis on these activities is most appropriate, namely *songs, chants, rhymes, stories*, TPR, drawing, coloring, cutting, gluing, folding, *games, puzzles, dressing up*, and role-playing.

Research conducted by Fitzgerald (2004) confirms that most parents are not confident in guiding their children's learning. However, a study conducted by Hornby (2000) proved that even though parents do not have good skills in communicating English, they can still facilitate children's reading skills at home (Dewi, 2017). Even if they don't master English, they still play an important role in accompanying children to learn English at home. Benner et al, (2016); and Castillo & Games (2013) stated that parents play an important role in supporting children to develop their language learning at home. Providing additional English learning media such as videos, online games, English songs, and English storybooks (Triutami, 2021).

So parental involvement or support is very important and necessary in children's learning English. Learning English at an early age can provide numerous benefits for individuals, including improved cognitive skills, better listening and communication abilities, and a deeper understanding of other cultures. This can lead to greater opportunities and success in various aspects of life, such as education, career, and personal growth (Montessori Academy, 2022). Despite there has been no study that examines the forms of support from parents who have an English education background and examines the effectiveness of the support they provide adapted to the learning characteristics of early childhood in learning English. This paper aims to dig up the experience of parents with an English background in supporting their child's English learning at home so as to provide benefits for children when entering education.

B. Method

This research use descriptive qualitative approach. Bogdan and Taylor (Herwani, 2022, p.4) explain that the qualitative approach is an approach that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words of the speakers and speech partners who are observed. The descriptive approach is an approach that describes research results using words rather than numbers as they are. A qualitative descriptive approach is used to produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words and research data in the form of spoken speech based on facts in learning interactions.

The subjects involved in this study were 5 parents whose children were aged 4-6 years old, with a background in English education. 4 parents are female, and 1 parent is male. Their ages ranged from 36-44 years old and were domiciled in 5 different regions in Java. Participant demographic data is as follows:

Table 1. Participant demographic data

No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Education	Child's Age	Origin
1	Nina	Female	38	S2	4	Surabaya
2	Ika	Female	36	S2	6	Demak
3	Fany	Female	44	S2	5.5	Pati
4	Vina	Female	37	S2	5	Kudus
5	Omar	Male	36	S1	6	Jepara

The instrument of the present study was a questionnaire via the Google Form platform. There are 6 question items in the questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed for parents who have an English education background and have children aged 4-6 years who attend public kindergartens, but who are not bilingual. The questionnaire is divided into 2 parts. The first part is to request personal data from these parents. The second section included 6 question items related to their experiences in supporting their children's English learning at home. The first item was to ask about their opinion about the introduction/learning of English being interesting for children, considering that the parents had a background in English education, but not from early childhood education. The second question is about

learning resources used to introduce English to children. Third, the type of English learning activities carried out. Fourth, the way they incorporate English learning into their daily routine. Fifth, time dedicated to learning English with children every day or every week. Sixth, focus on the material taught. Participants answered in Indonesian, and the researcher translated into English. The questionnaire questions are as follows: (1). How can you make introducing/ learning English a fun and interactive experience for children at home? (2). What learning resources do you use to introduce English as a foreign language to your children? (3) Can you tell us about the English learning activities you do with your son/daughter at home? (4). How do you incorporate English learning into your daily routine with children? (5). How much time do you dedicate to English learning with your children each day or each week? (6). Do you focus on vocabulary or grammar when teaching English to your children?

The data collected from this study were analyzed qualitatively. After the data was collected, it was first analyzed to identify emerging themes for further study through inductive analysis (Huberman, 1994). Based on the themes that emerged, a coding process was carried out. During the coding process, conceptual codes, in which emerging phenomena are grouped, are identified and labeled. Once the coding process was complete, codes were reread for significance and originality to ensure that themes reflected the views of participants, not those of the researcher. Through the analysis, the researcher hopes to explore English-educated parents' experience in supporting their very young children's English learning.

C. Result and Discussion

The Creation of the Interesting English Learning for Children

The five participants provided various comments about how they introduced and learned English as a fun and interactive experience for their children at home. By giving daily instructions/explanations about something in daily activities as in the following comments:

...not specifically making language introduction material, currently, my child has entered elementary school, and he understands English so he only uses it actively and passively with children, in giving daily instructions/explanations about things in daily activities. so does Indonesian. (Nina, 38 years old)

By using several media including songs, pictures or flashcards, books, cartoons, etc.:

Introducing or teaching English to our children must be in an interesting way. Sometimes, I use several media including songs, pictures or flashcards, books, cartoons, etc. (Ika, 36 years old)

By watching and listening through storytelling :

By seeing and listening to English in a fun version, for example through storytelling. (Fani, 44 years old)

By inserting it into everyday life, such as casual conversation, listening to or singing English songs:

By incorporating it into everyday life such as in casual conversation, listening to or singing English songs, etc. (Vina, 37 years old)

With English children's songs. (Umar, 36 years old)

Parents can create a good and supportive learning environment so that their children are interested in learning English, such as taking advantage of the surrounding environment, teaching English in a fun way, and providing sufficient motivation and support (Hastuti, 2020).

Learning Resources Used to Introduce English to Children

All participants used YouTube as a learning resource to introduce English as a foreign language to their children, two participants used bilingual storybooks, one participant used flashcards and television, and one participant used videos, games, APE, and songs.

because I work. so when I was working he learned English from YouTube maybe like Coco Melon, but that was only when

he was little before school, at preschool there was a simple introduction to English in the form of vocabulary, even though it was limited to incorrect pronunciation of words but it helped provide exposure languages other than Indonesian. (Nina, 38 years old)

I use books, flashcards, and television or YouTube (Ika, 36 years old)

Youtube, bilingual storybooks (Fani, 44 years old)

YouTube videos, games, APE, songs, etc. (Vina, 37 years old)

YouTube (Umar, 36 years old)

Parents use a variety of media, namely pictures from flashcards, and videos, storybooks, and pointing to real objects as visual aids for teaching vocabulary. By using several media including songs, pictures or *flashcards*, books, cartoons, etc., and by using learning media, such as videos or English songs, parents help children understand vocabulary and phrases in everyday English (Herlina, 2019). Teaching vocabulary through word cards is categorized as teaching vocabulary directly. The word card categories used are those that contain the vocabulary that children use most often in everyday life. Apart from that, it can be with pictures, real objects, and actions so that it makes it easy for children to understand the meaning contained in it, and it is easy to memorize it because it is stored in linguistic and visual expressions (Nation, 2003). Children can enrich their vocabulary quickly. One reason is that having to recall the meaning of the words on the cards supports learning, and it produces better results than memorizing a list of words and their meanings. Periodic retrieval proves to be very beneficial, as it allows improving the quality of word knowledge over time. The form of the word, spelling-wise, is provided on one side of the card, and the meaning on the other. The meaning can be explained in L2, translated into L1, or become an image that shows the meaning (Hestetraet, 2019). Meanwhile, the activity of reading picture books and storytelling is included in the

category of teaching vocabulary indirectly, namely through extensive reading, with tiered levels of vocabulary difficulty (Hestetraet, 2019).

The activities of reading books, watching videos, and singing songs are part of the exposure or efforts to give children examples of expressions in English. This is one approach to learning English, namely the *Comprehension-Based approach* which emphasizes listening as the main thing in learning a language for the first time. Research in the field of language acquisition (Postovsky 1974; Winitz 1981; Krashen & Terrell 1983) reveals that foreign language learning is assumed to be similar to first language acquisition. In this approach, listening skills are prioritized and are considered a basic ability that must be achieved before other language skills are acquired, namely speaking, reading, and writing (Murcia, 2000).

In *storytime*, listening to and talking about stories can help children in their efforts to learn to read. It is designed to give children the knowledge of spoken language, symbolic representations, and patterns, as well as the higher-order thinking skills they need to decode and understand the written word.

...listening to and talking about stories...helps children in their quest to learn how to read. [it is] designed to give children the knowledge of oral language, symbolic and pattern representation, and higher-order thinking skills they will need to both decode and comprehend written words (Linse, 2005).

Types of English Learning Activities Carried Out

Two participants said that the type of English learning activity they carried out was by accompanying them when they did their school assignments. While the other two participants chose to watch the video together and discuss it, one participant added that apart from watching videos, he could do storytelling. One other participant listens and sings the song together. Which can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. Parent Child Interactions

Questions	Nina*	Ika*	Fani*	Vina*	Umar*
How can you make introducing/ learning English a fun and interactive experience for children at home?	I don't specifically make language introduction material, currently my child is at elementary school age, he understands English so he only uses it actively and passively with children, in giving daily instructions/ explanations about things in daily activities. so does Indonesian.	Introducing or teaching English to our children must be in an interesting way. Sometimes, I use several media including songs, pictures or flashcards, books, cartoons, etc.	By seeing and listening to English in a fun version, for example through storytelling	By inserting it into everyday life such as in casual conversation, listening to or singing English songs, etc.	With English children's songs

How Parents Incorporate English Learning into Their Daily Routine

One participant used simple verbal and written instructions, one participant used several expressions, questions, and simple instructions. One participant mentioned it in everyday conversation, and another participant introduced vocabulary while pointing to the object in question. This is how participants incorporate English language learning into their daily routine with their children.

I provide simple instructions when children enter elementary school age or large kindergarten. both oral and written. I usually

put English writing on the shoe rack and I write instructions for placing shoes on the shoe rack, limited to simple instructions that children can understand and can write easily. (Nina, 38 years old)

Sometimes, I use some simple expressions, questions, or instructions in English, for example, thank you, are you happy?, open your book, etc. (Ika, 36 years old)

By connecting everyday conversations (Fani, 44 years old)

By pointing to items in English (Umar, 36 years old)

Parents also carry out social interaction as part of language learning by inviting conversations about everyday matters in English and discussing learning videos in English, and there are activities involving parents in English learning through assistance when doing English assignments from school.

Inviting children to dialogue using English in different contexts in everyday life will develop their English language skills. When giving an instruction, it is necessary to demonstrate each instruction given. Only give instructions one at a time so that children can learn to connect these instructions with actual directions. Ensure the complexity of the sentences used, is not too difficult and not too easy, the grammar is also clear, and the objects are real. Ensure one instruction at a time (Linse, 2005). By connecting everyday conversations. Always ask to talk when doing different activities, this is part of providing meaningful input for children. Children's language learning will develop rapidly through social interaction and a series of experiences based on context or situation.

Watching cartoon films together and discussing English words with their meanings mentioned in the film is an interesting activity for parents to introduce English to young children, it can help children improve their pronunciation by introducing them to native English speakers (Alghonaim, 2020). Watching videos or cartoons can help children acquire new vocabulary in a fun and interesting way (Singer, 2022). Discussing the meaning of cartoon films in Indonesian can help children actively engage with the material and develop their critical thinking skills. Children often enjoy watching

the same cartoons over and over again, which can help them strengthen their English skills (Kennedy, 2018). Apart from that, the form of parental support that emerged was ‘family time’ where parents and children had the opportunity to watch videos and sing songs together. Parents’ assistance in English learning is still conditional, uncertain, or not regular.

Time Dedicated to English Learning with Children Every Day or Every Week

Two participants did not provide a specific or uncertain time allocation. One participant said one hour, and two participants, said twice a week.

uncertain, depending on whether there is homework about B ing or not that needs to be discussed. (Nina, 38 years old)

Not sure, maybe 2 or 3 times a week (Ika, 36 years old)

1 hour (Fani, 44 years old)

not sure (Vina, 37 years old)

2 times a week (Umar, 36 years old)

Parents introduce English through activities that interest children. There is *family time* as part of creating *language enrichment at home* such as watching videos together and listening to songs in the car (Siner, 2022). The ideal duration for teaching or introducing English to children can vary depending on the individual’s age, attention span, and learning abilities. Experts suggest that the earlier a child is exposed to a second language, the better. Starting before the age of 4 is considered optimal for language acquisition (Fern, 2023). It is better to have short, frequent sessions than long, infrequent ones. Fifteen minutes of focused English learning time is enough for children (Blackmore, 2019).

The aspects of English learning that are developed include *speaking aspects* through singing songs and dialogue. The *listening* aspect is through listening to songs, watching videos,

listening to stories (*storytelling*), and dialogue. Aspects of *reading* and *writing* have not been introduced to children.

Singing songs in English can help children improve their pronunciation, vocabulary, and listening skills. Parents can find age-appropriate English songs and sing along with their children, encouraging them to imitate pronunciation and gestures (Dore, 2020).

The Focus of the Material Taught

Based on data from the questionnaire, it can be found that four participants emphasized vocabulary rather than grammar, while one participant said that vocabulary and grammar were two inseparable things.

For me, vocabulary and grammar are related, so you can't focus on teaching one, both are taught (Nina, 38 years old)

I focus on vocabulary first rather than grammar. (Ika, 36 years old)

Vocabulary (Fani, 44 years old)

more about vocabulary (Vina, 37 years old)

Vocabulary (Umar, 36 years old)

When parents invite children to dialogue at an early age, children are not learning a language system, but rather English as a means of communication. The focus of learning attention is on the sound or pronunciation of English, its tone, as well as the process of interaction with parents, then the feeling of pleasure when playing together, listening to stories, singing, and then parents can encourage children to express several meaningful English expressions (Puchta, 2019).

Table 3. Participant Answers

No.	Question	Summary of Participant Answers
1	How parents introduce or learn English to their children at home	Provide daily instructions Media songs, pictures, flashcards, books, cartoons Storytelling Have a relaxed conversation Listen and sing songs With songs
2	Learning Resources	YouTube Bilingual storybook Flashcards, television Video games. APE, song YouTube
3	Types of English Learning Activities Carried Out	Doing assignments/ homework Watching cartoons together and discussing English words with their meanings mentioned in the film Watching educative videos and storytelling videos only inserting spontaneously or when accompanying studying Singing children's songs in English together
4	How Parents Incorporate English Learning into Their Daily Routine	with simple verbal and written instructions on a shelf for example simple phrases, questions, or instructions by relating it to everyday conversation By pointing to items in English
5	Time Dedicated to English Learning with Children Every Day or Every Week	does not provide a specific or uncertain time allocation one hour twice a week

6	The Focus of the material being taught first	Both, namely vocabulary and grammar, are two inseparable things vocabulary vocabulary vocabulary vocabulary
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D. Conclusion

This research confirms the results of previous research conducted by Sri Awaliyah Nasrini, et al that parents with an English educational background have enthusiasm in supporting their children's English learning at an early age, but their involvement is not too intense (Nasrini, Parents utilize various sources such as *YouTube*, bilingual storybooks, *flashcards*, television, videos, games, media, and songs which can keep the learning experience interesting for children. Through reading books, singing songs, playing word games, using flashcards, and watching English cartoons, parents introduce new English vocabulary to children. Parents also carry out social interaction as part of language learning by inviting conversations about everyday matters in English and discussing learning videos in English, and there are activities involving parents in English learning through assistance when doing English assignments from school.

Apart from that, the form of parental support that emerged was 'family time' where parents and children had the opportunity to watch videos and sing songs together. However, parents' assistance in English learning is still conditional, uncertain, or not routine.

The aspects of English learning that are developed include speaking aspects through singing songs and dialogue. The listening aspect is through listening to songs, watching videos, listening to stories (storytelling), and dialogue. Aspects of reading and writing have not been introduced to children.

From these findings, it can be concluded that parents with an English language background can support English learning from the speaking and listening aspects. Apart from that, with a background in English education, parents can help or be involved in supporting their children's English learning

at home by completing assignments from school, providing examples of correct pronunciation, and establishing interaction (communication) using English with their children. These three things can be an advantage for parents with an English language background compared to parents with a non-English language background.

This research only involved 5 participants in one area (island), so future research could involve a larger number of participants and more places of domicile. This research is also still limited to the various types of learning activities that parents and children routinely carry out without touching on the quality of involvement of parents/caregivers and children (for example, cognitive stimulation and sensitivity/responsiveness of parents); and providing learning materials (books and toys) that are appropriate to the child's age.

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