

Creating a Smart Learning Environment for English Proficient Students: Parental Involvement

Sri Rejeki Murtiningsih^{1,*}, Sekar Ayuningtyas¹, and Didit Haryadi²

¹English Language Education Department, Faculty of Language and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia

²English Language Studies, School of Foreign Languages, Institute of Social Technology, Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand

Abstract. Parental involvement is crucial in fostering a smart learning environment, particularly for enhancing English proficiency among students. This study examines the role of parents in creating such an environment and the challenges they face. Using qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with four parents of students with high English proficiency at an Islamic elementary school in Magelang, Indonesia. The findings highlight various forms of parental involvement, including English learning support, provision of learning facilities, supervision during study sessions, collaboration with schools, and mental support. The research also identifies six key challenges: teaching English at home, supporting English learning, unsupportive academic backgrounds, low parental skills, busy schedules, and managing emotions. These insights are vital for developing strategies that enhance parental involvement to create smart learning environments and ultimately improve students' English proficiency. Implications for parents, institutions, and further research are discussed in this study.

Keywords: Parental Involvement; English Proficiency Level; Elementary School Student; Children's Education; Smart Learning Environment

1 Introduction

Family is the primary social environment supporting elementary school students. The process of child development is influenced by the social environment, the family, and the educational institutions, making partnerships in education increasingly crucial in recent times [1]. As parents are their children's first role models, young children can learn basic academic skills, such as reading and writing, with their help and grow into healthy adults. Additionally, parents are responsible for helping their children understand the importance of English [2] because English is a global language that provides access to a vast array of information, opportunities, and communication channels essential for future success.

One crucial action in supporting students learning English is parental involvement. Jaynes [3] asserts that parental involvement plays a pivotal role in student education, offering numerous benefits, such as enhanced academic performance and increased motivation. The role of parents in assisting their children's learning persists even after the students start school [1], reinforcing the importance of consistent and active engagement in their educational journey.

Several studies have focused on parental involvement in children's education. For instance, Hosseinpour et al. [4] found that parental involvement correlates highly with students' academic achievement. This finding is also supported by Wilder [5], who also claims that parental involvement positively impacts students' academic performance, including English learning and literacy. Previous research indicates that parental involvement positively affects elementary students' academic success and English literacy. Increased engagement is associated with better outcomes in children's language learning and overall achievement.

However, several challenges hinder some parents from effectively supporting their children's English learning. First, socio-economic constraints and limited academic backgrounds can prevent from providing adequate English learning facilities. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds often lack necessary resources, and higher parental income levels are associated with better language attainment [4, 6]. Thus, economic factors significantly impact the availability of supportive facilities. Second, busy parents who do not collaborate with schools may struggle to give sufficient attention to their children's English education. According to Kheryadi et al. [2], parents with demanding schedules often find it challenging to supervise their children's English learning, which can impede progress. Third, a positive home atmosphere is essential for effective English learning. Parents can enhance this by providing consistent support and creating a

* Corresponding author: jackie@umy.ac.id

conducive learning environment. Positive reinforcement and active involvement in their children's academic lives are crucial [2].

Many parents struggle to support their elementary school students' English learning, especially in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. As Akbari [7] notes, EFL learners often seek ways to improve their skills but need help figuring out where to start. Despite the increasing focus on English proficiency, previous research has predominantly examined this issue from the students' perspectives, leaving a significant gap in understanding the role of parental involvement. To address this gap, the current study specifically investigates parental involvement among students with high English proficiency. The research seeks to answer two key questions: (1) What types of parental involvement effectively support elementary school students with high English proficiency? What challenges do parents face in supporting their children's English learning? By answering these questions, this study aims to provide valuable insights and recommendations for enhancing parental support in EFL context, thus contributing to the broader discourse on English proficiency and parental involvement.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Supporting English learning

Parental interaction with children at home can significantly support English language acquisition. Interaction is essential to creating a natural learning environment and fostering a home culture conducive to language use [8]. As Sumanti and Muljani [8] argue, young children become accustomed to using a language through regular interaction and conversation. Thus, it can be concluded that parental interaction is crucial for supporting students' English learning.

Parents should promote literacy at home to further enhance students' English proficiency. Parental involvement in literacy activities can help EFL students improve their vocabulary, articulation of English sounds and words, and overall literacy levels [9]. Exposure to reading materials at home can increase vocabulary knowledge, interest in books, and related literacy skills [10]. Parents' active involvement in literacy promotes English proficiency and boosts children's confidence in their English abilities. In addition, parents can also provide practical literacy experiences at home to support their children's English learning. Klauda [11] notes that parents who maintain quality and regular literacy activities with their children can foster motivation and productive reading habits. Therefore, parental involvement in literacy activities is essential for supporting children's English literacy development.

2.1.1 Supporting facilities

Parents can enhance their children's English learning by providing supportive facilities. Enrolling children in after-school English courses is one effective strategy

[12]. Additionally, parents can supply quality materials such as dictionaries, literature, learning software, and dedicated learning areas to promote English learning [10]. These facilities are instrumental in supporting children's English acquisition.

2.1.2 Accompanying during study sessions

Spending time with children to assist in their English learning is essential for parents. Extra parental involvement, e.g., helping with homework and participating in school activities, has effectively improved English learning outcomes [2]. Domina [13] also found that such participation reduces behavioral issues in elementary school children. Regardless of their profession, parents who are attentive and involved positively impact their children's learning patterns [14]. Parents can also accompany the student in doing the homework at home. It is related to Barge and Loges [15] that parents supervise student homework, which is essential to ensure that children finish their homework and to assist them based on their needs. Thus, parental involvement in accompanying children during their learning significantly impacts their English proficiency.

2.1.3 Connecting with school

Active collaboration between parents and schools is vital for supporting children's English learning. Parents need to work with teachers to create an environment that enhances their children's school performance [16]. Such involvement provides valuable volunteer opportunities and fosters excitement for school activities [2]. Volunteering in school literacy programs is another form of engagement [17]. Effective communication between parents and schools is essential for building a partnership that supports children's learning [15]. Teachers and parents must collaborate to develop efficient partnerships and create effective learning environments [18]. Therefore, parental collaboration with schools is crucial for enhancing children's English development.

2.1.4 Providing Mental Support

Parents must provide strong mental support to encourage their children's English learning. A positive emotional atmosphere at home fosters emotional maturity and a positive attitude towards learning [19]. Hosseinpour et al. [4] state that the more involved parents are and the more positive their attitude towards their children's education, particularly in language learning, the more successful their children will be. Thus, by maintaining a cheerful and supportive home environment, parents can significantly enhance their children's comfort and success in learning English.

2.2 The challenges in parental involvement

2.2.1 Low Time Management Skills

Relying solely on school for English education is insufficient; parents must supplement this by teaching English at home. The limited time allocated for English in most Indonesian elementary schools [12] under the Merdeka Curriculum, which is only two hours per week, necessitates that parents find extra time to support their children's learning at home. Furthermore, the focus on grammar rather than communicative language skills in Indonesian schools [17] underscores the need for additional home support. Parents who do not provide this extra time struggle to assist their children effectively, making it difficult for students to achieve the desired proficiency.

Parents often face challenges balancing work, household chores, and children's care. Effective time management is crucial for parents to engage in their children's education. Busy parents, who may not manage their time well, often find supporting their children's learning challenging. This lack of involvement can result in students lacking a supportive figure in their education, especially in homes where both parents work [2]. Activities such as studying together, conversing in English, watching English films, and reviewing homework can significantly impact a child's English learning. With adequate time and attention from parents, children may be able to achieve their academic potential [14].

2.2.2 Low English Skills

In Indonesia, where English is not a widely spoken social language, supporting children's English at home is vital. Parents who actively use English at home provide valuable exposure for their children [12]. Unfortunately, many parents' literacy skills were not as high, making engaging in their children's education difficult. According to Vera et al. [20], parents who are literate in their native language and English are more likely to engage in family literacy activities. Indonesia's low literacy ranking [21] highlights the challenge for parents to support English learning effectively.

Parental educational background also plays a significant role in their ability to support their children. Parents with higher educational backgrounds are more confident and effective in involving their children in English literacy activities [10]. Conversely, parents with lower educational backgrounds often find it challenging to support their children's English learning [4]. This disparity affects the quality of parental involvement and, subsequently, the students' language learning outcomes.

2.2.3 Difficulty in providing facilities

Providing adequate English learning facilities is another challenge for parents, particularly those from low-economic backgrounds. The socio-economic position of a family significantly influences students' motivation and perceptions about the learning process [22]. Supporting facilities such as dictionaries, English courses, learning software, and literacy materials are essential for effective English learning. However, parents with limited financial resources often prioritize

basic needs over educational support, making it challenging to provide these facilities [6].

Families with higher socio-economic status can more easily provide supportive facilities and environments, enhancing their children's English learning experience [23]. The immediate environment, including family and broader socio-economic contexts, supports learning goals and students' efforts to succeed [24]. Therefore, fulfilling the need for learning facilities remains a significant challenge for many parents.

2.2.4 Low parental skills

Many parents need a comprehensive understanding of their role in their children's education, often perceiving it as the sole responsibility of the school. The family, however, is the primary and the most important educator [25]. Parents' involvement in their children's education is crucial for character development and academic success. Negative parenting patterns can result in adverse characteristics such as low self-esteem and reluctance to take risks [25].

Parents need to recognize their role in supporting their children's English learning. Recognizing the significance of fostering English usage at home can positively impact students' language development [2]. Effective parenting involves recognizing and addressing children's weaknesses and challenges, which requires a proactive approach from parents.

2.2.5 Low emotional management skills

Managing the emotional demands of parenting, work, and education can be overwhelming for parents. Stress and fatigue can hinder their ability to effectively support their children's English learning [26]. Parents need to maintain a positive and conducive family environment while balancing their responsibilities.

Creating a positive emotional atmosphere at home is essential for fostering a love for learning and emotional maturity in children [19]. Parents' involvement and positive attitude towards their children's education significantly impact their success [4]. Therefore, developing strong emotional management skills is crucial for parents to be effectively involved in their children's English learning.

2.3 Review of Related Studies

This research builds on previous studies exploring parental involvement in education, focusing on strategies and challenges parents face in supporting their children's English language learning. Yasin [27] identified democratic, permissive, and authoritarian parenting styles among higher education students' parents, finding the democratic style most prevalent but not significantly correlated with academic achievement. Zulifah [28] found a positive correlation between parental involvement and seventh-grade students' success through mixed-method research. Jafarov [29] categorized twenty-two factors influencing parental involvement into parent-related, school-related, and

student-related groups using qualitative literature analysis. Unlike these studies, which examined correlations and influencing factors, this research specifically looks at elementary school parents' involvement in English language learning, aiming to identify successful strategies and challenges faced.

The current study addresses two main research questions: how parents are involved in their children's English learning to achieve high proficiency and what challenges parents encounter in this process. While the reviewed studies explored parental involvement broadly or in specific educational contexts, this research zeroes in on the unique needs of elementary school students. These younger students require more focused attention from parents in learning English, both in school and through interactions at home with family members and other adults. By examining parental involvement from the parents' perspective and identifying effective strategies, this research aims to provide valuable insights for supporting elementary school students in English learning.

3 Methods

3.1 Participants

This research was conducted in a private Islamic elementary school in Magelang, where parents actively participated in student language learning and maintained a good relationship with the school. Preliminary interviews with parents of students with high English proficiency revealed various strategies and challenges involving students in English learning. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants, focusing on parents of elementary school students who demonstrated high English proficiency. This sampling method was chosen to ensure that the participants had relevant experiences and insights into the research questions. The participants were four parents of elementary students with high English proficiency, identified by pseudonyms: India, Merry, Ariana, and Ina.

Table 1. Demographic Information of The Participants.

| Name | Age | Employment | Child's Grade | English Courses |
|--------|-----|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| India | 33 | Full-time Mom | 3 rd Grade | No |
| Merry | 32 | Full-time Mom | 4 th Grade | Yes |
| Ariana | 35 | Full-time Mom | 5 th Grade | Yes |
| Ina | 34 | Full-time Mom | 4 th Grade | Yes |

Table 1 summarizes the key demographic information and involvement characteristics of the participants in this study.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This study used an interview guideline to collect data on parental involvement. Interviews, as highlighted by Cohen et al. [30], enable participants to share their perceptions and views on various circumstances. Questions covered how parents support their children's achievements, provide learning facilities, and manage challenges like time, emotional support, and their own English skills. Data collection involved confirming participants' availability, scheduling, and conducting interviews, each lasting 15 to 25 minutes. To facilitate responses and prevent misunderstandings, interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and recorded via the Zoom Meeting Application, with a smartphone as a backup. For data analysis, a systematic approach was used, including transcribing, member-checking, and coding. Initially, interviews were transcribed into text to identify relevant sections, as suggested by Clark et al. [31]. To enhance the validity data, member-checking with participants reviewing their transcripts for completeness and correctness was employed, ensuring accuracy of their statements [32]. Finally, the transcripts were then subjected to coding a process in which key points and themes were systematically identified and categorized. Coding was guided by the research questions and existing literature, ensuring a thorough and reliable analysis of the data.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data gathered in response to research question one are summarized as follows.

4.1 The types of parental involvement

4.1.1 Supporting the English learning

The finding revealed that all parents affirmed their active involvement in supporting English learning at home. Each participant described various approaches, such as fostering English language use at home, nurturing their children's interests and skills, and promoting literacy, particularly in English. For example, Ariana, who actively incorporated English into daily routines, emphasized, "We use English daily, encourage literacy at home, and support English learning based on our child's interests, skills, and learning style."

This commitment to parental involvement echoes findings from prior studies indicating that active parental engagement, particularly in literacy activities, enhances EFL students' vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation of English sounds and words, and overall literacy proficiency [9]. However, this study contributes to new insights by emphasizing the role of parental involvement specifically in households with high English proficiency among elementary school students. Unlike previous studies that mainly discussed general parental involvement, this research highlights the tailored strategies parents use to cultivate an advanced level of English in their children. This nuanced

understanding underscores the importance of context-specific parental support, which not only reinforces existing knowledge but also offers practical framework for other parents and educators aiming to achieve similar outcomes.

4.1.2 Supporting facilities

Based on the insights gathered from the interviews, parents employed diverse strategies to facilitate their children's English learning. All participants provided learning tools such as English books, laptops, smartphones, and computers. Specifically, India and Ina both supported their children's interest in online gaming, with India adding, "We provide a computer setup for gaming and recording hobbies, along with English comics." Merry, Ariana, and Ina further enhanced their support by enrolling their children in extracurricular English courses. Ariana elaborated, "We use supplementary materials like imported books, encyclopaedias, and fables, as well as audiovisual resources like YouTube. Additionally, we choose a high-quality school that emphasizes English learning."

These practices align with findings by Aditomo and Hasugian [10], who noted that parents often provide dictionaries, educational materials, dedicated learning spaces, software, literature, and other resources to foster EFL skills. Nevertheless, this study's unique contribution lies in its identification of specific types of resources that are effective for students already proficient in English. The focus advanced resources, such as imported books, and specialized audiovisual materials, highlights the need for more targeted approach to parental involvement, which goes beyond basic support and caters to the higher linguistics demand of proficient learners. This finding suggests that parents and educators should prioritize the provision of advanced and diverse learning materials to sustain and further enhance students' English proficiency.

4.1.3 Accompanying during study sessions

The researchers observed that all participants' children were proficient in English but continued actively supporting their learning at home. Their methods of support were straightforward yet essential, given their children's proficiency levels. India, Merry, and Ina supervised homework completion, provided assistance when challenges arose, and monitored overall progress. Merry elaborated, "I monitor my child's progress closely and step in to help when they encounter difficulties." Ariana shared her approach, stating, "I engage with my child by challenging her to explore beyond the standard curriculum. Despite her advanced English skills, I encourage her to compare school textbooks with materials from the Cambridge curriculum."

These supportive actions resonate with findings by Barge & Loges [15], emphasizing the critical role of parental supervision in ensuring homework completion and offering tailored support to meet children's individual needs. The innovative aspect of this study lies in its exploration of how parents tailor their involvement

to meet the advanced needs of proficient learners. This approach contributes to deeper understanding of how parental involvement can evolve as children's proficiency levels increase, offering a nuanced perspective for future studies on differentiated parental support strategies.

4.1.4 Connecting with school

The data analysis revealed that three participants, India, Merry and Ariana, maintained active communication with their children's school. These parents collaborated closely with teachers to prepare for English competitions and support their children's progress in English learning. Reflecting on this collaboration, Merry mentioned "We coordinate with teachers to ensure readiness for competitions." Ariana also highlighted her approach, stating "I actively engage with the school by providing input on teaching methods and suggesting international standards for curriculum enhancement."

These actions align with findings by LaRocque et al. [16], highlighting the importance of parental involvement in fostering an environment that enhances children's academic performance. Parents of students with high English proficiency actively engage with the school to support their children's English learning journey. The implications for these practices are important, highlighting that schools and parents should collaborate more closely to ensure that educational practices and resources are optimized to meet the needs of advanced learners.

4.1.5 Providing mental support

The researchers also found that all participants provided substantial mental support to their children, focusing on nurturing their interests, intrinsic motivation, and positive affirmations during English learning. Parents emphasized respecting their children's autonomy and preferences. Ina noted, "I am not forcing and adjusting to the child's will." Parents must understand their child's psychological needs for an effective English learning environment, fostering a lifelong love for learning driven by intrinsic motivation. Merry shared that she tried to "Find interest and skill, help the child find intrinsic motivation, share tell stories with kids, give child's path, grow to learn interest in learning, and create kids to be a long-life learner." India mentioned that "giving rewards, teaching about struggling and being sportive, increasing self-confidence, giving motivation, and giving spirit and positive things" were the forms of support she provided. In addition, Ariana stated that the support she gave was "educating her child to become familiar with books, nurturing her child's talents and interests, and instilling a genuine enthusiasm for learning."

These practices are supported by a previous study conducted by Hosseinpour et al. [4], emphasizing that greater parental involvement and positive attitudes toward their children's education, particularly in language learning, contribute to their academic success.

Parents of students with high English proficiency engage actively in supporting their children's English learning journey by providing robust mental support and cultivating a genuine passion for English learning through intrinsic motivation.

4.1 The challenges of parental involvement

Below are the findings of research question two.

4.1.5 Low time management skills

The data revealed that Ariana was the only participant who faced challenges in managing her time effectively due to her husband working outside the city, although she managed it well as a full-time mom. Ariana expressed, "It is hard to manage time because my husband works outside the city, even though it is managed well."

The finding resonates with previous studies indicating that parents of high -achieving students in EFL also encounter difficulties in time management. This aligns with Priyatna [33] assertion that both working and non-working parents must carefully manage their time to fulfill their parental responsibilities without disruption.

4.1.5 Low English skills

Parents who find it difficult to speak English also have difficulty involving students' English learning. Low English skills can be affected by academic background. The data showed that Merry, Ariana, and Ina acknowledged difficulties in actively promoting English as a daily language due to their own constrained English abilities. Merry admitted, "[It is] hard to use English daily, and my English is passive." Ariana, who actively used English at home, sometimes still faced challenges. She admitted, "Even though I already actively use English, sometimes I am confused with the slang vocabulary that my child uses."

Furthermore, the study highlights that parents with lower levels of education often find it challenging to support their children's English learning due to their own academic backgrounds. For instance, Ina, whose education only extends to senior high school, expressed difficulties assisting with higher-level English learning. Ina noted, "[it is] quite complex to teach more difficult level because of the academic background from senior high school." Similarly, India and Ina found it challenging to teach English at home because their proficiency in English was lower than their children's. India admitted, "[It is] hard to teach at home because [my] English skill level is lower than the child."

These findings are consistent with Vera et al.'s [20] study, which suggests that parents who are more literate in their native language and English are more likely to engage in literacy activities with their families. The research underscores that limited English proficiency poses a significant barrier for parents in actively participating in their children's English education.

4.1.5 Low parental skills

The data indicate specific challenges faced by two participants in their parenting roles. Ariana struggled to maintain her child's motivation for continuous learning and foster a lifelong learning mindset. Ariana noted that it was tough to navigate intense emotions when encouraging already skilled children to keep learning. One effective approach was building confidence in the children while further developing their skills. In contrast, Ina struggled with boosting her child's self-confidence despite the child's evident talents and interests in English, attributing her own passivity and lack of confidence as contributing factors. Ina admitted, "[It is] challenging to enhance a child's self-confidence, especially when the parent is less active and confident, despite the child's talents and interests in English." The less active and confident parents can affect the child's confidence.

The study revealed that parents who employ negative parenting techniques can adversely impact their children's self-esteem and willingness to take risks in learning English. This aligns with findings by Suhartono et al. [25], which suggest that negative parenting practices can lead to negative attitudes and traits such as low self-esteem, feelings of inferiority, fearfulness, and aversion to taking risks.

4.1.5 Low emotional management skills

The data also display that Ariana faced challenges managing her emotions when encouraging her proficient child to continue learning English. She described feeling emotionally drained in motivating her child, emphasizing the importance of building confidence while nurturing their skills. In the interview, she admitted that "[It] feels hard and draining emotions while asking kids that are already skilled to keep learning; the tricky way to manage it is by giving confidence to children while building their skills."

Additionally, the study found that parents with lower emotional management skills may struggle to effectively engage in their children's English learning. This aligns with findings from Chung and Lippe [26], suggesting that parents should maintain a balanced approach to family dynamics and work flexibility to support children's educational pursuits effectively.

These abovementioned findings provide valuable insights into the specific challenges that parents face in supporting their children's English learning, especially in non-native English-speaking contexts. While previous studies have explored general parental involvement, this investigation emphasize the nuanced difficulties related to time management, language proficiency, and emotional management. These results contribute to the existing body of literature by offering a more detailed understanding of the barriers that parents encounter, emphasizing the importance of addressing these challenges through support and interventions. By doing so, the study underscores the need for innovative strategies to enhance parental

involvement, thereby fostering more effective English learning environments at home.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to investigate two aspects: the types of parental involvement that facilitate high English proficiency among elementary school students, and the challenges parents encounter when engaging with elementary school students who have achieved high English proficiency. The findings revealed that parents employed various forms of involvement in their children's English learning, including providing home support and facilities, assisting with learning activities, collaborating with schools, and offering emotional support by fostering children's interests and intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, parents of elementary school students with high English proficiency encountered several challenges. These included difficulties in teaching and speaking English at home due to their own language proficiency, challenges arising from their academic backgrounds affecting their ability to support their child's English learning, and struggles with enhancing their child's self-confidence. The study also highlighted parental challenges in managing emotions when encouraging proficient children to sustain their English learning efforts. Thus, the research underscored the complexities parents face in supporting their children's English proficiency, encompassing issues of language skills, academic backgrounds, parental capabilities, and emotional management.

Based on the results of this research, recommendations are proposed for parents, institutions, and future researchers. Parents of students with high English proficiency should employ various strategies to support their children's English learning despite facing significant challenges. In addition, institutions maintaining good relationships with parents of students with high English proficiency play a crucial role. Collaborative efforts between institutions and parents enhance English competition preparation and student performance in English learning. Therefore, institutions are encouraged to foster collaboration with parents to optimize students' English learning achievements. For future researchers, this study identifies the types and challenges of parental involvement among students with high English proficiency. Understanding these factors is essential, as parental involvement may differ significantly between high and low proficiency levels. Future research should delve deeper into exploring low levels of parental involvement to enrich the discourse on parental roles in English learning. However, this current study has certain limitations that must be acknowledged. The sample size was relatively small, consisting of only four parents from one private elementary school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the use of interviews as the sole data collection method could introduce biases related to self-reporting and social desirability. Future studies, therefore, should consider larger, more diverse samples and employ mix-methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of parental involvement in English learning.

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