

# PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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**Abstract.** English has become a crucial language needs to be learned by all of the students in Indonesia. Its significances for both the education and career drive English to be a subject assessed in the National Exam. From the aforementioned issue, this study attempts to investigate three points such as parents' perceptions and parents' involvement of their children's English Language learning (ELL), and their perceptions related to their involvement in their children's ELL. Since this study was conducted to portray the natural context and interpret the parents' behavior, qualitative approach with basic qualitative is applied. Accordingly, interviews with both parents and children were also conducted to gain the data. The finding shows that 7 out of 11 parents have positive perception about their children's ELL, whilst the rest have negative perceptions. Moreover, it was found that there are three categories of parents' involvements, including learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community. From those two mentioned points concerning the parents' perceptions and involvements, it can be seen that the parents' involvement are strongly influenced by the perceptions which they possessed. The more positive the parents attitude towards English, the more participation they administer to support their children's ELL.

**Keywords:** parents' involvement, English language learning

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a vital aspect in the development of the society. The more people are aware on the education, the more civilized the society will be. Family, mainly, has the highest responsibility to attain that goal. This happens since learning begins at home through interaction with one's family. This statement also corresponds with Ngale (2009) who mentions that parents play a great role in assisting

the children's education. Here, children will have opportunity to acquire or even develop his knowledge when they are with their family. Parents are believed to play crucial role for children's development.

Ho and Willins (in Berthelsen and Walker, 2008) add that parents' involvement broadly as parental behavior with, or as a representative of children, at home or at school, as well as the expectation that parents hold for children's future education. Moreover, Linse (2005) points out that a vigorous involvement of the family toward their children's education will aid the children to socially, emotionally, cognitively, and intellectually bring up. In addition, Epstein et al. (2002) note that parents' involvement is not only home-based involvement, but also school-based involvement.

Furthermore, parental involvement becomes a crucial factor that affects students' achievement in English learning (Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi, & Yarahmadi, 2015). This occurs since parents can be categorized as environmental factors which may affect much on the development of the children, especially on their language competence. This statement is also in line with the behaviorist who states that children will acquire the second language better when a sufficient exposure on the target language from their environment is given.

. One of the aspects affecting the parents' involvement in the children's English Language Learning is parents' perspective. Their belief and their thought on English will completely influence their children's English Language Learning. One of the most fundamental aspects in the children's language and literacy development are both the parents' attitudes and goals (Bonci, 2008). This means that in the case of English Language learners, parents' perception toward their children's English Language Learning will provide much impact to their children's language development. Besides, study done by Mosty (2013) in the Iceland shows that parents who possessed positive perspectives toward their children's learning in home language and Icelandic will be more willing to support their children's learning, especially for the language development.

Additionally, Houwer (1999) claims that the decision of learning particular language is strongly influenced by the belief had by

the parents. When parents have positive attitude, it can be categorized that the first step of the language development of the children is done already. That statement is then strengthened by Houwer in Mosty (2013) who adds that the parents' belief and attitude toward the language might become the main indicators for the children to learn the languages. Besides, parents' perception also provides a direct impact to the children's language development. This means that the attitudes possessed by the parents are really vital for the children's language learning or even development. Therefore, it is extremely significant for parents to have positive perspective to their children's English Language learning when they have high expectation to their children to master English.

In this day and age, English has become a salient subject need to be learnt at school. Besides its existence as the international language spoken by most people in this world, English in Indonesia also becomes a subject included in the national examination. Based on the preliminary study done to several parents in a small countryside in Sidoarjo, it shows that parents tend to give the responsibility to teach the language to their children wholly to the language course and to the teachers at the school, regardless their role as the primary teacher for their children.

Therefore, in this present study, the writer conducts a study to explore the parents' perception toward English language learning, parents' involvements and how the parents' perception related to the parents' involvement. By conducting this study, it is expected that the parents' perception to their children's English language learning and how they involve in their children' English language learning are revealed. Besides, an investigation measuring the relation between the parents' perception and their involvement is also conducted in this study.

### **Parents' Involvement**

Engaging families in children education at school and home is viewed as an important means to provide better outcome of the children education. This occurs since parents play an important role in the cognitive of the children. This is in line with Beveridge (2005) who

claims that home and family play a key role in children's development and learning.

Berthelsen and Walker (2008) define parents' involvement broadly as parental behavior with, or on behalf of children, at home or at school, as well as the expectation that parents hold for children's future education. Madison (2004) also argues that parents' involvement is evidently crucial for the children's development. Not only that, Walberg (2011) also states that parental behaviors appear to influence children. Children with high parents' involvement perform better in school, such as get better grades, get higher score on standardized tests, and drop out less often, as well as have better attendance records, higher aspirations, and more positive attitudes about school and homework. Moreover, E. N. Patrikakou (2008) defines that parent involvement is a crucial force in children's development, learning, and success at school and in life.

In order to examine the issue, this paper uses Epstein's categorization on parental involvement. Epstein et al. (2002) categorizes parents' involvement into six major types. They are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. These six types are mostly used for bridging both the education stakeholders and the school to develop comprehensive relationship with the parents. Meanwhile, Epstein (1995) in Rafiq et al. (2013) states that parental involvement is designed not only for improving the academic achievement of the students, but also the attitude and the behavior for living. Each of type of parental involvement will be discussed as follows.

a. Type One: Parenting

In this point, school is required to give a guidance to encourage parents supporting their children's education. Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, and Gordon (2009) mention that one of the most powerful but neglected supports for children's learning and development is family involvement both in and out of school.

b. Type Two: Communicating

To reach the goal of the learning and teaching process, teachers should find variety of communication ways to maintain relationship

with the parents. According to E. Patrikakou (2011), the key factor in establishing and maintaining home–school partnerships is ongoing and productive communication. It is in line with Sonntag (2014) who suggest that parents should understand well about their children' academic year. As Lunts (2003) notes that two-way school-family communication is a factor that influences the parental involvement. Sheldon (2011) points out that by recognizing and addressing the challenges families face, schools can inform and determine the suitable program in the school.

c. Type Three: Volunteering

The more interaction that the parents do with the school, the more involvement they can do to support their children's education. Here, parents are encouraged to participate in children's school and school events. Henderson and Redding (2011) postulates that parents should actively participate in the training program that the school arrange to increase their involvement for their children's education. On the other hand, Lunts (2003) evaluates that the volunteering form of parental involvement also depends on family -school communication.

d. Type Four: Learning at Home

The parental involvement mostly occurs at home. As Walberg (2011) attests that the vast majority of the children in the first 18 years of life spend only 8% of their time in school, while the other 92% of the hours are the responsibility of their parents. Flecha (2012) argues that learning interaction occur when parents and children work together at home, studying or doing their homework. Moreover, parental involvement at home can also be done by giving more reinforcement to the students about the material they learned at school, especially to the second or foreign language learning. As the behaviorist claimed in Brown (2007) that reinforcement can give opportunity for the learners to acquire the words in second or foreign language better since students are conditioned to learn the language.

e. Type Five: Decision-Making

There are some factors affecting the success of children's language learning. It is not only because of the teacher, but also because of the family. Flecha (2012) suggests that decisive participation

can be done by letting families becoming representatives in decision making bodies of the school.

Schneider, Avis, and Leighton (2007) mention that parents have strong voice in determining what services are to be developed in the educational institution. This is crucial since the appropriate consideration of passing policy will also influence to the children's education.

f. Type Six: Collaborating with the Community

The success of children's education is not only affected by the parents and the teachers, but also the environment surrounding them. Flecha (2012) mentioned this type of involvement as an educative participation. Moreover, recently, children are all too often follows what people in the community do rather than what their parents and teachers instructed. Therefore, it is pivotal for the parents and school to have socialization actively to the community so that they can gain their goal of their children education effectively.

### **Parental Involvement in Children's English Language Learning**

There are plethora aspects that can influence the children's English language achievement. Several previous works shows that parental involvement can provide huge significance for the children's English Language Development. Torres and Tran (2014) attested that parental involvement can enrich the communication ability between the children and the parents. An example comes from the students of elementary school who argues that their ability in reading words was much influenced by their parents' participation (Elish-Piper & Piper, 2009). Moreover, Goldenberg (2004) in Robin Waterman and Beth Harry (2008) reveal that parent of the English Language Learners have a crucial role in the children' English language learning. One of the theories about the language development is the behaviorism which stated by Skinner (Brown, 2007). This statement is also in line with Brock and Rankin (2008) and Saville and Troike (2012) that children learn the language from the exposure or input existed in their surroundings. The ability of the children's acquiring the language is definitely influenced by the learning chance that is given for them by

interpreting, hearing and responding the language from their surrounding (Anning & Edwards, 2004).

Unfortunately, not all parents can communicate using English. Several of them even consider that they cannot either understand or speak in English. From the study done by Fitzgerald (2004) emphasizes that the vast majority of parents were not confident to guide their children's learning. However, a study done by Hornby (2000) attested that though parents do not have good ability in communicating English, they can still facilitate the reading skill of the children at home.

Assistance for learning English language cannot merely be done through sending to the language course or preparing the learning media. More than that, both mother and father can also introducing words to the children when they are together, such as watching TV, walking to the park and so forth. Mother plays an important role in building the language ability in their children. Mother's talk is frequently considered as the major source of input to the children (Saville & Troike, 2012). Albeit, this does not mean that other members of family do not have any responsibility to the children's language learning. Father and other siblings also need to support the mother by using the language learned by the children.

### **Factors Influence Parental Involvement**

Previous research has attested that parental involvement brings more positive academic outcomes and influences the development of the children behaviors. Nevertheless, not all parents participate actively in their children education as, for instance, they do not sufficient time for the children due to the full-day working hours. Here, some factors influencing parents in providing the parental involvement based on E. N. Patrikakou (2008) are children characteristics and development (Beliefs and expectations; Parent, teacher, and student roles)

Meanwhile, Hornby (2011) points out that the availability of parental involvement given by the parents are affected by some factors. They are parents and family factor (Parents belief about parental involvement, Parents' perception of invitations for involvement,

Parents' current life contexts, and Class, ethnicity and gender), Children Factors, Parent-Teacher Factors, and Societal Factors.

## **Methodology**

### **Subject of the Study**

The subjects of this study were parents in a small countryside in Sidoarjo whose children were sitting in the second grade of Junior High School. As the first plan, there should be seven pairs of parents involved in this study, however due to the unavailability time owned by particular parent and their willingness to be interviewed, the participants of this study were only four couples of parents from four children and three mothers from three children, which in total are eleven parents.

### **Data Collection Techniques and Instruments**

To answer the research questions in this study, the researcher conducted interviews as the main data collection technique. In this study, the interview is applied to answer the first and second research questions. The interview was done in the form of one on one interview, which means that parents, both father and mother, were interviewed one by one. One on one interview is an ideal way to attain the depth information from the participant (Cresswell, 2012). This occurs since the participants have more time to answer the questions given by the interviewer.

To obtain the information about the parents' perspectives and the involvement, the interview guideline is needed to provide guidance for the researcher to attain the data. The interview guideline was used in this study to guide the interviewer to collect the information for answering the first and second research questions, which are about the perspective of the parents toward the children's English language learning and the parents' involvement in children's English language learning.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis is the process of drawing conclusions on the collected data, representing it in tables, figures, and pictures to

summarize it; and explaining the conclusions in words to provide answers to the research questions (Cresswell, 2012). In this study, the data collected is then analyzed using the qualitative approach based on Mathew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana (2014).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Parents' Perceptions of their Children's English Language Learning**

From the data shown in the previous sub-chapter, it is indicated that there are two sorts of perceptions possessed by the parents, which are positive and negative. 7 out of 11 parents owned positive perception toward English language learning whilst the remaining numbers of parents have negative attitude towards English language learning.

There are several common backgrounds revealed why parents have positive perceptions about English. First, the existence of English as one of the subjects included in National examination makes parents consider about the significance of English for their children. This was stated by the second and the seventh set of parents that their children need to learn English as it is assessed in the final exam. This finding showed that the parents were worried about their children's competence of English. They then really concerned on their children's English learning so that their children would achieve good score in the final exam.

Secondly, why the majority of the parents in this study stated that English is salient was because they realized that English is an international language which has been used in both the academic and the career for years. As the eleventh parent statement that English was crucial for getting jobs, since English is one of the requirements which must be fulfilled by the applicants. His statement was in common with the second parent who said that everything, schooling and jobs, needs English. These two opinion apparently is in line with Renandya and Widodo (2016) who stated that in this day and age, English has been widely used not only in the classroom as the medium of instruction, but also for social and business purposes in the community.

Besides, from the utterance of those parents, it can be viewed that those parents were eager supporting their children to learn English on account of reward from outside which is usually called as extrinsic motivation (Brown, 2007). In this case, parents encourage their children much due to the reputation of English for their children's future. As a result, they believe that English will benefit their children for both the academic and the career in the forthcoming which is also enable them to make better life. This is in line with Zacharias (2003) who says that English is a pathway to better employment and higher social status.

Moreover, it is established that the children of parents who claim that English is a salient subject to be learned, mostly have good competence in English, whilst those whose children have low English competence tend to have negative attitude towards English. This result is in line with the statement of Hornby (2011) who says that the level of involvement done by the parents is strongly related with the competence that the child has. This means that when a parent understands that her child has good ability in English, she/he tended to support her child to be better in this subject. Meanwhile, for those who know their children's lack competence of English might not support their children to learn. This is consistent with Eccles and Harold (1993) in Hornby (2011) who claimed that the hitches as well as the incapacities of their children during the learning process might inhibit the parents to be more engrossed in their child's schooling. This possibly because the parents do not want to focus only to the weakness of their children, yet they tended to concentrate on their children's strength.

Furthermore, regarding the parents' negative perception about English, there are various motives come up. From the finding, it is clearly perceived that the marginal number of parents, 4 out of 11, who have negative perception about English mostly revealed that English is as essential as other subjects at school. They stated that the success of their children in the future is not only because of their children's understanding in English. This then led these parents offering personal freedom of choice for their children to study what they are enthusiastic about. From this utterance, it is seen that parents

apparently do not have a sense of urgency with the English learning in their daily lives, especially when they are as housewives or work as employee who have subordinate position.

Additionally, parents had negative perceptions about English because the most essential aspect for these parents is that their children have eagerness to study, regardless the subjects that their children learn. Parents believe if their children use their time to study, they will keep away from the juvenile delinquencies which have become burning issues among young teenagers nowadays. To a certain degree, this demonstrated that parents are really worried on their children's social milieu in this era. They then keep focusing on their children's willingness to study.

In conclusion, it is certain that the background why parents have positive perception toward English language learning is due to the significance of English for their children's future. This was in accordance with Lauder (2008) who claimed that English is a compulsory subject needs to learn by all of the students in Junior High School. In addition, English is an up-market language which is demanded in the modernization era nowadays (Crystal, 2003). People need to master English if they want to compete with people in this world since every single field of life needs English. Besides, parents in this study apparently have a sense of urgency with the English Language learning therefore they expect that by possessing the English competence, their children will have better life in the future. However, on the other hand, for parents who have negative attitudes towards English Language learning, seems that they are not aware much about the significance of English for their children. They do not have a sense of urgency with the English language learning. Therefore, parents then put English in the peripheral position and they make English equal to other subjects learned at school.

### **Parents' Involvement in Their Children's English Language Learning**

Related to the second research question about the parents' involvement to the children's English Language learning, there are various types of the involvement that the parents give to the children's English language learning. Epstein in (Rafiq et al., 2013) points out

that there are six types parents' involvement for the child's education. They are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with community. Needless to say, there are three classifications of the parents' involvements drawn up from this study. They are learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the communities which are described as follows.

The result shows that all parents involved in this research do involvements in the type of learning at home. Based on Epstein (1995) in Rafiq et al. (2013), parents are expected to give assistance to their child at home, especially about the subjects they have been learned at school. This occurs since the overwhelming majority of the time owned by the child is spent at home; therefore parents need to involve themselves to support their children's education. In addition, the data collected from the interview suggest that there are numerous types of participation derived from the category of learning at home.

The data depicts that interacting with children, such as reminding them for homework, asking what they have learned at school, and also asking about the their feeling about the learning and teaching process is the most popular contribution completed by the parents in this study. Even parents have already brought their children into the course due to their lack competence in English; they still control their children by doing the aforementioned things. Five parents attempted to interact with the children by asking their difficulties when learning English, whilst almost the entire parents remind their children about their homework. This learning interaction can be made during the learning at home which is involving parents and children to get together (Flecha, 2012).

Why not all parents understand the feeling of their children during the English Language Learning is derived from several roots. Firstly, it is about the time-availability which is owned by the parents. For instance in the case of the fifth parent who admitted that she is not engrossed to her child very well due to her business. She was busy running her small catering business. She attempted to help her husband to earn money for their family. Because of this then she could not participate much in her child's schooling. This finding agrees to Carter (2002) that the level of the parents' involvement to their children's

education is influenced by the parents' availability in taking part into their children's education. The busier they are, the less participation they administered for their children's schooling. Secondly, the positive perspective about English Language learning also supports the parents to give more guidance to their children rather than those who have negative perspective about English. As the tenth parent claimed that English is crucial, she then brought her child to learn English in the private course. It was similarly done by the third and the fifth parents; however they preferred to send their children into the class-based English language course.

More than that, the condition of the children is also another aspect which is noteworthy. There are more than a quarter of the parents involved in this study revealed that they cannot understand their children's feeling or even English Language learning, either in the school or the course due to their children's silence. Some of the parents suggested that nowadays, the quietness of the children may be influenced by the existence of the gadget which they are more interested in. Children are then keener to express their problems into the social media, rather than to their parents.

Additionally, it is found that a set of parents was actively involved in teaching their child at home during the Elementary School. The parents said that they invariably guided their children to learn English if there were difficulties. For instance, when the children got difficulties in translating the words or making simple sentences, these parents always helped their children. However, due to the more complex of the English in Junior High School level, they tended to bring their children into the English language Course. From this occurrence, it is perceived that the parents were not confident to help their children in solving their challenges in English. The first parent for instance, she has low self-esteem due to her education background which is only Junior High School. Meanwhile, the self-reliance of the tenth parent is not high enough on account of the complexity of English. Because of these facts, they preferred to deliver their children into the English course.

In addition, another involvement from the category of learning at home is passing on advice on how to get exposure to English. The

data demonstrate that 1 out of 11 parents were suggesting her child to make reading as their habit and to watch foreign movie in the television. It was done by the first parent who assumed that by reading a lot, her child will be automatically easy to learn every subject, including English. Moreover, by exposing himself into the foreign movie in the television, the child will get easiness to acquire or even pronounce the words correctly. It essentially was great involvement that the low-English competence parents to do. It is in line with Linse (2005) who claimed that parents can manage their child's learning material to support him in developing English competence.

The second involvement appears from the data collection is decision-making. The result shows that the entire parents do decision making for their child's education, especially English. However, they have different decision. For instance, due to the low competence of the parents in English, parents in this study tend to bring their child to the course rather than teaching by themselves. It is indicated that nine parents send their children to the general course, seven parents send their child into the general course and the rest prefers to send the child into the private course. Parents in this study sent their child into the general course since their children were keen to do that. Their children want to take course with their friends, so their parents agree with their children's willing. Yet, a couple of parents who brings their child into the private course think wider. They emphasize that by letting their child study with the private teacher; their child would get easily to understand the material. This occurs since the teacher will only focus on one student. Furthermore, parents' involvement is not merely about the action that the father and mother did. Collaborating with the community is also one of the involvements that appears from the findings. Based on the result of this study, it is found that three out of eleven parents involve their older children to help their young child. It agrees with Flecha (2012) who says that community also includes the family member.

It is conveyed that there are some considerations why the parents have willingness to involve themselves into their children's English language learning. They are parents' English competence, parents' perceptions on English, and also the parents' availability, both

time and mobility. Firstly, parents who feel that their English are not too good, they choose to send their children into the language courses. This happens since they do not have adequate confidence to guide their children to learn. This agrees with the result of the previous study done by Linse (2005). She said that by registering their children into the language course, parents are already made an aware decision for their children's learning. Secondly, the parents' view about English is also affected to the participation they employed. Parents with high understanding about the English's significance in the distant future have a tendency to be more involved in their children' English Language Learning. From Brown (2007), this belongs to the extrinsic motivation that the children possessed encouragement from their parents. Meanwhile, the next point is about the availability of the parents. Due to the unavailability of the parents to bring and pick their children to the course, the parents could not support their children to learn. This is absolutely in line with Carter (2002) who stated that parents' participation into their children's education is predisposed by their availability.

In brief, from the discussion above, it is concluded that there are three categories of involvements that the parents of this study administered to support their children's English language learning. They are learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with community.

### **Parents' perception related to parents' involvement**

From the data about the perceptions and also the involvement of the parents, it can be depicted that the involvement of the parents are in line with the perceptions that they have toward English language learning. 7 out of 11 parents agree that English is strongly important for their children to be learned. The involvements which are administered by those parents who believe that English is salient are suitable with their perception about English. Only did four parents, three fathers and one mother, do not participate much since two reasons. For the fathers, they mostly tended to rely on their wives about the participation, while they just support their wives. Meanwhile, for one mother, she admitted that English is vital yet

because of her business, she could not control her child's learning much. She only sent her child into the English language course.

In addition, for those who have positive and high involvement, they did several actions for supporting their children, such as understanding the children's difficulties in learning English, interacting or even reminding for homework, and encouraging to learn English. Besides, when they are not confident with their competence in English, they prefer to bring their children to the language course. More than that, they also control their children by asking what they have learned at the course and/or how their feeling is toward the learning and teaching process.

Meanwhile, for parents who have negative perspective about English language learning, tend to not too involve them into their children's English language learning. They claimed that English is not too important for the children to learn. As a consequence, they also gave freedom to their children whether they had willingness to learn English or not. They uttered this since they believed that their children have been already adolescent; they have become autonomous learners, so their parents did not need to guide their children. This statement is based on the statement of Hornby (2011) who says that parents have tendency to give greater involvement when their children are in the elementary school level, and vice versa.

In short, it can be concluded that the level of involvement of the parents is coherent with the level of the perceptions which are owned by the parents. The more positive perceptions possessed by the parents about their children's English language learning, the greater the involvement of the parents is.

### **Pedagogical Implications of the Findings**

The result of this study is expected to increase the level of involvement that is done by the parents for supporting their children's English Language learning. The result establishes that the level of the parents' involvement is parallel to the level of perceptions possessed by the parents. Therefore, it is suggested to the parents that they should be more open minded about what is the best things to do for their children's future. Moreover, they should interact with the children,

remind them for homework, and so forth. It also will be better when parents could understand how the progress of their children's achievement to measure the effectiveness of the course which their children were taken.

Besides, it is expected that schools stakeholders, such as headmaster or even teacher provide assistance for the parents to do parenting. By doing this, parents will broaden their knowledge about how to involve themselves to their child's education, especially English Language learning. Besides, for those whose children have low competence in English, the school stakeholder should encourage parents that children's ability is not fixed, it improves. On account of that, parents should provide more contribution for their children's education as general, English language learning for specific.

## CONCLUSION

Parents have positive perceptions about English Language learning. This is shown from the parents' statements which strongly agree that English is a crucial subject need to be learned by their children. Besides its importance as it is a subject in the national examination, they also argued that English is pivotal subject since it has become an International language used by the vast majority of people in this world. A particular parent revealed that jobs required English much, especially for those who work with the international-based company. Moreover, there are three kinds of involvements which the parents in this study applied to support their children English Language learning. They are learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community.

All in all, this can be determined that the parents' perceptions about their children's English Language learning positively influenced the level of the involvement administered by the parents. The more positive the parents' belief about English Language learning, the higher the involvement is. In addition, both the parents' perception and the parents' involvement into the English Language learning might be influenced by several factors. They are children's competence of English and the parents' competence in English.

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