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# The Quality of English Learning at Home: A Case Study of Three Years Old Indonesian Young Learner

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**Abstract:** Parental involvement in introducing English at the early childhood education (ECE) level has been increasingly recognized for its positive impact. However, concerns remain regarding the quality of English learning at home, particularly in the Indonesian context, where research has primarily focused on teachers rather than parents. This study addresses this gap by exploring the quality of English learning at home facilitated by the parents of a three-year-old child. A qualitative case study approach was employed, with data collected through three observation sessions involving painting and shared book reading activities. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) model, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that parents successfully supported their child's learning by acknowledging her interests, providing relevant resources, and engaging in positive and responsive interactions. Activities such as painting and shared book reading provided meaningful opportunities for vocabulary development, oral language practice, and early literacy. However, less effective practices were also identified, such as reliance on simple recall and closed-ended questions and a tendency for the mother to dominate the learning process, which limited the child's autonomy and higher-order thinking. While parents play a vital role in early English learning at home, the study suggests the need for more balanced approaches that combine parental guidance with child-initiated learning. The findings also highlight the importance of collaboration between parents and educators through workshops or parenting programs to strengthen home-school partnerships in supporting early English development.

**Keywords:** Case Study, ECE, English, Learning, Parents.

## INTRODUCTION

Parents' involvement in introducing English to children at the early childhood education (ECE) level has been widely recognized as beneficial. Previous studies show that parental engagement can enhance children's academic achievement (Yulianti et al., 2018) support their social skills, and reduce behavioural problems (El Nokali et al., 2010). However, concerns have emerged about the quality of English learning provided at home. In Indonesia, most studies have focused on the role of ECE teachers in teaching English to young learners (Amalia, 2021; Fitriati et al., 2023; Saud et al., 2023). While limited attention has been given to how parents introduce English at home.

Exploring the quality of parental involvement in English learning is important for several reasons. First, English functions as a global language across various domains, including politics, science, education, media, and entertainment. Proficiency in English not only facilitates international communication but also expands opportunities for academic advancement and career development (Saddina, 2021). Second, children learn best when schools and parents collaborate, as emphasized in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (Guy-Evans, 2024). Home literacy environments strongly influence children's early reading abilities, which also applies to learning English (Kusumawardhani et al., 2025).

Over the past decade, Indonesian ECE institutions have increasingly acknowledged the advantages of early English exposure. Many schools now integrate English into their curricula, with some even adopting it as the primary language of instruction (Arumsari et al., 2017; Fikroni, 2022; Illiyin & Ruhaena, 2024; Putri & Listyani, 2020). This growing institutional emphasis is also reflected in parents' attitudes. Studies indicate that many parents have positive views of early English introduction (Arumsari et al., 2017; Diniyah, 2017). Parents not only enrol their children in English-oriented schools but also engage in English learning activities at home.

Despite this trend, little is known about the quality of English teaching provided by parents at home. Existing studies have overlooked this dimension, focusing instead on teachers' practices in formal ECE settings.

Addressing this gap, this study explored the quality of English taught at home by parents in early childhood education (ECE) level experienced by a three-year-old Indonesian child. By doing that, the researcher hopes to identify potential strengths and weaknesses in parental teaching practices to provide insights for both parents and educators on how to create supportive home environments that foster children's English learning.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is to explore the quality of English taught at home by parents using a case study methodology. When a comprehensive grasp of a pertinent subject, event, or phenomenon in its natural, real-world context is required, the case study method is highly beneficial (Crowe et al., 2011).

The data was collected through observation. The observation took place at the child's house. The child is three years old, and her name is Paras (a pseudonym). Her parents come from a middle-class family, and both have a degree in higher education. Her mother is a housewife, while her father teaches Indonesian youngsters with intellectual disabilities. But before Paras was born, she spent a year and a half teaching kindergarten in Indonesia. In this family, Paras is the only child. Paras enjoy painting and animals.

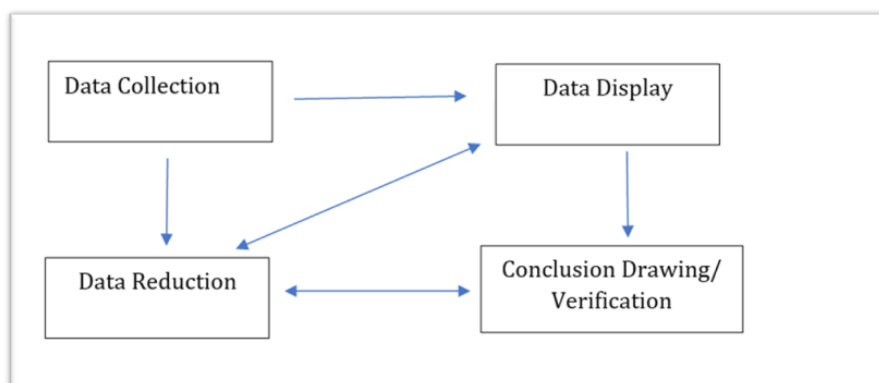
The observation was done three times and lasted for forty-seven minutes in total. English was the language used in the conversation between Paras' parents and her. Paras, her mother, and her father were the subjects of the first observation. It was completed between 11.05 and 11.14 a.m. (nine minutes). Paras' mother asked her if she wanted to read a storybook or paint while she was watching TV at home. Painting was her choice. After that, her father set up everything needed for the painting project and periodically reminded Paras to answer her mother's inquiries. The second observation lasted for twelve minutes, from 11.15 to 11.29 a.m. Paras was still painting this time. Again, Paras and her mother are discussing Paras' activities in English. The third observation took place from 14:17 to 14:43 (twenty-six minutes) on the same day. Paras and her mother went to the first floor of their house for a shared book reading session, sitting on the bed. Paras' mother selected a book called Counting Rhymes, authored by Johnstone in 2005. During the reading, Paras' father joined in and added a small contribution to Paras' learning experience. The table 1. outlines the detail of observations.

**Table 1. Observation's Timetable**

Observation	Times	Duration
<b>First Observation</b>	11.05 and 11.14 a.m.	9 minutes
<b>Second Observation</b>	11.15 to 11.29 a.m.	12 minutes
<b>Third Observation</b>	14:17 to 14:43 p.m.	26 minutes

After collecting the data, the next step was analysing the data. The analysis followed the three phases outlined by Miles & Huberman (1994) namely, data reduction, data display, and conclusion. During the data reduction phase, the researcher organized the information obtained from the three observations, selecting, focusing, and simplifying the data in line with the research objective. For example, in the first observation, although Paras' father prepared the painting materials and engaged in small talk, only the dialogues where the parents used English to guide Paras' responses were used by the researcher for further analysis. This process allowed the researcher to focus on moments where parental input contributed to Paras' English learning opportunities.

In the data display phase, the reduced data were arranged in a more systematic form. The transcripts were organized into tables that highlighted patterns of parental input, such as questioning strategies. This organization helped to clarify which strategies were consistently used by Paras' parents. Finally, in the conclusion drawing/verification phase, the researcher revisited the conversation transcripts, observation notes, and relevant literature to confirm findings. For instance, one conclusion was that Paras' mother frequently employed questioning techniques to sustain English interaction, a finding consistent with literature on parental scaffolding in early language learning. At the same time, the close-ended questions observed suggested a potential weakness in the teaching quality. The iterative process of comparing the data with theory ensured that the conclusions were supported by empirical evidence and relevant research. The three phases of analysing the data can be seen in the image 1.



**Image 1. Miles and Huberman (1994) Qualitative Data Analysis**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### English Learning from Painting Activities

The first observation included Paras, her mother, and her father. This observation focused on geometry learning involving two-dimensional shapes such as circles and squares, as well as counting the shapes her mother painted. Paras' mother drew a shape and asked Paras what it was called. She also requested that Paras counted how many of that shape there were. Here is the dialogue between the mother (M) and the child (C).



**Image 2. Paras' painting activity**

M: "What is this, Paras?" (Draw four green circles on the paper)  
 C: "Circle"  
 M: "How many circles?"  
 C: "One...two"

Another example can be seen when Paras' father (F) asked Paras (C) to answer her mother's question about the squares her mother had drawn (M). This is demonstrated in the conversation below.

F: "Pasha, what is it?"  
 C: "That's a square, Daddy."  
 F: "Wow, I have squares (with enthusiasm's voice). How many squares, Paras?"

#### English Learning from the Observation Part Two

In the second part of the observation, like in the first, the mother continued to focus on Paras' learning in geometry, specifically with two-dimensional shapes, as well as counting the shapes her mother painted. This time, Paras was asked to identify the triangle shape and count how many there were.

M: "Do you know what shape this is?"  
 C: "Triangles."  
 M: "How many triangles?"  
 C: "One...two...three...four." (she does not see the triangles)

#### English Learning from the Observation Part Three

The activity observed this time was shared book reading, primarily involving Paras and her mother, with some participation from her father as well.



**Image 3. Paras and her mother engaged in a shared reading of a book titled "Counting Rhymes."**

Figure 3 illustrated how the mother encouraged Paras' English learning through the book *Counting Rhymes* written by Johnstone (2005). Paras were prompted to count the animals in the book, beginning with one bird and progressing to nine dolphins.

M: "How many cows?" (The mother points to each cow individually as the child counts.)  
 C: "One... two... three... four... five." (Counting along with her mother as she points.)  
 M: "Five cows!" (Echoing the child's answer with a cheerful tone.) "Give me five!" (The child smiles and high-fives her.)

Reading books together and interacting during this activity can enhance children's oral language skills and expand their vocabulary. This aligns with the observations made. Through the shared reading experience, Paras' mother helped improve Paras' literacy, especially her vocabulary and oral language concerning animal traits. Paras was encouraged to identify the animals discussed in the story and to name other animals in the book along with their sounds. This is illustrated in the conversation.

M: "Two tired tortoises are heading home as well..... Find and count two tortoises. Find and count it!"  
 C: "One... Two" (Pointing at the tortoises as she counts.)  
 M: "Ok. I see other animals. What is this? ((Beginning to sing and move like a mouse.)  
 C: "Mouse" (Watching her mother and joining in the dance.)

Oral language is crucial for reading comprehension. Even if readers can read a text smoothly, they may struggle to understand its meaning if they are unfamiliar with the vocabulary used. Therefore, the interactions between Paras and her mother that fostered Paras' oral language skills and vocabulary will positively impact her reading comprehension in the future. However, the learning process did not end after Paras and her mother finished reading the book. Paras' mother continued the conversation by playing a guessing game to further enhance Paras' oral language and vocabulary in English. Paras was prompted to guess the names of animals based on specific characteristics described by her mother, as illustrated in the following conversation.

M: "Can you guess what animal that has big ears and long...." (Using her hands to mimic the long trunk of an elephant.)  
 C: "Trunk."  
 M: "Yes. What is the animal?"  
 C: "Elephant." (Pausing for a moment to think before answering with a smile.)

Next, the discussion shifted to learning about size and measurement. Paras were asked to compare the size of one animal to another, determining whether it was bigger or smaller. This can be seen in the following conversation.

M: "Which one is bigger, elephant or zebra?"  
 C: "Elephant."  
 M: "Elephant (Echoing the child's answer with enthusiasm). Which one is smaller? Mouse or dog?"  
 C: "Mouse."  
 M: "Mouse is smaller than a dog (Restating the child's answer.). Which one is smaller cat or tiger?"

In this observation, Paras was also asked to identify various two-dimensional shapes. Her mother employed several strategies to facilitate this learning. First, she used a door to represent a rectangle and asked Paras to identify the shape of the door. Next, she asked Paras what shape her face was; while the mother suggested it was circular, Paras insisted it was oval. Lastly, her mother used her fingers to form different shapes, such as a triangle, diamond, and heart, and asked Paras to guess the shapes she created.

## Discussion

### The Good Quality of English Learning at Home Acknowledging a child's interest

Paras' parents employ several effective practices to support Paras' English learning at home. One key practice is that they acknowledge her interests. They noticed her fondness for animals and painting.

C: "I love the animals." (Jumping)  
M: "You love animals?"  
C: "Yeah."

Paras' parents supported her learning by providing resources like painting supplies and a book about animals. According to van Aswegen and Pendergast (2023) interest is a key factor in facilitating children's learning. They explained further that both curiosity and interest are recognized as key factors in cognitive development and effective learning. Interest is seen as a significant motivational force that stimulates learning and is considered crucial for academic achievement. Students who have genuine interest are more inclined to focus, engage actively, and ultimately excel in their performance (Harackie-wicz, Smith, & Priniski, 2016) as cited in (van Aswegen & Pendergast, 2023). In contrast, parents who stimulate learning without considering a child's interests may lead to reduced engagement during learning. Thus, Paras' parents' approach, which considers her interests in painting and animals, is an effective strategy. During observations, Paras demonstrated enthusiasm and actively engaged with the activities, responding well to her parents' questions.

### **Fostering positive interactions**

Another effective strategy employed by Paras' parents is fostering positive interactions with her. During observations, they provided warm and responsive feedback to Paras' answers. According to Zöggeler-Burkhardt et al. (2023) nurturing and supportive interactions and relationships play a vital role in successful learning during early childhood. Children are more engaged in activities that align with their interests when they are in a warm, caring, and responsive environment. Cultivating positive interactions can enhance children's motivation, interest, and participation in learning. Furthermore, the environment has an important role as one of the factors influences the process of children's language learning. The environment in this case includes all individuals who can influence, such as parents. The role of parents is necessary to provide stimulation to children through positive interaction (Zulaeha & Setiasih, 2025). This also support the theory of Scaffolding proposed by Brunner (1983) as cited in Mehri et al. (2014) where adults provide temporary support to help children reach higher levels of competence.

Positive interactions between Paras and her parents were evident in several ways. For instance, when Paras made a mistake, her mother refrained from simply telling her that her answer was wrong. Instead, she took a more supportive approach by encouraging Paras to review her answer again. This method not only helps Paras feel more secure in expressing her thoughts but also promotes a growth mindset, emphasizing the importance of learning from errors rather than feeling discouraged by them.

By fostering an environment where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning, Paras' mother nurtures her confidence and critical thinking skills. This approach encourages Paras to engage more actively in her learning process, as she feels safe to explore and experiment without the fear of harsh judgment. Overall, this strategy exemplifies the importance of creating a supportive and constructive atmosphere for learning.

M: "How many triangles?"  
C: "One...two...three...four." (she does not see the triangles)  
M: "Hey, count again, please? Count it again."

Paras' mother often repeated Paras' answers in a cheerful tone to convey her enthusiasm. They also engaged in singing and dancing together, as illustrated in the following conversation.

C: "Mouse"  
M: "Mouse!" (Repeats the child's answer with a high-pitched, enthusiastic tone). The mouse says.... (Begins singing and mimicking a mouse's movements)  
C: "Squeak. Squeak" (Watches her mother and joins in the dancing)

At times, Paras' mother demonstrated positive responses to Paras' suggestions. She acknowledged and accepted Paras' ideas when posing specific questions. This was particularly noticeable during their guessing game after reading a shared book, where her support encouraged Paras' participation. While positive interaction between Paras and her father was evident when he frequently expressed appreciation each time Paras answered her mother's questions correctly. He showed his approval by clapping his hands, which often made Paras happy and brought a smile to her face.

M: "Chicken not a mammal?" (Expressing surprise)  
C: "He have egg." (Paras's father claps his hands. Paras looks at him and smiles with joy, then happily joins in clapping her hands alongside him.)

### **The Less Effective English Learning at Home** **The Quality of questions asked**

While many of English learning practices demonstrated by Paras' parents are effective in enhancing Paras' English skills, the quality of questions asked by parents are considered less effective. During observations one through three, Paras' parents, particularly her mother, predominantly asked simple questions with answers that Paras already knew. It appeared that Paras was mostly recalling basic facts, such as the names of animals, their

sounds, and labeling two-dimensional shapes. As a result, she did not acquire significantly new knowledge. This kind of question is usually referred to as recalled questions. They tend to be basic and does not encourage interaction, which means they do not improve students' critical thinking abilities (Cárdenas, 2021).

While providing tasks that match children's abilities can help foster confidence and a sense of achievement. Relying on such easy tasks can lead to negative outcomes. Children may become bored, feel confused when faced with new challenges, underestimate their own abilities, develop poor self-efficacy, and be less willing to take risks in their learning (Bobis et al., 2011, as cited in Vale and Livy, 2013). When children are tasked with challenges that stretch their capabilities, they tend to exert more effort and gain knowledge and skills. Such moderate challenges but still considered children's level can lead to greater engagement and enjoyment, making children feel more successful and in control of their learning.

Furthermore, most of the questions posed by Paras' parents, especially her mother, were close ended during both the painting activity and shared book reading. These questions typically required only a single acceptable answer or a simple yes/no response. Additionally, the mother often repeated Paras' responses without expanding on them. The following conversation illustrates this situation.

M: "What is that?"  
C: "Ladybug"  
M: "Ladybug" (Echoing the child's response with excitement)  
C: "Yeah."  
M: "What is this?" (Pointing to the flower)  
C: "Flower."

Tamas and Wang (2017) as cited in Cárdenas (2021) assert that the way teacher pose questions and the types they choose can significantly influence learning. They explain further that using low-level or memory-recall questions fails to stimulate students' higher-order thinking skills, leading to a lack of collaborative knowledge construction, as students merely depend on the information given by the teacher. This also applicable for the way parents ask questions to their children in English learning. The reliance on recall questions limited Paras' opportunities to develop critical thinking. This is consistent with Bloom's taxonomy, which highlights that higher-order thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation require more open-ended questioning (Mufson & Strasser, 2015).

### Parents' dominating the learning process

Paras' mother exhibited a tendency to dominate the learning process. She frequently asked questions, while Paras appeared to be a passive learner, mainly responding to her mother's inquiries. This was evident during their shared reading activities. Moreover, when Paras attempted to make additional comments, her mother simply expressed agreement without trying to further the discussion around Paras' thoughts. Evidence of this can be found in the conversation.

C: Look at the flower! (Pointing to the flower on the next page)  
M: "Oh yeah...Look at the flower (Echoing the child's excitement with a cheerful tone) and continue the story. Two tired tortoises are heading home as well..... Find and count two tortoises. Find and count it!"

Other examples of Paras' mother's tendency to control the learning process are evident when she stopped Paras from turning to the next page. Additionally, she consistently guided Paras in counting by indicating the objects to count. However, observations showed that Paras could point and count on her own successfully.

Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2008) suggest that adults often take a controlling approach to learning because of their responsibilities for children's care and development. However, they also highlight that adults who exercise less control and demonstrate interest in children's contributions can foster positive outcomes, such as promoting ongoing conversations, encouraging more dialogue from children, and helping them become active learners. Based on this perspective, Paras' mother controlling behavior may have the opposite effect. Parents can achieve a balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated activities. Their role should be to guide and facilitate learning rather than dominate it. Recognizing children as active participants can enhance their motivation and academic success.

## CONCLUSION

Parents play a crucial role in creating learning opportunities at home, including English learning. However, they may not always be aware of the quality of the teaching they provide. This study found that parents supported their child's learning effectively by acknowledging her interests, providing relevant resources, and engaging in positive and responsive interactions. Activities such as painting and shared book reading created meaningful opportunities for vocabulary development, oral language practice, and early literacy skills. These practices highlight the potential of parental involvement in fostering supportive home environments for English learning.

However, less effective practices were observed. Parents often relied on simple recall and closed-ended questions, which limited opportunities for higher-order thinking, and the mother tended to dominate the learning process, reducing the child's autonomy and initiative. These findings suggest that balancing parental guidance with child-initiated participation is crucial for improving the quality of home-based English learning.

Despite its contribution, the study has several limitations. As a single case study, the findings cannot be generalized to all families, and the observations were limited to a short time and specific activities. Future research should include more diverse families, contexts, and learning activities to provide a broader perspective on English learning at home. The study recommends that parents use more open-ended questioning, give more space for children's initiative, and collaborate with educators to ensure continuity between home and school in supporting children's English development.

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