

EXPLORING FAMILY-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN DAILY LIFE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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Abstract

Family-based English language learning has emerged as a promising alternative to formal instruction, yet limited research has examined its real-life application. A gap remains between theoretical frameworks of language acquisition and the ways in which families implement them in domestic settings. This study, conducted in Indonesia, aimed to explore how interactive learning strategies within a home environment supported the development of English language skills. Employing a narrative inquiry approach, the research focused on a multilingual family consisting of five members, including a high school-aged child. The findings revealed that daily English conversations, the use of multimedia resources, the encouragement of self-directed learning, emotional support, and the cultivation of a growth mindset significantly facilitated language acquisition. These practices aligned with prominent theories such as Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory, Benson's Self-Directed Learning Framework, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, and Dweck's Growth Mindset Theory. However, challenges were also identified, including limited parental English proficiency, time constraints, fluctuating learner motivation, limited access to technology, and the need for sensitive error correction. The study concludes that active family involvement, even in the absence of formal training, can effectively bridge the gap between theory and practice in language learning. Further research is recommended to investigate varied family contexts and to design intervention programs that enhance family-based English learning.

Keywords: Family-Based Learning, Narrative Inquiry, Family Involvement

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the significance of English as a global lingua franca has grown considerably, exerting influence not only on formal education systems but also on language practices within domestic environments. Traditionally, English language acquisition has been associated with structured instruction in school settings. However, emerging research trends increasingly highlight the role of home-based language learning, particularly in multilingual contexts such as Indonesia. Within this framework, the family functions as a vital domain for language socialization, where children are exposed to English through daily interactions, media consumption, and routine activities (Nugroho & Roekhan, 2024). This perspective aligns with the behaviorist theory of language acquisition, which posits that language learning is facilitated through imitation, reinforcement, and environmental stimuli (Leeder, 2022). When children consistently engage with English in interactive family settings—such as viewing English-language cartoons, singing songs, and utilizing digital resources—they acquire language in a natural and meaningful manner.

Recent scholarly investigations have affirmed the positive influence of parental involvement on children's English learning outcomes. (Choi et al., 2024) and Sumanti (2022) observed that children whose parents actively support their English learning tend to demonstrate higher motivation, more positive attitudes toward language acquisition, and increased communicative confidence. In parallel, Anggraini et al. (2022) highlights the efficacy of audiovisual materials in fostering early vocabulary development within home environments. Drawing on Epstein's framework of parental involvement, (Salac & Florida, n.d.) identifies home-based learning, shared decision-making, and community collaboration

as critical components in promoting language development. These findings reinforce the importance of the home as a learning environment, yet they often focus primarily on formal or semi-formal interventions.

Despite these contributions, a critical limitation persists in the existing literature—namely, the limited attention given to organically occurring language practices within multilingual households. Although English is extensively included in the curriculum of Indonesian schools as a non-native language, its presence in daily household communication is still uncommon (Lumbanbatu et al., 2023). Consequently, families that consciously integrate English into household interactions offer a unique yet underexplored context for naturalistic language acquisition. These families often adopt a blended linguistic approach, combining English with local languages such as Indonesian and Javanese. Pujiawati & Riady (2022) notes that discourse strategies like code-switching and translanguaging are frequently employed by parents to encourage English communication, reflecting a dynamic and adaptive use of language that warrants deeper investigation.

In addition, the role of sibling interaction in language development remains underrepresented in the literature. While many studies emphasize parent-child dynamics, the influence of peer-like communication between siblings—especially in multilingual families—has received comparatively little scholarly attention. Informal learning that occurs through sibling communication may serve as a significant catalyst for language acquisition, particularly in reinforcing consistent language use and enhancing fluency (Wahyuningsih & Mua'dib, 2023; Wulandari et al., n.d.). This gap indicates a need for research that explores the broader ecology of home-based language learning, including the roles of all family members in shaping language practices.

This study is further anchored in several key theoretical frameworks that inform the understanding of language acquisition in home settings. Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development* emphasizes the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in advancing children's learning. Krashen's *Affective Filter Hypothesis* highlights the role of emotional support and low-stress environments in facilitating language acquisition. Mayer's *Multimedia Learning Theory* supports the idea that combining visual and auditory inputs can enhance comprehension and retention. Benson's *Self-Directed Learning Framework* underpins the importance of learner autonomy, especially in informal settings like the home. Finally, Dweck's *Growth Mindset Theory* contributes to understanding how beliefs about learning potential can influence persistence and motivation in language learning. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens through which to interpret family-based English learning practices.

To address these gaps, the present study investigates how English is acquired and maintained within a multilingual Indonesian family that actively incorporates the language into everyday communication. This narrative case study focuses on a senior high school student in Paiton District who regularly engages in English conversations with both parents and younger siblings. This study seeks to address the following inquiries:

- 1) How can various interactive learning strategies be implemented in the family environment to support English language learning?
- 2) What are the challenges faced by families in implementing family-based English learning strategies?

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are threefold: to identify home-based strategies that support English acquisition; to analyze the obstacles faced in implementing these strategies; and to explore the adaptive practices families employ to foster sustained bilingual development. The novelty of this research lies in its localized investigation of family language dynamics, with particular emphasis on the underexplored role of sibling

interaction in English language acquisition. By focusing on an authentic, non-formal learning environment, this study contributes new insights to the fields of family language policy, bilingual education, and sociolinguistics in multilingual societies. Ultimately, the findings are expected to provide practical guidance for families and educators in cultivating linguistically rich and supportive home environments. Furthermore, this research offers implications for educational policymakers aiming to enhance formal English instruction through complementary, family-based strategies—particularly in contexts where access to high-quality English education remains limited.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design using a narrative inquiry approach to explore the lived experience of an 11th-grade student in learning English within a family-based environment. The research focuses on how English is acquired and practiced in the home setting, particularly through daily interactions and family support. A narrative inquiry approach is considered appropriate, as it allows for a detailed exploration of personal experiences and the socio-cultural context that shapes language learning.

The subject of this study is an 11th-grade student at SMA Tunas Luhur, located in Paiton District, East Java, who actively engages in English language learning at home. To enrich the data and provide a broader perspective on family-based English learning, the study also involves other members of her immediate family, including her father, mother, and two younger siblings. While the main focus remains on the eldest daughter to obtain an in-depth understanding of her individual learning journey, insights from her family members are essential to uncover the dynamics of support, interaction, and collaborative learning in the household.

This particular family was selected based on specific criteria, including the frequent use of English in daily communication at home, the active role of the eldest daughter in guiding her siblings, and the family's willingness to participate in the research. Their consistent involvement in English language interactions made them a rich case for narrative inquiry, which aims to explore detailed, contextual, and personal learning experiences.

Ethical considerations were thoroughly addressed in this study. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participating family members, including parental consent for the minor participants. The purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the participants' rights were clearly explained. Pseudonyms were used in all documentation to ensure anonymity, and explicit permission was obtained to record the interviews. All data were handled confidentially and stored securely to protect the privacy of the participants.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the main participant and her family members to gain insights into their roles, attitudes, and contributions to English learning. These interviews were designed to be open-ended to encourage detailed narratives and personal reflections.

Direct observations were conducted in the participant's home environment over a period of three weeks to capture authentic practices of English language use in daily life. These observations focused on real-life interactions, including language usage during conversations, informal learning activities, and the implementation of family-based learning strategies. The researcher paid particular attention to natural moments of translanguaging, the use of digital media such as videos or games, and peer teaching between the participant and her younger siblings. Field notes were taken throughout the observation process to document linguistic behaviors, learning routines, and contextual factors that may not have surfaced

during interviews. This observational data was used to complement the interview results by providing contextual evidence and helping to uncover learning dynamics within the family that emerged organically in daily life.

Documentation was also employed as a supplementary data source. This included various learning resources used by the participant, such as English textbooks (e.g., *English Time 1*, *Let's Go 1*, *Fun with English 4*), educational television programs (e.g., *Hi-5*), and English-language movies. These materials reflect the types of language exposure available in the participant's home and their role in supporting English acquisition.

The collected data were analyzed using narrative analysis following the framework proposed by Riessman, (2008). This approach involves coding and categorizing narrative accounts to identify emerging themes across the data. Key themes—such as parental support, motivation, learning strategies, and the reciprocal influence between the participant and family members—were developed inductively from the participant's stories.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was applied by cross-validating data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with the main participant to ensure the accuracy of the narratives. Furthermore, peer debriefing with fellow researchers was conducted to reduce potential researcher bias and to uphold analytical rigor throughout the research process.

Through this method, the study seeks to offer a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of English language learning within a family environment, emphasizing the dynamic interaction between individual initiative and familial support.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study focused on exploring various interactive learning strategies implemented within the family environment to support English language learning for a high school student. Comprehensive insights into the family's role in facilitating English language acquisition. Following the observation period, interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into the participant's experiences and perceptions of English language learning within the family. Several important points emerged during the interviews:

Parental Motivation and the Value of English

The participant described how her father emphasized the importance of English from a young age, which shaped her long-term motivation and interest in the language.

“My father once told me that English would be essential for future careers and education because many important references are available in English. Since childhood, my family has encouraged me to watch English shows, listen to English songs, and read English books.”

“My parents recognize the long-term benefits of learning English, such as improved educational opportunities and career prospects, which further enhances our motivation to learn.”

These statements illustrate how the family, especially the father, played an essential role in building the participant's motivation. This future-oriented thinking shows how parental belief

systems directly influenced the participant's attitude and persistence in learning English from a young age.

Multilingual Practices and Code-Switching at Home

The participant shared how everyday communication in her family naturally involved switching between English, Indonesian, and Javanese, creating a rich multilingual environment that supported her language development.

"We often use mixed language when talking, mainly Indonesian and English, and sometimes Javanese. I mostly use English with my siblings."

The participant's experience of switching between languages in daily conversations demonstrates a natural multilingual environment that supports bilingual competence. This linguistic fluidity at home not only reinforces English usage but also enhances cognitive flexibility and comfort with using English in real-life contexts.

Informal Learning through Digital Media

The participant recounted how engaging with digital media such as cartoons, music, and online content played a central role in her informal English learning journey at home.

"One of my preferred learning activities involves watching movies, as it enables me to improve my English by becoming familiar with pronunciation patterns and acquiring new vocabulary through visual and auditory exposure."

"When I was little, I loved watching and dancing along to the 'Hi-5' TV show. I sang along with English songs and even responded to characters like Dora the Explorer in English."

"Movies, video games, and social media are ways I want to make learning more fun and interactive."

These quotes emphasize the participant's engagement with various media formats as self-directed learning tools. The use of entertainment and visual-auditory resources demonstrates how informal learning can become enjoyable and effective, particularly when integrated into daily routines.

Emotional Connection and Peer Collaboration

The participant emphasized that learning English at home was not only an academic activity but also an emotionally supportive experience shared with her siblings.

"I feel happy because I have companions to practice English with. We improve our accents and communicate better together."

"It affected our relationships positively. For example, my youngest brother, who is now in Grade 4, started learning English through audio and videos at home."

"I hope that as time goes on, our English skills as a family will keep improving. We are still learning and not native speakers."

The participant not only benefited linguistically but also emotionally. These family learning dynamics fostered a warm, collaborative environment where English was not only a subject of study but a shared experience.

Teaching Role and Sibling Interaction

The participant described her evolving role as both a learner and a mentor to her younger siblings, illustrating how teaching others reinforced her own understanding of English.

“One challenge is helping my youngest brother with grammar. Sometimes he spells words phonetically wrong, like writing 'buk' for 'book', so I show him subtitles in videos to guide him.”

“Learning English in the family is a journey—a long experience filled with small steps and memorable moments with my parents and siblings.”

These reflections reveal how the participant acted as a mentor within the family, guiding her siblings through Basic English learning. This peer teaching experience allowed the participant to reinforce her own understanding while building a supportive learning culture at home.

Real-World Use and Family Encouragement

The participant highlighted moments when her family encouraged her to use English in real-life settings, which boosted her confidence and readiness to communicate beyond the home.

“During a family gathering, my father encouraged me to talk to a native English speaker, and I managed to hold the conversation fluently. It was a great experience for me.”

“These activities helped improve my English conversation flow and adaptability with different people.”

“By making English a habit at home, it becomes natural over time, which benefits everyone by broadening their knowledge and education.”

The application of English outside the home environment, supported by family encouragement, demonstrates the success of experiential learning. These practices strengthened the participant's confidence, fluency, and real-world readiness.

Fluency Development and Accent Differences

The participant reflected on her own advanced fluency in English compared to her family members, attributing this to early and consistent exposure to native-like input through media.

“People often say I sound like a native speaker. I think it's because I've been using English a lot, especially since I was little. I also mimic the way people talk in movies or shows. My parents and siblings can speak English too, but their accents are still a bit stiff.”

This quote highlights the participant's high level of English fluency, particularly in terms of pronunciation and intonation, which closely resembles that of native speakers. Her

advanced speaking skills are the result of sustained exposure, mimicry, and consistent usage since early childhood. In contrast, while her parents and younger siblings are also able to communicate effectively in English, their speech tends to reflect a non-native accent and more rigid intonation patterns. This difference illustrates the participant's deeper engagement with the language and her role as a linguistic model within the family, contributing to the overall English-speaking culture in the household.

Learning Resources and Documentation

The participant explained how she and her siblings utilized various learning materials, such as textbooks and children's programs, to support structured and enjoyable language learning at home.

"At home, I usually use books like Let's Go 1 and English Time 1 to help my younger siblings learn basic vocabulary. We read together, and I ask them to repeat the words after me."

"Sometimes we use the Fun with English and Oxford Reading Tree books. I like them because they have colorful pictures and simple stories that are easy for my little brother to follow."

"My Pals Are Here! English 4 is one of our favorite books. The exercises are fun, and we often take turns answering the questions."

"We often watch Hi-5 together. It's not just entertaining, but we also sing along and repeat the English phrases used in the show."

"Watching English movies helps us with pronunciation. When we don't understand a word, we look at the subtitles and try to guess the meaning."

These direct statements illustrate the participant's proactive role in using books and media to support learning within the home. Her use of accessible and engaging resources reflects an understanding of both pedagogical strategies and the learning needs of her siblings. Audiovisual materials also enhanced their engagement and comprehension, turning passive entertainment into an active learning opportunity.

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the implementation of interactive learning strategies in a family-based English learning environment and to identify the challenges faced in this process. Through a narrative inquiry approach focusing on a single participant and her family, rich insights were obtained about how English language acquisition is supported informally at home. This discussion section elaborates on the major findings, relates them to existing theories and previous research, and highlights how these findings contribute to filling the identified research gap. The discussion is organized according to the research questions proposed in the study.

Implementation of Interactive Learning Strategies in the Family Environment

The findings of this study reveal that various interactive strategies were actively implemented by the participant's family to support English language learning at home. This finding contrasts with classroom settings, where numerous educators continue to face challenges in consistently using English as the medium of instruction, despite its well-

documented advantages (Ferdiyanto et al., 2021). Daily conversation in English between the parents and their children formed the fundamental practice, allowing language exposure in natural contexts. Islam (2023) found, student-led discussions and peer explanations—such as the ‘Everyone is a Teacher Here’ method—encourage meaningful communication and improve comprehension, mirroring the participant’s role in guiding her younger siblings. This practice reflects Vygotskij & Cole (1981) sociocultural theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learning is mediated through social interactions with more capable individuals. In this case, the parents provided scaffolded interactions, adjusting the complexity of their English to suit the child's developing proficiency. Hamdani (2020) similarly observed that picture-based models, such as the Picture-Word Inductive Model, significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition by providing meaningful visual stimuli.

Additionally, the participant reported that their family frequently utilized multimedia tools, such as English movies, YouTube channels, and learning apps like Duolingo, to facilitate enjoyable language exposure. In line with this, R. Islam (2023) found that game-based activities, group discussions, and multimedia tools such as projectors help students feel more comfortable and engaged in English learning. This aligns with Mayer (2024) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which emphasizes that combining verbal and visual materials can significantly enhance comprehension and memory retention. The strategic integration of multimedia in the home environment demonstrates the family's effort to create a rich, multimodal learning context.

Moreover, the family encouraged autonomous learning practices, such as setting personal vocabulary goals and engaging in independent reading. This supports Benson (2011) perspective on self-directed learning, where learners take initiative and responsibility for their learning processes. The family's approach fostered a sense of ownership and motivation in the participant, essential factors in sustaining long-term language acquisition.

Emotional support also played a critical role. The parents consistently provided positive reinforcement and celebrated small achievements, which resonates with Krashen (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis, suggesting that lower anxiety and higher motivation facilitate more effective language acquisition. Through consistent encouragement, the family helped the participant maintain a positive emotional environment conducive to learning.

Furthermore, the growth mindset promoted by the parents, where mistakes were seen as part of the learning journey, directly supports Dweck (2016) theory. By framing errors as opportunities for growth, the participant felt more confident experimenting with the language without fear of failure. This mindset proved crucial in maintaining persistent engagement with English activities despite challenges. Another critical aspect emerging from the findings was the role of family routines in embedding English language learning into daily life. The participant’s family integrated English naturally into household activities such as cooking, shopping, and storytelling time. This approach resonates with the ecological systems theory proposed by Bronfenbrenner (2009), which emphasizes that a child's development is profoundly influenced by the multiple environments they engage with daily. By embedding English in routine activities across different microsystems (home, community), the family created authentic learning contexts that enhanced language use relevance and retention.

Moreover, the findings highlight the importance of culturally responsive practices within family-based learning. The participant’s family occasionally incorporated local cultural elements into English discussions, such as narrating traditional stories or discussing cultural celebrations in English. This approach aligns with García & Wei (2014) theory of translanguaging, where multilingual speakers strategically use their entire linguistic repertoire to make meaning, facilitate communication, and support learning. By allowing the natural

blending of languages when necessary, the family fostered a more flexible, meaningful, and supportive language learning environment, rather than enforcing rigid language boundaries.

These findings demonstrate that even within an informal family setting, the implementation of interactive learning strategies, supported by relevant theories, can significantly nurture English language acquisition. This supports (Zainuddin, 2024) view that speaking is one of the four essential skills—alongside listening, reading, and writing—that learners must master to achieve full language proficiency.

Challenges Faced in Implementing Family-Based English Learning Strategies

Despite the successes, the participant's family also encountered notable challenges. One primary issue was the limited English proficiency of the parents at the initial stage. Although they gradually improved through consistent practice, their early struggles echo Vygotskij & Cole (1981) assertion that mediators in the ZPD must themselves possess sufficient competence to effectively guide learning. Initial gaps in parental English skills temporarily hindered the smoothness of early interactions.

Another challenge was time management. Balancing work, school, and extracurricular activities often constrained the amount of time available for structured English practice. Warschauer (2002) emphasized that time constraints are a common barrier in integrating language practice into daily life, even in technology-rich environments. Although the family made deliberate efforts to prioritize English exposure, external commitments sometimes reduced the consistency of interactions.

Maintaining the child's motivation also presented difficulties. There were periods when the participant exhibited decreased enthusiasm toward English activities, particularly when academic pressures increased. According to Deci & Ryan (2000) Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation can waver when individuals experience external stressors that diminish their sense of autonomy or competence. The family addressed this by adapting activities to align with the participant's evolving interests, such as switching from formal exercises to game-based learning.

Technological challenges also arose, including limited access to advanced learning applications requiring paid subscriptions. Warschauer (2002) highlights that equitable access to digital learning resources remains a significant issue in home-based education settings. Although the family utilized free resources creatively, the lack of access to premium content somewhat restricted the diversity of learning materials.

Finally, correcting language errors without discouraging the learner proved to be a delicate balancing act. The participant mentioned feeling frustrated at times when corrections were made too abruptly. This reflects Long (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of negotiation of meaning and sensitive corrective feedback during language development. Over time, the parents learned to employ more supportive correction strategies, such as recasting and clarification requests, to maintain a positive learning atmosphere.

In sum, while the family successfully implemented a range of strategies aligned with established theories, they also navigated multiple challenges that required ongoing adjustment and resilience. Unlike previous studies that examined English language acquisition in formal school or classroom settings, this study reveals how family-based interactions, emotional support, and everyday practices at home can significantly shape English learning. By highlighting the role of parents and siblings as active agents in the learning process, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how informal environments can complement or even substitute formal language education, particularly in multilingual households.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that family-based English language learning, when supported by intentional daily practices, emotional encouragement, and multimedia resources, can significantly enhance language acquisition even in non-formal settings. The findings demonstrate that despite challenges such as limited parental proficiency, time constraints, and motivation fluctuations, families can operationalize key theoretical frameworks—such as Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development and Dweck’s Growth Mindset Theory—effectively at home. The implementation of interactive learning strategies, including daily English conversations and self-directed activities, fosters a supportive environment that bridges the gap between theoretical models and practical learning experiences.

Practically, this research suggests that families, even without formal pedagogical backgrounds, can cultivate English language skills by consistently engaging children in meaningful and emotionally supportive communication. Educators and policymakers should consider involving families as active partners in language education programs, providing guidance and resources that strengthen the home learning environment.

For future research, it is recommended to explore a wider range of family backgrounds, including those with different socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic contexts. Longitudinal studies are also encouraged to assess the long-term impact of family-based learning strategies on language development. Additionally, intervention-based research could be conducted to design programs that support families in optimizing their role as facilitators of English language acquisition at home.

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