

Recognising Diverse Forms of Parental Involvement in ESL Learning Across Socioeconomic Contexts

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Abstract—Parents play a significant role in children’s development and education. This paper examines parental involvement in children’s ESL learning in Malaysian public primary schools. Using semi-structured interviews with 12 parents (six low-income; six high-income) and thematic analysis, we identified seven themes: home learning environment, homework assistance, English communication, learning tools, ESL activities, support and encouragement, and home–school partnership. Both income groups were highly engaged, but strategies differed: Low-income families described resourceful, low-cost practices such as dedicated study spaces, readily available materials, vocabulary work, while high-income families reported tailoring activities to children’s interests, wider use of electronic devices and apps, and in some cases enrolment in private English classes. These patterns align with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems and Vygotsky’s social-constructivist perspectives that emphasise how environments and interactions shape support for learning. The findings suggest practical avenues for inclusive family-school collaboration and low-cost, home-based supports that recognise diverse family contexts.

Index Terms—parental involvement, ESL children, ESL learning, socioeconomic status, qualitative study

I. INTRODUCTION

Children’s development benefits from the involvement of various individuals and groups, including their parents (Kamal et al., 2023). Parents are among the most important individuals in a child’s life, influencing their learning and growth in many ways. Past studies illustrate that active parental involvement (henceforth PI) in children’s learning, leads to general well-being and academic achievement (Santrock, 2016), enhanced educational outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2007) and positive behavioural and cognitive engagement (Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2016). PI is a complex concept that has been defined and discussed differently by researchers (e.g., Kamal et al., 2022; Hill, 2022; Roy & Giraldo-García, 2018; Smokoska, 2020). For instance, PI can be seen as a single or multifaceted construct, with categorisations into home-based and school-based involvement being commonly used (Green et al., 2007; Kamal et al., 2022). Hill (2022, p. 309) asserts that PI encompasses the engagement of family members with teachers and children at school and at home. Roy and Giraldo-García (2018) suggest that PI, in its many forms, can be applied to foster parent–school relationships, introduce school-like activities at home, interact with children about school, and monitor screen time. Similarly, Smokoska (2020, p. 5) explains PI as parental support and engagement at home and in relationships with the school. The term “involvement” has also been equated with “participation” and “influence” in other studies, denoting similar meanings (Hosseinpour et al., 2015; Majid et al., 2005). Scholars have observed that PI is defined inconsistently, making results difficult to compare and synthesise (Jaiswal & Choudhuri, 2017; Shute et al., 2011). One strand privileges homework monitoring; another, shared reading. We therefore approach PI as a context-sensitive construct, shaped by families’ sociocultural norms and economic resources (Hill, 2022; Roy & Giraldo-García, 2018). From this standpoint, the present study investigates how parents from distinct SES backgrounds in Malaysian primary schools support ESL learning, addressing a gap in the local literature (Kamal et al., 2022). The research focuses on investigating the PI strategies employed by parents from two distinct SES groups in Malaysia: the B40 group (bottom 40% earners) and the

T20 group (top 20% earners) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). By examining these groups, the research explores how sociocultural factors and available resources shape the diverse strategies parents utilise to support their children's ESL learning journey.

The overarching research question guiding this study is: How do the diverse sociocultural backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses of parents influence the strategies they employ to support their children's ESL learning in Malaysian primary schools? By incorporating a sociocultural perspective and comparing SES groups, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the cultural values, resources, and opportunities that shape PI in children's ESL learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review systematically identifies existing knowledge pertaining to the research questions as outlined by Bullock (2014). A few subtopics were presented, including theories related to PI, PI and children's learning outcomes factors that influence PI in children's ESL learning, particularly focusing on the interplay of social, cultural, and economic contexts.

A. Theories Related to PI

This research delves into the complexities of socioeconomic and sociocultural perspectives on parental involvement in children's ESL Learning. Drawing upon two prominent theoretical frameworks: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) and Vygotsky's Social Constructivism (1978). Together, these frameworks provide a holistic understanding of the socioeconomic and sociocultural factors shaping parental involvement in children's ESL learning. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory lays the groundwork by highlighting the multifaceted environmental influences on child development. This theory depicts children as embedded within a series of interconnected systems, each influencing their experiences and behaviours. The innermost layer, the microsystem, encompasses the immediate environment where children spend a significant amount of time, such as family, teachers, and peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Moving outward, the mesosystem focuses on the interactions between these microsystems (Frankel et al., 2015). The ecosystem represents settings that indirectly impact children, such as a parent's workplace (Hayes et al., 2017). Finally, the outermost layer, the macrosystem, encompasses the broader cultural and societal contexts that shape all the other systems (Krishnan, 2010).

Vygotsky's Social Constructivism complements Bronfenbrenner's model by emphasising the social and interactive nature of learning. This theory posits that knowledge is not passively transmitted but actively constructed through social interaction and meaning-making (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is particularly relevant. The ZPD refers to the gap between a learner's current level of development and what they can achieve with assistance from a more knowledgeable person (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 84-91). This concept highlights the importance of social interaction in pushing learners beyond their current capabilities and fostering cognitive growth.

The synergy between these frameworks lies in their focus on the interplay between environments and social interactions. Bronfenbrenner's model provides the backdrop for social constructivist processes to unfold. The environments within Bronfenbrenner's framework become the breeding ground for social interactions that fuel learning within the ZPD. For instance, within the microsystem of the classroom, a student's interaction with a teacher can become a platform for social construction of knowledge. The teacher's guidance and support (scaffolding) can push the student's understanding beyond what they could grasp independently, activating their ZPD (Xue, 2023, p. 166).

Similarly, mesosystem interactions (e.g., home-school collaboration) can align support across contexts, reinforcing learning within a child's ZPD. Collaboration between teachers and parents, for example, can create a more unified learning experience that reinforces the concepts explored within the classroom environment.

B. PI and Children's Learning Outcomes

Research on the impact of parental involvement on student learning is inconclusive. Several studies, like Ahmad et al. (2017) and Manukaram et al. (2013), suggest that active engagement at home (creating a learning environment, communicating, supporting academic goals) leads to increased student engagement and self-regulated learning. This might even influence their life goals. Furthermore, Ramalingam et al. (2019) highlight how specific actions of PI such as helping with homework, making decisions about education, and volunteering can influence student achievement. Interestingly, Raslie et al. (2020) reported a positive link between PI in home literacy activities (even at low levels) and academic achievement, suggesting that any engagement might be beneficial. Kuan and Chuen (2017) offer a contrasting perspective, suggesting no significant relationship between PI and academic achievement. In the context of PI in children's ESL learning, several types of strategies were identified in the previous studies. Two most prominent are reading with children (Çalışkan & Ulas, 2022; Kamal et al., 2021; Skwarchuk et al., 2022) and providing homework assistance (Kalayci & Öz, 2018; Kamal et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). In addition, school-based PI such as attending parent-teacher meetings was also reported (Bromley & Yazdanpanah, 2021).

Several studies examined the relationship between PI and children's ESL learning. For instance, Çalışkan and Ulas (2022), involving 104 primary school students, found that PI in English reading activities had a positive impact on children's reading development. Wang et al. (2023) studied 253 students and reported that PI increased children's

academic performance in English, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, Skwarchuk et al. (2022), using a mixed-method approach with 82 parents of Canadian school children, discovered that parental shared reading with their children successfully improved their vocabulary. Programme-level syntheses show reading-led family activities and accessible materials are common denominators of impact (Ishak et al., 2025), reinforcing the value of home-based practices alongside school-based engagement in ESL learning. Taken together, these findings suggest that PI can positively support children's English learning in various ways, including reading practice, homework engagement, and vocabulary development.

C. Factors Influencing PI: Socioeconomic Status and Sociocultural Background

Socioeconomic status and sociocultural background are two major factors influencing PI in children's primary-level ESL education. For example, parents with higher SES often have more resources at their disposal, such as finances, time, and education. This allows them to provide more direct and diversified support for their children's learning. They might invest in after-school programmes, create enriched learning environments at home, and directly guide their children's homework (Lee, 2010).

However, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds should not be underestimated. Despite facing challenges like limited finances, long working hours, and potentially less access to technology, they still show dedication and creativity in supporting their children's ESL development. Examples include reading stories together, using everyday objects for learning activities, and actively encouraging their children (Lynch, 2008; Kamal & Hashim, 2021). Importantly, studies suggest that PI can significantly benefit children from low SES families, potentially bridging the achievement gap through parental commitment (Duan et al., 2018). The educational involvement shown by these parents is equally crucial, as their dedication could compensate for academic disadvantages faced by children from underprivileged backgrounds (Duan et al., 2018).

Cultural beliefs and practices significantly influence PI styles. Misunderstandings between parents and teachers can arise due to contrasting expectations (Li, 2004; Kamal, 2020). For instance, some cultures may emphasise rote memorisation for learning, while others prioritise critical thinking and questioning (Li, 2004, p. 14). Similarly, research by Kamal (2020) found that parents in her study perceived homework as crucial while teachers expressed concern that homework might not be completed if given. Additionally, Heath (1983) in her seminal work: *Way with Words* showed that literacy development practices can vary widely, some communities use books and reading session for language development, while others emphasise storytelling and oral traditions. Despite these differences, a common thread binding parents across backgrounds is the parents' aspiration for their children's success. This translates into a diverse range of strategies employed by parents such as direct support including activities like homework assistance, shared reading, pronunciation practice, and incorporating songs, music, and technology into learning (Kamal & Hashim, 2021; Pendleton, 2017). Kamal and Hashim (2021) also reported that some parents use creative approaches like using pizza boxes for spelling activities or leveraging phonics principles for reading guidance. In addition to that, cultural influences extend beyond language. Effective communication and collaboration between families and educators are crucial to bridge cultural gaps and create a supportive learning environment for all children.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative method, immersing itself in the lived experiences of people in natural settings, using non-numerical data like interviews, observations, and documents, offering an in-depth understanding of social life (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This research chose a qualitative approach because it aimed to understand a real-world situation involving a group of people (Gustafsson, 2017). This method is particularly helpful where prior research is limited (Kumar, 2011). This study employs semi-structured interviews to understand experiences and perceptions of the participants. Adopting purposive sampling technique, participants were carefully chosen based on their relevance to the research questions and objectives (Bryman, 2012). Participants were selected from parents of primary school children in Standards 4-6, where exposure to English is typically greater than in lower standards. Additionally, participants were chosen from either the low-income (B40) or high-income (T20) groups to align with the study's focus. A gatekeeper, specifically a school teacher, assisted in identifying suitable participants. The researchers then contacted the parents and obtained their consent to participate in the study. Each parent was interviewed for 30 to 60 minutes regarding their PI in the ESL education by using semi-structured interview. The interviews were conducted in Malay for B40 parents and in English for T20 parents, after confirming each participant's language preference. Prior to the data collection, ethical clearance was applied from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the researcher's university. Once approved, formal consent was requested from the State Education Department, as it involved parents and primary school children who reside in the district. After receiving approval, an introductory letter was sent to the selected school, requesting cooperation in identifying suitable participants, particularly parents of primary school children from B40 and T20 groups.

Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed non-verbatim before being analysed. Codes, sub-themes and themes were identified and finalised. Findings are reported using themes and excerpts from the parents' interviews are used to support the themes presented and discussed.

IV. FINDINGS

Research question: The influence of parental SES and sociocultural background on the strategies parents use to support their children's ESL learning.

A. Theme 1: Home-Learning Environment

One prominent strategy employed by both B40 and T20 parents is the creation of dedicated study spaces, whether a separate room or a designated study table. A B40 parent explained, *"We have set up a room for studying... It has helped spark their interest in learning."* Another B40 parent emphasised the importance of a study room, describing it as *"essential for children to feel comfortable."* A T20 parent added that a dedicated space allows children to focus on their studies and minimise distractions. Across the socioeconomic spectrum, parents also acknowledged the value of books in fostering ESL development. A few B40 parents and all T20 parents reported purchasing English books for their children. As one B40 parent put it, *"I buy them English books..."*. Another B40 parent noted a limitation: *"I rarely buy books for them because, if I do, they will ask me for help and I cannot assist because I have little knowledge of English."* This highlights challenges some B40 parents face in fully supporting book-based learning due to their own English proficiency. Several T20 parents described taking their children to bookstores and involving them in choosing materials: *"I also bring them to the bookstore to buy books,"* and *"I buy him books, as I always bring him to the bookstore."* The data also suggest that T20 parents showed greater flexibility in tailoring learning to a child's interests. For example, one T20 parent leveraged a passion for music: *"I don't stress my child to study 24 hours. I focus on her interests. My daughter likes music, so I ask her to listen to English songs and jot down any meanings she doesn't know."* Another T20 parent personalised learning by supporting a child's interest in writing and reading novels, providing English books and encouraging online research.

B. Theme 2: Homework Assistance

The majority of parents in both groups (B40 and T20) helped their children with homework. A B40 parent said, *"I always help them because I feel sorry when they struggle with their homework. I always check and assist them."* T20 parents echoed this: *"Yes, I always help them,"* and *"Yes, I help them every day."* Three B40 parents also highlighted challenges in directly assisting with ESL homework; as one noted, *"I've done my best to assist my child in the past, but currently, due to my own limitations, I find it challenging to provide the help they need."* At the same time, several parents described approaches that foster independent problem-solving. A B40 parent explained, *"Not entirely. I usually ask and provide encouragement. They usually refer to the internet for assistance."* Similarly, a T20 parent said, *"I typically don't directly assist her with homework... she takes the initiative to solve problems independently and does her best to complete assignments on her own."* Another T20 parent expressed a preference for independence unless the child encounters significant difficulty.

C. Theme 3: English Communication

Several B40 parents acknowledged limited English proficiency, which made it difficult to communicate in English at home. One B40 parent explained, *"No, I don't, because speaking in English is difficult for me. My daily language is Kelantanese, so it's hard for me."* Despite these challenges, B40 parents still sought to support learning-helping with individual words, strengthening vocabulary, and discussing school matters in the home language when needed. T20 parents reported a wider range of communication styles. While one parent rarely used English at home, others frequently incorporated it into conversations, often code-mixing depending on the situation. As one T20 parent put it: *"Yes, normally I will mix, and it depends on the situation."* Another noted: *"Yes, it depends on the situation, but I usually speak a lot in English."* One T20 parent also used English strategically to keep interactions engaging: *"I always communicate with her in English, but not all the time. I use English so she doesn't feel bored"*.

D. Theme 4: Learning Tools and Supplementary Instructions

While some B40 parents did not provide gadgets specifically for their children, they demonstrated resourcefulness. One B40 parent explained, *"No, my children don't have any gadgets since they are students. But I let them use my phone if they have homework. Usually, they use the internet to find the meaning of words."* These parents often allowed supervised access to a smartphone to look up vocabulary or complete assignments. T20 parents generally reported a wider range of electronic devices for their children, including smartphones, laptops, and tablets. These devices were used for various ESL-related purposes. As one parent said, *"I bought her an iPad because I think nowadays the internet and technology are essential-she needs that for her studies."* Devices were also used for vocabulary building: *"She always uses online vocabulary and English applications."* In addition, parents described using devices for English language exposure: *"She normally uses English applications such as online games, word searches, online vocabulary, and listening to music."* A few T20 parents also reported enrolling their children in private English classes as an additional support alongside home activities.

E. Theme 5: ESL Activities

Vocabulary development activities were a common focus among both B40 and T20 parents. One B40 parent described working on vocabulary enrichment: *"I usually help them with vocabulary, so sometimes we sit together and look up*

meanings in the dictionary; sometimes I use a picture dictionary.” Another B40 parent noted, “I ask him to do revision, and whenever she encounters a difficult word, we look it up together and I explain the meaning for better understanding.” A T20 parent shared, “During her revision, I sometimes prepare a list of vocabulary and ask her to search for the meanings.” Reading English books or novels was also a shared activity among B40 parents to promote comprehension and exposure to new vocabulary: “Normally we read an English book together during revision time.” T20 parents reported a wider range of activities, potentially due to greater access to resources. These activities aimed not only to build vocabulary but also to encourage spoken English and broader exposure to the language. For instance, one T20 parent encouraged conversation by asking the child to describe the day in English: “I always encourage her to speak with me in English. She tries her best to tell me about her day in English.” Another T20 parent framed everyday communication as an ESL activity: “I think communicating in English counts as an ESL activity, because most of our communication is in English.” Several T20 parents mentioned watching English cartoons or television together, with one explaining the storyline when needed: “We always communicate in English, watch English television together, and whenever she doesn’t understand the storyline, I explain it to her.” Finally, another T20 parent highlighted games and songs as engaging practice: “Additionally, we listen to English songs together and play English games when I have free time”.

F. Theme 6: Support and Encouragement

Four parents from both B40 and T20 backgrounds described various approaches to motivate their children. Several parents in both groups emphasised the importance of consistent encouragement and its positive effects. A T20 parent noted, “Yes, providing encouragement and motivation is effective.” Similarly, a B40 parent said, “Besides buying them books, consistently providing encouragement and asking about their well-being can positively impact children.” Some T20 parents reported using positive reinforcement (e.g., rewards or compliments). One parent explained, “I give a reward or token to my child if he excels in his academics. This helps him stay motivated and perform well alongside other students in his class. I feel that he likes my approach, as he feels appreciated for his efforts.” Several T20 parents also aimed to cultivate a genuine interest in English: “For me, providing motivation is crucial because it is one of the ways to engage with children and foster their love for English.” B40 parents described interest-sparking strategies, such as sharing personal experiences and incorporating media: “I consistently provide him with motivational support by sharing my past experiences, aiming to boost his interest. Additionally, I invite him to listen to English songs and watch English movies.” Some T20 parents used future aspirations to motivate: “Yes, I do this for my daughter. I like to compare the present with her future goals. For instance, if she aspires to attend an international university overseas, I emphasise the importance of studying hard”.

G. Theme 7: Home-School Partnership

A total of ten parents from both B40 and T20 backgrounds acknowledged the importance of attending school meetings. They cited several reasons for participating, such as monitoring their child’s progress. For example, a B40 parent said, “The teachers who interact with them daily know my child well. If we don’t attend, we won’t have insight into how our children behave in school.” A T20 parent noted, “Yes, I always attend because I want to know her level in learning. I would like to know her weaknesses as well as her abilities.” Parents also viewed meetings as opportunities to collaborate with teachers. As one B40 parent explained, “Attending parent–teacher meetings helps us keep track of our child’s progress and understand their strengths and weaknesses. It also provides an opportunity to communicate with teachers and offer suggestions or support, fostering a collaborative approach to our child’s education.” Similarly, a T20 parent saw meetings as a chance to address issues: “Yes, I always join the meeting because it’s the time when we can find out if there are any problems or if teachers need any help from us as parents.” For some B40 parents, meetings were also a way to gain insights from teachers who interact with their children daily and to build relationships: “It’s an opportune time to get to know our child’s teachers and inquire about our child’s progress.” While many parents valued meetings, some faced barriers to consistent attendance, for instance, forgetfulness and limited spousal involvement (B40), or time constraints (T20) often linked to work schedules or childcare responsibilities.

V. DISCUSSION

This research explored the influence of parental socioeconomic status and sociocultural background on the strategies parents use to support their children’s SL learning. Findings illustrate that both B40 and T20 parents actively participated though their approaches varied. For instance, B40 parents tended to rely on home-based strategies including verbal encouragement and shared learning activities. On the other hand, T20 parents employed structured resources such as digital tools and private tutors. Differences were also observed in areas such as English communication, homework support, and access to learning material. Notably, homework mattered to both groups; however, T20 parents were more likely to provide monitored independence-giving children space to work on their own and stepping in when needed, likely reflecting beliefs about fostering self-regulation, the availability of digital tools that scaffold independent work, and confidence in children’s competence (sometimes reinforced by supplementary instruction). In contrast, B40 parents more often provided direct assistance, addressing immediate difficulties and substituting hands-on guidance where digital or structured self-study supports were less available. Prior research has identified various PI strategies in ESL learning, with reading activities (Çalışkan & Ulas, 2022; Kamal et al., 2021; Skwarchuk et al., 2022) and homework assistance (Kalayci

& Öz, 2018; Kamal et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023) taking centre stage. This current study builds upon this foundation by demonstrating how SES shapes these approaches.

The research also unveils the resourcefulness of B40 parents. Despite facing financial constraints, they demonstrated a deep commitment to their children's education, employing creative and low-cost strategies. This aligns with the work of Lynch (2008) and Kamal and Hashim (2021), who documented the use of everyday objects for learning activities. These findings challenge the notion that PI is solely defined by economic means while also recognising how financial resources shape parental involvement approaches. The dedication and creativity of B40 parents showcase the power of parental motivation and resourcefulness in overcoming limitations. It emphasises the importance of acknowledging and valuing the diverse ways all parents, regardless of SES, contribute to their children's learning journey.

The research underscores the significance of sociocultural background in shaping PI styles (Li, 2004; Kamal, 2020). Parental practices both the type of guidance provided during homework and the preferred literacy routines varied between B40 and T20 groups, reflecting cultural influences. Importantly, all parents shared a priority for their children's academic success, evidenced by strategies such as vocabulary-building activities, shared reading, homework support, and the use of digital resources, adopted according to families' access and preferences (e.g., Kamal & Hashim, 2021). The findings on differing PI styles between B40 and T20 parents highlight the potential for collaboration between families and educators to bridge cultural gaps and create a learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of all students. By fostering open communication and acknowledging the cultural nuances of PI styles, schools can create a more inclusive learning environment where all families feel empowered to contribute to their children's ESL development. This emphasis on partnership is consistent with SLR evidence that effective initiatives are situated across both home and institutional settings, creating continuity of support for learners (Ishak et al., 2025).

The findings resonate with both Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and Vygotsky's Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), highlighting the interplay between environmental influences and social interactions in shaping parental support strategies. The home environment, a key element of Bronfenbrenner's microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), emerged as a crucial platform for parental support. Both B40 and T20 parents employed strategies like creating dedicated study spaces and utilising books to foster learning. However, SES disparities became evident. T20 parents exhibited greater flexibility, tailoring learning to their child's interests (e.g., music) and providing a wider range of resources like electronic devices. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's notion that the resources available within the microsystem can impact a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Parental involvement, particularly through attending school meetings, emerged as a significant theme. This finding resonates with Bronfenbrenner's concept of the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), highlighting the importance of communication and collaboration between environments (home and school) to support a child's development. Both B40 and T20 parents viewed meetings as opportunities to gain insights, collaborate with teachers, and address challenges. This collaborative approach strengthens the support system surrounding the child, ultimately benefiting their learning within the microsystem of the classroom (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development sheds light on the significance of social interaction in parental support (Vygotsky, 1978). Within the ZPD, many parents, from both SES groups, offered guidance that fostered independence rather than over-direction. This collaborative approach creates a ZPD, pushing children beyond their independent capabilities (Vygotsky, 1978). Interestingly, some B40 parents supported their children's learning by guiding them to online resources, demonstrating different ways of fostering independent learning beyond direct language instruction. This highlights alternative ways parents can create a supportive learning environment within the ZPD, even with limitations in their own knowledge base.

The study revealed a complex interplay between SES and communication styles used at home. While several B40 parents expressed limitations due to their own English proficiency, their desire to support their children, even in limited ways aligns with the emphasis on social interaction in Vygotsky's theory (Vygotsky, 1978). T20 parents, on the other hand, exhibited a wider range of communication styles, from frequent English use to code-mixing approaches depending on the situation. However, this does not imply a deficit in B40 parents' involvement. Rather, they adapt their language use strategically, often drawing on their home language to support learning. Crucially, home language can be an asset where using children's first language to scaffold English does not impede, but it may strengthen second-language development. For instance, Kim and Yim (2024) found that a supportive literacy environment in children's heritage language (Korean) aids the development of both Korean and English languages. Similarly, a study by Kekejian et al. (2023) revealed that exposure to a language other than English at home does not hinder English language development. Thus, PI in ESL learning does not necessarily depend on exclusive English use. In addition to that, one should perceive home language as an asset that foster the learning of additional languages.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings underscore the need to recognise and value diverse forms of parental involvement, particularly those shaped by families' socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Rather than assuming one "right" way, it is important to appreciate the different strengths that families bring to their children's ESL learning. The study also highlights the value of collaboration. Educators can cultivate stronger family-school partnerships by communicating in culturally sensitive ways and creating non-judgmental spaces for engagement. Policies and programmes can be designed to equip low-income

families with accessible tools, rather than assuming limited involvement reflects a lack of interest. The study also reframes family literacy by positioning it as a continuum of culturally grounded practices rather than a fixed model tied to material resources or formal schooling. This shift invites policymakers, teachers, and researchers to focus on how families support learning in ways that align with their realities. However, as the study focused only on B40 and T20 parents of primary school children in Malaysia, broader research is needed. Future studies should examine PI across different regions, ethnicities, and family structures, and explore how specific strategies influence ESL outcomes over time. Ultimately, the findings challenge deficit-based assumptions and call for a more inclusive lens-one that sees all parents not as passive recipients but as active contributors to their children's language learning journeys.

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