

The Use of Home-Based English Language Activities to Enhance Thai Parents' Involvement in Their Children's English Learning: A Study of Thai Parents With Limited English Proficiency

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Abstract

Parental involvement in promoting learning at home plays a crucial role in the English development of children learning English as a foreign language (EFL). However, parents with limited English proficiency (LEP) often face difficulties supporting their children, which may reduce their children's opportunities to improve their English. This study aimed to enhance the involvement of Thai LEP parents in supporting their children's English language learning at home through the use of home-based English language activities (HELAs). A mixed-methods design was utilized, incorporating a one-group pre-test and post-test approach. The participants, selected through purposive sampling, were 26 Thai LEP parents whose children were attending a preschool in northern Thailand. The research instruments consisted of four HELAs: using fable videos, using vocabulary teaching videos, using picture cards, and reading books with children. Additionally, pre- and post-questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to measure changes in parental involvement across three mechanisms: implicit instruction, encouragement, and reinforcement. The findings revealed significant increases in parental involvement. Two critical factors contributing to this improvement were identified: First, HELA participation raised parents' awareness of the importance of their involvement and boosted their self-efficacy. Second, the practical design of the HELAs facilitated involvement for LEP parents.

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However, reading activities posed a significant challenge for some parents. This study offers valuable insights for using HELAs to better support LEP parents in facilitating their children's English learning at home.

Keywords: Thai Parents, Limited English Proficiency Parents, Home-Based English Language Activities, Parental Involvement, English As A Foreign Language

บทคัดย่อ

การมีส่วนร่วมของผู้ปกครองในการส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้ที่บ้านมีบทบาทสำคัญต่อการพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษของเด็กที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ อย่างไรก็ตาม ผู้ปกครองที่มีทักษะภาษาอังกฤษจำกัดมักประสบปัญหาในการส่งเสริมบุตรหลานของตน ซึ่งอาจส่งผลให้โอกาสในการพัฒนาทักษะภาษาอังกฤษของบุตรหลานลดลง การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ เพื่อเพิ่มการมีส่วนร่วมของผู้ปกครองไทยที่มีทักษะภาษาอังกฤษจำกัดในการส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษของบุตรหลานที่บ้านโดยใช้ชุดกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษที่บ้าน การศึกษานี้ใช้รูปแบบวิจัยแบบผสมผสาน โดยวิธีการแบบกลุ่มเดียวทดสอบก่อนและหลังการศึกษา กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นผู้ปกครองที่มีทักษะภาษาอังกฤษจำกัดและมีบุตรหลานเรียนในโรงเรียนอนุบาลแห่งหนึ่งในภาคเหนือของประเทศ จำนวน 26 คน ได้มาจากการเลือกกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจง เครื่องมือวิจัยประกอบด้วยกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษที่บ้าน 4 กิจกรรม ได้แก่ การใช้วิดีโอออนไลน์ การใช้วิดีโอสอนคำศัพท์ การใช้บัตรภาพ และการอ่านหนังสือกับบุตรหลาน รวมทั้งแบบสอบถามก่อนและหลังการศึกษา และการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างเพื่อวัดความเปลี่ยนแปลงในวิธีการมีส่วนร่วมของผู้ปกครอง 3 รูปแบบ ได้แก่ การสอนทางอ้อม การให้การสนับสนุน และการให้กำลังใจ ผลการศึกษพบว่าผู้ปกครองมีส่วนร่วมมากขึ้นหลังการใช้ชุดกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษที่บ้านอย่างมีนัยสำคัญจากปัจจัยสำคัญ 2 ประการ ได้แก่ (1) การใช้ชุดกิจกรรมทำให้ผู้ปกครองตระหนักถึงความสำคัญของการมีส่วนร่วมของตนเองและมีความมั่นใจในการส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้ที่บ้านมากขึ้น (2) กิจกรรมมีการออกแบบที่เหมาะสมกับผู้ปกครอง อย่างไรก็ตาม กิจกรรมที่ผู้ปกครองบางคนพบปัญหาคือ กิจกรรมการอ่านหนังสือกับบุตรหลาน งานวิจัยนี้ชี้ให้เห็นถึงแนวทางในการใช้กิจกรรมภาษาอังกฤษที่บ้านเพื่อช่วยให้ผู้ปกครองที่มีทักษะภาษาอังกฤษจำกัดมีส่วนร่วมในการพัฒนาทักษะภาษาอังกฤษของบุตรหลานมากขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: ผู้ปกครองไทย ผู้ปกครองที่มีทักษะภาษาอังกฤษจำกัด กิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษที่บ้าน การมีส่วนร่วมของผู้ปกครอง ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

Introduction

Parental involvement in children's education encompasses a variety of behaviors that parents exhibit to support their children (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Whitaker, 2019). This study specifically focused on how parents with limited English proficiency (LEP) of preschool-aged children (3–4 years old) in English as a foreign language (EFL) settings involved themselves in their children's English learning at home. Such involvement is essential for young EFL children, as extensive research in EFL and English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts has demonstrated its positive impact on children's English learning (Huang, 2013;

Lau & Richards, 2021; Liu & Chung, 2023; Petchprasert, 2014; Tong et al., 2021; Yeung & King, 2016; Zhang et al., 2021). For instance, parents' home-based involvement through activities such as reading English books together or having conversations in English can significantly increase language exposure and offer children more opportunities to learn and use English outside the classroom. Such exposure, in turn, positively influences children's English development, such as vocabulary knowledge and early literacy skills (Petchprasert, 2014; Tong et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Additionally, there is evidence that parental involvement at home through activities that promote parent-child interactions can enhance young children's interest and motivation in learning English while also helping them develop a positive attitude toward the language (Choi et al., 2019; Huang, 2013; Tong et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). These findings collectively underscore the pivotal role of parental involvement in children's language development and the importance of supporting it in ESL and EFL settings.

However, despite the well-established benefits of parental involvement, LEP parents often face significant challenges in effectively involving themselves in their children's English learning, particularly within the home environment. This situation seems to apply to Thai LEP parents, who, similar to their counterparts in other contexts (Forey et al., 2016; Lee, 2010; Tong et al., 2021), may struggle with reading, writing, speaking, or understanding English. These limitations hinder their ability to participate actively in language-related tasks in their children's education (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021). Although some Thai LEP parents may attempt to use educational media and other learning resources to compensate for their language barriers, access to these resources can often be limited—especially for those living in remote areas (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021) or for low-income families, as seen in other contexts (Lee, 2010; Tong et al., 2021). Even when these resources are accessible, LEP parents may lack the skills and knowledge to use them effectively, creating additional barriers (Forey et al., 2016; Lau & Richards, 2021). Demanding life contexts can further compound these challenges, as many parents of EFL children nowadays manage time-intensive jobs and various household responsibilities, leaving them with limited time and energy to engage in their children's learning (Forey et al., 2016; Lee, 2010; Tong et al., 2021). As a result, despite their strong desire to support their children's English learning at home, many Thai LEP parents face limitations that restrict or even eliminate their involvement. This lack or even absence of parental involvement may cause their children to struggle with developing their English skills.

Over time, these challenges may widen the gap between children of LEP parents and their peers, particularly when comparing them to those whose parents tend to have higher English proficiency and more resources for supporting their children (Tong et al., 2021). Thus, it is crucial to find ways to promote greater involvement at home among Thai LEP parents.

To address the challenges faced by LEP parents and enhance their involvement, one promising approach is to implement home-based English language activities (HELAs) specifically designed for them. In this study, HELAs refer to activities that parents, family members, or caregivers engage in at home to support children's English language development. Despite the limited research on HELAs, it is evident that designing these activities to align with parents' language proficiency levels and providing structured, accessible guidance can significantly boost parental involvement. For instance, a recent study by Tong et al. (2021) demonstrated this by examining the effects of tailored take-home activities on the perceived

involvement of Chinese LEP parents in their children's English learning. During an eight-week intervention, LEP parents in the intervention group participated in activities such as reading and listening to storybooks, singing songs, writing, and playing games—all specifically designed for children with LEP parents. In contrast, the LEP parents in the control group engaged in traditional reading and listening tasks using free, technology-infused software. The findings revealed that participation among the parents in the control group declined significantly; however, those in the intervention group consistently maintained their involvement throughout the program. The sustained involvement of the intervention group can be attributed to the activities, which did not require parents to be fluent in English or to directly teach the language. Instead, the emphasis was on creating opportunities for parents to actively participate alongside their children and facilitate their exposure to English through various engaging activities. Other studies, such as those by Lau and Richards (2021) and Lee (2010), support Tong et al.'s (2021) findings, highlighting that equipping LEP parents with HELAs tailored to their skills and needs can enhance their involvement in their children's English learning at home.

While there is promising evidence for the benefits of tailored HELAs for LEP parents, studies specifically addressing this issue remain limited, especially in Thailand. To date, few existing studies have explored how HELAs can be used to enhance Thai parents' involvement. For instance, Petchprasert (2014) focused on dialogic reading, where Thai parents with moderate English proficiency received training and were able to independently conduct the activity. Another study by Khamsuk and Whanchit (2021) explored storytelling, but it primarily involved Thai LEP parents observing researchers performing the storytelling without active participation. While these studies suggest potential strategies to enhance home-based involvement among Thai parents, they did not provide conclusive evidence on how HELAs specifically designed for LEP parents impact their involvement. Ignoring this issue could limit the development of effective support mechanisms for these parents and hinder their opportunities to create a rich language learning experience for their children at home.

Thus, to address this critical gap, this study aims to implement HELAs designed to enhance the involvement of Thai LEP parents in their preschool-aged children's English learning at home. To ensure these activities are practical for LEP parents, they were systematically developed using the ADDIE model—a structured framework that guides the creation of effective instructional materials and programs through five key phases: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation (Branch, 2009). The results of this study offer valuable insights and guidelines for developing and implementing HELAs that effectively empower Thai LEP parents to support their children's English learning.

Research Question

What are the effects of using HELAs on enhancing Thai LEP parents' involvement in their children's English learning in the home environment?

Objective

To investigate the effect of using HELAs on enhancing Thai LEP parents' involvement in their children's English learning in the home environment.

Literature Review

Parental Involvement Mechanisms in ESL/EFL Settings

Drawing on Hoover-Dempsey et al.'s (2005) model of the parental involvement process, a well-established framework that outlines the mechanisms of parental involvement in children's education, this study identified three key mechanisms of parental involvement: instruction, encouragement, and reinforcement (Whitaker, 2019). Although the model includes a fourth mechanism, modeling, this study focuses only on the three aforementioned mechanisms. Within the parental involvement process model, instructional involvement can be categorized as either explicit or implicit (Whitaker, 2019). Explicit involvement entails parents directly teaching their children, while implicit involvement focuses on creating a rich environment that fosters natural learning experiences. This categorization aligns with previous research on home literacy practices in EFL and ESL settings, which commonly identify two main parental involvement types (Lai et al., 2024; Lui & Chung, 2023; Tong et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). The first type includes parental involvement through activities that promote direct language instruction, such as teaching vocabulary or pronunciation, aligning with explicit instructional involvement. The second type involves activities that provide unintentional language exposure, such as telling stories or having conversations in English, corresponding to implicit instructional involvement. Notably, in this study, given that parents had limited English proficiency, their instructional involvement was implicit. In other words, parents supported their children's learning by providing meaningful language exposure through resources such as fable videos, vocabulary teaching videos, picture cards, and reading books rather than direct instruction. Beyond instructional involvement, parents' attempts to support their children can also be seen through encouragement and reinforcement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Whitaker, 2019). In ESL/EFL settings, parents also demonstrate their involvement by encouraging their children to participate in English language activities at home, such as reading or engaging in language-related exercises. Additionally, parents can provide positive reinforcement by offering tangible rewards for language achievements or verbal praise for effort and progress in English learning. These emotional supports, which are crucial for helping ESL/EFL children succeed in their learning (Huang, 2013; Tong et al., 2021), underscore the diverse mechanisms of parental involvement in ESL/EFL contexts.

When focusing on LEP parents, including Thai parents, it becomes evident that their involvement can be limited across all three mechanisms. For example, language limitations may hinder LEP parents from providing both explicit instructional support—such as teaching vocabulary or pronunciation—and implicit instructional involvement, like engaging in English conversations or storytelling (Forey et al., 2016; Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Lee, 2010; Tong et al., 2021). Furthermore, LEP parents may be hesitant to encourage their children to participate in English activities, fearing they cannot provide adequate support or may inadvertently discourage them (Forey et al., 2016; Lee, 2010). This lack of involvement can lead to missed opportunities for children to engage in essential learning experiences. Therefore, it is crucial to create supportive resources that empower LEP parents to engage effectively in their children's English learning.

Home-Based Activities to Increase LEP Parents' Involvement

Past studies underscore the need for HELAs designed for LEP parents to enhance their involvement (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Tong et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). To ensure that LEP parents can effectively utilize HELAs, it is essential to provide them with adequate support. This includes guidance on how to use the activities, strategies for integrating them into daily routines, and techniques for maximizing their impact on their children's English development (Lau & Richards, 2021; Tong et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Huang's (2013) study on the use of literacy bags to promote parental involvement in Chinese children's literacy learning supports this notion. Huang (2013) found that while parents in the study initially felt less capable of supporting their children's English learning, they gained more confidence through structured guidance provided by the literacy bags. These bags included a guidebook with clear, step-by-step instructions for teaching strategies, which helped parents understand and apply various techniques in their daily routines, leading them to increased involvement. In addition, Tong et al. (2021) emphasized that effective HELAs for LEP parents should prioritize helping parents provide language exposure over direct instruction as these parents may not be able to teach English directly to their children. They also suggested that incorporating bilingual materials in both English and the parents' native language could help create a more comfortable environment for parents, encouraging their involvement. Additionally, it was highlighted that HELAs should include activities designed to foster creativity, enjoyment, and active participation, as young children tend to be more motivated to engage in such experiences. When children view HELAs as enjoyable, they are more likely to engage consistently, which can create valuable opportunities for increased interaction between parents and children (Tong et al., 2021).

In addition to insights from empirical studies in ESL/EFL contexts, the parental involvement process model (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) offers valuable guidance that can be adapted to engage LEP parents in HELAs. Rooted in educational, developmental, and social psychology research, this model identifies three primary factors influencing parental involvement in their children's education: parents' motivational beliefs regarding their participation, their perceptions of opportunities for involvement, and life contexts (e.g., parental knowledge, skills, time, energy, and family culture). Considering these factors, several recommendations can be proposed to ensure that LEP parents can actively participate in HELAs.

Firstly, it is crucial to ensure that parents understand how significant their involvement is. Extensive research on parental involvement consistently shows that parents who recognize the value of their participation are more engaged in their children's education (Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Walker et al., 2010; Whitaker, 2019). Secondly, it is essential to help parents recognize the diverse ways they can contribute through HELAs. They should understand that their role extends beyond merely providing learning opportunities; it also involves creating a supportive learning environment through encouragement and positive reinforcement (Walker et al., 2010). Furthermore, tailoring tasks to match their English proficiency and providing easy-to-use materials reinforces their sense of efficacy—the belief in their ability to influence their child's learning and development (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). When parents feel capable and equipped with tools they can use independently, they are more likely to engage persistently and

positively in activities at home (Walker et al., 2010). Lastly, to effectively address the perceived life context of parents, tasks should be designed with time limitations and schedules that align with their daily demands (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Walker et al., 2010). This involves offering activities that fit into typical family schedules and accommodating varying parental responsibilities. By combining insights from empirical studies in ESL/EFL contexts and the parental involvement process model, HELAs can be developed that effectively increase LEP parents' involvement in supporting children's English learning at home.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

This study is part of a larger research project aimed at developing HELAs to enhance English vocabulary knowledge among Thai preschoolers. However, the current study focuses on investigating the effect of HELAs on parental involvement. To achieve this objective, a mixed-methods design with a one-group pre-test and post-test approach was employed. Data collection involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. 26 parents completed the questionnaires before and after the HELA intervention to measure its impact on their involvement. Semi-structured interviews with eight parents further provided deeper insights into their experiences.

2. Research Participants

Through purposive sampling, the study recruited 26 Thai parents of preschoolers (aged 3–4) attending a preschool in northern Thailand. The majority of participants were mothers (N = 19), along with grandparents (N = 2) and fathers (N = 5). Their children were enrolled in kindergarten 2 across two classes, each with 13 students. The criterion for participant selection was the parents' limited English proficiency. To assess this, an initial self-rated survey was administered, using four items adapted from Clément and Baker (2001), each measured on a 6-point scale (1 = 'quite badly' to 6 = 'very well'). This survey evaluated parents' proficiency in four language skills: speaking, reading, listening, and writing. Only parents who rated themselves below a score of 3 in these skills were included in the study. The results indicated that all participating parents self-evaluated their skills as being below 3 in each area. Specifically, the overall average scores for the group were: speaking (M = 1.27), reading (M = 1.42), listening (M = 1.88), and writing (M = 1.15). These scores indicated that the parents could only understand and use basic English, confirming their limited English proficiency for the study.

Further insights from open-ended survey questions revealed minimal English use in their daily lives and occupations. Additionally, a significant majority (61.54%) reported not engaging in any HELA practices, indicating that HELAs were not commonly used among the parents in this study. The initial survey also identified other challenges that could hinder the effective implementation of HELAs, including time constraints, a perceived lack of knowledge on how to utilize HELAs, and potential disinterest from children in English language activities. The study carefully considered these limitations when developing the HELAs.

3. Research Instruments

This study employed three research instruments including pre-and post-parent questionnaires, a semi-structured interview, and HELA intervention. The following sections provide a detailed description of each research instrument.

3.1 Pre- and Post-Questionnaires

The study employed pre- and post-intervention questionnaires in Thai to measure changes in parental involvement across three key areas: implicit instruction, encouragement, and reinforcement. Implicit instruction specifically focused on parents' use of the four weekly HELAs designed to improve their children's English vocabulary knowledge. These activities included using fable videos, vocabulary learning videos, picture cards, and reading with the child. Parents rated the frequency of their participation in these activities on an 8-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 7 (seven times a week).

Encouragement focused on parents' efforts to motivate their children to participate in HELAs or learn English vocabulary at home. Reinforcement refers to the use of verbal praise by parents to solidify positive learning behaviors exhibited by their children. To measure these mechanisms, the study adapted six items from the well-established questionnaire developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005). These adapted items were divided into two categories: three items capturing the frequency of encouraging behaviors and three items capturing the frequency of reinforcing behaviors. Parents rated these mechanisms on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (often).

Both pre- and post-questionnaires comprised 10 identical items, with the post-questionnaire including an additional open-ended section for parents' comments on their experience with HELAs. The validity of the questionnaire items was confirmed through content validity assessment by five experts using the index of item objective congruence (IOC), all scoring between 0.60 and 1.00. Reliability was established through the test-retest method involving a pilot group of 22 LEP parents over a three-week interval, with no intervening interventions. The reliability coefficients ranged from 0.763 to 0.908, indicating high reliability for all questionnaire items.

3.2 Semi-Structured Interview

After the four-week intervention, semi-structured interviews were individually conducted based on the parents' availability, using online platforms that were comfortable for them due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Eight mothers, who self-reported their English proficiency as "quite poor" and whose children showed significant improvement (gaining more than five points in the post-vocabulary tests), were purposively selected. Each interview, conducted in Thai, lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. The guided questions for these interviews were designed to elicit parents' opinions on how HELAs influenced their involvement in their children's learning. These questions underwent validation by five experts, achieving a validity score of 1.00. Following validation, the questions were piloted with six parents to refine and eliminate redundant items.

3.3. HELA Intervention

The four-week HELA intervention involved implementing a set of HELAs (detailed in Table 1). These activities aimed to enhance the children’s English vocabulary development. Each week, parents received a combination of electronic and physical learning materials, including videos, picture cards, and storybooks. Following a recommended instructional sequence for preschool vocabulary learning based on Beck et al. (2013) and Webb and Nation (2017), the program was structured in four steps: watch, learn, practice, and read, scheduled from Monday to Thursday. Each activity lasted around 15 minutes, aligning with parent preferences for shorter, weekday activities that did not interfere with weekend plans.

Table 1

The weekly HELA implementation

Days	HELAs	Description of each HELA	Key parental involvement mechanisms
Monday	Watching a fable video	The children watched a fable video narrated in English.	Parents scheduled the educational video, monitored their child’s understanding, and encouraged participation in follow-up activities included in the video content.
Tuesday	Learning target vocabulary from a vocabulary video	The children watched a video that taught the target vocabulary from the fable video.	The parents utilized picture cards and offered verbal praise for correct answers.
Wednesday	Practicing with a picture card	The children named the pictures in English.	The parents read with their children in either English or Thai using the “point-to-print” technique.
Thursday	Reading with parents	The children read the storybook version of the week’s fable with their parents.	

The HELA intervention began with two activities centered around educational videos created by the principal researcher. These videos were designed to compensate for parents’ limited English proficiency, which hinders their ability to tell stories in English or provide direct vocabulary instruction themselves. On Monday, the children watched a fable video adapted from a well-known story familiar to the children. The fable video was narrated primarily in English by a professional English teacher and complemented by colorful illustrations. On Tuesday, a separate vocabulary video introduced the target vocabulary from the fable. In this video, the teacher focused on helping children associate the spoken words with corresponding illustrations. Following the vocabulary lesson, engaging games like "Guessing the Picture" were incorporated to reinforce vocabulary learning. Throughout both activities, parents played a crucial role by monitoring their

children's participation, encouraging their involvement, and offering verbal praise for correct answers during follow-up activities.

As the activities progressed, parents became more actively involved by using picture cards and reading. With picture cards, parents showed them to their children and prompted them to name the pictures in English. These pictures represented the target vocabulary from each week's story. If children correctly identified a picture more than three times, it indicated that they had likely mastered that word, allowing parents to focus on words their children were still struggling with. In the reading activities, the books featured illustrations with simplified English text. Each scene was accompanied by a single simple sentence in English to make reading easier for both parents and children (e.g., The tiger was sleeping). If parents found reading in English challenging, they were encouraged to use their native language, Thai. When using Thai, parents were guided to employ a "point-to-print" technique, where they pointed to specific items or characters in the book and asked their children to name them in English. To support parents in using picture cards and the point-to-print technique, the researchers provided weekly demonstration videos showing how to effectively use picture cards and the point-to-print technique for each story. This support ensured parents were prepared and confident in leading both activities.

To monitor progress and maintain ongoing engagement, parents were required to keep a log of their activities and submit it to an English teacher at the school every Monday. This log served as a tool to track their participation in the program. During the orientation video, parents were informed that failure to submit the log or incomplete participation in the four weekly activities would lead to discontinuation from the project. Throughout the intervention period, all parents adhered to these requirements and submitted their logs as requested. The records indicated that each parent engaged in four HELAs at least once a week, demonstrating consistent participation.

4. Data Collection

Before HELA implementation, five experts evaluated the developed HELAs' appropriateness across content, design, and usability using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (least appropriate) to 5 (most appropriate). All activities scored above 4.00, indicating high appropriateness. Subsequently, a two-week pilot study was conducted with a non-target group of 22 parents and their children. These parents assessed the HELAs based on the same criteria—practicality, usefulness, and design—and similarly provided positive feedback, with ratings for all areas exceeding 4.00.

One week before the program began, an orientation video was sent to parents via an online platform due to COVID-19 restrictions. The video provided detailed instructions on the intervention procedures and outlined their responsibilities for the four-week program. This ensured that all parents were adequately informed about the upcoming activities and their role in supporting their children's learning. Following the video, the principal researcher confirmed understanding with each parent individually to address any questions or concerns. The four-week intervention period then began as planned.

To evaluate the impact of HELAs on parental involvement, all participating parents completed questionnaires both before and after the intervention. Additionally, eight parents were invited to participate in the interviews to provide deeper insights into how HELAs facilitated their involvement in their children’s learning at home.

5. Data Analysis

Due to the non-normal distribution of the data from pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, confirmed by the Shapiro-Wilk test for all mechanisms, except using fable videos, and the sample size was less than 30, a non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-ranks test was employed to analyze the quantitative data. Also, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were reported. The frequency of parents’ involvement in implicit instructional activities was interpreted on a scale ranging from 0 (never) to 7 (seven times per week). For parents’ encouragement and reinforcement, the data were interpreted using the following class intervals (Alkharusi, 2022): "Always" (4.21–5.00), "Often" (3.41–4.20), "Sometimes" (2.61–3.40), "Rarely" (1.81–2.60), and "Never" (1.00–1.80). Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using content analysis, involving inductive coding, categorizing codes into themes, refining themes, and interpreting them in context.

Findings and Discussion

The study’s findings and discussion were presented in two sections. The first section outlines quantitative results on how HELAs influenced parental involvement across three mechanisms. The second section delves into qualitative data to provide detailed insights into how HELAs potentially influence parental involvement.

1. Quantitative Results

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Three Mechanisms of Parental Involvement Before and After the Intervention

Mechanisms of parental involvement	N	Pre-intervention (Mean (std.))	Post-intervention (Mean (std.))	Wilcoxon signed-ranks test (Z) (sig.)	Shapiro-Wilk test (sig.)
1. Implicit instruction					
1. Reading stories with the child	26	0.31 (0.549)	1.15 (1.405)	-3.099 (0.002)	0.849 (0.001)
2. Using fable videos	26	1.69 (0.970)	3.23 (1.336)	-3.944 (0.000)	0.939 (0.128)

Mechanisms of parental involvement	N	Pre-intervention (Mean (std.))	Post-intervention (Mean (std.))	Wilcoxon signed-ranks test (Z) (sig.)	Shapiro-Wilk test (sig.)
3. Using picture cards	26	0.96 (0.824)	3.08 (1.440)	-4.444 (0.000)	0.778 (0.000)
4. Using vocabulary learning videos	26	0.88 (0.864)	3.27 (1.218)	-4.520 (0.000)	0.867 (0.003)
2. Encouragement					
You encouraged your child to....					
5. practice English by naming items around them in English	26	2.00 (0.400)	3.38 (0.752)	-4.409 (0.000)	0.837 (0.001)
6. participate in English learning activities	26	2.03 (0.344)	3.50 (0.812)	-4.388 (0.000)	0.856 (0.002)
7. learn English vocabulary	26	1.80 (0.633)	3.61 (0.897)	-4.266 (0.000)	0.913 (0.031)
3. Reinforcement					
You gave verbal praise when you saw your child....					
8. participate in English language learning activities	26	1.76 (0.514)	3.50 (0.707)	-4.451 (0.000)	0.874 (0.004)
9. try to use English vocabulary	26	1.69 (0.470)	3.50 (0.812)	-4.443 (0.000)	0.890 (0.010)
10. learn new English vocabulary	26	1.96 (0.527)	3.57 (0.857)	-4.304 (0.000)	0.859 (0.002)

Table 2 presents quantitative data on parents' involvement through implicit instruction, encouragement, and reinforcement before and after the intervention. Statistical analysis using the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test indicated significant increases ($p < 0.05$) in all areas. Regarding implicit instructional involvement, before the intervention, the data suggests a low baseline for involvement, with average scores between 0.31 and 1.69, likely indicating that parents rarely participated in these activities. However, the data paints a much more positive picture after the intervention. All instructional HELAs saw a significant rise in frequency. Reading stories with children went from a very low occurrence ($M = 0.31$) to around once a week ($M = 1.15$). Similarly, the use of fable videos jumped from around once a week ($M = 1.69$) to about 3 times a week ($M = 3.23$). The use of picture cards and vocabulary learning videos also showed a substantial increase, going from around once a week ($M=0.96$ and $M= 0.88$ respectively) to around 3 times a week ($M=3.08$ and $M=3.27$ respectively). These results strongly suggest that the HELA intervention was successful in promoting implicit instructional involvement.

Moreover, as shown in Table 2, parents provided low encouragement for their children's English learning activities before the intervention. Mean scores fell into the "rarely" category for all three behaviors: naming items in English ($M=2.00$), participating in English learning activities ($M=2.06$), and vocabulary learning ($M=1.89$). However, post-intervention data showed scores for all forms of encouragement increased markedly to an average of 3.38, 3.50, and 3.61, respectively, indicating that parents "often" encouraged their children during the intervention. Similarly, the levels of positive reinforcement also showed substantial increases. Initially, the mean levels of reinforcement through verbal praise for their children's participation in English learning activities, efforts to use English vocabulary, and learning English vocabulary were 1.76, 1.69, and 1.59. After the intervention, these means rose to 3.50, 3.50, and 3.57, respectively. These results demonstrate that the intervention effectively increased the frequency of parental support, with positive reinforcement rising from "rarely" to "often."

This study offers compelling evidence that the HELAs effectively enhanced LEP parents' involvement in their children's English learning. The results identified a significant rise in implicit instructional activities facilitated by using educational media, such as fable videos and vocabulary learning videos. This aligns with Tong et al. (2021), who demonstrated similar benefits of HELA interventions that leverage educational media to enhance parental involvement. The use of picture cards also yielded positive results, showing an increase in parental involvement similar to educational media. This suggests that incorporating this activity can be particularly effective in promoting LEP parent's involvement. However, reading activities, while showing improvement, only occurred about once a week. This aligns with existing research in ESL/EFL contexts (Forey et al., 2016; Lau & Richards, 2021; Liu & Chung, 2023; Yeung & King, 2016) where reading seems less adopted by parents. Significantly, this study goes beyond previous research by demonstrating that HELA participation encouraged parents to provide more emotional support through encouragement and reinforcement. These practices are essential for creating an environment where children feel important and receive the encouragement or assistance they need (Whitaker, 2019). The increased involvement in both instructional and emotional aspects highlights the potential of HELAs to promote comprehensive parental involvement and create a supportive environment that enhances children's learning experiences.

2. Qualitative Findings

While the quantitative data showed that the HELA intervention increased parental involvement across all three mechanisms, in-depth interviews provided deeper insights into the reasons behind this increased involvement. First, HELAs empowered parents by increasing their awareness of their role and boosting their self-efficacy in supporting their children. This newfound awareness and confidence were crucial in motivating parents to become more actively involved. Second, the practical and accessible design of HELA activities made it easier for LEP parents to participate. However, despite the promising benefits of HELAs, the qualitative findings also highlighted reading as the most challenging activity for LEP parents. This aligns with the quantitative results, which showed the least improvement in reading practice frequency. The following sections delve deeper into these qualitative findings with a more detailed discussion.

2.1 HELAs empowered LEP parents by enhancing their awareness of the positive impact their involvement has on their children's English development and by boosting their confidence in supporting their children.

Interview data revealed that while some parents initially underestimated the influence of their involvement on their children's language development, participation in HELAs significantly shifted this perception. Over the four-week HELA intervention, they observed noticeable improvements in their children's English vocabulary knowledge and realized that their participation played a crucial role in this progress. This newfound understanding motivated them to stay engaged and adopt a more proactive role. The following excerpts illustrate the parents' reflections:

“Before I joined your project, I didn't think that my involvement could help my child that much because I wasn't good at English and I didn't know what to do. When doing these HELAs, I realized the importance of my involvement. Using videos and picture cards helped my child learn a lot of vocabulary. He enjoyed these activities. He was very happy and eager to learn more when I praised him. So, I did these activities many times each week.”

(Parent 1)

“Before that, I was not aware that just only doing simple activities like using the picture card could be very beneficial to my children. So, I spent more time using the picture card and watching the fable with him.”

(Parent 2)

Moreover, parents reported a boost in their self-efficacy in helping their children through HELAs. Initially, some parents lacked confidence in their ability to support their children's learning. However, as they participated in HELA activities, they realized that the tasks were simple and they could follow easily. They found that the instructions were straightforward and that the activities did not require extensive knowledge or advanced skills. This realization that the tasks were within their capability likely fueled a sense of self-efficacy,

potentially leading to greater involvement. To illustrate this point, one parent shared an insightful comment:

“At first, I was not confident in using these activities. I never did anything like this before. However, I gained more confidence to do these activities because they were easy to use, especially the video and the card. The instructions were easy to follow, so I could do it quite often.”

(Parent 3)

These findings indicate that when parents recognized the importance of their involvement and felt more confident in their ability to contribute, they became more engaged. This aligns with the parental involvement process model (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005), which emphasizes the role of parents’ motivational beliefs, such as their perception of their role and self-efficacy, in shaping their involvement decisions and behaviors. Previous research based on the model of the parental involvement process has consistently shown that parents who view themselves as valuable contributors and possess higher self-efficacy are more involved and invest more effort in their children’s academic learning (Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Walker et al., 2010; Whitaker, 2019). Supporting these earlier findings, this study suggests that HELAs, when well-designed, can positively impact LEP parents’ beliefs about their role and enhance their self-efficacy, ultimately leading to increased parental involvement among LEP parents.

2.2 The practical design of the HELAs facilitated LEP parents’ involvement.

The findings also underscored the practicality of HELA programs as a key factor in enhancing parental involvement, particularly for LEP parents facing challenges including limited English proficiency, and unfamiliarity with home literacy practices. In this study, HELAs effectively addressed these challenges by requiring parents to adopt a more supportive role, focusing on encouraging and facilitating their children’s learning rather than providing direct instruction. The use of educational media-based activities and picture cards exemplified this approach. For instance, with educational videos (i.e., fable videos and vocabulary learning videos), parents’ roles involved setting viewing times, monitoring their children’s engagement, and offering encouragement and reinforcement. Picture cards, although requiring slightly more active participation, remained manageable for parents. This was due to minimal instructions and the focus on specific vocabulary that children had already learned in the educational videos. The simplicity of these activities, combined with minimal language demands, made it significantly easier for LEP parents to engage in their children’s learning. Parents’ comments support this notion:

“The activities were simpler than I thought. Even though I’m not good at English, I could do it. After the first week, I felt more confident to do these activities, and that made me more involved.”

(Parent 1)

“I think these activities were practical. I just showed the videos and monitored my child while he was watching, and helped him if he had any questions.”

(Parent 4)

“The picture card was simple to use. I just show the card and encourage my child to answer. Despite my limited proficiency in English, the card focused on a single word and this made it easier for me to manage this activity.”

(Parent 5)

Furthermore, recognizing the time constraints of the parents, the HELA activities were designed to require minimal time investment. This fits well with parents’ routines and makes it easier to integrate them into daily use. One parent remarked.

“Because the activities were easy and did not use much time, I could do it with my child daily. Especially for the picture card, I used it 3-4 times until my child got all the vocabulary. It was just only 5-10 minutes before bed.”

(Parent 6)

These insights highlight that a practical design of HELAs—emphasizing minimal English use, clear instructions, and less time demands—enables LEP parents to engage more frequently in their children’s learning. This finding aligns with Tong et al.’s (2021) study, which found that LEP parents who participated in HELAs focusing on providing supportive interactions rather than direct instruction were able to sustain their involvement over eight weeks. Additionally, the findings of this study underscore the importance of considering parents’ life contexts—including their language skills, knowledge, and time constraints—when designing support programs (Forey et al., 2016; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Lau & Richards, 2021; Lee, 2010). By addressing these specific challenges, HELAs can be more easily integrated into parents’ daily routines. This, in turn, increases their involvement in their children’s education, leading to improving children’s educational outcomes.

2.3 Challenges hinder LEP parents in a reading activity.

A closer look at the interview data revealed that while most parents found the other three HELAs manageable, they perceived reading as more challenging and requiring greater effort. The qualitative data analysis identified two primary challenges hindering parents’ involvement in the reading activity. First, the interview revealed that some parents did not find reading in English appropriate to their limited English proficiency. These parents may have lacked the vocabulary or grammatical understanding necessary to grasp the full meaning of the stories, even in their simplified form. This could lead to hesitation and a feeling of inadequacy when reading with their children. This is remarked by one parent:

“I had a problem with reading. I knew the text was not long but it was difficult for me because my English was very limited.”

(Parent 7)

Although the researchers provided simplified stories featuring a single simple sentence on each page (e.g., "The tiger is sleeping.") in recognition of parents' limited English proficiency, this simplification did not fully address the core issue for some parents, such as Parent 7. This finding suggests that English proficiency is a significant factor influencing parental involvement. Forey et al. (2016) and Lau and Richards (2021) supported this notion, emphasizing that effective shared reading requires caregivers to possess a certain level of language proficiency to read the text and engage in meaningful verbal interactions with their children. As Forey et al. (2016) noted, limited proficiency can lead to feelings of insecurity and diminished confidence among LEP parents regarding their ability to support their children through reading activities.

Although challenges with reading in English emerged for some parents, these were anticipated based on their English proficiency, as reflected in their self-evaluations. To support them, these parents were encouraged to read in Thai while using the point-to-print technique. This involved telling the story in Thai, pointing at the pictures, and asking their children to name the objects in English. However, despite these strategies, a second challenge arose: some parents felt they lacked storytelling skills, making reading challenging for them. They viewed reading stories as a form of storytelling that required not just language proficiency but also the ability to engage their children. Lacking storytelling skills, they worried that reading would be a dull activity for both themselves and their children. Some parents shared their thoughts:

“Most of the activities were practical and easy to use, except the reading activity because I was not good at reading or telling a story. So, I did this activity only once a week honestly.”

(Parent 5)

“I struggled with reading, even in Thai. Keeping my child engaged while reading was very challenging. I didn't know how to make reading fun.”

(Parent 6)

“Reading took time and could be boring for my son because I was not good at storytelling. When my child showed a lack of interest, it discouraged me from continuing to read.”

(Parent 8)

This second challenge was unexpected, especially given the pilot study results, where the other group of LEP parents did not raise any concerns about storytelling skills during reading. This contrasting finding may be due to the pilot's limited duration of just two weeks and the inclusion of only two stories, which likely did not provide enough experience for parents to fully recognize the challenges of the reading activity. As a result, the strategies

employed to facilitate reading—such as simplified English texts, encouragement to use Thai, and weekly video guides demonstrating the point-to-print technique—may not have adequately addressed this issue for parents in the main study. Consequently, these target parents may have felt unprepared, hindering their ability to engage their children during reading activities.

This underscores the need for a more comprehensive parental training approach that encompasses a broader range of skills to help parents create engaging and interactive reading experiences.

Conclusion

The study highlights that HELAs effectively enhance LEP parents' involvement in the home environment. The findings show that when LEP parents feel confident in their ability to support their children's learning and understand the positive impact they have, it leads to more involvement. Furthermore, making HELAs accessible through minimal English usage, clear instructions, and flexible formats encourages greater participation among LEP parents. Overall, recognizing these factors can help educators create strategies to empower LEP parents, leading to a more well-rounded English learning experience for EFL children in the home environment.

Despite the positive findings, some limitations are worth considering. The study involved a small sample size and lacked a comparison group. Future research should involve a larger and more diverse group of participants, including a comparison group. Additionally, due to COVID-19 restrictions, home observation was not possible. Future studies with home visits and observations could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how parents utilize HELAs at home. Further research in this area will provide invaluable insights into how LEP parents can most effectively support their children's language development.

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