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## Parents' Investment in English for Young Learners: The Case of Elementary School Students Attending Non-Formal English Education

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### Abstract

This research seeks to explore parents' investment in English for young learners. Nowadays, English is not a compulsory lesson in state elementary schools in Indonesia. However, parents invested their children in non-formal English education. This research offers the point of view of state elementary school students' parents regarding English education at an early age. This research implemented a qualitative with a case study approach. It involved six parents of state elementary school students. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and demographic questionnaires. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This research finding indicated that all parents had high or positive expectations after their children joined an English course. The main factor indicating this was that English is not a compulsory lesson anymore in Indonesian state elementary schools. Thus, the parent's involvement in supporting their children to learn English made them practice it at home and in additional English courses.

### Keywords

English for young learners,  
elementary school,  
non-formal English  
education, parents' investment

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## Introduction

This globalization era has affected all aspects of human life in many ways, including politics, economy, culture, and especially language. Language is essential in human life because it is for communicating with each other. Of many kinds of languages, English is the most important one because it is the lingua franca of the world. Hence, learning it in the earlier stages of education is paramount. According to Pennycook (2017), English is one of the international languages used as a communication tool in international relationships and used in all branches of knowledge. It means people should not be blind to English. People will not be blind to English if they learn it earlier, like, when they are a kid or in elementary school, so it will be easy to understand how to speak English. If they know English earlier, especially since they are a kid, it will not be hard to continue their learning in English in the further steps.

According to Evridawati (2020), kids undoubtedly understand new knowledge and the ability to speak a language in early childhood can affect academic achievement in school. It means when they get new lessons or language, they will accept it. Learning English since they are kid means they learn English at a young age, or people call them young learners. According to Sukmawati (2018), young learners are between 0 to 15 years old. However, according to government rules number 67 of 2013 about the elementary school curriculum pages 9-10, there is no mention of the existence of English subjects in elementary school. Since English in the early stages of education is important, children need parents to guide them in this case. Therefore, parents' investment in supporting their children is necessary. It is one of the most important for their children to influence how their children will grow. According to Wati and Sahid (2022), parents' awareness of the importance of education greatly influences decision-making on educational extensions for children. Since many parents are aware of the importance of education in supporting children's survival in the future, parents will be more aware of expanding education to a higher level for the benefit of the children, the environment, and the future. Therefore, in this research, the researchers are interested in knowing why parents want to invest their children in learning English outside (non-formal English education) while their children are not learning English at school. Thus, the research problems in this research are (1) what are parents' expectations regarding their children's English ability? (2) What are the factors that contribute to the parent's investment in attending non-formal English education for their children? (3) How do parents involve their children in English language development?

## Theoretical Framework

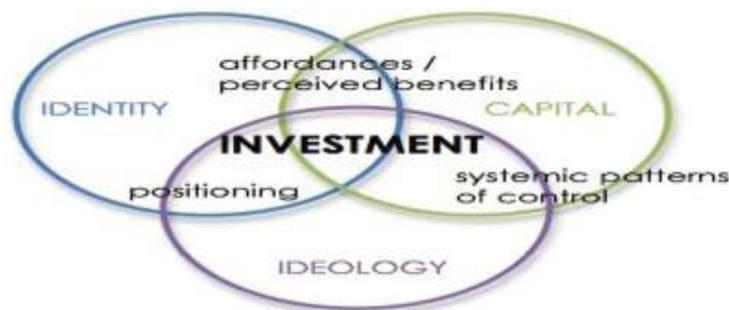
Based on Darvin and Norton (2015), investment models are divided into three components, consisting of identity, ideology, and capital. They influence each other. Darvin and Norton (2015) have explained that the models have relation and power in every component.

*Ideology*, language ideology is an essential construct to understand the mechanisms of power in linguistic exchanges. This investment model is expected to form a broader

construct of ideology, that is, as a normative set of ideas. The correlation between ideology and parents' investment is about parents' mindset that depends on parents' expectations of children's English ability. English ability in this research is from non-formal English education.

### *Models of investment*

**Figure 1.** Darwin and Norton's model of investment (2015)



**Identity** is to understand how inscriptions of identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexual orientation shape the way learners and their resources/capital are positioned in different social spaces. In this regard, our goal is not to explain these categories as factors or to find patterns of behaviour within categories, nor attempt to establish causal relations between social groups and learning outcomes. Instead, to understand how these inscriptions of identity can shape learners' way of navigating diverse social contexts, relations, and practices, and how learners can be privileged or marginalized by their identity, such as Black, Latinx, woman, working class, gay or straight. However, specifically for Indonesian parents to invest their children in non-formal English education because their perspectives are English can bring positive impacts for their children even though it is a foreign language. Hopefully, it can open windows to the global world for a better future.

**Capital** is a power that extends from the material/economic to the cultural and social. *Economic capital* refers to wealth, property, and income; *cultural capital* refers to knowledge, educational credentials, and appreciation of specific cultural forms. Meanwhile, *social capital* refers to connections to networks of power. The value of these capitals is determined by ideological structures, but it is continually negotiated in different *fields* or sites of struggle. In this stance, investment for capital is not only for parents' money for materials things but also for supporting their children to join non-formal English education. Therefore, capital can be one of the essential factors in supporting their children to get English education from non-formal English education.

### *English education*

English education is paramount. Meanwhile, students should learn English as soon as possible, especially young learners, because when teachers teach young learners, they will get used to knowing English. According to Lesia and Petrus (2022), teaching English in

Indonesia seems to force students to know the rules and develop sentences. Besides, some teachers who teach English to young learners do not have the appropriate educational experience. Sometimes, several things in the material are out of sync and out of control. Since this issue appears especially in teaching English to young learners, the Indonesian government has launched many policies to solve this current issue. In Indonesia, teaching English to young learners was considered necessary in large cities. Many parents compete to have their kids learn English as young as they are. This situation is how these schools deal with this phenomenon and how they can deliver effective and efficient learning. When the teachers are teaching English to young learners, it means teachers develop the children's knowledge. However, nowadays in Indonesia, the government made a rule that English is not a compulsory language anymore.

In addition, based on Kaltsum (2016), in government rules number 67 of 2013 about the elementary school curriculum pages 9-10, the SD/MI subjects consisted of two groups, group A and group B. Group A consisted of 1. Religious Education and Character Education, 2. *Pancasila* and Citizenship Education, 3. Indonesian (Bahasa), 4. Mathematics, 5. Science, 6. Social Sciences. Group B consists of 1. Cultural Arts and Crafts., 2. Physical Education, Sports, and Health. Furthermore, the Cultural Arts and Crafts subjects can contain all regional languages. In addition to the intra-curricular activities, as stated in the curriculum structure above, there are also extracurricular activities for Elementary School/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah between scouts (mandatory), School Health Enterprises, and the Youth Red Cross. Extracurricular activities such as Scouts (especially), School Health Units, Youth Red Cross, and others are to support the formation of students' social competencies, like caring attitudes. It means that there are no English lessons mentioned in the research.

### ***Non-formal education***

Non-formal education is knowledge from outside school. Students can get it from the community or course. According to Grajcevcic and Shala (2016), non-formal education is different from formal education. It is flexible in terms of curricula and methodology, but learning in these settings is not by chance. Instead, it is intentional and organized. Students' needs and interests are placed at the center, and the time frame is lacking. Non-formal education is flexible, adaptable to local circumstances and changing needs, and convenient for the target group. It can be used for virtually any type of subject matter and learning objectives. It is free to try new and unconventional approaches. Programs can be designed to serve all people regardless of their age or educational background. In addition, According to Mara and Thomson (2021), non-formal education gives people control over the additional skills and knowledge they acquire. In conclusion, non-formal education is different from formal education because it does not have research limitations and has more time from outside. It can be huger than formal education.

### *Parents' investment*

Parents' investment is one of the most important for their children because it will influence how they will grow. According to Wati and Sahid (2022), parents' awareness of the importance of education greatly influences decision-making on educational extensions for children. Additionally, parents are part of the family. It means that people can also call it a family investment. Yu and Wenjing (2021) described that family education investment is a special way of investment, which is fundamentally different from financial investment in nature, mode, and time. The goal of financial investment is profit only. The short-term benefit is pursued in time, and profit is the primary investment. The education investment pursues the long-term goal of cultivating people. In addition to capital investment, there is also the payment of knowledge and energy. Parents' investment in children's education is much, and according to the conclusion of this research, parents do not seek a return.

There are three factors of parents' investment in their children, supported by Gauthier and Jong (2021).

- Future labour market prospects as a motive for parental investment  
The first perspective views parents' investment as a way of increasing children's future labour market prospects and future 'returns'. Theoretically, it assumes parents' investment in their children, especially in their human capital to be driven by a desire to secure children's future (in an altruistic way) to preserve or improve a family's social status, or to ensure support (returns) at an older age.
- Social pressures (or societal norms) as a motive for parental investment  
Two decades ago, to capture this new parenting ideology and the related pressures on mothers to invest in their children. This ideology carries a high expectation regarding parents' time, money, and emotional investment in children, as well as expert guidance to provide the best for the children. Deploying time and financial resources to stimulate children's development has become part of what a good parent is expected to do.
- The quest for self-growth as a motive for parental investment  
Finally, the third perspective views parental investment in children as a source of personal fulfillment and self-growth. This argument has been made in the context of the transition to parenthood, where becoming a parent is associated with social identity acquisition. But it has also been made regarding child-rearing, by which negotiating today's challenges and social expectations related to good parenting contributes to a feeling of accomplishment and self-growth.

The conclusion from the explanations above is the factors of parents' investment are not only about materials but also about parents' willingnesses, if there is no motivation from the parents to ask their children to join non-formal English education, even though they have much money and can pay for everything, it will not support their children to join the classes.

### *Young learners*

Young learners are different from teaching English to adults or young adult learners. Oktaviani and Fauzan (2017) stated that Indonesian young learners are elementary school students between 6 to 12 years old children. In addition, according to Phillips (1993), young learners are children from the first year of formal schooling (five or six years old) to eleven or twelve years of age. However, as any children's teacher will know, it is not so much the children's age that counts in the classroom as how mature they are. Many factors that influence children's maturity, for example, their culture, environment (city or rural), sex, and the expectations of their peers and parents. The conclusion is that young learners are students who have been six to twelve years old, which means that the range age six to twelve is elementary school students because most elementary schools have started first grade from six years old and it will be to twelve years old.

### **Methodology**

#### *Research design, site, and participants*

This research used qualitative research. According to Maxwell (2005), qualitative researchers typically study a relatively small number of individuals or situations and preserve the individuality of each in the analyses rather than collecting data from large samples and aggregating the data across individuals or situations. In addition, Creswell (2012) also stated that qualitative research is a method for a problem to get an in-depth understanding of the case, not excluding understanding the participants, event, activity, process, individuals, etc. This research was conducted on parents' investment in English for young learners, the case of elementary school students attending non-formal English education, non-formal English education at Palembang. The participants of this research were parents of elementary school children who attended non-formal English education. The number of participants interviewed in the research was six people. They were from young learners' parents in attending non-formal English education from state elementary school students. All of the justifications have followed: (1) Parents who have fifth or sixth-grade students, (2) Parents who have students from state elementary school, and (3) Indonesian ethnicity.

#### *Data collection, demographic data, and the interview*

In this research, the primary data were obtained with interviews and demographic data. According to Creswell (2012), a qualitative interview occurs when the participants are asked by researchers general, open-ended questions and record their answers. An interview was conducted to seek the answers to the research questions regarding parents' investment in English for young learners. The interview process was done in Indonesian to avoid misunderstanding the interpretation.

The researchers followed several steps in conducting the interview. First, prepare the interview protocol and the recorder to record the interview process. Second, prepare a note

to write some additional information. Third, the researchers met and asked for parents' permission to attend non-formal English education as the research participants. Before beginning the interview process, the researchers introduced themselves to the interviewee and the purpose of the interview. Fourth, the researchers started asking several questions based on the interview protocol as comfortably as possible. The interview questions consisted of 20 items adapted from Norton (2015). During the interview process, the researchers recorded all the conversations.

Furthermore, the researchers applied thematic analysis in analyzing parents' investment in English for young learners, the researchers applied thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researchers Therefore, the collecting data from the interview were transcribed to identify categories based on the answers to the interview questions. Afterward, the researchers read the interview transcripts, then classified the data based on the code. After the coding process, the researchers made it into themes. In addition, demographic data is used to get more detailed information about the research participants. In this part, the researchers provided some questions for the participants. They are name, age, gender, educational level, job, income per month, daily language, self-rated proficiency in using English, and frequency of English usage.

## Findings and Discussion

### *High expectations from the parents regarding their children's English language*

To obtain data about parents' expectations regarding their children's English language. The result showed that the parents have high expectations regarding their children's English ability. Findings from the research are detailed into one emerging theme. It is about understanding English fluently.

### *Understanding English fluently*

Understanding English fluently was a high expectation for young learners who attended non-formal English education, even though English is not compulsory for state elementary schools. The participants were from state elementary school parents. Thus, making students understand English fluently is a high expectation because they do not know anything about English when they join non-formal English education. These findings are from the following interview answers.

“After joining the English course, she can speak English”. (Desy, February 2023)

“My expectation is not too high, to understand English and can communicate in English in the future.”(Randy, February 2023)

“I hope my child can understand English and can communicate in English after joining this course.” (Yeti, February 2023)

“I wish my child can speak English”. (Alpra, February 2023)

“I hope my child can fluently speak dan understand English”. (Elsan, February 2023)

“After joining the English course, she can use English at the home and in school. I hope they can understand English”. (Intan, February 2023)

To obtain data about parents' expectations regarding their children's English ability. The result showed that the parents put high expectations after taking their children to join non-formal English education. Understanding English fluently is one of the high expectations kinds, especially for state elementary school students who do not have English lessons in their studies. If the parents take their children to the English course, it means they do not know anything in English, even though just a little bit. Therefore, it is categorized as high expectations if parents expect to make their children understand English fluently.

***The absence of English lessons in the school and international language are the factors contributing to the parent's investment in attending non-formal English education for their children***

To obtain the data related to factors contributing to the parent's investment in attending non-formal English education for their children. The result showed that there is no English lesson in the school and English is an international language. Both are factors why parents take their children to join English courses or non-formal English education. Findings from the research are detailed into two themes. They consist of English as not a compulsory lesson, and English is an international language.

***English is a not compulsory lesson***

English is not a compulsory lesson is the reason why parents take their children to join non-formal English education. However, English can be as *Muatan Lokal*. Three parents as participants answered that there is no English lesson, even if it is only *Muatan Lokal*. These findings are from the following interview answers.

“Because she wants to study English by her willingness. In the school there is nothing English lesson, thus I support her to join non-formal English education”. (Randy, February 2023)

“In the school, my child does not learn English. I support her to join an English course”. (Desy, February 2023)

“There is nothing English lesson because it is for getting knowledge, I ask my child to join English course”. (Yesi, February 2023)

“There is nothing English lesson, the reason why I ask my child to join an English course is for getting new knowledge about English”. (Agung, February, 2023)

“There is nothing English lesson, while English is very important for the future”. (Elsan, February 2023)

“Because there is nothing English lesson, while I support my child for joining English course because it is for getting knowledge about English and can speak English correctly”. (Intan, February 2023)

### *English is an international language*

English is an international language, and that is the reason why parents want their children to learn English. Most parents answer that English is essential and it is an international language. These findings are from the following interview answers.

“Yes, it is important, because, in the globalization era, we need to communicate with another country, however, most of the countries can speak English so that we can understand what they have already talked about”. (Randy, February 2023)

“Important, because English is an international language and English is a famous language in the world”. (Agung, February, 2023)

“Yes, it is very important”. (Elsan, February 2023)

“Yes, because it is for making their knowledge wider”.(Intan, February 2023)

To obtain the data related to the factors contributing to the parent’s investment in attending non-formal English education for their children. The result showed there is no English lesson in the school and English is an international language. It is related to government rules number 67 of 2013 about the elementary school curriculum pages 9-10. Nothing is saying English lesson is a compulsory lesson. Findings from the research are detailed into two themes. They consist of English is not a compulsory lesson and English is an international language.

The first is that English is not a compulsory lesson for young learners. Young learners can easily understand everything. According to [Khumairo \(2022\)](#), English children’s songs have been commonly used as pedagogical tools to teach English to young learners. It means teaching young learners is very simple and easy. It is deeply regretted the school does not place an English in the school. If the reason of government wants to make young learners focus on Indonesian, the school has already learned about Indonesian. It means they still learn about Indonesia at school and also at home. Second, English is an international language. It is true because most countries are familiar with English, and in fact, English is an international language. Hence, all countries need to learn English, especially when they are a kid or young learners. It will affect their English skills if they learn earlier about English. According to [Tosuncuoglu \(2017\)](#), English is an international language that is famous to everybody. It means everybody has already known that English is for communicating if people meet with other countries.

*Parents practice English at home for involving their children in English language development*

To obtain the data related to how parents are involved in their children's English language development. The result showed that the parents involved their selves with their children after joining the English course. Findings from the research are detailed into one theme. It is about supporting their children to practice English at home.

*Supporting their children to practice English at home*

To make their children want to remember what they have already learned in English courses, their parents sometimes ask them to speak English. They also support online games and allow them to play the games. However, sometimes their parents ask in English about the games. All participants care for their children. They also follow up and ask their children in English at home, although not too often. These findings were from the interview with Randy. He asked his daughter what she had already watched on the handphone, like watching an English film. He asked her to tell him what she had already watched in an English film. Furthermore, he also asked about her hobby in English. In addition, Yeti and Agung stated they asked their children about the lesson, which has been learned when studying English. Then, Elsan said that he asked his child to speak English at home. Last, an answer from Intan. She stated that she asked her child to talk in English for her to remember and understand.

To obtain data regarding how parents are involved in their children's English language development. The result showed that the parents involved their selves with their children after joining the English course. The research findings are detailed into one theme. It is about supporting their children to practice English at home. According to [Li and Doyle \(2022\)](#), parental literacy beliefs appear to be related to children's early literacy skills and literacy interactions, and the association between parental beliefs and children's early literacy skills may be mediated by home literacy interactions. It means even though the parents seldom practice English for their children. Parents can give literacy interaction, like asking their children what game they played in English to make them interested to answer.

**Discussion**

The research result showed that parents put high expectations after they take their children to join non-formal English education. The research findings are detailed into one theme, understanding English fluently. Understanding English fluently is one of the high expectations kind, especially for state elementary school students who do not have English lessons in their studies. If the parents take their children to the English course, it shows they do not know anything in English, even though just a little bit. That is why if parents expect to make their children understand English fluently, it is categorized as high expectations. In addition, according to [Norton \(2015\)](#), parents' expectation is about ideology from the model investment because it is related to the ideas.

Second, to obtain the data related to the factors contributing to the parent's investment in attending non-formal English education for their children. The result showed that there is nothing English lesson in the school and English is an international language. It is related to government rules number 67 of 2013 about the elementary school curriculum pages 9-10. Nothing is saying English lesson is the compulsory lesson. Findings from the research are detailed into two themes. They consist of English is not a compulsory lesson and an international language. The first is that English is not a compulsory lesson for young learners. Young learners can easily understand everything. According to [Khumairo \(2022\)](#), English children's songs have been commonly used as pedagogical tools to teach English to young learners. It means teaching young learners is very simple and easy. It is deeply regretted the school does not place an English in the school. If the reason of government wants to make young learners focus on Indonesian, the school has already learned about Indonesian. It means they still study Indonesian at school and also at home. Second, English is an international language. It is true because most countries are familiar with English moreover, it is an international language. Hence, all countries need to learn English, especially when they are a kid or young learners. It will affect their English skills if they learn earlier about English. According to [Ernawati et al. \(2021\)](#), English at elementary school can improve students' skills and prepare them for international competitions.

This research also used demographic data to know parents' income. Thus, it concludes parents' income is also a factor. According to [Norton \(2015\)](#), income is a part of the capital from investments theory. In addition, [Atwell et al. \(2009\)](#) stated parents believed that their children's future life will be much better with English as it is interrelated between economic value and language. It means economic value can be one of the reasons to support their future. Last, to obtain data regarding how parents are involved in their children's English language development. The result showed that the parents involved their selves with their children after joining the English course. Findings from the research are detailed into one theme. It is about supporting their children to practice English at home. According to [Li and Doyle \(2022\)](#), parental literacy beliefs appear to be related to children's early literacy skills and literacy interactions, and the association between parental beliefs and children's early literacy skills may be mediated by home literacy interactions. It means even though the parents seldom practice English for their children, they can give literacy interaction, like asking their children what games they played and using English to make them interested, especially, since most games use English nowadays. In addition, [Norton \(2015\)](#) explained this case is a part of identity because it is about ethnicity. They thought that English was essential, which was why they involved their children to improve their English at home.

### **Conclusion**

This research concerned parents' investment in English for young learners, the case of elementary school students attending non-formal English education. The results are all parents want to get high or positive expectations after their children join English courses, and the result showed the absence of English lessons while it is an international language. That is why they became the factors why the parents asked their children to join non-formal English education. Third, the result showed that all parents support their children to learn

English at home after joining non-formal English education. Their parents ask their children to practice English even though it is not often.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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