



PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN EARLY FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates parental practices aimed at supporting young learners in foreign language learning across nine diverse countries. Through interviews conducted by international researchers, insights were garnered from 30 participants, exploring the explicit ways in which parents engage in their children's language education. Utilising qualitative content analysis, four primary categories emerged: home-school collaboration, academic support, informal support and emotional support. Within these categories, various strategies were identified, including parent-teacher meetings, homework assistance, exposure to foreign language, media and leisure activities and motivational encouragement. Notably, significant emphasis was placed on the role of parental involvement in homework support and fostering communication between home and school. This research underscores the multifaceted nature of parental engagement in early foreign language learning and highlights the importance of collaborative efforts between educators and families in facilitating children's language development.



HOME-SCHOOL COLLABORATION



Most parents reported that collaboration between home and school takes place through attending teacher-parent meetings and school events and projects. Other less frequent practices mentioned are parent-teacher associations and parent-teacher communication platforms.

"We're always participating in parent-teacher meetings either face-to-face meetings or online through Internet messaging systems with the school. We reply to them every time and I'm also part of the school council."

- French father

"Our child's school often organizes events and projects that involve the parents, they ask us to participate and show us what they are working with."

- Italian mother

"I think sending my child to a cram school is effective because the child feels positive about learning English because of the one-on-one lessons with the teacher, and the child gets along well with the teacher."

- Japanese mother

"I usually help him to do his homework during the weekend. I help him with the pronunciation of the words, and the understanding and memorising of the meaning."

- Italian mother

ACADEMIC SUPPORT



Despite limited familiarity with foreign languages, parents attempt to support their children and track their progress by helping them with homework. Furthermore, parents also support children by offering tutoring. This includes sending kids to one-on-one lessons and after-school institutions to improve their foreign language skills such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary development.

INFORMAL SUPPORT



Some of the parents support their children's foreign language learning through informal activities focused on **exposure**, such as media and leisure activities. Other parents prefer a complete **immersion** in the language, like summer camps or living with an au pair.

"It took me for a while to notice that the online educational videos, video games, visually appealing animations and movies proved to be quite effective on my kid's learning."

- Turkish mother

"The chance to speak in a real context – provided by the summer camp and by the hosting of a native language speaker – is an efficient way to support children's foreign language learning, thanks to the chance to speak it and to be into an immersive environment."

- Italian mother

"Sometimes he doesn't want to do homework, and he gets angry when he has extra classes. In those cases, we use rewards after he finishes what he has to do. For example, he could spend more time playing football or visiting his favourite place in the city, which is the pet shop."

- Spanish mother

"I speak English to my children at home to support them in speaking English and encourage them to use the language."

- Pakistani mother

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT



Most of the parents mentioned that emotional support can create a positive environment and encourage their children to learn foreign languages. Emotional support includes the promotion of **intrinsic** and **extrinsic** motivation.