

THAI PARENTAL ROLES IN ENGLISH LEARNING: FROM SPONSORS TO PEER LEARNERS AND ROLE MODELS

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ABSTRACT

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This research aimed to explore the roles of Thai parents in supporting their children's English learning in Bangkok where English is rarely used outside the classroom. The mixed-method study sought to promote parental involvement beyond the traditional role of financial sponsor, encouraging parents to be role models, peer learners, and active participants in language development. In Phase 1, a literature review and survey of 400 parents in Bangkok were conducted to assess current levels of involvement. In Phase 2, focus group discussions with 15 parents explored their perspectives on supporting English learning, obstacles they face, and the support they need. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, and content analysis. The results showed that while parents were willing to act as peer learners, many lacked confidence in serving as role models due to their limited English proficiency (81.75%). Most parents provided financial support (97.8%) and emotional encouragement (75%), but only a small number offered academic support (5.5%). Parents emphasized the need for specific training in phoneme perception and reading aloud, as well as opportunities for family-based English activities. They also requested training to be better peer learners, emotional supporters, and role models. Recommendations for educational policy and parent training programs were proposed to help parents engage more effectively in their children's English education.

Keywords: English language learning; parental involvement; curriculum development; language course design

1. INTRODUCTION

English is a key international language used for global communication and as a formal medium. Globalization has become increasingly evident, creating a greater need for people worldwide to communicate for various purposes, such as travel, work collaboration, immigration, and other international activities. As English holds significant importance in Thai society, particularly in education and professional fields, many job advertisements in Thailand now highlight the requirement for candidates to have a strong proficiency in English, emphasizing the language's growing relevance in the workforce (Forey et al., 2016).

English proficiency and skills restrict both educational and employment opportunities for the majority of the population. However, in Thailand, English is considered a foreign language. Learners have limited opportunity to use English outside the classroom. Aside from industries like tourism, most Thais have limited

opportunities to use English in real-life situations, as their exposure is primarily confined to classroom settings. Many children still lack opportunities to be exposed to English at home and in their immediate surroundings since many Thai parents face challenges communicating in English confidently with their children. These challenges stem from various factors, including longstanding inequalities, ineffective education systems, and a lack of an English-speaking environment (Pechapan-Hammond, 2020).

Given these circumstances, it is crucial to recognize the role of parents in their children's academic success. It has long been recognized that parents play a crucial role in influencing their children's English language development and the sustainability of their language learning (Bennett et al., 2002; Forey et al., 2016). Parental proficiency in English not only impacts their ability to support their children but also influences the overall language acquisition process and the sustainability of their language learning (Seo, 2025). Furthermore, the family's role as educators is positively related to children's receptive and expressive language skills (Bennett et al., 2002).

However, parents often assume the role of sponsors, providing financial support to enrol their children in schools that align with their beliefs. In Korea, parents invest in private English education outside of school when school-based English instruction does not meet their expectations, particularly to support their children's early bilingualism (Seo, 2025). A similar pattern can be seen in Thailand, especially in Bangkok, where there is a marked preference for international schools and teachers who are native English speakers. The city also boasts a large middle-class population whose English proficiency is considerably higher than in other regions of the country (Pechapan-Hammond, 2020). Additionally, factors such as education level, age, employment, and marital status of parents play a significant role in their involvement in their children's education (Naite, 2021). For instance, parents with a bachelor's degree tend to read with their children more often than those without a university education (Petchprasert, 2014).

Parental involvement in children's English language learning has notably changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to online learning forced parents to take a more active role in their children's education, which increased their involvement but also brought significant challenges. Before the pandemic, educational support for enhancing children's English proficiency was typically directed at teachers, often overlooking the need to equip parents with the skills to assist in learning a foreign language (Bennett et al., 2002; Heidlage et al., 2020). This gap became particularly evident as schools closed, and parents in countries like Thailand struggled to balance work from home while supporting their children's online learning, resulting in higher stress, anxiety, and depression (Jetiyanuwat et al., 2024; Pudpong et al., 2023). Studies showed that 41.1% of parents reported their youngest child experienced mental health problems during the pandemic, which further increased parental stress (Pudpong et al., 2022). Although parents spent more time assisting their children, managing online learning tasks, and technical issues, many lacked the digital literacy and guidance necessary to effectively support language learning at home. Despite these difficulties, the pandemic created a unique situation where parental involvement became more direct and consistent, but this involvement was often paired with emotional strain and the need for additional support and resources (Jetiyanuwat et al., 2024; Pudpong et al., 2022, 2023).

Given the increased demands placed on parents during and after the pandemic, there is a growing recognition of the need to equip them with better understanding, tools, and training to support their children's learning. Existing research suggests that Thai adults have limited access to upskilling training opportunities (Vandeweyer et al., 2020). Many educational programs prioritize meeting the needs of employers and industries, emphasizing economic outcomes (Kanta et al., 2024). However, adult learning systems should offer equitable opportunities for all adults to participate in various educational endeavours (Vandeweyer et al., 2020). To foster a shift in Thai parental roles from sole sponsors of English language learning to supportive peers, upskilling training for parents is essential. This would not only enhance children's educational outcomes but also support the learning and well-being of both parents and children. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the current landscape, explore parental perspectives, assess their willingness to engage in upskilling training, and promote greater parental involvement in English language education.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Research objectives

The research objectives are as follows:

- 1) To quantitatively survey the current situation regarding Bangkok parents' support for their children's English language learning.
- 2) To qualitatively investigate the needs of Bangkok parents in assisting their children's English language education.

2.2 Research design

This research is an explanatory sequential mixed-method design structured into two phases (Creswell, 2003). Phase 1 centered on reviewing relevant literature (Bennett et al., 2002; Pechapan-Hammond, 2020; Petchprasert, 2014; Pudpong et al., 2022, 2023; Seo, 2025) and surveying 400 parents in Bangkok, while Phase 2 consisted of organizing focus group discussions with 15 parents to gather insights into their perspectives on supporting their children's English learning. The details are as follows:

2.2.1 Phase 1: Bangkok parental involvement in children's English learning survey

Paper-based questionnaires, in Thai and English, were distributed to 500 randomly selected parents in Bangkok, resulting in 400 anonymous completed responses. The data key-in process was double-checked. Frequency distribution and percentages were used to analyze parental support for their children's English language learning. The Wilcoxon signed rank test compared parents' current proficiency with their perceived necessary proficiency. The questionnaire included 11 questions on parent demographics including age, gender, education level, marital status, and children's school program), self-perceived language proficiency and necessary English language proficiency, and parental support practices.

2.2.2 Phase 2: Bangkok parental involvement focus group discussion

Semi-structured group discussions were conducted with 15 volunteered parents. The interviews explored their perspectives on their roles and current situations; their perceived gaps, needs, and requirements for supporting their children's English learning; and the obstacles preventing them from supporting their children, along with their underlying reasons in Thai language. The audio recordings were then transcribed and translated. The translations were checked twice by a second individual and summarized qualitatively by two separate individuals, with cross-checking conducted for accuracy.

3. RESULTS

The research results are presented in two separate phases as follows:

3.1 Results of phase 1: Bangkok parental involvement in children's English learning survey

The study involved 368 mothers (92%) and 32 fathers (8%) as participants. The majority of their children were enrolled in the general Thai program ($n = 342$ or 85.5%), followed by the English program in Thai schools ($n = 40$ or 10%) and the international program ($n = 18$ or 4.5%). Most parents were aged between 20–29 years ($n = 216$ or 54%) and 30–39 years ($n = 136$ or 34%), with smaller groups of parents under 20 years ($n = 21$ or 5.3%) and over 40 years ($n = 27$ or 6.8%). A majority of the parents ($n = 290$ or 72.5%) reported not being involved in their children's English language learning, while less than a third ($n = 110$ or 27.5%) indicated that they were. Table 1 provides a summary of the parents' demographic information.

Table 1: The summary of the parents' demographic information

	Number	Percent
Gender		
Female	368	92%
Male	32	8%
Children's school program		
General Thai	342	85.5%
English program	40	10%
International program	18	4.5%
Age		
Less than 20 years	21	5.3%
20–29 years	216	54%
30–39 years	136	34%
More than 40 years	27	6.8%
Self-assess parental involvement		
Involve in English learning	110	27.5%
Not involve in English learning	290	72.5%

In terms of parents' English proficiency, only 30 parents (7.5%) felt their language skills were sufficient to support their children, while 370 parents (92.5%) expressed that their English was not good enough to do so. Half of the participants rated their current English proficiency at the elementary or A2 level

(n = 200 or 50%) according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which describes language ability on a six-point scale from pre-A1 (pre-beginner or below A1), A1 (Beginner), A2 (Elementary), B1 (Intermediate), B2 (Upper-Intermediate), C1 (Advanced) to C2 (Proficiency), meaning they can exchange information on familiar topics such as routine matters. This was followed by those at the A1 level (n = 81 or 20.3%) and pre-A1 level (n = 64 or 16%), respectively. Only 36 parents (9%) were at the B levels, and 19 parents (4.8%) were at the C levels. Most parents believed that an efficient proficiency level for supporting their children would be at the C1 level (n = 182 or 45.5%), followed by B2 (n = 101 or 25.3%) and B1 (n = 62 or 15.5%), respectively. Parents believed that neither A1 nor pre-A1 level of English proficiency was sufficient to support their children's language learning. Table 2 presents the parents' self-reported English proficiency levels and their perceived necessary proficiency to effectively support their children's English language learning.

Table 2: Parents' self-reported English proficiency and perceived necessary proficiency for supporting children's English language learning

	Self-reported English proficiency		Perceived necessary proficiency	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Pre-A1	64	16%	-	-
A1	81	20.3%	-	-
A2	200	50%	22	5.5%
B1	30	7.5%	62	15.5%
B2	6	1.5%	101	25.3%
C1	15	3.8%	182	45.5%
C2	4	1%	33	8.3%

To compare parents' current proficiency and their perceived necessary proficiency, the Wilcoxon signed rank test was applied. Results revealed a significant difference between the two ($Z = -8.098$, $p < 0.001$). The majority of parents (n = 327, 81.75%) believed their current English proficiency was lower than necessary to support their children's language learning. Fewer parents (n = 64, 16%) perceived their current proficiency as higher, while a small number (n = 9, 2.25%) believed it was just sufficient as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: The comparison of parents' self-reported English proficiency and perceived necessary proficiency

	N	Percent	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	P-value
Current proficiency is higher than perceived necessary proficiency	64	16%	323.30	20691.00	-8.098	<.001
Current proficiency is lower than perceived necessary proficiency	327	81.75%	171.09	55945.00		
Current proficiency is equal to perceived necessary proficiency	9	2.25%				

This survey found that all 400 participants were willing to support their children's English language learning. It explored parental voluntary behavior in three aspects: financial support, academic support, and emotional support. The results showed that most parents provided financial (n = 391, 97.8%) and emotional support (n = 300, 75%) to their children's English language learning, while fewer engaged in academic support activities (n = 22, 5.5%) such as reading, co-reading, or assisting with homework, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Parental support for children's English language learning

Aspect	Behavior	Number	Percent
Academic	support	22	5.5%
	not support	378	94.5%
Financial	support	391	97.8%
	not support	9	2.3%
Emotional	support	300	75.0%
	not support	100	25.0%

3.2 Results of phase 2: Bangkok parental involvement focus group discussion

The results from the semi-structured group discussions with 15 volunteered parents were organized by the key questions explored during the interviews. The data were analyzed qualitatively, focusing on the common themes and recurring patterns across participants as follows

3.2.1 Parents' perspectives on their roles and current situations

The discussions revealed a spectrum of parental roles, ranging from passive sponsors to active learners. Some parents viewed their primary role as financial sponsors, responsible for paying tuition fees, purchasing additional resources like tutoring services, and providing materials or funding activities. They believed that the responsibility for teaching the foreign language rested solely with the teachers. One parent expressed that

I understand that education is important, and English is one indicator of how successful schooling is. So, I work as hard as possible to get my children into the best schools. However, I cannot teach my child to speak English because I am not a good role model for using the language. So, I chose an international school, hoping that my child's English will be much better than mine. (Parent 13)

This mother also expressed that she found it challenging to communicate with the school due to their English-only language policy, which caused her significant difficulties due to the language barrier. Another parent (Parent 10) expressed his concern about the socioeconomic factors that limited his daughter's educational choices. Despite his dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching at the nearby government public school, he believed that English education could improve his daughter's life prospects. He noted that his daughter's school lacked native English-speaking teachers and that he was unsure of the teachers' English proficiency. He also expressed difficulty in selecting appropriate English learning materials for his daughter. He expressed that he tried to buy his daughter some materials, but he was still unsure about what was good for her.

Honestly, the money situation really boxes in her schooling options. I'm not crazy about the local public school, but I know English is absolutely crucial for her future. The thing is, her school doesn't have native English teachers, and I'm just not confident in the ones they do have. I've tried buying some learning stuff for her, but I'm still just guessing at what's actually effective. (Parent 10)

On the other hand, some parents, e.g., Parent 13 and Parent 3, both with and without good command of English saw themselves as role models actively involved in language learning alongside their children. For example, one parent said,

I think the best I can do is show my child that learning is important, even if I'm not very good at English myself. I believe it's better to show my child that I'm trying my best to study English. Sometimes, I demonstrate that I make mistakes but am still willing to communicate, so they know it's okay to make mistakes without fear of being judged. I think this approach helps my child's learning. (Parent 3)

Another parent, a pharmacist with an advanced education, was confident in her English proficiency at the C1 level. She felt that this was sufficient to serve as her child's language input, and she was satisfied with her child's improvement in English. However, she also believed that the sponsorship role still necessary as she sometimes had no time to assist her son doing his homework. She decided to hire an English speaker, well-educated and high-salary nanny to be her assistant.

I felt my English was enough for my child's language development, and I'm quite happy with his progress. While I could manage his learning myself, when I'm not with him, I need to invest in a well-educated, English-speaking nanny to assist. (Parent 4)

Despite these different perspectives, most parents (e.g., Parent 3, Parent 5, Parent 10, and Parent 13) expressed a willingness to engage more directly in their children's learning. They all understand that with their support their children's language learning could become more effective, but they were unsure how to do so. Several parents like Parent 3, Parent 10 and Parent 13 acknowledged feeling disconnected from their children's educational journey due to a lack of confidence in the subject matter, limited understanding of foreign language acquisition and pedagogy, their lives' conditions and their insufficient communication from teachers and school curriculum designers. As Parent 6 stated, "There is no parental support available." and Parent 5 explained,

We really want to help our kids learn more effectively, especially with English, but honestly, we just don't know how. It's tough when you're not confident in the subject yourself, and the school doesn't always explain things clearly. We just feel disconnected. (Parent 5)

In conclusion, based on these expressions, parents appear to have a general understanding of their role as learning supporters in various methods depend on their abilities and resources. However, several obstacles and limitations prevent them from fully fulfilling this role.

3.2.2 Obstacles preventing parental support

Most parents, such as Parent 3, Parent 5, Parent 6, and Parent 15 expressed a strong belief in the importance of English for their children's future opportunities, both academically and professionally. Although this belief motivated them to support their children, they identified four main obstacles that hindered their ideal supportive behavior: limited English proficiency, a lack of knowledge about how to help their children learn a new language, financial constraints, and time limitations.

Conversely, some parents, e.g., Parent 1 and Parent 7 admitted that their own negative experiences with learning English as children discouraged them from engaging more actively in their children's English education. They felt that their past struggles with the language made them less capable or interested in helping their children succeed. These parents pointed to economic inequality and poor-quality education in their generation as root causes of their difficulties. Some, including Parent 1, Parent 5, Parent 7, and Parent 13 shared that it seemed impossible to provide quality education for their children when they themselves were still struggling to meet basic needs and had limited time to assist their children or to learn new skills.

Additionally, parents noted a lack of accessible upskilling or reskilling programs tailored for parents, particularly those offered at an affordable price.

3.2.3 Reasons for not supporting their children

All the parents agreed that the primary reason they avoid actively supporting their children's English learning is their fear of making mistakes and unintentionally teaching their children the wrong way.

As parents, we love and support our children as much as we possibly can. The only reason we hesitate to help them is because we're not confident we can do it correctly. Moreover, we always feel stressful when we need to. (Parent 1)

Many parents, (e.g., Parent 1, Parent 3, Parent 5, Parent 7 and Parent 10), shared this concern, explaining that their lack of proficiency in English makes them worry that their involvement could confuse their children or hinder their progress. They felt that while they are eager to provide support, the fear of teaching incorrect language usage or methods holds them back from fully participating in their children's learning process. Some parents also mentioned that without proper guidance or resources, they felt unsure about the best ways to assist their children, leading them to leave this responsibility to teachers and external tutors.

3.2.4 Needs and requirements for supporting English learning

Many parents identified a significant gap between their own English proficiency and the level required to effectively support their children. They expressed the need for specific and intensive classes that focus on skills they should be able to teach their children, such as phonics, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and basic conversational skills, until their children can direct their own learning.

I want to start learning from blending phonemes. I've tried studying this skill on YouTube, but I'm not sure if I'm doing it correctly. I'd prefer a small group class tailored for parents, and I'd like to have other parents as my classmates. (Parent 1)

Several participants, (e.g., Parent 1, Parent 2 and Parent 3), shared a lack of confidence in taking English classes with younger people. They agreed that learning with peers of the same age in a group setting would not only improve their language skills but also provide mutual support and encouragement to face the challenge of learning a foreign language.

I think a lot of us feel the same way – I just don't have the confidence to take English classes with younger folks. It would make such a difference if we could learn with other adults our age. Not only would our English get better, but we could also support each other through the challenge of learning a new language. (Parent 2)

Many participants, (e.g., Parent 1, Parent 5 and Parent 14), expressed a preference for onsite classrooms over online learning, as they believed they could receive more comprehensive support from an attentive instructor in a relaxed atmosphere. They particularly favored daytime weekend classes over evening or weekday sessions during working hours. The preferred teaching method is explicit instruction, with no overly challenging activities, and the inclusion of technological support such as on-demand video recordings, easily accessible audio clips, or even AI, mobile applications, or web-based translators.

Honestly, onsite classes are just better than online for us. You get more direct support from the teacher in a relaxed setting. Weekend days are ideal, definitely not evenings or weekdays. We prefer clear teaching without anything too challenging, and tech like AI or apps. (Parent 14)

The most urgently needed and desired class was a "reading aloud" class, which would focus on phonemic awareness training, phonics, and phonics skills, especially blending, reading aloud, and fluency development. These skills were considered more important than meaning-oriented ones, such as reading comprehension and grammar. This was followed by a demand for vocabulary drilling classes and speaking practice.

Additionally, parents (e.g., Parent 1, Parent 2 and Parent 3), noted that they lacked familiarity with English-speaking environments. They expressed a desire for opportunities to receive authentic language input through engaging activities that their whole family could participate in. These activities could include traveling with an English-speaking tour guide, learning new skills or information in English, singing songs, or watching English-language movies together.

Moreover, every participant agreed that they wanted to improve their understanding of how children acquire a foreign language, how to effectively promote language learning, and how to emotionally encourage their children without relying on extrinsic rewards. They believed that reducing the focus on rewards would foster more sustainable learning behaviours. Parents also pointed out that they wanted to participate in school development and policy making because sometimes school staff, especially teachers, who play a crucial role in learning, can be inconsistent in quality due to personality differences. Additionally, they expressed concerns about the rigidity of the examination and evaluation system, which often applies a fixed approach to learners with diverse learning paces. This inflexibility can result in negative reinforcement and discourage children in their language learning efforts.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this research highlight the complexity of Thai parental roles in supporting their children's English learning as a foreign language, unlikely English-speaking families. The study revealed a shift in parental roles, from traditional financial sponsorship to potential peer learners and role models, but several obstacles prevent this transition from being fully realized.

4.1 Parental willingness and challenges

Ideally, in an English as a foreign language setting, using English as the medium of communication at home can help children successfully acquire English, increase their linguistic repertoire, prevent ineffective English teaching, and support English learning in non-English-speaking contexts (Seo, 2025). Yet, the survey results show that while parents are overwhelmingly willing to support their children's English learning, they often feel unqualified to do so. Only 7.5% of the parents believed their English proficiency was adequate to offer meaningful academic support, and the majority (81.75%) acknowledged a gap between their current proficiency and the level they deemed necessary to support their children. It is unclear whether parents underestimate their abilities or if this perception is accurate, but this finding aligns with previous research, which noted that parents of English learners often had negative experiences with the language learning process (Tarasawa & Waggoner, 2015).

Despite their perceived inadequacies, parents are not entirely passive. The study found that many parents provide emotional and financial support, indicating a deep commitment to their children's education. This suggests that, while they may not feel capable of offering direct assistance, parents understand the importance of creating a supportive environment for language learning and are eager to improve their own skills. Thus, for schools to increase parental involvement most effectively, both traditional and nontraditional approaches to family engagement must be implemented in ways that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. For example, to promote students' English achievements, schools or educational institutions should not only focus on developing their students but also act as active agents in enhancing parents' abilities and the surrounding environment (Poonsup, 2024). Parent's training is not only beneficial but also highly

advantageous for minority and marginalized groups, such as ethnic communities or families with limited budgets, time, and resources to support their children (Jeynes, 2007).

4.2 Peer learning and role model potential

Parental involvement is participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children (Jeynes, 2007). So solely performing as sponsors could not be considered as involvement. The focus group discussions indicated that some parents are beginning to embrace the idea of being peer learners alongside their children, a concept that represents a significant departure from the more passive role of sponsorship. Parents expressed a desire to model a learning attitude for their children, even when they themselves are not proficient in English. This shift is crucial because it suggests that they are not only willing to support their children academically but are also eager to participate in the learning process. By doing so, they can foster a more collaborative and less hierarchical approach to education, benefiting both parent and child by encouraging parents to adopt the role of a peer rather than an instructor. This could help them to feel more at ease, allowing them to share openly and let their children learn from their mistakes. Changing parents attitude could help improved their children's English ability (Petchprasert, 2014).

Conversely, the study also found that many parents feel disconnected from the process due to limited English proficiency and a lack of knowledge about language acquisition. As Seo (2025) points out, parental involvement in language learning plays a critical role in a child's academic success, but without proper training and resources, parents may struggle to contribute effectively. Therefore, specific training in phoneme perception and reading aloud, as suggested by the focus group participants, could empower parents to take on a more active role.

4.3 Obstacles to greater involvement

Several significant barriers prevent Thai parents from fully engaging in their children's English education. The limited English proficiency is the most prominent challenge, with 50% of parents rating themselves at the A2 level on the CEFR scale. Research has shown that parental education levels significantly affect children's language learning motivation (Iwaniec, 2020; Petchprasert, 2014). Although some parents can manage routine communication, they lack the fluency required to support more complex tasks such as homework assistance. While no study specifies how proficient parents should be, 81.75% of participants in this study reported dissatisfaction with their language skills, feeling that their proficiency is insufficient to support their children. This perception can have both advantages and disadvantages; underestimating their ability may act as a negative motivator, driving them to improve, but it may also undermine their confidence to serve as role models or even peers in their children's learning journey.

Additionally, the focus group revealed a widespread fear among parents of making mistakes and inadvertently teaching their children incorrect English. This anxiety is compounded by cultural norms surrounding seniority and education in Thailand, where there is a belief that knowledge should be passed down without errors. Past research has even suggested that a good role model should avoid speaking uncertain English, and that only 'native' English was considered ideal (Kamalanavin, 2015). These mindsets cause parents to feel anxious about using English with their children, preventing them from modeling an experimental, failure-tolerant learning approach. Some parents admitted that they had experienced this strict parenting style themselves and were unaware of how it might affect their own parenting.

In addition to proficiency issues, parents cited time constraints and financial limitations as major obstacles. These findings align with previous studies that show socioeconomic factors play a critical role in educational involvement (Naite, 2021). Parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may lack the time or resources to invest in supplementary learning materials or private tutoring, further exacerbating the educational divide and even affecting their own self-development. Given the challenge of dedicating approximately 200 hours to improve one proficiency level, it would take at least 700 hours of practice to reach a C1 level (Sara, 2023). This makes it difficult for parents to improve their English skills, leaving them to focus on providing emotional support, which seems a more immediate and accessible solution.

However, even offering emotional support requires psychological understanding and communication skills (Baker et al., 2021). Parents need training in areas such as managing language anxiety, giving positive and negative reinforcement, and practicing empathic communication.

4.4 The need for upskilling programs

Evidence revealed parents should take an active role in assisting their children's education especially at home (Boonsuk et al., 2024; Forey et al., 2016; Korosidou et al., 2021; Naite, 2021; Seo, 2025). The findings and research emphasize a critical need for upskilling and reskilling programs tailored specifically for parents (Boonsuk et al., 2024; Korosidou et al., 2021; Poonsup, 2024; Seo, 2025). The majority of parents indicated a willingness to learn but lamented the lack of accessible and affordable opportunities for improving their own English skills. Upskilling programs could bridge the gap between parents' current proficiency and the level

required to support their children more effectively. These programs should not only focus on language acquisition but also provide guidance on how parents can serve as role models and peer learners, encouraging a more active and engaged approach to their children's education. Psychological training and communication skills are also recommended (Baker et al., 2021).

4.5 Policy implications

This research underscores the importance of broadening the scope of parental involvement in English education in Thailand. Educational policymakers and school administrators need to recognize the potential of parents as active contributors to their children's learning process. Providing accessible training opportunities, family-based English activities, and communication strategies for non-English-speaking parents could significantly enhance the educational outcomes for children in non-English-speaking environments. Furthermore, efforts should be made to reduce the financial and time-related constraints that hinder parents' involvement, particularly for families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the shift after the pandemic has led many parents to realize the necessity of greater involvement in their children's education. While parents once primarily functioned as financial sponsors, there is now a growing desire among many to take on more active roles as peer learners and role models in their children's English education. This research highlights the crucial yet often underdeveloped role of Thai urban parents in supporting their children's English learning. Although the majority still remain in the role of financial sponsors, there is a clear interest in becoming more engaged. The study identifies significant barriers to deeper involvement, such as limited English proficiency, time constraints, financial limitations, and a lack of accessible resources for parents.

With appropriate support through targeted upskilling programs and policy reforms parents have the potential to become more actively engaged in their children's language education. Encouraging parents to participate in family-based learning activities, offering language skill training, and equipping them with tools to provide emotional support can foster a more holistic environment for English language learning. It is essential for educational institutions and policymakers to collaborate in providing the necessary resources and opportunities for parents to transition from passive sponsors to active contributors in their children's educational journey. By doing so, the gap in parental involvement can be bridged, ultimately enhancing language outcomes for children in non-English-speaking environments.

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