

SCAFFOLDING LANGUAGE LEARNING BEYOND THE EFL CLASSROOM: THE EXPERIENCES OF PRIMARY-AGED SAUDI STUDENTS

Enas Mohammed Alnafia^a, Urmee Chakma^b, Lilly Yazdanpanah^c,
Melissa Barnes^{d*}

(^dMelissa.barnes@latrobe.edu.au)

^{a,b,c,d} *School of Education, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia
Melbourne (Victoria), Australia*

Abstract: This study explores the out-of-school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning experiences of eight fourth-grade female students in Saudi Arabia. Using arts-based language maps and semi-structured interviews, we explored how the participants engaged with English learning beyond formal schooling. Drawing on the concepts of scaffolding and situated learning, a thematic analysis of the data revealed that the children's English language learning was scaffolded both intentionally and incidentally through human (e.g., mothers, siblings, friends, domestic workers) and technological (e.g., notebooks, digital tools, online tutors) resources. While engaging with these resources, the children demonstrated autonomy by initiating learning tasks and seeking guidance from more knowledgeable others. The study further revealed that out-of-school language learning occurred within hybrid spaces, where home literacy practices, digital environments, and formal online learning blended to support language development. It was also found that scaffolding and situated learning are co-constructed through children's interactions with their environments; however, access to these opportunities varied depending on the availability of resources. This research empirically addresses a gap in current understanding of how children engage in informal language learning experiences.

Keywords: English language learning, scaffolding, situated learning, technology

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v37i1/1-24>

Practising English outside formal English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom settings provides important opportunities for language learning (Socket, 2014; Bai & Guo, 2021). However, in many EFL contexts, opportunities for English language learning outside of school have traditionally been limited, as English is not used in daily communication. While research has shown that children's out-of-school English learning is often supported by a range of human and material resources including parents, siblings, peers, caregivers, and digital media (Alghamdi, 2024; Alroqi, 2019; Sayer & Ban, 2014; Zhang et al., 2023), less is known about how these sources of support operate together within children's everyday lives, particularly for young learners in EFL contexts. Existing literature has often focused on particular forms of support in isolation such as parental involvement, digital tools, and tutoring, rather than

* Corresponding author

exploring how children move across overlapping home, social, and digital environments in which support is distributed among multiple actors and resources (Annamalai et al., 2022; Estrada Chichón, 2022; Wolfaardt & Leung, 2025). This is important because access to such support is uneven as children differ in the availability of English-speaking family members, domestic workers, private tutors and digital resources, and these differences could shape the quality and frequency of their opportunities to engage with English beyond school (Vadivel et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023).

For this paper, we define out-of-school learning as any structured or unstructured English learning activity that occurs outside the school. This includes linguistic interactions in the home or outside the home, through media, peers, adults, which are either incidental or (self)-directed (Sockett, 2014; Sundqvist, 2009). For young learners, early exposure to English through these informal activities enhances their ability to notice language forms and engage in meaningful language use, promoting learner autonomy (Gee, 2012; Schmidt, 1990). These learning experiences are integrated into children's everyday lives making them authentic and situated within the context (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where both human and non-human resources help scaffold English language learning as children operate within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978).

Saudi Arabia presents a distinctive sociocultural and educational context in which English language learning operates within complex dynamics of tradition, religion, and globalisation (Almesaar, 2024). Although Arabic is the official language of Saudi Arabia, English has become increasingly significant due to its perceived economic, academic, and technological values. It serves as a fundamental language in higher education institutions, business and medical fields, and English proficiency is often associated with upward mobility and access to global opportunities (Al-Seghayer, 2023). As a result, recent educational reforms have introduced English from Grade 1 (Human Capability Development Program of Saudi Arabia, 2021), reflecting the growing importance of English for academic and professional opportunities in the country. However, English maintains an ambivalent status in the social fabric of Saudi Arabia. On the one hand, English is linked to global competitiveness and participation in the international knowledge economy. On the other hand, it has historically been perceived by some as a cultural threat, particularly due to its association with Western ideologies (Elyas & Picard, 2018). This tension is underpinned by religious, nationalistic, and educational concerns, whereby the increasing dominance of English is sometimes viewed as undermining the status of Arabic as a language of identity, heritage, and faith (Almesaar, 2024). Thus, cultural practices in this study refer to the everyday routines, values, social roles, and patterns of interaction within families that influence how children engage with English at home.

Similar to other EFL contexts, many Saudi children encounter English first in out-of-school settings often through interactions with parents, siblings, domestic workers, and digital media (Wolfaardt, 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). Yet little is known about how these supports interact within Saudi children's everyday learning environments, and how unequal access to such supports shapes opportunities for English learning beyond school. As such, understanding the dynamics of out-of-school English learning is essential for improving early language outcomes and addressing educational equity for young EFL learners in Saudi Arabia.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding, grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978), is the temporary support provided by more knowledgeable others as learners are guided through their ZPD. It represents "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In out-of-school learning contexts, scaffolding is typically associated with human actors such as parents (Estrada Chichón, 2022; Kalaycı & Öz, 2018), whereas non-human scaffolding is more commonly linked to the use of digital applications (Alghamdi, 2024; Annamalai et al., 2022). Assistance in these forms is all critical in the development of early literacy of children, especially, in EFL contexts, creating strong scaffolds for language learning.

The home environment is a favourable site for English exposure in EFL contexts, making family-based scaffolding essential (Minalla, 2022). Parents regularly engage in meaningful interactions such as daily conversations, storybook reading and video watching (Estrada Chichón, 2022; Kalaycı & Öz, 2018) and actively participate in children's language and literacy development, which in turn contribute to their language learning success (Zhang et al., 2023). Mothers play a central role in language learning by offering academic support, emotional encouragement, and monitoring access to digital tools (Sayer & Ban, 2014). This guidance helps children move toward autonomy, as parents adjust support to suit their children's developing competence (Belland, 2017). Siblings and peers alongside parents provide social scaffolding through collaborative plays, shared activities, and peer corrections (Gregory et al., 2004; Sorenson Duncan & Paradis, 2020). It is suggested that the more proficient English-speaking siblings scaffold their less proficient siblings' learning through interactions, collaborations and negotiations of meaning (Soyoo & Reynolds, 2024).

While the role of family members is well-documented, the influence of domestic workers on children's English learning in multilingual households remains underexplored though some studies have begun to acknowledge their role as key language models, especially in affluent households (Wolfaardt & Leung, 2025). For example, Wolfaardt's (2022) study of 8-9 year-olds in a Hong Kong English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) school found that children with domestic workers possessed significantly larger receptive English vocabularies, highlighting the domestic workers' influence on children's second language exposure. The study also revealed that the effectiveness of familial resources (e.g., parents, siblings, and domestic workers) depends on caregivers' language proficiency and the time they dedicate to interactions. In low resourced contexts, children often receive minimal interactions and scaffolding thereby exacerbating educational inequities (Vadivel et al., 2023).

Beyond human support, technological tools have been found to be powerful scaffolds for language learning. Vygotsky (1978) describes these tools as "mediating artefacts" that aid cognitive development through interactions. Gamification strategies (i.e., rewards, levels, and feedback) used by language learning applications, promote repetition and motivation, which are crucial for vocabulary acquisition and syntax development (Cancino Avila & Castillo Fonseca, 2021). Studies in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia found that these tools improved students' language skills and confidence by offering interactive and meaningful English exposure outside the rigid,

examination-focused curricula (Alghamdi, 2024; Annamalai et al., 2022). While technological tools provide scaffolding for language learning, learner motivation also plays a key role, particularly as learners must take responsibility and actively engage in self-directed activities (Bai & Guo, 2021; Dafei, 2007; Liu, 2015). Learner autonomy involves learners actively planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning (Little, 2022, p. 64), which can be supported through the use of digital tools.

While informal education plays an important role in scaffolding children's English language learning, out-of-school formal education offers support ranging from online tutoring to community-based learning programs. With the growth of e-learning platforms (Liu, 2023), families connect their children with English language tutors for tailored learning and conversation practice (Lau & Lee, 2021) as they offer scaffolding through visual aids, repetition and feedback, which encourage children's initiative to autonomously interact with videos, repeat phrases, and do exercises. Such scaffolding tools support children's self-regulation, autonomy and language acquisition (Cadima et al., 2019).

Despite their potential, digital technologies raise concerns. Socio-economic disparities limit access to digital resources and to competent scaffolding agents. Moreover, overreliance on technology without human support may inhibit children's language development (Salfin et al., 2024). It is therefore crucial to dispel the idea of scaffolding as a series of separate interventions and to conceptualise scaffolds as relational and material arrays of support that enable children's linguistic growth. As such, scaffolding should be construed as a network of relational and material enablers that facilitate children's linguistic growth (Salminen et al., 2021).

Situated Learning

Situated learning refers to the process by which knowledge is acquired through authentic, context-dependent activity, situated with everyday life rather than isolated instruction (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It positions learning as a social process that occurs through participation in meaningful, culturally relevant practices. In the context of language learning, it highlights the idea that learners develop proficiency through daily interactions and experiences in which language serves a real communicative purpose (Gee, 2012; Rogoff, 2003). As learners engage with English in authentic settings—such as conversations with caregivers, watching cartoons, or listening to songs—they not only use language but also begin to *notice* its forms and patterns, in line with Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that conscious attention to linguistic features is necessary for second language acquisition; situated, contextual experiences often provide such noticing opportunities naturally and meaningfully.

Studies have demonstrated that children's language learning is supported through both incidental and intentional engagement with English in everyday environments. For instance, Sundqvist (2009), in a study involving 80 Swedish children aged 10-11, found that frequent engagement in English-mediated digital activities, such as video games or YouTube videos, correlated with higher English oral proficiency. Similarly, Sockett (2014) reported that French adolescents improved vocabulary and listening skills by intentionally engaging with English-language music and social media content. These findings illustrate how informal learning spaces

can provide the dual benefit of incidental exposure and intentional learning through motivated engagement, especially when the content is emotionally or socially meaningful.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, incidental language learning in the home and community becomes particularly significant. Alroqi (2019) notes that many Saudi children are introduced to English through caregivers, cartoons, or interactive media before receiving formal schooling in the language. These environments allow children to hear and respond to English in emotionally engaging, low-stakes settings that support both internalisation and communicative confidence. Through repeated exposure and interaction, learners notice recurring language forms and gradually shift from peripheral participation to more active use of English in daily life (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Although scaffolding and situated learning offer distinct perspectives, their combined application allows for a deeper analysis of children's informal English language learning. Scaffolding, as a concept, helped explain how parents, siblings, domestic workers, and digital tools support children's learning by enabling them to work within and extend their ZPD, both autonomously and with assistance. Situated learning helped explain how and why children's everyday encounters with English become meaningful learning opportunities through participation in (routine) social practices. Considered together, these conceptual lenses, allowed the findings to be interpreted in terms of how support for English learning was enacted and distributed across different human and digital actors, how English learning was mediated through everyday participation, and how opportunities for such participation were unevenly available across children's environments.

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and perspectives of Saudi primary-aged students regarding their English language learning outside the classroom. The study employed a qualitative case study design, chosen for its suitability in capturing in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences within specific contexts and enabling the exploration of the social and familial dynamics shaping their informal English language learning. The study was guided by the following research question:

What are Saudi primary-aged students' experiences and perspectives of learning English outside the classrooms?

In addressing this question, the study attended to how children's English learning was mediated through resources, situated practices, and support from others, as well as how access to these opportunities varied across participants.

This study utilised an arts-based approach (ABA), an interdisciplinary approach that combines creative arts principles within research contexts (Leavy, 2020; McNiff, 2018), allowing young learners to express their experiences visually through language maps as well as through verbal narratives in follow-up semi-structured interviews. In educational research, creative productions, such as language maps are recognised as potent pedagogical tools, providing learners from diverse backgrounds with a voice and with the opportunity to actively

construct meaning, positioning them as co-researchers (e.g. D'warte 2014). This method not only facilitated self-expression among young participants but also allowed the researchers to access insights that may not have been fully articulated in verbal interviews alone (Leavy, 2020). After each language map was completed, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews where students were asked to explain what they have drawn and why (see Appendix for the prompts used) to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives and allow the children to provide a narrative around their drawings.

Participants

The Saudi education system consists of both public and private schools. Public schools are government-funded and follow a unified national curriculum delivered predominantly in Arabic, with English introduced as a subject from early primary years (Grade 1 since 2021 reforms) (Human Capability Development Program of Saudi Arabia, 2021). Private schools, by contrast, often offer bilingual or international curricula (e.g. British, American or International Baccalaureate curricula), and provide more intensive English language instruction from early childhood (Saudi Times, 2025). These schools tend to attract middle- and upper-income families, and their students often demonstrate higher English proficiency levels due to extended exposure and resource availability (Olwi, 2024). This dual system reflects broader social inequalities, which are particularly relevant to understanding children's access to informal English learning outside school.

This study was conducted in four primary schools in Saudi Arabia, each representing a distinct context (two public schools, two private schools; with one school located in metropolitan area and one in a rural setting). The shared criterion across all sites was the inclusion of Grade 4 Saudi students who were, at the time of data collection (December 2024), enrolled in a Saudi primary school. Grade 4 students were selected due to recent policy measures which mandated English to be taught starting in Grade 1 (Human Capability Development Program of Saudi Arabia, 2021), making this cohort the first learners to have been taught English since Grade 1.

Table 1. Participant Details

Participant	Area	School
Abeer Mariam	Metropolitan	Public
Layal Lama		Private
Farah Hadiyah	Rural	Public
Kenaz Misk		Private

Eight Grade 4 students (aged 9-10), two from each all-girls school, were purposively selected to offer varied perspectives on their English language learning outside the classrooms and on their parents' role in supporting their learning. To recruit the students, English language

teachers served as essential mediators who assisted in the distribution of the participants' information sheets of the study to all students in their classes. All interested participants were encouraged to contact the researcher directly to express their interest. Finally, all families who satisfied the inclusion criteria were contacted and the first two families from each school who returned consent and assent forms, expressing their willingness to participate were chosen to participate in the study.

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from [Blinded] University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Application Number: [Blinded]) and permission was obtained from the regional Education Department in Saudi Arabia to ensure adherence to guidelines for research involving children. Data were collected by the first author of this paper, a native speaker of Arabic.

To capture the participating students' own experiences and perspectives of out-of-school English language learning, each participant was introduced to a drawing task, which is also known as a language map (D'warte, 2014). They were asked in Arabic to "draw how you learn English outside of school. Consider who you communicate in English with, what you communicate and when." Any objects, people, or places could be depicted, and students were encouraged to use symbols, colours, or words they felt best represented their daily experiences with English.

Children were given a blank sheet of paper and a selection of coloured pencils, crayons, and markers. The researcher reminded the participants that there was "no right or wrong" way to draw and that the emphasis was on freely expressing ideas about who, what, and when they learned English (Leavy, 2020). If needed, gentle prompts were offered (e.g., "What else helps you learn English at home?") to spark further detail, but care was taken not to lead the content of the children's drawings.

Using language maps provided an avenue for students to convey experiences that might be difficult to articulate in purely verbal forms (Amina et al., 2024). Younger learners often find drawing more natural than extended conversation, and visual outputs can overcome linguistic barriers by reducing reliance on formal vocabulary (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006). This approach thus honours an ABA research ethos, foregrounding the child's perspective with minimal adult framing (Leavy, 2020).

After completing the language map, each student participated in a semi-structured interview of 15-20 minutes. The flexible format allowed the researcher to probe elements of the drawing while also following a basic guide of open-ended questions related to English language learning, routines, feelings about learning English and parental involvement.

Interviews began with a simple prompt: "Could you tell me about your drawing?". Follow-up questions addressed any notable symbols, characters (e.g., a parent or sibling), or activities (e.g., reading, using an iPad). If details were unclear, the researcher would ask clarifying questions (e.g., "What does this person do to help you learn English?"), ensuring the child had the opportunity to elaborate on or reinterpret the visual elements (D'warte, 2021).

All interviews and documents, such as the participant information sheets, consent and assent forms were in Arabic to ensure that participants and others involved comfortably comprehended communications and expressed themselves. Interview translation process followed Behr and Shishido (2016) three-step approach: translation, testing the translation, and back translation. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim in Arabic, then fully translated into English. The translation was treated as an interpretive process, especially where culturally embedded meanings or context-specific wording did not map neatly onto English. As a native Arabic speaker, the first author undertook the initial translation of transcripts into English. Attention was paid to preserving children's intended meanings, especially where colloquial expressions or culturally specific references were used. Where literal translation risked obscuring meanings, explanatory phrases were used to retain the original intent of the children's statements. Any salient nonverbal cues (e.g., prolonged silence, laughter) were noted in brackets.

To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned pseudonyms in transcripts and publication of findings. Where cultural and religious sensitivities arose (e.g., drawing facial features or reluctance to speak), the researcher remained alert, adapted her language or pacing, and gave the child time to respond or decline.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis using an iterative approach was applied to analysing both the language maps and interview transcripts by applying initial codes to data, followed by refining and consolidating codes and merging them into themes. Each language map/ interview pair was treated as a single analytic unit by interpreting the visual and verbal data together and was progressed through several stages. Initial coding was applied to the visual features in the language maps such as the size of figures, proximity between people and tools, labels or speech bubbles, learning spaces and activities alongside the children's explanations to identify areas of elaboration and emphasis. Firstly, In Vivo codes that captured the children's own words that named a practice or tool (e.g., "*Cops and Robber*", "*always with Dada*"). Followed by descriptive codes which summarised visual-verbal segments (e.g., mother checks homework, reads menu restaurant). After that, second-cycle coding was applied, where the codes that emerged from the first cycle were re-examined and pattern coding was used to cluster conceptually similar codes into higher order constructs. For instance, multiple codes relating to "mother's role" or "using smartphones," were grouped into broader categories (Saldaña, 2021). To construct candidate themes, patterns were identified which later formed the building of the themes. For example, "family/caregiver involvement" and "digital tools and apps" were recognised as recurring categories (See Table 1). By completing these phases, a clear picture of potential themes had emerged which were then reviewed by revisiting each language map and interview excerpt that linked to the candidate themes. At the final stage, to ensure that the themes represent the data two questions were asked: Do these data extracts genuinely reflect the essence of the theme? Are there contradictions or exceptions that challenge the proposed theme?

As a Saudi Arabic-speaking researcher, the first author occupied an insider-outsider position in this study. She shared linguistic and cultural familiarity with the participants and the

wider social context which supported the rapport with the children and sensitivity to culturally situated meanings as well. At the same time, as an adult researcher working across school sites and interpreting children's accounts, she remained outside the participants immediate worlds. This positioning required reflexive approach to mitigating the possibility of taking familiar practices for granted or over-interpreting implied meanings. To strengthen interpretive credibility, the research team engaged in iterative discussions of codes and themes, revisited the visual and verbal data where meanings were ambiguous, and considered contradictions and expectations across the dataset before finalising the themes. During team discussions, translated excerpts were presented alongside contextual explanations and, where needed, the first author revisited the original Arabic transcripts to clarify wording and intended meanings. When needed, themes were adjusted or renamed to align them more coherently with the dataset (Nowell et al., 2017).

Table 2. Example of The Thematic Analysis Approach for One Theme

Initial Code	Pattern Code	Theme
Watch English videos on YouTube	Digital input through media	Resources that Mediate Language Learning
Play English-based games	Gamified learning	
Trace letters on educational toys	Material literacy practice	

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study used arts-based language maps and semi-structured interviews to explore how primary-aged Saudi children learn English outside of the classroom. Themes were generated through code categorisation reflecting three distinct, though interconnected, dimensions that capture children's experiences and perspectives of out-of-school English learning. The first theme revealed the children's experiences of the resources they used in their learning, and how they described or visually represented these resources as useful or enjoyable for learning. The second theme highlighted the situated opportunities children had to notice and use English in their everyday lives, showing both their real-world encounters with English and how they interpreted these encounters as relevant to communication, play and everyday participation. The third theme illuminated children's experiences and perspectives of the human support that scaffolded their learning by highlighting the forms of support they received from different actors, and how they perceived these actors as important, available or sometimes unavailable sources of support.

Material and Digital Resources that Mediate Language Learning

Children's English learning outside the classroom was mediated by different digital and material resources. These resources whether self-chosen or parent-provided, supported a wide range of language skill development and reflected a range of purposes, from playful interaction

to focused study. Many of digital resources integrated gamification with learning, where learning was a part of a challenge or interaction. Some of these helped children notice, attend to language form or meaning of the interaction, others supported translanguaging (i.e., meaning making created through the interplay of English and Arabic).

YouTube was the most commonly used digital resource by the children, exposing them to a high level of spoken English. It often provided a mix of entertainment and learning, thus allowing children to learn at their own pace relying more heavily on their listening and comprehension skills. Mariam, for example, stated that she tries “*to find English videos on YouTube and listen to them*” and then translates them into Arabic. Mariam’s approach demonstrates an intentional language learning behaviour, as she purposefully attends to individual words and phrases in an effort to translate them, an example of early metacognitive strategy use and clear focus on meaning. In contrast, Misk described a translanguaging experience where both Arabic and English were fluidly used: “*I watch a frog and a bunny cartoon on YouTube. They converse partly in Arabic and in English.*” Although Misk primarily focuses on fun, she recognises the role of both languages in meaning-making and uses one language to scaffold the learning of the other.

Other children highlighted how mobile games fostered English learning through gamification, creating motivation and conditions for implicit learning. Misk, for example, described playing “*Cops and Robbers,*” where she had to “*gather all the letters*” to access a treasure. In this case, the desire to receive rewards motivated Misk to engage with the English alphabet and in doing so, she learned to recognise and sequence the letters. The game incentivised the noticing of English letters and turned literacy practice into a challenge-driven activity.

Layal described a multimodal activity where reading and movement intersect. “*There’s a game called Just Dance. The words are written in English at the bottom, showing what movements, we need to do.*” Although the primary focus seemed to be on playing a game, the integration of text with physical action helped with Layal’s English learning through immersion and repetition.

Abeer provided another example of incidental learning, explaining that she “*learned a lot of things*” by listening to how people pronounced words while playing Minecraft and eventually “*got used to saying them the way they do.*” Through modelling and repetition in gameplay, she was exposed to English in a way that helped her develop pronunciation skills, contributing to her oral fluency.

Materials like notebooks, drawing, and writing were also prevalent by supporting alphabet learning, vocabulary retention, and spelling through repetition and creativity. For example, Hadiyah incorporated creative elements into her literacy learning by referring to writing exercises as “drawing”, explaining “*I sometimes bring a notebook and draw in English. I mean draw A, B, C.*”. This creative approach may help reduce stress and maintain interest. Misk, on the other hand, used a vocabulary memorisation strategy that involved writing English words as a daily practice. She described her routine: “*I write English words, like I write one word every day. I write them on paper, and I memorise the paper.*” Through this practice, she used spelling and orthographic memory as an intentional self-directed learning strategy. The memorisation

process demonstrates that she uses a systematic approach to learning by utilising both her visual and verbal memory systems.

Layal and Lama also mentioned the use of educational tools, particularly those that helped with handwriting and vocabulary. Layal described her experience with such tools, explaining that “*These are the toys... like educational toys. You trace the dots, and you connect it.*” (see figure 1).

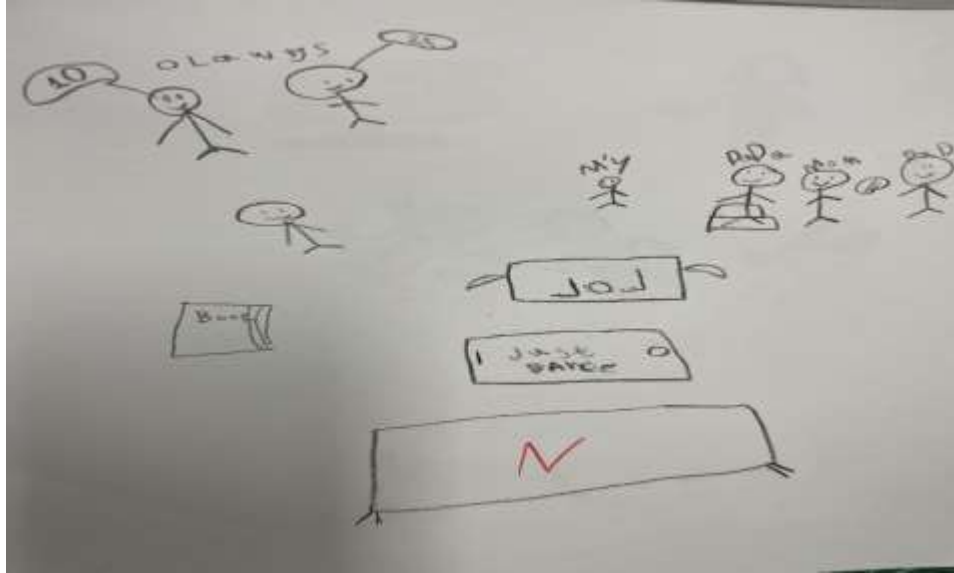


Figure 1. Layal traces the dots (LOL)

Layal’s approach reflects implicit learning where language instruction is integrated into play-based activities, reducing mental effort while supporting vocabulary retention. Likewise, Lama described using flashcards as part of her learning, explaining: “*Sometimes I play with cards that have letters and pictures.*” Here, “play” involves active recall by looking at the flashcards and trying to remember what is on the other side, whether a word or a picture. This playful engagement supports her memory of English words and vocabulary retention through repeated meaningful exposure. Across several language maps, the children brought together digital tools, printed materials, and home spaces within a single drawing, suggesting that English learning did not occur in one bounded site but across overlapping material and digital environments.

Situated Real-World Practice and Application

The participating children learned English through both formal educational tools and informal experiences in their everyday lives. The unstructured real-world experiences which children encountered resulted in authentic learning opportunities that allowed them to notice English in context while putting their knowledge into practice and building confidence. Schmidt (1990) described noticing as the active identification of new language structures in meaningful

environments, something evident in participants' interactions with public signs, restaurant menus, store labels and environmental text. These instances were typically self-initiated and embedded into their daily routines. As Mariam shared, she tried *"to read English words"* when in *"the market or anywhere."* While Hadiyah explained that she tries *"to read the letters to understand a sign written in English."* Both Mariam and Hadiyah demonstrated a natural awareness and attentiveness to English texts in their environment. Their accounts indicate purposeful practice using real-world language samples to test their reading and vocabulary. This strategy closely aligns with noticing which involves intentional attention to language use.

Several children treated their noticing of English in real life as a casual competition which made English reading more engaging. Abeer, for example, transformed a routine visual encounter into a language play by setting up a time-based challenge for herself, saying *"Most car signs (plates) are written in Arabic and English, right? So I try to read the English part quickly before the car passes."* This playful noticing, although incidental, likely enhanced her processing fluency and responsiveness to English in motion.

Kenaz's strategy extended beyond passive noticing. She actively recorded new vocabulary, turning environmental print into personalised learning content, demonstrating both self-regulated learning and metacognitive awareness of how to reinforce English input. Describing her method, she said, *"Here, in this drawing, I learn English by looking at the writing (like prices and product names in English), and I write them down, and that way, I learn from it."* Her language map extended her verbal account; rather than depicting English as a separate study activity, she represented shelves, products, and interaction within a commercial space, positioning environmental print as part of her social setting (see figure 2). This suggests that English noticing was embedded in everyday movement through public spaces and not confined to structured learning at home.



Figure 2. Kenaz learns English by reading the products' names in English

Lama, along with other students, used English as a practical tool for navigating public spaces, highlighting the relevance of language to real-world problem-solving. For example, in an imagined scenario, she would envision herself using English for practical purposes: “*Like if I want to ask where the toy store is or where the restaurant is while I’m in a mall.*” This reflects her orientation toward communicative competence, using English for a purpose even when such opportunities may not arise often. These experiences show how ordinary public spaces such as markets, roads, and malls became situated learning environments where English was noticed, interpreted and sometimes imagined as a tool for communication.

Support from Others through Social Scaffolding

English language learning outside regular classes depended heavily on children’s interactions with family members, caregivers, peers, and online tutors. These individuals provided different types of linguistic exposure, emotional support, and learning scaffolds, which helped children notice and engage with English in meaningful ways. The absence or limitations of such support posed significant learning challenges for some participants. The findings suggest that the participants received their most frequent support from their mothers who provided academic assistance and emotional support. In most cases, mothers acted as informal tutors guiding children through memorisation activities, while correcting pronunciation, teaching grammar and offering positive reinforcement and motivational support. This approach aligns with the notion of scaffolding where the more knowledgeable adults offer structured support to help learners perform beyond their current level. Abeer, for example, stated that her mother helps her “the most” and Farah spoke about her reliance on her mothers’ assistance during difficult tasks where she would go to her mother as “she is the one who helps [her] the most”. Abeer and Farah used the phrase ‘*the most*’, to emphasise their mothers’ roles in supporting their English language learning at home. This emphasis was also visible in Abeer’s language map where her mother was drawn as a prominent figure positioned close to her within the learning scene, making the mother-child relationship as a key site of support (*see figure 3*).



Figure 3. Abeer with her mother learning English

Support from mothers came particularly when the children encountered difficult tasks or when they struggled to understand something on their own. Misk explained that her mother encouraged her to engage with digital resources, noting that her mother often tells her “to download English apps because” she believed they will help her English learning. This demonstrates a rather indirect method of support, where her mother opted for a more hands-off role in her child’s English language learning. She supported Misk’s learning by ensuring access to external resources and opportunities to extend her learning at home.

In contrast, Hadiyah illustrated a structured routine, where she and her mother worked side by side during test preparation. “We sit on chairs at a table. I sit next to her, and then she teaches me. I repeat and repeat until I memorise them so I can get a good grade in reading English”, she explained that her mother corrected her when she said “/loof/ instead of ‘Love’” These moments reflect not only academic scaffolding but also language awareness and noticing, where mothers, either directly or indirectly, help children pay attention to form, pronunciation, and accuracy. Farah, by contrast, noted that while English learning was not difficult, the frequent use of Arabic at home reduced opportunities for English practice. The results show that exposure alone is insufficient without meaningful interaction.

Another important finding was that children, with domestic workers in their homes, benefited from practising English with them as these workers played an essential role in providing daily conversational exposure. In certain households, nannies were the primary source of English language interaction for the children. Lama said, that she talks with her “nanny in English”. Lama’s language map reinforced this interaction, as the domestic worker “Dada” was drawn as the largest figure positioned directly beside Lama. The size and proximity of the figure suggest the importance of this relationship within Lama’s everyday learning environment (see figure 4).



Figure 4. Lama interacts with her domestic worker “Dada” using English

Layal expanded on this, saying that her nanny “teaches [her] English” and when she does not “*know a word*” she “*will sneak away to ask the nanny, then come back and use the word*”. These examples demonstrate how repeated, informal conversations with nannies facilitate noticing of vocabulary, form, and meaning in real time. They also point to domestic workers as significant yet underexplored language-learning mediators within children’s English learning ecologies. This represents a low-pressure partnership between the children and the more knowledgeable adults although accessible, their support was not stable as Layal noted that, “*sometimes the nanny travels back to her home country.*”, revealing the instability and temporary nature of this informal learning environment making it important for children to access multiple support systems.

Peers and siblings also played an important role in the children’s outside-the-classroom English language learning. This support took the form of collaborative playful interactions contributing to the children’s language exposure and noticing. Misk, reflecting on a classmate, said, “*Like when she says things in English, I can memorise them and write them down*”. Layal describes a similar experience with her cousin: “*...my cousin and I play together. For example, we say, ‘Don’t touch the floor!’... We have to speak English while playing.*”. In these cases, English was used organically allowing children to acquire new forms, noticing vocabulary, and gaining confidence in using English for communication with their peers.

Siblings, especially older ones, often provided academic guidance. Hadiyah, noted that her older brother tells her “*what to read and study*” and gives her “*a paper with questions and explains them [to her].*” describing her older brother’s involvement in exam preparation. However, sibling support varied in quality and availability. Some children acknowledged their family’s limited English proficiency or time constraints made it hard for them to consistently rely on these informal supports. While siblings contributed to informal learning moments, some children emphasised that their parents, especially mothers, remained their primary support figures. Farah summarised this dynamic by stating: “*yes, my siblings do help, but not all the time. My mum helps me the most.*”

The findings also indicate that online tutors provided the children with more structured exposure. In these cases, children engaged in listening activities while speaking and occasionally received interactive corrective feedback. The participating children tended to identify their tutors as authoritative language models who implemented educational approaches that mirrored traditional classroom procedures.

Both Hadiyah and Lama refer to their online tutors as ‘*teachers*’ thereby formalising the learning process and positioning themselves as language learners. During these sessions, Hadiyah prepares for exams, demonstrating purposeful learning for academic achievement. In contrast, Mariam referred to her online tutor as a teacher who “*follows the curriculum and [provides] extra conversation tutoring sessions*”. Her mention of ‘*conversation*’ underlines the value of interactive practice opportunities as they are not always accessible at home. Through these conversational exchanges, learners’ cognitive engagement increases, helping them consolidate the language forms they have noticed during passive activities like watching English cartoons on YouTube.

The findings from these experiences suggest that online teachers delivered scaffolded instruction, reflecting the expanding role of technology in providing direct language instruction

beyond traditional classrooms. In the interviews, at least four participants (Mariam, Hadiyah, Lama, Misk) stated being enrolled in formal online tutoring. This suggests that structured online learning is a growing trend among Saudi primary learners, supplementing informal exposure with explicit language teaching and personalised feedback. However, not all families could afford or maintain such programmes, with Abeer mentioning *"If Mum wasn't here, I'd need a private tutor."*

Both Farah and Abeer shared their desire for more structured help which indicates the importance of consistent, expert-led interaction to advance these learners' English language skills. This highlights an important equity issue, while some children had access to ongoing private support, others experienced gaps in guidance.

Discussion

The findings of this study extended existing literature on children's out-of-school English learning in three main ways. First, they highlight domestic workers as significant yet underexplored mediators of children's English language learning. Second, they show that children's learning occurred within hybrid spaces where home routines, digital entertainment, public encounters, and formal online tutoring overlapped rather than functioning as separate domains. Thirdly, they demonstrate that children's access to these learning ecologies was uneven, shaped by differences in household resources.

The findings of this study support the important role of scaffolding as a necessary tool for children to acquire English language skills in informal environments. Drawing from Vygotsky's (1978) concept of scaffolding and ZPD, the data revealed how various "more knowledgeable others" such as mothers, siblings, domestic workers and online tutors offered both academic and emotional support which enabled children to operate just beyond their current English language proficiency. Mothers, in particular, actively took part in providing scaffolding support for their children to learn English language. The maternal support followed the instructional scaffolding described in literature (Belland, 2017; Kalaycı & Öz, 2018), through direct instruction (e.g., helping with pronunciation or guiding memorisation) or through encouraging their children to engage with digital tools. The scaffolding process in some cases involved collaborative and dynamic interactions which included repetition and correction along with emotional reassurance, all of which facilitated both children's comprehension and confidence.

A key contribution of this study lies in showing that social scaffolding extended beyond the commonly discussed parent-child and teacher-student relationships. Domestic workers (e.g., nannies) acted as everyday language mediators by providing informal linguistic input through low-pressure casual conversations, which supported real-time vocabulary use and encouraged spontaneous language production. This is important because their role remains underexplored in studies of children's EFL learning, despite emerging evidence that domestic workers can contribute meaningfully to children's English receptive vocabulary and fluency (Dulay et al., 2017; Wolfaardt, 2022; Wolfaardt & Leung, 2025). In this study, the domestic workers were not just background figures in the household; for some children, they were active participants in English practice. At the same time, their support was uneven and sometimes temporary, highlighting both the value and instability of this form of informal scaffolding.

Crucially, this study also highlighted the rise of digital scaffolding through structured online tutoring which has become an essential element of current educational practices. The children viewed online tutoring sessions as an expansion of their school learning that provided them with personalised help and curriculum-aligned instruction. These findings echo those of Liu (2023), Alshammary (2020) and Yeh and Lai (2019) who observed that e-learning environments create scaffolded spaces for focused and individualised instruction. Furthermore, the significance of online tutoring in this study lies in how it contributed to hybrid learning spaces. Children moved between home support, digital entertainment, everyday encounters, and online tutoring, drawing on each context in different ways. In other words, their English learning was neither fully formal nor fully informal. It was distributed across overlapping spaces where formal instruction, digital tools and everyday practice interacted. Yet, the data revealed that access to such platforms was uneven among the participating children, with some expressed a desire for support that was either inconsistent or financially out of reach. This disparity draws attention to the issue of educational equity; a theme that cuts across all the conceptual lenses of this study which reminds us that scaffolding while essential, is not always equally available to all learners.

Learners' interactions with digital tools also provided strong evidence of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning among young Saudi EFL learners. Many participants described initiating learning activities on their own, whether it was searching for English videos on YouTube, practising writing in notebooks, or memorising vocabulary through repeated exposure. These behaviours reflect what Namaziandost et al. (2024) call the learner's "ownership" of their educational development, an essential element of autonomy. Autonomous engagement was often mediated by children's own interests, a point consistent with previous research that emphasises motivation as a key driver of language learning outside formal education (Bai & Guo, 2021; Dafei, 2007; Liu, 2015). For instance, the children autonomously used Minecraft and Just Dance games, although these games were not approached as learning tools per se but became vehicles for incidental learning for vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation practice. This finding supports the idea that gamification makes learning easier by reducing mental effort while embedding language within purposeful and enjoyable activities, as reinforced by other studies (Annamalai et al., 2022; Cancino Avila & Castillo Fonseca, 2021).

However, autonomy did not automatically translate into independence in every case. For some children, their self-initiated learning activities were underpinned by the presence of supportive adults or peers who scaffolded their efforts either directly or by facilitating access to resources. This finding demonstrates that autonomy and scaffolding are not contradictory but rather complementary, as children take initiative of their learning within a framework of support which help them to gradually internalise the tools and strategies, they need for independence learning (see also Cadima et al., 2019). Several children demonstrated metacognitive awareness as they recognised what learning strategies worked for them (e.g., writing for memorisation and video translation) and expressed their preferences of how they learned. These practices suggest a level of learner agency and intentionality that goes beyond passive exposure and show that even if structured instruction is absent, children still can actively shape their own language learning trajectories.

Children in this study encountered English in authentic, everyday contexts such as reading street signs and cars plates, identifying words on shop fronts and using English to navigate

shopping malls. These brief and incidental moments created meaningful opportunities for noticing (Schmidt, 1990), which enabled the children to connect new language forms with real-world purposes. The contextualised encounters exemplify what García and Kleyn (2016) term translanguaging moments, when bilingual learners move fluidly between languages to construct meaning in their interactions. For example, children who watched cartoons or played games in both Arabic and English often interpreted and used words from each language flexibly according to the context of the situation. These translanguaging practices, although cognitively demanding, serve as bridges between languages which help learners draw on their full linguistic repertoire. The use of English in social play with peers or cousins, even when limited, suggests that some children were engaging in what Lave and Wenger (1991) describe as “legitimate peripheral participation” in emerging communities of English use. Although these children were not immersed in English-speaking environments, they were gradually internalising roles and rules of interaction through repeated, meaningful engagement. These experiences show that out-of-school English learning was shaped by situated opportunities for noticing and use, rather than by exposure alone.

Yet again, the benefits of situated learning were unequally distributed. For children whose families lacked time, language proficiency, or resources, opportunities to engage with English in everyday life were more limited. This reinforces the point that language-rich environments do not arise organically in all households, and that the capacity to convert exposure into learning depends on both material and relational resources (Dong et al., 2020; Lau & Richards, 2021; Li, 2007). This inequality is one of the study’s key findings as unequal access was not simply a matter of having more or less English around the child. Rather, the children differed in their access to mediational support, digital tools, English-speaking family members, private tutors, and opportunities to practice English. This finding is particularly important in the Saudi EFL context, where English carries increasing academic and economic value (Al-Seghayer, 2023), but access to out-of-school English learning opportunities remains uneven.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how Saudi primary-aged learners engage with English outside the classroom through a combination of language maps and semi-structured interviews. Three key themes emerged from the data: 1) the use of material and digital resources that mediate language learning; 2) situated real-world and application of English; and 3) the support children received from others through social scaffolding which shaped their exposure and motivation.

Several important contributions are made to the growing body of literature on English language learning in out-of-school contexts, particularly within EFL contexts such as Saudi Arabia. By centring children’s voices and using arts-based methods such as language maps alongside interviews, the study adds depth to understanding how children interpret and navigate their home environments. Empirically, it draws attention to the role of domestic workers as meaningful language-learning mediators in some children’s daily lives, extending current understandings of who may function as a scaffold in home-based English learning. Conceptually, the study shows that children’s English learning often occurred in hybrid spaces where home routines, digital practices, public encounters, and formal online tutoring intersected. It also

highlights that access to these learning ecologies was uneven as children's opportunities were shaped by the availability of supportive resources.

Despite these contributions, the research was limited by its focus on a specific cultural context and its small sample size. While both are appropriate for qualitative research, they limit the generalisability of findings to broader populations. A further limitation relates to recruitment. Since participation in the study depended on the first two families returning consent and assent forms from each school, the sample may have represented families who were more responsive or more invested in English learning. As a result, the findings might underrepresent the experiences of children whose families had less time to support or lower levels of involvement in English learning. Notwithstanding these limitations, the findings highlight the blurred boundary between formal and informal English language learning. For many participating children, English learning was neither restricted to the classroom nor wholly outside it. They routinely transitioned between their schoolwork, home practice, online tutoring and digital entertainment activities, drawing on elements of each to reinforce their English language learning. Thus, the home emerged as a hybrid learning space where scaffolding from human and non-human actors intersected with learner autonomy.

However, access to these hybrid learning opportunities was shaped by structural inequities as not all children had access to private tutors, digital subscriptions, or English-speaking family members. Children who had access to supportive parents, digital and material resources, and English-rich environments were more likely to benefit from gamified learning, scaffolded practices, and situated encounters with English. As such, while the findings illustrated the active engagement of young Saudi children, it was revealed that English language learning opportunities do not take place on an even playing field. Longitudinal research is needed to extend these findings across diverse socio-economic contexts and age groups and over time, tracking how informal English learning evolves over time and interacts with formal schooling.

REFERENCES

- Al-Seghayer, K. (2023). The newfound status of English in 21st-century Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 15(4), 82-103.
<https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v15i4.21262>
- Alghamdi, F. A. M. (2024). *Exploring the effectiveness of technology-enhanced self-access language learning (SALL) amongst primary level EFL learners in Saudi Arabia* [Doctoral thesis, University of Southampton]. <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/id/eprint/494903>
- Almesaar, O. (2024). English language in Saudi Arabia: vision 2030 in the historical prism of a clash between cultures. *Frontiers in Communication*, 9.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2024.1205167>
- Alroqi, H. S. (2019). *The relationship between screen media exposure and early language development* [Doctoral thesis, The University of Manchester].
https://research.manchester.ac.uk/files/162160209/FULL_TEXT.PDF
- Alshammery, M. S. (2020). The impact of using Cambly on EFL university students' speaking proficiency. *English Language Teaching*, 13(8), 12-26.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v13n8p12>

- Amina, F., Barnes, M. M., & Saito, E. (2024). Belonging in Australian primary schools: how students from refugee backgrounds gain membership. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural development*, 45(6), 1864-1887. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2026367>
- Annamalai, N., Eltahir, M. E., Al Salhi, N. R., Zakarneh, B., & Zyoud, S. H. (2022). Investigation of Malaysian ESL students' learning experience of the smartphone applications for English language learning. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 11(4), 202-211. <https://doi.org/10.55493/5019.v11i4.4678>
- Bai, B., & Guo, W. (2021). Motivation and self-regulated strategy use: Relationships to primary school students' English writing in Hong Kong. *Language Teaching Research*, 25(3), 378-399. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168819859921>
- Behr, D., & Shishido, K. (2016). *The translation of measurement instruments for cross-cultural surveys*. In C. Wolf, D. Joye, T. W. Smith, & Y.-c. Fu (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of survey methodology*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957893>
- Belland, B. R. (2017). Instructional Scaffolding: Foundations and Evolving Definition. In B. R. Belland (Ed.), *Instructional scaffolding in STEM education: Strategies and efficacy evidence* (pp. 17-53). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02565-0_2
- Cadima, J., Barros, S., Ferreira, T., Serra-Lemos, M., Leal, T., & Verschueren, K. (2019). Bidirectional associations between vocabulary and self-regulation in preschool and their interplay with teacher-child closeness and autonomy support. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 46, 75-86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2018.04.004>
- Cancino Avila, M. O., & Castillo Fonseca, G. I. (2021). Gamification: How does it impact L2 vocabulary learning and engagement? *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 18(2), 156-170. <https://doi.org/10.56040/ghcc1824>
- D'warte, J. (2021). Facilitating agency and engagement: Visual methodologies and pedagogical interventions for working with culturally and linguistically diverse young people. *Language Teaching Research*, 25(1), 12-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820938826>
- D'warte J., S. M. (2014). *Language mapping: Researching marginalised students' everyday language and literacy practices*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Dafei, D. (2007). An exploration of the relationship between learner autonomy and English proficiency. *Asian EFL Journal*, 24(4), 24-34. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242273007_An_Exploration_of_the_Relationship_Between_Learner_Autonomy_and_English_Proficiency
- Dong, Y., Wu, S. X.-Y., Dong, W.-Y., & Tang, Y. (2020). The effects of home literacy environment on children's reading comprehension development: A meta-analysis. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 20(2), 63-82. <https://doi.org/10.12738/jestp.2020.2.005>
- Dulay, K. M., Tong, X., & McBride, C. (2017). The role of foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong Chinese children's English and Chinese Skills: A longitudinal study. *Language Learning*, 67(2), 321-347. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12222>

- Elyas, T., & Picard, M. (2018). A brief history of English and English teaching in Saudi Arabia. In C. Moskovsky & M. Picard (Eds.), *English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia: New insights into teaching and learning English* (pp. 70-84). Routledge.
- Estrada Chichón, J. L. (2022). Parental involvement in EFL Learning with preprimary children: shaping the features of video tutorials. In A. Courtney-Dattola (Ed.), *Handbook of research on adapting remote learning practices for early childhood and elementary school classrooms* (pp. 369-391). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-8405-7.ch022>
- García, O., & Kleyn, T. (2016). *Translanguaging with multilingual students: learning from classroom moments*. Routledge.
- Gauntlett, D., & Holzwarth, P. (2006). Creative and visual methods for exploring identities. *Visual Studies*, 21(1), 82-91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860600613261>
- Gee, J. P. (2012). *Situated language and learning: A critique of traditional schooling*. Taylor and Francis.
- Gregory, E., Volk, D., & Long, S. (2004). *Many pathways to literacy: young children learning with siblings, grandparents, peers, and communities*. RoutledgeFalmer.
- Human Capability Development Program of Saudi Arabia 2021-2025. (2021). <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en/explore/programs/human-capability-development-program>
- Kalaycı, G., & Öz, H. (2018). Parental involvement in English language education: Understanding parents' perceptions. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching*, 5(4), 832-847. <https://iojet.org/index.php/IOJET/article/view/447>
- Knowles, J. G., & Cole, A. L. (2007). *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues*. SAGE Publications. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/latrobe/detail.action?docID=1995726>
- Lau, C., & Richards, B. (2021). Home literacy environment and children's English language and literacy skills in Hong Kong. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.569581>
- Lau, E. Y. H., & Lee, K. (2021). Parents' views on young children's distance learning and screen time during COVID-19 class suspension in Hong Kong. *Early Education and Development*, 32(6), 863-880. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2020.1843925>
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815355>
- Leavy, P. (2020). *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190847388.001.0001>
- Li, G. (2007). Home environment and second-language acquisition: The importance of family capital. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(3), 285-299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425690701252028>
- Little, D. (2022). Language learner autonomy: Rethinking language teaching. *Language Teaching*, 55(1), 64-73. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000488>
- Liu, H. j. (2015). Learner autonomy: The role of motivation in foreign language learning. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 6(6), 1165-1174. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0606.02>

- Liu, T. (2023). The impact of the combination of online English learning app Cambly and TESOL on English learners. In *Proceedings of the 2023 7th International Seminar on Education, Management and Social Sciences (ISEMSS 2023)* (pp. 377-385). https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-126-5_45
- McNiff, S. (2018). "Philosophical and practical foundations of artistic inquiry." In P. Leavy (Ed.), *Handbook of arts-based research* (pp. 22–36). Guilford Press.
- Minalla, A. A. (2022). Empowering EFL parents for interlocutor's role with their children through contextualizing speaking activities at home by using supplementary videos (Video material & explainer video). *Creative Education*, 13(7), 2252-2263. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2022.137142>
- Namaziandost, E., Çakmak, F., Heydarnejad, T., & Rezai, A. (2024). The predictive effects of learner autonomy and academic engagement on willingness to communicate, foreign language learning self-esteem, and L2 grit in an EFL context. *Acta Psychologica*, 250, 104528. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104528>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Olwi, A. (2024). English proficiency among public and private high school graduates in the Arab world. *al-Azhar Journal of Education*, 204(2), 749-766. https://journals.ekb.eg/article_401033.html
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Salfin, S., Kurniadi, P., & Erwin, E. (2024). Language development in the digital age: A literature review on the influence of technology on human communication. *Sciences du Nord Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(01), 01-07. <https://doi.org/10.58812/0yhk5d80>
- Salminen, J., Muhonen, H., Cadima, J., Pagani, V., & Lerkkanen, M.-K. (2021). Scaffolding patterns of dialogic exchange in toddler classrooms. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2020.100489>
- Sayer, P., & Ban, R. (2014). Young EFL students' engagements with English outside the classroom. *ELT Journal*, 68(3), 321-329. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccu013>
- Schmidt, R. W. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 129-158. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/11.2.129>
- Socket, G. (2014). *The online informal learning of English* (1st ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sorenson Duncan, T., & Paradis, J. (2020). Home language environment and children's second language acquisition: The special status of input from older siblings. *Journal of Child Language*, 47(5), 982-1005. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000919000977>
- Soyoof, A., & Reynolds, B. L. (2024). The role of a mother and siblings in enhancing two young Iranian EFL students' willingness to communicate in a second language through serious game play. In J. S. Lee, D. Zou, & M. M. Gu (Eds.), *Technology and English language teaching in a changing world: A practical guide for teachers and teacher educators* (pp. 61-71). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-51540-8_5

- Sundqvist, P. (2009). *Extramural English matters: Out-of-school English and its impact on Swedish ninth graders' oral proficiency and vocabulary* [Doctoral dissertation, Karlstad University]. <https://scispace.com/pdf/extramural-english-matters-out-of-school-english-and-its-4crfp5zq00.pdf>
- Vadivel, B., Alam, S., Nikpoo, I., & Ajanil, B. (2023). The impact of low socioeconomic background on a child's educational achievements. *Education research international*, 2023, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/6565088>
- Vygotsky, L. S., Cole, M., John-Steiner, V., Scribner, S., & Souberman, E. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/latrobe/detail.action?docID=3301299>
- Wolfaardt, J. F. (2022). Bilingual Hong Kong primary school children's vocabulary: The impact of Filipina domestic workers. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 26(6), 767-783. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069211062032>
- Wolfaardt, J. F., & Leung, A. H.-C. (2025). The impact of Filipina domestic workers on Hong Kong primary school children's L2 English spoken CAF and reading accuracy and fluency. *Applied Linguistics*, 46(1), 146-161. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amad072>
- Yeh, H.-C., & Lai, W.-Y. (2019). Speaking progress and meaning negotiation processes in synchronous online tutoring. *System*, 81, 179-191. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.01.001>
- Zhang, X., Carrie, L., & Su, Y. (2023). Home environment and development of English as a second/foreign language for young children in Asian contexts: A systematic review and meta-analysis*. *Early Education and Development*, 34(1), 274-305. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2021.1981065>

APPENDIX

Language Map

Draw how you learn English outside school. Consider who you communicate in English with, what you communicate and when.

Individual Interview Questions for Students

1. What do you enjoy about English language learning?
2. What makes learning English or communicating in English outside of the classroom enjoyable? What makes it difficult?
3. How do your parents support your learning of English at home? Do they encourage learning English at home? If so, how? What would help you learn English at home? What might your parents do to help you?
4. What activities do you participate in outside the classroom to enhance your English language skills? Do your parents participate in these activities? Why or why not?