

# Exploring parents' beliefs toward children's English learning in a multilingual Tenggerese community

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## ABSTRACT

Parents' beliefs significantly influence how children experience and engage with language learning, especially in multilingual settings where local and global languages coexist. This study examines how Tenggerese parents understand and respond to their children's English learning within an informal language course context. Situated in Tosari Village, Bromo, East Java, an indigenous and multilingual community, the research seeks to capture parental perspectives on English education amid ongoing cultural and linguistic diversity. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six parents whose children attend a local English course. The thematic analysis identified three central patterns: parents' generally positive views of English and its perceived relevance for education, tourism, and global interaction; their conscious efforts to support English learning while maintaining Tenggerese language and cultural traditions; and differing forms of parental involvement shaped by socioeconomic conditions and educational backgrounds. Although many parents had limited English proficiency, they showed strong emotional commitment and viewed English as an additional resource rather than a replacement for their local language. These findings illustrate how indigenous parents engage in adaptive multilingual practices that connect global aspirations with cultural continuity. The study adds to existing discussions on parental beliefs in EFL contexts and offers insights for developing culturally responsive English education in rural and indigenous settings.

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## INTRODUCTION

Parental beliefs play a central role in shaping how children experience English language learning. These beliefs influence learners' motivation, attitudes, and patterns of engagement, both within formal educational settings and beyond them (Baker, 2011; Bartram, 2010). In applied linguistics and language education, parents are increasingly recognized as key social agents whose beliefs are embedded in wider sociocultural processes that shape language learning (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; King & Fogle, 2017). Through their daily practices and decisions, parents do more than facilitate access to English learning opportunities. They also transmit values, aspirations, and expectations that shape how children perceive the meaning and importance of English (Toppelberg & Collins, 2010). When English is associated with modernity, social mobility, or prestige, parents tend to encourage greater engagement with the language and invest more actively in their children's learning experiences (Park & Sarkar, 2007; Schwartz & Asli, 2014).

In Indonesia, a country marked by extensive linguistic and cultural diversity, parental beliefs about English are shaped by the interaction of global, national, and local identities (Lamb & Coleman, 2008; Lauder, 2008; Mahboob, 2018). English occupies a distinctive position within this multilingual landscape. It is widely valued for its role in international communication and economic opportunity, yet it coexists with strong national and local languages that remain central to everyday social life. As a result, parents' attitudes toward English often reflect an ongoing negotiation between aspirations for global competence and the desire to maintain cultural and linguistic identity (Canagarajah, 2013; Lamb, 2012). In some contexts, English is viewed as an essential resource for social mobility and participation in global networks, while in others it is perceived as a potential challenge to the continuity of local languages and traditions (Heller, 2011; Nugrahenny, 2015).

These dynamics are particularly evident in the Tenggerese community of Tosari Village, Bromo, East Java. As an indigenous group, the Tenggerese people have maintained strong cultural traditions, including their language, belief system, and customary practices, while increasingly engaging with tourism, technology, and formal education (Pawlak et al., 2021). In everyday interactions, Tenggerese families commonly use Tenggerese, Javanese, and Indonesian, whereas English is encountered mainly through schooling and contact with international visitors. This multilingual environment reflects a continuous negotiation between preserving local

identity and embracing English as a resource for expanding educational and economic opportunities in a globalized context.

Despite the richness of this sociolinguistic setting, research on parental beliefs about English learning in rural and indigenous Indonesian communities remains limited. Existing studies have largely focused on urban contexts. For instance, Setiawan (2019) reported that urban parents tend to associate English strongly with global competence and social advancement. Suryani (2015) demonstrated that parental support contributes significantly to learners' motivation and confidence in English learning. Similarly, Wahyuningsih and Mua'dib (2023) found that parents who hold positive beliefs about English are more actively involved in supporting their children's learning at home and at school. However, these studies offer limited insight into rural and indigenous contexts, where language practices, socioeconomic conditions, and access to educational resources differ considerably from those in urban areas.

Recent research also suggests that parental involvement is shaped by parents' socioeconomic background, educational experiences, and cultural positioning. Aditya et al. (2024) found that parents' engagement with English learning depends on how relevant they perceive English to be within their everyday social and cultural lives. Likewise, Setiawan et al. (2025) showed that parents' beliefs and practices are influenced by educational attainment and social status, which affect both expectations and the forms of support they provide. These findings highlight the importance of examining parental beliefs within their specific social and cultural contexts rather than treating them as uniform across communities.

In informal education settings, parents play a particularly influential role in deciding whether their children participate in additional English learning outside school. Astuti and Umam (2020) noted that informal tutoring programs, commonly referred to as *bimbel*, provide valuable opportunities for extended language exposure and practice. Saraswati et al. (2021) further showed that technology-mediated learning tools can support learner autonomy while also fostering parental involvement. Sumanti and Muljani (2021) found that parental engagement in English learning contributes positively to children's self-efficacy, underscoring the importance of parental beliefs and support in shaping successful learning outcomes.

The study of parental beliefs is closely aligned with sociocultural perspectives on learning. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes that learning is a socially mediated process shaped by interaction and cultural context. Within this framework, parents function as important mediators who support learning, transmit cultural norms, and convey language-related values (Yu, 2023). This perspective is further informed by the concept of family language policy, which focuses on how families manage language use and transmission within the home (King & Fogle, 2017; Spolsky,

2009). In multilingual contexts, family language policies reveal how parental beliefs intersect with broader social pressures surrounding dominant and global languages (De Houwer, 2009; García & Wei, 2014).

This study also contributes to broader global discussions on how multilingual families negotiate the relationship between heritage languages and foreign languages. As noted by Curdt-Christiansen (2018) and Tannenbaum (2012), parents' beliefs often play a decisive role in determining whether children maintain their local language or gradually shift toward a global one. In Indonesia's postcolonial context, these decisions are further shaped by historical and economic factors, where English is frequently associated with modernity, progress, and global belonging (Canagarajah, 2013; Mahboob, 2018). Examining parental beliefs within the Tenggerese community therefore offers valuable insight into how global and local language ideologies coexist, interact, and at times come into tension within everyday family practices.

In addition, this study adds to research that emphasizes the social and cultural dimensions of learning English as a Foreign Language. Recent work has highlighted the importance of situating English education within learners' cultural and community contexts rather than treating it as a neutral or universal practice (Darwin & Prasojo, 2025). Studies on multilingual learning further suggest that parents' beliefs influence not only language outcomes but also children's independence and critical engagement in learning (Saraswati et al., 2021; Sumanti & Muljani, 2021). By focusing on Tenggerese parents, the present research illustrates how local multilingual values intersect with aspirations for English learning in a rural indigenous setting.

Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative case study approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents whose children attend informal English courses in Tosari Village, and the data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2022) framework. The study aims to:

1. explore Tenggerese parents' beliefs regarding their children's English learning; and
2. examine how multilingual practices and cultural identity shape these beliefs.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding parental beliefs in indigenous and multilingual communities in Indonesia. It highlights how parents navigate the tension between preserving local languages and supporting English learning, and it offers practical insights for English educators seeking to design culturally responsive instruction that aligns with parental expectations. More broadly, the findings support ongoing discussions on language ideology, multilingual education, and the role of parents in English language learning within minority contexts (Aditya et al., 2024; Lamb, 2012; Setiawan et al., 2025).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to develop a nuanced understanding of how parents perceive their children's English language learning and how these perceptions are shaped by social and cultural meanings. Qualitative inquiry is particularly appropriate for examining lived experiences and the meanings individuals assign to them within specific contexts (Creswell, 2013). Through a case study design, the research is able to focus closely on a particular community, namely the Tenggerese community, and to examine parents' experiences of informal English learning using multiple sources of information (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). This approach was selected to capture the complexity of parental beliefs, values, and cultural orientations toward English learning within a multilingual setting.

The study is framed as an instrumental case study, as it seeks to generate broader insights into parental beliefs about multilingual education in indigenous Indonesian communities rather than to describe a single case in isolation (Stake, 1995). It is grounded in an interpretive paradigm, which emphasizes understanding social realities from participants' perspectives and acknowledges the subjective meanings they construct through their lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### Participants

The participants in this study were six Tenggerese parents, consisting of three mothers and three fathers, whose children attend an informal English course in Tosari, Pasuruan, East Java. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a strategy that allows researchers to identify individuals with direct experience and relevant insights related to the focus of the study (Patton, 2015).

To be included in the study, participants had to actively support their children's English learning through enrollment in an English course, be able to communicate their views in either Bahasa Indonesia or Tenggerese, and be willing to participate voluntarily. Although the number of participants was limited, this focused group aligns with qualitative research principles that emphasize depth and richness of data rather than representativeness or large sample sizes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The parents represented a range of educational and occupational backgrounds, which enabled the study to capture varied perspectives within the same indigenous community.

### Instruments and Data Collection

The primary data for this study were gathered through semi-structured interviews. This interview format allowed participants to describe their experiences and viewpoints in

their own words, while still ensuring that core issues relevant to the research were systematically explored (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Interviews were carried out either in the participants' homes or at a local learning center in order to create a setting that felt familiar and comfortable. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and addressed topics such as parents' views on English language learning, their reasons for enrolling their children in English courses, the role of English within the local community, and their perceptions of multilingualism and cultural identity.

With the participants' consent, all interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim. In addition, field notes were taken during and after the interviews to document contextual information, nonverbal cues, and situational factors that could support a richer interpretation of the data. Data collection took place over a four-week period, with interview times arranged to fit the participants' daily schedules.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality (Cohen et al., 2018). To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were used in all transcripts and research reports.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022). This approach provides a clear and structured way to identify, examine, and interpret recurring patterns within qualitative data. The analysis began with careful reading of all interview transcripts to develop familiarity with the data. Initial codes were then generated to capture meaningful units of information. These codes were subsequently examined to identify broader patterns, which were developed into tentative themes. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately represented the data and were conceptually coherent. Once finalized, each theme was clearly defined and named before being integrated into a descriptive and interpretive account in the final report.

An inductive coding strategy was applied, allowing themes to emerge directly from participants' accounts rather than being guided by predefined categories or assumptions (Nowell et al., 2017). The resulting themes highlight parents' beliefs about English language learning, the role of cultural identity, family multilingual practices, and perceptions of English as a pathway to modern life and future opportunities. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the study followed the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was supported through member checking, in which participants were invited to review summaries of their interview responses. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions

of the research context and participant characteristics. Dependability and confirmability were strengthened through consultations with two linguists who have expertise in the Tenggerese context and qualitative research methods.

The interpretation of the findings was informed by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) and the family language policy framework (King & Fogle, 2017; Spolsky, 2009). These theoretical perspectives emphasize the close relationship between language, culture, and social interaction, and they guided the analysis of how Tenggerese parents make sense of and negotiate English language learning within their multilingual environment.

## RESULTS

The thematic analysis of interviews with six Tenggerese parents showed a range of perspectives that were distinct yet closely related in how they framed their beliefs about their children's English learning within an informal educational setting. All participants recognized the importance of English for their children's future prospects. Nevertheless, their levels of enthusiasm and the ways they supported learning varied, shaped by differences in occupation, educational background, and everyday exposure to English. From the analysis, three main themes emerged, reflecting how Tenggerese parents understand, value, and engage with English learning in a multilingual context that remains strongly rooted in local culture.

### **Positive Orientation toward English and Global Awareness**

All participants viewed English as an important resource that could support their children's educational development, communication skills, and future employment opportunities. Parents frequently linked English learning to practical advantages, particularly in relation to tourism and increased contact with people from outside the local community.

#### **Excerpts:**

*"At first, I did not think English was very important. However, after meeting tourists who could not speak Indonesian, I realized how useful it is. I want my son to be able to communicate with international tourists."* (Bapak B, 35, jeep driver, Wonokitri)

*"English can create opportunities for children in the future. Even though we live in a village, the world today is already connected."* (Ibu S, 42, farmer, Tosari)

*"When my child learns English, I feel proud. It can support their education or help them if they want to work in tourism."* (Bapak A, 49, homestay owner and trader, Wonokitri)

These statements indicate that Tenggerese parents often associate English proficiency with ideas of modern life, social mobility, and broader access to opportunities. English is not understood simply as a school subject, but as a practical means of linking local experiences with wider global interaction. This perspective supports the findings of Aditya (2024) and Anjar et al. (2025), who note that parents in communities shaped by tourism and globalization frequently view English competence as a pathway to future advancement and international engagement.

### **Balancing English Learning with Local Cultural Identity**

Although parents showed strong support for their children's English learning, they repeatedly highlighted the importance of maintaining the Tenggerese language and cultural traditions. English was generally understood as an added skill that could support future opportunities, rather than something that should replace local identity.

**Excerpts:**

*"Both are important. English is for their future, but Tenggerese is our identity. They must not forget our own language."* (Ibu J, 32, kindergarten teacher, Ngadiwono)

*"It is good if my child can speak English, but I still remind him to keep using Tenggerese at home."* (Bapak A, 49, homestay owner and trader, Wonokitri)

*"I am happy if they can speak English, but they also need to learn our prayers and the language passed down from our ancestors."* (Ibu S, 42, farmer, Tosari)

These accounts suggest that Tenggerese parents view multilingualism as a complementary practice rather than a competitive one. English is associated with ideas of progress and future mobility, while Tenggerese functions as a marker of identity, continuity, and cultural belonging. This orientation reflects Reiber-Kuijpers and Zohoor's (2023) concept of cultural continuity within bilingual identity and aligns with the findings of Liando et al. (2023), who observed that parents in multilingual Indonesian contexts often strive to maintain a balanced relationship between global and local languages.

### **Parental Support and Challenges in English Learning**

Most parents showed clear commitment to supporting their children's English learning through various forms of involvement, including verbal encouragement, financial support, and enrolling their children in informal English courses. However, the ways in which parents engaged with their children's learning differed depending on their educational background and their own confidence in using English.

**Excerpts:**

*"I usually help my daughter review what she learns at the course. I want her to feel that learning English can be enjoyable."* (Ibu J, 32, kindergarten teacher, Ngadiwono)

*"Even though I cannot speak English, I always remind my son to study seriously. I tell him that learning is important."* (Bapak I, 41, farmer, Tosari)

*"I pay for the course and sometimes accompany my child there. That is how I support them, even though I am not good at English."* (Ibu L, 32, online seller, Tosari)

While some parents, such as Ibu J, were able to provide direct academic assistance, others mainly offered emotional reassurance and motivational support. This pattern suggests that affective involvement often compensates for limited linguistic ability. Such findings support previous studies by Setiawan (2019) and Derakhshan (2022), which emphasize that parental encouragement plays a significant role in sustaining learners' motivation, particularly in EFL contexts.

At the same time, parents openly acknowledged challenges in supporting English learning, especially constraints related to time and limited English proficiency.:

**Excerpt:**

*"I cannot really help with English homework because I do not understand it, but I always motivate my child."* (Bapak B, 35, jeep driver, Wonokitri)

This response reflects Vygotsky's (1978) concept of social scaffolding, where emotional support functions as a cultural resource that strengthens children's confidence and willingness to engage in learning. Even in the absence of direct linguistic assistance, parental encouragement and practical investment contribute meaningfully to children's learning experiences.

Overall, the findings indicate that Tenggerese parents hold positive and forward-looking beliefs about English learning. They recognize its practical value for future opportunities while remaining strongly committed to maintaining their local language and cultural identity. English is viewed as a tool for empowerment and social connection, particularly in relation to tourism and education. Parental involvement is expressed mainly through emotional and financial support, shaped by parents' socioeconomic circumstances and exposure to English. Taken together, these findings portray a multilingual community actively negotiating between continuity and change, where English learning represents both global aspiration and cultural resilience.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that Tenggerese parents generally hold positive and future-oriented beliefs about their children's English learning. English is widely perceived as a valuable resource that can support personal growth, social mobility, and engagement with broader social and economic networks beyond the local community. Although the parents came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, including farming, trading, teaching, and tourism-related occupations, they shared a common understanding that English has the potential to expand their children's future opportunities. This shared outlook appears closely linked to the increasing influence of tourism in the Mount Bromo area, where frequent interactions with international visitors have gradually shifted English from an abstract school subject to a practical skill with tangible relevance in everyday life. Similar observations have been reported by Aditya (2024) and Anjar et al. (2025), who note that in emerging multilingual settings, parents often view English proficiency as a form of symbolic capital that facilitates access to education, employment, and intercultural communication.

At the same time, the beliefs expressed by Tenggerese parents reflect a distinctive balance that sets them apart from many urban families. Unlike urban parents, whose orientation toward English is often driven primarily by socioeconomic ambition

(Setiawan, 2019; Suryani, 2015), Tenggerese parents demonstrate a more nuanced perspective that recognizes both global and local dimensions of language learning. While they value English as a language of opportunity, they also stress the importance of maintaining their ethnic language and cultural traditions as foundations of identity and moral values. English is not viewed as a threat to local heritage but rather as a complementary resource that can coexist with the mother tongue. This stance aligns with Reiber-Kuijpers and Zohoor's (2023) notion of cultural continuity within bilingual identity, which suggests that bilingualism can strengthen, rather than weaken, cultural belonging. It also supports the findings of Liando et al. (2023), who report that parents in multilingual Indonesian contexts often promote balanced language ideologies that encourage global competence while preserving local identity.

Another important finding relates to the nature of parental involvement in children's English learning. Regardless of differences in English proficiency, most parents demonstrated consistent support through enrolling their children in informal courses, offering encouragement at home, and monitoring learning routines. However, the form of involvement varied according to parents' educational background and exposure to English. Parents with limited English skills, particularly those working in farming or driving, tended to emphasize moral guidance and emotional encouragement rather than direct academic assistance. This pattern reflects Derakhshan's (2022) concept of affective parental involvement, which highlights emotional support as a key factor in sustaining learners' motivation in EFL contexts. From a sociocultural perspective, this can be understood as a form of social scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978), where parents create a supportive learning environment that enables children to engage confidently with English, even in the absence of direct instructional support.

The beliefs and practices identified in this study also demonstrate the adaptive capacity of rural multilingual communities to engage with global influences without undermining local identity. Contrary to deficit-oriented assumptions that often portray rural parents as less engaged in their children's education, Tenggerese parents exhibit a strong sense of agency in responding to linguistic change. Their attitudes reflect what Lamb (2012) describes as language investment, in which families devote time, effort, and resources to language learning as a means of empowerment. By investing in English education, these parents are not abandoning their cultural heritage but are actively reinterpreting it in relation to contemporary socioeconomic realities. This dual orientation toward tradition and change reveals a form of multilingual awareness that remains underrepresented in EFL research in Indonesia.

The findings also carry important pedagogical and policy implications. For teachers and curriculum developers, understanding parents' beliefs is essential to ensuring that English education in rural multilingual contexts remains culturally responsive.

Integrating local narratives, community experiences, and Tenggerese values into English instruction may strengthen students' sense of identity while supporting language development. Schools and language centers could also enhance parental involvement through community-based programs, parent-child learning activities, or informal workshops. Such initiatives may help bridge home and school environments, reinforce learners' motivation, and align instructional practices with parental expectations. At a broader level, these findings support Darwin and Prasojo's (2025) call for multicultural educational planning in Indonesia that recognizes linguistic diversity as a central component of national education.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results. The study involved only six participants, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized. The reliance on self-reported interview data may also introduce bias, as parents' responses may reflect idealized practices rather than actual behavior. In addition, the focus on a single community means that variations across other Tenggerese villages or indigenous groups were not explored. Future research could address these limitations by adopting comparative designs, expanding the participant pool, or employing longitudinal approaches to examine changes in parental beliefs over time.

Despite these limitations, this study offers valuable insights into how indigenous parents negotiate the relationship between global language learning and local identity. The beliefs held by Tenggerese parents illustrate a form of adaptive multilingualism that connects aspirations for modern education with the preservation of cultural continuity. This balanced perspective provides an important reference for understanding English education in similar rural and indigenous contexts across Indonesia. Ultimately, the study highlights the need to recognize parents not merely as passive supporters but as active cultural mediators who shape their children's English learning journeys. By embracing both English and Tenggerese, these parents model a dynamic form of multilingualism that brings together local tradition and global participation rather than positioning them in opposition.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Tenggerese parents generally hold positive and forward-looking views toward their children's English learning. English is perceived not only as a practical skill but also as a meaningful resource that can support personal growth and future opportunities within a multilingual cultural setting. Parents' beliefs reflect an increasing awareness of global communication and economic possibilities, shaped by local conditions such as tourism and access to education. At the same time, they remain deeply committed to preserving their linguistic and cultural heritage,

indicating that English learning in the Tenggerese community is understood as a process of coexistence rather than cultural displacement.

Although parental involvement varies in form, it is consistently characterized by emotional encouragement and motivational support that helps sustain children's engagement with English learning, even when parents are unable to provide direct linguistic assistance. These patterns illustrate how indigenous parents actively balance cultural continuity with aspirations for social mobility, challenging assumptions that rural communities are disengaged from or resistant to foreign language education.

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of recognizing parental beliefs as a key factor in shaping inclusive and culturally responsive EFL practices. By incorporating the perspectives of indigenous multilingual families into language education policy and classroom pedagogy, educators and policymakers can support English learning that honors local identity while preparing learners to participate meaningfully in an increasingly interconnected world.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

## AUTHOR (S) CONTRIBUTION

*Tyas, L.A.*: Conceptualization (lead), methodology (lead), data collection (lead), writing – original draft (lead), review (supporting). *Yannuar, N.*: Conceptualization (supporting), methodology (supporting), supervision (lead), review (lead). *Zen, E.L.*: Conceptualization (supporting), methodology (supporting), supervision (Supporting), review (lead), editing (supporting).

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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