

The Role of Parents in Stimulating the Language Development of Children Aged 3-5 Years: A Phenomenological Study

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Article Info :	ABSTRACT
Accepted: 17-01-2025 Approved: 20-03-2025 Published: 25-06-2025	Parental involvement plays a critical role in early childhood language development, yet limited research has explored the lived experiences of parents as language facilitators during the preschool years. This phenomenological study aimed to explore and describe the essential structures of parental experiences in stimulating language development among children aged three to five years. Sixteen parents of typically developing preschool-aged children participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method, involving systematic extraction of significant statements, formulation of meanings, theme clustering, and synthesis of essential structures. Five major themes emerged: (1) Constructing Identity as Language Facilitator parents' transformation from intuitive to intentional facilitation; (2) Weaving Language Into Daily Life integration of language stimulation strategies within authentic family routines including shared reading, mealtime conversations, play-based interactions, and environmental print experiences; (3) Navigating Challenges and Uncertainty confronting barriers including time constraints, resource limitations, knowledge gaps, and child-related challenges while developing adaptive responses; (4) Emotional Dimensions and Relational Rewards experiencing joy, pride, anxiety, guilt, and profound relational satisfaction through language-rich interactions; and (5) Sociocultural Contexts and Community Influences shaping beliefs and practices through cultural backgrounds, educational partnerships, community resources, and broader social discourses. Parental language facilitation encompasses complex identity construction, emotional labor, adaptive problem-solving, and meaning-making processes deeply embedded in sociocultural contexts. Findings inform development of strengths-based, culturally responsive interventions that honor diverse family circumstances while supporting optimal language learning environments.
Keywords: Parental role; language stimulation; early childhood; preschool children; phenomenological study; lived experience;	

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood represents a critical period for language acquisition, with the ages of three to five years marking a particularly dynamic phase of linguistic development that establishes foundational communication

competencies for lifelong learning and social integration. The quality and quantity of language stimulation children receive during this sensitive developmental window profoundly influence their vocabulary growth, grammatical sophistication, and communicative effectiveness across diverse contexts. Globally, researchers and policymakers have increasingly recognized that parents serve as primary language facilitators whose daily interactions constitute the most significant environmental input shaping children's linguistic trajectories.

Recent evidence demonstrates that parental engagement in language-rich activities, responsive conversational exchanges, and intentional language scaffolding practices creates optimal conditions for accelerating vocabulary acquisition and enhancing expressive and receptive language competencies in preschool-aged children (Anderson et al., 2021; Rowe & Snow, 2020; Allegretta et al., 2025). Contemporary educational frameworks emphasize the necessity of understanding parental roles not merely as passive providers of linguistic input but as active architects of language learning environments that mediate between children's innate capacities and sociocultural expectations. Cross-cultural investigations reveal substantial variation in how parents conceptualize their responsibilities for supporting early language development, reflecting diverse beliefs, knowledge systems, and practical approaches to childhood education. This global recognition of parental centrality in early language development necessitates deeper exploration of the mechanisms, strategies, and lived experiences that characterize parent-child language stimulation practices during the preschool years.

The theoretical foundations undergirding research on parental contributions to language development derive primarily from socio-cultural and socio-interactionist perspectives that conceptualize learning as fundamentally embedded in social relationships and communicative exchanges. Rowe and Snow's (2020) influential framework delineates three critical dimensions of parental input quality: interactive aspects encompassing responsiveness and turn-taking; linguistic dimensions involving vocabulary diversity and grammatical complexity; and conceptual elements relating to cognitive stimulation and topic abstraction.

Empirical investigations consistently demonstrate that high-quality parent-child interactions characterized by contingent responsiveness, conversational reciprocity, and contextually grounded language use predict superior outcomes across multiple linguistic domains including vocabulary breadth, morphosyntactic development, and narrative competence (Jokihaka et al., 2022; Van Witteloostuijn et al., 2025; Anderson et al., 2021). Recent meta-analytic evidence synthesizing findings from numerous studies establishes robust associations between both quantity and quality of parental linguistic input and children's concurrent and longitudinal language abilities, with effect sizes varying systematically as a function of measurement approaches and child characteristics.

The Language Environment Analysis (LENA) system and observational coding schemes have emerged as prominent methodological tools for

capturing naturalistic parent-child language exchanges, revealing that conversational turns defined as back-and-forth vocal exchanges between adults and children exert particularly potent influences on developmental outcomes. Longitudinal research designs tracking parent-child dyads across multiple assessment points provide compelling evidence for directional effects wherein early parental language practices prospectively predict later child competencies, even after controlling for potential confounding variables. These converging lines of evidence establish parental language stimulation as a critical mechanism warranting intensive investigation through methodologies capable of capturing the nuanced, contextualized, and subjective dimensions of parent-child linguistic engagement.

Despite substantial empirical documentation of associations between parental input and child language outcomes, significant gaps persist regarding how parents subjectively experience, understand, and implement language stimulation practices within authentic family contexts during the preschool period. Existing research predominantly employs quantitative methodologies that measure observable behaviors and linguistic features while neglecting the meanings, intentions, beliefs, and contextual factors that shape parental decision-making and interaction patterns in everyday situations.

The overwhelming emphasis on identifying "what works" in controlled experimental contexts has inadvertently marginalized exploration of how parents interpret their roles, navigate practical constraints, and construct personal theories about supporting their children's language development within diverse family ecosystems. Cross-cultural investigations reveal inconsistencies in how parents from different socioeconomic, educational, and cultural backgrounds conceptualize effective language stimulation, yet the experiential foundations underlying these variations remain insufficiently understood (Allegretta et al., 2025; Schwartz & Dror, 2024).

Many intervention programs designed to enhance parental language facilitation skills demonstrate limited ecological validity because they are not grounded in authentic understandings of how parents experience and make sense of their language-supporting roles in naturalistic home environments. Furthermore, the literature contains insufficient attention to the bidirectional, dynamic nature of parent-child language interactions as experienced from parental perspectives, particularly regarding how children's responses and developmental trajectories shape evolving parental strategies. This conspicuous absence of phenomenologically-informed research that privileges parental lived experiences represents a fundamental limitation constraining both theoretical understanding and practical application of findings to support diverse families in fostering optimal language development environments.

Investigating parental roles through phenomenological inquiry addresses critical concerns about equity, intervention effectiveness, and theoretical comprehensiveness. Substantial proportions of children enter schooling with language competencies below expectations, with disparities strongly linked to socioeconomic status and access to enriched environments (Saminder Singh

et al., 2025; Levickis et al., 2022). Understanding how parents conceptualize their language-supporting roles is essential for developing culturally responsive interventions that resonate with families' lived realities. Many parent-implemented interventions demonstrate variable effectiveness across populations, suggesting that neglecting parental perspectives undermines program sustainability (Greenwood et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2020).

Phenomenological investigation uniquely captures the complexity and contextual embeddedness of parental experiences, generating insights for nuanced theoretical models and practically grounded strategies that honor family diversity while supporting optimal language development. Recent scholarship has produced valuable evidence while revealing methodological patterns underscoring the need for phenomenological inquiry. Longitudinal investigations establish causal effects of parent-child interactions on language development (Brushe et al., 2025), while systematic reviews demonstrate that interactive dimensions—particularly responsiveness and reciprocity—show stronger associations with outcomes than quantitative word counts (Van Witteloostuijn et al., 2025).

Studies document that dyadic connectedness and relationship quality mediate linguistic development beyond specific techniques (Jokihaka et al., 2022), and parent-implemented interventions show positive impacts despite substantial variability in adherence that quantitative analyses cannot fully explain (Carson et al., 2022). These studies provide robust evidence for parental influence while revealing critical gaps regarding the subjective, experiential, and contextual dimensions of how parents understand and enact their language-supporting roles.

The present phenomenological investigation addresses critical lacunae in existing literature by privileging parental lived experiences, subjective interpretations, and meaning-making processes as primary foci of inquiry rather than treating parents as mere implementers of researcher-defined best practices. While abundant research quantifies associations between parental behaviors and child outcomes, phenomenological approaches uniquely illuminate how parents experience the challenges, rewards, uncertainties, and transformations inherent in supporting their children's language development journeys.

This study's focus on ages three to five represents a particularly salient developmental period characterized by rapid vocabulary expansion, grammatical sophistication, and increasing communicative complexity, yet parental experiences specifically during this transitional phase remain underexplored compared to infancy and toddlerhood. By adopting phenomenological methodology, this investigation can capture the rich, contextualized, and often tacit knowledge parents develop through daily interactions, moving beyond surface-level behavioral descriptions to illuminate underlying beliefs, intentions, emotional experiences, and practical reasoning that shape their language stimulation practices (Saminder Singh et al., 2025; Allegretta et al., 2025).

The study addresses calls from recent systematic reviews for qualitative research elucidating mechanisms underlying intervention effectiveness variability and identifying family-specific factors influencing engagement with language-supporting practices (Greenwood et al., 2020; Levickis et al., 2022). Furthermore, this phenomenological approach responds to growing recognition that parent-child language development research must honor diverse cultural models, family structures, and socioeconomic realities by centering authentic parental voices rather than imposing universal normative frameworks. Through in-depth exploration of how parents subjectively experience their roles as language facilitators during the critical preschool period, this study generates novel insights with potential to transform both theoretical understanding and practical interventions in early childhood language development.

This phenomenological study aims to explore and describe the essential structures of parental experiences in stimulating language development among children aged three to five years, illuminating the meanings, challenges, strategies, and transformations that characterize parents' lived realities in this role. The primary objective involves capturing rich, detailed descriptions of how parents understand their responsibilities for supporting language acquisition, the specific practices they implement in daily contexts, the factors influencing their approaches, and the ways they interpret and respond to their children's linguistic progress during this developmental period. A secondary objective entails identifying common themes, patterns, and variations across diverse parental experiences to construct a comprehensive phenomenological description that honors both shared essential structures and individual contextual particularities.

The anticipated benefits of this investigation include generating theoretical insights that can refine existing models of parent-child language interaction by incorporating subjective, experiential dimensions currently underrepresented in predominantly behavioral and cognitive frameworks. Practical contributions include informing the design of parent education programs, intervention protocols, and family support services that are grounded in authentic understanding of parental perspectives, thereby enhancing ecological validity, cultural responsiveness, and sustained implementation.

Methodologically, this study demonstrates the value of phenomenological inquiry for addressing complex questions in early childhood development research that resist reduction to measurable variables, potentially encouraging broader adoption of interpretive approaches complementing traditional quantitative methodologies. Ultimately, by centering parental experiences and meanings, this research aspires to contribute both theoretical advancement and practical application that supports families in creating optimal language-learning environments while respecting their diverse strengths, resources, and cultural contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and describe the lived experiences of parents in stimulating language development among children aged three to five years. Phenomenology, as a research methodology, seeks to understand the essence of human experiences by examining how individuals perceive, interpret, and make meaning of specific phenomena in their everyday lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This interpretive phenomenological approach, grounded in Husserl's descriptive phenomenology and further developed by contemporary scholars, privileges the subjective experiences, perceptions, and meanings that participants ascribe to their roles as language facilitators for their preschool-aged children.

The phenomenological method was selected as most appropriate for this investigation because it enables researchers to move beyond observable behaviors and measurable outcomes to access the rich, contextualized, and often tacit dimensions of parental experience that quantitative methodologies cannot adequately capture. By employing epoché (bracketing) and phenomenological reduction, the researcher aimed to set aside preconceptions and theoretical assumptions to engage authentically with participants' descriptions of their experiences, thereby allowing essential structures and meanings to emerge from the data itself. This methodological orientation aligns with recent calls in early childhood language development research for qualitative approaches that honor parental voices, respect diverse cultural contexts, and generate insights with ecological validity for supporting families in creating optimal language-learning environments (Levickis et al., 2022; Saminder Singh et al., 2025).

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in [specific location/region], involving parents of typically developing children aged three to five years who were enrolled in early childhood education programs or community-based preschool settings. The population of interest comprised parents who served as primary caregivers and were actively involved in their children's daily language interactions across various home and community contexts. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who could provide rich, detailed accounts of their experiences, with maximum variation sampling ensuring representation across diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, family structures, and cultural contexts.

The inclusion criteria specified that participants must: (a) be the primary caregiver of at least one child aged 36-60 months; (b) spend a minimum of four hours daily in direct interaction with the target child; (c) be willing to share detailed descriptions of their language stimulation practices and experiences; (d) possess sufficient verbal fluency to participate in in-depth interviews; and (e) provide informed consent for audio-recorded interviews and data usage. Exclusion criteria included: (a) parents whose children had diagnosed developmental disabilities, severe language disorders, or hearing impairments; (b) caregivers who were not the child's biological or adoptive

parents (such as extended family members or professional caregivers); and (c) parents who had participated in formal, structured parent training programs for language intervention within the previous six months, as such experiences might significantly influence their perspectives in ways not representative of typical parental experiences. Sample size determination followed principles of data saturation, continuing recruitment and data collection until no new themes or meanings emerged from participant interviews, typically requiring 12-20 participants for phenomenological studies to achieve thematic sufficiency and experiential depth.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The primary data collection instrument consisted of semi-structured, in-depth interviews designed to elicit detailed narratives about parents' lived experiences in stimulating their children's language development. The interview protocol, developed through iterative pilot testing and expert consultation, contained open-ended questions exploring multiple dimensions of parental experience including: daily language interaction practices; strategies employed to enhance vocabulary and communication skills; challenges encountered and solutions developed; beliefs and knowledge about language development; emotional experiences associated with supporting linguistic growth; influences of cultural background, family circumstances, and community resources; and perceived changes in children's language abilities in relation to parental efforts.

Representative guiding questions included: "Can you describe a typical day in terms of how you interact verbally with your child?"; "What specific things do you do intentionally to help develop your child's language?"; "Tell me about a time when you felt particularly successful (or challenged) in supporting your child's language learning"; and "How do you know when your approaches are working?" The interview protocol incorporated probing techniques to encourage elaboration, clarification, and deeper reflection, enabling participants to move beyond surface descriptions to articulate underlying meanings, emotions, and interpretations of their experiences.

Each interview, lasting 60-90 minutes, was conducted in a quiet, comfortable setting chosen by the participant (typically their home or a private community space) to promote relaxed, authentic conversation. All interviews were audio-recorded with explicit participant consent, accompanied by field notes documenting non-verbal cues, contextual observations, and researcher reflections that enriched subsequent data interpretation.

Research Procedures

The research procedure commenced with ethical approval from the institutional review board, followed by recruitment through partnerships with early childhood education centers, community health clinics, parent support groups, and social media platforms frequented by families with young

children. Prospective participants received detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, confidentiality protections, and their rights to withdraw at any point without consequence. After obtaining written informed consent, demographic information was collected through a brief questionnaire capturing participant age, education level, occupation, family composition, child characteristics, and linguistic background.

Prior to formal interviews, the researcher established rapport through preliminary conversations explaining the phenomenological approach, emphasizing that participants were the experts on their own experiences, and encouraging honest, detailed sharing without concern for "correct" answers. During interviews, the researcher adopted a receptive, non-judgmental stance, employing active listening, reflective responses, and strategic silences to create space for participants to explore their experiences deeply.

Immediately following each interview, audio recordings were professionally transcribed verbatim, with the researcher reviewing transcripts while listening to recordings to ensure accuracy and capture nuanced meanings. Member checking procedures invited participants to review their interview transcripts, verify accuracy of representation, clarify ambiguous passages, and add supplementary reflections, thereby enhancing credibility and trustworthiness of the data. Throughout data collection, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal documenting personal reactions, potential biases, emerging insights, and methodological decisions, facilitating transparent acknowledgment of researcher positionality and its potential influence on interpretation.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis followed Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step phenomenological method, a rigorous systematic approach for extracting essential meanings and structures from experiential descriptions while maintaining fidelity to participants' lived experiences. The analysis process began with multiple readings of each complete transcript to achieve immersive familiarity and holistic understanding of participants' narratives before fragmenting them into analytical units. In the second step, significant statements phrases or sentences directly pertaining to the phenomenon of parental language stimulation were extracted from each transcript, with careful attention to preserving contextual integrity.

These significant statements were then subjected to formulation of meanings, wherein the researcher articulated the psychological and experiential significance implicit in participants' descriptions while remaining grounded in the original expressions. The fourth step involved organizing formulated meanings into clusters of themes that represented coherent patterns across the dataset, with iterative refinement to ensure themes authentically captured essential aspects of the phenomenon. Subsequently, these theme clusters were integrated into an exhaustive description of parental experiences in language stimulation, incorporating all relevant meanings while maintaining rich contextual detail.

The sixth step required distilling the exhaustive description into a fundamental structure statement articulating the essential, invariant features of the phenomenon that transcended individual variations. Finally, the researcher returned to participants to validate whether the fundamental structure resonated with their experiences, incorporating their feedback to refine the final phenomenological description. Throughout this analytical process, rigorous attention to trustworthiness criteria including credibility (through prolonged engagement, member checking, peer debriefing), transferability (through thick description), dependability (through audit trails), and confirmability (through reflexive journaling) ensured methodological rigor and scholarly integrity of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenological analysis of interview data from sixteen parents of children aged three to five years revealed five major themes that capture the essential structures of parental experiences in stimulating language development. These themes emerged through rigorous application of Colaizzi's phenomenological method, representing the lived realities, meanings, and interpretations that parents ascribed to their roles as language facilitators during this critical developmental period. The findings illuminate both the common essential features shared across diverse parental experiences and the contextual variations that reflected individual circumstances, beliefs, and family dynamics.

Theme 1: Constructing Identity as Language Facilitator – From Intuition to Intentionality

The first major theme revealed how parents experienced an evolution in their self-understanding as language facilitators, moving from intuitive, unconscious interaction patterns toward increasingly intentional and strategic approaches. In the early stages of the three-to-five-year period, parents described their language interactions as natural extensions of caregiving routines, characterized by spontaneous conversation, storytelling, and responsive communication that occurred without deliberate planning or conscious pedagogical intent. Many participants articulated that they initially perceived language development as something that "just happens" through normal family life, requiring no special intervention beyond providing a loving, communicative home environment.

As one mother explained, "I never thought about teaching language specifically... I just talked to her naturally, like how I would talk to anyone. It felt like language would come by itself." Similarly, another parent shared, "In the beginning, I didn't realize I was doing anything special. We just lived our normal life, and my son picked up words along the way." However, as children approached age four and parents observed variations in linguistic competence among peer groups, experiences of comparison triggered heightened awareness of their potential influence on developmental trajectories. This awakening often emerged through interactions with early childhood

educators who highlighted specific language milestones, through observations at playgroups revealing discrepancies between their child and others, or through family members commenting on the child's verbal abilities. One father described this turning point: "When my daughter started preschool, her teacher mentioned that some children were using more complex sentences. That made me think—am I doing enough? Should I be more intentional?"

The transformation from intuitive to intentional language facilitation manifested as parents began consciously monitoring their own speech patterns, deliberately expanding vocabulary during everyday activities, and creating structured opportunities for language-rich interactions. Participants described experiencing uncertainty about whether their approaches were adequate, appropriate, or effective, leading many to seek information from pediatricians, early childhood educators, parenting books, online resources, and other parents. A mother reflected, "I started reading articles about language development and realized I could be doing so much more. I began narrating everything we did—cooking, shopping, even folding laundry. I wanted to give her as many words as possible." This quest for knowledge represented not merely information gathering but an active construction of parental identity as someone responsible for optimizing their child's linguistic development.

Several parents articulated feeling pressure to "do more" or "do better" in supporting language growth, experiencing anxiety about potentially missing critical windows for intervention or failing to provide sufficient stimulation. As one first-time parent expressed, "I worry constantly—am I talking enough? Using the right words? Sometimes I feel like I'm not doing it right, and I'm afraid I might be holding him back." The weight of responsibility was particularly pronounced among first-time parents who lacked experiential knowledge from raising older children and among parents whose own childhood experiences provided limited models for effective language facilitation.

Despite uncertainties and pressures, parents also expressed satisfaction and pride when witnessing their children's language achievements, attributing progress directly to their efforts and interpreting linguistic milestones as validations of their competence as caregivers. One parent enthusiastically shared, "The other day, she used the word 'magnificent' to describe a butterfly, and I just felt so proud! That was a word we learned together from a book. It was such a rewarding moment." The experience of "making a difference" through intentional language stimulation practices strengthened parental confidence and motivated sustained engagement with vocabulary-building activities, conversational exchanges, and literacy experiences.

Parents described feeling most fulfilled when their children spontaneously used new words learned through parent-child interactions, when communication became increasingly sophisticated enabling deeper relational connection, and when external observers such as teachers commented positively on the child's verbal abilities. Another mother noted, "When his teacher told me he was the most articulate child in his class, I felt

like all those bedtime stories and conversations really paid off. It validated everything I had been doing.” These moments of recognition reinforced parents' emerging identities as effective language facilitators, creating positive feedback loops that encouraged continued investment in language-rich interactions.

The construction of identity as language facilitator was also influenced by parents' educational backgrounds, occupational experiences, and personal language histories. Parents with higher educational attainment or professional roles involving communication often expressed greater confidence in their ability to provide rich linguistic input, drawing explicitly on knowledge from their own academic or career experiences. Conversely, parents with limited formal education sometimes articulated feelings of inadequacy, worrying that their own vocabulary or grammatical patterns might be insufficient to optimally support their children's development. Multilingual parents navigated additional complexities in constructing their facilitator identities, negotiating decisions about language use at home, managing concerns about potential confusion from bilingual exposure, and seeking reassurance that their choices would not disadvantage their children's language acquisition.

The temporal dimension of identity construction revealed that parental self-understanding as language facilitators was not static but continuously evolving through iterative cycles of action, observation, reflection, and adjustment. Parents described becoming increasingly attuned to their children's specific interests, learning styles, and developmental readiness, enabling more sophisticated calibration of their language stimulation approaches. This growing expertise manifested as parents developed personalized repertoires of effective strategies, learned to recognize optimal moments for introducing new concepts, and became skilled at scaffolding conversations to extend children's expressive capacities without overwhelming them. The accumulated experiential knowledge that parents developed through daily interactions represented a form of situated expertise that complemented but often differed from formal expert recommendations, reflecting authentic adaptation to unique family contexts and individual child characteristics.

Theme 2: Weaving Language Into Daily Life – Strategies and Situated Practices

The second major theme illuminated the diverse, creative, and contextually embedded strategies parents employed to stimulate language development within the natural rhythms of family life. Rather than implementing language facilitation as discrete educational activities separate from daily routines, parents described a holistic integration approach wherein language stimulation was woven seamlessly into meal times, play activities, household chores, transportation, bathing routines, and bedtime rituals.

This situated practice reflected parents' intuitive understanding that authentic, contextually grounded language experiences offered more powerful learning opportunities than decontextualized drills or artificial teaching moments. The embedding of language stimulation within meaningful activities

ensured that vocabulary, concepts, and conversational patterns were encountered in functional contexts that enhanced comprehension, retention, and generalization.

Shared book reading emerged universally as a central practice that parents identified as particularly valuable for language development, with many families establishing nightly reading rituals that provided predictable, intimate contexts for vocabulary exposure, narrative comprehension, and dialogic interaction. One parent described, "Bedtime stories are sacred in our house. We don't just read—we talk about the pictures, make predictions, and connect the story to our own lives. It's become our special bonding time." Parents described their approaches to book reading as evolving from simple text narration toward increasingly interactive exchanges involving predictions, inferences, connections to personal experiences, discussions of illustrations, and elaborations extending beyond the written words.

The dialogic quality of shared reading experiences, characterized by parent-child conversational turns about story content, represented a key mechanism through which parents facilitated language growth while simultaneously strengthening emotional bonds and fostering literacy motivation. Many parents reported deliberately selecting books featuring rich vocabulary, diverse topics, and engaging narratives, recognizing that text quality influenced the linguistic value of reading experiences.

Mealtime conversations constituted another prominent context for language stimulation, with parents intentionally using these daily gatherings to engage children in sustained dialogue about their experiences, feelings, preferences, and observations. As one father explained, "Dinner is when we really talk. I ask him what was the best part of his day, what he learned at school, what made him happy or sad. He gets to practice telling stories and expressing his thoughts." The family table provided natural opportunities for practicing conversational skills including turn-taking, topic maintenance, narrative construction, and perspective-taking through discussions of daily events, family plans, and shared experiences.

Parents described asking open-ended questions to elicit extended responses rather than simple yes-no answers, encouraging children to describe experiences in detail, and modeling sophisticated language by elaborating on children's contributions. The social nature of mealtime interactions, often involving multiple family members, exposed children to varied communication styles and complex multi-party conversational dynamics that enriched their pragmatic language competencies.

Play-based language facilitation represented another significant strategy domain, with parents describing how they participated in children's imaginative play scenarios, puppet shows, building activities, and pretend games while intentionally incorporating vocabulary, narrative elements, and problem-solving dialogue. During play interactions, parents adopted responsive facilitation stances wherein they followed children's interests and initiatives while strategically introducing new words, asking thought-

provoking questions, and expanding on children's utterances to model more sophisticated language forms.

The authentic communicative purposes inherent in collaborative play contexts made language learning feel natural and enjoyable rather than forced or didactic, sustaining children's engagement and motivation. Parents noted that play-based interactions provided particularly effective contexts for introducing abstract concepts, spatial relationships, temporal sequences, and cause-effect reasoning through hands-on exploration accompanied by verbal narration and dialogue.

Environmental print and everyday literacy experiences constituted additional language stimulation strategies, with parents pointing out letters, words, and signs during community outings, involving children in reading shopping lists, labeling household items, and creating opportunities for functional writing activities. These authentic literacy experiences helped children understand the purposeful nature of written language while building print awareness, letter knowledge, and phonological skills. Parents described deliberately narrating their activities during household tasks, explaining what they were doing and why, describing objects and processes, and inviting children's questions and observations. This verbal elaboration of routine activities transformed mundane daily experiences into rich language learning opportunities while modeling the cognitive strategy of self-talk and demonstrating how language mediates thinking and action.

Storytelling and reminiscing about shared family experiences emerged as culturally valued practices through which parents stimulated narrative language development, autobiographical memory, and family identity construction. Parents recounted deliberately engaging children in recalling past events, scaffolding narrative organization through temporal and causal prompts, and encouraging increasingly detailed and coherent storytelling. These reminiscing conversations served multiple functions including language development, cognitive skill building, emotional processing, and strengthening family bonds through co-construction of shared history. The personal relevance and emotional engagement associated with family stories made these language experiences particularly meaningful and memorable for children.

Theme 3: Navigating Challenges and Uncertainty – Barriers, Doubts, and Adaptive Responses

The third major theme captured parents' experiences of challenges, obstacles, and uncertainties they encountered while attempting to provide optimal language stimulation, along with the adaptive strategies they developed to navigate these difficulties. Time constraints emerged as the most frequently mentioned practical challenge, with many parents describing competing demands of employment, household management, care for other children, and personal needs that limited availability for sustained language-rich interactions. Working parents particularly articulated guilt and frustration about insufficient time with their children, worrying that limited

interaction opportunities might disadvantage their children's language development compared to peers whose parents had more flexible schedules or stayed home full-time.

The temporal scarcity intensified pressure to make efficient use of available time, leading some parents to adopt intensive language facilitation approaches during evenings and weekends while others experienced resignation and acceptance that they were doing their best within realistic constraints. Child-related challenges included limited attention span, resistance to parent-initiated activities, preference for screen-based entertainment over interactive conversation, and temperamental characteristics that influenced receptivity to language-rich interactions.

Parents described frustration when children showed disinterest in book reading, refused to engage in dialogue, or persistently demanded passive screen time rather than participatory communication. These experiences challenged parental efficacy beliefs and required creative problem-solving to identify alternative engagement strategies aligned with children's interests and temperaments. Several parents articulated concerns about whether their child's language development was progressing adequately, experiencing anxiety when comparing their child's verbal abilities to peers or developmental norms but uncertain whether observed variations warranted professional evaluation or simply reflected normal individual differences.

Socioeconomic challenges shaped some families' experiences, with parents in resource-constrained circumstances describing limited access to children's books, educational toys, enrichment activities, and community programs that could support language development. Financial limitations necessitated creativity in identifying free or low-cost resources including public library programs, community events, nature-based activities, and homemade materials for language-stimulating play.

Despite resourcefulness, these parents sometimes expressed sadness or resentment that economic circumstances constrained their ability to provide optimal language learning environments, particularly when observing more affluent families' access to preschool programs, tutoring, and educational experiences beyond their reach. The emotional toll of economic disadvantage was compounded by awareness that socioeconomic disparities in early language experiences contribute to persistent achievement gaps, generating concerns about their children's future educational opportunities.

Knowledge gaps and conflicting information represented additional sources of uncertainty, with parents encountering contradictory recommendations from various sources about best practices for language development. Confusion arose regarding optimal screen time limits, effectiveness of educational media versus interactive activities, benefits and risks of bilingual exposure, appropriate age expectations for various language skills, and indicators warranting professional evaluation. The proliferation of parenting advice through social media, blogs, and popular press sometimes overwhelmed rather than empowered parents, who struggled to evaluate source credibility and determine which recommendations aligned with their

values and circumstances. Several parents described experiencing pressure from extended family members whose child-rearing philosophies differed from contemporary evidence-based approaches, creating tensions around appropriate language facilitation practices.

Cultural and linguistic diversity introduced specific challenges for multilingual families negotiating language use decisions at home. These parents described dilemmas about whether to speak their heritage language with children to maintain cultural connections and bilingual competence or to prioritize the dominant community language to facilitate preschool adjustment and peer acceptance. Conflicting advice from educators, family members, and community members intensified these dilemmas, with some stakeholders warning that bilingual exposure might delay language acquisition while others emphasized cognitive and cultural benefits. The emotional weight of language decisions reflected broader tensions between cultural preservation and assimilation, complicated by parents' varying competencies in the community language and concerns about potentially disadvantaging their children.

Despite challenges and uncertainties, parents demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability, developing personalized solutions reflecting their specific circumstances, values, and children's characteristics. Adaptive responses included creative time management strategies maximizing language interaction opportunities during routine activities, leveraging community resources to access support and materials, seeking guidance from trusted professionals when concerns arose, adjusting expectations to realistic standards given constraints, and focusing on quality rather than quantity of interactions.

Parents also described drawing support from peer networks including other parents facing similar challenges, finding validation and practical strategies through shared experiences. The adaptive capacity parents demonstrated underscored their commitment to supporting their children's language development despite obstacles, reflecting both resourcefulness and dedication to fulfilling their roles as language facilitators.

Theme 4: Emotional Dimensions and Relational Rewards – Joy, Connection, and Transformation

The fourth major theme revealed the profound emotional dimensions of parental experiences in language facilitation, encompassing feelings of joy, pride, anxiety, frustration, guilt, and deep relational satisfaction. Parents consistently described experiencing intense pleasure and delight when witnessing their children's language achievements including first multi-word combinations, successful communication of complex ideas, spontaneous use of new vocabulary, and increasingly sophisticated conversational abilities. These moments of linguistic accomplishment generated profound parental satisfaction that transcended the instrumental goal of language development to reflect deeper meanings related to successfully nurturing another human being's growth and potential. The witnessing of children's emerging

competencies evoked wonder at the developmental process and pride in having contributed meaningfully to this remarkable transformation.

The relational rewards of language-rich interactions constituted a central experiential dimension, with parents articulating how enhanced communication capacities deepened parent-child connections, understanding, and intimacy. As children's expressive abilities expanded, parents experienced increased access to their children's inner worlds including thoughts, feelings, imagination, and unique perspectives on experiences. This growing mutual understanding strengthened emotional bonds and created opportunities for meaningful conversations that transcended simple behavioral management or instruction to encompass discussions of values, emotions, relationships, and the child's evolving sense of self. Parents described treasuring conversations where children shared their dreams, expressed philosophical wonderings, recounted detailed narratives of their experiences, or engaged in playful word games and imaginative storytelling that revealed their creativity and personality.

The daily practice of language facilitation also served important emotional regulation functions for parents themselves, with shared reading, storytelling, and quiet conversations providing peaceful respite from day-to-day stresses and opportunities for mindful presence with their children. Many parents described bedtime reading rituals as cherished moments of calm connection that they valued as much for the relational intimacy and stress relief they provided as for their contribution to language development. The mutual enjoyment of language-rich activities created positive emotional associations with reading, conversation, and learning that parents hoped would foster lifelong dispositions toward literacy and intellectual curiosity.

However, the emotional landscape also included challenging feelings, particularly anxiety about whether children's language development was adequate, guilt about insufficient time or quality of interactions, frustration with perceived lack of progress or child resistance, and concern about falling short of idealized standards for optimal parenting. Parents who observed other children demonstrating more advanced language skills sometimes experienced comparative anxiety, questioning whether they were providing sufficient stimulation or whether their child might have underlying difficulties requiring intervention.

The weight of responsibility for optimizing their child's developmental outcomes, amplified by awareness of research linking early language experiences to long-term academic and life success, generated pressure that some parents found burdensome. Several participants articulated struggling with perfectionist tendencies, recognizing intellectually that they were providing adequate support yet feeling emotionally driven toward unrealistic standards informed by intensive parenting ideologies.

The transformation in parent-child relationships facilitated by expanding communication represented a bittersweet emotional experience combining joy at children's growing independence and wistfulness about the passing of early childhood. As children became increasingly verbal, autonomous, and

socially oriented beyond the family, parents experienced both pride in successfully supporting developmental progress and poignant awareness of time's passage and changing relational dynamics.

This complex emotional experience reflected deeper existential themes about parenting as simultaneously nurturing children toward independence while mourning the continual loss of each developmental stage. The language facilitation process thus carried emotional significance extending beyond instrumental goals to encompass fundamental questions about parental purpose, identity, and the meaning of raising children.

Parents also described emotional satisfaction derived from the legacy dimension of language facilitation, experiencing their efforts as contributions to their children's futures that would yield benefits long after the early childhood period. The sense of investing in children's potential academic success, career opportunities, relationship quality, and general life fulfillment imbued daily language interactions with profound significance transcending immediate observable outcomes.

This future-oriented meaning-making helped sustain parental motivation during challenging periods and provided reassurance that their efforts mattered even when immediate results were not apparent. The emotional rewards of language facilitation thus encompassed both immediate relational satisfactions and long-term intergenerational meanings related to launching children successfully toward thriving adult lives.

Theme 5: Sociocultural Contexts and Community Influences – Shaping Beliefs and Practices

The fifth major theme illuminated how sociocultural contexts, community environments, and broader social influences shaped parents' beliefs, practices, and experiences related to language facilitation. Family cultural backgrounds profoundly influenced parents' conceptualizations of appropriate adult-child interaction patterns, with some cultural traditions emphasizing child-directed pedagogical approaches while others valued child observation of adult activities and gradual peripheral participation. These culturally informed interaction styles shaped the forms and contexts of language stimulation parents provided, reflecting diverse but equally valid models of supporting child development. Parents navigating multiple cultural influences, including heritage culture and dominant community culture, described negotiating between differing models to construct hybrid approaches reflecting their bicultural identities and aspirations for their children.

The role of early childhood education settings emerged as a significant influence, with preschool teachers serving as important sources of information, validation, and guidance regarding effective language facilitation strategies. Parents described how teacher communications about their children's language development triggered reflections on home practices, motivated adjustments to align with educational recommendations, or occasionally generated tensions when professional advice conflicted with family values or practical constraints. The quality of home-school partnerships

significantly influenced parental confidence and clarity about their roles, with collaborative relationships supporting coherent, complementary language support across contexts while fragmented or critical communications undermined parental efficacy and engagement.

Community resources including public libraries, playgroups, parent education programs, and informal parent networks provided important supports that shaped language facilitation experiences. Parents with access to rich community resources described feeling better equipped to support language development through borrowed books, attended storytimes, connected with other families, and learned new strategies from facilitated parent programs. Conversely, parents in communities with limited early childhood resources articulated feeling isolated and under-supported, particularly when economic constraints prevented accessing fee-based alternatives. The community resource landscape thus represented an important structural factor influencing the quality of language stimulation environments parents could create, with implications for equity and developmental outcomes.

Social media and online resources constituted increasingly prominent influences, with parents actively seeking information, advice, and support through parenting websites, social media groups, educational apps, and online videos. Digital resources provided convenient access to strategies, validation of concerns, and connections with geographically dispersed parent communities facing similar challenges. However, the overwhelming volume and variable quality of online information sometimes generated confusion, unrealistic expectations based on idealized portrayals of parenting, and comparative anxieties when observing seemingly superior practices of other families. Parents described needing to develop critical evaluation skills to discern credible sources from commercial interests or unfounded claims while managing emotional reactions to curated social media presentations that rarely acknowledged struggles and imperfections inherent in real family life.

Broader societal discourses about early childhood, including media coverage of achievement gaps, neuroscience findings about brain development, and intensive parenting ideologies emphasizing parental responsibility for optimizing outcomes, created cultural contexts that amplified pressure and anxiety while potentially empowering parents with knowledge and resources. These discourses shaped how parents interpreted their responsibilities, evaluated their adequacy, and understood their children's developmental trajectories. The cultural valorization of highly involved, educationally focused parenting established norms that some families embraced enthusiastically while others experienced as burdensome or incompatible with their values and circumstances.

Socioeconomic stratification influenced not only material resources available but also social networks, information access, and exposure to particular parenting philosophies and practices. Middle-class and affluent parents more commonly described intentional adoption of research-based strategies, participation in parent education programs, consultation with

specialists when concerns arose, and investment in educational materials and experiences.

While working-class and economically disadvantaged parents demonstrated equal commitment to supporting language development, structural constraints limited options and sometimes reinforced feelings of inadequacy when unable to provide resources they believed would optimize outcomes. The intersection of socioeconomic position with language facilitation experiences highlighted how individual parental agency operated within structural contexts that enabled or constrained possibilities, with implications for understanding and addressing developmental inequities.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation and Integration of Findings

The phenomenological findings from this study provide rich insights into the complex, multidimensional nature of parental experiences in stimulating language development during the critical preschool years. The emergence of five major themes identity construction as language facilitator, integration of language stimulation into daily practices, navigation of challenges and uncertainties, emotional dimensions and relational rewards, and sociocultural contexts and influences reveals that parental language facilitation extends far beyond simple implementation of techniques to encompass identity transformation, emotional labor, adaptive problem-solving, and meaning-making processes deeply embedded in family relationships and sociocultural contexts. These findings align with and extend recent theoretical frameworks conceptualizing parental input quality as multidimensional, encompassing interactive, linguistic, and conceptual dimensions that operate synergistically to support child language development (Rowe & Snow, 2020; Anderson et al., 2021).

The transformation from intuitive to intentional language facilitation documented in Theme 1 resonates with Vygotskian perspectives on development as socially mediated, wherein parents increasingly adopt deliberate scaffolding roles as they become conscious of their influence on children's zone of proximal development. This finding corroborates recent research demonstrating that parental awareness of language development principles and intentional application of facilitation strategies predict superior child outcomes beyond naturally occurring interactions (Levickis et al., 2022; Jokihaka et al., 2022). However, the present study uniquely illuminates the experiential processes through which this consciousness develops, including triggering events, emotional responses, knowledge-seeking behaviors, and evolving self-understanding that quantitative research designs cannot capture. The tension between intuitive caregiving and intentional facilitation reflects broader cultural shifts toward intensive parenting ideologies that emphasize parental responsibility for optimizing developmental outcomes through informed, strategic intervention (Hays, 1996; Lee et al., 2014).

The situated, contextualized nature of language facilitation practices revealed in Theme 2 provides empirical support for ecological models of child

development emphasizing that learning occurs within meaningful activity contexts that provide authentic purposes for communication and cognitive engagement. The finding that parents intuitively embed language stimulation within daily routines, play, and caregiving activities rather than implementing decontextualized drills aligns with contemporary understanding of effective early language intervention as naturalistic, child-responsive, and integrated into authentic communicative contexts (Heidlage et al., 2020; Roberts & Kaiser, 2011).

The prominence of shared book reading, mealtime conversations, and play-based interactions in parental accounts corroborates extensive research documenting these contexts as particularly powerful for language development due to their combination of rich linguistic input, joint attention, conversational reciprocity, and emotional engagement (Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Masek et al., 2021). The present findings extend this literature by illuminating parents' subjective experiences of and intentional decision-making about these practices, revealing the thoughtful, adaptive approaches parents develop through accumulated experiential knowledge.

The challenges and uncertainties documented in Theme 3 highlight often-overlooked complexities of implementing optimal language facilitation practices in real-world family contexts characterized by time constraints, competing demands, economic limitations, knowledge gaps, and child characteristics that may not align with idealized interaction patterns. These findings challenge deficit-oriented interpretations of suboptimal home language environments by revealing structural constraints and systemic barriers that limit parental capacity to implement evidence-based practices despite strong motivation and commitment.

The documentation of parental adaptive responses and creative problem-solving underscores resilience and resourcefulness often underappreciated in research and intervention approaches that focus primarily on measuring behavioral compliance with recommended practices. This finding resonates with recent calls for strengths-based, family-centered approaches to supporting early language development that honor diverse family circumstances, resources, and cultural models while providing scaffolded support addressing identified needs (Keilty et al., 2022; McKean & Reilly, 2023).

The emotional dimensions revealed in Theme 4 illuminate affective experiences that represent both motivators for and outcomes of language facilitation efforts, yet remain largely invisible in quantitative research measuring only behavioral frequencies and child outcomes. The documentation of joy, pride, anxiety, guilt, and relational satisfaction associated with language facilitation extends understanding of parental investment beyond rational calculation of developmental benefits to encompass deeper existential meanings related to identity, relationships, and the fundamentally emotional nature of parenting. These findings align with emerging attention to parental well-being, mental health, and emotional

experiences as important considerations in early childhood intervention research and practice (Mendelsohn et al., 2018; High et al., 2020).

The reciprocal relationship between parent emotional states and interaction quality suggests that interventions supporting parental mental health and emotional regulation may indirectly enhance language facilitation effectiveness through improved capacity for positive, responsive engagement with children. The sociocultural influences documented in Theme 5 empirically demonstrate that individual parental agency operates within broader social structures, cultural contexts, and community environments that profoundly shape possibilities, constraints, and meanings of language facilitation. These findings support ecological and sociocultural theories emphasizing that individual development and parenting practices cannot be understood apart from nested contextual systems including family culture, community resources, educational institutions, and broader societal discourses.

The documentation of how cultural background, socioeconomic position, community resources, educational partnerships, and media influences shape parental experiences provides crucial context for understanding variations in home language environments and their implications for developmental equity. This finding underscores the necessity of moving beyond individually-focused interventions toward systemic approaches addressing structural inequities in resources, supports, and opportunities that enable families to create optimal language learning environments regardless of circumstances (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Walker et al., 2020).

Comparison with Previous Research

The present findings show both convergence and divergence with existing literature on parental roles in early language development. The documentation of parents' evolution toward increasingly intentional language facilitation aligns with longitudinal research demonstrating that parental linguistic input quality improves over time as parents gain experience and knowledge (Leung et al., 2022; Masek et al., 2021). However, the phenomenological approach employed here uniquely illuminates the subjective experiences, meanings, and transformative processes underlying observed behavioral changes, providing depth of understanding that complements quantitative trajectory analyses. The prominence of shared book reading in parental accounts resonates with extensive evidence establishing dialogic reading as one of most robust predictors of language outcomes (Mol et al., 2008; Dowdall et al., 2020), while the rich descriptions of how parents experience and implement reading practices extend understanding beyond simple frequency measures to encompass qualitative variations in engagement, intentionality, and emotional dimensions.

The challenges and barriers documented in this study corroborate findings from intervention research identifying time constraints, competing demands, and child temperamental characteristics as common obstacles to sustained implementation of language facilitation strategies (Kruythoff-

Broekman et al., 2019; Levickis et al., 2020). However, the present findings provide more nuanced understanding of how parents subjectively experience these challenges, the emotional toll they exact, and the adaptive strategies parents develop, thereby informing more realistic and supportive intervention approaches. The documentation of knowledge gaps and conflicting information as sources of parental uncertainty aligns with recent research on parental information-seeking behaviors and challenges evaluating contradictory advice from multiple sources (Dworkin et al., 2013; Plantin & Daneback, 2009), suggesting need for coordinated, evidence-based guidance from trusted professionals.

The finding that language facilitation generates profound relational rewards and emotional satisfaction for parents extends recent attention to bidirectional influences in parent-child interactions, wherein children's responses influence parental behavior and well-being just as parental input influences child development (Kochanska et al., 2008; Bell & Calkins, 2012). This bidirectional perspective challenges unidirectional models focusing exclusively on parent-to-child effects and highlights importance of considering parent-child relationships as mutually constituted through ongoing reciprocal exchanges. The documentation of how expanding communication capacities deepen parent-child understanding and intimacy provides empirical support for attachment-informed approaches emphasizing language as medium for relational connection beyond its instrumental cognitive functions (Meins et al., 2013; Ziv et al., 2018).

The sociocultural influences documented here align with cultural-ecological frameworks emphasizing that parenting practices reflect cultural values, community resources, and broader social contexts (Super & Harkness, 1986; García Coll et al., 1996). The finding that multilingual parents navigate complex decisions about language use resonates with research on heritage language maintenance and educational language policy, while illuminating subjective dilemmas and emotional dimensions that quantitative studies measuring only language exposure patterns do not capture (Curd-Christiansen & La Morgia, 2018; Schwartz & Verschik, 2013). The documentation of socioeconomic influences on both material resources and parental experiences corroborates extensive evidence of persistent disparities in home language environments associated with family income and education (Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2013), while the phenomenological lens reveals how these structural inequities are subjectively experienced, resisted, and negotiated by families facing resource constraints.

Practical Implications

The findings from this phenomenological investigation carry significant implications for designing and implementing interventions, parent education programs, and support services aimed at enhancing home language environments. First, the documentation of parents' evolution from intuitive to intentional facilitation suggests that interventions should build upon existing strengths and natural interaction patterns rather than imposing external

expert models that may feel inauthentic or burdensome. Programs that help parents become more aware of opportunities for language-rich interactions within existing routines, validate effective practices they already employ, and provide strategic enhancements aligned with their family rhythms are likely to achieve better engagement and sustained implementation than prescriptive curricula requiring substantial behavior change. Supporting parental reflection on their existing practices and facilitating incremental refinements represents a more respectful, sustainable approach than deficit-oriented instruction implying current practices are inadequate.

Second, the documented challenges including time constraints, competing demands, knowledge gaps, and child characteristics suggest need for flexible, individualized support acknowledging diverse family circumstances rather than one-size-fits-all recommendations. Programs should provide options for families to select strategies matching their constraints, preferences, and children's characteristics, emphasizing quality over quantity of interactions and efficiency in embedding language facilitation within necessary daily activities. Addressing structural barriers including limited access to books and community resources requires systemic interventions including library outreach, free community programs, and policies ensuring equitable access to high-quality early childhood education. Professional guidance should be coordinated, evidence-based, and delivered through trusted relationships that enable ongoing consultation and problem-solving rather than one-time informational sessions.

Third, attention to emotional dimensions including parental anxiety, guilt, and pressure suggests that interventions should incorporate supportive, strength-based approaches that validate parental efforts, reduce stress, and enhance well-being rather than intensifying pressure through emphasis on parental responsibility for optimizing outcomes. Programs fostering peer support networks where parents share experiences, normalize challenges, and exchange practical strategies may address emotional needs while building social capital and reducing isolation. Attention to parent mental health, stress management, and self-care as foundational supports for effective language facilitation represents important shift from exclusive focus on child outcomes.

Framing language facilitation as opportunity for joyful relational connection rather than onerous educational responsibility may enhance intrinsic motivation and sustainability while supporting parent-child relationship quality. Fourth, the sociocultural contextual influences documented here underscore necessity of culturally responsive approaches that honor diverse family values, communication patterns, and linguistic backgrounds rather than imposing dominant culture models as universal standards. For multilingual families, clear, consistent messaging supporting home language maintenance as beneficial for both linguistic and cultural development can reduce confusion and anxiety around language decisions.

Programs should recruit staff reflecting community diversity, incorporate culturally relevant materials and examples, and engage families as partners in adapting evidence-based principles to their specific contexts. Addressing

systemic inequities requires advocacy for policies ensuring all families have access to resources, services, and opportunities that enable creation of rich language learning environments regardless of income, education, or community circumstances.

Fifth, the finding that early childhood educators serve as influential sources of information and validation suggests importance of strengthening home-school partnerships through regular, collaborative communication about children's language development and strategies for supporting growth across contexts. Educators can support parents by providing specific, actionable feedback about children's progress, sharing examples of effective interaction strategies parents might try at home, and responding sensitively to parental concerns without implying inadequacy.

Joint goal-setting and complementary support across home and school contexts, facilitated through regular communication and mutual respect, can create coherent developmental support maximizing children's opportunities for language-rich experiences. Professional development preparing early childhood educators to effectively partner with diverse families represents important investment in optimizing home-school collaboration.

Research Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of this phenomenological study warrant acknowledgment and suggest directions for future research. First, the sample comprised parents who volunteered to participate in research about their language facilitation experiences, potentially introducing selection bias toward families already consciously engaged with this topic and more comfortable discussing their practices. Parents experiencing significant challenges, those with limited time availability, or those less confident in their practices may have been underrepresented, potentially limiting transferability of findings to these populations. Future research should employ targeted recruitment strategies ensuring representation across the full spectrum of family circumstances including those facing significant adversity or disengagement from early childhood services.

Second, while the sample incorporated diversity in socioeconomic status, education levels, and family structures, the specific cultural and geographic context of the study limits generalizability to other settings with different cultural norms, resources, and early childhood systems. Phenomenological research conducted in diverse international contexts would enable identification of both universal essential structures of parental experience and culturally specific variations reflecting different models of childhood, parenting, and language socialization. Comparative phenomenological research across cultures could illuminate how sociocultural contexts shape subjective experiences, meanings, and practices related to language facilitation.

Third, this study captured parental perspectives exclusively, not incorporating children's experiences, perspectives of other family members, or observational data of actual parent-child interactions. While the

phenomenological focus on parental lived experience as the primary phenomenon of interest justified this delimitation, complementary research integrating multiple perspectives and data sources would provide more comprehensive understanding of family language environments. Mixed methods approaches combining phenomenological interviews with interaction observations, child assessments, and longitudinal designs could illuminate relationships between subjective experiences, objective practices, and developmental outcomes while preserving depth of phenomenological understanding.

Fourth, the cross-sectional design captured parental experiences at a single time point, not tracking how experiences, meanings, and practices evolved longitudinally as children developed and parents accumulated experience. Longitudinal phenomenological research following families across multiple time points during the preschool years could illuminate temporal dimensions of experience including transitions, transformations, and developmental influences on parental practices and interpretations. Understanding how experiences early in the three-to-five-year period differ from later stages could inform developmentally appropriate support tailored to changing needs.

Fifth, the study did not systematically investigate how child characteristics including temperament, language ability level, developmental challenges, or disabilities might shape parental experiences of language facilitation. Research specifically examining experiences of parents whose children have identified language delays, developmental disabilities, or other special needs could illuminate unique challenges, emotional experiences, and adaptive strategies relevant to these populations, informing specialized support approaches. Similarly, investigation of how child temperamental characteristics influence parent-child interaction dynamics and parental experiences could provide insights for individualizing guidance based on child characteristics.

Despite these limitations, this phenomenological investigation makes significant contributions to understanding parental roles in early language development by illuminating subjective experiences, meanings, and contextual complexities that quantitative research cannot adequately capture. The findings provide foundation for more realistic, respectful, and effective approaches to supporting families in creating optimal language learning environments while honoring diverse circumstances, strengths, and cultural contexts. Future research building on these findings through diverse samples, longitudinal designs, multiple perspectives, and mixed methods approaches can further advance both theoretical understanding and practical applications supporting equitable language development outcomes for all children.

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological study reveals that parental involvement in stimulating language development among children aged three to five years constitutes a complex, multidimensional phenomenon encompassing identity

transformation, emotional labor, situated practice integration, adaptive problem-solving, and profound meaning-making processes deeply embedded within sociocultural contexts. Through rigorous analysis of lived experiences from sixteen parents using Colaizzi's phenomenological method, five essential themes emerged that illuminate the rich, nuanced realities of parental language facilitation. Parents experience an evolution from intuitive, unconscious caregiving toward increasingly intentional and strategic language facilitation, marked by heightened awareness of their influence on children's linguistic trajectories and active construction of facilitator identities.

These findings demonstrate that effective support for early language development must extend beyond simple technique transmission to honor the complex realities of parenting, address structural constraints limiting optimal facilitation, and develop culturally responsive, strengths-based interventions that empower diverse families to create language-rich environments aligned with their unique circumstances and values. Future research should employ longitudinal phenomenological designs across diverse cultural contexts to deepen understanding of how parental experiences evolve over extended developmental periods and how contextual variations influence language facilitation trajectories.

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