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## **The Effects of Home-Based English Language Activities on Thai Preschoolers' English Vocabulary Development: A Study of Thai Preschoolers with Limited English Proficiency Parents**

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*Received: 11 Mar, 2024*

*Revised: 22 Apr, 2024*

*Accepted: 4 Jun, 2024*

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the effects of using a set of home-based English language activities (HELAs) on Thai preschoolers' receptive vocabulary development and explores the opinions of parents with limited English proficiency (LEP) in using the HELAs. The participants were 26 pairs of preschoolers and their parents. The instruments employed were as follows: a set of HELAs designed following the ADDIE instructional design model, pre- and post-vocabulary tests used to measure the preschoolers' vocabulary development, a parent questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview. The parents implemented the HELAs at home for a period of four weeks. Each week, the HELAs included four activities: watching a fable video, learning target vocabulary from a vocabulary video, practicing with a picture card, and reading with parents. After the intervention period, the preschoolers showed significant gains in receptive vocabulary. Additionally, the interviews with parents revealed three key benefits of the HELAs that could lead to vocabulary development. These benefits included providing frequent exposure to vocabulary, creating opportunities for deliberate learning of vocabulary, and promoting learning through the combination of verbal (spoken words) and nonverbal (pictures) codes. Furthermore, the findings revealed that LEP parents had positive attitudes toward using HELAs. These findings not only support the effectiveness of using various HELAs in enhancing vocabulary knowledge but also offer insights for involving LEP parents in using HELAs.

**Keywords:** home-based English language activities; limited English proficiency parents, receptive vocabulary; Thai preschoolers; English vocabulary knowledge

### **Introduction**

The growing importance of English as a lingua franca for communication, education, and future opportunities in the increasingly interconnected world fuels a global trend of preschoolers (ages 3-5) engaging in English as a foreign language (EFL) learning (Butler, 2019; Lai et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2021). This trend also resonates with Thailand, where a considerable number of Thai EFL learners begin their English learning during the preschool age, although English is officially designated as a

compulsory foreign subject from primary education onward (Nomnian, 2013). The trend of early EFL learning in Thailand is likely driven by the global importance of English and the belief that early exposure to English can significantly improve language proficiency later in life (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021; Prongkitsanuluck et al., 2022).

Given that many Thai preschoolers have already started learning English, it is crucial to help them establish a strong foundation of vocabulary knowledge. This is because, without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, these young learners may struggle to understand and engage, whether in basic English communication or classroom instruction (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021; Prongkitsanuluck et al., 2022). Moreover, those lacking such a foundation might face challenges in developing more advanced language skills such as reading comprehension (González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2017; Webb & Nation, 2017). As vocabulary is the building block of language learning, the need for effective vocabulary learning activities has risen. In consideration of effective activities, home-based English language activities (HELAs) emerge as a promising option (Lai et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2021).

HELAs are activities that parents, family members, or caregivers carry out at home to support children's English language development. While the concept of HELAs can be associated with autonomous learning in a home environment, where learners can set their own learning goals, choose content that interests them, and take ownership of their learning (Xie, 2020; Xie & Yang, 2020), the approach for preschoolers tends to be different. In the preschool years, HELAs often involve structured activities with parental involvement (Zhang et al., 2021). This is likely because young learners tend to lack the necessary skills and cognitive abilities to engage in completely independent language learning. Hence, parents play a crucial role in providing guided instruction and learning materials for these activities. In the case of EFL preschoolers, mounting evidence suggests that a wide range of HELAs are associated with their vocabulary development (Lai et al., 2024; Petchprasert, 2014; Sun et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021). The plausible explanation could be that engaging in HELAs offers unintended exposure to language input (e.g., listening to stories) and deliberate learning opportunities (e.g., practicing pronunciation during shared reading) (Lai et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2018). Additionally, HELAs can potentially compensate for EFL preschoolers' limited exposure to English both in the classroom and in daily life, a factor that could hinder their vocabulary development (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Lai et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2018).

Despite the growing body of studies exploring the benefits of HELAs for English vocabulary development among EFL preschoolers in various contexts, there is a dearth of studies addressing this issue in the Thai context. Although the most relevant studies available in Thailand, which employed dialogic reading (Petchprasert, 2014) and storytelling (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021) as HELAs, demonstrated positive effects on Thai preschoolers' vocabulary development, these studies have limitations that require further exploration. First, these existing studies (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Petchprasert, 2014) primarily focused on a single HELA approach (e.g., using only reading or storytelling). Research in the field of vocabulary acquisition, however, has suggested that effective vocabulary learning necessitates a combination of various

learning conditions, such as unintentional exposure to language, deliberate vocabulary learning, and opportunities for practice using the learned words (González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2017; Webb & Nation, 2017). Thus, a single HELA might not fully support all these conditions. For example, while listening to stories excels at providing rich unintentional exposure to new vocabulary, it may not provide as many opportunities for deliberately learning the meaning of those words. Given the potential limitations of utilizing a single HELA, it is worth further investigating how various HELAs could be used together to promote vocabulary learning among Thai preschoolers.

Second, a critical gap exists in previous studies in Thailand that did not directly address the use of HELAs by Thai parents with limited English proficiency (LEP). Instead, the previous studies focused on the HELAs led by parents with moderate English proficiency (Petchprasert, 2014) or by researchers (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021). This means their practices may not apply to LEP parents who tend to face various challenges in using HELAs effectively, such as difficulties in using English while doing activities, answering children's questions related to English vocabulary, and providing pronunciation guidance, among others (Forey et al., 2016; Tong et al., 2021). Therefore, a study directly involving LEP parents is crucial, as it can shed light on how LEP parents use HELAs and the specific difficulties they face. This insight into their experience is essential for promoting more effective HELAs that support this under-represented population.

To address these research gaps, this study aims to investigate the effect of using a set of HELAs on enhancing Thai preschoolers' receptive English vocabulary, particularly when implemented by Thai LEP parents. Additionally, the study explored these parents' opinions regarding using HELAs. The findings provide valuable insights into how HELAs can enhance the vocabulary knowledge of EFL preschoolers and shed light on the perspectives of LEP parents involved in this process.

### **Research Objectives**

This study's research objectives are as follows:

1. To investigate the effects of using a set of HELAs to enhance Thai preschoolers' English receptive vocabulary knowledge.
2. To explore the opinion of Thai LEP parents toward using a set of HELAs.

### **Literature Review**

#### **English Vocabulary Knowledge and EFL Preschoolers**

Given the diverse cognitive capacities, language proficiency, and developmental needs of learners across different age groups and learning contexts, it is crucial to identify the specific vocabulary knowledge that is most relevant and beneficial for each group (Webb & Nation, 2017). According to Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge can be classified into three categories: (a) knowledge of form, (b) knowledge of meaning, and (c) knowledge of use, covering both receptive and productive aspects. As the participants of this study were of preschool age, this study solely focused on receptive vocabulary knowledge, referring to the ability to recognize the spoken word when it is heard (Nation, 2001). This emphasis stems from its vital role in helping EFL preschoolers understand basic English communication, participate in classroom

activities, and build a foundation for future literacy skills (Butler, 2019). Generally, EFL preschoolers tend to develop receptive vocabulary knowledge more readily than productive vocabulary (Butler, 2019) since it may only require understanding the form-meaning link of a word to achieve receptive vocabulary mastery (González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2017; Webb & Nation, 2017).

Regarding vocabulary selection for EFL preschoolers, previous studies highlight the importance of basing choices on their cognitive development level (Albaladejo et al., 2018; Bulter, 2019; Hjetland et al., 2023) and the relative value of words (Hjetland et al., 2023; Webb & Nation, 2017). Typically, concrete nouns are often prioritized as preschoolers do not fully develop the cognitive ability to fully understand abstract ideas (Albaladejo et al., 2018; Chamsuparoke & Charubusp, 2021; Hjetland et al., 2023; Webb & Nation, 2017). Moreover, the target words should relate to their daily life and the immediate environment as these words constitute a significant portion of spoken and written communication (Hjetland et al., 2023; Webb & Nation, 2017). Therefore, prioritizing vocabulary relevant to EFL preschoolers' daily lives and aligned with their cognitive development could foster meaningful and effective English language learning for them.

### **HELAs in EFL Contexts and their Effects on Vocabulary Development among EFL Preschoolers**

Drawing from previous studies, HELAs could be tentatively categorized into (1) activities focusing on providing direct teaching of specific language elements, such as discussing the meaning of English words and teaching pronunciation (Forey et al., 2016; Lai, 2024), and (2) activities focusing on providing unintended exposure to English, for example, watching English cartoons, and storytelling (Choi et al., 2019; Lai et al., 2024; Lee, 2010; Sun et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021). The quantity and quality of HELAs are often influenced by various parent-related factors such as parents' English proficiency, family socioeconomic status, and parents' belief in their role (Forey et al., 2016; Lai et al., 2024; Lee, 2010). Notably, in the EFL contexts, studies have consistently identified parents' English proficiency as a significant factor influencing both the quantity and quality of HELAs (Forey et al., 2016; Lee, 2010; Tong et al., 2021). Limited English proficiency can restrict EFL parents' involvement in HELAs, particularly in activities that demand a certain level of English proficiency, such as storytelling and English conversation (Forey et al., 2016; Tong et al., 2021). Also, LEP parents may face various obstacles in using HELAs, such as a limited understanding of the English language, difficulties responding to their children's inquiries, incorrect pronunciation, and a lack of confidence (Forey et al., 2016; Tong et al., 2021). Conversely, higher English proficiency empowers parents to employ HELAs more easily and facilitate a broader range of activities, fostering a richer learning environment for their children (Lee, 2010). Therefore, effective use of HELA requires careful consideration of parents' English proficiency.

Concerning the impact of HELAs on vocabulary development among EFL preschoolers, previous studies have revealed positive contributions. Zhang et al. (2021), in their meta-analysis of the home environment and the development of English among ESL/EFL Asian children, found that informal literacy activities at home (e.g., parent-

child book reading) were positively correlated with Asian children's English development, including vocabulary. They further emphasized the benefits of home literacy activities for LEP parents, suggesting they utilize accessible resources (e.g., electronic books and television programs) to compensate for limited English use at home. Similarly, Sun et al. (2018) found that home English media exposure was the strongest predictor for receptive vocabulary skills in young English learners in China. Their study affirmed that the use of home English media has an important role in English development among young EFL learners as it compensates for the lack of English exposure both at home and at school. In line with these findings, Lai et al. (2024) found that Informal Language Exposure at home (e.g., reading with parents and watching English cartoons) was linked to English oral vocabulary in Chinese children. Their finding underscored the potential benefit of home literacy activities in providing rich language exposure. Furthermore, the intervention studies in Thailand align with the aforementioned findings. Petchpasert (2014) found that Thai preschoolers who participated in the dialogic reading program with their parents experienced significant vocabulary growth. This indicated that the interaction between parents and children during the reading session (e.g., discussing the stories and book-related vocabulary) had a positive effect on their vocabulary development. Consistent with Petchpasert (2014), Khamsuk and Whanchit (2021) observed vocabulary growth among Thai preschoolers participating in the in-house storytelling sessions led by the researchers. Their findings highlighted that both frequent exposure to English and deliberate learning of vocabulary occurring at home can positively impact Thai preschoolers' vocabulary development.

The parallel findings from existing literature underscore the significance of HELAs in fostering English vocabulary development among EFL preschoolers. Through participating in HELAs such as reading English books with parents or watching English cartoons, EFL preschoolers naturally encounter new vocabulary. This exposure can trigger the initial noticing and learning of new vocabulary (Nation, 2001). Additionally, certain HELAs, such as explicit vocabulary instruction and pronunciation practice, can facilitate deliberate vocabulary learning. By focusing on explanations, definitions, and correct pronunciation, these activities go beyond mere exposure and can enhance long-term memory (Webb & Nation, 2017). The frequent encounters with new words, as well as the quality of how learners engage with and learn these words through HELAs, could potentially contribute to their progress in language learning.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The following sections delve into key principles that informed the design of the HELAs used in this study. Drawing on research in vocabulary learning, parental involvement, and instructional design, these principles were adapted to create effective vocabulary learning experiences for EFL preschoolers with LEP parents.

### **1. *Promoting vocabulary learning conditions***

The design of the HELAs was based on several principles to promote vocabulary learning. One crucial principle is to incorporate various activities to promote optimal learning opportunities. This is because the acquisition of new vocabulary is a complicated process that calls for a variety of learning conditions (Nation, 2001).



Therefore, using various HELAs, each with its advantages, could assist and enrich learning in a balanced way (Bulter, 2019; Nation, 2001). Another key principle is providing opportunities for repeated exposure to the target vocabulary. By encountering words consistently, learners have more opportunities to notice new words, retrieve the meaning of previously encountered words, and use learned words in various situations (Butler, 2019; Nation, 2001; González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2017). Also, it is worthwhile to consider incorporating activities promoting deliberate learning of target vocabulary. Focusing on learning a smaller, carefully chosen set of words and their specific features (e.g., meaning and pronunciation) might enhance attention, engagement, and ultimately, long-term retention (Nation, 2001). Furthermore, utilizing learning materials that combine verbal (speech) and non-verbal (visual) codes could be useful. Dual Coding Theory suggests that young learners may acquire vocabulary and deepen their understanding more effectively when information is presented through both channels (Wong & Samudra, 2021). In addition, addressing learners' interests could maximize their engagement in learning. Previous studies have revealed that preschoolers are most likely to actively participate in activities that encourage creativity, provide enjoyment, and encourage active participation (Chamsuparoke & Charubusp, 2021; Nation, 2001; Panapob, & Abhakorn, 2022; Sun et al., 2018). Therefore, HELAs should be designed to meet these engaging elements. Finally, as this current study focused on receptive vocabulary knowledge of spoken words, the activities should prioritize listening tasks over those that require reading, writing, and speaking.

While combining a variety of HELAs, effective implementation requires a well-sequencing approach. Beck et al. (2013) proposed a three-step sequence for teaching new vocabulary to young learners: presenting target words in context, providing deliberate teaching, and offering follow-up activities for practice and interaction. Webb and Nation (2017) further suggested sequencing activities from easier to more challenging tasks to progressively develop learners' skills and knowledge. Strategically combining various HELAs and implementing them through a well-sequenced structure can ensure effective vocabulary learning experiences for young EFL learners.

## **2. *Facilitating parental involvement***

Parental involvement is crucial for the successful implementation of HELAs, as parents bear the responsibility for supervising, supporting, assisting, or monitoring their children's learning at home. Drawing from previous multidisciplinary studies, this study proposes key recommendations for designing HELAs to facilitate the involvement of LEP parents. First, it is essential to communicate to parents their role in children's learning achievement. Informing parents about how their involvement can benefit their children's English learning can help them recognize the importance of their role and encourage their participation (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Lai et al., 2024). Second, the selection of HELAs should consider parents' English proficiency. For LEP parents, utilizing readily available resources such as educational videos can compensate for their language limitations (Tong et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Activities with high English demands should be avoided or adapted appropriately. Third, parents should be provided with knowledge and resources that they can easily comprehend and integrate into their

daily lives. Offering parents learning resources with step-by-step instructions can help them work with their children at their own pace and within their capabilities. This can also boost their confidence and increase their involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Lastly, HELAs should be time-limited and interactive. Specific time-limited tasks can help parents understand their role clearly and manage their time effectively according to their life context, while interactive tasks enhance interaction between parents and their children (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Implementing these recommendations has the potential to facilitate LEP parents in using HELAs more effectively to support their children's learning.

### 3. *Employing a systematic developmental process*

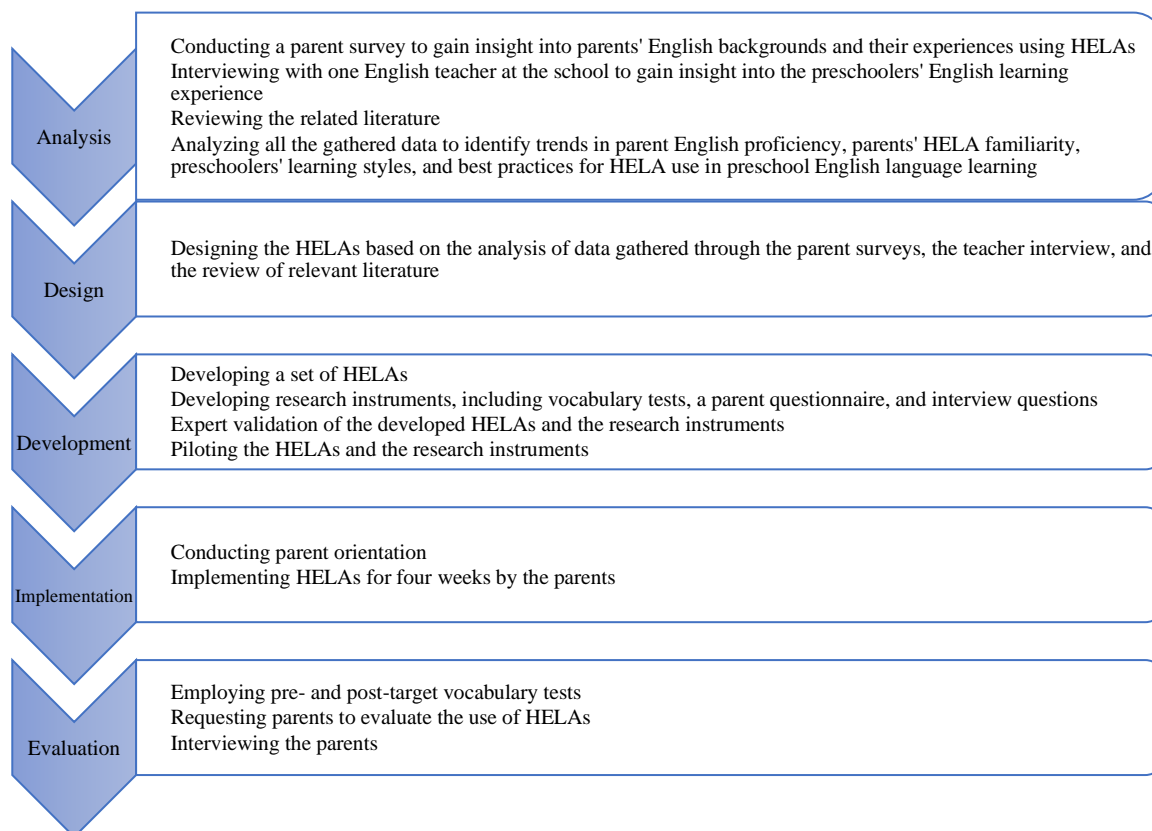
To ensure the set of HELAs in this study was designed to foster vocabulary development in EFL preschoolers and remained practical for their LEP parents, a systematic development process was adopted. This process utilized the ADDIE model (Branch, 2009), a well-established instructional design framework encompassing five key phases: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation (ADDIE). In this study, the initial phase, Analysis, involved an analysis of the preschoolers and their parents' English background and their parents' experience in using HELAs, along with a review of relevant literature. This information then laid the groundwork for the subsequent Design and Development phases. Following the development of the HELAs and their validation by experts, a pilot phase was conducted. Subsequently, the fully developed HELAs were implemented for four weeks. This Implementation phase put the developed HELAs into practice to investigate their impact on vocabulary development and their applicability in real-world settings. Finally, the Evaluation phase involved a comprehensive analysis of data gathered through various methods, including vocabulary tests, parent questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a mixed methods research design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The HELAs in this study were developed and implemented following the ADDIE instructional model (depicted in Figure 1). After a 4-week HELA intervention, pre- and post-vocabulary tests were administered to measure preschoolers' vocabulary development. Additionally, a parent questionnaire was used to gather perceptions toward using the HELA activities. Finally, semi-structured interviews with eight parents were conducted to explore their experiences using the HELA activities and their perspectives on how these activities impacted their children's vocabulary development.

**Figure 1**  
*HELAs Developing Processes*



## Participants

This study employed purposive sampling to recruit 26 Thai preschoolers aged 3-4 years from a preschool in northern Thailand, along with their parents. The preschoolers were purposively selected because their parents had limited English proficiency. The preschoolers were from two classes, each with 13 students. All parents were required to provide an informed consent form and an assent form on behalf of their children. To gain insights into the preschoolers' prior English learning experiences, an initial interview was conducted with one English teacher at the study's outset. Moreover, a parent survey was conducted at the beginning of the study to ensure the comparability of the parents' English language backgrounds and explore their prior experience using HELAs.

According to the survey and interview, all participating preschoolers had approximately one year of English learning experience, primarily within the school, where they learned English two hours per week. The teacher also reported that she focused on teaching basic vocabulary related to daily life, such as places, animals, and the environment. Despite the absence of formal English vocabulary assessments, the teacher observed positive signs of developing vocabulary knowledge in the preschoolers. This was evident in their increasing ability to accurately choose pictures that matched the vocabulary the teacher stated in English. Concerning the preschoolers'



activity preference, both the teacher and parents agreed that they enjoyed watching or listening to fables and playing games such as naming objects in English.

Concerning the parents' English background, they self-rated their skills in four areas on a 6-point scale (Clément & Baker, 2001), ranging from 1 (quite badly) to 6 (very well). Their self-evaluation indicated a level of "quite badly" across all four skills: speaking ( $M = 1.27$ ), reading ( $M = 1.42$ ), listening ( $M = 1.88$ ), and writing ( $M = 1.15$ ). This indicated limited English proficiency. Moreover, they reported that English was not used in their daily lives or their occupations, meaning they had very little contact with English. Regarding the HELAs currently carried out by the parents, the survey revealed three HELAs, including helping with English homework, using video media, and teaching vocabulary. However, 16 parents out of 26 (61.54%) reported not being involved in any HELAs, indicating that HELAs may not be common practices among the parents in this study.

### **Data collection Methods and Procedures**

To collect the data, four research instruments were employed including the set of HELAs, the pre- and post-vocabulary tests, the parent questionnaires, and the semi-structured interview. The following sections describe each research instrument.

#### ***1. A set of HELAs***

Enriching the vocabulary learning experience requires utilizing a variety of activities (Nation, 2001). Therefore, this study employed four HELAs, including watching fable videos, watching vocabulary videos, using picture cards, and reading with parents. Prior studies have shown that these activities can enhance vocabulary knowledge by providing opportunities for repetitive exposure to vocabulary, deliberate learning, and exposure to rich verbal and nonverbal representations of vocabulary (Choi et al., 2019; Lai et al., 2024; Lee, 2010; Sun et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021). When well-designed, these activities can be particularly engaging for young learners (Panapob, & Abhakorn, 2022; Prongkitsanuluck et al., 2022) and are practical for LEP parents (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Sun et al., 2018). Moreover, these activities were considered as interesting for the preschoolers in this study, as reported by their parents and the teacher.

Each week, one fable was used as the central theme for conducting the HELAs. Following the instructional sequence recommended in the literature (Beck et al., 2013; Webb & Nation, 2017), parents were instructed to implement these activities according to the sequence of "Watch - Learn - Practice - Read," as detailed in Table 1. This sequence facilitates efficient vocabulary learning for preschoolers. Watching fable videos first introduced new vocabulary within the context of the stories. Following this, watching vocabulary videos and using picture cards provided a more deliberate focus on learning the target vocabulary. Finally, encountering these target words again during reading sessions could further strengthen recall and promote long-term retention. Moreover, the sequence was also carefully structured for the preschoolers, beginning with simpler tasks (e.g., watching videos) and gradually progressing to more advanced activities such as practicing with picture cards and reading with parents. Also, parents'

roles evolved from providing support and encouragement during video watching to actively participating in using picture cards and engaging in shared reading.

The HELA program structured activities into four days, each lasting around 15-20 minutes, taking into account parents' preference for shorter sessions that fit their life contexts and acknowledging their reports of weekend activities planned for their children. However, parents were encouraged to repeat these HELAs on other days outside of the set schedule if their child showed interest in doing them.

**Table 1**

*A Schedule of HELAs for Each Week*

<b>Days</b>	<b>HELAs</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Parent roles</b>
Monday	Watching a fable video	Videos uploaded on YouTube	Scheduling video viewing, monitoring, and encouraging children to engage in follow-up activities provided in the video
Tuesday	Learning target vocabulary from a vocabulary video		
Wednesday	Practicing with a picture card	Picture cards sent home weekly	Using picture cards, and giving verbal praise
Thursday	Reading with parents	Picture books sent home weekly	Reading with a child in English or Thai, using a point-to-print technique

To ensure the effective implementation of HELAs, the intervention began with an orientation video sent to all parents via the online platform due to the spread of COVID-19 at the time of the study. The video, viewed and acknowledged by all parents, explained the intervention's procedures and parents' roles. Then, throughout the four-week intervention, parents received a weekly package of materials in both electronic and physical formats. Each material was sent or uploaded based on the designated day of use (Table 1). However, fable and vocabulary videos were only available online for one week before being archived. This limited accessibility encouraged participants to focus on each week's activities.

During the week, the parents were requested to complete each activity at least once according to the schedule (Table 1). This structured schedule helped parents focus on a single activity each day. Furthermore, the demonstration videos for each activity were uploaded every week via the online platform to help the parents implement the activities. The online platform also served as a communication channel, allowing parents to ask questions and seek clarification throughout the week.

To monitor progress and maintain engagement, parents were requested to record their activities in a log and submit it to the teacher every Monday. It was informed in

the orientation video that failing to submit the weekly log or participate in fewer than four activities per week could lead to discontinuation from this study. Encouragingly, all parents successfully fulfilled these requirements, ensuring their continued participation throughout the intervention. The next sections provide comprehensive details about the materials used in each activity. These learning materials were designed to promote the use of both visual and verbal information, all while incorporating entertaining elements to capture preschoolers' interest.

### **1.1 Fables videos**

In this study, four fable videos were composed in English by adapting familiar fables that the preschoolers had learned in Thai at school. Each video was approximately 7 minutes long. To create the video, the English script was first composed primarily using vocabulary from the school's English wordlist. This familiarity with both stories and vocabulary aimed to facilitate preschoolers' comprehension when watching the videos in English (Nation, 2001). Each script, comprising approximately 350 words, was proofread by a native English speaker and evaluated by using the Flesch reading-ease test to indicate how difficult a text in English is to comprehend (McClure, 1987). All scripts scored above 90, indicating their suitability for young learners.

The design of the videos featured age-appropriate illustrations that clearly depicted the story and target vocabulary. A Thai professional English teacher narrated the videos, primarily in English, using tone, mood, pace, and gestures that matched the story. However, the narrator occasionally shifted to Thai to maintain preschoolers' engagement. At the end of the videos, the narrator asked follow-up questions about the fable in Thai and encouraged parents to assist their children with answering.

### **1.2 Vocabulary videos**

Following the four fable videos, an additional set of four videos aimed at facilitating deliberate learning of target vocabulary was created. Each video presented 10-13 target vocabulary items including nouns and verbs from each fable. The videos were between 5 and 7 minutes long and primarily utilized Thai throughout. The teacher in the vocabulary video was the narrator in the fable videos.

The teaching process followed a three-step structure: Warm-up, Present, and Play. During the Warm-up, the teacher initiated the session with general questions about the fable to prepare the children for the vocabulary introduction. In the Present phase, vocabulary illustrations were shown, and the preschoolers were prompted to name them in English, with the teacher providing pronunciation guidance. Finally, in the Play phase, the preschoolers engaged in activities, such as identifying silhouettes by naming them in English. Parents played a crucial role in this phase by encouraging their children to share answers, providing support when needed, and offering verbal praise for correct answers.

### **1.3 Picture cards**

Picture cards featured illustrations of 10-15 key target vocabulary items from the fables. These cards prompted simple English dialogues: parents asked "What do you see?" and children responded with "I see..." followed by the vocabulary (e.g., "I see a

hedgehog.”). Words correctly answered over three times were considered mastered, allowing parents to focus on items requiring more practice. Furthermore, recognizing that some parents may be unfamiliar with the card practice, a demonstration video was provided weekly.

#### **1.4 Fable books**

Each week, the preschoolers received a fable book based on the fable for that week. The books had an illustration accompanied by a narration in English which was simplified into one short simple sentence to facilitate parents’ reading (e.g., The tiger was sleeping.). However, if reading in English posed challenges, parents were encouraged to read in Thai and use the point-to-print technique. This involved pointing to characters, objects, and actions, and prompting their children to name them in English. To help parents adopt the technique, a video demonstrating its use was provided every week.

#### **Validating and Piloting the Developed HELAs**

The developed HELAs underwent two evaluation processes. Initially, five experts evaluated the content, design, and usability of the activities using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (least appropriate) to 5 (most appropriate). The scores, all of which exceeded 4.00, indicated a strong consensus on the appropriateness of the HELAs. Subsequently, to gather insights into real-world applications, a two-week pilot study involving 22 Thai preschoolers and their LEP parents, who were not participants, was conducted. Following the pilot, 22 parents evaluated the HELAs using the same criteria as the experts. Consistent with the expert review, all aspects scored above 4.00, suggesting that the parents found HELAs practical, useful, and well-designed.

#### **2. Pre- and post-vocabulary tests**

The pre- and post-vocabulary tests were developed by drawing on the established format and protocol of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) (Dunn & Dunn, 1997), a widely used test for assessing receptive vocabulary in young ESL/EFL learners (Zhang et al., 2021). The pre- and post-tests were administered at the school by the English teacher, who underwent training and had a comprehensive understanding of the test’s nature. The researcher also served as an observer during the testing. Before the test, the preschoolers practiced on two sample items to ensure a clear understanding of the protocol. During the test, the teacher presented a page in the booklet with four pictures: one target word and three distractors. The pictures differed from those used in the HELA materials to minimize the chance of the preschoolers selecting based on familiarity. Upon the teacher stating the target words, the preschoolers were required to point to the corresponding pictures. Correct responses were scored as 1 point, while incorrect ones received 0 points. The pre- and post-tests were conducted in the same manner and used the same tests.

Concerning the selection of target vocabulary, three to four vocabulary items from each fable were chosen based on two criteria: (1) all target vocabulary were concrete nouns, and (2) they were likely unfamiliar to the preschoolers. To ensure the latter, the teacher confirmed that the chosen words were neither taught nor used in class.

These target words were also not on the school's wordlist which was used to create the English video script used in this study. Additionally, words that 70% of the preschoolers correctly identified in the pre-tests would be excluded. This process resulted in the selection of 15 target words, all of which were retained due to no pre-test item exceeding the 70% threshold. The list of target words is detailed in Table 2.

To validate the test, five experts used the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) form to judge each test item by rating a scale (1 = agree, 0 = not sure, -1 = disagree), depending on how well it directly assesses the target vocabulary. All items scored above 0.600, confirming their validity. The same experts then evaluated the appropriateness of the test administration procedures in two areas, including instructions (e.g., clarity and simplicity of the instruction) and test format (e.g., picture selection), using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = least appropriate, 5 = most appropriate). This evaluation ensured the administration procedure's suitability for use with the preschoolers, as evidenced by average scores exceeding 4.0 across all criteria. To determine the test's reliability, a pilot test with 15 items was conducted with 22 preschoolers who were not participants. This pilot employed a test-retest approach with a three-week interval. The resulting Pearson correlation of 0.872 demonstrated good reliability.

### **3. Parent questionnaire**

Following the intervention, the parent questionnaire, developed by the researcher, was used to gather parents' opinions toward using HELAs. The questionnaire contained eight items categorized into three main areas: content, design, and overall usability of the HELA activities. Each item used a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 5). To avoid overburdening parents, the questionnaire focused on their overall experience in using HELAs rather than individual activities. This approach was adapted based on the feedback from the pilot study where parents found evaluating each activity repetitive and time-consuming. However, open-ended questions were included, allowing parents to provide specific comments regarding a particular HELA.

### **4. Semi-structured interview**

Initially, 11 parents, representing children with gained scores in the post-test ranging from the lowest (2 scores) to the highest (12 scores), were purposively invited to participate in interviews. However, only eight agreed to participate, as a father and two grandparents, whose children exhibited a difference of two to four scores, were unavailable for the interview session. The participating parents, all mothers, self-reported their English proficiency as "quite poor." Their children demonstrated a difference of five to 12 scores.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation during the study, interviews were conducted online through channels parents were comfortable with, based on their availability. Each interview, conducted in Thai, lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. The interview questions aimed to elicit insight into parents' opinions regarding the effect of HELAs on their children's vocabulary learning and their experiences in using HELAs. These questions were validated by five experts for their validity using IOC,



and all achieved a score of 1.00. Following a trial in the pilot study with six parents, redundant questions were eliminated, and some questions were revised based on the feedback.

## Data Analysis

### Table 2

#### *Data Collection Plan*

Weeks	Data collection plan
<b>Week 1 -2</b>	<p><b>Pre-test 1</b></p> <p>Target vocabulary: hedgehog, hunter, net, flute, mole, eagle, pumpkin, whistle</p> <p><b>Implementation of HELAs (Stories 1-2)</b></p> <p><b>Post-test 1</b></p>
<b>Week 3-4</b>	<p><b>Pre-test 2</b></p> <p>Target vocabulary: squirrel, grain, jar, scarf, paintbrush, shovel, apron</p> <p><b>Implementation of HELAs (Stories 3-4)</b></p> <p><b>Post-test 2</b></p>
<b>Week 5 -6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Parents' evaluation of HELAs</b></li> <li>● <b>Parent interviews</b></li> </ul>

The pre-tests and post-tests were divided into two sessions to minimize the preschoolers' fatigue and classroom disruption as shown in Table 2. The first session assessed vocabulary from stories 1 and 2, while the second focused on stories 3 and 4. Following the intervention, the parents completed the questionnaires, and eight parents participated in the interviews.

Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. The pre- and post-test results were analyzed using a pair sample t-test to determine if using a set of HELAs improved vocabulary knowledge. Data from the parent questionnaire was presented as mean scores and standard deviations, while qualitative data from the interviews was analyzed using content analysis, which involved identifying, coding, and categorizing key themes from the participants' responses.

## Findings

This section presents the study's findings in two parts: the effects of using a set of HELAs to enhance Thai preschoolers' English receptive vocabulary knowledge, and the opinions of Thai LEP parents regarding the utilization of the HELAs.

## The Effects of Using a Set of HELAs to Enhance Thai Preschoolers' English Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge

### Quantitative Results

**Table 3**

*Comparison of the Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of the Preschoolers*

	N	Total score	Mean	SD	Paired t-test (p)	Shapiro-Wilk (p)
Pre-test	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4.34</b>	<b>1.765</b>	<b>9.591(0.000)</b>	<b>0.924(0.055)</b>
Post-test	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>2.952</b>		

Table 3 presents key statistics from pre- and post-vocabulary tests conducted with a sample size (N) of 26 participants. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the difference between the post-test and the pre-test of preschoolers' vocabulary growth had a normal distribution ( $W = 0.924$ ,  $p = 0.055$ ); thus, the paired t-test statistic could be used to test the mean difference between both tests. The result showed that the post-test score ( $M = 10.00$ ,  $SD = 1.765$ ) was higher than the pre-test ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 2.952$ ) with a statistical significance ( $p = .000$ ). The statistically significant improvement in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores suggests that the use of HELAs, which were specifically designed to promote vocabulary development, could enhance preschoolers' English receptive vocabulary knowledge.

### Qualitative Findings

Additionally, qualitative findings from the interviews highlighted three key benefits of the HELAs that likely contributed to the vocabulary gains including providing frequent exposure to vocabulary, creating opportunities for deliberate learning of vocabulary, and promoting exposure to verbal and nonverbal representations of vocabulary.

First of all, six of the parents mentioned similarly that the HELAs provided their children with rich vocabulary encounters throughout the week which could enrich their children's learning of new vocabulary. One of the parents provided the following insights:

*I think my child learned a lot of new vocabulary because he met these words many times when he did these activities during the week. I think it makes sense that the more my child meets these words, the more he could remember them. (Parent 1)*

Second, the vocabulary knowledge could be potentially enhanced by deliberate learning activities as all parents mentioned that using the picture card was the most useful and the most frequently used activity, followed by watching a vocabulary learning video. Some parents mentioned that while doing these two activities, the

children's attention was on linking words and their meanings, not other elements. This led to better and faster memorization of new words. As one parent expressed:

*Personally, I think the picture card and vocabulary learning video were the most effective activities that helped my child learn new vocabulary. This is because it is easier when my child focuses only on learning the meaning of a single word. Learning word by word helped him remember new words more easily. (Parent 3)*

Third, a majority of parents also mentioned the benefit of the learning materials that presented or could be used to represent both illustrations and spoken words at the same time. In addition, four parents specifically mentioned that their children were likely to memorize the word more easily by connecting the illustration they saw and the word they heard. Provided below is an example of statements made by a parent:

*I think the illustration was a very important element that helped my son remember new words faster and longer. My son could remember vocabulary easily because he connected what he saw and what he heard when watching the videos. (Parent 7)*

By integrating quantitative evidence demonstrating improved vocabulary scores with qualitative insights, the study supports the conclusion that HELAs serve as an effective strategy for enhancing English vocabulary development among EFL preschoolers.

### **The Opinion of Thai LEP Parents toward the Use of HELAs to Support Their Children's English Vocabulary Learning**

#### **Quantitative Results**

**Table 4**

*The Result of Parent's Opinions toward the Use of a Set of HELAs*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>Content</b>			
1. The content is interesting.	4.04	0.774	<b>Agree</b>
2. The content is age-appropriate.	4.04	0.824	<b>Agree</b>
3. The vocabulary is useful.	4.23	0.764	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Design</b>			
4. The design is interesting.	4.12	0.816	<b>Agree</b>
5. The design is age-appropriate.	4.23	0.765	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Usability</b>			
6. It is easy to use.	4.12	0.588	<b>Agree</b>
7. It is practical to use at home.	3.96	0.720	<b>Agree</b>
8. The guideline is clear.	4.31	0.549	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Total</b>	4.12	0.523	<b>Agree</b>

The result, as depicted in Table 4, suggests that LEP parents generally have positive opinions regarding the use of a set of HELAs in supporting their children's English vocabulary development. Specifically, regarding content, the parents agreed that the content was interesting ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 0.774$ ) and age-appropriate ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 0.824$ ), with useful vocabulary ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.764$ ). In terms of the design of HELAs, they also found it interesting ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.816$ ) and age-appropriate ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.765$ ). In addition, they perceived the usability positively, finding the provided HELAs easy to use ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.588$ ), practical for home use ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 0.720$ ), and with clear guidelines ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 0.549$ ). The total mean score across all aspects evaluated is 4.12 ( $SD = 0.523$ ), indicating a consistent agreement among the parents regarding the use of the HELAs in supporting their children's English vocabulary development.

### Qualitative Findings

Throughout the interviews, parents conveyed a sense of enthusiasm and positivity regarding using a set of HELAs. Their sentiments reflected their satisfaction with the use of HELAs, which they found to be practical and adaptable to their capabilities. The positive view on HELAs is evident in the following statement:

*I think these activities were practical. They were very useful. It was a great experience. (Parent 2)*

*I used the picture card several times a week until my child got all the words. It was very easy to use. I just showed the picture. My son had already learned these words from the videos he watched previously. I didn't have to teach him myself. I just played with him using the picture cards. (Parent 7)*

However, the findings from the interviews somewhat contrast with the results from the parent questionnaire when delving into specific activities. In the interviews, most parents expressed a positive opinion toward the use of fable videos, vocabulary videos, and picture cards. On the other hand, six out of eight parents found reading in English to be a challenging task even when the narration was simplified. The following statement reflects parents' opinions regarding the reading activity:

*Most of the activities are practical and easy to use, except the reading activity because I am not good at reading or telling a story. So, I did this activity only once a week honestly. (Parent 1)*

This challenge persisted even when they were encouraged to read in Thai. This may be related to some parents' unfamiliarity with reading practices, as evidenced by one parent's comment:

*We didn't do much reading at home back then. Actually, I rarely read with my children even in Thai. Reading is quite a new practice to me. So, reading in English is very challenging. (Parent 4)*

The qualitative finding suggests that LEP parents tended to rely on educational media and a task requiring simpler English practice, such as using picture cards. However, reading in English was perceived as demanding both greater effort and a higher demand for English proficiency. Even reading in Thai was perceived as challenging, as reading can be an uncommon practice in the participants' households. This unfamiliarity with reading likely contributed to the lower preference for reading activities.

## Discussion

### **The Effect of Using a Set of HELAs to Enhance English Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge among Thai Preschoolers**

This study revealed that using a set of HELAs by LEP parents significantly enhanced Thai preschoolers' receptive vocabulary development. This finding aligns with previous studies that indicated the positive effects of HELAs on vocabulary learning among EFL preschoolers (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Lai et al., 2024; Petchpasert, 2014; Sun et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021). The insight from the interview suggests that the positive outcomes likely come from the variety of HELAs that create a rich learning environment.

Exploring the elements that led to vocabulary development, frequent exposure to target vocabulary emerged as a key element. To illustrate this point, consider the target vocabulary "hedgehog" presented in the first week's story, "Hedgehog, Mouse, and Tiger." The pre-test conducted at the beginning of week one revealed that most preschoolers failed to identify the picture corresponding to "hedgehog," indicating a lack of prior knowledge of the word. However, the post-test administered at the end of week two demonstrated a significant improvement, with a majority of them successfully identifying the correct answer. This improvement could be attributed to the preschoolers encountering the word "hedgehog" numerous times during the four HELAs conducted in the first week. Supporting this claim, findings from parent interviews revealed that most parents noticed their children acquiring vocabulary due to repeated encounters with target words through the four weekly HELAs. As all parents confirmed conducting all activities at least once a week, this suggests a high probability that consistent and varied encounters with target vocabulary played a crucial role in enhancing vocabulary development. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing the importance of frequent exposure to target vocabulary for L2/FL vocabulary development (Butler, 2019; González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2017; Nation, 2001). Although the exact number of encounters needed for complete L2/FL vocabulary acquisition remains under debate, more encounters likely lead to better outcomes (Butler, 2019; González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2017; Webb & Nation, 2017). This finding also backs up the results of previous studies that have emphasized the role of HELAs in providing rich language exposure, leading to EFL preschoolers' vocabulary development (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Lai et al., 2024; Petchpasert, 2014; Sun et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021).

However, frequent encounters alone do not guarantee robust vocabulary development (Webb & Nation, 2017). To illustrate, the first exposure to the word "hedgehog" likely occurred when the preschoolers watched the fable video "Hedgehog,



Mouse, and Tiger,” the first activity of the first week. While watching, the preschoolers may initially notice the word “hedgehog” after hearing it a few times, and connect it to the accompanying illustration. However, their primary focus might be on the overall story, leading to a superficial retention of the word “hedgehog.” This notion was supported by existing literature that highlights the limitations of unintentional exposure. It assumes that while such exposure may promote noticing new words, this noticing is often superficial and may not be sufficient for long-term memory (González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2017; Nation, 2001; Webb & Nation, 2017). Thus, the significant improvement observed in preschoolers’ scores on the post-test likely suggests that the effectiveness of HELA programs in promoting vocabulary development could be attributed to additional factors beyond mere exposure to new words.

Concerning other possible factors, this study suggests that HELAs promoting deliberate learning of target words, including watching vocabulary videos, practicing with picture cards, and reading with parents, play a crucial role in enriching the quality of encounters with new vocabulary. Parent interviews support this notion, with all parents identifying picture cards and vocabulary videos as the most helpful for helping their children learn new vocabulary. The deliberate learning opportunities to learn target words offered by these activities likely explain their high regard. For instance, watching vocabulary videos provides focused instruction, unlike the initial, unintentional exposure through the fable video. Vocabulary videos feature teachers explicitly explaining the meaning and pronunciation of words, for example, “hedgehog,” alongside visual illustrations. This focused instruction can deepen the preschoolers’ retention of the previously encountered word “hedgehog” (Webb & Nation, 2017). Moreover, after encountering new words in the vocabulary videos, practicing with picture cards was crucial in promoting retrieval. When asked to name the picture of a spiky animal on the card, the preschoolers would likely try to recall and articulate the word “hedgehog.” This active process of recalling and producing the word strengthens the connection between the visual representation and the spoken word (Nation, 2001). Moreover, as practicing with cards focused on small sets of vocabulary at a time, this allowed the preschoolers to focus on vocabulary they had not yet mastered and work on it with their parents, as reported by one of the parents.

Apart from watching the vocabulary videos and using the picture cards, reading in this study also incorporated deliberate learning. While traditional HELA often emphasizes parents reading aloud to their children in English (Zhang et al., 2021), considering the preschoolers’ undeveloped reading skills and LEP parents’ potential limitations in reading English, this study utilized a more targeted approach using the point-to-print technique. The LEP parents were instructed to read with their children in Thai, and they pointed at illustrations of characters, things, or actions in the book, prompting their children to name them in English. This technique could help the preschoolers connect the words to the broader scene and actions, potentially leading to improved vocabulary retention (Nation, 2001).

The three aforementioned HELAs facilitated a deliberate learning process that is considered an effective method for acquiring significant vocabulary within a short period with long-term retention (González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2017; Nation, 2001). Khamsuk and Whanchit’s (2021) study further supports this notion by demonstrating

that explicitly teaching a small amount of English vocabulary during Thai storytelling at home significantly improved Thai preschoolers' English vocabulary knowledge. Building on this finding, this study contributes to the field by suggesting that HELAs do not only provide rich exposure to language, but when well-designed, they can also promote deliberate learning, which can enrich encounters with new words and contribute to vocabulary development.

In addition to the benefits that emerged from the use of HELAs, this study adds to the existing literature by highlighting the benefits of utilizing learning materials that combine verbal and non-verbal codes (Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Wong & Samudra, 2021). This finding is particularly relevant in the home environment, where preschoolers may benefit from available learning materials that present visual and verbal information together, such as electronic books, digital pens, and TV programs (Choi et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). As mentioned by the parents in this study, seeing the illustrations and hearing words at the same time while watching the videos helped the preschoolers effectively associate the spoken word with its visual representation. Many educators support the idea that this association could aid in better understanding and retention of the learned vocabulary (Nation, 2001; Wong & Samudra, 2021).

As discussed previously, the findings of this study highlight the potential of using various HELAs to empower LEP parents to create rich learning environments that can foster their children's English vocabulary development. These activities provide repeated encounters with target vocabulary, but with varying levels of deliberate learning. Also, learning materials that utilize both visuals and sounds further promote vocabulary learning. While the lack of a comparison group, such as those using only a single HELA, prevents drawing a firm conclusion on whether using multiple HELAs is definitively more effective than using a single one, incorporating diverse activities remains valuable in promoting vocabulary learning, as demonstrated in this study.

### **Opinions of Thai LEP Parents regarding the Use of a Set of HELAs**

Overall, the findings revealed Thai LEP parents' positive opinions toward the use of HELAs. However, the insights from the interviews also showed varying opinions on particular HELA. Notably, media-based activities (videos) received strong support, likely because they effectively compensate for LEP parents' language barriers. This finding supports existing research demonstrating that media-based activities serve as useful tools for LEP parents (Forey et al., 2016; Lee, 2010; Sun et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021). Moreover, picture cards garnered positive responses as they were considered less instruction-heavy. Interestingly, the findings suggested that picture cards might not require direct vocabulary teaching from parents, as children may already have acquired some vocabulary knowledge through prior media exposure activities (watching fables and vocabulary videos). This finding points toward the potential of combining media-based activities with simple follow-up practices such as picture cards as a practical approach for LEP parents.

However, the study revealed the challenges faced by the parents in reading activities. Despite efforts such as simplifying reading texts, encouraging them to read in Thai using the point-to-print technique, and providing them guidance for reading, persistent challenges were evident. This contrasts with a dialog reading study where

Thai parents found reading to be practical (Petchpasert, 2014). A potential contributing factor to this difference could be the higher English proficiency of parents in the previous study as they perceived their English proficiency to be moderate in all skills. This underscores the significant role of English proficiency in shaping parents' preferences for and effective use of HELAs (Forey et al., 2016; Lee, 2010). Furthermore, this finding supports the previous study (Lai et al., 2024) which emphasized the need to train parents in facilitating HELAs. While weekly guideline videos were provided for reading activities, the lack of in-person training due to the COVID-19 pandemic might have limited parents in acquiring essential reading skills. This could also be a plausible explanation for why reading was perceived as more challenging to adopt compared to others.

### **Implications**

The finding of this study supports the use of various HELAs that do not require a high level of English proficiency and can be effectively utilized by LEP parents. These HELAs may include media-based activities, picture cards, and potentially simpler reading materials, all of which can offer a wide range of learning conditions for vocabulary learning. Understanding the benefits and learning how to use these activities can empower parents to create a learning environment for their children at home. However, the finding also shows that reading activities, even when encouraged to do in Thai, seem impractical for the parents in this study. Therefore, if reading is included, it should be well-designed and consider parents' English proficiency. This study further underscores the need for policies and support from educators and other stakeholders in the field of early English language education to actively engage LEP parents. Schools and teachers can collaborate with LEP parents by offering resources, workshops, and guidance on how to implement HELAs at home. Supporting their involvement can lead to more holistic and successful language learning among young EFL learners.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies**

The outcomes of the present study were influenced by several limitations. Concerning the research design, this study included a small number of participants, and there was a lack of a comparison group, which weakened the argument for the effectiveness of the HELAs. The inclusion of more participants and the presence of a comparison group could improve the validity and the generalization of the findings. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented conducting home observations, which could have provided valuable insights into how parents utilize HELAs in their home environment. Future research, if feasible, could incorporate home visits or observations to gain a more comprehensive understanding of such practices. Moreover, the finding of this study is limited by not including the perspectives of the preschoolers themselves and a parent whose child showed the least improvement on the post-test. Including their experiences will further the understanding of HELAs and young learners' English language development.

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## Acknowledgement

This study was funded by Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand.

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