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Performed Online, Lived at Home: A Narrative Inquiry Into Family Language Policy and Scaffolded English Exposure on Tiktok @inisekolahibu

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian naratif ini mengkaji penerapan Kebijakan Bahasa Keluarga (*Family Language Policy*/FLP) dan *scaffolded English exposure* di rumah serta representasinya di ruang digital. Penelitian berfokus pada seorang ibu di Indonesia yang mendokumentasikan praktik literasi bahasa Inggris bersama putrinya yang masih balita melalui akun TikTok (@inisekolahibu). Dengan menggabungkan kerangka FLP dari Spolsky dan pembedaan *designed-in scaffolding* dan *interactional scaffolding* dari Hammond dan Gibbons, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana FLP dan *scaffolded English exposure* diterapkan dalam interaksi sehari-hari di rumah serta direpresentasikan melalui konten TikTok, termasuk perbedaan antara praktik di rumah dan tampilannya di ruang digital. Data dikumpulkan melalui tiga sesi wawancara naratif pada Oktober 2026, catatan lapangan dari lima episode alami, lembar koding tiga video TikTok, dan jurnal reflektif peneliti. Data dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan First-Cycle *In Vivo* coding dan Second-Cycle *Pattern* coding kemudian dikonfirmasi melalui *member checking*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa paparan bahasa Inggris di rumah berlangsung dalam rutinitas yang tidak sepenuhnya terjadwal dan terutama dipicu oleh rasa ingin tahu serta agensi linguistik anak. Sementara itu, representasi praktik tersebut di TikTok dikurasi melalui pilihan editorial dan dipengaruhi oleh kendala produksi. Partisipan menyadari dan merefleksikan perbedaan antara kedua konteks tersebut. Penuturannya juga mengindikasikan bahwa ikatan emosional orang tua dan anak turut menjadi motivasi penggunaan bahasa Inggris di rumah, bukan hanya modal sosial. Sebagai penelitian *insider* yang dilakukan oleh suami partisipan, penelitian ini menerapkan refleksivitas melalui jurnal, pemisahan catatan lapangan, dan *member checking*. Penelitian ini juga mengakui keterbatasan anonimitas anak akibat keterbukaan akun TikTok.

Key Word
Kebijakan Bahasa Keluarga, Scaffolding, Penelitian Naratif, Parent-Influencer, Tiktok, Home Literacy Environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Platforms like TikTok have turned private family routines into public educational content. In Indonesia, mothers increasingly treat TikTok as an informal space for learning about parenting (Widyastuti & Formen, 2026), and parent-influencers regularly share curated glimpses of early English exposure, presenting followers with polished demonstrations of home learning. Research on parent-influencers has often looked at how audiences are affected, for example how exposure to mommy influencers relates to mothers' perceived parental self-efficacy (Ouvrein, 2024), and at the ethics of sharing children's lives online (Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2023). A smaller body of work analyses what posted content shows about language: parents' videos and posts on TikTok and Instagram have been read as sites of translanguaging and of curated bilingual parenting (Sindoni et al., 2025), and the TikTok content of an Indonesian–Spanish family has been analysed for its translingual practices (Rachmi et al., 2025). Yet beneath these videos lies a question rarely addressed directly: how closely does the performance on screen track what is actually lived at home?

This study approaches that question by bringing together two theoretical lenses: Family Language Policy (FLP) (Spolsky, 2012) and educational scaffolding FLP treats the home as a sociolinguistic domain where parental beliefs, practices, and management decisions shape children's language choices (Spolsky, 2012). A decade after the first thematic issue on the topic in Language Policy, FLP research has widened to include digital communication (Curdt-Christiansen & Palviainen, 2023), although a systematic review of 163 studies of migrant families found that digital communication made up only about 11% of the language practices examined (Bose et al., 2023). Conceptual work has begun to describe how sharing a child's language use on social media forms part of a family's language practice (Chen & Liu, 2025), and empirical studies show children helping to shape family language policy themselves (Nenonen, 2024) ; (Sari, 2022). Within the home, early English exposure is often mediated through a parent's role as a Language Acquisition Support System (LASS), scaffolding interaction through routines and shared activity rather than formal instruction. This support operates at two levels: designed-in scaffolding, which is planned and pre-structured, and interactional scaffolding, which emerges spontaneously in the moment-to-moment flow of parent-child dialogue (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005).

Evidence on English at home points in a similar direction. A meta-analysis of 18 studies found that parents' literacy-teaching behaviours were more strongly associated with children's English as a second language outcomes than parents' beliefs about English learning or the resources available at home (Dong & Chow, 2022). Studies of Indonesian families describe how parents support literacy at home (Nurafifah, 2022) and how they perceive early English literacy (Wanodya et al., 2021). Research on English-language digital media points to the role of mediation: Bungsudi et al. (2026)

report that the quality of parental involvement, rather than exposure alone, shaped toddlers' English output, while Iskandar et al. (2025) describe difficulties in Indonesian among urban five-year-olds heavily exposed to English-language digital media. Work on maternal scaffolding of children's informal digital learning of English suggests that mothers support learning mainly by asking questions and helping children talk about their favourite popular culture (Soyoof et al., 2025) and a study of scaffolding during computer games found that it became possible mainly when children invited their mothers into the activity (Alon Tirosh & Ben Chitrit, 2025).

Against this background, three gaps remain at the intersection of these literatures:

1. Much of the FLP research conducted in Indonesia examines heritage-language maintenance and bilingual, transnational, or returnee households (Indriani et al., 2021); (Mauziyyah et al., 2024); (Nurjaleka et al., 2025); (Sari, 2022), whereas the everyday cultivation of English in a family that lives in Indonesia and shares Indonesian as its main language has received less attention.
2. Indonesian studies of home English tend to rely on parents' reports of their perceptions or practices (Nurafifah, 2022); (Wanodya et al., 2021) and less often follow how English exposure unfolds in a family's daily routine as narrated from within the household.
3. Research on parent-influencers has examined audience effects, ethics, and the language of posted content (Ouvrein, 2024); (Rachmi et al., 2025); (Sindoni et al., 2025); (Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2023), but, to our knowledge, has not set the pedagogy shown in the videos against the practice the parent describes at home.

To address these gaps, this narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen et al., 2024); (Clandinin, 2022) examines the lived and performed language practices of a mother who runs the TikTok account @inisekolahibu. As an insider study the researcher is the participant's husband this article also treats the distance between performed and lived practice as something the participant herself is positioned to narrate and interpret, rather than something inferred about her from the outside alone. The contribution is therefore not a further analysis of posted content, but a comparison between the practice the participant narrates and the version she designs for TikTok.

Two research questions guide the study:

RQ1: How does the participant construct and live out Family Language Policy and scaffolded English exposure as interactional practice in everyday life at home?

RQ2: How is this same practice represented as designed-in scaffolding in TikTok content on @inisekolahibu, and how does the participant's narrative reveal the distance or negotiation between this digital representation and the lived reality at home?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using narrative inquiry to explore how an Indonesian mother implements Family Language Policy (FLP) and scaffolded English exposure at home and represents these practices on TikTok. This design was selected because the study focuses on the participant's experiences and narratives to understand how home-based English literacy practices develop in everyday life and how they differ from their digital representations (Barkhuizen et al., 2024); (Creswell, 2018). The research was conducted within a single Indonesian family that runs the TikTok account @inisekolahibu. The participant was purposively selected because she practises "Sekolah Ibu" with her daughter, who was 2 years and 7 months old during the data collection period. The researcher is the participant's husband and the child's father; therefore, his position as an insider researcher was explicitly considered throughout data collection and interpretation.

Data were collected from four sources: three narrative interview sessions, observational field notes, documentation of three TikTok videos, and a researcher reflective journal. The interviews were conducted in October 2026. The first session explored the participant's background, beliefs about language learning, and the origins of "Sekolah Ibu." The second focused on specific interactional episodes observed between 4 September and 10 October 2026 and the selected TikTok videos. The third session, held on 14 October 2026, was used to review the preliminary interpretations through member checking. The researcher documented five naturally occurring learning episodes at home: cebok/clean up, ate/eat, pink, clay, and slip/sleep. The field notes were written retrospectively, with observed actions and dialogue separated from the researcher's reflections. The documentary data comprised three TikTok videos posted on 27 July, 28 September, and 12 October 2026. These videos were purposively selected for their relevance to the research questions and their potential to illustrate how home-based English literacy practices were represented online. A coding sheet was used to record each video's caption, duration, thematic content, designed-in scaffolding elements, and production process, the latter of which was subsequently clarified through interviews. The reflective journal documented the researcher's involvement in family language- and education-related practices during the research period.

Data were analysed thematically using the interactive model of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles et al. (2014). Initial data condensation involved First-Cycle In Vivo coding to preserve the participant's original expressions (Saldaña, 2021). These initial codes were subsequently grouped through Second-Cycle Pattern coding to develop broader categories and themes relevant to the two research questions. The data were displayed according to themes, episodes, and sources. Preliminary themes were repeatedly checked against the original interview excerpts, field notes, and video data. Trustworthiness was supported through triangulation across data sources, iterative

questioning to examine consistency in the participant's accounts, member checking, and the separation of descriptive field notes from reflective commentary. All Indonesian-language excerpts included in the English-language report were translated by the researcher. Regarding research ethics, the participant provided consent to participate and chose to use her publicly recognised identity, while Rhyme was used as a pseudonym for the child. The study acknowledges that the researcher's family relationship with the participant may have influenced observation and interpretation. Furthermore, the three purposively selected videos were not intended to represent the entire TikTok account. The public visibility of the account also limits the child's anonymity, and this limitation was taken into consideration when reporting the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that Family Language Policy (FLP) and scaffolded English exposure in the participating household operate as a single practice viewed through two interconnected lenses: lived interactional practice at home and designed-in performance on TikTok. English exposure is largely triggered by the child's curiosity and shaped by everyday linguistic habits and parental mediation (addressing RQ1), while its representation on TikTok is a structured, partly edited, and partly technically constrained artefact that the participant herself recognises as a curated version of that lived practice (addressing RQ2). Two cross-cutting nuances qualify any simple opposition between "performed" and "lived": at least one designed-in device ("Tell your friends…") originates in pre-existing household role-play rather than being invented for the camera, and the participant's account of educational philosophy frames investment in English primarily as a vehicle for parent–child bonding and cultivating curiosity rather than as social or linguistic capital.

At home, five interrelated patterns emerged. The routine labelled "Sekolah Ibu" did not begin as a pre-planned pedagogical curriculum but as a spontaneous response to the child's domestic boredom and interest in storybooks depicting school scenes; over time it crystallised into a flexible weekday structure around 9 a.m. This illustrates the management dimension of FLP (Spolsky, 2012) operating from the bottom up: an improvised response to an immediate need gradually became a recurring, loosely timed practice through the participant's own decisions rather than through top-down planning. Scaffolded English exposure occurred naturally across daily routines (bath time, meals, play, drawing, clay modelling). A consistent three-step interactional sequence was observed—initial explanation, shared practice, and encouragement of independent performance with gradual fading of support—consistent with classic accounts of scaffolding and fading. Concrete episodes included the introduction of "clean up"/"wash" for the culturally specific term *cebok* after AI consultation (4

September), past-tense modelling during mealtime (8 September), colour vocabulary during drawing (18 September), target-phrase provision during clay play (25 September), and pronunciation negotiation around "sleep" versus "slip" (10 October).

Language learning was not unidirectional. The child actively negotiated, questioned, and sometimes resisted parental input. In the slip/sleep exchange the child rejected the correction ("Bukan, Rhyme maunya slip!") and immediately asked for the English equivalent of another related term (*kepleset*). Uptake was therefore variable and bidirectional, aligning with research that treats children as agents within FLP (Nenonen, 2024). The participant explicitly framed her investment in early English as a means of parent–child bonding and of sharing parental knowledge as a form of privilege, rather than as accumulation of social or linguistic capital. Because this framing rests primarily on a key interview statement, it is treated as an indicative nuance rather than a generalisable claim; it is consistent with accounts of affective dimensions of bilingualism and harmonious bilingual development without rejecting capital-based interpretations. Explicit language management was also visible: when a lexical gap arose for *cebok*, the participant acknowledged the gap, consulted an AI tool, evaluated options, and selected target forms, providing concrete evidence of digital tools entering FLP decision-making (Chen & Liu, 2025).

These home patterns are summarised in Table 1, which traces the chain of evidence from empirical episodes to theoretical interpretation.

Table 1.
Chain of Evidence: From Empirical Data to Theoretical Interpretations (RQ1 – Lived at Home)

Main Theme	Empirical Evidence & Sources (Episodes & Dates)	Observed Interactional Pattern	Qualitative Interpretation	Theoretical Link
1. Origin & Ideology of 'Sekolah Ibu'	Interview Session 1 (Oct 2026); Researcher Reflective Journal	Shift from spontaneous play to a loosely scheduled 9 a.m. weekday routine	Mother responds to domestic boredom by creating a structured pedagogical space at home	Family Language Policy (FLP) Ideology & Management ((Spolsky, 2009); (Spolsky, 2012).
2. Scaffolding in Domestic Routines	Field Notes (4 Sep: cebok/clean up; 8 Sep:	Consistent sequence: explanation → joint practice →	Mother gradually reduces verbal support (fading) as child masters	Scaffolding & Fading (Wood et al., 1976); (Hammond &

	ate/eat; 18 Sep: pink; 25 Sep: clay; 10 Oct: slip/sleep)	encouragement of independent performance (fading)	vocabulary	Gibbons, 2005) (Vygotsky, 1978)
3. Child Agency & Resistance	Field Notes (10 Oct: slip/sleep correction incident; 10 Sep: leftover cake)	Child rejects parent's linguistic correction and defends her own utterance	Language learning is bi-directional; child possesses agency to accept, negotiate, or reject input	Child Agency in FLP (Curdt-Christiansen & Palviainen, 2023)
4. Emotional Bonding vs. Capital Nuance	Interview Sessions 1 & 2 (key statement on privilege & bonding)	Language exposure occurs in a relaxed setting without formal academic pressure	Investment in English is driven primarily by mother–child affective bonding rather than social-mobility pressure (indicative nuance from one interview)	Affective FLP & Harmonious Bilingualism (Noor & Nasmiati, 2022)
5. Language Management & AI Use	Interview Session 2; Field Note (4 Sep: cebok incident)	Parent acknowledges lexical gap, uses AI tool to research options, and selects target vocabulary	Explicit language management using digital technology to resolve cross-cultural lexical gaps	FLP Language Management (Chen & Liu, 2025)

On TikTok the same underlying activity is reshaped. Six patterns characterise the transformation. Sampled videos display a recurrent architectural frame—an opener such as "Good Morning!" and a closing toss with the child—functioning as a designed-in pedagogical script (Bruner, 1983) for public consumption. The device "Tell your friends about your [X]!" appears in presentation-style videos (including Thiwul/Kolak, 12 October); the participant's narrative indicates that this phrasing was carried over from pre-existing household storytelling and role-play rather than invented solely for the camera, rendering the designed-in/interactional boundary porous in at least one direction. A gap between process and product arises through two mechanisms: technical constraint (device overheating truncated the Duck video of 28 September) and deliberate editorial curation (removal of the child's off-topic spontaneous talk, or *keasbunan*, to avoid viewer confusion). TikTok functions dually as public content and as

a private evaluative record that the participant and her husband review to monitor developmental and linguistic progress. A fading pattern is also visible across videos: the Sunscreen video (27 July) shows the child performing an independently practised routine with spontaneous verbal improvisation after weeks of unfilmed practice, while the Thiwul/Kolak video was recorded in a single take with live verbal re-triggering rather than re-takes. Commercial product mentions occurred organically because the items were already in daily household use.

Table 2 presents a multimodal contrast between lived domestic interaction and the published TikTok artefacts.

Table 2.
Multimodal Contrast Matrix: Lived Domestic Interaction vs. Performed TikTok Artefacts (RQ2 – Performed Online)

TikTok Video Artefact	Lived Interaction at Home (Lived at Home)	Performed Representation on TikTok (Performed Online)	Editorial Trim / Production Gap	Participant's Editorial Rationale
Video 1: Sunscreen (27 July 2026)	Unfilmed daily routine of learning skincare vocabulary through practice and fading	Polished educational video featuring a child performing the routine independently with spontaneous verbal addition ("rub rub rub…")	Off-topic pauses and initial instructional prompts omitted	To present a clean, engaging demonstration of child independence for viewers
Video 2: Duck (28 September 2026)	Interactive game using rubber ducks to teach this/that/these/those; recording cut short by device overheating	Incomplete, shortened video ending abruptly without a formal closing script	Latter half of lesson unrecorded due to hardware failure	Technical necessity; published as-is because the captured child interaction was valuable despite brevity
Video 3: Thiwul / Kolak (12 October 2026)	Child asks about traditional foods prior to filming; mother explains background upon child request	Child recounts food experience from her own perspective in a single take	No re-takes or cuts; live verbal re-triggering used when child paused	To maintain an authentic, single-take narrative flow while gently guiding child

	focus without re-filming

Taken together, the data extend Hammond & Gibbons (2005) designed-in/interactional distinction—originally developed for classroom ESL pedagogy—into a domestic, social-media-mediated setting. In the present case the layers can pull apart: the designed-in layer (TikTok) does not primarily build toward the interactional layer (home) but documents and re-presents it afterward for a different audience. A published video is therefore better read as a representation of scaffolding performed for followers than as scaffolding for the child, even when filming occurs alongside real interaction. At the same time, the "Tell your friends…" finding complicates a purely binary reading and shows that lived practice can supply devices that later appear designed-in on screen.

These results align with FLP literature emphasising practices and management (Spolsky, 2009); (Spolsky, 2012). and with studies that position children as agents (Nenonen, 2024); (Sari, 2022). They add an empirical instance of masspersonal communication (Chen & Liu, 2025) in which public sharing of a child's language use is simultaneously personal and edited. Scaffolding patterns observed at home are consistent with parental mediation around the child's own interests (Soyoof et al., 2025); (Alon Tirosh & Ben Chitrit, 2025) and with evidence that parents' teaching behaviours matter more than beliefs or resources alone (Dong & Chow, 2022); (Bungsudi et al., 2026). The deliberate cultivation of English contrasts with reports of limited awareness among some Indonesian parents (Wanodya et al., 2021), although a single case cannot establish the role of the parents' English Literature background. For parent-influencer research the study supplies a producer-side account of how each video relates to the day it was filmed, complementing work focused on audiences, ethics, and posted content (Ouvrein, 2024); (Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2023); (Rachmi et al., 2025); (Sindoni et al., 2025). Because Indonesian mothers report using TikTok as a space for learning about parenting (Widyastuti & Formen, 2026), the documented distance between lived and performed practice may matter to viewers who treat such videos as models; the present data contain no viewer evidence, so this remains an open question.

The findings address the three gaps identified in the Introduction. First, they extend Indonesian FLP research (previously focused on heritage, bilingual, transnational, and returnee households) to a non-migrant Indonesian household that deliberately cultivates English. Second, they supply a daily-routine, insider-narrated account that includes an affective motivation for English investment not fully captured by existing meta-analytic factors. Third, they move parent-influencer research beyond audience effects and content analysis by juxtaposing the pedagogy shown on screen

with the practice described at home and by identifying documentation as an evaluative tool for the parents themselves.

Alternative explanations remain possible. The observed patterns could partly reflect the participant's academic background or the particular temperament of a single child; the affective framing of "privilege" rests on limited interview data and may coexist with capital-oriented motives not fully articulated. Technical and editorial gaps on TikTok could be more pronounced or differently motivated in other households. These possibilities cannot be adjudicated from a single-case design.

The principal implications are methodological and practical. Researchers working with similar social-media data should ask what a video is evidence of—a record of the child's competence, a record of the parent's editorial choices, or both—rather than treating designed-in material as a transparent proxy for interactional scaffolding. For parent-educators considering documentation, the case suggests that content made for an audience may simultaneously serve as a private record of progress; whether this dual function holds beyond one family cannot be determined here. Future research could usefully examine parent-influencer reflexivity across multiple cases, incorporate viewer responses, and explore how digital tools (including AI) enter everyday FLP management in other Indonesian households.

Limitations must be acknowledged. The study rests on one household and one key participant; findings are therefore illustrative rather than generalisable. The affective nuance regarding "privilege" derives primarily from a single interview statement and is offered only as an indication meriting further study. No viewer data were collected, so claims about audience reception remain speculative. Technical constraints of the research setting (device limitations, weather) also shaped the corpus of videos available for analysis. These constraints do not invalidate the patterns observed, but they bound the scope of interpretation.

CONCLUSION

The distance between lived and performed language practice in this household is real yet porous: English exposure at home is shaped by the child's curiosity, parental repertoire, and a bonding-oriented philosophy, while its TikTok version is curated through editorial choices and production constraints, although at least one designed-in device originates in everyday role-play. By bringing Family Language Policy, home English literacy, and parent-influencer research into dialogue around one narrated case, the findings illustrate how interactional scaffolding is refracted into a public artefact and highlight a relational motive for early English investment that existing accounts have under-emphasised. For parent-educators and content-creating parents, the distinction between designed-in and interactional practice offers a practical lens for reflecting on documentation choices. Although limited to a single family, these insights

advance understanding of FLP in digital contexts and the ethics of sharing children's learning online.

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