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Research Article

Sociocultural Influences on Young Japanese English Learners: The Impact of Parents' Beliefs on Learning Motivation

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ABSTRACT

In this quantitative study, we investigated the relationships between parenting and young learners' English learning—specifically parents' sociocultural influence on elementary school children's motivation—within the framework of self-determination theory (SDT). We surveyed 212 dyads of Japanese parents and their children (8–12 years old) and used structural equation modeling to elucidate the causal relationship between parents' attitudes and children's motivation for their second language (L2) learning, which is English as a foreign language learning context in this study. We found that parental involvement in children's English education positively impacted children's perceived competence in L2 learning and their interest in other countries, improving their L2 learning motivation. This demonstrates that parental involvement is a significant predictor of young learners' L2 motivation in Japan. We also identified a discrepancy between children's and parents' perceptions. Parents believe their involvement in children's L2 learning is autonomy-supportive behavior, while children do not always perceive this. We conclude that parental involvement in children's home L2 learning supports children's learning motivation. Our final model expands the SDT framework for language learning and covers both parenting and language learning research realms, improving our understanding of how parental attitudes and behavior influence children's L2 learning.

Keywords: sociocultural influence, self-determination theory, parental involvement and attitudes, elementary school children, English as a foreign language, structural equation modeling

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INTRODUCTION

Deci and Ryan (1985) propose self-determination theory (SDT) as "an approach to human motivation and personality" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68). Within the framework of SDT, motivation is divided into *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* types. SDT focuses on individual learners' psychological processes with a continuum of motivation from the least autonomous (*external regulation* in extrinsic motivation) to the most autonomous (*integrated regulation* in extrinsic motivation/intrinsic motivation). This motivational developmental process is known as *internalization*, defined as "the process of taking in values, beliefs, or behavioral regulations from external sources and transforming them into one's own" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 182). From the SDT perspective, *parental autonomy support* is considered a critical dimension in fostering children's autonomous motivation and internalizing process. Previous SDT research in developmental psychology has validated the positive effect of parental autonomy support on learners' autonomous motivation and academic outcomes (Grolnick et al., 1991). However, controlling parenting and parents' pressuring behaviors are on the opposite end of the parental autonomy support on a control-support axis and have negative effects on children's well-being (Grolnick, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2017). In other words, parents' controlling behaviors undermine children's perceived competence (Grolnick & Apostoleris, 2002).

SDT has been applied in a wide range of fields, including parenting, sports, counseling, and health care, as well as in learning contexts, such as first language (L1) acquisition and second language (L2) learning. We selected SDT as an appropriate and informative framework for discussing motivational research in parenting and L2 learning. Indeed, several studies focusing on multiple domains, such as parenting and language learning, have employed SDT as their theoretical framework (e.g., Butler, 2015; Butler & Le, 2018; Yamamoto & Ohba, 2018), because SDT can explain the common process of human psychological development in those different domains. However, these interdisciplinary investigations are scarce overall. Regarding the process of human psychological development, SDT takes an organismic integrated perspective in terms of individuals' motivational growth with different types of motivational regulations, from the least autonomous to the most autonomous, and the internalizing process of values from important others in social groups. This perspective is known as *an organismic integration theory* in SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017), and it can contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between parental influence and learners' motivational growth within individuals.

Turning our gaze to the Japanese L2 context, much of the SDT research on English learning motivation has focused on students in secondary education or above (e.g., Hayashi, 2005; Hiromori, 2006) and parental social influence on their learning (e.g., McEown & Sugita-McEown, 2019; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2012). More recently, attention has turned to elementary school pupils learning English (e.g., Hirose & Tsuchiya, 2018; Someya, 2021) as English has been introduced as an academic subject at the elementary school and was fully implemented in 2020 (MEXT, 2017). However, much of the focus has been on the classroom environment (e.g., Carreira, et al., 2013; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2017; Oga-Baldwin et al., 2017), while the home milieu, including family influences, has not yet been examined.

The impact of family members on children in the home setting is enormous (Pomerantz et al., 2005) and should always be considered. According to one survey involving 900 Japanese parents of children in grades first to ninth, approximately 18% of parents do help their children while sitting together at a desk at home, reviewing or preparing for the next lesson at school. Another 40% of parents are willing to assist their children with homework when necessary (Bandai, 2019, March 19). Grolnick and Apostoleris (2002) claim that parents are vulnerable to ego involvement in their children's performance, and that when parents become ego-involved, they may demonstrate controlling behaviors. If Japanese parents demonstrate ego involvement in their children's learning and consequently teach them at home, they may negatively impact their children's learning motivation. Accordingly, there exists a pressing need to understand how parents influence children's English learning motivation in this context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several prior studies on parent–child relationships within SDT have examined parents' attitudes and their influence on children's motivation, whether that influence is positive or negative. To comprehend the causal mechanism underlying this relationship, it is essential to first review

SDT perspectives on parenting and children's psychological development. Subsequently, an overview of how this mechanism, which drives children's motivational growth through parental influence, is explained in the context of L2 learning, will be provided.

SDT Perspective on Parenting

Three fundamental psychological needs of human beings—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—in the framework of SDT are relevant to parenting (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The fulfillment of these needs enhances self-determined or autonomous motivation (i.e., intrinsic motivation, which is behavior motivated by one's curiosity or interests, and identified regulation in extrinsic motivation, which is behavior motivated by understanding the importance of the tasks). This facilitates the internalization of social values (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In addition, SDT identifies three parental dimensions—autonomy support, involvement, and structure—that can help satisfy children's three psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Parental autonomy support represents "the active nurturing of the children's capacities to be self-regulating" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 320) and includes "actively taking children's perspectives, as well as providing support and encouragement for self-expression, initiation, and self-endorsed activities" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 320). The opposite of autonomy support is *controlling*, which includes punishment or external reward. Controlling parenting weakens children's intrinsic motivation and drives them to less self-determined forms of extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When children perceive autonomy support from their parents, they tend to become more proactive and show greater initiative in their behaviors. This fosters positive relations between children and their parents, as it fulfills their needs for autonomy and relatedness. *Parental involvement* is another critical dimension with three different types: *school*, *cognitive*/*intellectual*, and *personal* (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). School involvement includes parents' participation in school events. Cognitive/intellectual involvement is the degree of cognitively/intellectually stimulating behavior of parents, such as how often they take their children to libraries. Personal involvement is related to parents' interest in or knowledge about what their children are doing at school. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) claim that school and cognitive/intellectual involvement have a positive impact on children's perceived competence. This, in turn, affects their children's school grades. When children perceive their parents' behaviors positively, they can feel their parents' support and a strong connection with them in terms of satisfying their needs for competence and relatedness. Regarding the two parental provisions of autonomy support and involvement previously described, Grolnick et al. (1991) found a positive linkage with children's perceived competence using structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. They also found that children's perceived competence positively affected their general academic achievement.

Structure is the last dimension of parenting and is related to children's competence need (Ryan & Deci, 2017). However, previous studies have paid less attention to this aspect than the other two dimensions. Structure requires "conveying clear and consistent guidelines and rules, providing knowledge about the countertendencies between behaviors and outcomes" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 326). Through the structured approach of offering guidelines and rich feedback regarding expected behaviors, children can fulfill their need for competence.

Parental Influence on L2 Learners' Motivation in SDT

Few empirical studies have focused on parental influence and English learning using the SDT framework. In China, Butler (2015) investigated the causal relationship between parental behaviors and children's English learning among 572 children (198 fourth, 191 sixth, and 183 eighth graders), utilizing a mixed approach of quantitative research through questionnaires and qualitative research via interviews. The findings indicate that parents with high socioeconomic status (SES) tend to adjust to their children's changing needs, while parents with low SES are likely to use controlling parenting and thus fail to enhance both children's competence and autonomous motivation. Additionally, Butler claims that high-SES parents offer more opportunities for children to learn English outside school and enhance their children's autonomous motivation as the children grow older. Conversely, low-SES parents force their children to study but do not support them. Thus, economic status affects the level of controlling parenting, which is negative for children's well-being.

In South Korea, Kim and Barrett (2019) investigated 254 elementary school children and found a positive correlation between parents' involvement and their children's English proficiency. However, they also suggest that if children have negative attitudes toward parents' involvement, parental involvement could lose its positive effect on children's learning.

One of the related studies in Japan is by Tanaka (2018), who examined 54 dyads of kindergarten children (5–6 years old) and their mothers. This study investigated the causal relationship between maternal involvement and children's English learning motivation using SEM analysis. In this study, she assessed mothers' *international posture* (Yashima, 2002) as a trigger for maternal involvement, which was defined as "the general attitude toward the international community and foreign language learning" (Yashima, 2002, p. 54). In the Japanese L2 context, where exposure to different cultures or target languages is limited, having a high international posture acts as a catalyst for actions in learning, such as willingness to communicate (Yashima et al., 2004). Mothers' high international posture is assumed to lead to their involvement in their children's English learning. The results of Tanaka's study, employing SEM analysis, reveal that high levels of mothers' international posture result in high maternal involvement in children's English education. However, this heightened involvement negatively affects children's English learning motivation and their interest in other countries. Tanaka attributes these findings to the fact that kindergarten children may not be sufficiently old to internalize their mothers' values. Furthermore, her study solely focused on investigating mothers' perceptions of maternal involvement and did not directly inquire about the degree of children's perceptions toward parental involvement. Future research in the context of investigating the causal relationships between parents and children in L2 learning may necessitate considering both parents' and children's perceptions. Our study uses both parents' and children's perceptions for a more comprehensive understanding.

Research Questions

This study explores the causal relationship between parenting and children's English learning in the Japanese elementary school L2 context using the SDT framework.

Previous SDT research in parenting has demonstrated that parents' supportive behaviors (autonomy support and involvement) affect children's perceived competence and academic performance (Grolnick et al., 1991; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Therefore, parental involvement in the L2 context is expected to improve children's perceived competence in learning English and motivation. Furthermore, parents' international posture is assumed to be closely tied to parental involvement in the L2 context. This is because it can be one of the vital triggers for taking actions related to English learning with children (Tanaka, 2018). Based on these assumptions, we aim to assess parents' influence on children's English learning outcomes.

Children's interest in other countries could also be an influential factor for the effectiveness of parental involvement in children's English learning motivation, as enhancing the learner's intrinsic motivation always requires their interest (Ryan & Deci, 2000). We assume that the children's experiences of enjoying English activities with their parents can help increase their positive feelings of interest in learning English, getting to know other countries or cultures, and in turn, affecting their intrinsic motivation to learn English. Moreover, given that children's perceptions determine whether parental involvement is effective for children's motivation, it is essential to examine how children perceive their parents' beliefs. Accordingly, the following research questions (RQs) are formulated:

> RQ1. What are the causal relationships between parents' perceptions of parental autonomy support and parental involvement, and their children's perceptions of parental autonomy support and parental involvement?
>
> RQ2. What are the causal relationships between children's perceptions of parental autonomy support and involvement, and their English learning motivation, perceived competence, and interest in other countries?

We selected a questionnaire as the most appropriate method for assessing parents' and children's perceptions of parental involvement and autonomy support and to yield answers to our two research questions. This is because it enables us to find an overall picture of the relationships among the variables of several parents and children. Furthermore, some of the target variables are participants' perceptions, such as parental involvement and attitudes

toward children's English learning, which are difficult to identify in their behaviors in the home milieu. Hence, the use of a questionnaire was deemed an appropriate method for this study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs SEM analysis to confirm the hypothetical model and to verify the causal relationships between the influential variables in the model. The hypothetical model, participants, research site, procedures, and instruments are described below.

Hypothetical Model

We examined the research questions through SEM using IBM SPSS AMOS (Version 27) (Arbuckle, 2020). Based on the SDT perspective and the results of previous studies (Grolnick et al., 1991; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Tanaka, 2018), we formulated a hypothetical model (Figure 1). We observed *parents' international posture* to elucidate a model of motivation in the Japanese L2 context based on the studies of Tanaka (2018) because it reflects parents' beliefs and can be a trigger for children's internalization process. We assumed that parents who have a high international posture will take some parental action related to their child's English learning activities. Based on the results of Tanaka, direct paths from parents' international posture were drawn to parents' hopes for their children's internationalization in the future, and to parents' perception of parental involvement. Only one path from parents' hopes for their children's internationalization was drawn to parents' perception of parental autonomy support. No path was drawn to parents' perception of parental involvement from parents' hopes for their children's internationalization. This is because a direct impact on parental involvement from parents' hopes for their children's internationalization was not supported in the previous study (Tanaka, 2018). It was hypothesized that children's perceptions of parental autonomy support and parental involvement are mediated by parents' perceptions based on the positive correlations between parents' and children's perceptions reported in Grolnick et al. (1991). Furthermore, based on Grolnick et al. (1991), children's perceptions of parental autonomy support and parental involvement were assumed to enhance children's affective variables—perceived competence and English learning motivation. According to SDT, perceived competence enhances a learner's motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, a direct path from children's perceived competence to English learning motivation was drawn in the model. In addition, the linkage between parental involvement and children's interest in other countries was supported by the results from Tanaka's study. Although it displayed a negative relationship, this finding establishes a path from children's perceptions of parental involvement to their interest in other countries within this model. Our hypothesis posits a positive causal link along this path, connecting children's perceptions of parental involvement to their interest in other countries.

Participants and Site

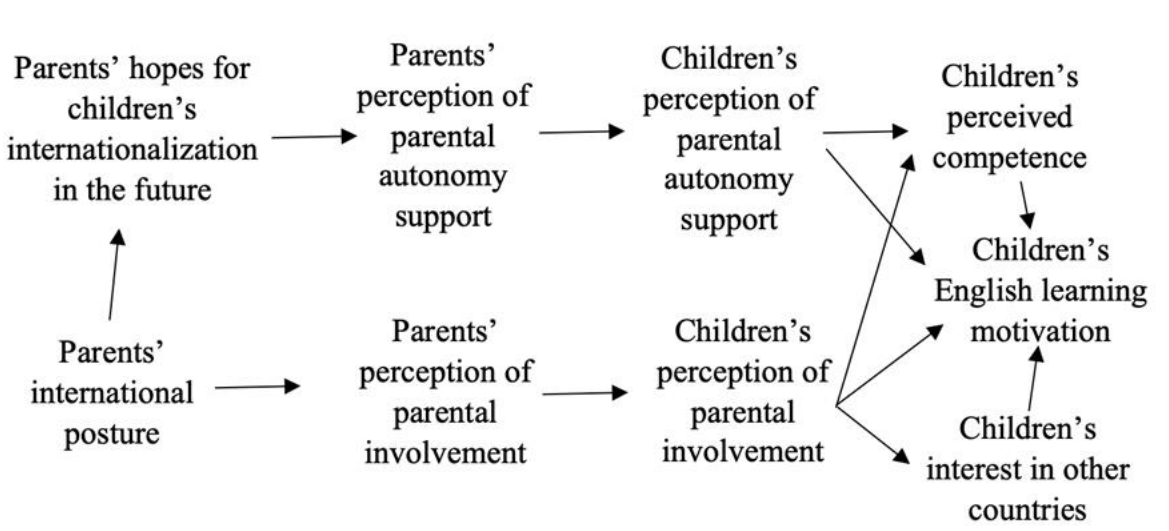
The participants in this study comprised 212 dyads of elementary school pupils (100 boys and 112 girls; 62 third graders, 52 fourth graders, 58 fifth graders, and 40 sixth graders) along with their parents, who were the main guardians in the families (189 mothers, 20 fathers, two grandmothers, and one unknown). We focused on children and their parents in Grades 3 to 6 (ages 8 to 12 years old) due to the change in Japan's English education initiation, which now begins in the third grade of elementary school as of 2020 (Ikeda et al., 2019). This change has led to an increased interest and concern among parents regarding their children's English education (Benesse Educational Research & Development Institute, 2021, March 5). The questionnaires were distributed and were returned by 268 out of 466 parent-child dyads (57.5% of the response rate). This response rate is comparable to other studies involving parents and their children (Grolnick et al., 2014). Subsequently, 54 pairs of questionnaires were removed because items were missing from the questionnaires. Two parent-child pairs were detected as outliers (by calculating Mahalanobis distances) and removed from the data sets, which resulted in the final 212 dyads.

The data collection was conducted in one public elementary school, located in Kumamoto, in western Japan. In this school, foreign language activity lessons with 35-unit hours per year are conducted in the third and fourth grades, and English language lessons as a school subject, with 70-unit hours per year, are conducted in the fifth and sixth grades under the guidelines of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, 2017). A

Japanese homeroom teacher and an assistant language teacher (ALT) who is an L1 speaker taught classes. A course coordinator, who has a secondary school teaching credential in English, advised the homeroom teacher so that they could effectively instruct students in English.

The participating school was selected because it typically follows the guidelines authorized by the Kumamoto Prefectural Board of Education (2019) in which homeroom teachers should be the main instructors in English lessons, and is considered to be a common public school in Japan with an average school size and curriculum. In this study, participants started learning English almost simultaneously and can be regarded by homeroom teachers as a homogeneous group of beginner English learners. We excluded international students and those who had previously studied English.

Figure 1. *Hypothetical Model to be Tested with Elementary School Pupils and Their Parents*



Procedure

We asked parent-child pairs to complete the questionnaire anonymously at home. In the first phase, we conducted a pilot study with three mother-child dyads (children aged 8, 9, and 10 years old) to confirm the validity of all questionnaire items and the procedures for completing a questionnaire at home. After verifying the validity of the questionnaire items and the procedures, we asked the participating school to join the research. We provided the school principal with a full explanation of the purpose and intended process of the research before they signed the school consent form. We used paper questionnaires with pairs of identification numbers showing parent-child pairs. Both children's and parents' questionnaires were placed into the same envelope and distributed by homeroom teachers on November 22, 2019. A parental consent form (with a full explanation of the current research and participants' rights in it) was included in each questionnaire, with the statement that children's participation in the research was contingent upon obtaining parental consent. Only children who received parental approval filled out the questionnaire and returned it to the investigators. We requested that the questionnaires be completed and returned within a week. In the questionnaire for third and fourth graders (ages 8 to 10), which encompassed the younger participant age groups, the initial page of the questionnaire included written instructions. These instructions asked parents to read the question items aloud to their children if the children found it difficult to complete the questionnaire alone. In such cases, parents were also advised to avoid imparting their intentions or special feelings into their children's responses. As for the parent questionnaire, the written instructions specified that respondents should answer the questionnaire items individually, in a quiet home environment. They were instructed to proceed through the questions uninterrupted until the end, refraining from projecting any specific wishes or desires for their children in their own responses.

Instruments

In this study, we employed two different questionnaires written in participants' L1 (Japanese): one for parents and one for their children. In the children's questionnaire (31 items), the following variables were prepared to assess the children's affective aspects: English learning motivation, interest in other countries, perceived competence, perception of parental autonomy support, and perception of parental involvement. Children responded to all survey items using a 4-point Likert-type scale (1: *more negative attitude* to 4: *more positive attitude*, depending on the question items). The decision to use the 4-point Likert scale was based on previous research, in which the scale was found to be appropriate for elementary school students (Carreira, 2006).

The questionnaire for parents (48 items) comprised the following variables: international posture, hopes for their children's internationality in the future, (self-) perception of parental autonomy support, and perception of parental involvement. Parents responded to the survey items regarding the perception of parental autonomy support using a 4-point Likert-type scale (1: *more negative attitude* to 4: *more positive attitude* depending on the question items) because they were essentially the same questionnaire items as presented to the children. The participants were also asked to respond to other questions using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1: *strongly disagree* or *never* to 7: *strongly agree* or *very often*, depending on the question items). In previous studies, mixing different Likert scales was not considered to have influenced the results (e.g., Grolnick, 2015).

Items for Both Parents and Children

Children's Perception of Parental Autonomy Support (CP–ATM) and Parents' Perception of Parental Autonomy Support (PP–ATM). This scale drew on children's version of the Perceptions of Parents Scales (POPS), developed by Grolnick et al. (1991), which has been used for children as young as eight years old to assess children's perception of their parents' degree of autonomy support and involvement. We eliminated the item asking about punishment based on ethical considerations and modified the wording where necessary.

Children's Perception of Parental Involvement (CP–PI) and Parents' Perception of Parental Involvement (PP–PI). To assess parents' behaviors or attitudes toward their children's English learning, we used a scale comprising nine items revised from Tanaka (2018). Two items were added from the POPS of Grolnick et al. (1991), which asked about parents' concerns about children's learning. The remaining seven items were modified based on the cognitive/intellectual involvement scale of Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994).

Items for Children

English Learning Motivation (MOT). We followed the previous empirical research for young learners (8–12 years of age) in Japan. Five items were prepared to assess children's positive attitude toward English learning and English classes at school based on the motivation scales in Carreira (2006), Kunimoto (2006), and Nishida and Yashima (2009), mostly focusing on intrinsic motivation in SDT.

Interest in Other Countries (IOC). Five items were drawn on Carreira's (2006) scale to assess the degree of willingness to learn about foreign countries or a positive attitude toward going abroad in the future.

Perceived Competence (PC). We used seven items to measure learners' perceptions of capability toward English learning in the classroom. We based four items on Kunimoto (2006) and Nishida and Yashima (2009), with slight modifications. Additionally, we selected three items originally adapted from the self-reflection sheet (similar to the can-do list) widely used in elementary schools in Kumamoto.

Items for Parents

International Posture (IP). This scale drew on Yashima's (2002) scales, comprising 22 items with four categories: *intercultural approach* (or *avoidance*) *tendency*, *interest in international vocations*, *ethnocentrism*, and *interest in foreign affairs*. We made slight modifications for interest in international vocations.

Hopes for Their Children's Internationality in the Future (HOPES). We selected 12 items as a measure of parents' hopes or expectations for their children's future attitudes in/toward the international community. Nine were

based on Yashima's (2002) international posture; the other three items measure the degree to which parents support their children's future English learning and going abroad.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics derived from the current samples before data screening using Mahalanobis distances calculations. We used the Spearman-Brown split-half method to estimate internal consistency, satisfying all factors except for children's perception of parental autonomy support (CP–ATM).

We decided to use the CP–ATM scale without modification. This is because our study displayed a higher-reliability coefficient than those of major studies in the field of developmental psychology (Van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2016; Wong, 2007). Moreover, as Borgers et al. (2000) argue, the internal consistency of items for children tends to be relatively lower than those of adults; thus, they can be tolerated.

In the first phase, we performed Pearson's correlation analysis between parents' variables and children's perceptions (CP–ATM, CP–PI) to explore the relationship between variables (Table 2). We used IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27) for the analysis. Children's perception of parental autonomy support (CP–ATM) did not show any significant correlations with IP, HOPES, or PP–PI. Although there were positive correlations between parents' perception of parental autonomy support (PP–ATM) and children's perceptions of parental involvement (CP–PI), their correlation coefficients were weak (r = .14, p < .05). Conversely, the correlation between parents' perceptions (PP–ATM and PP–PI) was strong (r = .95, p < .01), which means that multicollinearity (r = .90 or higher) existed. Thus, in the later analysis (SEM), we merged these (PP–ATM and PP–PI) into one variable named Parental perceptions (P–P). The Spearman-Brown coefficient was 0.74.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation)*

Factor	Items	*M*	*SD*	Spearman-Brown	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Potential	Actual		
Parents'								
IP	22	3.95	0.89	.78	1–7	2.2–6.3	0.37	–0.70
HOPES	12	4.89	1.08	.88	1–7	1–7	–0.32	–0.18
PP–ATM	5	2.42	0.56	.69	1–4	1–4	0.87	0.70
PP–PI	9	2.07	0.82	.65	1–7	1–5	1.16	1.14
Children's								
MOT	5	3.36	0.65	.78	1–4	1–4	–1.33	1.88
IOC	5	2.85	0.77	.81	1–4	1–4	–0.50	–0.60
PC	7	2.97	0.63	.82	1–4	1–4	–0.44	–0.03
CP–ATM	5	3.09	0.52	.58	1–4	1.6–4	–0.48	–0.03
CP–PI	9	1.64	0.49	.69	1–4	1–3.3	0.98	0.76

Note. N = 214. IP = parents' international posture; HOPES = parents' hopes for children's internationalization in the future; PP–ATM = parents' perception of parental autonomy support; PP–PI = parents' perception of parental involvement; MOT = children's English learning motivation; IOC = children's interest in other countries; PC = children's perceived competence; CP–ATM = children's perception of parental autonomy support; CP–PI = children's perception of parental involvement.

We conducted a further Pearson's correlation analysis between children's variables to explore the connections between them (Table 3). The results indicate that children's perception of parental autonomy support (CP–ATM)

showed slight positive correlations with MOT (r = .20, p < .01), PC (r = .22, p < .01), and CP–PI (r = .17, p < .05).

Table 2. *Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Parental Variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. IP	–					
2. HOPES	.61**	–				
3. PP–ATM	.49**	.43**	–			
4. PP–PI	.49**	.43**	.95**	–		
5. CP–ATM	.12	.11	.14*	–.04	–	
6. CP–PI	.35**	.28**	.60**	.60**	.17*	–

Note. N = 214. IP = parents' international posture; HOPES = parents' hopes for children's internationalization in the future; PP–ATM = parents' perception of parental autonomy support; PP–PI = parents' perception of parental involvement; CP–ATM = children's perception of parental autonomy support; CP–PI = children's perception of parental involvement. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 3. *Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Children's Variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. MOT	–				
2. IOC	.60**	–			
3. PC	.57**	.49**	–		
4. CP–ATM	.20**	.11	.22**	–	
5. CP–PI	.35**	.41**	.35**	.17*	–

Note. N = 214. MOT = children's English learning motivation; IOC = children's interest in other countries; PC = children's perceived competence; CP–ATM = children's perception of parental autonomy support; CP–PI = children's perception of parental involvement. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

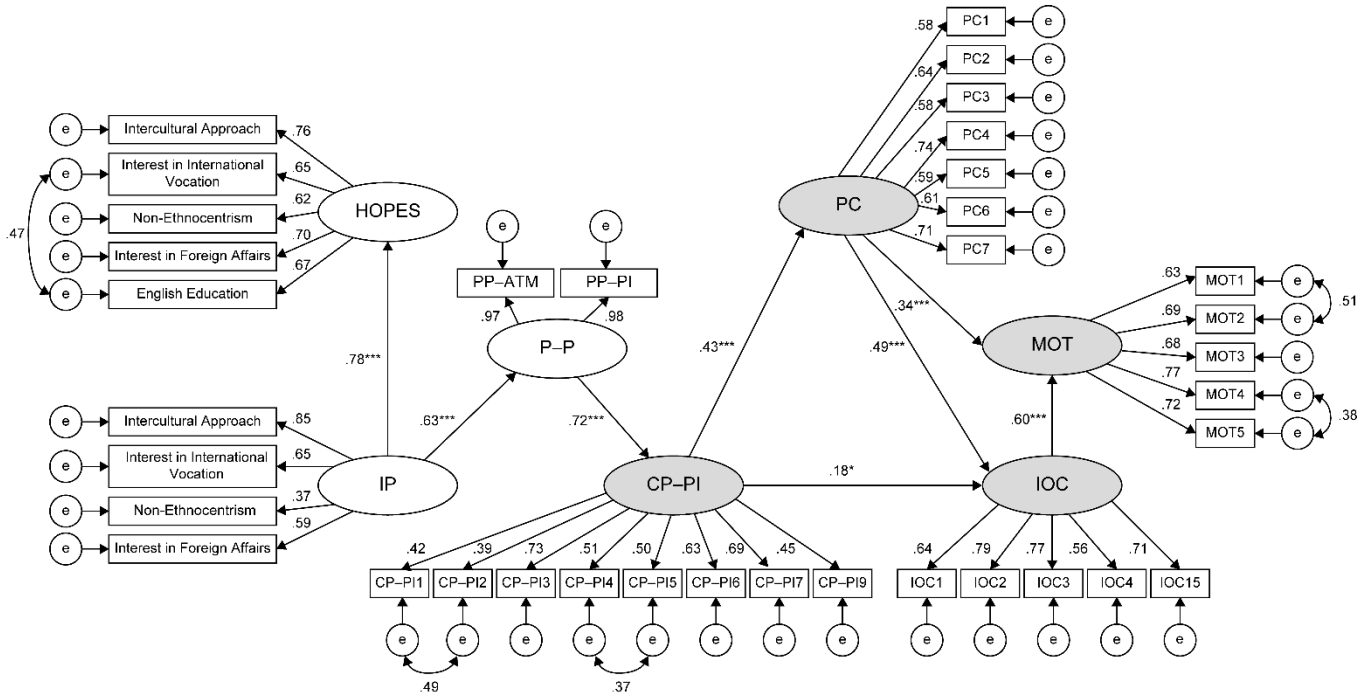
The results of two Pearson's correlation analyses showed that coefficients of children's perceived parental autonomy support (CP–ATM) with other variables are considerably weak. Consequently, we decided to remove CP–ATM in the SEM analysis. In the second phase, the hypothetical model (Figure 1) was tested by SEM analysis with maximum likelihood estimation using IBM SPSS AMOS (Version 27) (Figure 2). Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend employing CFI (Comparative Fit Index), RMSEA (Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation), and SRMR (Standardized Root-Mean-Square Residual) for SEM analysis using maximum likelihood estimation. In this model, CFI was 0.914, RMSEA was 0.049 (90% CI: .043, .056), and SRMR was 0.074. The cut-off criteria of model fit indices show CFI close to 0.90, RMSEA close to 0.06, and SRMR close to 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Therefore, we concluded that the fit indices of the resulting model were acceptable.

The final model (Figure 2) revealed the significant paths from parents' international posture (IP) to parents' other attitudinal variables (IP→HOPES: path coefficient = .78, IP→Parents' perceptions: path coefficient = .63), as hypothesized earlier. Parents' perceptions (P–P) affected children's perception of parental involvement (CP–PI) positively, with a strong path coefficient (.72). Hence, RQ1 was answered in the affirmative regarding the relationship between parental perceptions (PP–ATM and PP–PI) and

CP–PI. However, notably, we could not obtain the potential relationship between parental perceptions (P–P) and CP–ATM. This might be because we used the parental autonomy support scale from POPS (Grolnick et al., 1991) in which children were asked to answer about parents' general attitudes on specific occasions, such as homework activities and house chores, not the attitude toward parents' autonomy support related to parental involvement focusing on English activities. Therefore, as measured in this study, children's perception of parental autonomy support could be affected by other parent-child interactions besides English-related activities.

The model also showed the significant paths from children's perception of parental involvement (CP–PI) to both perceived competence (PC) and interest in other countries (IOC) (CP–PI→PC: path coefficient = .43, CP–PI→IOC: path coefficient = .18). Path coefficient 0.18 is not statistically strong. However, this result is meaningful because the finding was different from Tanaka's (2018) study, which revealed the negative relationship between perceived parental involvement by mothers (roughly equivalent to CP–PI in this study) and children's IOC. Conversely, a direct path was not created from children's perception of parental involvement (CP–PI) to English learning motivation (MOT) in this model. Therefore, RQ2 was answered partly in the affirmative. The resulting SEM model showed that children's perception of parental involvement (CP–PI) is mediated by children's perceived competence (PC) and interest in other countries (IOC) and affects English learning motivation (MOT). It is an indirect impact but shows a positive relationship between these two constructs (CP–PI→MOT). This result is consistent with previous findings in developmental psychology (Grolnick et al., 1991). Meanwhile, the model obtained a data-driven path from children's perceived competence (PC) to interest in other countries (IOC) (PC→IOC: path coefficient = .49), which indicates that children's curiosity can arise from their self-confidence in English.

Figure 2. *Final Model of Structural Relationship Between Parents and Children (N = 212)*



Note. $N = 212$. IP = parents' international posture; HOPES = parents' hopes for children's internationalization in the future; P–P = parents' perceptions; CP–PI = children's perception of parental involvement; PC = children's perceived competence; MOT = children's English learning motivation; IOC = children's interest in other countries. Texts highlighted in gray are children's variables. The others are parents' variables. CFI = .914, RMSEA = .049 (90% CI: .043, .056), SRMR = .074, *$p < .05$, ***$p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

An overview of SEM analysis demonstrates that parents can be a positive influence on children's English learning. It also reveals that their attitude toward children's English education affects children's motivation, indirectly mediated by their perceived competence and interest in other countries. Parents' international posture spurs their willingness to become involved in their children's English learning. It heightens hopes that their children will obtain internationality—the quality of being able to interact in an international context in the future.

However, the current SEM model could not create a direct path from parents' hopes for their children's internationalization (HOPES) to parents' perceptions (P–P). This means that not every parent who hopes for their children's internationality in the future engages in their children's English learning. There might be several reasons for this finding. The first one is that most parents are busy raising children and working every day. In Kumamoto prefecture, where the participating school is located, 52.6% of the households are dual-income households, and it ranks 14th of all 47 prefectures in the Japanese national ranking of dual-income households (Nikkei, 2018, July 13). Although parents may hope for their children's internationality, some of them cannot become involved in children's English learning or are unable to make extra time to enjoy English activities with their children as they have a full schedule. Another reason could be that parents do not know how to enhance children's internationalization. Although parents understand the importance of internationalization for their children's future, based on the ongoing rapid globalization, they do not know how to help and may believe that English should only be taught at school or cram school (i.e., private extramural institutions that train students to study for entrance exams).

This study also highlights the high correlation between parents' perceptions of parental autonomy support and parental involvement. This finding could mean that parents who enjoy English activities with their children believe that their behaviors and attitudes are autonomy-supportive. Asian parents are generally considered more controlling than Western parents (Choi et al., 2013). However, we found that Japanese parents who want to be involved in their children's English learning do not believe that they are trying to force their children to learn English, but are trying to support their autonomy.

Nevertheless, notably, this is the parents' perspective of their attitudes and behaviors. However, the children's perceptions have a direct positive impact only on cognitive aspects (perceived competence and interest in other countries), not on affective ones (motivation), which implies that children of this age cannot internalize their parents' beliefs and values. This finding is congruent with Tanaka (2018), who claims that kindergarten children cannot reach the level of internalization of their mothers' values toward English learning. Parents believe that their English-related involvement equals autonomy-supportive behavior; conversely, their children do not perceive their parents' behaviors toward English learning as autonomy support.

Children's perception of parental involvement—which predicts children's cognitive variables—is important for children's English learning. Regarding RQ1, the results demonstrate that the psychological construct of parental perceptions positively impacts children's perception of parental involvement. Moreover, RQ2 reveals that children's perceptions of parental involvement affect both their perceived competence in English learning and interest in other countries. The process of this indirect causal connection can be interpreted as follows. Children who enjoy some English activities with their parents gain knowledge of English words and a shared vision with parents who have a high international posture. The parental involvement scale in this study includes activities in which children enjoy reading English picture books, singing, listening to English songs, or studying English with their parents. In the L2 learning context in Japan, English is taught mainly in the classroom setting; children lack exposure to the English language, L1 speakers, or English communities outside of the classroom. When parents try to become involved in children's English learning, children can gain more knowledge of the English language. Parents can provide opportunities for contact with the English language and culture outside school and develop their global awareness through English-related activities (e.g., talking about overseas news or international affairs together). Growing their vocabulary can give them self-confidence and willingness to learn English. This corroborates the existing SDT perspective on fulfilling the psychological

need for perceived competence, which, in turn, enhances autonomous motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we tested the hypothesized model of the causal relationships between parenting and children's English learning in the Japanese L2 context using the SDT framework. We also examined how children perceive their parents' beliefs or attitudes. The findings indicate that parental involvement in children's English education could provide positive support for children's learning, as demonstrated in the body of SDT parenting research (Grolnick et al., 1991). Further, the model reveals a discrepancy between parents' and children's perceptions toward parental involvement and autonomy support, which might suggest that children (around or under 13 years of age) are not in the process of internalizing parents' beliefs or values in the Japanese L2 context. The reasons they may not internalize their parents' beliefs and values might be their stage of psychological development, or that they cannot internalize their parents' beliefs in the limited context of language learning. This study provides a better understanding of the relationships between parents and their children in the Japanese L2 context, where the paucity of research focusing on parental influence warrants further investigation. Additionally, our final SEM model provides insights into the influence of parents' international posture and the perception gaps between parents and children, thereby further expanding the SDT framework in L2 learning.

Finally, it is important to mention that in this study, 89% of parents who participated were mothers. Mothers' attitudes were thus predominantly reflected in the data. However, fathers' behaviors and attitudes also influence their children's learning. Future research should delve into qualitative investigations to explore whether paternal involvement/autonomy support differs from maternal involvement/autonomy support.

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Authors' Contributions

ST participated in the design of the study and completed the data collection. ST worked on data analysis with support from OT. ST and OT drafted the manuscript and participated in the interpretation of the results. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethics Approval & Consent to Participate

All participants provided written informed consent prior to enrollment and data collection of the study.

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Data Availability Statement

The questionnaires are available in IRIS at the following URL: https://www.iris-database.org/details/psVKF-dvwJM.

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