

EXPLORING PARENTS' EXPOSURE OF ENGLISH TO THEIR CHILDREN: AN EYL STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF YOGYAKARTA

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Abstract: *This study investigates how parents in a Yogyakarta elementary school expose English to their children through qualitative interviews with 10 participants. The findings reveal a highly positive attitude among parents toward nurturing English proficiency in their children. Motivated by the global importance of English, parents actively establish a supportive environment for language development. They aim for early English mastery, employing a bilingual approach at home. Engaging in diverse activities such as watching English films and reading books, parents create a language-rich environment, ensuring positive experiences. Witnessing tangible progress, parents express confidence in the benefits of early language exposure and are dedicated to fostering a positive English language learning atmosphere, encouraging courage in language attempts and accepting mistakes.*

Keyword: *early English proficiency, English language exposure, parental involvement.*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menyelidiki bagaimana orang tua di sebuah sekolah dasar di Yogyakarta memperkenalkan bahasa Inggris kepada anak-anak mereka melalui wawancara kualitatif dengan 10 partisipan. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan sikap yang sangat positif di antara para orang tua dalam mengembangkan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris pada anak-anak mereka. Termotivasi oleh pentingnya bahasa Inggris secara global, para orang tua secara aktif membangun lingkungan yang mendukung perkembangan bahasa. Mereka bertujuan untuk penguasaan bahasa Inggris sejak dini, dengan menggunakan pendekatan bilingual di rumah. Terlibat dalam berbagai kegiatan seperti menonton film berbahasa Inggris dan membaca buku, para orang tua menciptakan lingkungan yang kaya akan bahasa, memastikan pengalaman yang positif. Menyaksikan kemajuan yang nyata, para orang tua mengungkapkan keyakinan mereka akan manfaat paparan bahasa sejak dini dan berdedikasi untuk membina suasana belajar bahasa Inggris yang positif, mendorong keberanian dalam upaya berbahasa dan menerima kesalahan.

Kata kunci: kemahiran Bahasa Inggris sejak dini, keterlibatan orang tua, paparan Bahasa Inggris.

INTRODUCTION

English language acquisition for young learners stands as a cornerstone in their overall educational development, playing a pivotal role in shaping cognitive growth, fostering cultural awareness, and laying the groundwork for future academic achievements. Within the contemporary educational landscape, the methods employed for teaching English to

young learners have undergone significant evolution, leaving a lasting impact on classroom dynamics and the overall learning experience.

This transformation in English language education for young learners is marked by a departure from traditional approaches toward embracing more interactive and personalized learning experiences. The educational paradigm is shifting away from the reliance on rote

memorization and formal instruction. Instead, there is a growing emphasis on methods that accommodate diverse learning styles and actively encourage the development of critical thinking skills among young learners. Technological advancements have further contributed to this shift, opening up new avenues for innovative and engaging teaching methodologies.

Alharbi & Alzahrani (2020) underscores the importance of early learning for young learners, noting that it contributes to physical, cognitive, and personal development. In countries where families can choose a second language for their children, English is overwhelmingly the preferred option (Carmel, 2019). The rising demand for English proficiency, coupled with parents' belief that it provides their children with better educational opportunities and improved career prospects, has led to an expansion of Early Years English Language (EYL) programs (Hasibuan et al., 2024). In research conducted by Erk et al. (2022), parents seem to have positive parental beliefs regarding early English language learning. They also identified a correlation between a favorable family status assessment and an earlier initiation of the child's English language learning.

Amidst these progressive educational advancements, the role of parents emerges as paramount. Parents become indispensable partners in their children's journey of English language acquisition. Beyond the conventional responsibilities of supporting homework or attending parent-teacher conferences, their involvement extends to the creation of a language-rich environment within the home. This encompasses exposing children to a variety of English language materials, fostering reading habits, and actively engaging in meaningful conversations.

Parents play a vital role in cultivating a positive attitude towards learning (Şengönül, 2022). Their active participation in their children's language development transcends the boundaries of

formal classroom settings, contributing significantly to a holistic learning experience. This is also supported by (Surrain, 2021) who stated that influential figures beyond educators, such as parents, play a crucial role in the language learning of young learners. As children navigate the complexities of language acquisition, the support and guidance provided by parents become instrumental in shaping linguistic proficiency. Getie (2020) pointed this out by emphasizing that parental encouragement can influence students' attitudes, whether positively or otherwise, and may also affect their motivational levels.

Specifically in Indonesian context, parents nowadays also embrace the emergence of English in the modern world. Fata et al. (2022) found that parents maintain a positive outlook on promoting

English-Indonesian bilingualism in their children. Their findings also reveal that parents should prioritize their children's interests to ensure an effective and successful learning process, utilizing diverse resources and materials. The parents are convinced that actively engaging in their children's language learning will foster a dedicated interest in learning languages, especially English.

This research seeks to explore the methods employed by parents in a Yogyakarta elementary school to expose their younger children to English. The findings from this study aim to provide valuable insights and guidance for other parents aspiring to adopt similar practices with their children. Recognizing the paramount importance of early exposure to English for children, the researcher is motivated by a desire to contribute to the understanding of effective strategies in this context. By shedding light on the experiences and approaches of parents in this specific setting, the research aims to offer practical and applicable recommendations for fostering early English language development in children. To serve as a bridge for these

purposes, this paper includes the following research questions:

1. Why do parents in a school in Yogyakarta expose English to their children early?
2. How do parents in a school in Yogyakarta expose English to their children early?

METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach to delve into the nuanced realm of parents' attitudes and strategies in introducing English to their children. The research utilized interviews to collect data, recognizing the intricate nature of language development within a familial context. Interviews is chosen as a primary data collection method to capture the richness and depth of parental experiences. The interview included a set of 6 open-ended questions, thoughtfully designed to elicit detailed responses from participants. The researcher audio recorded the whole process of interview after getting the parents' permission to do so. It was done to ease the process of transcription as well to ensure that the participants consent to being recorded.

This research employs purposive sampling in which researchers deliberately choose participants based on the study's objectives, anticipating that each participant will contribute unique and valuable information (Negrin et al., 2022). The sampling method was deliberately chosen to focus on 10 parents actively engaged in exposing English to their elementary school-age children in Yogyakarta. This intentional selection aimed to gather insights from parents with experiences in introducing English to their children, providing a nuanced understanding of the subject under investigation. The purposive sampling approach was selected due to its capacity to enable a detailed examination of parental attitudes and support strategies

during this critical period of their children's linguistic development.

The raw data obtained from the interview recording underwent several steps provided by (Palomares et al., 2021). Firstly, the audio was transcribed into text, verbatim. The researcher then organized the data, assigning the date of the interview, initials, and securing the file for efficient retrieval and safe storage. Familiarization with the transcribed data followed. Subsequently, the researcher conducted preliminary coding for each answer and identified emergent themes. Finally, the results were interpreted.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the interview shows many aspects of parental involvements in exposing English to their children. All of them reflect the strong belief and optimism of the parents regarding the importance of English language proficiency for their children's future.

All of the parents recognize that English serves as an international language. Consequently, they view the act of teaching English to their child as a positive endeavor. The ultimate goal is to equip the child with the ability to compete on a global scale as they mature. As shown on the excerpt below, P1 and P2 express a strong belief in the importance of English language proficiency for their children's future success. P1 acknowledges English as an international language and sees teaching it to their child as a positive effort, with the ultimate aim of equipping the child to compete on a global scale as they mature. In a similar vein, P2 is confident in investing in early English language learning, foreseeing significant benefits for the child's future. P2 emphasizes the belief that English proficiency will become a crucial life skill, essential for effective competition with others. The parent aspires for the child not only to possess strong English skills but also to secure high-quality job

opportunities, potentially even internationally.

“English is an international language. Therefore, I believe that teaching English to my child is a positive thing. The goal is for my child to be able to compete globally when they grow up”. - P1

“I am confident that investing in learning English from an early age will bring significant benefits for my child's future. I hope that English proficiency will increasingly become a crucial life skill, enabling my child to compete effectively with others. Hopefully, with strong English skills, my child can secure a quality job, even perhaps abroad”. - P2

When asked about importance of English for leisure activities, some parents agree and some others somewhat agree. P3 and P4 underscore the importance of learning English, each offering distinct perspectives. P3 places emphasis on the practical applications of English, suggesting that it is preferable for the child to acquire language skills for endeavors such as higher education or work. Despite this focus, P3 maintains an open-minded approach, stating that if the child wishes to use English for purposes beyond these, it is not a problem. P3 expresses continuous support as long as the intentions remain positive.

Conversely, P4 highlights the overarching significance of learning English, employing the metaphor "menyelam sambil minum air" (diving while drinking water) to illustrate the idea of leveraging English skills for both work and enjoyment. P4 perceives English proficiency as valuable not only for professional purposes but also for recreational activities, advocating for a comprehensive approach to language learning that encompasses various aspects of life.

“Actually, it is important, but it is better for the child to learn English for things that are truly useful, such as pursuing higher education or

work. However, if at some point, my child wants to use their English skills for other purposes beyond that, it is not a problem. As a parent, I always support as long as it is for positive things”. - P3

“In my opinion, this is very important. So, it's like diving while drinking water. They can use their English skills for work, but also for enjoyment”. - P4

Moving on to whether the parents desire their children to master English before entering a higher level of education. These statements from P5 and P6 both highlight the importance of introducing English to their children at an early age. P5 is motivated by the concern that their child might fall behind in understanding English when entering junior high school, prompting the decision to introduce the language. On the other hand, P6 emphasizes the idea that language is mastered more efficiently when introduced early, and this belief, coupled with the family habit of using both Indonesian and English at home, encourages the early introduction of English to their child. Both parents share a common goal of ensuring their children are proficient in English from a young age, motivated by a desire to prevent potential challenges in understanding the language as they progress in their education.

“Actually, this is one of the motivations for me to introduce English to my child. I'm afraid that later, when entering junior high school, they won't understand anything about English and will end up falling behind”. - P5

“I once read that language is mastered more quickly when introduced at an early age. That's why I did it when my child was still young. Moreover, at home, we use both Indonesian and English. It has become a habit in our family”. - P6

Then, the researcher asked the parents to provide examples of how they actively support their child's English development at home. All of the parents, including P7 and P8, actively incorporate English into their children's activities. They regularly include their children in watching English-language films, selecting child-friendly options like Simba, Aladdin, and others. Additionally, both parents engage in reading English-language books, including fairy tales, to further immerse their children in the language. Moreover, both parents consistently involve their children in watching English films and listening to English music, noting that their children consistently enjoy these activities. To enhance language development, they also initiate English conversations with their children, acknowledging that occasional confusion may arise. Overall, P7 and P8 share a commitment to creating a language-rich environment and ensuring positive experiences with the English language for their children.

"I usually take my child to watch English-language films, of course, those that are child-friendly like Simba, Aladdin, and others. Sometimes, I also read English-language books such as fairy tales and others". - P7

"Usually, I take my child to watch movies and listen to music in English. So far, they have always enjoyed doing these activities. I also often engage them in conversations in English, although sometimes they get confused". - P8

The parents were also asked about the impact of exposing English to their children. Both P6 and P7 express confidence that the various English-related activities they engage their children in will undoubtedly yield positive results. They anticipate positive impacts not only on their children's understanding of the English language but also on their ability to speak it. P6 notes

that their child has already begun to mention several words in English. Moreover, a notable outcome of these activities, as highlighted by P7, is the growing enthusiasm of their child to consistently learn English. The child has developed a keen interest to the extent that they occasionally request to watch English-language films or read English-language books independently. Collectively, these parents observe tangible and enthusiastic progress in their children's language development through these intentional language-rich activities.

"All of these activities will undoubtedly have a positive impact on my child, both in terms of their ability to understand and speak in English. So far, they have been able to mention several words in English". - P6

"One of the significant impacts of these activities is my child's enthusiasm to continuously learn English. Sometimes, they even request to watch English-language films or read English-language books themselves". - P7

The parents were also asked about how they encourage their children to learn English. They responded by saying that they actively cultivate a positive environment for English language learning. P8, in addition to various activities mentioned earlier, instills the idea that making mistakes is acceptable, emphasizing the importance of courage in attempting to speak English and offering support for error correction. Similarly, P5 focuses on building a positive environment where the fear of making mistakes is eliminated, promoting a supportive atmosphere for language development. Both parents share a common commitment to creating a positive and encouraging space for their children to learn and grow in English.

"In addition to the activities I mentioned earlier, I also instill the idea that making mistakes is okay. What matters is the courage to try

speaking in English. If there are mistakes, I will help to correct them”. - P8

“Building a positive environment without being afraid of making mistakes”. - P5

The positive attitude of parents in a school in Yogyakarta toward promoting English to their children is evident from various factors. All parents universally acknowledge the significance of English as a global language, shaping their perception of teaching it to their children as a positive and essential endeavor. Their collective goal is to equip their children with the proficiency to compete on a global scale as they advance in age.

They have a strong belief in the pivotal role of English language proficiency for their children's future success is evident. They also perceive English as an international language and deems teaching it as a positive effort, aiming to prepare their children for global competitiveness. Moreover, they also confidently invest in early English language learning, foreseeing substantial benefits for the child's future. They also emphasize that English proficiency is not just a skill but a crucial life competency, indispensable for effective competition. The aspiration extends beyond linguistic proficiency to encompass securing high-quality job opportunities, potentially on an international scale. Their opinions are agreeable since English the predominant language employed in communication between international companies (Rao, 2019).

When questioned about the importance of English in leisure activities, the responses varied. Some parents underscore the practical applications of English, emphasizing its preference for endeavors such as higher education or work (Rao, 2019). However, the parents also maintain an open-minded stance, asserting that if the child wishes to use English for purposes beyond these, it is fully supported, as long as the intentions remain positive. On the other hand, some

parents leverage English skills for both professional and recreational aspects of life. They perceive English proficiency as valuable not only for career purposes but also for enriching leisure activities. This is in line with Chen et al. (2020) who found similar finding in their research. Moreover, these answers imply that the parents might enjoy traveling as well which is good since according to Davidson & Liu (2020), exposing young learners to English at an early age, such as through international travel, contribute to improved speaking abilities. However, this research cannot state that this is the fact for the parents since the researcher did not ask about it. Though, in the end, these perspectives advocate for a comprehensive language-learning approach that embraces various facets of life. English indeed can help one to advance their career or education in the future, but it can also help us to have more sources of enjoyment (Ilyosovna, 2020).

All of the parents stated that they have the desire for their children to master English before entering higher education (Chand, 2021), underscoring the importance of early exposure (Erk et al., 2022b). They are motivated to introduce English earlier by the concern that their child might lag in understanding English upon entering junior high school. The objective of this is to ensure their children attain English proficiency from a young age, driven by the intention to preempt potential language challenges as they progress in education. Furthermore, other parents further extend the discussion by saying that their families' habitual use of both Indonesian and English at home. This finding mirrors Apriana & Sutrisno (2022) statement in their article that says becoming bilingual is a long journey for a child. Since it is a long journey, it would be better for the children to start earlier.

Upon inquiring about the examples of how parents actively support their child's English development at home, a consistent pattern emerges. All parents integrate English seamlessly into their

children's activities. This includes regular participation in watching English-language films featuring child-friendly content. In addition to consistently involve their children in watching English films, some of them also introduce English music to their children. Additionally, parents engage in reading English-language books, including fairy tales, to immerse their children further in the language. Activities like reading at home particularly during mid-grade primary schooling is important (Mostert & Vall Castello, 2020). All of these incorporation of media shows that parents know how to expose English to their children. This is in line with Sumanti & Muljani (2021) who found that some parents enthusiastically provide learning media for their children to learn English.

To boost oral language development, parents initiate English conversations, acknowledging occasional confusion as a part of the learning process. This demonstrates a steadfast commitment to fostering a language-rich environment, ensuring positive experiences with the English language for their children. They also express unwavering confidence in the positive outcomes of exposing the language to their children early. They anticipate not only enhanced understanding but also improved speaking proficiency. Additionally, some parents also highlight a notable outcome which is the growing enthusiasm of their child to consistently learn English. All of these underscore tangible and enthusiastic progress in their children's language development through intentional and immersive language-rich activities. It is safe to say that what these parents do is supporting their children by providing increased linguistic exposure outside school whether directly or indirectly (Mostert & Vall Castello, 2020).

Furthermore, they also shared commitment to fostering a positive English language learning environment at home. In addition to the previously mentioned activities, they encourage a

mindset that accepts mistakes, stressing the significance of bravery in English speech attempts and providing assistance for error correction. In other words, they construct a positive setting, free from the fear of mistakes, fostering a supportive ambiance for language development. In line with this, Carroll (2022) emphasize that positive parenting style demonstrated a more beneficial influence on the speech and language development of preschoolers compared to a less effective parenting style. Although the parents' children are in elementary school level, this statement is still true to some extent. Furthermore, Reeve & Cheon (2021) also found that autonomy-supportive parents, allowing children to make decisions independently, correlate positively with better English performance. Through the parents' answers, it is clear that they do not require their children to always be correct when using English. Instead, they give them freedom to express themselves in the language.

CONCLUSION

The research in a Yogyakarta school highlights parents' overwhelmingly positive attitude toward fostering English proficiency in their children. Motivated by the global significance of English, parents actively create a supportive environment for language development. They desire their children to master English early, using a bilingual approach at home. Through diverse activities like watching English films and reading books, parents contribute to a language-rich setting, ensuring positive experiences. Observing tangible progress, parents are confident in the benefits of early language exposure. They are committed to fostering a positive English language learning environment, emphasizing bravery in language attempts and accepting mistakes.

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