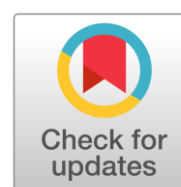




## English Language Acquisition of Indonesian Kindergarten Students in Tahsin for Kids Madania Foundation Australia

**Losi Sabbilla\***

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Salatiga  
[Nurilhabibah603@gmail.com](mailto:Nurilhabibah603@gmail.com)



**Miftachudin**

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Salatiga

### Abstract

**Purpose** - The objectives of this research are to find out the methods used by Indonesian students in acquiring their English proficiency and to recognize the challenges and strategies of Indonesian student in acquiring their English proficiency in foreign country.

**Design/methodology/approach** - The research methodology used in this research was descriptive qualitative. The techniques of collecting data were interview, documentation, and audiovisual and digital materials to gather the data. The subjects of this research were kindergarten students in Tahsin for Kids Madania Foundation in Australia.

**Findings/results** - The writer concluded that most of Indonesian students who live in foreign country used English as their second language. While the challenges of acquiring English are flip translation, teaching suitable and correct English, learning English from Indonesian parents, preparing the parents and children before enrolling kindergarten, and child speech delay.

**Originality/value** - There are a lot of method used by indonesia students in acquiring English, it given by their closer environment such as family at home, teachers and friends at school.

**Paper type** - Research paper

**Keywords:** Language acquisition, English learning, Foreign country

**\*Correspondence**

## Introduction

Human are always needs a tool to communicate, to convey, to express, to claim, their desire or feelings, their thought or idea, also their opinion to the other human. And here human have a language as the tool or method. Language is a method of expressing ideas or emotions that are used and comprehended by a group of people, and sometimes refers to the grammar, syntax, or order used for its components (KO 2016). Language is one of the most basic means of communication for humans and other God's creatures through different ways of conveying. The way of conveying language between humans and animals is also different. Humans have several stages in language delivery starting from the compilation of sounds in the form of phonemes, then into several forms of syllables or morphemes, which combine into words, then clauses or sentences or utterance.

Differences in geographic location, ethnicity, race, group, and many other factors create languages become various in variations and characteristics of each language. However, to unite these differences, it is necessary to have a unifying language. For example, in Indonesia, with various ethnic groups, regions and ethnic groups, each has a different regional language. Therefore, the Indonesian language has been agreed as the unifying language of the Indonesian nation. The same thing is needed by the world's citizens and the various countries that occupy it also need a language that unifies the world, it is English. There are proverbs said that "English language is world language". According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000) in Eva (2011) defines language as the system of communication in scpeech and writing that is used by people of a particular country.

With the variety of languages in this world, certainly the acquisition of languages in each region is different, especially for countries that use English as foreign language, such as Indonesia. In order to fulfill the long-standing agreement that makes English the unifying language of the world, for countries that do not use English as their first language but serve as a foreign language in their countries must learn the language through formal or non-formal education. A foreign language is also acquired after the first language; however, it is one a person voluntarily chooses (Eddy 2011) In Indonesia, a foreign

language is not a language that all citizens should master to communicate it. The foreign language usually chosen to be studied because of their importance in education. The formal language obtained in school from kindergarten until university in English course while the non-formal one obtained by joining the private courses or such a community. One more thing that non formal English language education can also acquire from their mother or family where they are live in.

Humans as the language learners acquire language in three processes, there are acquiring English as a first language, acquiring English as a second language, and acquiring English as a foreign language. All those processes have different methods in the process of acquiring the language, the influencing factors, as well as some problems that may be faced. Some of them must learn the language of a different group of people who live in the same country as them, whereas others have relocated to a different country and must become more or less fluent speakers of the language used there in trying to adapt with the obstacles of everyday life (Eddy 2011).

Along the process of acquiring the language there must be a steps goes through by the lerners where in this study were kindergarten students in Tahsin for Kids Madania Foundation Australia. They would have several method used by the adults (parents and teachers) around them who accompanied students in the process of acquiring language. Besides, the students also have their own strategies coming from their internal self as innate capacity in acquiring the language. As what mentioned by Chomsky "that we are born with a genetic capacity that predisposes us to a systematic perception of language around us, resulting in the construction of an internalized system of language" (Assaiqeli 2013).

In addition, in acquiring a first language armed with innate abilities, the kindergarten students who live abroad also learn and acquire a second language where there are many external factors involved such as the environment, school, and community in which they live. They will imitate, see and practice from what they seen and heard from the surrounding environment so that they are accustomed to using language to become part of that environment. According to Lightbown and Spada (1999) in Assaiqeli (2013) mentioned that "children imitate the sounds and patterns which they

hear around them and receive positive reinforcement (which could take the form of praise or just successful communication) for doing so. Thus, encouraged by their environment, they continue to imitate and practise these sounds and patterns until they form 'habits' of correct language use"

As a result, imitation and practice are critical methods for acquiring or learning a language. Here the researcher would like to make further research entitled an analysis of English language acquisition of kindergarten students in tahsin for kids madania foundation Australia.

The first related research belongs to Nur Azmi Rohimajaya and William Hamer (2020). They were analyzed the first language acquisition of three years child based on phonological, morphological, and semantics aspects. They were used descriptive qualitative research with the subject and object from 3 years old child named Truly Dilara Tenderly Wellaz. Based on their analysis, the researchers concluded that the respondent was able to communicate appropriately with the important role of her parents in contributing their child's language development such as giving the correct pronunciation rather than following the words or phrases spoken by their child.

The second related research was done by Somariah Fitriani (2019). In her research she analyzed the first and second language acquisition of a child in the Indonesian and English Language. A qualitative-case study used by the researcher as the method of the research with 3 years old child as the unit analysis in two years, from 2014-2015. The focus of her research was on spoken utterances in Indonesian and English, as well as the factors that influence them. Based on the findings, the researcher has revealed the infant's utterances have primarily risen, and the child has already comprehended the directions by following the instructions. Language input, imitation, environment, exposure, and the language learning device can all have an impact on a child's utterance. The third previous research was done by Erwita Yasinta Br Ginting, I Nengah Sudipa, A. A. Sagung Shanti Sari Dewi (2019). The aim of their research was examined Tonya's (respondent) growth as a mixed-married child in learning her first language, particularly vocabulary acquisition in English, and to determine the factors that influence Tonya's language acquisition. A qualitative method was used in analyzing the data in this

research. The findings of this research show that language development is inextricably linked to a child's physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development. Tonya's parents speak a foreign language and have a distinct culture, which has an impact on her English vocabulary acquisition. Apart from Tonya's natural aptitude to acquire languages, the behavioral characteristics of those around her, as well as technology and learning programs at her school, all influence Tonya's capacity to learn English.

The last previous research from Yasmin Bahalwan and Slamet Setiawan (2015). The main issues addressed in their research were (1) the process of how the children of a mix-marriage family acquiring English as second language, (2) what are the internal and external factors that affect the children of a mix-marriage family acquiring English as second language, (3) the dominant language used by the children of a mix-marriage family. The method used in this research was qualitative method with mix marriage (Autralian-Indonesian) children live in Sydney as the subject of this research. The findings reveal that children go through (1) numerous stages when learning English as a second language, including employing L1, staying silent, starting to use L2, and generating L2. (2) Children's acquisition of English as a second language was influenced by both internal (age, motivation, aptitude) and external (learning strategy and environment) factors; (3) even siblings who grew up in the same environment could have different dominant languages depending on the frequency with which they used the language

## Method

The type of research used in this research was descriptive qualitative. The data presented in the form of narrative words or pictures and not in the form of numbers. The term qualitative methodology refers to research that generates descriptive data from people's own written or spoken words as well as observable behavior in the broadest sense (Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault 2016). The research results in this method emphasized more on meaning than generalization. The research design was flexible and emergent, adapting to changing situations as the research progresses. Palmer and Bolderston (2006:16) states that "Qualitative research is an interpretative approach,

which attempts to gain insight into the specific meanings and behaviors experienced in certain social phenomena through the subjective experiences of the participants”

To get a broader and deeper understanding of the social situations studied. Thus, the data collection technique used by researchers in this study is triangulation, which uses various data collection techniques combined / simultaneous. The sources of primary data that used by the researcher in this research is interview, the interview conducted to get information directly from informants who in this study were teachers and parents of students about their opinions on how do their students or children acquire English skills during living in a foreign country also the challenges that might they have as a parent and teacher in accompanying children during acquiring language. The researchers used secondary data documentation sources such as video records and/ or audio records.

The research conducted from September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021 to 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021. This research conducted online at the Tahsin for Kids Madania Foundation located at 16 Beddoe Ave, Clayton, Victoria, Melbourne Australia. This research carried out on the parents of students and or teachers at the school. This research conducted at the school by considering that the students of the school are Indonesian children who live abroad and got English as their first and second language

## **Result & Discussion**

### **The methods of Indonesian students acquire their English skills in a foreign country**

#### **Interacting with the school environment**

Based on the results of interviews that the researchers have conducted, shows that the student's interacting with the school environment, starting from kindergarten is the initial stage or the first environment for students to acquire English while living abroad.

*“When they enter a new environment with a new language as well as when they enter school later I as a parent should communicate this to the teacher that my child uses his mother tongue, Indonesian at home and when they enters school they will use English to communicate. It's the first time in a community, so the teacher will understand what kind of condition our child is in.”*

According to the results of the documentation taken during classroom learning, almost all the instructions given by the teacher, the explanation of the materials, and the student responses were delivered in English. As Indonesian schools abroad, of course they will prioritize English to communicate with children.

Based on the discussion in chapter II, children primarily acquire language from their parents, the rest of their family, neighbors, and from their school environment. As stated by Piaget that children construct their own knowledge of his own experiences with the environment. Piaget emphasized the importance of social interaction to intellectual development and interaction as the key to how we overcome the instability of the symbols we individually construct. Piaget tied the role of social interaction to the importance of language (Nath 2010). This applies to both first and second language acquisition.

The process that students experience is part of natural language learning and acquisition which is also referred to as the natural environment where they naturally acquire and learn a new language both as a second language and as a foreign language. In most cases, a second language is learned in the country where it is also spoken as a first language. Listening to native speakers and having conversations in public locations such as shops or restaurants allow learners to fully immerse themselves in the target language. They converse with their pals, watch television, listen to the radio, and even read street signs and product labels (Eddy 2011).

*Being active in social media application provided by the school*, as said by parents in the interviews conducted by the researchers, that children are only allowed to use applications that have been provided by the school on their ipad to support learning activity in the classroom, even their use is also controlled by teachers at school and parents at home.

*"in our family, our children the elder 12 years old and the sister 9 almost 10 years old was introduced for the first time to gadgets when there was a program here, at school when they were in 3rd grade they were indeed required to bring an iPad and can bring ipad because the program for 3rd grade will use various applications on the ipad and then use it to support lessons at school."*

According to the results of the documentation that the researchers got from learning in the class, the children used one of the game applications prepared by the school, i.e. Quizizz to help learning in the class.

Using the application provided by the school, commonly children need an iPad or any other gadgets to use the application, this is in accordance with the discussion in chapter II regarding the factors that support the language acquisition process in children, it is economic and technological factors. It is clear that a person with healthy and wealthy economic view is more efficient and happier than a person who is not efficient in economy (Sari 2017).

In this process of acquiring and learning the language students use cognitive strategies they got the material as the direct learning process (Lestari 2015).

### **Accessing short education video on YouTube**

In addition, using applications provided by schools, occasionally teachers also use short videos from YouTube to support the learning process in class.

*"After they, if I'm not mistaken, around grade 4, they start doing assignments using the gadgets they bring to school and sometimes the teacher plays YouTube related to the subject matter that will be delivered at that time but for other social media it is not introduced at school"*

The use of YouTube in classroom learning is also seen in the documentation when the delivery of material takes place in class by the teacher.

The economic factors play a big role in this acquisition of the language because it provides facilities in the form of supporting language learning materials apart from technological factors (Sari 2017).

Besides, students in this process are also have such a formal setting as the short education video given by the teacher in the class. Formal setting where the learning process takes place in a classroom, where formal instruction on rules and their use in the language in question is given (Eddy 2011).

### **Watching English-language television shows**

In this case, the way how students acquire English from the family environment provided by the parents, even though the parents are not natives whose first language is English, but they also try to teach English to children, one of which is by providing television shows that use English.

*"Yes, it can be, but the children do not have social media when they were young, so maybe the acquisition was possible, most of from TV. There are children's TV programs. The TV shows are in English, I think that's the dominant one"*

As discussed in chapter II, the process of acquiring English in students is influenced by social factors (Sari 2017) it is called habituation by the family at home. Besides, the mass media also helps in the process of language acquisition as part of print technology. From this habitual process given by the parents students tried to creating linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing action as a four categories in memory strategy (Lestari 2015) obtained from watching english television shows.

### **Getting regular maternal child care guidance**

Medical personnel as well as a consultation center provided by the country where students live have an important role in the process of acquiring students' English because the child's development will be monitored every month.

*"So actually, when the first child was born, every newborn child here had to be obliged to meet with maternal child health, maternal child health is like a posyandu, just like in Indonesia, only here there are regular meetings for every age- the child's age from birth until he was 4 years old before school, so there was a meeting around 6 weeks old 2 months old 4 months 6 months 12 months old 18 months then 2 years 3 years like that so the child's growth and development period is really monitored Here, we look at the details per development, so per month per when it comes, the child is expected to achieve anything"*

The Children whose growth and development are monitored regularly and those who are not supervised will certainly have different language developments. Besides being more focused, of course it will be more focused on several languages that children might use compared to children learning independently without direction. Childcare in

this case is an external social factor that affects the acquisition of English in students (Sari 2017). and interpretational strategies which monitor the students or learner's development and evaluate their performance (Lestari 2015) guided by the maternal child care.

## **The challenges of acquiring English for Indonesian students in a foreign country**

### **Flip translation**

According to the result of the research, students who have just moved abroad or acquired a new language have the possibility of flip translation and or incorrect word pronunciation. This can happen because the vocabulary or sentences in him about the new language is less.

*"His mother chooses not to speak English because she was not good enough, we can say that she is not good, that's probably her English. But, in the end, her child can speak both Indonesian and English, but the accent is not that great, he actually brings the accent here."*

*"Even her big son who is 6 years old, the accent isn't too accentuated here, but in the end it's back and forth, for example, I said, if we tell you what's my name, right, my name is Nuri. Well, he has started to turn around, so what I named (aku nama) like that is my name, even though it should be my name (nama aku)"*

*"It's also possible that the difference between reading letters in English and Indonesian is different, right, so when they read it, for example, when my child was little, he read wet cat (kucing basah ) not wet paint (cat basah)"*

According to the documentation analysis that researchers have, during the teaching and learning process in class students sometimes use English and Indonesian interchangeably but of course their language accents are different according to where they live in this case, in Australia.

As what mention in chapter II flip translation can also be categorized as incorrect utterances. Hutauruk (2015) mentioned that children who acquire a new language need a guidance and direction from adults so they don't make the same mistakes. In addition, from the interview excerpt above, students can also experience errors in pronouncing a word called phonological errors (Hutauruk, 2015).

## **Teaching suitable and correct English**

According to the interviewees as parents whose first language is not English, one of the concerns or challenges for parents in teaching English to their children while living abroad is how to teach suitable and correct English while their English skills are limited. Therefore, the parents prefer their children to acquire suitable and correct English from the natives around them.

*"The challenge is, if any, how can I teach them English properly and correctly as a person whose English is not my first language"*

From the documentation taken by researchers when students did schoolwork, parents provided assistance to children by dictating words or sentences in English that must be spoken when children had to speak up in their assignments in the form of videos. In this case, children who have just acquired English usually do imitating (Sohnata Hutauruk 2015) in the form of words or sentences from the surrounding environment, there are parents or teachers at school.

Formal instruction that given by the teacher at school might help students in performing the acquisition of the language but it is not obtained from parents whose English skills are limited. Learners who receive formal instruction may learn more rapidly than those who do not and formal instruction speeds up second language acquisition (Fadillah 2009).

## **Learning English from Indonesian parents**

The limitations of parents in teaching English to children often cause differences with the English used by natives, this can be in the form of accents, for example. In addition, the types of sentences, phrases, and words used are only those that parents often use in their daily life. This can be a challenge for parents as well as students if the source of language acquisition is only from parents.

*"English is not my first language, so my language skills are limited. Sometimes my accent confuses the children"*

According to the analysis that the researcher did in the documentation of classroom learning, even though the teachers and students at the school are Indonesian citizens

living abroad, the accent of the English language conveyed remains the same as the accent of English in that country.

In this case, one of the challenges that can be identified according to the discussion in chapter II is the possibility of imitating (Sohnata Hutaaruk 2015) from children when acquiring English from parents in this case in the form of accents carried from the parents' L1. Furthermore, parents as external factors can influence learner's acquisition input of the language (Fadillah 2009) one of them is by giving a different accent from native English

### **Preparing the parents and children before enrolling kindergarten**

Based on the results of interviews with parents, they said that preparing children for kindergarten was also a challenge for both of them. Especially children, because children may not necessarily be able to adapt easily by acquiring a new language, that is English.

*"The challenge I faced when I made English as a second language for my children is when they start to enter kindergarten age where they will meet the native community who speak English, in Australia here in Melbourne into the new school year when the child enters the kindergarten, I have to prepare myself and my child to learn English, although not thoroughly, but introducing English in general is also introducing English vocabulary which will be used frequently in the kindergarten."*

Based on the experience of the researchers when participating in the teaching and learning process in the classroom recorded in the activity documentation, the teacher will deliver the material bilingually according to students who have just moved abroad and are just learning English. Because students are still in the stage of adjusting from their first language, Indonesian to their second language, English. Of course, this has been previously communicated by parents to teachers.

Personality and cognitive style also affect the acquisition of English in children (Fadillah 2009) both are those who have just moved abroad and those who have settled there and have just entered a kindergarten whose main language is English. In this case, children may have excessive anxiety if they do not get guidance that suits their needs. One of the external elements that influences the learning of a second language in student

is parents who prepared themselves and their children for kindergarten. The environment that can influence second language acquisition is referred to as external influences of learners. It encompasses the social environment, the family environment, the school environment, and the classroom environment, among other things (Wang 2015).

### **Children's speech delay**

Speech delay can occur due to several things, it cause of delays in child's growth development (internal) or the lack of stimulus from outside (external) such as lack of conversation between parents and children since childhood or it can cause of confusion in children acquiring two languages simultaneously.

*"When they were toddlers, I tried to introduce Indonesian, but they were too late to speak (speech delay). At the age of 2, they don't have much vocabulary. According to the opinion of the health nurse and also one of my friends, children who are introduced to their 2 languages are confused and it affects their speaking ability. So we are encouraged to use only one language, to make it easier for children to speak."*

According to the discussion in the previous chapter, the occurrence of speech delay in children is cause by the different cognitive abilities of each child. (Kalati 2016) This will affect the language acquisition process in children so that it requires handling according to their needs.

The lack of language input that students get from their parents causes delays in producing words, this can occur in the acquisition of the first or second language. Ellis (1989) in Fadillah (2009) writes 'it is self-evident that second language acquisition can take place only when the learner has access to second language input.

### **The strategies of acquiring English for Indonesian students in a foreign country**

#### **Giving direct corrections to the students**

One of the fastest ways to respond to errors that 'may be repeated' in children who are still in the early stages in acquiring language is by providing direct corrections, adjusting the situation and conditions of language use in conversation.

*"Yes, of course we will correct it immediately, yes, for example, when he misinterprets it in front of Indonesian friends, usually they will reflexively correct it"*

Direct corrections can be made by adults around the student, either from parents or teachers at school. Providing direct corrections in order to overcome challenges in acquiring English is part of the Communicative Approach Strategy (Jenny Ximena Montano 2017) where there is communication that can be understood by each other. In addition, compensation needs to be given as a form of tolerance for mistakes that children make when they make mistakes in speaking or conveying a sentence. The compensation can be in the form of modifying the message, mixing phrases, or moving to the mother tongue based on the child's English ability. This is called the compensating technique (Kalati 2016).

### **Giving a language area outside the class**

One of the ways that can accomplish to teach or train children so that they can speak English properly and correctly is to place them in an English-speaking community so they will be able to acquire English quickly. In addition, parents also provide assistance during the process of acquiring English when outside of school.

*"It's like what I said during the interview. So far, we have planned that for example at home, we speak Indonesian but when we are outside when we are outside the house, yes, yes, we try to speak English, why? Yes, as I said before, so that children get used to it too, inside the house, it's ok, we just use Indonesian but when outside the house, it's okay to speak English because people outside the house also mostly speak English"*

Providing support during language acquisition using a communicative approach and adjusting children's cognitive abilities (Jenny Ximena Montano 2017) will help them acquire English well. This strategy asked students to be more confident in exposing themselves outside class and home. social strategies are activities that students engage in to seek opportunities to be exposed to an environment where practice is possible. This strategy is important because language learning always involves other people (Hardan 2013).

## **Learning independently from television**

Many sources that parents use in order to help the process of acquiring their children's second language i.e. English, one of it through television, story books, and short videos. They chose this because they wanted to reduce screen time for children.

*"I set up a TV channel for children so they can learn English on their own"*

*"From personal experience, it is easier for me to learn a language by watching movies or the news"*

When children watch on television channel where all the shows are in English without a translation, the child will automatically recall some basic vocabulary that they have heard or known before. This method can be categorized as using memory strategy (Kalati 2016) The memory approach aids students in storing and retrieving data. It also participates in semantic mapping, grouping, and sound and visual representation. Learning the language independently from television asked the students to use all of their memory by associating and elaborating new language information to the concept that already in memory (Lestari 2015).

## **Giving basic knowledge of English**

As parents whose first language is not English, one of the efforts they can do to help children acquire English is by providing basic knowledge of English which can be in the form of vocabulary, expressions, or giving examples of sentences used in daily conversation.

*"The strategy used to overcome these challenges is that I try to make the transition process of my child to school run smoothly, I try to teach a lot of English vocabulary to my child who does speak Indonesian at home then try to play together and start using English. Using Indonesian and then translated into English and then also able to see video clips in a short duration which is suitable for the age of Kindergarten children, which teaches about how they will be in a new school in a new kindergarten. and how does the teacher teach it in English like that so that children are sought not to experience pressure or stress when they enter a new environment with a new language too"*

Many strategies can combined in teaching basic English to children, as well as through a communicative approach (Kalati 2016) between parents and children by

providing real examples in the use of sentences, compensation strategies by letting children explore the sentences or words they want to say, and of course using memory strategy (Hardan 2013) because children will automatically recall memories that they ever had or something that happened to them before.

### **Monitor child language development with maternal child care**

A strategy that can be used if children have difficulty in acquiring English as their first or second language is asking for help from experts, including through maternal childcare/nurse who will monitor the development of children from infancy every month or within a certain period of time.

*"The next steps for example there is a possibility of being late in speaking, or for example, there is the possibility of other things that really need to be followed up later, the nurse there will give what is called a reference, like an introduction for us to meet with a doctor or meet with a specialist"*

In addition to parents and teachers who must understand this strategy, as an expert (pediatrician/maternal childcare) certainly can better understand identifying to children's cognitive abilities (Jenny Ximena Montano 2017), so that suggestions and input to parents can be given according to the needs and abilities of children. Additionally, the strategy used in this process also social strategy (Lestari 2015) where students have interaction to the maternal child care so that they could measure the language development

## **Conclusion**

**T**his study has some practical implications for many side such as teachers and other researchers. The English teachers can explore further various methods that can help the student in acquiring English, both when interacting with school friends and provide advice to parents to participate in supporting the child's English acquisition process. In this case, there is collaboration between teachers and parents in helping the process of acquiring English for children. For other researchers who may also have the same discussion as this research requires more diverse sources for comparison and data analysis and analyzing

more methods, problems, and strategies used in acquiring Indonesian children's English abroad.

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