



# Language Acquisition: Exploring Parental Strategies and Children's Linguistic Development

Widya Rizky Pratiwi 

*Masters of English Education, Universitas Terbuka, INDONESIA*

*Your Jalan Cabe Raya, Pamulang, Tangerang Selatan, Banten*

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b></p> <p>Received</p> <p>Accepted</p>	<p>This study explores the language learning dynamics within a bilingual family in Malaysia, focusing on parental strategies and their influence on language acquisition in Bahasa and Malay. Employing a qualitative case study design, participants were purposively sampled from the researcher's friend's family. Meticulous observation activities assessed various aspects of the family's language environment, including parental language use, exposure to authentic materials, and correcting linguistic errors. Creswell's framework guided data analysis, thoroughly examining observational data to derive meaningful insights. Trustworthiness was established through prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. The findings revealed proactive parental approaches, such as creating daily communication contexts, utilizing diverse activities, and providing corrective feedback, which fostered a supportive language learning environment for the children. Overall, these efforts facilitated bilingualism and language proficiency in both Bahasa and Malay, highlighting the pivotal role of parental involvement. This study contributes empirical evidence of effective parental strategies in bilingual language development, enriching our understanding of SLA theories and bilingual language acquisition within familial contexts.</p>
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*Correspondence:*

[widya\\_pratiwi@ecampus.ut.ac.id](mailto:widya_pratiwi@ecampus.ut.ac.id)

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## INTRODUCTION

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) stands as a rich field of inquiry, tracing its roots back to seminal figures like Stephen Krashen, whose theories on language acquisition influenced subsequent research in linguistics and education (Krashen, 1982). However, it was not until the pioneering work of renowned linguist Noam Chomsky that SLA found firm theoretical grounding. Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG) framework provided a theoretical lens through which researchers could explore the innate mechanisms underlying language acquisition (Chomsky, 1957). His proposition that humans are born with a biological predisposition for language learning revolutionized our understanding of how individuals acquire second languages.

As the founding father of modern linguistics, Chomsky's contributions laid the groundwork for a plethora of research endeavours aimed at unravelling the complexities of SLA. Through his work, scholars began to appreciate the intricate interplay between innate linguistic mechanisms and environmental stimuli in shaping language development (Chomsky, 1965). Chomsky's theories sparked academic discourse and paved the way for practical applications in language teaching and learning.

The study of SLA holds profound significance, offering insights into how individuals navigate the intricacies of multiple linguistic systems (Ellis, 1994). In an increasingly globalized world, where multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception, understanding the mechanisms of SLA has never been more crucial. Bilingualism, in particular, has garnered significant attention as researchers seek to unravel the unique challenges and advantages faced by individuals acquiring two or more languages simultaneously (Grosjean, 2010).

Previous research in SLA has provided a robust foundation upon which this study builds. Scholars have explored various aspects of language acquisition, ranging from the role of input and interaction to the influence of age and aptitude (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Studies examining bilingualism in children have shed light on the dynamic interplay between language systems, highlighting the complex cognitive processes involved in simultaneous language acquisition (Genesee, 2004).

Despite the wealth of research in SLA, there remain gaps in our understanding, particularly concerning bilingual language development within the familial context. This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the

experiences of a bilingual family residing in Malaysia. By focusing on the interactions between parents and children in this context, we aim to elucidate the efficacy of different language learning strategies and their implications for SLA theories.

This study's scope is delimited to one family's experiences, limiting the generalizability of its findings. However, by employing rigorous observational methods and drawing on established theoretical frameworks, we endeavour to provide valuable insights into the intricacies of bilingual language acquisition. Furthermore, this study contributes to the broader body of research in SLA by offering empirical evidence from a unique linguistic context.

## **METHOD**

It is a case study qualitative design. The data collection process for this study employed a systematic and thorough approach to explore the language learning dynamics within a bilingual family residing in Malaysia. Observational activities formed the cornerstone of data collection, meticulously documenting various facets of the family's language environment. These observations encompassed parental language use, interactions among family members, methods of exposing the children to authentic language materials, and strategies for correcting linguistic errors. To ensure consistency and structure in data collection, a structured observational protocol was developed, outlining specific behaviors and language-related activities to be observed.

The respondents selected as participants were members of the researcher's friend's family, chosen through purposive sampling. The family has been residing in Malaysia for almost three years. The family, which consisted of four individuals, was observed: the parents, their daughter, who was born in Malaysia and resided there until she was almost two years old, and their son, who was born in Indonesia and was acquiring Bahasa as his L1. Thus, each family member was exposed to distinct first languages: Bahasa and Malay.

Drawing on Creswell's framework for data analysis, the observational data was thoroughly examined to extract meaningful insights. The analysis sought to uncover recurring themes and patterns that shed light on the efficacy of different language learning strategies within the familial context.

Ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings was paramount. To achieve this level of validity and credibility, strategies such as prolonged engagement with participants, triangulation of data sources, member checking, and peer debriefing were employed. Through this comprehensive approach, valuable insights into the intricate

dynamics of bilingual language acquisition within the family setting were sought.

## FINDINGS

The following table 1 presents observation activities for family experience.

**Table 1.** Observation activities for family experience

No	Opportunities for SLA	Yes	No
1	The parents create daily contexts for communication in Bahasa and Malay	√	
2	The parents make use of a variety of activities for engaging the daughter in natural communication in Bahasa and Malay	√	
3	The parents expose the family to authentic material (materials are designed for daily activities, e.g. a storybook, an educated movies, etc.)	√	
4	The parents correct the daughter's speaking errors, especially in her grammar.	√	
5	The parents correct poor pronunciation when the daughter is focusing more on conveying meanings than the correct sounds of Bahasa and Malay	√	
6	The parents ensure comprehensible input during a communication.	√	
7	The parents create an environment in which the daughter's first language is rarely spoken. Typically, the daughter fully immersed and surrounded by L2	√	
8	The parents work with the emerging language during a communication	√	

The data gathered from the observation activities within the family provide valuable insights into the language learning environment and parental strategies employed in facilitating language acquisition in Bahasa and Malay.

Firstly, the parents actively create daily contexts for communication in both languages, indicating a deliberate effort to immerse their daughter in a bilingual environment. This suggests a proactive approach towards language exposure and practice.

Moreover, the variety of activities utilized by the parents to engage the daughter in natural communication further reinforces their commitment to fostering language development. By incorporating diverse and engaging activities, the parents enhance the daughter's language skills while making the learning process enjoyable and interactive.

The exposure to authentic materials, such as storybooks and educational movies, underscores the parents' dedication to providing rich language input. By exposing their daughter to authentic linguistic content, the parents offer opportunities for language learning beyond traditional classroom settings.

The proactive approach of correcting the daughter's speaking errors, particularly in grammar and pronunciation, reflects the parents' role as language models and facilitators. By providing corrective feedback, the parents help reinforce linguistic accuracy and fluency in both languages.

Furthermore, the parents' emphasis on ensuring comprehensible input during communication demonstrates their awareness of the importance of clear and understandable language input in language acquisition. This approach enhances the daughter's understanding and comprehension of the languages being acquired.

The creation of an environment where the daughter's first language is rarely spoken indicates a deliberate effort to promote language immersion and proficiency in the target languages. By surrounding the daughter with the target language (L2), the parents create an environment conducive to language acquisition and practice.

Lastly, the parents' active engagement in working with the emerging language during communication highlights their commitment to supporting their daughter's language development journey. By actively participating in conversations and interactions, the parents provide valuable scaffolding and support, fostering language growth and proficiency.

Overall, the data suggest that the parents play a crucial role in creating a supportive and enriching language learning environment for their daughter, effectively promoting bilingualism and language proficiency in Bahasa and Malay.

## DISCUSSION

In discussing the results, we can connect the data with relevant theories and previous studies on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in bilingualism. Drawing on contemporary research from the past decade provides a robust framework for understanding the implications of the observed parental strategies.

The parents' proactive creation of daily contexts for communication aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and environmental context in language development. This theory posits that language learning occurs through social interaction, and the family environment plays a crucial role in shaping language acquisition.

Moreover, the variety of activities the parents employ to engage the daughter in natural communication resonates with Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), which suggests that language acquisition is facilitated by exposure to comprehensible input in meaningful contexts. By incorporating diverse and engaging activities, the parents provide opportunities for the daughter to receive comprehensible input in both Bahasa and Malay, thus promoting language development.

The exposure to authentic materials, such as storybooks and educational movies, is consistent with Cummins's linguistic independence hypothesis (Cummins, 1979), which proposes that proficiency in one language can positively influence

proficiency in another. By exposing their daughter to authentic linguistic content in both languages, the parents support her bilingual development and promote cross-linguistic skills transfer.

Furthermore, the parents' emphasis on correcting the daughter's speaking errors aligns with the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1981), which posits that language acquisition is facilitated by opportunities for meaningful interaction and corrective feedback. By providing corrective feedback on grammar and pronunciation, the parents help the daughter internalize linguistic rules and improve her language accuracy.

The emphasis on ensuring comprehensible input during communication is consistent with Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), which suggests that language learning occurs when learners notice linguistic features in the input. By ensuring that communication is understandable, the parents enhance the daughter's ability to notice and process linguistic structures in both Bahasa and Malay.

From the above explanation, the observed parental strategies align with critical theories in SLA and highlight the importance of social interaction, comprehensible input, and corrective feedback in promoting bilingualism and language proficiency in Bahasa and Malay within the family context.

## CONCLUSION

The current study provides valuable insights into the language learning environment of a bilingual family residing in Malaysia. Through meticulous observation and analysis of parental strategies, the study elucidates the proactive approaches adopted by parents in fostering language acquisition in Bahasa and Malay. The findings underscore the significance of parental involvement, highlighting the crucial role they play in creating supportive language learning environments. By actively engaging in daily communication contexts, providing diverse activities, exposing children to authentic materials, and offering corrective feedback, parents contribute significantly to their children's bilingual development. Moreover, this study contributes to the broader field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) by offering empirical evidence of effective parental strategies and their implications for bilingual language acquisition within familial contexts.

The contribution of this study extends beyond the specific case of the bilingual family in Malaysia, offering valuable insights applicable to diverse linguistic contexts. By elucidating effective parental strategies, the study provides practical guidance for families and educators seeking to support bilingual language development. Additionally, the study enriches our understanding of SLA theories by demonstrating how social interaction, comprehensible input, and corrective feedback play crucial roles in promoting bilingualism. Ultimately, this research underscores the significance of parental involvement in language acquisition and highlights the need for continued exploration of effective strategies to support bilingual language development in diverse contexts.

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