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by Amy Fayla Sufa

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Exploring a Toddler's Foreign Language Development through Watching English Videos on YouTube

Amy Fayla Sufa[1]✉, Dzulfikri[2]
Graduate program in ELT, Universitas Islam Malang(1)
Department of English Education, Universitas Islam Malang(2)
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Abstrak
Penelitian ini menguraikan perkembangan Bahasa Asing (BA) seorang balita Jawa yang diberikan stimulus melalui menonton video berbahasa Inggris di YouTube. Zhaff, balita non-berbahasa Inggris menjadi subjek penelitian ini. Observasi longitudinal dalam studi kasus digunakan sebagai metode penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan dalam bentuk rekaman video, wawancara, dan catatan yang diambil dari interaksi langsung dengan subjek. Penelitian ini hanya berfokus pada bahasa Inggrisnya dan tidak memberikan bukti perkembangan bahasa Indonesianya. Hasilnya, Zhaff dikategorikan sebagai anak bilingual yang dipengaruhi oleh media YouTube. Dia mengalami peningkatan pada BA-nya seiring bertambahnya level video yang ditontonnya. Mulai dari kosakata sederhana dari lagu tentang hewan, menirukan lagu anak-anak, hingga peningkatan dalam membuat beberapa frasa dan mengolah kata-kata kompleks yang didapatnya dari dialog kartun. Studi ini lebih lanjut mengungkapkan bahwa kemampuan kognitif anak-anak untuk memperoleh kosa kata luar biasa.

Kata Kunci: *perkembangan bahasa balita; pemerolehan bahasa; anak bilingual; YouTube.*

Abstract
This study explores the progress of a Javanese toddler's Foreign Language (FL) development by providing a stimulus through watching English videos on YouTube. Zhaff, a non-English toddler living in Java was the subject of this study. Longitudinal observation in a case study used as the research method. The data were collected in the form recorded videos, interviews, and notes taken from direct interaction. This research only focuses on his English and did not give the evidence on his Bahasa Indonesia development. As the results, Zhaff categorized as a bilingual child influenced by the media of YouTube. He experienced an improvement on his FL as the level of the video he watched increased. Starting with a simple vocabulary from animal songs, imitating songs from nursery rhymes, until the improvement in making some phrases and processing complex words that he got from cartoon dialogues. This study further reveals that children's cognitive ability to acquire vocabulary is marvelous.

Keywords: *toddler's language development; language acquisition; bilingual children; YouTube.*

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✉ Corresponding author :
Email Address : amyfaylasufah@gmail.com (Malang, Indonesia)
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Introduction

Toddler's language development could be analyzed from many points of view. For instance, on language acquisition (Aprilia, 2021; Dewi, 2021; Horvath et al., 2022; O'Shannessy, 2020; Sorenson Duncan & Paradis, 2020), on cognitive psychology (Gunnerud et al., 2020; McCauley & Christiansen, 2019; Siregar & Yaswinda, 2022), and behaviorism (Fitriyani & Barokah, 2021; Kusmanto et al., 2021; Madigan et al., 2020; Zhao, 2022) etc. Language development itself is a process occupying both cognitive and articulation process (Xu et al., 2008). Furthermore, the researcher will use the language development form of **FL** for foreign language, **L1** for first/ mother language, **L2** for second language and so on.

Some parents might not aware that children are able to absorb foreign language by effortlessly watching videos from YouTube. The most popular video application that supports children's language development, YouTube, classified as "*Made for Kids*" is intended at its finest standard to supports early learning (Neumann & Herodotou, 2020). YouTube has its own version specifically for children, namely YouTube Kids. As written in the description, "*YouTube Kids* provides a more contained environment for *kids* to explore *YouTube* and makes it easier for parents and caregivers to guide their journey". Based on research by Sisbintari & Setiawati, (2021), the use of this application also helps develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills of their children through the content contained in the Youtube Kids application. Children videos on YouTube are packaged in such a way that makes children craved for it more and more. With fascinating creations and attractive colors, children want to explore further.

Cocomelon is the most famous channel in YouTube kids. However, some people debated that the intro sound strongly attracts children's attention, the videos itself even hypnotized (Anselmo, 2020), brainwashed (CouchMomClub, 2022), hacked children's brain (Savantics, 2022), hyper-stimulated from bright colors and loud noises (Amalia, 2022). These assumptions brought from some YouTube channel which against Cocomelon for kids due to its dark theories (MostAmazingTop10, 2021). In hence, if it happened continuously over a long period of time, of course, they would become addicted to watch this channel. And it could be as dangerous as drugs for children (BlackSheepMinistries, 2020).

A toddler who will be the subject of this study, Zhaff used YouTube to watch nursery rhymes, cartoons, dancing and songs, but mostly, he likes to watch animals and living things character from the channel Pinkfong and Cocomelon. All of those videos are presented in English, which influences hugely on his language ability. This research was conducted that when Zhaff was 7-months to 4-years old. Therefore, in accordance to Piaget, he went through 2 phases of cognitive development; sensorimotor (0-2 years) and preoperational (3-6 years). On sensorimotor, children's language comes from simple signs. Then in the next phase, the children language development within echolalia into monologue (from repeating sounds around them into producing sounds from their own mouth) (Tavakoli, 2013). In the case of Zhaff, English is not his L1. He is in the environment where Javanese children speak Javanese as their L1, Bahasa Indonesia as the L2 and English or other language could be the L3. Nevertheless, he speaks English more often than the language he should speak, neither Javanese language nor Bahasa Indonesia. This makes people around him facing some problems to make conversation with him.

Kusmanto et al., (2021) did research on the effect of gadget usage on 3 Indonesian toddlers aged 2-4 years old and found that 2 of 3 toddlers had a negative response which experienced speech delays. While the one who got positive response is the child who mastering foreign vocabulary and easy to communicate with other. The result also related to the frequent of gadget usage, they spent more than 2 hours per day to watch videos on YouTube. It assumed that the high usage of gadget, has a very huge impact on toddler's language development (Sowmya & Manjuvani, 2019). However, benefitting technology does not always have a positive impact, it could make children's addiction on gadget quite high

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(Novianti & Garzia, 2020). This might be related to the screen media effect, the content is made to resemble toddlers' real-life experiences as close as possible using simple stories and familiar objects or routines (Linebarger & Vaala, 2010).

The research on how YouTube has big impact on children's language development also had been conducted by some previous researcher, including positive impact (Anggraini et al., 2022; Farahsani et al., 2020; Hosen & Khatun, 2021) negative effect in addiction to YouTube (Nasution, n.d.; Novianti & Garzia, 2020; Wahyuningtyas & Shahlo Izatovna, n.d.; Widodo & Wartoyo, 2021). The negative impact is that children might experience a delay in speaking their L1, because they are more interested and curious to the uniqueness of the FL sounds from YouTube.

Despite a lot of research on children language development had been conducted, however, researchers did not find yet any study of children's language development whose environment is among Javanese people. Based on three factors that can affect children to be bilingual: adult language in the home, non-English use for media, and non-English use with siblings (Anderson et al., 2020). Then, is it possible for Zhaff, who gets a stimulus from watching YouTube videos, can be categorized as a bilingual child?. Furthermore, this research will be focusing on how English video on Youtube influencing Zhaff, a Javanese toddler on his FL development.

Method

The most frequent method for investigating children language learning or acquisition is through longitudinal observation (da Silva, 2022). Longitudinal approach in a case study adopted by Larsen-Freeman was conducted in this research, it mostly used to analyze linguistic, cultural, and social phenomena to figure out individuals' experiences and development in a limited contexts (Phakiti et al., 2018). The subject of this study was Zhaff, a 4-years-old toddler born in Java, Indonesia, which people around him are Javanese pure-blood and speaks Javanese language daily. Thomas in Starman (2013), argued that the subject is not selected based on a typical sample, but somehow, it is carefully chosen because it is interesting, unusual, striking, and can make a change in the object's characteristics. Zhaff's case was interesting that on his age, he could memorize a lot of English vocabulary coincidently by only watching English videos on YouTube. The research design involved the following steps;

Table 1. Research design

1. Collect the data. Due to its limitation as it is impossible to record the entire process on subject's language development, the instrument of the data were collected in the form recorded videos taken in the last two years around January 2021 to December 2022, interviews with the family, and some notes of vocabulary progress for easy analyze at a later which researcher had direct interaction with him. In addition, this research only focusing on his English, the researcher did not give the evidence on his Bahasa Indonesia development.
2. Testing the subject was to find out the extent of vocabulary knowledge he has mastered using try-to-guess games and story tests to measure communication skills.
3. Categorize the data refer to Salnita et al., (2019) divided children's language development into several phases; at the age of one year, children begin to be able to say a word that they know from their environment. At the age of 2 years, children are able to pronounce two-word utterances, respond to the other person's speech, and enter into short conversations. At the age of 3 years, children begin to be able to carry on long conversations and take turns with the interlocutor. At the age of 4-6 years they are able to use single sentences with

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complete or incomplete clauses and have coherent structures and inversions. For that reason, the data is presented into several phase of age growth started from 6-month to 18-month old (0,6-1,5 years old), 19-months to 24-months old (1,5-2 years old), 25-months to 30-months old (2-2,5 years old), 31-months to 36-months old (2,5-3 years old), 37-months to 42-months old (3-3,5 years old), and 43-months to 50-months old (3,5-4,2 years old).

4. Analyze the data. Like many other observation methods, a case study tends to be more qualitative to involve deep examination of an individual by describing the findings.
5. Draw a conclusion.

Results and Discussion

We believe that children could learn languages quickly and effortlessly. SLA experts argued that children acquire and adults can only learn. Meanwhile, language learning means a conscious effort in gathering L2, language acquisition assumes a subconscious process of acquiring language for communication purpose (Krashen, 1981). Here is the data that researcher found on her analysis in order to gain information of the process of Zhaff's language development focusing in English. By sorting out every six months of his growth, with the purpose that language development can be seen reliably.

age	improvements
6 to 18-months	babbling and learn simple words in Bahasa
19 to 24-months	one syllable animals and butterfly pronounced unclearly
25 to 30-months	vocabularies increased rapidly; colors, shapes, and simple phrase
31 to 36-months	humming and singing nursery rhymes
37 to 42-months	making complex word phrases
43 to 50-months	translating words and recognizing the game correctly

Table 2. Zhaff's FL development

The details of Zhaff's FL development would be described below;

6-months to 18-months old

Children starts to babbling around 6-10 month, m-sounds, with some basic sounds that can be accepted by babies, such as *m*-sound, *b*-sound, and *g*-sound (Tavakoli, 2013). Zhaff started to talk since he was around 6-months to 17-months old, he was able to say a few simple words in Bahasa Indonesia, such as; *mama, papa, susu, kucing, minum, maem = makan, kepuyuk = kerupuk, kepu = kupu-kupu*. It means that his L1 is Bahasa Indonesia. In accordance with McNeill's (1970) that even though children are limited to uttering a single word at the beginning of language acquisition, they are capable to understand things in a complete sentence (Coulthard & Candlin, 2014). Some words uttered by Zhaff was not appropriate with the correct rules of Bahasa Indonesia. But at least, at this age, he had been started to learn to understand a few words to give small orders to people around him.

19-months to 24-months old

This was when the moment when the pandemic started. It is a difficult time for everyone, many are affected physically and mentally (Labib et al., 2022; Marconcin et al., 2022; Solmi et al., 2022). Since the pandemic, there has been an increase in the use of gadgets by the Indonesian society. It is even begun to affect toddlers (Khadijah et al., 2022). A recent report, surveyed 3,154 families and showed that 80% of children age 0-7 use YouTube, and 59% use YouTube Kids (Neumann & Herodotou, 2020).

This lockdown was also faced by Zhaff that the government advised to stay at home and minimize outside activities. During this time, his mother started introducing English-based YouTube channel to him, including Pinkfong, Cocomelon, Bing, Babybuss, and many

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more but mostly nursery rhymes. Where toward this phase, children should be introduced to the world outside by playing on the playground, or just walking around the house complex. But he locked down at home and his only fun-zone is in the videos given by his mother. He was allowed to watch YouTube when his mother was doing another job. The video was played on the TV when he busied build up his magnetic tiles. Actually, his mother did not do it on purpose to make him learning English through the videos. Just simply because the channel was attractive enough to gain children's attention.

Because most of videos he watched were animation channel about animals, at this time, Zhaff started to know some vocabulary about animals. Some of the words he knows are *cat, bee, bird, and fish,* those are animals that only have one syllable. However, he could also pronounce a word that has more than one syllable, *butterfly.* Although the pronunciation was not clear, he pronounced butterfly with *flai-flai, bai-bai or pai-pai*. It was affected by one of the videos was a song by Pinkfong channel under the tittle Flitter-Flutter Butterflies, the lyrics also say it so. Since he was still unable to recognize letters yet and only relied on hearing, he might get confused with the words *flitter-flutter* and *butterfly*. Because they both sound similar, so that his pronunciation of butterfly varies. As long as it is understandable, it is no problem. Children say things and using practical understanding which is later coming up with abstract word but acceptable vocalization (Cowley, 2004).

Watching a video on YouTube can cause one-way communication, in which children only focus on the screen without making any dialogue or interaction. It reduces the quality of two-way communication where children must learn since a very young age, so that speech delay can be avoided. Because children's language skills development is an ability that is very important to communicate, especially for toddler, it is important to build communication two-way (Sari, 2020). This is also seen in Zhaff where at the beginning of his screen time, he focused a lot on his cellphone. Make him a little bewildered and somewhat disconnected when having conversation.

25-months to 30-months old

In this phase, the development in vocabulary increased rapidly. He can already recognize simple colors; *red, green, blue* and *yellow*. Various basic shapes; *circles, squares, triangles* and *rectangles*. He knew these simple shapes and colors from the videos Learn Shape Circle, Triangle, Rectangle & more by Kids Songs and Nursery Rhymes - RV AppStudios channel, Dancing Shapes and Ollie is Trapped by Pinkfong, Shape Song by Cocomelon, and many more.

Generally, children between 18 and 24 months of age, they began to combine words into phrases (Rescorla & Mirak, 1997). However, Zhaff is not an English native speaker, he bagan to have some phrases at these ages. Some simple phrases that had been spoken, such as *"Thank you"*, "*this is blue*", "*look! Birds flying*", "*let's play*", "*it's okay*", *"well done!" and* "*let's go, yeay!"*. Toddlers get an understanding of how their bodies can be used as a tool, for example by pointing an object can represent their interests by utilizing their activities for adult understanding of acceptable vocalization analysis (Cowley, 2004). For what he had been known, he tried to show. For example, when he saw an ashtray in the form of yellow circle. He pointed at the object or touched it while saying "*it's a circle*", "*it's yellow, yellow*". Also, when he saw an animal on the wall like a butterfly, he said *"look! It's butterfly"*. His pronunciation on butterfly was already clear now.

On many occasions, he often talked where as if he imaginably having dialogue like in the video. Which in fact, he only imitated the sound, not the words. Therefore, it sounded as if he was speaking English because the accent as just the same as the video. He did not really speak English, he only tried to sound like the cartoon. Sometimes, he gave an order with English too and so that between Zhaff and the interlocutor could not build two-way communication because they did not understand each other, except those who knew English. For the reason that only few people understand him, he liked to talk to himself. But it is normal,

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even until now, he still often talks to himself. It is not something to be worried, because in majority, children do it. Much of children talk is talk for themselves and it serves little communicative function(Berk, 1994). Children have their own imagination.

31-months to 36-months old

Children's cognitive abilities can be developed through a song. Then, auditory sensitivity is trained with the pitch of the song. In addition, children can make a difference in their internal rhythms and motor skills through changing the rhythms of music (Anggaira et al., 2022). Zhaff's acquisition on FL is the result of the benefits of learning English from songs. Starting with a simple vocabulary from animal songs, imitating songs from nursery rhymes, until the improvement in making some phrases and processing words that he got from cartoon dialogues.

Zhaff began to be able to sing the songs he heard, such as The Bees Go Buzzing Hurray, Hurray by channel The Bumble Nums. Even until today (he is 50 months old), he still pronounces the word "Hurray" where Indonesian people usually say "Hore". Flitter-Flutter Butterflies by Pinkfong still one of his favorites. There also a song by himself, "*bunga flower, bunga flower*". According to the researcher's observations, there was one song he often sings or just humming the tones. It is by the Muffin Songs channel, the lyrics is *fly, fly, fly the butterfly. In the meadow is flying high, in the garden is flying low. Fly, fly, fly, the butterfly*. Once on a long trip out of town, he sang this song all along the trip. Butterfly is the animal he likes the most, he always brings butterfly figure wherever he goes.

At the age of three, he began to be able to build good communication with people around him. Not only using English, the vocabulary in Bahasa Indonesia has also increased over the time. The process of language development for children aged 3 years is structured based on behavior and perception (Lumentut & Lengkoan, 2021). Through the addition of little by little as rhythmic as the cognitive development of children.

37-months to 42-months old

As he got older, Zhaff began to be given several videos with a rather long duration and had dialogues not only nursery rhymes videos. For instance, cartoons from the Wolfoo Family, Como Kids TV, Bing, BabyBuss channels and many others. Noticing from his accent every time he speaks, it seems that Zhaff watched a lot of the Wolfoo family channel because it was as much the same as the cartoon. Not only Wolfoo sounded attractively for Zhaff, the character is simple but cute. Adapted from the word "wolf", you can imagine Wolfoo is a wolf cub in a cute way. As written in the channel description, "*Wolfoo is a cute wolf living on a hill in a small American village with his parents, baby sister Lucy and his friends*". This educational based channel targets to gain viewers from children aged 2-years to 8-years old.

This cartoon turns wolf as a wild animal into well-behaved and funny animals. Some videos described Wolfoo as a soft-hearted animal. As in several videos in the tittle Wolfoo, I'm Sorry, Excuse Me! Learn Rules of Conduct for Kids or Daddy! I'm Sorry, Excuse Me - Daddy Is My Hero. Apparently, watching videos on YouTube not only affects the language, but also the behavior. The evidence was once Zhaff made a mistake, he spontaneously said "*I am sorry mama*". There was also when he was running around with his brothers and he was exhausted to run, he said "*hey, stop! don't run*", "*hey, stop, stop, stop*" while made a gesture by waving his hand signaling to stop. Fortunately, his pronunciation is fluent, by imitating the accent in the videos from YouTube. Their tongues are more flexible compared to adult tongues. Thereby, young learners have better phonetically than adults.

43-months to 50-months old

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In this phase, Zhaff entered preschool, therefore his activity of watching YouTube videos is drastically reduced. He allowed to use a cell phone at night or on weekends only. At the beginning of school, it was difficult for him to communicate with his peers because he understood English more than Javanese language or Bahasa Indonesia, which all of his friends used. Fortunately, Zhaff's class teacher could speak English and been able to understand the language Zhaff used. If before, he was awkward and seemed a bit afraid to talk to strangers, entering his school years, he met many people and started to communicate with others easily. Literally, Zhaff has been able to make two-way communication since the early he spoke English, but the people around him didn't speak English. Like in one moment researcher (who also able to speak English) asked, "*Zhaff, what are you doing?*" and he responded by answering what action he did. He was accomplished to sort out which language will he use. When his opponent use Bahasa Indonesia, then he will respond in Bahasa Indonesia too. When his opponent use English, he will respond it in English.

On October 2022, Zhaff was turning 4. He got some presents from family and relatives which he then opened it carefully. And again, he recognized the present with English, *"wow! A microphone, it's blue, papa, it's blue microphone! Yeay!"* he tried to show to his father. Later, the researcher gave him a pink rain lily and sadly, her cousin stole the flower, causing the petals fell off its stem. With a sad expression he complained "*oh no! it's broken*". The researcher was dumbfounded of how could he knew the L2 vocabulary that much. Maybe one of the scenes he watched was similar to what happened at that time. Therefore, he understood that when he sees something get damaged into some pieces, it is *broken*. Naturally, he imitated the dialogue of the characters in the cartoon and match the actual events.

All of sudden, the researcher forgot what the English word of "blowing" when she asked the petals to be blown by him. And just casually asking Zhaff, "*dek, apasih bahasa Inggrisnya tiup?*" (What is the English of "tiup"?). Surprisingly, he was even able to translate this word, "*aah blow*" he said with ease. No need to recall onto his memory, reflexively, his brain could process information about this translation. Still in her shock, researcher initiated to play try-to-guess game. Then grabbed Oxford dictionary and opened The Animal Kingdom section, because he loves animal. Enthusiastically, he pointed at the animal figures in the book and guessed them one by one. Started with the insects section, he pointed to his favorite animal, *the butterfly*, continued with; *bee, mosquito, wasp, dragonfly, ladybug, ant, moth, caterpillar, larva* and *grasshopper*. Next was the part above, there were amphibians; *frog, turtle, snake*, but he mistaken the salamander as a *lizard* (because they did look similar). After that on the crustaceans section; *shrimp* and *crabs*. Arachnids; *spider* and *scorpion*. Gastropods; *snails*. Cephalous; *octopus*. Turned into the next page, what caught his attention the most were *birds*, the pictures were 11 types of birds but he only recognized *owls*. There also a picture of a *nest* and he figured it out properly. Below it was mammals; *whale, lion, monkey, squirrel, elephant* and *bat*. The last one is *fish*. Out of 52 pictures of animals (including 11 types of bird) he was able to answer 30 correctly. Even though he couldn't read yet, he was only relied on his memory from what he saw on YouTube before. Amazing.

Children are representation of 'speak now, learn later', it was proven by Zhaff, by the end of observation, researcher did a small test by try-to-guess game with Oxford Dictionary. And the result was amazing, with the consideration that he could not read yet, he can already recognize animals in English because he watched and heard from the YouTube videos. Locke's philosophy of child's brain begins as a tabula rasa or blank slate (Baser et al., 2022) indicates that children are able to copy-paste anything. They build their own personality by experiencing the world around them through their senses. Just like a white paper, it can be put with any colour to draw, children are portrayed according to how their parents trained them since childhood. Some parents rely on gadgets to accompany their children growth and

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development might bring positive and negative effect. For Zhaff's language development, it brings positive impact. Luckily, the negative effect did not affect him. When his mother told him to stop using gadget, he stopped. He also never got into tantrums just for the sake of watching YouTube.

Zhaff experienced to speak in L1 since he was 6-months and FL around 19-months. However, bilingual children might seem delayed if only one of their languages is concerned (Nicoladis & Genesee, 1997). Considering Zhaff's language development, which is basically equivalent between his L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) and his FL (English). His relatives thought Zhaff got speech delay because of his late in mastering his L1. In evidence, normally, children are able to string words correctly after they are 48 months old (Rescorla & Mirak, 1997). It was just his family worriedness over the worst effects of YouTube. This worriedness might be linked to Ortega (2014), 3 to 4 years old is the most potential age to teach L1. Until his late 4, he still unable to speak Javanese language and having a very minimum understanding when his interlocutor speaks Javanese language. It is because all of his family speaks Javanese language as their L1, but Zhaff had Bahasa Indonesia as his L1. This is one that his parents missed. However, in educating children, it is not only parents who should be the primary control to maximize communication with children, but people around them also have the responsibility.

Conclusion

Based on results and discussion, it can be concluded that Zhaff, a non-English based is categorized as a bilingual toddler. He was able to adsorb FL obtained from a continuous stimulation, and by the level of videos increases, his ability in English is also increasing. Zhaff's bilinguality with Bahasa Indonesia as his L1, and English as the L2, influenced by the medium of YouTube in an environment where none of them speaks English. Unfortunately, he cannot speak and only has a little understanding of Javanese language, as the Javanese people L1 majority speaks Javanese language.

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