

# The Influence of Environment and Family on the Development of English Language Skills in Early Childhood

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## ABSTRACT

*The study examined the influence of family and school environment on the English language skills of early childhood children at “TK Al-Falah Balombong”. The main objective of this research was to identify the factors hindering English language learning in that place, as well as to determine the extent of children’s interest to know, learn, understand, and master English. This research used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. We found that the family and school environment at “TK Al-Falah Balombong” was not optimal in supporting English language learning. This could be seen from the language they often used at home and in their community, their local language and Indonesian, as well as the gadgets provided by their parents that did not focus on English language learning. The school also lacked competent English language teachers and adequate supporting facilities. Despite these limitations, the children showed high enthusiasm when the researchers introduced English through engaging methods such as songs and animations. To optimize this potential, interactive approaches, competent teachers, and parental support are needed to facilitate their children’s English learning.*

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## KEYWORDS

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## 1. Introduction

English is a crucial and essential tool for global communication in the current era of globalization. Proficiency in English is vital for achieving success in a globally connected society. According to Ningsih et al., (2024), the rapid growth and significance of English worldwide necessitated that children introduced to it from an early age. Mastering and understanding English from a young age is a strategic step in developing children's language and communication skills to face increasingly sophisticated global challenges. Children should be taught foreign communication, specifically English, from an early age because this period was their golden age (Yani & Muryanti, 2023; Mokoginta et al., 2021; Junaidi et al., 2021; Sahib et al., 2021).

Early childhood was the most critical phase in human development, encompassing the age range of 0-6 years. During this stage, children experienced significant development in physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic domains (Article 28, Indonesian National Education System Law No.20/2003, Paragraph 1). Children at this age underwent rapid stimulation through various activities, experiences, and interactions to support their brain development and rapid growth that could not be replicated later in life, which was why this period was often referred to as the "golden age" (Sunarya & Zulfitriya, 2024; Suma et al., 2024). The brain of a young child develops very quickly and is highly responsive to various stimuli from their surroundings. Therefore, the role of parents, family, and educators are crucial in providing appropriate and quality stimulation to support their development.

Family and environment significantly influenced children's English proficiency. As the first environment children encountered, the family was the initial place where they received education (Alfira et al., 2024; Jumriati et al., 2021; Junaid et al., 2024). The family, especially parents, constituted the first and most important educational environment for an individual (Alfira et al., 2024). Parents had the responsibility to provide education that prepared children for school and life beyond. In this context, the family was a crucial determinant in directing a child's development (Wiresti, 2020; Junaid et al., 2023.; Lanta et al., 2022). Not only parents, but teachers also played a vital role in children's English

proficiency. Teachers were essential in helping children understand and use English, thereby enhancing their language skills in early childhood (Aisya et al., 2020; Suma et al., 2023).

Based on our observations at TK Al-Falah Balombong, Majene, it appeared that parents, as the child's first educators, had not yet recognized the importance of mastering English in today's era. The role of parents in supporting and enhancing their children's linguistic intelligence was highly significant (Pratikno et al., 2023; Junaid et al., 2023). Furthermore, the school environment was also not conducive to learning English, as there were no competent English teachers, insufficient encouragement from the school, and inadequate English learning facilities. This situation led to a lack of interest among children in developing their communication skills in English at TK Al-Falah Balombong.

This research highlighted the importance of developing English language skills in early childhood and emphasized establishing a strong foundation in these skills during the era of globalization. The primary priority was to strengthen the role of parents as the main facilitators of learning by understanding how they could effectively support their children's English language acquisition. The primary task of the family, particularly parents, was to guide the child and shape their personality. Social support from an individual's environment, including the family, had a positive impact on the individual's life (Dwitia, 2022).

This study addressed the main research question: What were the influences of family and environment on the development of English language skills in early childhood?. The aim of this research was to identify the factors that prevented families, particularly parents, as well as the surrounding environment and school, from positively impacting the English language development of young children at TK Al-Falah Balombong. Additionally, this study sought to determine the extent of children's interest in learning, understanding, and mastering English.

The benefits of this research included identifying effective methods to help families and schools positively influence and increase children's interest in English. Additionally, this research could provide solutions for determining enjoyable and engaging teaching methods for children in rural areas. As stated by Sunarya. A. and Zulfitria, (2024), designing fun and appealing learning strategies or methods for early childhood education was an essential task for teachers focused on early childhood learning.

## **2. Methodology**

This research was conducted at TK Al-Falah Balombong, Pamboang, Majene. The sample consisted of three parents, two students, and three teachers or educational staff, including the school principal and two other teachers at TK Al-Falah Balombong. The research method used was qualitative with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research aimed to uncover and narratively describe the activities conducted and the impact of these actions on the subjects' lives (Alfira et al., 2024).

The data collection techniques and research stages in this study were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation activities. The observation activities were conducted by directly observing the enthusiasm of the children when we provided English learning treatment using visual aids, such as showing videos of children's songs in English accompanied by cartoon animations at TK Al-Falah Balombong. The research data sources were obtained from interviews with the principal, teachers, parents, and students, as well as documentation in the form of photographs taken during the observations and interviews. The data analysis technique used was qualitative analysis, by identifying and categorizing the main data from the observations and interviews. Then, the researcher detailed and describes the data comprehensively to draw conclusions.

The conclusion-drawing stage of this research involved providing conclusions based on data analysis and evaluating activities that encompassed all the results obtained from the data. This concluding process was carried out in stages. First, preliminary conclusions were drafted while continuously considering the latest incoming data, necessitating ongoing data verification. Second, final conclusions were drawn after the first stage is completed. Conclusions were drawn by comparing and aligning the respondents' statements, survey results, and documentation to obtain a conceptual research outcome.

### 3. Result and Discussions

#### 3.1 Findings

As a result of observations, interviews, and documentation conducted in this research, the following data were obtained.

**Table 1. Parents' Perspective**

| Items                | Findings                               |
|----------------------|--|
| Daily Language       | Indonesian language and local language |
| Facilities           | Only gadget ( parent's mobile phone)   |
| Using time of gadget | 30 minutes – 2 hours                   |
| Gadget access        | YouTube kids and games                 |

According to data from the parents' perspective (Table 1), the daily language usage of the children included Indonesian and local languages, with mobile phones being the primary tool supporting the learning process. The children spent between 30 minutes to 2 hours per day using gadgets, with their main access being to content such as YouTube Kids and games. These findings indicated that although gadgets were an important tool in the children's daily lives, access to educational materials, especially for English, was very limited. This suggested that the exposure to English that the children received was still minimal and depended on the content available on digital platforms.

**Table 2. Teachers' Perspective**

| Items                             | Findings   |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Students responses and enthusiasm | The children showed considerable enthusiasm when introduced to English. They often eagerly asked for the English songs that had been given to them during the treatment. |
| Facilities                        | posters  |
| Obstacles                         | There is no English teachers and lack of facilities  |
| Previous English study            | Only in several songs but the meaning didn't understand by students  |

From the teachers' perspective (Table 2), the children showed significant enthusiasm when introduced to English. They often requested the English songs that had been taught during the learning process, indicating a high level of engagement with the material. However, the teachers faced various challenges, including the absence of an English teacher and a lack of adequate facilities to support English language learning. Although posters were used as visual aids, structural challenges such as a shortage of resources and teachers impacted the effectiveness of teaching. Additionally, the children's previous exposure to English had been limited to a few songs, and they had not fully understood the meaning of the material.

**Table 3. Students' Perspective**

| Items                                  | Findings                          |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Visualization learning method          | Interested and easy to understand |
| English songs practice at home         | often                             |
| Learning facilities other than gadgets | Only gadget and watching tv       |

From the students' perspective (Table 3), the visual learning methods were considered engaging and easy to understand. Students actively practiced English songs at home, but they only had limited access to learning facilities, primarily through gadgets and television. These findings highlighted that although students showed interest and positive

engagement with visual methods and home practice, the limitations of learning facilities could have restricted the effectiveness and depth of their English language learning.

Based on interviews conducted with three parents of students at TK Al-Falah Balombong, it was found that the languages used daily by the students at home or in their environment were Indonesian and the local dialect. The parents stated that they never used English in daily communication. This was due to several factors, including their rural location, which resulted in limited knowledge of English education in Balombong, as well as their priorities, which had not yet emphasized English proficiency for their children. Additionally, the parents also revealed that there were no facilities at home to support English language learning. The only device that the parents provided was a gadget, but its use was primarily focused on playing games and watching videos rather than on learning English.

The views expressed by the parents aligned with the information provided by the principal and teachers at TK Al-Falah Balombong. They explained that there were currently no teachers at the school with specialized expertise in English language instruction. As a result, the children were not yet able to understand English well. English at TK Al-Falah Balombong was only introduced through a few songs, but the meaning was not yet understood by the students. In addition to the songs, there were also several English posters and pictures that were merely displayed without significant effort to encourage the children to learn from them. Therefore, the school environment had not made a significant contribution to the children's English language learning.

Nevertheless, our observations at TK Al-Falah Balombong showed that the children were actually very enthusiastic when introduced to and taught English. During our first visit, we gave a treatment by using a projector to display visualizations of several songs accompanied by cartoon animations. This approach successfully captured the children's attention and focus, eventually leading them to memorize the songs. This observation was supported by interviews with two TK Al-Falah Balombong students who revealed that the teaching method was easy to understand and made them increasingly interested in learning English.

Furthermore, the children's enthusiasm was also evident when we asked them to introduce themselves in English and to mention English phrases along with their meanings. The children showed great enthusiasm and competed to come to the front of the class, introduce themselves, and follow the instructions we gave. They responded enthusiastically to the activity, demonstrating that they had a strong interest in learning English when given the right and engaging approach.

Thus, it could be concluded that although the family and school environment at TK-Al Falah Balombong was not yet optimal in supporting English language learning, there was significant potential for the children to learn English. This potential could be seen from their enthusiasm after being provided with an appropriate and engaging approach through the treatment we gave. Therefore, this required further efforts and support both from the school and from parents in terms of providing competent teachers and interactive learning media, as well as creating facilities and an environment that supported their English language learning at home.

## **3.2 Discussion**

Teaching English from an early age was crucial for building children's abilities to communicate globally in the future. Children should be taught foreign communication skills, including English, from a young age because this period was considered their golden age (Yani & Muryanti, 2023). However, several factors, such as family and school environments, could influence the English language development of young children. Based on findings from interviews and observations, this study examined the influence of the family environment and school environment on the development of English language skills in early childhood at TK Al Falah Balombong.

### **3.2.1 Family Environment and Its Influence**

The home environment was the primary place where a child's language grew and developed (Alfira et al., 2024). According to interviews conducted with three parents of students at TK Al-Falah Balombong, the children never spoke in English because no one used English at home. Their daily languages at home and in their environment were Indonesian and local dialects. The lack of exposure to English meant that children did not have the opportunity to learn to listen and speak English if they were not accustomed to the language at home. This significantly affected the children's ability to learn English.

Additionally, family priorities also influenced the English language development of young children. The parents at TK Al-Falah Balombong, had not yet prioritized English learning. According to Alfira et al., (2024), parents played a

crucial role in teaching their children proper vocabulary and setting a good example in language use, especially English. However, the parents at TK Al-Falah focused solely on using local languages and did not realize the importance of English language learning for their children.

Children's ability to speak English was greatly influenced by the availability of supportive English learning facilities in their homes. Learning facilities were an integral part of the educational process, whether directly related to education or not (Novitasari & Fauziddin, 2022). Interviews indicated that most parents did not have adequate English learning materials at home. The only available facility was gadgets, but these devices were primarily used for playing games and watching children's videos rather than focusing on English learning. There are no storybooks, videos, or educational apps to help children learn English at home. Yet, the family played a crucial role in a child's education as the foundation for their future development and success (Chaniago et al., 2023).

### **3.2.2 School Environment and Its Influence**

The limitation of teaching staff in teaching English was a major challenge at TK Al-Falah, Balombong. Teachers played a crucial role in creating an enjoyable and conducive atmosphere for English learning at school (Amalia, 2021). The principal and teachers at TK Al-Falah acknowledged that the school did not yet have teachers with specific expertise in English language teaching. This limitation caused the children to be unable to understand English well.

At TK Al-Falah Balombong, English language learning had previously incorporated several songs to support the students' learning. However, this approach was limited to a few songs whose meanings were not fully understood by the students. Additionally, various posters and pictures were displayed in each classroom, which were intended to be used for their learning. However, these English-language posters and pictures were merely displayed without significant effort to encourage the children to engage with the material. Therefore, it could be said that there was a need to enhance the competencies of teachers or early childhood educators, particularly in the field of English education. This was crucial because teachers were key to the success of children's development, and children tended to emulate what was taught by their teachers, as teachers were considered the third parents (N.hidayati, 2018).

Additionally, TK Al-Falah Balombong was also lacking in qualified personnel to support effective English language learning. The lack of interactive learning media resulted in students losing interest and motivation to learn English (Pratiwi & Ayriza, 2018). The absence of interactive learning materials and engaging content made the children less interested and prevented them from having an optimal learning experience. Learning facilities were a crucial factor in achieving success in the teaching and learning process (Novitasari & Fauziddin, 2022). This had a significant impact on the development of children's English language skills.

### **3.2.3 Potential and Recommendations for Improvement**

Based on our observations, it was evident that the family and school environments at TK Al-Falah Balombong had not yet optimally supported English language learning. However, it could be seen that after the treatment we provided, there was a positive response and enthusiasm from the children. In this context, both parents and teachers could indeed employ various methods to develop children's English skills from an early age (Na'imah, 2022). Moreover, introducing language aspects (English) to children had to be supported by high-quality human resources (teachers). In other words, improving the quality of human resources could have had a positive impact on the process of introducing English to children (Purwanti et al., 2020). From this, we could explain that children would show significant improvement in English language learning if fully supported by both the school and family environments.

Introducing English at an early age should ideally be supported by adequate facilities and resources (Jusriati et al., 2023). To significantly enhance children's English learning, several measures can be taken using interactive learning approaches in schools. This can include using media such as projectors to display English children's songs accompanied by animations, which can capture their focus and interest in the material presented. Following this, teachers can engage in interactive feedback to ensure that the children understand or at least follow the rhythm of the songs and sing along together. According to Rakimahwati & Roza, (2020), state that children benefit from game-based activities. Therefore, in this context, teachers can also incorporate question-and-answer games at the end of the learning session to ensure that the children comprehend and effectively grasp the material presented through visualization.

Furthermore, considering that young children think concretely, English teachers for young learners must be imaginative and resourceful to meet their needs. To facilitate linguistic progress, teachers also had a deep understanding of the mechanics of language (Susanto, 2021). Therefore, to support interactive and imaginative English

learning as described above, it is necessary to have competent educators who specialize in teaching English to children so that the learning process can be conducted optimally.

After all the measures have been effectively implemented, the next important aspect to consider is the attention of parents towards their children to provide support in enhancing their English skills at home. This includes providing English storybooks, gadgets for displaying videos, and English-language games for children, all of which should be used under parental supervision. This was consistent with what Pratikno et al., (2023), state regarding the significant role of parents in supporting and improving children's language intelligence.

Furthermore, the cooperation between parents and teachers in creating an interactive and enjoyable learning environment can have a significant impact on children's mastery of English. This can be achieved by improving learning facilities, both at home and at school, which can provide opportunities for children to become more engaged and motivated to learn. Thus, a synergistic collaboration between families and schools has the potential to overcome existing challenges and accelerate the development of children's English language skills at TK Al-Falah Balombong.

#### 4. Conclusion

From our research, we found that the family and school environments have a significant influence on the early childhood English language development. We discovered that the family and school environments at TK Al Falah Balombong itself were not yet optimal in supporting English language learning. This could be observed from the languages they frequently used at home and in their surroundings, which were regional languages and Indonesian, as well as the use of gadgets provided by their parents that did not focus on English language learning. The school also lacked qualified English language teachers and adequate supporting facilities. Despite these limitations, the children showed high enthusiasm when introduced to English through engaging methods such as songs and animations. To optimize this potential, an interactive approach was needed, along with competent teachers and parental support by providing age-appropriate English books, videos, and educational apps. Support from various parties is essential to create a conducive and effective learning environment.

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