An Indonesian Bilingual Child

by Agis Andriani

An Indonesian Bilingual Child Development: Highlighting the Influential Factors and Strategies

Agis Andriani [1], Rika Kartika [2], Nita Sari Narulita Dewi [3], Edy Suroso [4]
[1] Siliwangi University Tasikmalaya, Indonesia; agisandriani@unsil.ac.id
[2] Siliwangi University Tasikmalaya, Indonesia; missrikakartika@gmail.co
[3] Siliwangi University Tasikmalaya, Indonesia; nitasarinarulitadewi@unsil.ac.id
[4] Siliwangi University Tasikmalaya, Indonesia; edysuroso@unsil.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Bilingual children are always interesting to be studied because they might have different uniqueness in experiencing their language development. Eleven years old Indonesian participant in this research experienced to have a special condition which makes her difficult to focus, but then, exposed to more than one language since she was a young age. Along with the proper parenting styles, this study gives empirical insight into the factors and strategies contributed to maximize the children's language development. Data taken from observation of the video taken since the participant 3-4 years old until now, interviews both the child and mother, and documentation showed that innate factors and strategies including watching and listening, imitating and repeating, storytelling and self-talking, doing minimal grasp strategy, code-switching and move-on strategies, and giving educational support and motivations are supported to the child to have bilingual capacity in her communication. However, the milestone or stages of children's bilingual development has not been investigated yet. Thus, to get a deeper understanding, future studies should investigate the milestone of children's bilingual language developmentthe findings can be extended to which could inform other researchers about what should be conducted next in the case that the longitudinal observation is needed.

Corresponding Author:
Agis Andriani
Universitas Siliwangi, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia; agisandriani@unsil.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the issue of language development becomes the interesting topic in the language phenomena, billingualism occurs not only in adults but also in children. In the case of children, by several reasons, it is realized by fact such as having interaction with bilingual and live in society with more than one culture (Grosjean, 2013). In addition, this condition is more illuminated by the indication of special condition had by them. This special condition experienced them to have special treatment related to language, can activate the children get a lot of exposure in two languages and also shapes them to be bilingual. Moreover, the researchers also argue that language exposure is one of the important factors in children's language development (Altinkamis & Simon, 2020; Cheung et al., 2018; Deanda et al., 2016; Dixon et al., 2012; Hoff et al., 2012; Place & Hoff, 2011; Sun et al., 2020). These variety and quality of input languages that are exposed to them will support their bilingual development (Unsworth et al., 2019). Hence, to these reasons, there are many factors supported the children's language development to become bilingual.

Currently, researchers argue to make the distinction in defining the condition of individuals who can speak more than one language. The common views nowadays are using multilingual terms to define the person or community who speak two or more languages, also the bilingual and trilingual phenomena are included in multilingualism (Aronin & Singleton, 2008; Cenoz, 2013; Hammarberg, 2010). On the other hand, the traditional views are using the term bilingual to define the ability to use two languages but it also can include more languages (Bhatia, 2019; Bialystok, 2003; Bloomfield, 1933; Butler & Hakuta, 2004; Cook & Bassetti, 2011 in Cenoz 2013). Further, from a socio-psychological perspective, childhood bilingualism is not only about acquiring two or more languages, but it is a lifelong process involving many factors such as different life backgrounds, input processes and stages (Bhatia, 2019). Then, the participant in this research is able to speak more than one language and have a native-like control of them, therefore, the term "bilingualism" in this research is used as an all-inclusive term to embody both bilingualism and multilingualism.

Studies discussing the language development of bilingual children, in general, have found several factors that contributed to children bilingualism. Altinkamis & Simon (2020) research the effect of language exposure and family background on children's language abilities. The results show that home context including parents' linguistic background, mother's educational level, and language exposure were affecting the score of their standardized proficiency test. Although this study was valuable, it do not contain much information related to other factors that support children bilingualism.

Duncan & Paradis (2020) examine the relationship between maternal education and linguistic input in bilingual children. The result reveal that l2 language exposure, maternal l2 fluency, mothers' language input and children's output affect children's first and second language development. Moreover, the education level of the mother is associated with the language input. Hence, the higher level of education has higher l2 fluency.

Farabolini et al., (2021) assess the language development in bilingual children who have different native languages. The results show that there is a correlation between non-word repetition performance and receptive vocabulary, cumulative exposure, age of first exposure, maternal education and parental concern. Although this study was valuable, this study does not inform the strategies that were used by the children and their parents to support their children bilingual development.

Since those studies were only focused on the affecting factors of language development on average children, this study focuses on describing the bilingualism of a child who experience a special condition, including the factors and strategies that support her bilingualism as a complementation of the existing study on children bilingualism. In detail, this study was guided by following the research questions, as follow.

1) What factors contribute to her bilingualism?
2) What strategies are caused by the factors that support her bilingualism?

The results of this study are expected to give the parents, care-giver, language teachers, etc. About the factors that influence bilingualism and strategies to guide the children with special conditions. Therefore, they can be concerned about the factors and apply the strategies to support their children's language development and become bilingual children.

2. METHODS

This study described the bilingualism that occurs in an Indonesian child named Ade. She was born on April 2010. She acquired Indonesian and English languages simultaneously around ages 2-7. Then, at age 7 she mastered the languages fluently and communicatively. She has high innate linguistic potential. She got 4,3 of 5 scores for her linguistic potential test. However, she experienced an attention deficit which was detected at around age 3. However, to this condition, her parents prefer to maintain the condition by using their own ways supervised by psychologist to take care the child than to do extend the treatment to have the specific judgement in the case of attention problem. Related to the case of attention problem, the fact is indicated by her very independence and endurance scores. She got 92 from 100 for her independence score and 88 from 100 for her endurance score. This condition made her only focus on her world and less care about the surrounding environment. Also, it made her difficult to respond to the surrounding environment and only focus on the things that she found interesting. The interest is through English videos. Furthermore, through the appropriate parenting styles and following her potential, she succeeded to overcome her inattention issues and becoming bilingual. Additionally, Ade's mom (Ibu) also participated in this research to give additional detailed information related to Ade's bilingualism.

The data collected from observing the video documentation of Ade since she was 4 years old as many as 19 videos and semi-structured interviews as many as three times interview were analyzed by using thematic analysis. It includes six steps consisting of familiarizing the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Andriani, Yuniar, and Abdullah, 2021).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion of this study are organized based on the research questions. The analysis produced two main themes: (1) Factors that support Ade's bilingualism; and (2) Ade's language development strategies. Those have been validated and verified through the use of triangulated data and methods.

3.1. Factors that Support Ade's Bilingualism

At first, Ade's bilingualism was affected by her high linguistic innate potential and the special condition that she experienced. She experienced an. inattention issue which made her hard to focus on other things besides something that she is interested in and her world. This condition made her difficult to interact with others. Then, the parents tried to train Ade's attention through kids' shows. Unfortunately, they could not find the local TV shows that attracted Ade's attention. Therefore, they went to subscription TV which had a lot of kid's shows in English. Thus, from that situation, Ade started to love English shows since she was 2,5 years old and she could spend more than three hours watching them. This could be reflected from the data obtained from the interview wit *Ibu* as follow.

> "…around 2,5 to 3 years old, she was very enthusiast to watch English shows … it used to stimulate her because at that time she indicated not responsive while talking with others." (Interview, Ibu, 6th September 2021).

Furthermore, besides her innates potential, several factors supporting the development of Ade's bilingualism such as (1) home language non-native and mix- language pattern, (2) a lot of different language input, (3) mother's assistance and guidance, (4) various educational experiences, and (5) positive attitudes towards languages.

Home language non-native and mix-languages pattern

Besides training Ade's attention, her parents also used the shows to be able to communicate with her. Usually, Ibu talks in English with Ade to attract her attention, then ask her to retell about the show that she watched. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ade's documentation video as follow.

> Ibu   : *"you want to say something? To Tante Isma?"*
> Ade   : *"yes, I want to say a type of Pokemon"*

On the other hand, another video showed that Accompanied by her dad, Ade played in the ditch. She spoke English but her dad Spoke Indonesian. Furthermore, because both Ade and her parents are bilingual, along with the time the pattern changed to mix – languages pattern. They communicate with each other in English, Indonesia even mix or switch it. This finding is in line with Fitriani (2019), who found that acquiring two languages simultaneously does not cause misunderstanding for the child. Therefore, introducing additional language besides the dominant language to the children at an early age and the use of code-mixing and code-switching were supporting their language development and becoming bilingual children

A lot of different input languages

Ade bilingualism is supported by the presence of media and people who are able to speak more than one language. Those different input sources will be described as follow.

Table 1 Ade's language input sources

Sources	Input language
Media (Subscription television, Youtube)	English
Media (books)	English, Indonesian
Parents	English, Indonesian
Mom's families	Sundanese
Dad's families	Indonesian, Javanese
Friends	Indonesian, Sundanese
Animator community	English
Nanny	Sundanese

When the children at age 2-3 years old they started to produce more than one word (Menyuk & Brisk, 2005). At this age, Ade start to get various input languages. Therefore, she also started to produce more than one language includes Indonesian and English. Language exposure is one of the most important factors in children language development (Altinkamis & Simon, 2020; Cheung et al., 2018; DeAnda et al., 2016; Dixon et al., 2012; Hoff et al., 2012; Place & Hoff, 2011; Sun et al., 2020). Altinkamis & Simon (2020) reported that the more exposure to a language, the higher acquisition of it. Therefore, a lot of different language input both from media and people around Ade, contributed to

her language development and made her has high proficiency especially in her English and Indonesian and she became a bilingual child.

Mother's assistance and guidance

The interaction between children and parents plays an important role in children's language development. They become the main model for children to develop their language. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ade's interview as follow. Ade told that besides getting to acquire English from shows, her mom also helped her to get a better understanding of English words. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ade's interview as follow.

"My mom is an English teacher. She sometimes teaches me the actual meaning of the words."

In addition, Ibu also accompanied Ade when she played. Sometimes Ibu gave corrective feedback,
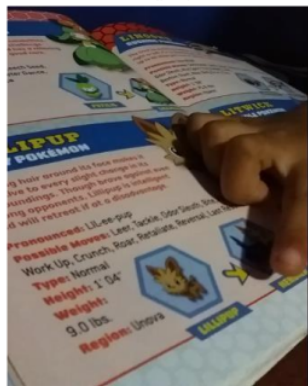
Ibu corrected the way Ade spelt the letter in English, and she suggested her to spell it in Indonesian then in English. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ade's documentation video as follow.

Figure 1: Ibu gave the corrective feedback

Ade	:	*"Oke meowth present is (start spelling the name) M-E-O- (confused about the word) Yu-Yey (the mom corrects the spelling)."*
Ibu	:	*"double yu- W- *then she repeated*"*
Ade	:	*"double yu -W- "*
Ibu	:	*"tey"*
Ade	:	*"Ti"*
Ibu	:	*"eight"*
Ade	:	*"eight"*

Therefore, the development of Ade's language, especially English, was not only supported by media such as YouTube, TV and books but also it was supported by her mom's assistance and guidance. This finding is in line with Place & Hoff (2011), Dixon et al., (2012), Hoff (2018), Paradis et al., (2020), and Sun et al., (2020). They found that maternal education influenced children' language development. Furthermore, it has great contributions, especially for bilingual children.

Various educational experiences

Besides the unconscious learning that Ade's got from watching shows, listening to her mom while reading her books and playing with her family members, her other formal and informal education also support Ade's language development. Ade is a student in one of MI in her town. She has a formal English class every Wednesday or Thursday. Also, in English class, Ade is believed to be a teacher's assistant to help her friends with English. Then, she often became the school representative for English competitions. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ade's interview as follow.

"Sometimes my teacher told me to teach my friend to speak English … if in the special day I have English storytime session, so for school, the teacher always told me that I have it."

Moreover, Ade also joined an English course for about 4 months. The reason she joined an English course is to make friends talk in English. She was hard to be accepted in the course because her English level was higher than her age. Hence, to make her easier to adapt with her coursemates, the institutions decided to downgrade her English level and placed her in a first-grade junior high school. However, the result was not maximal. Then, the mom decided to hire the tutor to be her private partner to talk English. Therefore, both unconscious learning from media at home and also educational experiences was supporting Ade's bilingualism.

Positive attitudes towards languages

Ade's has positive attitudes toward English, Indonesian and her local language. The attitude towards language affects the way she perceives, uses and learns the language. Ade has positive thoughts about English. She thought English was a great language and it was fun. Although at the beginning Ade felt overwhelmed when speaking English. Now she enjoys being happy and confident when speaking English.

"When I was a kid my feelings were overwhelming and insecure and interrupted …in my opinion English is a great language to learn and it's really fun to learn and it is useful for my future"

Furthermore, Ibu told that Ade was not only able to speak more than one language, she also knew to use that language properly. Therefore, although she could speak English fluently, she did not speak it carelessly. She understood with whom she could speak English or not. Also, she is able to use each language with its own accent. So, she looks like the native of those languages.

" So she doesn't carelessly speak English to people that she thinks don't speak English

… She could speak English completely with its accent. So, her English does not interfere with Indonesian accent, and vice versa"

Moreover, she thought that she could easily express her feeling or her thought using English. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ade's interview as follow.

"When using Indonesian, more people will understand. However, English is more expressive to me"

Similarly, her mom also thought that Ade's English was more expressive compared to Indonesian. She is often overwhelmed when being asked to explain something in Indonesian. Then, when talking, her English was more fluent than Indonesian. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ade's interview as follow.

"When she explained something, like when I ask "itu teh apa?" (what is it?) Then she answered "gimana ya ceritanya, pusing kalau bahasa Indonesia (How to say it in Indonesian, it's confusing). She is more fluent in English.

In general, besides her high innate linguistic potential, the several factors above were supporting her language development. The findings were supported by the previous studies. It also claimed that the factors such as language exposure, language input, maternal education and family background were supported children's language development (Altinkamis & Simon, 2020; Barac & Bialystok, 2012; Farabolini et al., 2021; Paradis et al., 2020).

3.2. Ade's Bilingual Development Strategies

Using the appropriate strategy to support children's language development is needed. Because, introducing a new language to the children in the way that they are interested in, it will make them stick with it and unconsciously acquire that language. Several strategies found in Ade's bilingualism such as (1) watching and listening, (2) imitating and repeating, (3) storytelling and self-talking, (4) doing minimal grasp strategy, (5) code-switching and move-on strategies, and (6) giving educational support and motivations.

Watching and listening

Ade experienced an Inattention issue which was detected since she was 2 years old make less care about the environment around her and only focusing on something that she was interested in. her parents provided her with a subscription television to stimulate her attention and she was loving and just sticking with it. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ade's interview as follow.

"I watched a lot of shows, cartoon network shows that played in English."

Imitating and repeating

Besides watching tv, Ade also loves listening to the story told by her mom from the storybook. Ade often imitated what she heard both from her mom and the shows that she watched. When she found a caption that she liked, she always tried to read it and kept repeating it until she could definitely read it. It helped her improve her reading skill. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ade's interview as follow.

"I imitated the word from the movie, I always imitating what I like … I tried to read it, then I keep reading the caption."

Storytelling and self-talking

Ade's innates potential tends to be linguistic, she tends to be talkative. Ade loves doing self-talk by telling her own story through toys or other objects. She can play with it as she read the story. Ade also loved to retell the story that she watched to her parents. It helped her become more talkative and interact with people in English. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ade's interview as follow.

"When I was a kid, I always watched something and retell it to my parents"

"(she acted like her finger was burned while she touched the stove) ah.. ah.. that's hot (blew on her finger) this the hot on top. (made a sound and took the little stuff onto the stove) ah.. that's hot. Let's make this burger burger. Okay, put that in that. Oww… nice come from a small hole. let's see in the back. emm it's quite tasty in the back it's quite tasty…"

Figure 2: Playing with her toys

Minimal grasp strategies

Minimal grasp strategy is the strategy when the parents pretend as monolingual and could not understand the language that has been spoken by the children. It is used to stimulate the children to talk in a language that is understood by the parents. Ibu often asked Ade about what she has been watching. It used to stimulate her to retell the story. When Ibu asked Ade to explain the English shows that she watched, it indicated that She did not understand them. Then, it stimulated Ade to explain the show in Indonesian. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ibu's interview as follow.

"if I asked her 'what is it' it means that I do not understand about that, then she helped translate it."

Code-switching and move-on strategies

Ade and her parents are bilingual. They can talk in more than one language. Ade told that sometimes she forgot the Indonesian word of something and she only remember the English one, so to solve it she tried to remember it and often asked her parents and switch the language. Also, Ade asked her mom if she found a new English word that she did not know. At that moment, when the researcher asked the question about her activities at home, she seemed confused to answer because she did not know the meaning of the activity. Then, she switched to Indonesian and she asked her mom for the meaning. Then, she was able to answer that question properly. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ade's interview as follow.

"Hmmm.. what like, I eumm mi.. activity itu apa?"

"Tante Isma ini Sakti, he's always been (she does not speak clearly). Sakti mah suka (she thinks for a moment) he always smelling, tonguing even tact me"

Moreover, Ade always spoke full in English or full in Indonesian, she rarely mixed or switched it. However, she switched to English when she didn't know the Indonesian word of something. Then,

she often switched Indonesian to Sundanese. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ibu's interview as follow.

> *"She usually speaks fully in English. Paused, then she started to speak Indonesian. Paused, then she started to speak Sundanese… for mixing the languages it happened when she did not know the Indonesian meaning of words"*

Giving educational support and motivations

Ibu always supported Ade by providing her with media that she loves. Ibu also supported Ade's language development by getting her partner to talk with and encouraging her to attend some English competitions. Like before the pandemic, when Ade has a long holiday, she often joined English events outside the city. Hence, supporting Ade's interest and joining her in an animation club that consists of a lot of members from different countries is used to make her have a community or place to talk and develop her English. This could be reflected from the data obtained from Ibu's interview as follow.

> *"She also joined the competition, English competition. And now, she has a partner to talk with her every week. When she was a kid, it went naturally… I just motivate her to achieve her goal and maximize her English potential"*

Generally speaking, according to the data above, there are several strategies used by Ade and also her parents such as watching and listening to English shows. Then, imitating and repeating the phrases that she heard. Also, the parents provide Ade with some media as the additional language input sources and as the media to play with such as subscription television, books, and toys. Then, she also loves self-talking and story-telling in English and it helped her become talkative. Also, the family members used more than one language and often switched it in their interactions. They also often did minimal understanding strategies to stimulate her to talk. Then, they also supported her education by providing her with a partner to talk in English and motivated her to enter English competitions and join her favourite club. Hence, with those media and support, Ade has succeeded to develop her language and becoming a bilingual child.

4. CONCLUSION

Ade's language tends to develop differently than other children around her, because she can speak more than one language fluently. This condition occurs due to several factors and strategies that contributed to support her bilingualism. The factors are home language non-native and mix-languages pattern, a lot of different input languages, mother's assistance and guidance, various educational experiences, and positive attitudes towards languages. Those factors supported Ade's bilingualism. Additionally, Ade and her parents also have several strategies to support her bilingualism. Those strategies are watching and listening, imitating and repeating, code-switching and move-on strategies, doing storytelling and self-talk, doing minimal understanding strategies to stimulate her to talk and giving her educational support and motivations. Therefore, by a lot of supporting factors and the use of appropriate strategies, it succeeds in solving her special condition, making her language well developed. Moreover, a lot of English exposure from a young age makes her success to become a bilingual child and able to acquire English like the native speaker of it. Furthermore, by understanding the condition of children, parents, caregivers and even language teachers can use the strategies that have been found in this research to support children language development. Furthermore, the present study is only focused on describing the factors and strategies

that support children bilingualism. However, the milestone or stages of children's bilingual development has not been investigated yet. Thus, to get a deeper understanding, future studies should investigate the milestone of children's bilingual language development. Also, data collection techniques in this research are only using video documentation observation and interviews. However, by doing long term study and observing the milestone of children's language development from the early stage will give clearer data about children's bilingual development. Thus, future studies are expected to do a similar focus in long term study with the proper data collection techniques.

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