

THE ROLE OF PARENTAL COMMUNICATION PATTERNS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD FIRST AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of parental communication patterns in the process of first language (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition in early childhood through a literature review approach. Parental communication patterns, including responsiveness, frequency of verbal interaction, use of *child-directed speech* (CDS), and emotional engagement, have been shown to significantly influence children's linguistic development. This study analyzes various literature sources from 2016 to 2026 relevant to the topic of early childhood language acquisition. The findings indicate that rich, responsive, and consistent communication patterns positively contribute to the speed and breadth of both L1 and L2 acquisition. Furthermore, it was found that a structured *bilingual* environment with active parental communication support can optimize children's second language acquisition without impeding first language development. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of parental education regarding effective communication strategies in supporting the linguistic development of early childhood.

Keywords: *Language Acquisition, Parental Communication Patterns, Early Childhood, First Language, Second Language*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran pola komunikasi orang tua dalam proses pemerolehan bahasa pertama (B1) dan bahasa kedua (B2) pada anak usia dini melalui pendekatan studi literatur. Pola komunikasi orang tua yang mencakup responsivitas, frekuensi interaksi verbal, penggunaan *child-directed speech* (CDS), serta keterlibatan emosional terbukti memiliki pengaruh signifikan terhadap perkembangan linguistik anak. Kajian ini menganalisis berbagai sumber kepustakaan dari tahun 2016 hingga 2026 yang relevan dengan topik pemerolehan bahasa anak usia dini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pola komunikasi yang kaya, responsif, dan konsisten berkontribusi secara positif terhadap kecepatan dan keluasan pemerolehan B1 maupun B2. Selain itu, ditemukan bahwa lingkungan *bilingual* yang terstruktur dengan dukungan komunikasi orang tua yang aktif dapat mengoptimalkan kemampuan bahasa kedua anak tanpa menghambat perkembangan bahasa pertama. Implikasi kajian ini menekankan pentingnya edukasi orang tua mengenai strategi komunikasi yang efektif dalam mendukung tumbuh kembang linguistik anak usia dini.

Keywords: *Pemerolehan Bahasa, Pola Komunikasi Orang Tua, Anak Usia Dini, Bahasa Pertama, Bahasa Kedua*

INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition in early childhood is one of the most amazing and complex aspects of cognitive development. In the age range of 0 to 8 years, children show exceptional ability to absorb, process, and use the language systems that prevail in their surroundings. This process of language acquisition does not take place passively, but is strongly influenced by the quality and quantity of linguistic interaction that children receive, especially from parents as the main parenting figures (Mazidah, Ainurrahma, Maulana, & Abu, 2025).

In Indonesia, the issue of early childhood language acquisition has become increasingly complex considering the sociolinguistic context of Indonesia's rich society. Most Indonesian children grow up in a multilingual environment, where they are simultaneously exposed to Indonesian as the national language, regional languages as mother tongues, and even foreign languages such as English which are introduced to the family at an early age. This condition makes the study of parental communication patterns and their impact on children's first and second language acquisition very relevant to be researched (Nurkhasyanah, Saleh, West, Language, & Dini, 2024)

Parents play a central role as a language model as well as an agent of linguistic socialization for children. The communication patterns applied by parents, ranging from speech intonation, vocabulary richness, conversation frequency, to responsiveness to children's speech, directly form the foundation of children's language competence. Studies in Indonesia have shown that the quality of parental verbal interaction is positively correlated with children's language skills at later stages of development (Lubis & Depalina, 2025).

However, studies that specifically and comprehensively discuss the relationship between parental communication patterns and first and second language acquisition in a single literature review framework are still limited, especially those that integrate the Indonesian context. Therefore, this research

is here to fill this gap. The objectives of this study are to: (1) identify forms of parental communication patterns that affect early childhood first language acquisition; (2) examine the role of parental communication patterns in supporting early childhood second language acquisition; and (3) formulate practical implications for parents and early childhood educators in optimizing children's language development.

METHODS

This study uses a literature study approach (*literature review*) or literature review. This method was chosen because it aims to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate findings from various relevant previous studies in order to build a comprehensive understanding of the topic (Christians, 2026). This approach is seen as appropriate because it allows researchers to map the development of knowledge, identify research gaps, and generate evidence-based conclusions from a variety of diverse sources (Apriyanto, 2024).

The data collection process was carried out through searching various scientific literature sources, including the Google Scholar database, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), Garuda (Garba Digital Reference), and SINTA (Science and Technology Index). Priority is given to accredited national journals.

The inclusion criteria set include: (1) articles or books published in the range of 2016 to 2026; (2) discussing the topic of early childhood language acquisition (age 0-8 years); (3) examine the role of parents or family communication patterns; and (4) written in Indonesian or English. The keywords used include: "parental communication patterns", "language acquisition", "early childhood", "*bilingual*", "parental communication", and "language acquisition early childhood". The analysis was carried out thematically by grouping findings

based on themes that emerged consistently, then synthesized to produce coherent conclusions.

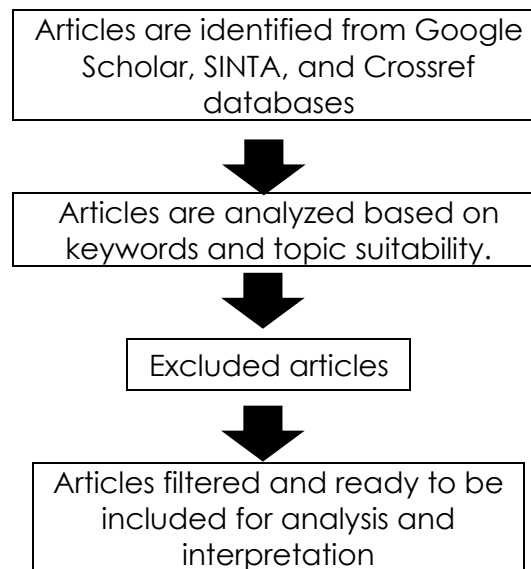


Figure 1. Systematic literature review step flow chart

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following is a list of articles reviewed in this study:

Table 1. Article Analysis Based on Problem Formulation

No	Name of Journal/Research	Analysis	Research Theme
1	Puspita et al. (2022)	The intensity of verbal communication between parents and children aged 12–36 months has a significant effect on the richness of children's vocabulary at the age of three. Active dialogue is more effective than passive communication.	Parental Communication Patterns and First Language Acquisition (B1)
2	Sugiyanti (2021)	The use of child-directed speech (CDS) helps children understand language sounds and enrich vocabulary through repetition, distinctive intonation, and sentence simplification.	Parental Communication Patterns and First Language Acquisition (B1)
3	Nadia, Rusmayadi, & Hajerah (2025)	Responsive parenting improves children's expressive language	Parental Communication

No	Name of Journal/Research	Analysis	Research Theme
		skills, while command-and-for-command communication inhibits children's communication initiatives.	Patterns and First Language Acquisition (B1)
4	Romeo et al. (2018)	The frequency of conversational turns between parents and children correlates with the activation of Broca's area in the child's brain, thus supporting language development.	Parental Communication Patterns and First Language Acquisition (B1)
5	Andini (2018)	Consistency in the use of two languages in the family supports the development of the productive abilities of the first and second languages simultaneously.	Parental Communication Patterns and Second Language Acquisition (B2)
6	Azzahro, Nova, & Hasibuan (2024)	Active parental involvement in the use of English through songs, stories, and games is more effective than relying solely on language courses.	Parental Communication Patterns and Second Language Acquisition (B2)
7	Sabrina (2025)	Active communication of parents is necessary to maintain the use of regional languages as a second language and family cultural heritage.	Parental Communication Patterns and Second Language Acquisition (B2)
8	Fibla et al. (2022)	The balance of language exposure from parents determines the dominance and fluency of bilingual children without causing language delays.	Parental Communication Patterns and Second Language Acquisition (B2)
9	Altman, Goldstein, & Armon-Lotem (2018)	Bilingual experiences increase metalinguistic awareness that supports children's literacy development.	Parental Communication Patterns and Second Language Acquisition (B2)
10	Luthfiyah & Yuliana (2023)	Family culture influences communication patterns and the development of children's pragmatic competencies through language politeness norms.	Factors that Mediate the Influence of Parental Communication Patterns

No	Name of Journal/Research	Analysis	Research Theme
11	Nisa & Muthmainnah (2026)	The use of gadgets without verbal interaction has a negative impact on language development, while co-viewing with parents has a positive impact.	Factors that Mediate the Influence of Parental Communication Patterns
12	Nurbaity, Rokhanawati, & Isnaeni (2025)	Socioeconomic status and parental education affect the quality of language input, but communication training can improve the quality of family interactions.	Factors that Mediate the Influence of Parental Communication Patterns
13	Pan et al. (2025)	High levels of parenting stress decrease the frequency and quality of parent-child conversations.	Factors that Mediate the Influence of Parental Communication Patterns
14	Shanti, Suryani, & Ajisukmo (2021)	Parenting programs promote the use of supportive communication strategies such as expansion, recasting, and open-ended questions.	Practical Implications for Early Childhood Parents and Educators
15	Nurhadi et al. (2025)	Consistency in the use of regional languages in the family context helps to maintain bilingualism and cultural preservation.	Practical Implications for Early Childhood Parents and Educators
16	Dicataldo, Rowe, & Roch (2022)	Dialogic reading programs involving parents improve expressive vocabulary and understanding of early childhood stories.	Practical Implications for Early Childhood Parents and Educators
17	Aushofia & Tejaningsih (2025)	Teacher-parent collaboration supports learning that is responsive to the child's linguistic background.	Practical Implications for Early Childhood Parents and Educators

1. Parental Communication Patterns and Early Childhood First Language Acquisition

Early childhood first language acquisition (B1) is strongly influenced by the quality of linguistic input received from the family environment. Research (Puspita, Hanum, Rohman, Fitriana, & Akhyar, 2022) A study conducted on 45 families in Central Java

found that the intensity of verbal communication between parents and children at the age of 12-36 months significantly predicted the richness of children's vocabulary at the age of three. Children who were more often consulted by their parents showed a broader mastery of active vocabulary than children who were more exposed to passive communication such as watching television.

One of the linguistic phenomena that is consistently found in the literature is the use of *child-directed speech* (CDS) or native language (*motherese*). The use of distinctive intonation, repetition, and simplification of sentence structure in CDS helps children build phonological and lexical representations of their mother tongue (Sugiyanti, 2021).

The aspect of parental responsiveness has also received attention in Indonesian studies. Responsive parenting characterized by parents who respond quickly to children's speech and gestures is positively correlated with the development of expressive language in children aged 18-30 months. On the other hand, communication patterns that are dominated by prohibitions and commands without giving space for children to respond have been shown to hinder the development of children's communicative initiatives (Nadia, Rusmayadi, & Hajerah, 2025).

From an international perspective, (Romeo et al., 2018) using neuroimaging techniques to show that the frequency of conversational turns, which is a meaningful exchange of speech between parent and child, is positively correlated with the activation of Broca's area in the child's brain. These findings provide strong neurobiological evidence that the quality of verbal interaction, not just the quantity of words a child hears, is the most decisive factor in the development of language skills. These findings reinforce and are in line with the results of research in Indonesia that emphasize the importance of interactive dialogue between parents and children.

2. Parental Communication Patterns and Early Childhood Second Language Acquisition

In the context of a multilingual Indonesian society, the acquisition of a second language (B2) in early childhood is a very common phenomenon. B2 in question can be in the form of Indonesian for children whose mother tongue is a regional language,

a regional language for children who grow up in urban families who are predominantly Indonesian, or foreign languages, especially English, which is increasingly introduced from an early age.

Research by (Andini, 2018) presented an interesting pattern, namely the success of second language acquisition (B2) is largely determined by the consistency of parents in using both languages in daily interactions. Families that consistently practice bilingual use show that children are able to develop productive communication skills in the first language (B1) and second language (B2) from the age of 4–5 years. In contrast, families with inconsistent language use patterns tend to produce children who only have receptive skills in the second language (B2), while their productive abilities are still developing in a limited way

The role of parents in the acquisition of English as B2 in children aged 4-6 years in several major cities in Indonesia. This study found that active parental involvement in providing meaningful English language input through English songs, stories, and games was significantly more effective than simply sending children to a course institution without home tutoring (Azzahro, Nova, & Hasibuan, 2024). Children whose parents actively communicate in English at home even in small portions showed better production skills and understanding of B2. The research (Sabrina, 2025) emphasized that without active communicative intervention from parents, the acquisition of regional languages as cultural heritage will be increasingly threatened.

These findings from the Indonesian context are in line with the study of Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams (2019) in (Fibla, Kosie, Kircher, Lew-Williams, & Byers-Heinlein, 2022) which confirms that the proportion of language exposure (*Language Exposure Balance*) What children receive from parents directly determines the dominance and fluency of each language. Children *Bilingual* who received adequate exposure to both languages did not show a delay in language development compared to monolingual children. Genesse and Paradis (2004) in (Altman, Goldstein, & Armon-Lotem, 2018) even stating that the experience *Bilingual* can increase awareness *metalinguistics* children who are beneficial for the development of literacy as a whole.

3. Factors That Mediate the Influence of Parents' Communication Patterns

The influence of parents' communication patterns on children's language acquisition is mediated by various contextual factors that need to be understood. First, the socio-cultural background of the family plays an important role. Research by (Luthfiyah & Yuliana, 2023) found that in Javanese culture, the norm of politeness in language (upload-unggah) instilled by parents from an early age not only shapes children's linguistic competence but also pragmatic and cultural competence. However, on the other hand, cultural norms that require children to speak only when asked (not to interrupt) can also limit children's communicative initiatives if they are not balanced with sufficient space for expression.

Second, the use of gadgets (*gadget*) And digital media in the family is increasingly becoming a significant mediating factor. The duration of children's screen time that is not balanced by parental verbal interaction is negatively correlated with the development of vocabulary and narrative ability of children aged 3-5 years. On the other hand, the use of digital media accompanied by co-viewing and discussion with parents can actually be a means of enriching effective language input (Nisa & Muthmainnah, 2026).

Third, economic and parental factors also affect the quality of communication patterns in the family. Research (Nurbaity, Rokhanawati, & Isnaeni, 2025) found significant gaps in the quality of language input between children from families of high and low socioeconomic status. However, the study also found that interventions in the form of communication strategy training to parents from underprivileged families were shown to be effective in significantly improving the quality of parent-child verbal interaction, indicating that the communication knowledge factor is not entirely determined by economic factors.

Fourth, the mental health of parents, especially mothers, has an impact that cannot be ignored. High levels of parenting stress are negatively correlated with the frequency and quality of mothers' conversations with children under five years of age (Pan et al., 2025). This implies the need for mental health support for parents as an integral part of children's language development programs.

4. Practical Implications for Early Childhood Parents and Educators

Based on the synthesis of the literature that has been conducted, this study produces a number of practical implications that can be applied in the context of early childhood education in Indonesia. First, parenting programs organized by PAUD institutions need to explicitly include material on parental communication strategies that support language acquisition. Parents who attended the training showed a significant increase in the use of supportive communication techniques such as expansion, recasting, and open-ended questions (Shanti, Suryani, & Ajisukmo, 2021).

Second, to support the preservation of regional languages as well as the development of Indonesian and foreign languages, parents need to get practical guidance on the management of bilingualism in the family. In his research (Nurhadi, Mukminin, Al-maimunah, Jeruk, & Sampang, 2025) recommend a strategy of consistency in the use of language adapted to family conditions, such as the use of regional languages in certain contexts (at home, when with grandparents, when telling traditions) as a realistic way to maintain the vitality of regional languages in the midst of the dominance of the Indonesian language.

Third, reading activities together (*Shared Reading*) or *dialogic reading*) needs to be promoted more massively in early literacy programs in Indonesia. (Dicataldo, Rowe, & Roch, 2022) In his intervention study, it was found that the *dialogic reading* which involved parents for eight weeks significantly improved the expressive vocabulary and story-comprehension abilities of children aged 4-6 years. The key to its success lies in training parents to not just read the text, but to invite children to dialogue, ask predictive questions, and encourage children to reconstruct stories.

Fourth, PAUD teachers need to act as a bridge between communication patterns at home and at school. Intensive communication between teachers and parents about children's language development, including the local language used at home, can help teachers develop learning strategies that are responsive to the child's linguistic background (Aushofia & Tejaningsih, 2025). This approach is in line with

the principle *linguistically responsive teaching* which is increasingly advocated in early childhood education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This literature review confirms that parental communication patterns have a fundamental role in the process of acquiring the first and second languages of early childhood. Rich, responsive, and consistent communication patterns that include the use of *child-directed speech*, meaningful conversational turns, verbal scaffolding, and warm emotional engagement have been proven to consistently support children's linguistic development, both in international contexts and multilingual Indonesian contexts. In the context of second language acquisition, studies in Indonesia show that the real threat to the sustainability of regional languages lies in the reduced use of regional languages in parent-child communication. The consistency of parents' *bilingual* communication strategies and the balance of exposure to both languages are the main keys to the success of B2 acquisition, both regional and foreign languages.

The most important implication of this study is the need to strengthen literacy-based parenting programs that are integrated into the PAUD system in Indonesia. Collaboration between parents, early childhood educators, linguists, and health workers is needed to create an optimal linguistic ecosystem for early childhood growth and development. Future research is expected to further examine the role of digital platforms and social media in shaping parent-child communication patterns, as well as develop contextual and evidence-based intervention models for Indonesian families.

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