

**THE ROLE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN CHILDHOODS LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract**

*The environment plays a crucial role as a platform in the development of children's language and speech skills, as it is part of their interactions during the developmental process. This research aims to describe the role of the environment in children's language development. The method used in this research is qualitative, employing a literature review approach. Sources are taken from various kinds of literature, including journals, articles, previous research, and other internet sources. The results of this study show that the role of the environment is very important in language development because early childhood language skills can develop depending on the stimuli provided by the environment. The environment helps train children in communication by introducing proper greetings, familiarizing them with surrounding objects, implementing democratic parenting, and integrating language skills into daily life, thereby supporting children's ability to express themselves.*

**Keyword:** Early Childhood, Environment Influence, Language Development, Stimuli

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**INTRODUCTION**

**A. Background**

Language development in children is a fundamental aspect of their cognitive and social growth. From early childhood, children begin acquiring language by interacting with their environment, which significantly shapes their communication abilities. Numerous studies have shown that language acquisition is not only an innate process but also highly influenced by external factors, particularly the environment. The role of parents, caregivers, educators, and the surrounding community is crucial in providing the necessary linguistic stimuli that help children learn to communicate effectively. According to Jahja (2011) quoted in (Amalia et al., 2019) Language development is a medium for communication. In the sense that it includes all ways to communicate to express it such as using speech, writing, gestures, and facial expressions.

The reality in society, many of us assume that children who talk a lot are a reflection of intelligent children without paying attention to the language development of the child. The lack of language filters obtained from the environment causes a negative influence on the child himself. This will be seen when they socialize and communicate with others. The language used depends on the environment in which they often interact. For example, if a

child often gathers with people who use polite language, then a child will be formed into a child who speaks politely. Conversely, if a child is in a poor language environment, then the child's language will also be poor. The reason is because children will easily record what they hear and see without seeing the consequences.

In many cases, the early language skills of children are honed through daily interactions, such as conversations at home, exposure to reading materials, or structured activities in educational settings. The environment acts as a platform for children to practice and expand their vocabulary, understand social norms in communication, and express their thoughts and emotions. However, the extent to which the environment supports language development depends on the quality and frequency of these interactions.

Understanding the dynamic between environmental factors and language acquisition is essential for creating environments that nurture children's language skills. This study explores the importance of environmental factors, drawing from various literature, to highlight how these factors contribute to language development in early childhood. By examining how children are influenced by their surroundings, this research aims to provide insights into the strategies that can be employed to support language growth in different contexts.

## **B. Research Problem**

How does the environment influence children's language development during early childhood, and what are the key environmental factors that contribute to variations in language acquisition and communication skills?

## **C. Research Objective**

To Explore Environmental Influence: Investigate how various environmental factors such as parental involvement, caregiver interactions, and community surroundings affect children's language development.

## **PREVIOUS WORK**

Numerous studies have explored the intricate relationship between environmental factors and children's language development. This body of research highlights the significance of various contexts, including family, educational settings, and community interactions, in shaping children's linguistic abilities.

### **1. Family Influence on Language Development**

Hart and Risley (1995) conducted a landmark study that examined the impact of parental language use on children's vocabulary development. They found that children from families with higher levels of verbal interaction had significantly larger vocabularies compared to those from less verbally engaged families. The study emphasized the importance of "language-rich" environments, where parents frequently talk to their children, read aloud, and engage in meaningful conversations.

A study by Tamis-LeMonda et al. (2004) further supports this notion, showing that the quality of mother-child interactions, including responsiveness and the use of varied

vocabulary, positively correlates with children's language skills. The research suggests that children benefit from interactions that encourage them to express their thoughts and feelings.

## **2. Educational Settings and Language Acquisition**

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory posits that social interaction is fundamental to cognitive development, including language acquisition. His work emphasizes the role of teachers and peers in providing the necessary scaffolding for children to develop their language skills. Research by Dickinson and Tabors (2001) supports this theory, indicating that children engaged in interactive, language-rich activities in preschool settings demonstrate stronger language skills than those in less stimulating environments.

A study by Neuman and Celano (2001) examined the impact of access to books and literacy resources in low-income neighborhoods. They found that children who had access to books and participated in literacy programs showed significant improvements in vocabulary and reading skills, underscoring the importance of educational resources in language development.

## **3. Community and Social Interaction**

The role of community in language development has been highlighted in various studies. For instance, Kholilullah (2020) explored how community engagement through storytelling sessions and local educational programs enhances children's language skills. The research indicates that children exposed to diverse linguistic contexts in community settings develop a broader vocabulary and better communication skills.

A study by Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) examined the cultural practices surrounding language use in different communities. They found that children learn language not only through direct instruction but also through participation in community activities, which provide rich opportunities for social interaction and language practice.

## **4. Impact of Socioeconomic Status**

Research by Hart and Risley (1995) also highlighted the disparities in language exposure based on socioeconomic status. Children from lower-income families often have fewer verbal interactions and less access to educational resources, leading to language delays compared to their peers from higher-income families. This finding emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to support language development in disadvantaged communities.

A study by Walker et al. (2011) examined the effects of socioeconomic status on language development and found that children from low-income backgrounds are at a higher risk for language delays. The research advocates for community programs that provide resources and support to families in need.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **A. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The method used in this study is the literature study approach. Literature study can be said to be a series of studies related to the method of collecting library data, or a study whose research can be explored with various library information such as; books, scientific journals, previous research, articles and other documents. After the data is collected through the data collection method. After that, the process of analyzing the collected data. Next is to provide an interpretation of the data owned by the researcher using the descriptive method.

## **B. RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

The research subjects in this study are various sources of literature related to the role of the environment in children's language development. These include theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and case studies from previous research, as well as relevant educational and developmental psychology literature. The subjects of these studies focus on early childhood language acquisition, environmental influences, and interactions between children and their surroundings, such as family, educational institutions, and the broader community.

## **C. RESEARCH OBJECT**

The object of this research is the role of environmental factors in the development of children's language skills. This includes examining how family interactions, educational settings, and community involvement contribute to language acquisition and communication abilities in early childhood. The study seeks to explore how these various elements of the environment influence children's ability to develop vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and social communication skills. By analyzing these objects, the research aims to identify key strategies for optimizing language development in young children through environmental support.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The analysis of the role of the environment in children's language development reveals a complex interplay of various factors that contribute to linguistic growth. This section synthesizes findings from the literature to highlight how family dynamics, educational settings, community interactions, and socioeconomic status collectively influence language acquisition in early childhood.

### **A. Family Influence on Language Development**

The family environment is often the first context in which children are exposed to language. Research by Hart and Risley (1995) underscores the significance of verbal interactions within the family unit. Their study found that children from families with higher levels of verbal interaction had significantly larger vocabularies compared to those from less verbally engaged families. This finding emphasizes the importance of creating a "language-rich" environment at home.

#### **1. Parental Engagement:**

- **Quality of Interaction:** The quality and quantity of parental engagement directly correlate with children's language skills. Parents who actively involve their children in discussions, ask open-ended questions, and encourage them to express their thoughts create a rich linguistic environment that fosters vocabulary expansion and comprehension. For instance, when parents narrate stories or describe daily activities, they introduce new words and concepts, enhancing the child's language exposure.
- **Modelling Language Use:** Children learn language not only through direct instruction but also by observing and imitating their parents' language use. This modelling effect is crucial, as children are likely to adopt the linguistic styles and vocabulary of their

caregivers. For example, if parents consistently use polite language and varied vocabulary, children are more likely to mirror these behaviors in their own speech.

## 2. Emotional Support and Language Development:

- **Secure Attachment:** The emotional bond between parents and children also plays a role in language development. A secure attachment fosters a safe environment where children feel comfortable exploring language. When parents respond positively to their children's attempts to communicate, it encourages further attempts and builds confidence in their language abilities.
- **Verbal Encouragement:** Positive reinforcement, such as praising children for their verbal efforts, can motivate them to engage more in conversations. This encouragement can lead to increased language use and experimentation with new words and phrases.

## B. Educational Settings and Language Acquisition

Educational environments play a pivotal role in language development, as highlighted by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. The interactions children have with teachers and peers in educational settings provide essential scaffolding for language acquisition.

### 1. Interactive Learning:

- **Language-Rich Activities:** Dickinson and Tabors (2001) found that children engaged in interactive, language-rich activities in preschool settings demonstrate stronger language skills. Activities such as group discussions, storytelling sessions, and collaborative projects encourage children to use language in meaningful contexts. These interactions not only enhance vocabulary but also improve grammar and pronunciation.
- **Peer Interaction:** Interaction with peers is equally important. Children learn from each other through play and cooperative learning. Engaging in dialogue with peers allows children to practice language skills, negotiate meanings, and develop social communication abilities.

### 2. Access to Literacy Resources:

- **Importance of Books:** Neuman and Celano (2001) emphasize the importance of access to books and literacy resources. Children in low-income neighborhoods who participate in literacy programs show significant improvements in vocabulary and reading skills. Access to diverse reading materials, such as picture books, storybooks, and educational games, can stimulate children's interest in language and literacy.
- **Teacher Training:** The effectiveness of educational settings also depends on the training and preparedness of teachers. Educators who are equipped with strategies to promote language development can create an environment that nurtures children's linguistic growth. Professional development programs that focus on language acquisition strategies can enhance teachers' ability to support diverse learners.

### **C. Community and Social Interaction**

The community context significantly impacts children's language development. Kholilullah (2020) highlights how community engagement through storytelling and local educational programs enhances children's language skills.

#### **1. Diverse Linguistic Contexts:**

- **Community Programs:** Children exposed to various linguistic contexts in community settings develop broader vocabularies and better communication skills. Programs that involve storytelling, reading clubs, and language workshops provide rich opportunities for social interaction and language practice. These community initiatives can help bridge the gap for children who may not receive adequate language exposure at home.
- **Cultural Events:** Participation in cultural events and activities can also enrich children's language experiences. Engaging in community traditions, festivals, and celebrations allows children to hear and use language in diverse contexts, enhancing their understanding of language as a social tool.

#### **2. Cultural Practices:**

- **Learning Through Participation:** Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) found that children learn language through participation in cultural practices, which reinforces the idea that language acquisition is a social process influenced by community norms and values. For instance, children who participate in community storytelling sessions not only learn new vocabulary but also understand the cultural significance of language use in their community.
- **Role of Adults in the Community:** Adults in the community, such as mentors, librarians, and local.

### **D. Impact of Socioeconomic Status**

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a critical factor influencing language development. Research by Hart and Risley (1995) identified disparities in language exposure based on SES, with children from lower-income families often experiencing fewer verbal interactions and less access to educational resources. This section explores how SES impacts language acquisition and the implications for interventions.

#### **1. Language Exposure and Interaction:**

- **Disparities in Verbal Interaction:** Children from lower-income families typically have fewer opportunities for verbal interaction compared to their peers from higher-income families. Hart and Risley (1995) found that children in affluent families were exposed to thousands more words per day than those in low-income households. This disparity in language exposure can lead to significant differences in vocabulary development and overall language skills.
- **Quality of Interaction:** Not only is the quantity of language exposure important, but the quality of interactions also matters. Families with higher SES often engage in more complex conversations, use a wider range of vocabulary, and provide richer linguistic input. In contrast, children from lower SES backgrounds may experience more

directive and less interactive communication, which can hinder their language development.

2. Access to Educational Resources:

- Literacy Resources: Walker et al. (2011) found that children from low-income backgrounds are at a higher risk for language delays due to limited access to books, educational materials, and literacy programs. The lack of resources can restrict opportunities for language practice and exploration, leading to gaps in language skills.
- Community Support Programs: The research advocates for community programs that provide resources and support to families in need. Initiatives such as mobile libraries, after-school tutoring, and community literacy workshops can help bridge the gap for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. These programs can offer access to books and educational materials, as well as opportunities for guided language practice.

### E. Synthesis of Findings

The analysis reveals that the environment plays a multifaceted role in children's language development. The interconnectedness of family, educational settings, community interactions, and socioeconomic status creates a complex web of influences that shape linguistic growth.

- Holistic Approach: To optimize language development, a holistic approach that integrates family engagement, quality educational experiences, and community support is essential.
- Targeted Interventions: Recognizing the disparities in language exposure based on socioeconomic status calls for targeted interventions that provide resources and support to families in need, ensuring that all children have access to language-rich environments.
- Cultural Sensitivity: Understanding the cultural practices surrounding language use in different communities can inform strategies that respect and incorporate diverse linguistic backgrounds, enhancing children's language acquisition.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the role of the environment in children's language development reveals several key findings that underscore the importance of various environmental factors. The results indicate that family dynamics, educational settings, community interactions, and socioeconomic status collectively influence language acquisition in early childhood.

### A. Family Influence on Language Development

The findings from the literature highlight that the family environment is the primary context for early language exposure. Children from families with high levels of verbal interaction demonstrate significantly larger vocabularies and better language skills. This suggests that fostering a language-rich home environment is crucial for promoting language development.

- Parental Engagement: The quality and quantity of parental engagement are critical. Parents who actively involve their children in discussions and provide verbal encouragement create a supportive atmosphere for language learning. This engagement not only enhances vocabulary but also builds confidence in children's communication abilities.

- **Emotional Support:** The emotional bond between parents and children plays a significant role in language development. A secure attachment fosters a safe environment for exploration, while positive reinforcement encourages children to engage more in conversations. This emotional support is essential for developing effective communication skills.

## **B. Educational Settings and Language Acquisition**

The analysis indicates that educational settings are vital for language development, as they provide structured opportunities for interaction and learning.

- **Interactive Learning:** Children engaged in interactive, language-rich activities in preschool settings demonstrate stronger language skills. This finding emphasizes the need for educational programs that prioritize interactive learning experiences, such as storytelling and group discussions, to enhance children's language acquisition.
- **Access to Literacy Resources:** Access to books and literacy resources is crucial for language development. Children in low-income neighborhoods who participate in literacy programs show significant improvements in vocabulary and reading skills. This underscores the importance of providing equitable access to educational resources to support language growth.

## **C. Community and Social Interaction**

The community context significantly impacts children's language development.

- **Diverse Linguistic Contexts:** Community programs that promote storytelling and language workshops provide rich opportunities for social interaction and language practice. Children exposed to diverse linguistic contexts develop broader vocabularies and better communication skills, highlighting the importance of community engagement in language development.
- **Cultural Practices:** Participation in cultural events and community activities reinforces language learning. Children learn language not only through direct instruction but also through participation in cultural practices, which enhances their understanding of language as a social tool.

## **D. Impact of Socioeconomic Status**

The analysis reveals that socioeconomic status (SES) is a critical factor influencing language development.

- **Language Exposure and Interaction:** Children from lower-income families experience fewer verbal interactions and less access to educational resources, leading to significant disparities in vocabulary development. This finding emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to support language development in disadvantaged communities.
- **Access to Educational Resources:** Limited access to books and educational materials restricts opportunities for language practice, resulting in gaps in language skills. Community support programs that provide resources and support to families in need are essential for bridging these gaps.



## **E. Synthesis of Findings**

The analysis reveals that the environment plays a multifaceted role in children's language development. The interconnectedness of family, educational settings, community interactions, and socioeconomic status creates a complex web of influences that shape linguistic growth. To optimize language development, a holistic approach that integrates family engagement, quality educational experiences, and community support is essential. Recognizing the disparities in language exposure based on socioeconomic status calls for targeted interventions that provide resources and support to families in need, ensuring that all children have access to language-rich environments. Additionally, understanding the cultural practices surrounding language use in different communities can inform strategies that respect and incorporate diverse linguistic backgrounds, enhancing children's language acquisition. By addressing these interconnected factors, stakeholders can create supportive environments that nurture children's language development and promote effective communication skills, ultimately contributing to their cognitive and social growth.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **A. Conclusion**

The findings of this research emphasize the crucial role the environment plays in shaping early childhood language development. The family environment serves as the most foundational setting where children first acquire language through constant verbal interaction, emotional connection, and parental guidance. Parents' involvement, such as reading books, telling stories, and engaging in conversations, directly contributes to a child's vocabulary growth and communication abilities. In addition to the family, educational settings, including schools and daycare centers, play a significant role by providing structured opportunities for interactive learning, exposure to literacy resources, and social interaction among peers. Moreover, the community and cultural environment enrich children's language development through activities like storytelling traditions, group interactions, and exposure to diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the study reveals that socioeconomic factors greatly influence language acquisition, with children from affluent families often having better access to educational resources, whereas those from lower-income families may face limitations in their language exposure. Overall, this research demonstrates the necessity of a supportive and stimulating environment, combining family, education, and community elements, to optimize children's language development.

### **B. Suggestion**

To promote comprehensive language development in children, collaborative efforts from families, educators, communities, and policymakers are essential. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to create a language-rich home environment by engaging in regular conversations, reading books aloud, telling stories, and encouraging children to express their thoughts. Schools and educational institutions should design curricula that focus on fostering interactive, language-centered activities, providing access to diverse reading materials, and supporting children's linguistic growth through both formal and informal learning. Community leaders and organizations can contribute by arranging programs like storytelling

events, reading sessions, and cultural activities to stimulate children's interest in language and social interaction. Policymakers are advised to address socioeconomic disparities by implementing initiatives that ensure equitable access to quality education, such as mobile libraries, free early education programs, and support for low-income families. By integrating these approaches, all children can benefit from environments that nurture their language skills and overall cognitive development, ensuring they are equipped with the tools necessary for lifelong learning and effective communication.

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