



The Impact of First Language Toward Second Language Acquisition

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: February 3, 2025</p> <p>Revised: February 23, 2025</p> <p>Accepted: April 12, 2025</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords: Impact; First Language; Second Language; Acquisition</p>	<p>This study explores the influence of first language proficiency on the acquisition of a second language, specifically English, among students at Muhammadiyah University Muara Bungo. Employing a qualitative research design, data was gathered through in-depth interviews with five fifth-semester students from the English Education Department. The study reveals that the first language significantly affects the ease and effectiveness of learning English. Participants reported encountering difficulties related to their native languages and environmental factors. Despite these challenges, students actively pursue English learning through diverse methods, such as watching films, listening to music, and engaging with social media. The findings highlight the complex interplay between first language influences and second language acquisition, offering insights into the strategies students use to overcome language barriers.</p> <p>How to Cite: Utami, M., Monika, T., Agustin, D., & Habibi, M. (2025). The Impact of First Language Toward Second Language Acquisition. <i>Indonesian Journal of Pedagogy and Research Development</i>, 1(2), 90-95.</p>

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental medium for communication, as highlighted by Suardi et al. (2019). The first language, often referred to as the mother tongue, is acquired by children through interaction with their caregivers and environment. According to Fatmawati (2015), language acquisition is a gradual process wherein children evolve from not knowing any language to achieving fluency. This process is natural and occurs as children absorb the language spoken around them, primarily from their parents or caregivers.

As children grow, they encounter the challenge of acquiring a second language. Chaer and Agustina (2014) describe this process as a gradual progression where knowledge of the second language is built upon a foundation of the first language. Despite the gradual nature of this acquisition, some children struggle with mastering the second language effectively. In Indonesia, for instance, English is introduced as a foreign language in schools, making it a compulsory subject at all educational levels (Zelvia, 2019).

At Universitas Muhammadiyah Muara Bungo (UMMUBA), English is a core component of the curriculum for students in the English Education Department. These students come from various regions in Jambi, each with its own regional language as their first language. English, therefore, becomes a secondary language they must learn alongside their native languages.

Given this context, this research seeks to address the following questions:

1. How does proficiency in a student's first language impact their acquisition of a second language, such as English?
2. What challenges do students face in learning English as a second language, considering their first language background?
3. What strategies do students employ to overcome these challenges in their English language learning process?

By exploring these questions, this study aims to understand the impact of first language on second language acquisition and provide insights into the experiences of students learning English in a multilingual context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Language can be categorized as an important media of communication, because language is a means for someone to express opinions, gain knowledge and think (Muhammad, 2019). Language consists of mother tongue and second language. According to Fatmawati (2015) Mother tongue is a child's mastery of a language which begins with the acquisition of the language they first acquired. In that sense, parents here also play a role in acquiring the mother tongue. However, sometimes there are times when a child's language is difficult for people, including their own family, to understand. Because children at their age still find it difficult to use rudimentary grammar (Puspita, Yenda. Et al. 2022). According to Azzahroh, et Al (2021) environmental conditions are one of the factors that have an impact on the development of a child's first language.

Where, children acquire their first language from their environment, either from their family or society. According to Ulan, et al (2022), the term acquisition is a process of language absorption that children do naturally or naturally when they learn their mother tongue. In a sense, this term of acquisition the child will capture his first language from his mother first, he hears, absorbs, then practices the languages that have been taught by his mother when he was a child. Acquiring this first language means that children capture, acquire and process and use these words for communication purposes (Puspita, Yenda. Et Al. 2022). This means that a child's first language will always develop over time. For a second language, the method of acquiring a second language is divided into two as explained by Alam Budi Kusuma (2016), the first is guided, meaning that the acquisition of a second language in a guided way is achieved during classroom learning activities, there is a speaker or teacher who explains Second language lessons, for example English. This material has usually been prepared using a curriculum according to each school's policy and several strategies have been used by a teacher according to what the students need. The second is scientific language acquisition. This scientific language acquisition is usually obtained in daily activities. Like when we communicate, free from teachers' materials. But back to each person, each individual has a way to acquire a second language.

As it was found in one of initial studies that children learn the second language through the online game (Hafifah, et al: 2022). Based on the results of their research or interviews, here children gain more second language acquisition as an effect of online games where they absorb English words that are often spoken. They catch a word like "battle". The implication in online games is, for example, "I want to play a game first, because I want to battle with friends" or in everyday life "let's have a battle to eat noodles, whoever is quickest will win". When they were asked why they preferred to use English, it turned out that they were more comfortable pronouncing the word "battle" because they already knew the meaning of the word and the pronunciation was also easier and more practical. One of the studies above can be concluded that by playing online games you can absorb or acquire a new language into your daily life. This has a good impact on children their age because the vocabulary is simple and often occurs in real life.

Another research was conducted by Rakaiza Imani Nasuha (2020). Here he conducted research on the influence of YouTube on second language acquisition in 8 year old children. Based on the results of his research, this little boy was already used to watching YouTube. This child is used to watching the "Tic Tac toy family" channel. And from the researcher's interview, it was clear that the child and mother were already used to speaking English as their second language. The

researcher interviewed the mother that indeed for everyday language they still used Indonesian. However, there are times when they use English. Through this research, researchers saw that the child did not use the second language very often in his school environment, but he used the second language more often in his home environment. The environmental influence is not a big factor for the child because his habit of watching YouTube is greater than the environmental influence of using a second language.

From two examples of research that have been carried out by several researchers, it can be concluded that not all acquisitions from the environment have a big impact, but sometimes they also come from habits that occur. Therefore, researchers want to examine the impact first language towards the acquisition of a second language that occurs by adults.

3. METHODS

In this case, the researcher used qualitative methods. It is a research activity that aims to have deep understanding of the phenomena experienced by the subject of the research. Such as behavior, actions, motivation and so on which aims to collect data and is based on theory (Umar et al. 2019). To gain the suitable data, the researcher involved 5 students from Universitas Muhammadiyah as the participants. The participants were studying in English Education Department. They were in their fifth semester. The participants were interviewed by asking some questions related to the impact of the first language on the acquisition of the second language.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are many factors influence a language learner to learn second language, such as environment, society, age, and culture (Oktavia, 2019). Beside of those factors, the first language is also assumed to give impact towards learning English as second language. After the researcher has collected data or observations through interviews. Below are the results of the analysis presented by the researcher.

1. *The Use of Language on Daily Life*

As we generally know, Indonesia is a diverse tribe and culture with dozens of regional languages in it. In this case, the researcher saw from several respondents' answers that some of them used Indonesian as their first language, there were also those who used the language of their region of origin and the region we live in now. Based on data regarding the Impact of First Language, some of participants said the following

"My first language is a regional language. Because I live in a city environment, I completely use Indonesian. I learned this first language of course from the environment and the world of education."

"The first language I use is my mother tongue, aka my regional language, namely Minang, I learned it from my parents and the environment. My first language, sometimes some words sound foreign to other people."

"My first language is of course a regional language which is sometimes only understood by those closest to me, but often my friends also understand it. In my daily life, I use Indonesian to communicate. However, sometimes I also use English with virtual friends."

"My first language is of course Indonesian and a regional language, I learned it from my mother, school and others. And to communicate in my environment, I don't find it difficult to speak my language."

"My first language is a regional language because I live in an environment a little far from urban areas. I learned this first language from my family of course. Sometimes this first language may be difficult for other people."

From the answers from the interviews, the researcher concluded that some of these students' first language was a regional language. They learn the regional language first because the family environment is very strong, then followed by Indonesian. However, sometimes their first language is a little difficult for people other than their family to understand due to different ethnic factors for each individual.

2. Using English as a Foreign Language

Based on the participants information that they use English rarely. They only use the language when they are in the class.

"Well, because we are English students, we speak English when are studying"

"I am shy to speak English out of the class"

"I do not speak English except in the classroom"

"I do not speak English everyday. I don't feel comfortable to use English"

Based on the data above, it shows that the participants seldom practice English. They are more comfortable to speak with their mother tongue.

3. The Impact of First Language on Second Language Acquisition

In life we definitely have difficulties in learning existing languages, such as the second language of these students certainly have different difficulties. Of course, the impact of their first language is also present in acquiring this second language. . Based on data regarding the Impact of First Language on Second Language Acquisition, some of participants said the following.

"My first language doesn't give me much difficulty when learning a second language. However, sometimes it has an impact when I learn a second language, I only use the second language in class, this makes my skills less honed. Apart from that, the environment also influences because they don't give me the opportunity to practice my English"

"I feel that sometimes I take a long time in the process of acquiring second language vocabulary, I rarely practice because I always use my local language. In my environment, only a few people use a second language, but that doesn't really affect me, I only use it when I'm on campus."

"Regarding the impact of my first language when acquiring a second language, it is quite significant, I can understand easily, if I encounter difficult vocabulary, I will translate it so I can understand. However, the environment sometimes does not support me enough in using English, when I was an exchange student, I had friends to chat with, after returning home my English skills decreased greatly."

"For my first language, it is not too difficult to acquire a second language, because if there are problems I will continue to learn and repeat what I have learned. The impact could be said to be 50 50, it's the same, in my environment it's also less supportive. However, I continue to learn through any platform"

"My first language had an impact when I acquired a second language due to difficult vocabulary. I also use my first language more often because my environment does not support speaking a second language, especially in my family. Even so, my first language does not make it difficult for me to learn English"

Based on the results of the interviews, it can be concluded that some of the students felt that their first language had an impact on their second language, some felt that there were no obstacles. They rarely use English in everyday life because there is a lack of support from the environment, especially family and friends, however, from the campus environment they still learn and use English. Apart from campus, they are also self-taught, many learn from music and films. Even though there are many obstacles and their impacts, it is not a difficulty and they remain enthusiastic about learning English.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the researchers' interviews with several students. The first languages they use are regional languages and Indonesian, they got these languages from their family environment. Sometimes their first language is quite difficult for other people to understand due to the effects of different ethnicities, however they still communicate well with other people. Apart from that, they also learn a second language, namely English.

Many of them learn English autodidactically, starting from films, listening to music, or other social media. Apart from being self-taught, of course they also learn it from education such as campuses, some think that the teaching staff on campus is enough to influence and motivate them in learning English. There are also some who think that teaching staff are lacking in speaking, meaning that students are not able to speak fluently. Even so, the teaching staff delivered the material quite well and interestingly. The impact of their first language on the acquisition of this second language, some feel influenced, some don't, they are fluent and learn English well, however sometimes the biggest factor is the environment because their environment is less supportive for practicing speaking English. So they become less practicing, however that will not break their enthusiasm for learning English.

6. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's findings, based on interviews with students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Muara Bungo, reveal that students use a range of first languages, including regional languages and Indonesian, which they acquire from their family environments. While these first languages can sometimes be challenging for others to understand due to ethnic diversity, students generally manage effective communication. In addition to their native languages, these students are learning English, often through self-directed methods such as watching films, listening to music, and engaging with social media. They also receive formal instruction from their educational institutions. However, there are mixed perceptions about the effectiveness of their instructors. Some students find the teaching staff's efforts motivating and sufficient, while others feel that the staff's limitations in spoken English hinder their fluency.

The limitation of the study:

1. **Sample Size and Diversity:** The study is limited by its small sample size of students from one university, which may not fully represent the broader student population across different institutions and regions.
2. **Self-Directed Learning Bias:** The reliance on self-directed learning methods may not be uniformly effective for all students, potentially skewing perceptions of the impact of first language on second language acquisition.
3. **Instructor Influence:** Variability in students' perceptions of their instructors' effectiveness suggests that the study may not account for all factors affecting language learning, such as instructional quality and teaching methods.

The recommendations of the study:

1. **Expand the Study:** Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample of students from multiple universities and regions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of first language on second language acquisition.



2. Evaluate Self-Directed Learning: Investigate the effectiveness of different self-directed learning strategies and their impact on language proficiency to identify best practices that can be shared among students.
3. Instructor Training and Support: Educational institutions should consider investing in professional development for instructors to enhance their language teaching skills, particularly in spoken English, to better support students in achieving fluency.
4. Enhance Language Practice Environments: Develop more supportive language practice environments both on and off campus, including language exchange programs and conversation clubs, to help students practice English more effectively and overcome environmental barriers.

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