

# Benefits of Teaching Foreign Language for Early Childhood

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**Abstract:** Benefits of foreign language to teach early childhood. Language as a communication tool and an important tool in the child's life. Through language, the child can interact, share experiences, and can improve the intellectual, in order to develop the knowledge and language skills. Through language, the child can interact, share experiences, and can improve the intellectual, in order to develop the knowledge and language skills. There are many ways that parents can do to teach foreign languages to children, one of them is to get children to use a foreign language in everyday life.

**Keywords:** foreign language, early childhood, benefits of foreign language

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language is an inseparable part of human life, because by language a person can convey intentions and goals to others. In other words, language is a communication tool used by humans in their efforts to interact with each other. Language functions as a communication tool and is an important tool in children's lives. Through language, children can be interconnected, share experiences, and can improve intellectually, namely in the context of developing their language knowledge and skills (Marić, 2017). For children at an early age it is a period of development that must be fostered and developed so that they can make full use of their language abilities. Without guidance and direction, it is feared that their language development is not as expected by parents at home or by educators at school.

Humans as social creatures always interact with others. Communication through language allows one to adjust to the surrounding environment. Language is unique and universal (Gill, & Damann, 2015; Chaterjee, 2016). Unique means to have characteristics or characteristics that are not owned by other languages and universal means to have the same characteristics that exist in all languages. Bilingualism is a person's ability to use or master two languages.

## 2. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SIDES TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO CHILDREN SINCE EARLY

One question that often arises in response to trends in teaching foreign languages to children is, should foreign languages be taught to children? There are several reasons why children need to learn a foreign language at an early

age. The first reason is pragmatic demands. It is inevitable that at present the geographical barrier between regions or even between countries has begun to collapse, falling one by one due to globalization. The development of communication and information technology seems to be one of the factors responsible for the increasingly open relations between people in this global era (Walsham, 2017). The impact that we immediately observe with the collapse of the parapet is that it is easier and cheaper for one individual, even between nations, in different places and in other parts of the world to relate to other individuals in real time. One communication tool that plays an important and necessary role in global competition is the mastery of foreign languages (Ahmad, 2016; Dörnyei, Z., & Al-Horiee, 2017). For this reason, the preparation of Indonesian human resources needs to be done early.

Other reasons refer to formal legal reasons and international agreements. The 1945 Constitution mandates the Government to 'educate the life of the nation.' Law No. 23 of 2003 concerning the National Education System confirms that every child has the right to education and teaching in order to develop his personality and intelligence in accordance with his interests and talents. At a more operational level, it is stated that foreign languages can be taught at the elementary school level to children as local content. Institutionally, as a component of the nation, early childhood education is the responsibility of the Government.

There are several factors that become important reasons for learning a foreign language early on. The first factor, the maturation process seems to favor the young language learners. The point is, that the younger a child learns language, the easier he will master the language. Lenneberg states that until approaching the age of transition (puberty) the human brain is relatively easier to

absorb something physiologically, thus providing convenience and adaptation for children in language acquisition.

Children do not need to bother learning it. Children only take language naturally from their surroundings (Deng & Zhou, 2016). The second factor that plays an important role in children in learning language is related to emotions and feelings. Henter (2014) looks at several factors related to affective factors in language learning. These factors are self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, empathy, extroversion and motivation. In these factors' children tend to have more positive values than adult learners. For example, children do not have an excessive mental burden when learning a foreign language, fear of making mistakes is low, and students have a better desire to learn new things through a foreign language. The third factor is the environment. Children tend to have better opportunities to integrate true communication needs with their new linguistic experience. It means that in an age marked by exploration of the environment, children have a better chance of using language naturally to represent their understanding of their environment. Therefore, the communication needs of children using language in the surrounding environment are more widely and naturally accommodated.

What are the advantages and disadvantages if the child learns a foreign language early? Here are some benefits of children learning a foreign language early on. The first advantage is related to his intellectual development. Children who learn foreign languages at an early age have advantages both in terms of language and non-language. They tend to have more mental flexibility, excellence in the formation of concepts of natural phenomena around them, and have a more diverse mental ability. This means that by learning foreign languages earlier children are more familiar with the wider world and have conceptual abilities in interpreting the surrounding environment through language. In other words, early stimulation at the age of child development through language learning will benefit in the development of reasoning. In addition, children will also benefit more from the awareness of the language system as a social phenomenon. He will be better able to understand his mother tongue system. This advantage brushes aside fears of disrupting children's mastery of their mother tongue with the introduction of foreign languages.

Children who master more than one language will not experience communication problems in their daily lives. Third, children who learn a foreign language early will benefit in terms of cultural understanding. He will have a broader cultural view, and this is beneficial because he will be able to develop an attitude of tolerance towards other different cultures. However, all these positive cultural values can only be achieved if the foreign language learning environment experienced by children truly supports the achievement of optimal learning outcomes, for example the use of appropriate learning media, selection of

appropriate learning methods, the presentation of pleasant material, and teacher involvement who really have adequate language teaching competence for children.

In addition to the positive aspects of learning foreign languages in children, there are some challenges that seem to need to be watched out for. First is the problem of sustainability, especially at the time of transfer of education, from the playgroup or kindergarten to elementary school, from elementary school to junior high school. This aspect of sustainability can be related to learning material as well as to the impact of using the material presentation strategy. The mapping of learning materials seems to be done carefully so that unnecessary repetitions can be avoided. Likewise, the appropriate strategy balance for the presentation of material needs to be taken into account at different levels. Not fulfilling these conditions has the potential to reduce students' interest and motivation to learn at the next level. Another challenge is that the curriculum content will increase which means that the learning burden of students will increase as well as the teaching load of teachers, especially for classroom teachers. If foreign languages are to be introduced to young children, the impression is that English lessons are just a supplement to core subjects, or there are other motivations such as promotional needs, as far as possible to be minimized.

### **3. BENEFITS OF BILINGUALISM FOR CHILDREN**

Indonesian children have the potential to be bilingual and even multilingual. In addition to Indonesian, our children are generally also taught English as an international language and indirectly are also able to speak regional languages through parents or family. Improving children's multilingual or multilingual abilities is actually not too difficult. Every child is born with the ability to imitate the sounds of any language. Over time, when a baby is 10 months old, he begins to narrow the range of sounds he hears from those around him. So, if you want to teach children another language, it is very good to do it in the first year of a child's life.

#### **3.1 Early Language Stimulation**

The child has been exposed to language since parents have not taught him any abilities. In the mother's stomach, the baby listens to her parents talk and learns to recognize sounds. After birth, the process of understanding language has increasingly developed since he learned to distinguish different sounds and tone of speech. Children are very enthusiastic and have an extraordinary ability to learn languages. Children's language development increases rapidly when he turns 3 years old. At that age, children strengthen articulation, sentence structure, and already have a lot of vocabulary. Age 3 years and over is a golden period of teaching language to children, including

foreign languages. Handryastuti a pediatrician said that, introducing children to foreign languages can be done as early as possible. It is good for a child's brain development because he receives various stimulations. A child's brain's ability to learn a second or third language is best when toddlers and that ability lasts until the age of 8". But parents also need to pay attention to the child's condition. It is undeniable that language skills require talent. Wahyudi stated that is what is called polyglot, which is someone who has the talent or ability to use two or more languages actively.

Language also includes one of the nine intelligences (multiple intelligences) popularized by Howard Gardner. So, there is indeed a child who has language skills that are more prominent than other children of the same age. There are also certain cases where biologically a child has difficulty mastering language.

### **3.2 Language-Sensitive Phase**

When a child is introduced to more than one language, his developing brain does not realize that he is actually learning two different languages. The brain accepts both languages as one system. The experts prove by brain examination results that show, the two languages are stored in the same place in the brain. Babies have extraordinary sensitivity in hearing. They can distinguish sounds, very similar though, in various languages.

Sharpness is no longer owned by adults. In addition, the structure of the mouth, especially the palate that is growing, in toddlers is still very elastic so they are able to mimic all forms of sound in various languages. However, once one or two languages are absorbed, the ceiling will adapt to the dominant language used daily. And the ability of children who have grown up to imitate all forms of sound to be limited.

Some linguists argue that the earlier a child learns a foreign language or second language, the easier it will be to master the language (Peacock, 2001). In fact, many experts argue that until the age of 10, children can master a second language almost as well as their mastery of the first language. And they can talk without an accent. After the age of 10 years, the use of a second language becomes unnatural and children have begun to find it difficult to get rid of the everyday accent language that is dominant they use in the family or social environment.

In mastering the first language or mother tongue, known as the critical phase (critical period). While in mastering a second language or a foreign language, there is the term sensitive phase (sensitive period).

### **3.3 Supporting Environment**

There needs to be a strong motivation from within the child to learn second, third language, and so on. Motivation can be obtained from conditions created in the home or formed from the environment around the child. If

a father or mother is fluent in a foreign language due to a long stay abroad or learning a second language during lectures or courses, children can be motivated to learn languages that are often used by fathers or mothers. The family environment in Indonesia which uses a lot of local languages for daily conversation can also be seen as the potential to teach more than one language to children. Because it can be seen as a linguistic wealth owned by children, especially in an increasingly modern era where children may no longer be familiar with the mother or father's native language. Effective media for teaching foreign languages to children are story books, foreign language songs, television shows, interactive CDs, and various types of games - such as flashcards - as well as through computer.

A child who is considered bilingual has the ability to speak, write, listen, and read two languages fluently. Being a bilingual can give children an advantage in school. Bilingual in pre-school age children has shown that they are more capable than their monolingual counterparts in terms of focus on tasks and not easily divided. The results also show that bilingualism can delay the onset of age-related dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, by up to four years.

There are a number of advantages that bilingual children have more monolingual children. Learning a second language is very beneficial in a child's cognitive development. Bilingual children also tend to perform better in other subjects such as mathematics and science. Bilingual children also have an increased capacity for language learning as adults. Bilingual children tend to dominate in one language, often this is the language used in schools.

There are many myths and misconceptions about bilingualism (Stamou & Dinas, 2009; Moore, & Pérez-Méndez, 2006). Many people believe that bilingual children are confused between two languages and will tend to mix them up. Don't be mistaken! Children are naturally created with excellent abilities and are very adept at separating two languages, so that is only a myth and not true. The benefits of learning a second language at an early age include everything from increased ability to creativity and multi-tasking, children have a broader understanding of culture, and prevent Alzheimer's disease.

The above just mentioned the benefits in terms of physical. Not to mention foreign languages are an investment as well as their future provisions. Not surprisingly, many parents have introduced foreign languages early on. With the hope that children can compete in the global job market later.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

From the description above it can be concluded that it is only natural if we teach English to young children. However, the exact terms and conditions must apply. One of the requirements is to have correctly communicated with

our language, namely Indonesian. Nowadays foreign languages are one of the keys to one's success, especially in international classes.

This is because language is a communication tool. Without language, humans cannot be said to be social beings because they cannot interact without language. Parents play an important role in introducing foreign languages in early childhood. This is because children interact with parents every day, so parents must stimulate a lot of children with regard to teaching foreign language. One way is to get children to use two languages in their daily lives.

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