

Parents Role in Children Bilingual Development

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ABSTRACT

Language development of a child is believed to be highly influenced by environmental conditions. Parents are the closest individual to children's growing and development of self-skill, especially linguistic skill, which is essential to provide them the ability to socialize with others. The purpose of this study is to examine parents' roles in children's bilingual development. Specifically, this study seeks to have a deep investigation on how the parents play their roles in children's bilingual development. This research is adopting qualitative design and the family with bilingual use of language was targeted as the data source. The data of this study is the utterances collected from the interview which is used as the technique of collecting data. Then the data will be analysed by applying the theory of parents' role suggested by Anderson. The result of this research found that from five of roles suggested by Anderson, four roles were found, they are the role as a motivator (40%), a feedback provider (30%), a facilitator (20%) and a controller (10%), meanwhile the role as threatener was not found. This study also found that the subjects on this research were categorized as unbalanced bilinguals due to their ability to speak one language dominantly over the other language.

Keywords: Language Development, Bilingual children, Parents' role.

1. INTRODUCTION

Parents are the main figure who play a very significant roles in the development of every child. It includes the role of the development of their languages. Parents do not teach the language to their children formally, but it happens as a natural process by which the children learn and perceive what they heard and see in natural ways just like how they learn to do physical things [1]. The development of children's language is not only limited to one but as many as possible in many possible ways. This mastery of more than one language is called bilingual. The bilingual can be categorized into balanced bilingual and unbalanced bilinguals. The ability to switch from one language to the other language easily is categorized as balanced bilingual. Meanwhile, the ability to speak more comfortably in one language over the other language is categorized as unbalanced bilingual.

A common way in which new born children ended up being bilingual is that they were born to a parent who speaks diverse languages. When both languages are utilized routinely within the domestic, the child is more often than not able to secure both languages at the same

time. Therefore, it shows that parents' language use influences the language development of children. There are strong possibilities children can be bilingual due to the ways parents do in communicating with the children along with the actions they made to provide some sources to support the children to be bilingual, such as: providing the children with books, movies, songs, etc.

1.1. Bilingual Children

Bilingual children are children who can function in more than one language. Recent studies have indicated that the majority of the world's population today is bilingual. Bilinguals can speak two languages, both L1 and L2, which can be balanced and unbalanced [2]. The bilinguals can arise in various ways, such as family environment from a very young age (since birth) and later age (when the children say their first words) until they aged 11 (when they are getting used to their mother tongue). Based on the time when the languages are being exposed, bilingual children can be categorized into two types: simultaneous bilingual (balanced bilingual) and sequential bilingual (unbalanced bilingual) [3].

Simultaneous bilingual is the type of bilingual where the bilinguals are exposed to more than one language from a very early age, which is connected and developed during the first year of life [4]. Below is the stage of simultaneous children’s bilingual development.

Table 1. Stage of Language Development of Simultaneous Bilingual Children

| Age | Stage | Milestone |
|------------------|--|--|
| Birth to 2 month | Undifferentiated (contains elements from both languages) | Cooing |
| 2 – 6 month | Undifferentiated | Babbling |
| 6 – 15 month | Undifferentiated | First words (age of appearance might be somewhat later than with monolingual speakers but it is still within normal range) |
| 1– 2 year | Undifferentiated | Language blend (parts of words in both languages are blended in the same word) |
| 2-3 year | Undifferentiated | Language mixing (words of different languages are used in the same phrase or adapted to the grammar of the other language) |
| 4 year and older | Undifferentiated | Uses each language as a separate system |

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the first stage is an undifferentiated, “single-language” system composed of elements from both languages, L1 and L2. The developmental process is- single words, increased vocabulary, the emergence of two-word combinations, use verb tenses, and so on which involves both languages. For example, the child use words from both languages in a single sentence (language mixing), or uses word stems of one language with prefixes and suffixes from another language (language blend).

The second stage occurs when a child begins to differentiate the two language systems for distinct purposes. The child may learn to associate each language with a specific person (parents vs caretaker) age group (playmates vs adults), or situation (home vs playground). The child then develops the ability to alternate language, using a specific language to communicate in a specific context. In a family context, if the family code switches multiple times within one conversation, the child will also learn that pattern and recognize that two languages are being used, the children adapt to the language uses by the parents to respond to them, using the L1 only, L2 only or mix L1 and L2, doing code-switching between two languages.

Sequential bilingual is the type of bilingual where their L2 acquisition is acquired after the foundations of the L1 are settled in place, generally after the age of three years old. This type may happen due to parent’s choice to use one specific language only in communicating with their children, relocation to a different environment where the community speaks a different language, or due to the introduction of a community language when starting school. Below is the stage of sequential children’s bilingual development.

Table 2. Stage of Language Development of Simultaneous Bilingual Children

| Age | Stage | Milestone |
|------------------|----------------------|--|
| Birth to 3 year | First language | Normal acquisition sequence |
| 3 -4 year | Second language | - |
| 4 year and older | Interactional period | Use of nonverbal communication and fixed phrases |
| 5-6 year old | Inference period | Grammatical rules of the first language are applied to the second language |
| 6-8 year old | Silent period | Selective mutism (can be longer in anxious children) |
| 8 year and older | Code-switching | Switches between languages in the same conversation |

The table above defines the stage of children’s L2 acquisition, it shows that there is a silent period happens to the children in the process of acquisition of L2, which may be caused by some factors such as the attitude of the children itself and the lack of speaking partners to practice their L2 daily. An anxious child may have a silent phase when they are unsure about what language they have to use to communicate with particular people. It leads them to do some mixing between L1 and L2. The relative exposure to the second language compared with the first language can also affect how a child develops the second language.

1.2. Language Development

Language development is defined as a complex process that is foundational to linguistic ability, communication skills, and achievement. It is also known as a process of developing linguistic skills which is essential to help the children to be able to share meaning with others through the process of communicating and making social relations. Language development in the context of social relations has roots in the early

interactions of children and parents [5]. Children are particularly sensitive to and aware of the linguistic patterns of their interlocutors [6]. They are very sensitive to the language use of those around them as well as being influenced by language when it is addressed directly to them [7].

The process of developing children's language needs some effort both from parents and the children themselves, especially in a bilingual context. Parents can show their supports by providing them with linguistic input and showing impressive behavior while advising the children to get more enhance in developing their languages.

1.3. Children's Bilingual Development

Children's bilingual development is defined as the process of children's socialization through a particular language which is including adaptation and communication with the people in the community. Children learn and develop their language to help them to fulfill the function to adapt with the society and community [8]. The children who are able to speak two languages are called bilingual, which can be classified as balanced bilingual and unbalanced bilinguals. Balanced bilingual children can switch from one language to another language easily while they are communicating. This happens when the speakers are exposed to two languages simultaneously. Meanwhile, unbalanced bilingual children commonly use one dominant language significantly more over the other language, which happens due to the speakers are exposed to one language than the other language during the learning and developing language. People who are classified as unbalanced bilinguals are the bilinguals who use one of the languages less than 40% [9].

1.4. Measuring Levels of Bilingual

Measuring levels of bilingual development could be done by doing some tests such as Completion Word Task and Peabody Pictures Vocabulary Test.

1.4.1. Peabody Pictures Vocabulary Test

Peabody Pictures Vocabulary Test (PPTV) is the test that can be used for the subject at the age of 2-5, considering at that age the participants are unable to write yet. PPTV was originally develop as a measure of verbal intelligence which consists of some group items [10]. These items include verbs, adjectives, and nouns. The words belong to 1of 20 different content categories, such as animals, actions, or emotions. The way this test is applied is by giving the participants some sets of pictures based on the categories. Then they should circle the words which represent the pictures, it is can be also a spoken test, where the researcher asks the children what pictures they see and ask them to say it. The utterance of

the children can be seen as an indicator of their bilingualism. Whether they are balanced (using L1 and L2 equally) or unbalanced (using one language dominantly more than the other).

1.4.2. Completion Word Detention Task

It is a test where the children are being asked to produce as many as possible in both languages in a given letter. The number of words used in one language compared with the number of words used in the other language is considered as an indicator of bilingualism. It will give hints, whether the children are balanced bilingual or unbalanced bilingual. This test is appropriate to be used for the participants at the age of 6 and older, considering at that age the participants can read and write on the questionnaire.

1.5. Parents' Role

Parents' role is defined as the part taken by the parents which involves some responsibilities to produce certain types of social behaviors. These roles involve different kinds of work and levels of responsibility, different power and kinds of relationships, and different patterns of interaction and communication. Parents' role consists of five types, they are: 1) Facilitator, 2) Motivator, 3) Controller, 4) Threatener, and 5) Feedback Provider [11].

Based on the discussion and exploration above, this research intends to do an investigation on how parents play roles in the development of children's bilingual language. Throughout this study, the following research questions will be explored:

1. How ways do parents play their role in children's language development?
2. What types of bilinguals the children in this research are, balanced or unbalanced bilingual?

2. METHOD

As a research method, the research applied qualitative design in collecting and analysing the data. Qualitative research refers to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. In qualitative research, data were likely to be presented in form words instead of a numerical number, to describe the phenomena [12]. In this research, the phenomenon is related to how parents play roles in the language development of bilingual children.

The subjects of this research were four families with bilingual children. There were four bilingual children taken as the subject, Subject I, was a 4 years old child, Subject II was 5 years old child, Subject III was 6 years old child and Subject IV was 7 years old child. The different age children were taken as the subject to see the

development of bilingual on every stage of age, considering this research is cross-sectional research which the development will be seen from difference of the age of the children. To measure the bilingual level of the subject, both subjects I and II were tested by using Peabody Pictures Vocabulary Test. Meanwhile, Subject III and IV were tested by using Completion Word Detention Task.

To find out the roles parents play in the children’s bilingual development, both parents, mother, and father were being interviewed to get the data. The data was taken from the utterances of the subjects during the interview. Then the data were analyzed by using the theory of the Parents’ role suggested by Anderson.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result of the analysis in this study was discussed in accordance with the theory of parents’ roles in language development. The roles parents play in developing children’s bilingual development are categorized into five main roles, they are: 1) Facilitator; 2) Motivator; 3) Controllor; 4) Threatener ; and 5) Feedback Provider. Further, the result of the analysis can be presented in the following table and discussed below.

Table 3. Parents’ Role in Children Bilingual Development

| Subject | Roles | | | | |
|------------|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| | Facilitator | Motivator | Controllor | Threatener | Feedback Provider |
| I | √ | √ | - | - | √ |
| II | - | √ | - | - | - |
| III | √ | √ | - | - | √ |
| IV | - | √ | √ | - | √ |
| Total | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Percentage | 20% | 40% | 10% | 0% | 30% |

Based on the result presented in the table above, it showed that four from five kinds of roles are played by parents. Those kinds of roles include: facilitator (20%), motivator (40%), controllor (10%) and feedback provider (30%). Further from these roles, motivator was the most played role by the parents, followed by feedback provider, facilitator, and controllor. Meanwhile, the role as the threatener was not found on this study.

So as has been presented and discussed above, the dominant roles played by the parents in developing children’s language development was the role as a

motivator (40%) and in the second place followed by the role as feedback provider (30%), then the role as facilitator (20%) and the last the role as controllor (10%).

Parents’ Role as a Motivator

Role as motivator refers to the role which parents play by giving motivations to increase the interest of the children to learn and develop the language. The motivation parents give can be showed by the way they were talking with their children to encourage them and build their curiosity to learn and develop particular languages. It can be showed by the data below:

I : *Anak-anak dirumah ini lebih sering ngomong pake Bahasa Jawa atau Karo pak?*

(The children more often speak Javanese or Karonese sir?)

S 1 : *Jawa. Tapi dibilang sering ya gak sering juga, kalo pas yang ngomong pake Bahasa Jawa ya dijawab Bahasa Jawa. Tapi namanya anak-anak ya kadang banyak diemnya. Mamaknya yang sering bilang coba jawab nak, Adek pasti bisa, kan udah sering denger abang.*

(Javanese, but it isn’t much often, if we speak Javanese then he responds in Javanese, because he is just a child, sometimes he prefers to be silent. His mother often tells him just try it, you can do it, you have listened it frequently)

The utterance *Mamaknya yang sering bilang coba jawab nak. Adek pasti bisa, kan udah sering denger abang.* showed that the mother tried to encourage and support the child to be confident to talk in Javanese. This utterance can be classified as a motivation, then the parents acted as motivator.

I : *Dirumah ini ada anggota keluarga yang selalu ngomong Bahasa daerah sama nak-anak pak?*

(In this house how many family members whoalways speak local language with the children, sir?)

S.II : *Nondongnya (nenek) lah, tapi kan mamaku itu gak disini tinggal. Kalo dateng aja dia baru ngomong Bahasa karo. Jadi kalo ditanya neneknya paham dia. Tapi gak bisa dijawabnya, lancer. Kadang dijawabnya pake Bahasa Indonesia. Tapi sering memang diajari mamaknya, mamaknya ini lah yang semangat ngajari. Aku kalo anak-anak ini nanyak, Pak ini artinya apa, kubilang ini artinya nakku. Kukasih semangat juga.*

(Her grandmother, but my mother doesn't live here. If she comes she speaks Karonese. So, if her grandmother asks, she understands. But she can't answer it fluently. Sometimes she answers by using Indonesian. But it is often her mother teaches her, her mother is so enthusiast to teach. I just contribute if my daughter asked me. Dad, what does it mean, I will tell the meaning. I give motivation as well.)

The utterance *Aku kalo anak-anak ini nanyak, Pak ini artinya apa, kubilang ini artinya nakku. Kukasih semangat juga.* showed that the father gave guidance and support to the child regarding some words which the child did not know yet. This utterance can be classified as a motivation, which made the parents were categorized as a motivator.

Parents' Role as Feedback Provider

Feedback provider refers to the input and feedback parents gives through comments about the way children perform their languages at home. It can be showed by the data below:

I : *Jadi kalo misalnya anak-anak dirumah ngomong Bahasa Karo dan Bahasa Jawa nya salah bapak sama ibu ada komentar atau marah gak?*

(So, if your child mispronounce the words while speaking Karonese and Javanese, do you and your wife give her comment or get angry at her?)

S. IV : *Saya sama ibu nya dirumah gak maksa harus Bahasa Karo atau Jowo. Ya gimana, lingkungannya banyak suku Jowo kok. Saya yang sering kasih tau ini salah ngomongnya nak. Ibunya juga kadang ikut, wong dia lebih jago Boso Jowo dibanding Bahasa Karo.*

(My wife and I never force her to speak Karonese or Javanese. What can we do, the environment is Javanese. I often tell her this is mispronounce. Her mother sometimes tells her, she is better in Javanese than Karonese.)

The utterance *saya yang sering kasih tau salah ngomongnya nak.* showed that the father gave comments related to the mistakes the child made while pronouncing the languages. This utterance can be classified as feedback, then the parents acted as feedback providers.

I : *Jadi lebih sering pake Bahasa apa anak-anak ini dirumah bu? Karo, Jawa atau Indonesia?*

(What language does your child use at home, maam? Karonese, Javanese or Indonesian?)

S.IV : *Kalo dirumah Bahasa Indonesianya orang ini lebih sering. Tapi kalo aku sama bapaknya ngomong pake Bahasa Karo paham orang ini, bisa dijawabnya walau kadang campur pake Bahasa Indonesia, adalah kadang dijawabnya juga pake Bahasa Karo dan Jawa sikit-sikit. Tapi sering salah, jadi kami ajari bukan gitu bilanganya.*

(If she is at home she prefers to speak Bahasa Indonesia. But if her father and I speak Karonese she understands, she can answer it even though sometimes she mixes Karonese and Javanese a little bit. But she often makes mistakes, so we teach her, that is not the way to say it).

The utterance *jadi kami ajari bukan gitu bilanganya.* showed that the parents gave comments and correct their mistakes in pronouncing the languages. This utterance can be classified as feedback. Then, the parents acted as feedback providers.

Parents' Role as Facilitator

Facilitator refers to the facilitations which parents give to enhance and develop children's bilingual through some media such as books, games, songs, movies, Tv programs, and radio. This role can be shown in this data below:

I : *Dilingkungan ini ada kegiatan khusus yang anak-anak kerjakan mereka diajak bicara pake Bahasa daerah gitu bu?*

(In this environment is there any special activities the child does which he is being asked to speak local language maam?)

S. I : *Gak ada kegiatan kek gitu, anak-anak ini main ajanya kerjanya, pulang sekolah dia makan siang, dikerjakannya PR, maen dia didepan itu. Tapi adalah buku cerita disimpan neneknya, buku-buku dongeng gitu pake Bahasa Jawa. Pernah juga ibuk suruh, baca dulu itu ndok. Dibacanya. Ada cerita Joko Tarub gitu kan dibilangnya, keren si Joko ini ya buk. Ngaknya pala tau dia artinya, ditengoknya gambarnya keren, keren juga dibilangnya.*

(There is no such a thing, this child just play around, after school he has lunch, do homework, play in the front. But there are books his grandmother kept which is written in Javanese. Sometimes I asked him to read, he said Joko Tarub is cool. He doesn't know the meaning but when he sees the pictures, he said it is cool.)

The utterance *Tapi adalah buku cerita disimpan neneknya, buku-buku dongeng gitu pake Bahasa Jawa. Pernah juga ibuk suruh, baca dulu itu ndok. Dibacanya.* showed that the mother provided the child with books in Javanese which can help them enhanced their language through reading.

I : *Apa anak-anak dirumah diajari bicara dengan Bahasa Karo atau Bahasa Jawa pak?*

(Do the children at home speak Karonese or Javanese sir?)

S IV : *Kami dirumah selalu pake Bahasa Indonesia, kadang-kadang aja pake Boso Jowo. Tapi saya kasih mereka dengarkan radio Karo , Sikamoni itu kan. Ibunya juga kadang diputarnya musik Jawa. Jadi kadang anak-anak ikut nyayi walaupun gak semuanya tau artinya.*

(We always speak Bahasa Indonesia at home, sometimes we speak Javanese. But I let her listen Karonese radio such as *Sikamoni* . Her mother sometimes plays Javanese songs. So she sings along even though she doesn't know the meaning completely.)

The utterance *Tapi saya kasih mereka dengarkan radio Karo, Sikamoni itu kan.* showed that the parents allowed the children to listen to Karonese music which helped them to acquire language through songs. This kind of action was classified as facilitator.

Parents' Role as Controller

The role of controller means the parents take action to control what languages the children are supposed to use in communicating with others especially in the home environment. The way parents play this role is by setting the language policy, control the language children used, monitoring, supervising and checking the children's language elements. This role can be shown in the following data:

I : *Kenapa bapak dan ibu rasa perlu anak-anak ini diajari Bahasa daerah?*

(Why do you and your wife think it is important to teach local language to your child?)

S III : *Gininya dek, kam kan orang Karo nya kan. Udah pahamnya kam kekmana orang bermarga ini persaudaraannya. Jadi kalo anak-anak ini gak bisa dia ngomong Bahasa Karo, tinggal di Medan ini aneh kali kurasa. Lebih sukanya aku kalo ngomong dibalas orang ini pake Bahasa Karo juga. Sering kubilang gini, kalo bapak*

ngomong samamu pake Bahasa Karo sebisa mungkin kau jawab Karo juga nak..

(It is well-known you are also a Karonese, aren't you?. You must be understand how people with culture have close relationship. So if the children can't speak Karonese, living in Medan will feel weird. I prefer if I speak he responds me in Karonese as well. I often tell him, if I speak Karonese with you, try your best to respond in Karonese as well.)

The utterance *Sering kubilang gini, kalo bapak ngomong samamu pake Bahasa Karo sebisa mungkin kau jawab Karo juga nak.* showed that the father controlled the language the children had to use in responding him during conversation.

Based on the analysis, it can be found as well that the bilingual children in this research were categorized as unbalanced bilingual considering they were using one language dominantly over the other language. It can be seen in the Tables below:

Table 4. Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test

| Picture | Subject I | | | Subject II | | |
|--------------|-----------|----------|------------|------------|----------|------------|
| | Karonese | Javanese | Indonesian | Karonese | Javanese | Indonesian |
| Pic 1 Tidur | - | √ | - | √ | - | - |
| Pic 2 Minum | - | √ | - | - | - | √ |
| Pic 3 Makan | - | √ | - | - | - | √ |
| Pic 4 Kakek | √ | - | - | √ | - | - |
| Pic 5 Nenek | √ | - | - | √ | - | - |
| Pic 6 Ayah | - | - | √ | - | - | √ |
| Pic 7 Ibu | - | - | √ | - | - | √ |
| Pic 8 Takut | - | √ | - | - | √ | - |
| Pic 9 Senang | - | √ | - | √ | - | - |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pic 10 Berani | - | √ | - | - | √ | - |
| Total | 2 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 |

From 10 pictures which have been shown to both subjects, Subject I answer 2 pictures in Karonese, 6 pictures in Javanese and 2 pictures in Indonesian. From the total score it can be seen that Subject I was dominant in Javanese, he was classified as unbalanced bilingual. Meanwhile, Subject II was classified as unbalanced bilingual which was dominant in Karonese and Indonesian due to the total score of her utterances. When she has been asked the same amount of pictures, she answered 4 pictures in Karonese, 2 pictures in Javanese and, 4 pictures in Indonesian.

Table 5. Completion Word Task

| Letters | Subject III | | | Subject IV | | |
|---------|-------------|----------|------------|------------|----------|------------|
| | Karonese | Javanese | Indonesian | Karonese | Javanese | Indonesian |
| Let A | √ | - | - | - | √ | - |
| Let T | √ | - | - | - | √ | - |
| Let M | - | - | √ | - | - | √ |
| Let P | √ | - | - | - | √ | - |
| Let B | - | √ | - | - | - | √ |
| Let G | - | - | √ | - | - | √ |
| Let D | √ | - | - | - | √ | √ |
| Let S | √ | - | - | √ | - | - |
| Let N | √ | - | - | √ | - | - |
| Let K | √ | - | - | √ | - | - |
| Total | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 |

Both subjects III and IV were asked to say some words which start with some significant letters the interviewer showed. There were 10 letters and each letter can be used to make any words whether in Karonese, Javanese or Indonesian. Subject III produced 7 words in Karonese, 1 word in Javanese and, 2 words in Indonesian. It showed that Subject III was dominant in Karonese.

Meanwhile, Subject IV produced 3 words in Karonese, 4 words in Javanese and, 4 words in Indonesian. It showed that Subject IV produced the same amount of words both in Javanese and Indonesian which also meant Subject IV was dominant in Javanese and Indonesian.

4. CONCLUSION

Through the analysis and findings of this research, the conclusion can be drawn that the role as a motivator (40%) was the dominant role parents play in developing their children bilingualism. The role can be seen by the words parents said to motivate and encourage their children to speak both language L1 and L2 at home. The role as feedback provider (30%) was in the second place of being most played by the parents, followed by the role as a facilitator (20%) and controller (10%). Further from the findings, the research also found that all subjects in this research were unbalanced bilinguals which dominant in one language over the other languages. Subject I (4 years old child) was dominant in Javanese, Subject II (5 years old child) was dominant in Karonese and Indonesian, Subject III (6 years old child) was dominant in Karonese and Subject IV was dominant in Javanese and Indonesian.

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