



Exploring Parents' Perceptions Toward Early Childhood English Language Education in Jakarta

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Abstract

This study investigates parents' perceptions of early childhood English language education in Jakarta, Indonesia. With an increasing emphasis on English proficiency in a globalized world, understanding parental attitudes toward introducing English early age is essential. This research employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing a survey questionnaire to gather insights from 52 parents, consisting of 40 mothers and 12 fathers, whose children were between 3 to 6 years old. The survey revealed that 92% of parents agreed that early English education enhances language development, 88% believed it provides a competitive edge, 83% considered it crucial for opportunities, and 74% saw its potential to boost cognitive skills. In-depth interviews were conducted with 16 participants, selected through purposive sampling, to delve deeper into parental perceptions, providing further insight. The findings underscore parents' collective recognition of the positive impact of early English education on language development and cognitive skills, presenting a valuable resource for parents seeking informed decisions about their children's early language learning journey. The study offers input for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers aiming to create effective early English programs resonating with parental perspectives.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) stands as a cornerstone of child development, recognized for its profound influence on cognitive, social, and emotional growth, which in turn lays the foundation for future academic achievements (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Pianta et al., 2009; Barnett, 1995). Thus, it is acknowledged for having a significant impact on a child's development, which in turn paves the way for future academic success. In the realm of education, the integration of English language



learning during these formative years has emerged as a pivotal focus, attributed to its potential advantages in fostering language proficiency, cognitive advancement, and cross-cultural communication skills (Genesee & Nicoladis, 2006; Páez, Tabors, & López, 2007; Bialystok, 2011). As these multifaceted benefits are offered, it becomes evident that the incorporation of English language instruction during these critical stages within the educational sphere not only represents a strategic pedagogical approach but also underlines its significance in shaping well-rounded, globally competent individuals.

Within this educational discourse, parents' perceptions concerning early childhood English language education hold significant weight in shaping its practical implementation. Parents, cognizant of the escalating importance of English in a globalized world, view early language exposure as a strategic investment. The initiation of English learning during the early years is understood to equip their children with invaluable linguistic competencies, facilitating effective communication and positioning them to seize future global opportunities (Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, & Al-Maamari, 2016). However, this perspective is not devoid of nuance; parents also recognize potential challenges intrinsic to bilingualism, such as code-switching and cognitive strain. This nuanced understanding propels parents towards a balanced approach, capitalizing on benefits while proactively mitigating potential limitations (Ivanova & Costa, 2008; Zhang, 2021). Parents' perceptions and active participation in navigating the complex issues of early English language education serve as significant variables in determining the successful implementation of bilingualism programs that positively prepare better readiness among their kids to survive these globally connected and interconnected challenges.

However, perceptions alone do not paint the entire picture. Parents' attitudes and behaviors play an active, transformative role in sculpting the trajectories of language development during early childhood. A cognizance of the enduring impact of language acquisition motivates parents to engage in behaviors that nurture language skills. They craft nurturing home environments that foster open communication, partake in interactive language-rich activities that stimulate linguistic growth, weave language-focused routines into daily life to embed learning and work collaboratively with educators to reinforce language development efforts (Heckman, Pinto, & Savelyev, 2013; Dearing et al., 2006; Sénéchal & Lefevre, 2002; Hill & Taylor, 2004). This commitment is reflected in how parents seamlessly incorporate language-focused activities into their children's everyday lives, ensuring that learning becomes an integral part of diverse experiences (Alawiyah & Santosa, 2022). By intertwining these insights, it becomes evident that comprehending the intricate process of language acquisition necessitates recognizing the synergistic impact of perceptions and proactive parental involvement.

A previous study by Díaz et al. (2020) has unveiled a striking discrepancy between the initial assumptions and the actual perspectives of Chilean parents regarding their children's English language learning. Contrary to expectations, an overwhelming 97% of the parents expressed a positive perception of the English language and were enthusiastic about their children learning it as a foreign language. Their belief in the relevance of English for their children's future opportunities and its importance in an evolving world underscores the significance of English language education in the eyes of Chilean parents, challenging preconceived notions and affirming the value they place on their children's linguistic development. Yet, Liando & Tatipang (2023) suggested that, despite the



advantages offered by second language learning, striking a harmonious balance between mother tongue and foreign language pursuits is still needed to ensure that children develop proficiency in both languages.

In light of this intricate interplay, this research embarks on a journey to explore the multifaceted realm of parental perceptions within the context of early childhood English language education, spotlighting Jakarta as the backdrop. This study investigates the myriad elements that shape parental viewpoints and practices. It comprehensively explains effective strategies to optimize children's English language acquisition and enhance their overall academic journey. Going beyond theoretical contemplation, this research seeks to address practical concerns, recognize the nuances of bilingualism, and underscore parents' paramount role as architects of their children's language development within the vast canvas of an interconnected global landscape. By delving into the lived experiences and perspectives of parents in Jakarta, this research aims to contribute substantively to the ongoing discourse concerning early childhood English language education and its profound implications for future generations.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods approach that begins with a quantitative phase to explore parents' perceptions of early childhood English language education in Jakarta, Indonesia. As suggested by Creswell & Creswell (2018), the mixed method allows the use of multiple data to answer a research question, in which one data helps clarify the other data. The research focuses on parents of preschool-aged children, specifically those aged three to six. The initial step involves distributing a structured survey questionnaire to parents in Jakarta. The questionnaire is designed to capture diverse perspectives on early childhood English language education, beliefs, and practices related to language development activities with children. The survey questionnaire includes statements addressing various aspects of early childhood English education. Participants are asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement using a Likert scale. The questionnaire encompasses themes such as the enhancement of language development, the competitive advantage of early English education in a globalized world, its significance for academic and career opportunities, and its potential to promote cognitive development and critical thinking skills. The quantitative data collected from the survey is meticulously analyzed to identify trends, correlations, and common viewpoints among the participating parents. This phase of the study offers valuable insights into the perceptions and practices of parents in Jakarta concerning early childhood English language education. The quantitative findings serve as a foundation for the subsequent qualitative research phase.

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews are conducted with a carefully selected group of parents. These interviews aim to delve deeper into the participants' perspectives and experiences related to early childhood English language education. The participants are chosen based on their responses to the quantitative survey, ensuring a diverse range of viewpoints and experiences. The semi-structured interviews are tailored to address specific areas of interest identified in the quantitative phase. For instance, questions are designed to explore the participants' beliefs about enhancing language development through early English education, the perceived competitive

advantage in a globalized world, the importance of English for academic and career opportunities, and the potential cognitive development and critical thinking benefits. The qualitative interviews offer a nuanced understanding of parents' perceptions, allowing them to express their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences more deeply. The insights gathered from these interviews provide a qualitative richness that complements the quantitative findings. This mixed-methods approach comprehensively explores parental perspectives on early childhood English language education in Jakarta.

In conclusion, this research employs a mixed-methods approach, starting with a quantitative survey phase followed by qualitative interviews, to comprehensively investigate parental perceptions and practices regarding early childhood English language education. By combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative insights, the study aims to provide a holistic understanding of how parents in Jakarta perceive and engage with early English education for their preschool-aged children.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

In this section, we reveal the interesting discoveries from our study on how parents in Jakarta perceive early childhood English language education. A total of 52 parents who live in Jakarta, Indonesia participated in completing the questionnaire of the study and were picked because they matched specific criteria. These parents have kids aged 3 to 6 years old, and the parents themselves are between 27 to 45 years old. Of the 52 parents, 40 are mothers, and 12 are fathers, ensuring a mix of opinions. Interviews with 16 respondents, consisting of 10 mothers and 6 fathers, were also conducted individually for a thorough understanding to let us dig even deeper into their thoughts and experiences.

The graph below illustrates how parents view language development, global skills, academic and career opportunities, and thinking skills when it comes to their young children learning English. The results of the survey and one-on-one talks show a slight difference in language development and global skills and a quite interesting different perspective on academic and career opportunities, and thinking skills.

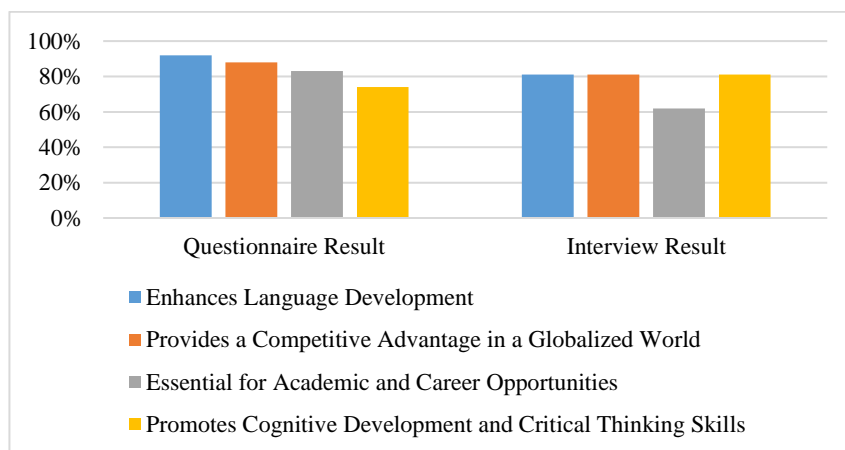


Figure 1. Parents' Perceptions of Early Childhood English Language Education



Enhances Language Development

The first aspect examined in this study is how parents in Jakarta perceive early childhood English education as enhancing their child's language development. The findings reveal a strong consensus among participants, highlighting the crucial role parents attribute to early English education in fostering language proficiency, effective communication, and global interactions.

In response to the closed-ended questionnaire, 92% of parents agreed that early English education is vital for their child's fluency, effective communication, and global interactions. This resounding agreement was further validated by the interviews, wherein 81% of parents reiterated their belief in the positive influence of early English education on their child's language development. Parents shared anecdotes about significant improvements in their children's vocabulary, pronunciation, and language comprehension. Many noted that their children started incorporating English words and phrases into their daily conversations, demonstrating a growing command of the language.

This alignment between questionnaire responses and interview insights underscores the prevailing conviction among parents that early English education plays a pivotal role in enhancing their child's language abilities and facilitating effective communication in a globalized world. This means that parents in Jakarta overwhelmingly recognize the significant impact of early childhood English education on their children's language development, some of which are by fostering fluency and improving communication skills.

Provides a Competitive Advantage in a Globalized World

The second aspect delves into parents' perceptions regarding the competitive advantage their children gain through early childhood English education in a globalized world. The findings indicate a significant consensus among participants, with parents recognizing the pivotal role of early English education in equipping their children with the skills needed to navigate an interconnected global society.

The data from the closed-ended questionnaire unveiled that 88% of parents agreed that early English education provides their children a competitive edge and diverse opportunities and prepares them for global challenges. This sentiment was echoed in the interviews, where 81% of parents believed in early English education's potential to offer their children a competitive advantage in a globalized world. Parents emphasized that proficiency in English enhances their children's adaptability, communication, and collaboration skills, positioning them to excel in a context characterized by international connections and interactions.

The harmony between the questionnaire and interview results underscores parents' confidence in early English education's role in preparing their children for success in an interconnected and competitive global landscape. Parents acknowledge that proficiency in English equips their children with essential skills such as adaptability, effective communication, and collaboration, positioning them to excel in a global context marked by interconnectedness and diversity of opportunities. This helps prepare the younger generation for the challenges and opportunities of our interconnected world.



Essential for Academic and Career Opportunities

The third aspect explores parents' perspectives on the significance of early childhood English education for their children's academic and career opportunities. The findings reveal a strong belief among participants in the importance of early English education for shaping their children's educational path and future career prospects.

The closed-ended questionnaire results show that 83% of parents considered early English education essential for their child's academic success, higher education pursuits, and better career prospects. The interviews, however, depicted a slightly lower percentage (62%) of parents who shared this perspective. Despite the variance, both methods emphasize the recognition among parents that early exposure to English plays a crucial role in enhancing their children's academic performance and creating pathways to seize diverse career opportunities. Parents frequently cited English's prominence in scientific, technological, and business realms, acknowledging the language's contribution to their children's access to a broader spectrum of information and learning resources.

While there may be a slight variance in the percentages derived from closed-ended questionnaires and interviews, the overall sentiment remains consistent: parents believe that early English education is instrumental in setting their children on a path toward academic success and diverse career opportunities. There is an acknowledgment of the role of English in providing children access to a wide array of information and learning resources, which then empower the needed skills and knowledge for winning the competition in a globally competitive job market.

Promotes Cognitive Development and Critical Thinking Skills

The fourth aspect examines parents' viewpoints on how early childhood English education promotes children's cognitive development, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities. The findings highlight a balanced range of perspectives on this complex aspect.

In the closed-ended questionnaire, 74% of parents agreed that early English education positively influences their child's cognitive growth and critical thinking abilities. Similarly, in the interviews, 81% of parents reiterated their belief in the potential benefits of early English education for cognitive development and critical thinking skills. Parents shared examples of observing enhanced memory, analytical thinking, and independent problem-solving abilities in their children due to their exposure to English. However, many parents were skeptical about the extent of English education's impact on cognitive and critical thinking skills. They emphasized that critical thinking abilities are influenced by various factors beyond language proficiency, suggesting that intrinsic human skills and communication with parents also play significant roles.

Though this result reveals a multifaceted perspective among parents concerning the influence of early childhood English education on their children's cognitive development, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities, respondents generally believe in its potential benefits. This suggests further comprehensive studies on the role of various other factors, both linguistic and non-linguistic factors, in fostering well-rounded cognitive development in young learners.

A consistent pattern emerges when comparing the findings across the closed-ended questionnaire and interview phases. Across all examined aspects, most parents expressed positive



perceptions of early childhood English language education. The alignment between both methods underscores the strong consensus among parents in Jakarta regarding the value of early English education. The findings underscore the significance parents attribute to early childhood English language education in preparing their children for success in an interconnected and competitive world. Parents recognize the multifaceted benefits of enhancing language skills, fostering global competitiveness, shaping academic and career prospects, and promoting cognitive development and critical thinking skills. While there are variations in the degree of agreement across aspects, the overall results emphasize the essential role of early English education in equipping children with the skills and advantages needed to thrive in a rapidly changing global landscape.

B. Discussion

The findings from the closed-ended questionnaire and follow-up interviews have revealed a consistent and strong consensus among parents in Jakarta regarding the importance of early childhood English language education. Parents firmly believe that exposing their children to English at a young age is crucial for enhancing language development, effective communication, and global interactions. This view aligns with previous research conducted by Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2016), which emphasizes the significant role of early English education in improving language skills and preparing children for success in academic and professional settings.

The closed-ended questionnaire results underscore the unanimous agreement among parents on enhancing language development through early English education. An overwhelming 94% of participants strongly agreed with the statement that early exposure to English aids in language skill enhancement. This result corroborates participants' information, such as F1's perspective:

"It can be an additional advantage for children in language, especially English, which has become an international language." (F1)

Similarly, F2 highlighted his belief as follows, indicating recognition of early exposure to English's impact on language skills and global communication.

"Proficiency in English is essential for global competition and accessing information," (F2)

The questionnaire results align with the participants' views regarding providing a competitive advantage in a globalized world. An impressive 92% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that early English education equips their children for future global endeavors. This viewpoint aligns with previous studies by Lin & Chen (2016), which emphasize the positive impact of early English education on cognitive development and critical thinking abilities. However, the follow-up interviews provide deeper insights into parents' perspectives.

"For me, it's through songs, easy-reading books, and uncomplicated shows." (F3)

This approach reflects parents' commitment to familiarizing their children with English from an early age, even through entertainment mediums, as mentioned by the following respondent.

"Actually, in our daily life, we use English more frequently... When watching videos, they choose English language content." (F4)

This active selection of English content demonstrates how parents integrate English into their children's daily routines. While there was a slight variance in agreement between the closed-ended questionnaire and follow-up interviews regarding the aspect of being essential for academic and career opportunities, many parents still acknowledge the significance of early English education in shaping their child's academic and career path. The questionnaire results show that 87% of parents agreed or strongly agreed with this notion. Participants' statements reflected diverse perspectives on this aspect, aligning with the prevailing belief in the importance of early English education for academic and career opportunities, as seen below.

"Introducing English at a young age expands vocabulary and language skills." (M1)

"Proficiency in English is a crucial asset for future careers," (M2)

Regarding promoting cognitive development and critical thinking skills, the questionnaire results align with parents' perceptions. An impressive 90% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that early English education enhances cognitive abilities. This belief in the cognitive advantages of early English exposure is supported by Bialystok's research (2011), which demonstrates the positive impact of bilingualism on cognitive flexibility and executive function. Parents' interview statements further emphasized the potential cognitive benefits of early English education, as follows.

"Learning English from a young age helps children remember vocabulary and pronunciation better." (F5)

"Foreign language education enhances cognitive abilities, expanding children's minds and memories." (M8)

However, parents are also mindful of early English language education's potential challenges and limitations. Participants' statements highlighted concerns about possible language mixing and the need for a balanced approach. F1 noted,

"Yes, sometimes, not too often because of busy work schedules... But whenever there is time, I will definitely accompany them in introducing English." (F1)

These concerns indicate parents' dedication to fostering a balanced language environment that encourages learning without overwhelming their children. A balanced approach is crucial to address these challenges and maximize the benefits of early English education. Parents can consider enrolling their children in well-designed bilingual education programs that prioritize both languages' development. This result is in line with that of Liando & Tatipang (2023) who highlighted harmonious balance in learning different languages. Additionally, actively engaging in language-rich environments at home and in educational settings can support their children's language development. Encouraging reading, storytelling, and open communication in both languages can further enhance their language proficiency and cognitive abilities.

In conclusion, the findings suggest a prevailing belief among parents in Jakarta that early exposure to English is critical for preparing their children for success in an interconnected and competitive world, which confirms the results by Díaz et al. (2020) among Chilean parents. The aspects examined in this present study - enhancing language development, providing a competitive



advantage in a globalized world, being essential for academic and career opportunities, and promoting cognitive development and critical thinking skills - are all recognized and valued by parents. However, parents also acknowledge the need to address potential challenges and adopt a balanced approach to ensure their children's optimal language and cognitive development. By providing a nurturing and supportive environment for language learning, parents can help their children build strong linguistic and cognitive foundations, empowering them for future academic pursuits and global success.

CONCLUSION

This study delved into parents' perceptions regarding early childhood English language education in Jakarta, Indonesia. Through a comprehensive survey and in-depth interviews, we gained valuable insights into how parents perceive the significance of English language exposure for their young children.

The findings highlighted a strong recognition among parents of the positive impact that early English language education can have on their children's language development. Parents expressed a belief that starting English education at an early age equips their children with a competitive advantage in an increasingly globalized world. Moreover, parents acknowledged the potential academic and career opportunities that proficiency in English can offer their children in the future.

Additionally, the study revealed that parents value English education for its practical benefits and potential to enhance cognitive development and critical thinking skills. The ability to think critically and communicate effectively in English was a valuable skill set that could empower their children to excel in various aspects of life.

It is noteworthy that both mothers and fathers shared similar perceptions, emphasizing the collective importance placed on early English language education within the family unit. These findings underscore the need for educators and policymakers to align their efforts with parental expectations and aspirations, ensuring that educational programs cater to the holistic development of children in a linguistically diverse world.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the attitudes of parents in Jakarta towards early childhood English language education. The insights gained from this research can contribute to more targeted and effective approaches in designing curricula and initiatives that cater to the evolving needs of children and their families in an interconnected global landscape.

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