

YouTube as a source of language input: Early findings on children's L2 acquisition

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Abstrak: Evidence on how YouTube contributes to children's second language (L2) acquisition remains limited, particularly in early childhood settings. This study examines the impact of YouTube and the factors shaping L2 learning among children. Using an exploratory descriptive approach with two participants aged 3 and 5, the study indicates that guided exposure to target-language YouTube content may support incidental gains in vocabulary, common expressions, and context-appropriate language use. Several factors appear to be associated with outcomes: (1) age, with preschoolers showing readiness to uptake novel forms; (2) presentation and input quality, including curated resources and caregiver support; (3) children's intrinsic motivation to view and imitate; and (4) first-language (L1) influence, which can both facilitate and constrain transfer to L2. The findings suggest that parents and educators should provide active mediation, select developmentally appropriate content, and pair media exposure with offline interaction to enhance the meaningfulness of input. Given the small scale of this study, conclusions should be interpreted cautiously; future research with larger samples and stronger designs is recommended to validate and extend these preliminary insights.

Kata Kunci: YouTube; Second Language Acquisition; Early Childhood; Media Exposure; Learning Motivation; L1 influence

INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition is an inherent phenomenon through which individuals acquire and cultivate their linguistic abilities. This process initiates at birth, as we progressively immerse ourselves in the linguistic environment that surrounds us. This is in line with the opinion expressed by (Khairi, 2018) that language acquisition is a natural process in which individuals learn and develop other language skills. According to Aitchison (2011) language acquisition is a gradual process that commences at birth, as children start to encounter the language spoken in their surroundings. It encompasses the comprehension and utilization of vocabulary, grammar, intonation, and the aptitude to engage in effective communication with others.

Language acquisition in children can be impact by various factors, including the surrounding environment, that an environment rich in conversation, language stimulus, and positive interactions can improve children's language skills (Khoiriyati Salis, 2013), children who engaged in rich interactions with peers and native speakers of the target language had a higher likelihood of mastering the language better (Abdullah, 2020), and a supportive school environment, including an interactive approach to learning and the use of engaging learning materials, can accelerate children's language acquisition (Puspita et al., 2022). These research illustrate the substantial impact of the surroundings in which children grow, encompassing both familial and educational contexts, on the process of language acquisition. Profound comprehension of these elements can empower parents and educators to establish nurturing and intellectually stimulating settings conducive to enhancing children's language skills for optimal growth. Similarly, a child's first language acquisition is shaped not only by environmental factors but also by the roles and interactions of parents. Parents wield a significant impact in fostering and nurturing a child's language development. Research indicates that parents who actively engage in conversations, read books, and sing songs with their children provide valuable linguistic stimuli. Through these engagements, children are exposed to a diverse range of vocabulary, expressions, and grammatical structures that are pivotal in the process of language acquisition.

The following studies are worth considering when discuss about children's interaction in acquiring language through daily interactions with parents, learning new words, understanding sentence structure, and developing speaking skills (Zikri, 2016) the role of parent-child interaction in children's language acquisition (Choirunnisa, 2020), interaction between children and other family members in language acquisition, where children can learn by example and imitate adults (Anggraini, 2021). These studies underscore the significance of children's engagements with parents and familial members in the process of language acquisition. Through such interactions, children can gain exposure to diverse facets of language that contribute to the enhancement of their linguistic proficiency.

The emergence of the digital age has wielded a notable impact on children's acquisition of a second language, with platforms like YouTube standing out as a popular and influential medium. YouTube, recognized as a prominent resource for Second language learning, offers an array of advantages and challenges that warrant consideration. The rapid evolution of social media in today's context is undeniable, as technology continues to play an integral role in every facet of human life (Kurnia et al., 2022). Social media and online content platforms have become an integral component of daily life for children and adolescents in the contemporary digital era. One highly popular platform among them is YouTube, providing an extensive repository of diverse videos spanning a wide array of subjects.

YouTube, a renowned social media platform, can have an impact on language acquisition, especially today (Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018). This video-sharing platform allows users to upload, watch, and share videos without restriction. YouTube has over one billion users, which accounts for roughly one-third of all internet users. Every day, these people watch billions of hours of video content, resulting in a staggering number of (Osman et al., 2022). Currently, YouTube continues to develop as a media platform, allowing unrestricted video downloads, making it a useful source of information for its audience (Munger & Phillips, 2022).

Several studies have explored YouTube media impacts children's attainment of different levels of second language proficiency, a study on YouTube for second language acquisition as highly effective when it is implemented under parental supervision as the intended purpose (Fitri, 2023) YouTube exerts a substantial impact on the second language acquisition process in children. Nonetheless, it's important to acknowledge that YouTube media cannot entirely supplant the role of human interaction and guidance in language acquisition and learning (Irwansyah & Shabiburrahman, 2022) YouTube media holds the potential to impact the process of children acquiring a second language (Annisa, 2022). Nevertheless, it's crucial to recognize that YouTube media cannot entirely substitute for the essential role of human involvement in language acquisition and learning (Putri et al., 2018). Those studies become evident that YouTube media can impact children's acquisition of a second language. Nonetheless, it is imperative to recognize that while YouTube media plays a significant role in language acquisition and learning, it cannot entirely supplant the human factor in the process. Therefore, this study seeks to elucidate the impact of YouTube media on second language acquisition in children through qualitative research methods, offering a comprehensive portrayal of YouTube media as a facilitator of second language acquisition.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Language Acquisition

Every human being acquires language before becoming proficient in speaking. Consistent listening leads to language acquisition, which is then recorded in the human brain's memory. Language acquisition begins with the acquisition of the first language (L1), often known as the mother tongue, followed by the acquisition of the second language (L2), which could be a regional language or a foreign language. This study focuses on the learning of a second language in children, specifically the acquisition of a foreign language. Children's acquisition of L2 language is usually deliberate or unintentional, as children develop memory that easily recall what they hear.

Many environmental and inherited variables influence children's language acquisition. In ordinary situations, parents are frequently ignorant of their child's language development (Lust, 2006). Children's language grows quickly while they are toddlers or in their golden years (Carpenter, 2012). Children will readily learn to speak and acquire language if they are taught directly by their parents, listen to what adults say, practice speaking alone or with toys, chat to their peers, etc. Internal and environmental variables influence the acquisition of a first language. Internal aspects include cognitive factors, the Language learning Device (LAD) or language learning device the child has used since birth, and the child's IQ. External influences include the child's social environment and the quality of language input gained in daily life. Children will strive for linguistic competency and performance when learning their first and second languages (Geers et al., 2016).

Language Acquisition Device (LAD)

Every human being acquires language before speaking. Conceptually, LAD is characterized as a psychological structure that handles language and is naturally or innately present in the mind of every human being from birth; thus, LAD belongs to every human being (Campbell & Wales, 1970). This LAD is comprehensive, rationally analytical, and conscious (Burke, 1974). This LAD has two components for processing input linguistic data: (1) procedures for operating the corpus, such as performing distributional analysis or applying 'inference rules' to obtain specific transformations, and (2) linguistic information, such as the fact that all sentences include noun phrases and verbs (Ide & Romary, 2004).

The LAD's exact and concrete contents cannot be determined. It is apparent that with these components, LAD can process the verbal material it gets from internalization. In other words, LAD has the ability to internalize input linguistic facts and generate grammatical rules (Macwhinney, 2010). LAD has the ability to (1) differentiate between human voices and other sounds, (2) organize linguistic events into certain classes which are "on the fly" this classification is refined, (3) organize input linguistic data that has been classified in point (2) into language rules, and (4) carry out continuous assessments in order to create the simplest language system (Rauschecker & Scott, 2009). Thus, LAD has the ability to process the input linguistic data it receives into grammatical competence (Baradja, 1986, p. 8).

During the process of learning a language, the learner's LAD works to process input linguistic data by forming hypotheses about the language system and rules of the language being studied. These hypotheses are then subconsciously tested in the learner's daily use of the language, resulting in changes in the learner. The learner develops his learning system in an orderly and systematic manner as he develops his learning system toward a perfect system of rules, as stated by adult speakers. Incorrect or erroneous hypotheses are corrected until they are perfect, and the correct hypothesis becomes knowledge about the system of language rules under study (Chomsky & Halle, 1965, pp. 25-32).

METHODS

This study was designed with a qualitative research methodology with a descriptive approach. The objective of qualitative method is to obtain an extensive understanding of social reality through the perspectives of the participants. It is not predetermined; rather, it is achieved after studying the social reality that is the focus of the research and producing a conclusion in the form of a broad understanding of reality. Since the research was carried out informally and with somewhat relaxed interviews, the researchers serve as a major instrument in this study, they need to examine numerous characteristics of both in terms of listening skills and memory. This is a case study research involving two subjects: a three-year-old and a five-year-old children. This study was supported by audio recordings, which were then transcribed into data for the research discussion. Audio recording is performed on each utterance of the research object containing the child's acquisition of a foreign language or L2. The recording tool was an Android voice recording application. The researchers endeavor to analyze by allowing children to play and communicate with them in order to acquire

information on L2 language understanding based on what they often watch on Youtube. The speech analysis on the two children was conducted while he was playing and conversing with his family. When performing study, the researcher used an undercover recording approach that left the children unaware. In addition to these methodologies, this research relied on a variety of sources, including books and journal articles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Children have strong recollections of their experiences, which last longer than adults'. Children will imitate their parents' activities, therefore the first language they learn is their mother tongue. Children will eventually learn another language, or "L2 language," from sources other than their parents, primarily from their environment or the schools they attend (Sakdiyah & Perangin-angin, 2023). In this study, researchers discovered the phenomenon of children's L2 language acquisition using social media. A child who watches or listens to audiovisuals on a regular basis will have his brain's memory recorded; because the child's memory is not fully developed, he will be able to retain more complex memories. Research on second language acquisition in children is included in applied psycholinguistic studies (Levelt, 2013). A child responds to questions in his second language, which he knows through his habits and recollections of watching YouTube videos. Children learn and acquire language naturally through YouTube media.

Conversation 1:

Fadil : mama sorry yaa sandalnya fadil jatuh in kuala
Fadil mother's : jatuh dimana nak
Fadil : di depan rumahnya kakak jibi

In the Conversation 1, Fadil uses the Gorontalo dialect in the first sentence by saying "kuala," which in everyday context they mean as a small river. Based on the conversation above, it can be concluded that Fadil used the word "sorry" that he obtained through YouTube. During the conversation, Fadil said "mama sorry" to apologize to his mother for dropping sandals "in kuala". This shows that Fadil uses the word "sorry" which he learned through watching videos on the Cocomelon YouTube page that presents songs in English, so that children can learn new words such as "sorry" which they then apply in everyday conversation.

Fadil's use of the word "sorry" in the context of an apology shows that he applies the second language he acquires through YouTube in his daily life. This suggests that YouTube Media has the potential to shape children's acquisition of a second language, as in the case of Fadil who used the word to express regret and apology to his mother. Therefore, in this situation a process occurs in which a child imitates or follows what they have seen on the YouTube platform.

Conversation 2:

Ridho's brother : Ridho lihat mobil besar ee
Ridho : mana?
Ridho's brother : itu sana
Ridho : wahh big car warnanya blue kan?
Ridho's brother : apa itu blue
Ridho : warna biru noh
Ridho's brother : kalo bajunya kakak Rahmat warna apa?
Ridho : red
Ridho's brother : apa itu red?
Ridho : merah

From the Conversation 2, it can be concluded that Ridho also uses a second language that he obtained through YouTube. In the conversation, Ridho used words like "big car" and "blue" that he probably learned from YouTube videos he watched before. The conversation between Ridho and his

brother showed that Ridho used new words he obtained from YouTube to describe objects and colors. He used the word "blue" to refer to the color blue and "red" to refer to the color red. This shows that through YouTube, Ridho acquired a second language which he then applied in everyday conversation. He was able to identify objects and describe their colors using new vocabulary he learned through the platform.

For the factors that encourage the influence of second language acquisition to occur, in terms of the theory outlined in the introduction, researchers see 4 factors that influence the extent of Ridho's second language skills, namely motivation factors, age factors, presentation factors, and first language factors. The explanation of this is in line with the theory described above. The motivation factor occurs because there is encouragement and will that arises from oneself, the age factor occurs because at his age, a 5 year old child tends to learn a new language more easily, the presentation factor occurs because of the facilities provided by the surrounding environment to support his success in learning a new language. , and the first language factor, occur because LAD requires stimulus-response, so that over time, children will acquire a second language by themselves, without realizing it.

Conversation 3:

Neighbor's son : Fadil mau kemana?

Fadil : you asking? (sambil ketawa)

In the conversation above, it can be seen that Fadil uses the expression "you asking" which is a word often spoken by one of the content creators known as Dilan Cepmek which has been modified in English and is often used by Dilan Cepmek and other content creators. This shows that Fadil has obtained this expression through watching content created by Dilan Cepmek on YouTube. The impact of YouTube media, in this case through content created by Dilan Cepmek, can affect children's language acquisition. Children like Fadil can absorb phrases and words that are often used in the video, and then apply them in everyday conversation.

Discussion

Based on the findings and discussions presented, it can be inferred that YouTube as a medium has a substantial impact on children's attainment of a second language at the B2 level. Kids are quickly adopting the language used by content creators in YouTube videos. Through this research, conversations between Fadil, Ridho, and their neighbor's children showed the use of a second language they acquired through watching content on YouTube. Through YouTube, Ridho can identify objects and describe their colors using the new vocabulary he acquires. The third conversation showed that Fadil used the phrase "you ask" which he gained through watching YouTube content. This shows that YouTube media, in this case through content created by certain content creators, can impact children's language acquisition.

In this case (Chaer, 2003: 245) explains the acquisition of a second language according to Skinner, behaviorism theory which considers that the language acquisition factor is a habit factor through a stimulus-response process giving birth to several language acquisition methods in an effort to acquire and master a second language. Among these methods is the birth of the audiolingual method in America in the 1950s as a direct result of the success of the American Army Method theory which adheres to structural theory. The method was born by taking an interpretation of the birth of B.F.'s stimulus-response theory. Skinner's is the result of the behaviorists' views due to the discovery of language learning aids. This is in accordance with the efforts made by Ridho's older brother to Ridho, he provided stimulus by learning a second language which his younger brother was not aware of, then Ridho responded in the form of increasing his ability to master the second language.

This also suggests that, apart from habits, the environment has an important effect on an individual's ability to acquire and learn a second language. The term "environment" also refers to the ambiance of restaurants, cafes, newspapers, television, and other areas. (Krashen, 1972). Apart from that, Krashen divides the type of environment into two categories: formal environments, such as classrooms where teaching and learning take place, and informal or natural environments. Based on

the researcher's observations, Fadli did not frequently use his second language (English) with his friends at school, but rather with his peers at home. The significant environmental influence on Fadli's second language acquisition can be classified as little, as his habit of viewing YouTube outweighs the influence of his environment in using his second language. Based on the theory outlined in the introduction, there are four factors that influence Ridho and Fadli's level of second language skills: motivation, age, presentation, and language. This explanation corresponds with the related theory. The motivation factor occurs because one's own encouragement and will is present; the age factor occurs because a 5-year-old child learns a new language more easily; and the presentation factor occurs because his parents have provided him with the resources he needs to succeed in learning a new language, and the first language element, arises because LAD requires stimulus-response, so that over time, children will acquire a second language on their own, without realizing it. Similarly, Ridho rarely used his second language at school, although he did with his older brother at home. The significant environmental influence on Ridho's second language acquisition can be classified as little, because his habit of watching YouTube is stronger than the influence of his environment using his second language.

CONCLUSION

YouTube media has an important role in the child's second language learning process. Children can acquire new vocabulary, expressions, and language usage through watching content on the YouTube platform. It is important for parents, educators, and practitioners in education to understand the impact of this YouTube medium and use it effectively in supporting second language acquisition in children. The use of YouTube to learn a second language is influenced by habits and a few environmental factors, but fortunately, there are four factors that affect learning a second language overall: age (a child under five years old learns a language more readily), presentation (the resources that his parents provide to support his success in learning a language), motivation (the requirement that comes from within), and first language.

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