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Parents' attitudes and sociocultural factors influencing English for young learners in Indonesia: A critical discourse analysis¹

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Similarity

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Abstract

The debate surrounding the benefits of English for Young Learners (EYL) continues to attract significant attention, particularly from non-academic circles, notably Indonesian parents. This research explores the increasing demand for English, influenced by global sociocultural and political trends. Employing critical discourse analysis, the study examines parents' attitudes toward the current state of EYL in Indonesia and identifies the factors shaping these attitudes. The findings revealed a preference among parents for early English language learning for their children and a perceived necessity for English instruction in young learners. Themes emerged from the parents' discourse on EYL, highlighting the belief that the earlier foreign language learning begins, the better; English acquisition adds life value, ensures future success, promotes internationalization prospects, and reflects responsible parenting.

Interestingly, the study highlights that EYL trends and demands were not solely driven by academic or research circles but significantly influenced by non-academic groups, especially parents, as a cohesive community force. Consequently, the study underscores the importance of engaging all stakeholders, including policymakers, school principals, and teachers, in active collaboration with the local community, with particular attention to parents' perspectives and insights. This collaborative approach is crucial for developing effective EYL policies and practices in Indonesia.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of English for young learners (EYL), the debate surrounding its benefits has garnered considerable attention, particularly from non-academic speakers, with Indonesian parents emerging as critical stakeholders. Recognizing parents as pivotal stakeholders in their children's education, this study delved into their expectations and demands concerning English language curriculum planning and implementation. Parents consider English a crucial component of their children's educational accomplishment, driving the demand for English programs even investing in private lessons or courses outside of school hours (Baldauf et al., 2013). This study aimed to unravel EYL trends through the lens of Indonesian parents, seeking to comprehend the factors influencing their attitudes and demands for early English learning in schools. Addressing two central research questions, the study examined the parents' attitudes toward early English learning in schools and the factors driving these attitudes in the Indonesian context. Central to the study was the application of critical discourse analysis, a method chosen to delve into the nuances of parents' perspectives regarding the current state of EYL in Indonesia. This research contributes valuable insights to the collaborative development of effective EYL policies and practices by delving into parental attitudes. In summary, this study seeks to contribute to the academic discourse on EYL and underscores the broader societal implications of language education for young learners, particularly in the Indonesian context.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Concepts

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach was employed in this research to delve into the rich and multi-faceted discourse generated from interviews with Indonesian parents regarding their attitudes towards English for Young Learners (EYL). CDA is rooted in a critical theory of language, considering language usage as a social activity and recognizing the crucial role of discourse in shaping social interactions, identities, and power dynamics within the broader social environment (Gee, 2004; Janks, 1997). This theoretical perspective emphasizes that people's ideologies, ideas, and understandings of everyday life are constructed through various discursive resources, ultimately contributing to the production of social reality (Weiss & Wodak, 2007). Building upon the work of scholars Gee (2004) and Weiss & Wodak (2007), the CDA methodology employed in this study allowed for a systematic investigation, analysis, and description of parents' verbal

discourse concerning EYL. The research aimed to reveal underlying ideologies, prevalent beliefs, and social constructs that inform their attitudes toward early English learning by scrutinizing the language parents use.

Literature Review

The term 'foreign language' refers to a language not widely spoken in a country acquired via education. In Indonesia, English is considered a foreign language (EFL) since most people speak Indonesian as their first language. The term "young learners" (YLS) or "very young learners" (VYLS) refers to children aged five or six to eleven or who are still officially studying a foreign language or a second language at their school (Ellis, 2014; Phillips, 1993; Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). In this study, the term "young learners" (YL) referred to students aged 6 to 12 years learning English in grades 1-6 of primary school in Indonesian formal schools.

Method

The selection of respondents for this study was purposeful (Patton, 2002) and aimed at capturing a diverse range of economic, social, personal, and cultural backgrounds among Indonesian parents. To investigate parents' complex and nuanced attitudes towards English for Young Learners (EYL) in Indonesia, a multi-faceted data collection approach was employed, encompassing in-depth semi-structured interviews, field observations, and analyses of previously published studies on EYL. Among these methods, in-depth semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary data-gathering technique due to their effectiveness in eliciting qualitative data and providing valuable insights into language teaching and learning processes (Talmy & Richards, 2011). The interviews were analyzed in four stages using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to comprehensively understand the respondents' perspectives on English for Young Learners (EYL).

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the attitudes of Indonesian parents towards English for Young Learners (EYL) in Indonesia. The discourse analysis revealed that parents strongly desire their children to learn English at an early age. They view EYL as a critical factor in shaping their children's future success and believe it provides them with added life value and opportunities for internationalization. To leverage the power of parents' discourse, educators should collaborate more closely with parents, understanding their viewpoints on EYL and integrating them into effective teaching strategies. This collaboration can better prepare students for higher education and equip teachers with the necessary knowledge to effectively cater to students' needs.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, English as a Foreign Language, English for Young Learners, Parents' Attitude, Young Children.

INTRODUCTION

As a global tool for communication, interaction, and economic activity, English has become deeply ingrained in societies worldwide (Crystal, 2003). Despite not being the official language in Indonesia, English has permeated various aspects of daily life, from street names and media to government offices and local services (Lamb & Coleman, 2008). Since Indonesia's independence, English has been officially recognized as the "first foreign language," bestowing prestige and economic opportunities upon its speakers (Lamb & Coleman, 2008). Consequently, English holds significant value as a gatekeeper in various work settings and as cultural capital essential for thriving in today's information-driven global world (Gee et al., 2001; Rafael & Sternberg, 2002).

The prominence of English has led to its integration into the education system, with it being introduced as the first foreign language at all school levels and taught for multiple semesters in

tertiary institutions across Indonesia (Nababan, 1991). English has long been a required subject in the secondary school curriculum, emphasizing its perceived importance in academic and future career pursuits (Lamb & Coleman, 2008).

Given the popularity and reputation of English, there is a growing interest among non-native English speakers, including Indonesian parents, in teaching English to young learners (EYL) (Copland et al., 2014a; Nikolov, 2016). In response, many primary schools now offer English instruction, driven by factors such as the belief that early language learning yields advantages, the global demand for English-speaking professionals, and parental aspirations for their children's success in a globalized world (Hu, 2007; Nunan, 2003; Sutopo et al., 2020).

Parents who play a significant role in their children's education are interested in how schools plan and implement their English language curriculum. Parents' expectations and demands are crucial in promoting EYL in schools (Baldauf et al., 2013). The demand for English programs stems from parents considering English a vital component of their children's educational accomplishment, leading them to invest in private lessons or English courses outside school hours (Baldauf et al., 2013). The discourse on early childhood learning (EYL) has emerged as a significant factor promoting EYL in educational settings, making it a "hot topic" despite uncertainties surrounding early childhood benefits and drawbacks.

Therefore, this study sought to investigate EYL trends from the perspective of Indonesian parents to understand better the variables that drive their attitudes and demands towards early English learning in schools. The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What were parents' attitudes towards early English learning in school, and how might they be interpreted?
2. In the parents' view, what factors drove their attitudes toward EYL in Indonesia?

Understanding the dynamics driving the expansion of EYL requires exploring the interplay of political, societal, and cultural forces, along with the perspectives of key stakeholders, particularly parents. This study employs critical discourse analysis and a sociocultural perspective to investigate parents' attitudes and responses to their children learning English (Fairclough, 2013). Rather than focusing solely on optimal language learning timing or measuring learning outcomes, this research seeks to uncover the factors shaping the EYL phenomenon in Indonesia. This study contributes valuable insights to the collaborative development of effective EYL policies and practices by examining parental attitudes. Before delving into the critical analysis, the subsequent section will provide an academic overview of

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Young Learners (EYL), contextualizing the study within existing research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English as a foreign language

A foreign language is not widely spoken in a country acquired via education. In Indonesia, English is considered a foreign language (EFL) since most people speak Indonesian as their first language. The term "young learners" (YLS) or "very young learners" (VYLS) refers to children aged five or six to eleven or who are still officially studying a foreign language or a second language at their school (Ellis, 2014; Phillips, 1993; Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). In this study, the term "young learners" (YL) referred to students aged 6 to 12 years learning English in grades 1-6 of primary school in Indonesian formal schools.

Early exposure to second/foreign languages is considered a positive factor in children's future success. Linguists believe learning a foreign language has numerous benefits for students' metacognitive, cognitive, and linguistic abilities and overall development (Abu-Rabia & Sanitsky, 2010; Edelenbos & Kubanek, 2009). Bilingual children are thought to have better language learning skills. However, this claim is debatable due to various sociocultural factors and language learners' states, which are inextricably linked to bilingualism (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999). Indeed, learning foreign languages is considered a valuable advantage from both a sociocultural and an economic perspective, elevating speakers to a more critical role in the community and the broader economic society (Bourdieu, 1991; Kallis & Yarwood, 2022). Consequently, parents are enthusiastic about promoting English and providing their children with intense, high-quality English learning settings (Butler, 2014; Nikolov, 2016b).

On the other hand, learning a foreign language at a young age is frequently regarded as a challenging task by teachers and students. A few heavily debated issues among linguists and practitioners include the students' age factor and the critical period (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999; DeKeyser, 2000; Montrul, 2008). For proponents of early foreign language learning, young learners are more effective and successful than older learners because they are naturally adept at language imitation. Young children learn a language independently, instinctively acquiring the sounds, structures, intonation patterns, and rules of a new language, just as they did with their mother language (Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011). They also believe that starting earlier correlates to a more remarkable pronunciation of the foreign language and speaking fluency, leading to outstanding results (Cahyati & Madya, 2019). However, research has shown that older learners may outperform younger learners in achieving fluency in their foreign language

over time (Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Pfenninger & Singleton, 2017). While younger students catch up with older students on oral activities, they do not surpass them during their education, likely due to the advantage older students maintain from continued exposure to the language in instructional environments.

According to many scholars, the focus placed on learning a foreign language at an early age as the most significant aspect of mastering it needs to be more accurate in reality. All linguists believe that individual, social, and environmental factors all influence the effects of early exposure to a foreign language on children's language development. Additional considerations for a favorable language acquisition setting include the instructors' quality and the availability of appropriate resources. As a result, researchers must consider not only the age-related component but also social, psychological, contextual, and environmental considerations (Pfenninger & Singleton, 2017).

Despite the previous debates, nonprofessionals believe children benefit from learning a foreign language at a young age. Children who begin learning English as a foreign language at a young age will enjoy linguistic benefits and notice an improvement in their language ability (Abu-Rabia & Sanitsky, 2010; Edelenbos & Kubanek, 2009). Consequently, many parents believe that children learn foreign languages more successfully while young or "the younger the person, the better" (Hu, 2007; Kocaman & Kocaman, 2015).

English for Young Learners

English instruction at the elementary level in Indonesia is a critical foundation for enhancing students' overall language proficiency and preparing them for secondary education (Sadtono, 2007). Given the challenges faced in secondary English education in Indonesia, early English instruction is considered an opportunity to improve students' language skills from an early age (Sadtono, 2007). However, it is noteworthy that English is now categorized as an extracurricular subject at the primary level rather than being integrated into the regular curriculum, which has implications for the depth and intensity of language exposure (Habibi & Sofwan, 2015). Despite being compulsory in some schools, English is introduced in Grades 1–3, with lessons delivered only once or twice a week, often in large classrooms with over 30 students (Habibi & Sofwan, 2015).

Compounding the situation is the severe need for more professional English teachers throughout Indonesia's primary schools (Nizar, 2004; Suyanto & Chodidjah, 2002; Zein, 2017). Consequently, non-certified English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers or replacements may occasionally conduct English classes for young learners (Habibi & Sofwan, 2015). While

these teachers may have received training in general pedagogy, they often need more exposure to the English language, limiting their ability to provide comprehensive language instruction (Suyanto & Chodidjah, 2002). The presence of non-certified EFL teachers further compounds the challenges faced in early English language instruction and may impact the quality of language learning experiences for young learners.

Implementing early English instruction in primary schools has been influenced by a need for consistent and well-defined policies, leading to variations in decision-making practices across different schools in Indonesia (Zein, 2017). Schools consider multiple factors, such as market dynamics, available financial and educational resources, the availability of trained English teachers, the school's vision and priorities, and parental interests and demands when making decisions regarding early English language programs. Parental pressure has emerged as a significant force influencing the inclusion of English in the primary school curriculum, reflecting the recognition of English's importance in keeping up with global trends and demands (Zein, 2017).

Due to the growing popularity of English and its perceived value in providing educational and career advantages, parents have become increasingly active in advocating for early English acquisition in school settings over the past decade. Their involvement in shaping language policies and practices has emphasized early English learning initiatives in primary education (Baldauf et al., 2013). This parental engagement reflects their aspirations for their children to succeed in an increasingly globalized world, where proficiency in English is viewed as a valuable asset.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach was employed in this research to delve into the rich and multi-faceted discourse generated from interviews with Indonesian parents regarding their attitudes towards English for Young Learners (EYL). CDA is rooted in a critical theory of language, considering language usage as a social activity and recognizing the crucial role of discourse in shaping social interactions, identities, and power dynamics within the broader social environment (Gee, 2004; Janks, 1997). This theoretical perspective emphasizes that people's ideologies, ideas, and understandings of everyday life are constructed through various discursive resources, ultimately contributing to the production of social reality (Weiss & Wodak, 2007).

Adopting the CDA approach, this study sought to unravel the intricate web of social meanings embedded in parents' language when discussing EYL. The analytical tools of CDA offer a

comprehensive set of methods to explore and interpret discourse, providing deeper insights into complex social phenomena by integrating linguistic and social theories. Through CDA techniques, researchers could uncover the surface meanings of individual words and phrases and the underlying power structures and social representations that influence and shape the way parents perceive and communicate their attitudes toward EYL.

Building upon the work of scholars Gee (2004) and Weiss & Wodak (2007), the CDA methodology employed in this study allowed for a systematic investigation, analysis, and description of parents' verbal discourse concerning EYL. The research aimed to reveal underlying ideologies, prevalent beliefs, and social constructs that inform their attitudes toward early English learning by scrutinizing the language parents use. This in-depth exploration of parents' perspectives was crucial to better understanding the factors driving the demand for EYL in Indonesia, primarily when such attitudes originated from non-academic circles, such as parents as a community force. Through the CDA lens, the research sheds light on how parents' discourse is influenced by sociocultural and political trends and their aspirations for their children's future success and prospects for internationalization.

By applying CDA, this study aimed to contribute to the ongoing debate surrounding the benefits and challenges of English for Young Learners. Analyzing parents' attitudes through a critical lens could offer valuable insights for policymakers, principals, and teachers, guiding them in making informed decisions about early English language education in Indonesian formal schools. Moreover, understanding the nuances of parental discourse through CDA could provide a bridge between academic research and non-academic circles, ensuring that the voices and concerns of parents were heard and integrated into the development of effective EYL programs. By acknowledging the sociocultural and political context in which parental attitudes were formed, educational stakeholders could foster meaningful collaboration with the local community, ultimately enhancing EYL initiatives' overall quality and inclusivity in Indonesia.

METHOD

Respondents

The selection of respondents for this study was purposeful (Patton, 2002) and aimed at capturing a diverse range of economic, social, personal, and cultural backgrounds among Indonesian parents. To achieve this, we deliberately contacted and invited families from various cultural backgrounds, including Bataknese, Malay, and Javanese, to participate in the research. Additionally, we ensured representation from different socioeconomic strata by including working-class and middle-class families. To further enrich the sample, we also included two

distinct single-parent families. This thoughtful and deliberate approach to selecting respondents allowed us to obtain a comprehensive understanding of parental attitudes towards English for Young Learners (EYL) in Indonesia, considering the diverse perspectives and experiences of the participants.

Instrument

This study's data collection instrument involved interviews in Bahasa, Indonesia, which were recorded using a phone recorder. Subsequently, the researchers involved in the project transcribed and translated the recorded interviews into English. The interview questionnaire was thoughtfully crafted to elicit valuable insights from the participants regarding their perspectives on English for Young Learners (EYL) in Indonesia.

In addition to gathering basic demographic information such as age, occupation, years living in the neighborhood, number of children in the family, languages spoken at home, and religion, the interview questions delved into crucial aspects of EYL. Participants were asked about their views on the appropriate age for young children to start studying English at school, whether they believed English should be introduced in the early grades, and their willingness to invest in their children's English education and how they would do so.

To understand the perceived connections between English proficiency and other aspects of life, respondents were asked whether they believed knowing English impacted various areas of their lives. The interview questionnaire also allowed parents to freely express any additional remarks or comments about English or the process of studying English relating to themselves or their children.

The carefully designed interview questions aimed to foster candid and meaningful dialogue, allowing the respondents to share their assumptions, attitudes, ideas, and opinions about EYL. By encouraging open and reflective responses, the instrument facilitated the exploration of parental attitudes towards EYL in Indonesia, offering valuable insights into the factors that inspire their preferences and decisions related to early English language learning for their children.

Data collection procedure

To investigate parents' complex and nuanced attitudes towards English for Young Learners (EYL) in Indonesia, a multi-faceted data collection approach was employed, encompassing in-depth semi-structured interviews, field observations, and analyses of previously published studies on EYL. Among these methods, in-depth semi-structured interviews were selected as

the primary data-gathering technique due to their effectiveness in eliciting qualitative data and providing valuable insights into language teaching and learning processes (Talmy & Richards, 2011).

As discussed earlier, nine parents actively participated in the in-depth semi-structured interviews, selected purposefully to ensure diversity in terms of economic, social, personal, and cultural backgrounds. The participants' ages ranged from early 30s to late 40s, reflecting the parent demographic crucially invested in their children's early English language learning journey. These participants were from a local school in Deli Serdang District, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. Data collection was conducted for about six months during the beginning of 2021. Each interview session lasted approximately 40-60 minutes and was conducted over the phone or face-to-face, offering a comfortable and conducive setting for open communication with the parents (Mann, 2016).

The interviews aimed to explore and analyze the spoken discourse of the parents, allowing researchers to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives, beliefs, and attitudes toward EYL. By engaging in meaningful conversations with the parents, the researchers could delve into various aspects, such as parental motivations, attitudes towards language learning, the role of learner autonomy, and other relevant themes, all contributing to the rich data gathered in this study.

Data analysis

The interviews were analyzed in four stages using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to comprehensively understand the respondents' perspectives on English for Young Learners (EYL). The researchers began by reflectively examining the entire data collection, carefully reviewing each interview to identify recurring patterns and themes in the parents' discourse. This initial stage allowed the researchers to get a sense of the overall discourse landscape and the central ideas expressed by the parents (Handford & Gee, 2013; Mann, 2016). Next, the researchers delved deeper into the data, focusing on more extended sections of text where respondents elaborated on their opinions, behaviors, and underlying assumptions and beliefs related to EYL. By analyzing complete sentences, the researchers aimed to capture the nuanced expressions of the parents and identify any underlying ideologies or values that influenced their attitudes toward early English learning (Gee, 2004; Weiss & Wodak, 2007). In the third analysis stage, the researchers thoroughly examined the data, closely scrutinizing respondents' phrases and language characteristics. This involved paying particular attention to unusual, repetitious, or controversial language, as these linguistic features can offer valuable insights into the

parents' perspectives on EYL. The researchers analyzed linguistic components such as repetitions, the use of specific content words, analogies, metaphors, and the tone of the discourse, all of which contribute to shaping the parents' viewpoints (Gee, 2004; Weiss & Wodak, 2007).

Furthermore, the researchers explored the presence of reference materials, reported speech, phrases, and terminology "borrowed" from other contexts or sources. These elements shed light on the broader societal influences and cultural discourses that may have shaped the parents' attitudes toward EYL (Gee, 2004; Janks, 1997). Upon completing the analysis, the data was shared with an independent reader and a fellow researcher for further scrutiny and to obtain feedback on the coding and interview data. This step aimed to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings by involving multiple perspectives and ensuring that the interpretations were well-grounded in the data (Mann, 2016). The multi-stage approach to analyzing the interviews using CDA allowed the researchers to uncover the complex interplay between language, social context, and individual beliefs regarding EYL. By exploring the linguistic features and discursive patterns, the study gained valuable insights into how parents in the local school in Deli Serdang District, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, construct their views on English language learning for young learners. The following section will present the findings and discuss the themes that emerged from the analysis, shedding light on the factors that drive parents' attitudes toward EYL in Indonesia.

FINDINGS

The analysis of the interviews revealed five prominent theme areas in the discourse of English for Young Learners among the parents from the local school in Deli Serdang District, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. These themes shed light on the parents' perspectives and attitudes towards early English language learning. The first theme, "foreign language learning: the younger the person, the better," reflects the prevailing belief among parents that starting English instruction at an early age is advantageous for language acquisition. The second theme, "added life value," highlights the parents' perception that learning English enhances their children's overall personal development and cultural capital. The third theme, "success in the future," delves into how parents associate English proficiency with future success in education and career opportunities. The fourth theme, "Prospects for internationalization," underscores parents' importance on English as a tool for global communication and participation in an increasingly interconnected world. Lastly, the fifth theme, "responsible parents," illuminates the parents' sense of duty and responsibility in providing their children with quality English education to

equip them for future challenges. These theme areas will be discussed in the following section, providing valuable insights into the factors driving parents' attitudes and decisions concerning English for Young Learners in Indonesia.

Foreign language learning: The younger the person, the better

The recurring theme of "foreign language learning: the younger the person, the better" was prominently voiced by the respondents, reflecting a widely held belief that younger children are more adept at language acquisition than older individuals. This assumption aligns with the critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach employed in this study, as it investigates the social construction of language ideologies and attitudes (Janks, 1997). The respondents emphasized the significance of early English learning, underscoring its positive impact on young children's linguistic and social skills.

The respondents substantiated their views with compelling arguments, using phrases like 'children will be able to pronounce different vocabulary in English and understand their teachers and peers' to stress the advantages of early exposure to the language. Moreover, they asserted that initiating English instruction during early childhood prepares children for future higher education, aligning with previous studies that emphasize the benefits of early language learning on long-term academic success (Edelenbos & Kubanek, 2009). The respondents highlighted the ease with which young learners can imitate and internalize language, corroborating research on the critical period hypothesis, which suggests that language learning is more efficient during early childhood (Abu-Rabia & Sanitsky, 2010).

The discourse of the respondents on this theme reveals a solid personal investment, as indicated by their use of the personal pronouns 'I believe, I think, I feel'. Their rational and convincing arguments were further supported by reassuring terms such as 'confident, sure, it is true, indeed, of course, certainly, absolutely, obviously, undoubtedly, surely,' echoing CDA's focus on language as a tool to construct social realities and power relations (Gee, 2004; Weiss & Wodak, 2007). The following excerpts were from a parent's discourse supporting the 'the younger the person, the better' answer.

Agfa (mother): I believe that learning English from a young age is excellent because children's brains are still fresh, like an empty cassette, ready to record any English language learning, even if it is only English vocabulary that is presented to them. When they are taught as teenagers or adults, the load on their ability to concentrate and think increases significantly. Of course, the most recommended method of instruction is to engage in play while learning.

Ali (father): I am confident that children in their early childhood are already extremely capable of learning English due to their high level of curiosity, which will aid them in their learning. Teaching a foreign language to children at a young age is analogous to carving something into a rock in that they will remember it at any time in the future.

An analysis of the respondents' language usage uncovers the employment of figurative language to strengthen their arguments. For instance, Agfa metaphorically compared children's fresh minds to "an empty cassette, ready to record any English language learning," underscoring the malleability of young minds regarding language acquisition. Similarly, Ali likened teaching a foreign language to children at a young age to "carving something into a rock," emphasizing the lasting impact of early language learning.

Moreover, respondents shared personal experiences reinforcing the benefits of early English learning. A respondent demonstrated how crucial it is to teach English to young learners in the following example:

Rosma (Mother): I invite my children to watch English children's videos and songs on YouTube, such as the Baby Bus series, the Wolfoo Family, and other simple English videos. You know!... I noticed that they were gradually understanding and correctly pronouncing numerous English phrases.

Rosma's account of her children's progress, conveyed with enthusiasm through 'you know!' was a powerful example of the positive outcomes of initiating English instruction early on. Her testimony aligns with the growing research on the advantages of playful and interactive language learning environments for young children (Nikolov, 2009).

Added life value

The respondents' compelling arguments emphasize that English language proficiency bestows significant value upon individuals, encompassing social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Their statements vividly illustrate the manifold advantages associated with early English learning. Notably, the respondents highlighted that children who can effectively communicate in English earn respect and admiration from their peers, teachers, and parents, setting them apart as unique individuals among their friends. Moreover, they emphasized that English language proficiency contributes to enhanced employment prospects, elevating the value of resumes for job applicants. The following is an excerpt from one of the parents' discourses.

Abdul (father): A child who speaks English better than his peers will have more value in the community. For example, he will be more respected, looked up to, and appreciated in his surroundings.

These findings align with previous studies that have explored the impact of English language learning on various aspects of life. Janks (1997) and Gee (2004) have previously demonstrated

that language usage, especially proficiency in a dominant language like English, carries social power and influence, influencing individuals' positions within communities. The notion that English proficiency enhances one's social status finds support in the works of Weiss and Wodak (2007), who discuss the role of language in shaping social interactions and power dynamics. Specifically, they highlight how language can be a tool for establishing authority and gaining recognition in society. Another comment related to life value is discussed below.

Nazrillah (Mother): A child who is good at English will have a greater sense of self-confidence and will be better positioned in our family. My niece, for example, has always been a topic of conversation and a role model to the other kids in our family.

Similarly, the connections between English proficiency and self-confidence, as discussed by Nazrillah, resonate with findings from studies conducted by Sadtono (2007) and K. K. E. Suyanto (2010). These studies underscore the positive impact of early language learning on children's self-esteem and overall development. They emphasize that children who acquire language skills at a young age often exhibit higher self-assurance and active engagement in social interactions. Furthermore, as seen in the following example, the discourses of two parents were linked to life value.

Arifa (mother): I am sure that as youngsters grow older, their English abilities will assist them in gaining more information and improving the quality of their CV.

Sari (mother): I thank God English helps my daughter understand some of the items and commercials presented in English on TV and other media.

Arifa highlights the significance of "English ability" concerning "information" and the "quality of their CV," indicating her strong belief in the prospective economic advantages of securing a job. The phrase "I am certain" suggests that she is confident and possibly foresaw any potential errors in her statement, seeking to establish credibility. For instance, Sari's sentence effectively links "English" with the ability to "understand information linked to items and ads," further exemplifying the economic benefits of including English as a Young Learner (EYL) component. Arifa underscores the tangible advantages EYL can bring in enhancing job prospects and economic growth by employing concrete examples. The economic benefits of English proficiency, as emphasized by Arifa and Bestrica Sari, are also well-documented in existing research. Talmy and Richards (2011) and Mann (2016) delve into the advantages of language learning in the context of career opportunities. These researchers have shown that English language skills can significantly enhance employability, access to information, and understanding of media content, aligning with the experiences shared by the respondents.

Success in the future

In their discourse on English for Young Learners (EYL), the respondents frequently emphasized the significance of "success." According to their viewpoint, participating in EYL programs can significantly enhance the prospects of their children, both in the present and the future. This aligns with previous studies showing that early exposure to English language learning positively impacts linguistic and social skills in young learners (Handford & Gee, 2013; Mann, 2016). Several excerpts from the respondent's discourse are included here.

Jefri (father): English has become essential in securing a job.

Misba (mother): English skills are my children's gateway to mastering the most cutting-edge technology required today and in the future.

Dasmiasi (Mother): My son requires the necessary tools, specifically English, in order to be able to compete in the global marketplace in the future.

The parents' attempts to link the term "success" to various metaphorical concepts, such as the 'key,' 'gateway,' 'tool,' or 'ladder,' underscore their belief that learning English was instrumental in success in various facets of life. For instance, Jefri expressed that English proficiency was the "most important key in securing a job." Misba highlighted that English skills served as the "gateway" for her children to master cutting-edge technology, resonating with findings highlighting the importance of English in the digital age (Talmy & Richards, 2011). Similarly, Dasmiasi's assertion that her son required English as a "necessary tool" to compete in the global marketplace reinforces the notion that English proficiency is increasingly valuable in today's interconnected world (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The parents' use of metaphorical terms emphasizes the critical role of English in achieving future success. These metaphors reflect how parents perceive English as a means to unlock opportunities and open doors for their children. This aligns with previous research showing that parents often associate English proficiency with higher social status and community recognition (Handford & Gee, 2013).

Moreover, the parents' emphasis on early English language development echoes the widely held belief that starting English language instruction in early childhood offers numerous advantages, including improved language learning capabilities and cognitive benefits (Talmy & Richards, 2011). This finding is further supported by the parents' use of words like 'securing a job,' 'cutting-edge technology,' and 'competing in the global marketplace' to illustrate the long-term benefits of early English language learning.

Prospects for internationalisation

The respondents' recognition of the significance of English for Young Learners (EYL) stems from their understanding of English as an international language. This perception is evident in their descriptions of English as 'a language spoken internationally,' 'a global language,' and that 'millions of people on the planet interact in English.' They also believed that not speaking English might lead one to be 'left behind by foreigners.' This aligns with previous research that emphasizes the role of English as a global lingua franca and its importance in international communication (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2014). In addition to using such descriptive terms, the respondents frequently employed lexical expressions such as 'overseas,' 'outside,' 'global,' 'all over the world,' 'planet,' and 'earth' to reinforce the concept of internationalization associated with English. The parents' discourse exemplifies their support for EYL due to its potential for internationalization.

Indah (mother): I teach my children English so they can communicate in English wherever they travel, such as abroad.

Zahara (mother): English is an international language, right? It is the most widely spoken language all over the world.

Hendri (father): Almost every country has started teaching their kids foreign languages at a young age, but we do not do it. Why not? We like to be included.

Indah articulated her support for EYL, stating that she taught her children English so that they could communicate in the language when traveling abroad. This highlights her belief in the practicality of English as a means of international communication. Zahara also reaffirmed the international status of English, referring to it as "an international language" and "the most widely spoken language all over the world." This illustrates how English is perceived as a global lingua franca. Furthermore, Hendri's discourse pointed out that many countries had already started teaching their young learners foreign languages, including English. He questioned why Indonesia should not follow suit, emphasizing that not doing so would mean being left behind in an increasingly interconnected world. This suggested that the respondents were aware of the trend in global education towards early language learning, mainly English, and its implications for future opportunities.

The respondents' statements reflect their proactive approach towards EYL, as they recognized the need for English proficiency in an increasingly internationalized world. Their belief in the importance of English as a global language was supported by using self-evident statements and rhetorical questions to underscore the value of EYL. This aligns with previous research on the

global significance of English as a lingua franca and the trend of teaching English to young learners in various countries (Seidlhofer, 2013).

Responsible Parents

In the discourse on English for Young Learners (EYL), respondents emphasized the significant role of "responsible parents" in ensuring the success of their children's language learning journey. The parents firmly believed that EYL's achievements are intrinsically tied to their active involvement and support. Throughout the discourse, the parents repeatedly used specific keywords such as 'offer,' 'push,' 'obligated,' 'invest,' 'care,' 'provide,' and 'encourage' to underscore their roles and responsibilities. They explicitly identified themselves as "responsible parents" and expressed their unwavering commitment to supporting their children's English language education.

The concept of "responsible parents" was exemplified through actions that required sacrifices, both in terms of time and financial resources, to provide the best possible education for their children. For instance, Radly expressed his dedication to saving money so that he could enroll his children in an English course or non-formal education. He believed that being a responsible parent involved making sacrifices and investing in their children's education. According to the parents, such commitments were essential to fostering an environment conducive to EYL.

Radly (father): As a responsible parent, I am saving money to send my children to an English course or a non-formal education. It is okay if my time and energy are sacrificed to give them the best education possible.

Further, Agfa demonstrated her involvement by continually attempting to introduce English to her children at home, mainly through watching educational videos. She saw her role as a parent as a crucial support system for her children's language learning journey, emphasizing the responsibility of parents in scaffolding their youngsters' English skills.

Agfa (Mother): At home, I keep attempting to introduce English to my children by accompanying them to watch English videos introducing nouns, animals, and fruits. That is a great parent, right?

Furthermore, the parents believed that being responsible parents required setting a positive example for their children. Zahara highlighted that encouraging children to learn English should complement the parent's active participation in language learning. She felt that being a good parent meant leading by example and showing genuine interest in learning English themselves.

Zahara (mother): As a parent, I should not only be able to encourage my children to learn English, but I should also be able to provide a positive example by showing that I like learning English.

Moreover, religiously oriented parents, such as Toufiqsyah, expressed their commitment by using prayer and faith as a form of support for their children's language learning endeavors. For Toufiqsyah, praying to God for his children's fluency in English reflected his belief in the role of divine assistance and parental dedication.

Toufiqsyah (father): As long as I live, I pray and hope my children can speak English fluently and better than their parents.

The discourse on responsible parents in the context of EYL aligns with previous research that emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in children's language development (De Houwer, 2009). Parental support and engagement have significantly impacted children's language learning outcomes, especially in early language acquisition (Hoff, 2006).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to critically analyze parents' discourse and attitudes towards English for Young Learners (EYL) and the factors influencing these attitudes. The assumption that English for Young Learners is in high demand due to global, sociocultural, and political trends (Copland et al., 2014; Nikolov, 2016a) has led to the focus of this study on understanding parents' perspectives on the necessity of EYL instruction for young learners in Indonesia.

The parents' discourse in this study highlighted their strong desire for their children to be exposed to English early. Through their use of specific keywords and phrases like 'the younger, the better on foreign language learning,' 'added life value,' 'success in the future,' 'prospects for internationalization,' and 'responsible parents,' parents conveyed their belief in the importance of EYL for their children's development. These themes align with previous studies conducted by Butler (2014) in Mainland China, where parents emphasized early English education as vital for their children's future success, regardless of socioeconomic status. Similarly, Kocaman and Kocaman (2015) found that parents in Turkey favored early foreign language instruction due to its positive impact on cognitive, linguistic, and social development.

Moreover, the discourse from this study indicated that parents recognized the global, sociocultural, and political opportunities associated with English for Young Learners. They actively engaged in supporting their children's English learning by participating in activities like 'watching English videos and songs together,' 'introducing simple vocabularies at home,' 'sending their children to English courses,' 'being a role model for their children in learning English,' and 'sacrificing time and energy for the sake of their children's education.' The importance parents place on academic benefits, regardless of socioeconomic background, is consistent with findings by (Schneider and Buckley, 2002).

Given the power and influence of parents' discourse on EYL, it is essential to channel their perspectives into effective educational practices. Parents' discourse in this study displayed logical argumentation, persuasive reasoning, and evidence from their own experiences, actions, and analogies, potentially impacting educational policies and practices in Indonesia. Previous research by Bekleyen (2011) and Lamb and Coleman (2008) in Indonesia further supports the role of parents' discourse in shaping educational initiatives and decisions.

Therefore, educators and policymakers should acknowledge and engage with parents' perspectives on EYL. Teachers can collaborate with parents to better prepare students for higher education and meet their expectations. Teacher preparation programs can benefit from more significant interaction with parents' discourse on EYL, enhancing educators' understanding of the main approaches and needs in foreign language instruction (Sawyer et al., 2019).

Likewise, policymakers and school principals must pay close attention to parents' aspirations and expectations regarding EYL before implementing English programs for young learners. By involving parents in decision-making processes, schools can ensure that children reach their full potential (Whitty & Wisby, 2007). Policymakers should also tailor EYL programs to meet students' needs, and school principals can ensure adequate teaching time and support for teachers' professional development related to teaching English to children and adolescents (TESOL). By aligning educational practices with parents' discourse, schools can create a supportive and collaborative learning environment for young learners, enabling them to thrive in English language acquisition.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the attitudes of Indonesian parents towards English for Young Learners (EYL) in Indonesia. The discourse analysis revealed that parents strongly desire their children to learn English at an early age. They view EYL as a critical factor in shaping their children's future success and believe it provides them with added life value and opportunities for internationalization.

The findings of this study align with previous research conducted in Mainland China by Butler (2014) and in Turkey by Kocaman and Kocaman (2015), where parents similarly emphasized the importance of early English education for their children's cognitive, linguistic, and social development.

Moreover, parents' discourse in this study demonstrated their active involvement in supporting their children's English learning through various actions and activities at home and outside. Their belief in the value of EYL has led them to take on the role of responsible parents, making

sacrifices in terms of time, energy, and financial resources to provide their children with the best possible English education.

Parents' discourse cannot be underestimated, as it can influence educational practices and policies in Indonesia. Previous studies by Bekleyen (2011) and (Lamb & Coleman, 2008) also underscore the influence of parents' perspectives in shaping educational initiatives and decisions.

To leverage the power of parents' discourse, educators should collaborate more closely with parents, understanding their viewpoints on EYL and integrating them into effective teaching strategies. This collaboration can better prepare students for higher education and equip teachers with the necessary knowledge to effectively cater to students' needs.

Furthermore, policymakers and school principals should heed parents' aspirations and expectations when designing and implementing EYL programs. By involving parents in decision-making processes, schools can create an educational environment that meets the needs of young learners and maximizes their potential for success.

In conclusion, Indonesian parents' discourse on English for Young Learners is crucial in shaping educational practices and policies in Indonesia. By acknowledging and incorporating parents' perspectives, educators and policymakers can work together to create a more effective and supportive EYL program that benefits the young learners of Indonesia.

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