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**The Impact of Children's You Tube Videos on
English Language Socialization and Acquisition in
Indonesia**

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Abstract

This study aims at describing how the use of English on youtube videos play a significant role in the socialization and acquisition of the language for children in Indonesia. It particularly focuses on the depiction of how the media serve a platform for children's English language development and socialization and whether parents or other adults' accommodation reinforces or counteracts the language. Ethnographic interviews were conducted on five middle class parents with children of 3-5 years of age so as to collect information on children and parents' everyday practices with the media. The findings suggest that parents' beliefs and ideologies on foreign language socialization as well as their English proficiency lead to their primary support for English. Their everyday media consumption and communication practices with children show how arenas provided by parents have turned into an assumed form of scaffolding in the way that children reflect on the language collected from the media. The research indicates that global practices of English on the internet intersect with local practices of language socialization.

Keywords: Youtube videos, children, English, language socialization, language development

Introduction

Despite the large number of discussions on the role of You Tube as one of the most viewed platforms for learning and education, little work has emerged on how it interferes with language development in children. Several scholars have discussed how the Internet and digital technologies affect parents-children relationships (Blinka 2013; Fuller 2015; Livingstone 2018), where as some researchers such as Venkataswamy (2018) and Eva Lam (2004) have discussed ways in which the Internet has influenced learning, as have Jia (2019), Olasina (2017) and Terantino (2011), who explain that You Tubemay become useful in helping with language development. Asmiarti and Winangun (2018) and Jindal and Kanozia (2019) have conducted similar work. However, this work focuses on You Tube's effect on cognitive development and parenting. The present study aims to explore the way You Tube has changed the process of the development of a primary discourse in the Indonesian context.

Since its launch in 2005, You Tube's popularity has experienced a sharp increase continuously, due largely to the provision of Internet in all countries, not least of which is Indonesia. As such, the number of Internet users has risen astronomically. Google research (via Praditya 2018) suggests that 57% of Internet users use You Tube to search for entertainment, where 86% search for newest information. In Indonesia, 92% of Internet

users have expressed that You Tube has become their first target for searching when they need to look for video content. This emanates from that You Tube offers a variety of and interesting content, easily available to users.

The alteration in media habits globally has influenced parenting habits. Jindal and Kanozia (2019) report that in India, with the advent of 4G mobile internet services, You Tube Child Media has been enhanced greatly. Children's rhymes and animated cartoons on You Tube have become parents' prioritized choice to engage their children and to provide edutainment. The role of edutainment once possessed by television has now moved to You Tube. This is similarly the case in Indonesia. At present, Indonesian parents prefer You Tube in order to occupy infants, toddlers or preschool children. Through this, the platform stimulates children's cognitive as well as language skills and occupies children while parents work. You Tube channels are thus chosen for children in such a way that they contain child-friendly material, while television does not offer the same affordance. Children's programs on You Tube are delivered in many languages, including Indonesian and English. Parents in Indonesia with English language competence mostly resort to programs delivered in English. This leads to the phenomenon of Indonesian children being socialized into English at a very early age, despite that their surrounding ecosystem of language socialization is mainly Indonesian or a local language. This paper explores this issue by describing the methods by You Tube channels for children's socialization into English, and the impact of this socialization.

Method

To collect data, the study deployed the use of interviews and observations. Five parents whose children were identified as becoming socialized into English early through You Tube were chosen as informants. Three of the children are now early elementary school, while two are still at preschool. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with the parents concerning the social and educational information of the children's linguistic and cultural development were conducted. From the interviews, data regarding the channels on You Tube that the children watch regularly was obtained. Consequently, the researchers observed the content in these You Tube channels. Data was analyzed based theories of attention and development learning, and through a thematic analysis. Finally, the results were discussed with parents in conjunction with macro social information about socialization and language planning and policy in Indonesia.

How do You Tube Channels Socialize?

The interview results suggest that several You Tube channels with children's programs include those from famous television channels. The channels and content include Pinkfong Kids Songs and Stories with content from Baby Shark Dance, Blippi, Ryan Toy Review (now Ryan World), Nick Jr., Shaun the Sheep, Chu Chu TV, Cocomelon, Tayo the Little Bus, FV Family and others. The channels have approximately 4 – 30 million users with 4 -700 million views, globally.

The children in this study began to watch You Tube from ages 1-2 years, and are in contact with You Tube for five hours per day. This amounts to 100 hours per month and 1200 hours a year. The children mostly watch the programs without interruption. Here, the children had not yet begun school and parents work outside of the home. During working hours, children usually watch programs downloaded by their parents, and are accompanied by caregivers such as their grandparents or their nanny. More contact with parents occurs when

parents return from work. Here, parents usually apply restrictions to the content viewed and the duration of watching.

The time children spend watching You Tube exposes the intensity of contact with You Tube media. During the viewing, children are provided with what Cameron (2001: 199) labels as “target language only,” which is the choice when using only the target language. In the context of Indonesian neighborhood environments, children are usually socialized into Bahasa Indonesia or local languages of the community, such as Javanese. Parents and other caregivers or relatives use these languages at home with the children. However, with rigorous connection to Kids programs on You Tube, children whose parents present programs in English see English as their ‘target language,’ maximizing exposure to the language and thus their learning opportunities.

All the videos in the programs are attractive, containing music, dance, stories, verbal interactions, colorful objects or pictures and are abundant sources of language. Channels such as Ryan’s World, Blippi or FV Family and others provide examples of language use in real life contexts (authenticity). The English words, phrases, and sentences uttered in the channels are accompanied by physical movements which react to verbal input, which is in common as an activity when socializing children into a language. Here, the channels provide very well-established formal features, that is a representational code that guide(s) infant and young children’s attention to information processing, including auditory and visual production and editing techniques such as action, sounds effects, pacing” and so forth (Barr 2008). The characteristics of the channels comply with the characteristics of young developers, who seek play, and thus learn through enjoyment.

Some channels provide language repetition, thus increasing learning. Repetitions is mostly through rhymes “helpful in improving children language, learning abilities, and diction” (Jindal and Kanozia, 2019). Moore (2012: 210) states that: “Repetition is a source that is always available and can be used to do many different things, and this affordance is significant for language socialization.” Cameron (2001: 51) suggests that “the repeated use of the same words in different physical and language contexts helps to construct in the child’s mind the sound, shape, and use of the word.”

The vocabular, phrases or complete sentences used captivate the children in that this is ‘formulaic language.’ Cameron (2001: 49-50) claims that “in all types of language-using situations, first and second, child and adult, speakers seem to rely on formulaic (whole ‘chunks’) language that come ready-made and can be brought into use with less effort than constructing a fresh phrase or sentences.” Vocabulary and phrase chunks include: ‘Pretty tasty,’ ‘Thumbs up,’ ‘Roll around,’ ‘Gynormous,’ ‘Teleporting,’ ‘It goes right there,’ ‘You made it,’ ‘That was so much fun,’ ‘That smells,’ and so forth. The use of these chunks in the programs is accompanied by action movement or peculiar gestures with which children easily grasp the meaning of the chunks and therefore acquire these quickly.

You Tube channels nevertheless lead to cultural development. Some use appropriate expressions and context, with conversations between parents and children in the programs, such as in FV Family or Ryan’s World channels. These provide children with authentic English vocabulary related to the targeted community, richer culturally than in class instruction. Owing to this interaction, children become exposed to internalization and hence culture outside of their primary ecosystem (Thanksgiving Day, Halloween, Christmast Eve). Scott and Ytreberg (2004: 2) assert that: “Young children sometimes have difficulty in knowing what is fact and what is fiction. The dividing line between the real world and the imaginary is not clear.” Ochs and Schieffelin (2012: 8) assert that during language socialization, infants (and young children) “not only become speakers of language;

they also become speakers of cultures.” Ortner (2012) suggests that: “... adults and children are always trying to make sense out of their lives, always weaving fabrics of meaning, however fragile and fragmentary. As such, the significant amounts of time these children devote to You Tube renders this medium real world.

Consequences on Children’s Socialization

Influenced by their intense engagement with You Tube programs which absorb their attention and increase their language socialization, the eventual primary discourse ceases to be Indonesian or regional languages, and becomes English, for all but one child documented. All children indicated that they are socialized into English language as their primary discourse. In consequence, most of the children were considered experiencing speech developmental delays as they have lowered skills in the community’s language. Furthermore, as the Indonesian government policy regards English as a foreign language, the children’s ecosystem does not support their socialization into English. At this point, parents are forced to decide on further language policy (to reinforce English or to switch socialization to the local community’s language), as children must cope with home and school environments.

One parent documented claimed that, as an Indonesian, their child should speak Indonesian prior to any other language. Therefore, they communicate with their children in languages other than English, and alternate between Indonesia and English programs. However, they admit to that their child produce English ‘chunks’ in speech, evidencing the English effect of You Tube. Another parent reported that they have to stop their child from watching channels and all kinds of kids videos delivered in English so as to dampen the conflict with the child’s grandmother who considered her grandchild as mute and retarded as he could only speak English at that early age. They subsequently switch language socialization to Indonesian and replace all videos with those in Indonesian. Still, children speak Indonesian with broken accents. Other parents face difficulties when their children enter school. As the children attend schools with an Indonesian language of instruction, they experience difficulties in coping with educational demands, which may not occur in international schools. Children’s language identities have thus become a dilemma, owing to language policy, ideology and identity in Indonesia.

Conclusion

English, with a status in Indonesia as a foreign language, has the potential to become Indonesian children’s first language. You Tube and other platforms online provide international ecosystems for English socialization for Indonesian children as it provides children with specific language and cultural affordances. Parents’ language ideologies and the policies to which they are subjected have become factors for the establishment of English as a primary discourse. Unfortunately, children developing competence in English as their primary discourse, while developing social competence in a (virtual) global community, are concurrently alienating their physical environments.

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