

العوامل المؤثرة على تطور اللغة لدى الأطفال

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## Factors Influencing Language Development in Children

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#### المخلص

يُعد تطور اللغة لدى الأطفال عملية معقدة وديناميكية تتشكل من خلال مجموعة من العوامل الداخلية والخارجية المتعددة. تتناول هذه المقالة التأثيرات الداخلية الرئيسية، بما في ذلك الرعاية قبل الولادة، والتغذية، والاختلافات بين الجنسين، والتي تُسهم في المراحل الأساسية لاكتساب اللغة. علاوة على ذلك، تُستكشف دور العوامل الخارجية، مثل سهولة الوصول إلى الكتب، والبيئة المحيطة، ومعرفة الوالدين، والتعرض لوسائل الإعلام، وأساليب التربية، في تشكيل القدرات اللغوية لدى الأطفال. تُشكّل هذه العناصر مجتمعةً نظامًا مترابطًا يدعم نمو اللغة أو يُؤخره من مرحلة الجنين وحتى البلوغ. وتخلص المقالة إلى أن اكتساب اللغة ليس عمليةً معزولةً، بل هو رحلةٌ مستمرةٌ تتأثر بتفاعلٍ ديناميكيٍّ بين العوامل الوراثية والبيئية. لذلك، تُعدّ المشاركة الفعّالة من الوالدين والدعم المناسب أمرًا بالغ الأهمية للأطفال ليبلغوا كامل قدراتهم اللغوية، مُسلّطين الضوء على أهمية التواصل اللغوي والمشاركة المجتمعية. وأخيرًا، تُؤكّد الدراسة على أهمية تهيئة بيئةٍ مواتيةٍ لتعلم اللغة مُبكرًا وفعّالًا. تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى دراسة العوامل الداخلية والخارجية الرئيسية التي تُسهم في عملية صعوبات التعلم لدى الأطفال، والتي سبق أن

تناولها باحثون آخرون. يتضمن هذا البحث مراجعة شاملة للأدبيات لجمع الأفكار والحقائق من وجهات نظر متنوعة، وتقديم ملخص وافٍ للعوامل المحتملة. تشير الأبحاث إلى أن تطور اللغة لدى الأطفال يتأثر بمتغيرات داخلية وخارجية على حد سواء. وقد اعتمد الباحثون في دراستهم على بيانات ثانوية.

### Abstract

Language development in children is a complex and dynamic process shaped by a combination of multiple internal and external factors. This article examines key internal influences, including prenatal care, nutrition, and gender differences, which contribute to the foundational stages of language acquisition. Furthermore, the role of external factors, such as access to books, the surrounding environment, parental knowledge, media exposure, and parenting styles are explored in forming linguistic abilities of children. Together, these elements form an interconnected system that supports or delays language growth from the fetal stage through puberty. The article concludes that language acquisition is not an isolated process but a continuous journey influenced by a dynamic interplay of genetics and environment. Therefore, active parental involvement and timely support are essential for children to reach their full linguistic abilities highlighting the importance of language communication and societal participation. Finally, the study underscores the importance of fostering an environment conducive to early and effective language learning. The aim of this paper is to examine the primary internal and external factors contributing to the process of LD in children, which are already investigated by other researchers. This research involves extensive literature research to gather thoughts and facts from various perspectives. Finally, provide a complete summary of the possible factors. Research suggests that children's language development is influenced by both internal and external variables. The researchers use secondary data.

### 1.Introduction

“Language is one of the most important features of a community and the ceaseless use of the same language is the most certain proof of the historical continuity of a community of people. The need to communicate triggers both the occurrence and the development of a language and this need arises and becomes stronger and stronger when one has someone else to communicate with, i.e. where there is a society.” (Sirbu, 2015; p.405).

Stated by Finders et al. (2023) that UNESCO considers early language and literacy development as a global human rights issue. Previous





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researches indicate that language skills are fundamental for a variety of cognitive, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes. Thus, promoting language acquisition in early learning environment is essential.

According to Hartanto et al. (2016), language is a specialized system of communication and receiving information. Kridalaksana (2001) describes language as a communication instrument that has a crucial role in human interaction. People use language to communicate their ideas, desires, feelings, and experiences with others. Language represents human civilization and culture. According to the linguistic dictionary, language is an arbitrary system of sound symbols used by members of society to cooperate, interact, and identify themselves.

Nasution and Tambunan declared that language use is significantly connected to language practice. The more familiar someone is with a language used in communication, the better their ability to interpret a word or sentence. As a tool for communication, language is highly important in human life as it allows people to engage in various conversations. Language can be divided into two parts based on how it is presented: written language and spoken language. Whether spoken or written, language serves to build social interactions within society (Nasution and Tambunan 2022).

Feelings, ideas, information, and experience are not transferred only through language. There are other modes, such as gestures, body language, sign language and others. Individuals can laugh to express amusement, happiness, shriek to express anger, excitement, or fear, clench their fists to express determination, anger, or a threat, raising eyebrows to express surprise or disapproval, and so on, but language remains as the primary mode of communication (Santana,2016).

Language development (LD) is a well-known subtopic in the field of psycholinguistics and refers to the process through which children learn to process speech and communicate; a process that occurs universally across cultures. According to Nelson et al. (2006), LD is considered as a major determinant of children's cognitive capacities, and is closely associated with later academic performance and overall success. Beyond its cognitive significance, LD promotes social relationships, and the emergence of early literacy skills. Importantly, LD begins even before birth, and fetuses respond to sounds, rhythms, and other auditory stimuli, forming the earliest foundations of linguistic knowledge. After birth, children progress from producing simple vocalizations to forming words and sentences, gradually mastering basic syntactic patterns and expanding their vocabulary. Throughout this process, interactions with caregivers

play a crucial role, as responsive and meaningful communication significantly accelerates children's LD (Kennison, 2013).

Moreover, child development contains both qualitative and quantitative changes physically, so does linguistically. LD is one of the most essential aspects of child development, since it serves as an indicator of the overall development. LD is sensitive to delays as if the development is not achieved during the critical period, it becomes difficult for the child to achieve it after that age. Even if they try, it may not be as natural as it would be during the optimal stage. Critical period is between infancy and childhood. Therefore, it plays a vital role in children's language development, since it is during this age that children acquire language skills and comprehend other's thoughts (Ritonga and Sofyani, 2019).

Wang (2023) states that language is a basic instrument used for communication and determines an individual's thinking process throughout life, because of this close connection between language and cognition, early childhood represents a critical period for LD, specifically in oral communication skills. During these early years, children use language not only to express themselves but also to build interpersonal relationships, interpret social situations, and organize their thoughts and behaviors. Thus, language serves as both a communicative resource and a developmental mechanism that supports children's emerging social and cognitive capacities.

LD in early life is critical for children's futures, therefore it has to be encouraged from the beginning and taken into serious consideration. Hurlock believed that early development was more important than later development since the foundation of LD was primarily influenced by learning and experience. Generally, the two major factors influencing LD are genetic and environmental factors (Hurlock, 1959). These can be broadly categorized as internal and external influences on LD.

The aim of this paper is to examine the primary internal and external factors contributing to the process of LD in children, which are already investigated by other researchers. This research involves extensive literature research to gather thoughts and facts from various perspectives. Finally, provide a complete summary of the possible factors. Research suggests that children's language development is influenced by both internal and external variables. The researchers use secondary data.

## 2. Internal Factors

### 2.1 Special Care in the Womb

Although mothers do not directly affect LD of the child when in the womb, but indirectly through their speeches and certain activities such as reading books, thus, research shows that prenatal experiences provide





early forms of language input that can influence later development. According to Gross (2022), womb is the first environment where the fetuses start processing sounds, and maternal speech or activities such as reading aloud can stimulate early auditory learning, accordingly, the mother plays a major role in assisting developing their children's language skills. Partanen et al. (2013) further explains that children not only recognize sounds in the womb, but words and the different realizations of words. Similarly, Dopwell et al. (2014) discusses that when mothers consistently read to their unborn children, the fetus receives additional linguistic stimulation that supports early sound recognition. Therefore, children treated with special care in the womb, tend to have more developed language skills.

Evidence from clinical studies also highlights the importance of healthy prenatal development., Jansson-Verkasalo et al (2004) found that very low birth weight (VLBW) preterm infants tend to score lower on language assessments and often produce shorter or developmentally immature sentences compared with full-term children. These findings suggest that both biological growth in the womb and the mother's prenatal behaviours, including stress level, nutrition, and verbal stimulation jointly contribute to early language outcomes (The Mom, 2023). Therefore, prenatal care and maternal interaction play an important role in supporting the foundations of later LD.

### 2.2. Nutrition Factor

Nutrition is widely recognized as a key internal factor influencing early language and cognitive development. Nurwijayanti (2016, as cited in Fitira, 2020) states that there is a strong relationship between adequate nutrition and LD. Similarly, Cohen Kadosh et al. (2021) claim that sufficient nutritional intake during the first 59 months of life is vital for neurocognitive and LD in early life. The development of the brain starts when the fetus is four weeks old in the womb. What the mother eats and consumes directly influences the child. Furthermore, once the baby is born, mother's milk is primary source of food for children containing all the nutrition required for the child's mental and physical growth and development. Additionally, mental growth results in better LD (Ip et al., 2007).

Moreover, Adler (1982:323) states "A child's acquisition of language-learning skills, as well as his or her general behavioral status, are ultimately dependent on his or her health state". Children having inadequate and damaged health do not result in gaining motivation and enthusiasm. As a result, children end up having low energy level leading

to lower rates in LD and learning. This happens due to lack of nutrition in the meals served to children (Fitria, 2020).

### 2.3 Gender Differences

Gender in children is considered as one of the most influential internal factors affecting LD. Bouchard (2009) posits that there is a superiority of linguistic ability in girls over boys. Girls apply more substantial expression, whether they are single words, phrases or even long sentences compared to boys. Meanwhile, girls have more ability in producing more complex grammatical structures. Researches on child development have shown that the average IQ is quite similar in both men and women. Yet, concerning perception, girls have a higher level of hearing ability and they are more sensitive, meaning they have stronger sense of touching and smelling for example. A great deal of girls' language development comes from their memory. They concentrate of image and mechanical memory that is beneficial in terms of language learning (Wang, 2023). Contrary, boys are better at doing abstract memory tasks that includes geometric figures and tables. In addition, girls communicate more successfully and are better speakers in communication, because they focus on individuals around them more and this helps them with one of the vital functions of language; communication (Rinaldi et al., 2023). Moreover, Eriksson et al (2012. pp:337-338) found that "girls are generally ahead of boys in emerging language skills and that this difference increases with age up 2.06. Little support was found for the hypotheses that this gender difference in language varies across language communities or that young boys are more variable in language skills than young girls." In addition to that, Nip et al. (2011) supports the idea of gender contributing to LD in children as an internal factor by asserting that sex has previously been linked to subtests of expressive language, attention, and memory, with girls scoring higher than boys do.

### 3. The external factors

#### 3.1 Books

Books are widely regarded as powerful tools that support children's LD. In that sense, storybooks and picture book in particular provide rich linguistic input that enhances vocabulary growth, sentence structure, and narrative skills. The stories that children tell influence the length of their sentences. According to Adams (1996), the stories children hear and retell influence the length and complexity of their sentences, thereby reflecting their expressive language abilities. Additionally, children's ability to recall and repeat words from stories contributes to the development of phonological memory.





Dowdall's meta-analysis designates that picture-book sharing interference was beneficial in terms of both adapting and expressing language. Its strategies can significantly upgrade children's language acquisition and development. Picture book sharing is recurring and available in various settings, including homes, schools, and children's entertainment places (Dowdall et al., 2020).

Muhammed (2023) found out that children being exposed to reading stories influences in various developmental areas such as thinking patterns, personality building, language skills, and cultural awareness. As the results of Muhammed's study present, parents identify the benefits and significance of children's stories for their child's LD. Furthermore, the results according to the experimental research show that children with more exposure to story reading tend to be more knowledgeable concerning language. Their language skills are higher compared to those without stories.

Similarly, Rodríguez (2017) observed that regular listening to and reading short stories in a foreign language assisted students in improving their language skills. Continuous and conscious practice of reading, listening, writing, and speaking enhance language acquisition by reproducing real-life communication skills. He further states that listening and reading sessions for a long period of time gave students valuable exposure to the target language, serving as a model for future production with better abilities.

Furthermore, Jing and Hsu (2023) indicate that picture-book reading is especially beneficial for children with Specific Language Impairment (SLI). These children, who often struggle with reading comprehension and oral expression, show improvements in narrative skills and emotional engagement following picture-book interventions. Thus, book exposure—both visual and narrative serves as an essential external factor that supports LD across children with typical and atypical language trajectories.

### 3.2 Surrounding Environment

The environment in which children grow up plays a critical role in shaping their LD. Children raised in linguistically rich, socially interactive, and culturally diverse environments receive a wider range of linguistic input, which strengthens their communicative abilities. In contrast, environments characterized by introversion or limited social interaction provide fewer opportunities for children to practice and develop language.



Nottle et al. (2020) note that when children regularly listen and pay attention to conversations in their surroundings, they gain and learn key language components resulting in expanding their internal and cognitive skills; language processing, comprehension and acquisition. According to Holzinger et al. (2020), critical period is an important and effective phase in children's life, because it is during that time that children acquire linguistics knowledge.

Consequently, children, to a great deal, are affected by the environment and culture in which they live. Suggesting that environment and circumstances influence LD either by promoting or of upbringing may either promote or restrain LD in newborn. For example, children growing up in social and cultural situations that value interpersonal and intergroup connections results in variety of linguistic components. Hoff (2006) states that human environments sustain language acquisition and development by giving children opportunities for experiencing rich communication.

Moreover, in a study, Hart and Risley (1980) found that children who were exposed to a greater quantity and quality of language, such as complex vocabulary and varied sentence structures from caregivers, performed better academically and linguistically as well as a stimulating home language environment predicts later academic success.

When parents provide good communication with their children in a peaceful environment, this results in positive children with high level of LD (Sainain et al., 2020). Lieven (2010) further supports the idea by stating that children acquire language from the linguistic input they receive and the circumstances in which infants grow influence the specific language information that they get (Hart et al, 1997), (Hoff, 2006).

Those children who are sensitive to their siblings' cognitive requirements tend to have a stronger framework for LD. Children living in an environment in which there is beneficial connections among siblings enhances the process of LD succeed (Prime et al, 2014) (Milevsky, 2011). Moreover, Johnston (2010) asserts that LD is affected by the linguistic environment. Form the ages one to three years old, children from highly verbal or professional households heard almost three times more words compared to children from low linguistics families. Quantitative and qualitative researches demonstrate early environment of parental linguistic predicts higher language scores at age nine.

### 3.3 Parental Knowledge

Parental knowledge and educational background significantly influence children's LD. Muluk at al. (2016) argue that mothers with higher





educational level and who live in higher socioeconomic areas result in their children having remarkably higher level of LD. He argues that apart from the educational background of the mother, the income level and intellectual level plays a crucial role in the child's LD. However, he overemphasizes "the maternal education level is an important factor in language development of children." Furthermore, White (2018) highlights that highly educated parents interact with their children in more supportive and stimulating ways, guiding and monitoring the LD process more effectively. These parents encourage positive behavior, provide rich language input, and create an environment conducive to learning. September et al. (2017) similarly report that parents with higher education feel more responsible and capable in supporting their child's linguistic progress.

Educational background also enables parents to better understand their children's academic experiences, allowing them to monitor progress and reinforce language learning at home (Alexander et al., 1994). Similarly, Sandeep (2018) shows that parental education strongly predicts the quality and level of children's language skills. Sharif (2015) and Sainain et al. (2020) add that interactions between highly educated parents and their children tend to be more intentional and developmentally appropriate. Additionally, Pancsofar and Vernon-Feagans (2006) emphasize that parental careers and their ability to model intellectual engagement also contribute to children's language growth. Therefore, parental knowledge, comprising education, awareness, and cognitive engagement, are key external factors shaping early linguistic development.

### 3.4 Media influence

Media, particularly educational TV programs, are considered as a significant external factor influencing children's LD. Educational TV offers affordable and accessible learning opportunities, especially for families with limited resources or immigrant backgrounds. Through culturally and linguistically rich content, children are exposed to vocabulary, narrative structures, and social communication cues that support language learning (Veronica & Gupita, 2020; Dore et al., 2020; Al-Harbi, 2015).

Jing et al. (2023) state that correlation between screen exposure and vocabulary acquisition among children under six years old. The type and quality of media content influence children's expressive language outcomes, indicating that carefully selected educational programs can be beneficial. According to Ritonga and Sofyani (2019) Television is considered as one of the most influential media in communicating its

message. Continuous exposure of TV has an impact on children's language development. Children acquire receptive and expressive language, knowledge of letters and sounds and narrative knowledge via watching TV. In addition, they can also enhance their knowledge of known terms from unattended television exposure; meanwhile friends also influence language abilities and understanding of unfamiliar words.

### 3.5 Style of Parenting

Parenting style is another external factor that significantly shapes children's LD. Simangunsong and Sihotang (2022) show the importance of the family environment in building a child's growth and LD. It concentrates on the idea that parents with positive parenting practices and approaches tend to have children with better LD abilities. This is because it fosters and inserts aspects of culture, education, personal experience, language and religion in children.

Kong and Yasmin's study (2022) states that parenting style influences both learning and language outcomes, noting that educational and psychological research consistently demonstrates that how parents treat and guide their children affects linguistic development. Parenting style serves as a holistic framework of emotional interactions that shapes children's social and cognitive trajectories (Fazli, 2019; Joseph & Jhon, 2008; Johari & Mamt, 2011). For instance, Madigan et al.'s (2019) meta-analysis shows that children raised by caregivers who demonstrate high sensitivity and warmth exhibit stronger language skills than those raised in less supportive environments. Structured parenting interventions also lead to improvements in children's expressive and receptive abilities. Thus, nurturing and responsive parenting styles provide a foundation for healthy LD.

### 4. Conclusion

Language acquisition in children is a complex and continuous process that begins before birth and extends through early childhood, forming the foundation for cognitive, social, and academic success. Both internal and external factors play critical roles in shaping linguistic development. Internal factors, including prenatal care, nutrition, and gender, interact with external influences such as access to books, the surrounding environment, parental knowledge, media exposure, and parenting styles to support or hinder children's language growth.

The interplay of these factors highlights that LD is not an isolated process but rather a dynamic system in which biological, cognitive, and environmental elements converge. For instance, adequate nutrition and





prenatal care provide the neurological foundation for language, while interactive reading, supportive parenting, and rich social environments enhance vocabulary, sentence complexity, and communicative skills. Children facing developmental challenges, such as preterm birth or specific language impairments, benefit particularly from targeted interventions and enriched linguistic environments.

Early childhood represents a critical period in which timely and appropriate support can maximize language acquisition. Parents and caregivers play a pivotal role in monitoring progress, providing stimulating and responsive communication, and fostering environments that integrate learning across multiple domains. As Sirbu (2015) emphasizes, language is essential for communication and the continuity of human society, and children with strong linguistic skills are better prepared to contribute to social and cultural development..

In conclusion, fostering optimal LD requires a holistic approach that combines biological, cognitive, and environmental support, guided by attentive and informed caregivers. When these factors align, children are more likely to achieve full linguistic competence and to harness the power of language for lifelong learning and social engagement.

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