



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESS OF 2-5 YEARS' KIDS IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract

With the growing demands of the English language in the globalized world, parents in Bangladesh have become more concerned about English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning by their children during early childhood. This study aims to throw light upon the process of two- to five-year-old children's EFL Learning in Bangladesh. This study also analyzes the factors and other mechanisms that influence children's EFL Learning. The researchers have used mixed methods and data collected through surveys and interviews from children's parents to know children's language learning process. The research findings reveal that children's EFL learning is significantly impacted by media content, especially YouTube content. Kids are learning Basic English communication through cartoons, rhymes, etc. However, parents have expressed concerns regarding the inappropriate messages delivered through different contents. Also, children's addiction to the digital device is another concern of the parents.

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Introduction:-

Language has an immense influence on the daily lives of members of any race, creed, and region of the world. It helps convey our feelings, desires, and queries to the world around us. Words, gestures, and tone are utilized in the union to illustrate a broad spectrum of emotion. The unique and diverse means human beings can use to correspond through written and spoken language is a large part of what channels our innate ability to form lasting bonds with one another, making humanity distinctive from the rest of the animal realm. Human beings are capable of learning and using multiple languages amongst all creatures.

Moreover, the ability to communicate in multiple languages is becoming more and more critical in the increasingly integrated global business community. It claims to be fostering an environment from a young age regarding promoting bilingual or multilingual learning. Kids learning English as a foreign language in Bangladesh are a diverse group. Some children get little or no exposure to English when starting childcare at family or daycare, kindergarten, or school. The early years are recognized as the foundation years for children's development. Thus, this study explores how 2-5 Years' Kids in Bangladesh learn English as a second language other than their mother tongue through the psychological philosophy behaviorism. Amazingly, children at a very early age (2-5 years old) can learn English with their native language.

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Research Objectives:-

The general objective of this research is to discover the process of kid's EFL learning in the Bangladeshi context. The Specific objectives of this research are-

1. to find out the impacts of YouTube on babies EFL learning,
2. to find out the factors that affect babies' EFL learning.
3. to find out the difficulties children are facing in the journey of their EFL learning.

Literature Review:-

Learning is an individual activity that carries out studies, investigation, work processes, and other internal factors. According to Skinner (1976), learning is a process of adjustment to adaptation through simulation and accommodation between the basic units of cognition stimulation. Clarke (2009) described that "during the first three years of life the foundations of a child's language development are laid. Babies and toddlers must have rich language experiences at this time." He states that infants' language competence begins much before language performance. Initially, they listen to the utterances of the humans around them and try to understand the sound system. They observe how one sound differs from the other at this stage. Their communication with people near them plays a crucial role in their language acquisition process. In the first year, babies require language inputs both in their native language and English as a second language. It has been observed that many children are exposed to native language inputs more than second language inputs. Because of this, they learn their mother tongue efficiently but lag in being proficient in English, which is the second language. In such cases, these children are likely to underperform in classes that follow English medium instruction unless they are not provided with careful English language input at school. If one student is exposed to the English language since birth and another is not that much exposed to English during early childhood, then the former is more likely to perform better than the latter in the classes following English medium instruction. If children with less exposure to English as toddlers at home have to learn English both as a subject at school and learn their different lessons using English, they face many challenges. The load becomes more for them.

Some monolingual babies only acquire one language, but some babies are exposed to two languages at a very young age. Jensen (2011) investigates the dual language learning of children under five years old from different countries. In some cases, babies learn two languages together. In some other cases, babies learn one language after another. In the latter case, often at home, they learn a language, and then at preschool, they are exposed to another language. The study's findings show no proven research to testify that children acquiring two languages show any language disability. Similarly, Bijeljac-Babic et al. (2009) state about the advantages of acquiring foreign language at a very young age. They studied 20 months old children who could successfully learn French and English words. The babies could practically relate to the words they learned.

On the contrary, the study conducted by Farzaneh&Movahed (2015) on Iranian preschool children reveals that a second language acquisition impedes children's first language acquisition. Considering the importance of learning English, children of a very young age are exposed to English in Iran in preschools. However, the second language of the babies interferes with their first language. English accents influence how they pronounce words in their mother tongue. Many young children also feel pressured and are uninterested in learning the second language. Whether the acquisition of two languages by babies facilitates or impeding their language acquisition process is still controversial.

Another important aspect regarding babies' language acquisition is whether electronic devices aid their language acquisition process or not. A study conducted by Patricia et al. (2003) reveals that 9-month-old toddlers watching and listening or solely listening to studio class DVDs of foreign-language material do not demonstrate phonetic learning, even though toddlers of a similar age can learn from a live individual. The study conducted two experiments. In Experiment 1, 9-month-old American toddlers were exposed to native Mandarin Chinese speakers in 12 laboratory sessions. A control group also partook in 12 language sessions but heard only English. Subsequent tests of Mandarin speech discernment established that contact to Mandarin reversed the decay seen in the English control group. In Experiment 2, toddlers were exposed to foreign-language speakers and materials via audiovisual or audio-only recordings. Infants' speech perception scores in the Audiovisual and Audio groups did not vary from the scores of toddlers in the English control group who were not open to foreign language material. However, attention scores exposed that toddlers attended suggestively less to the speakers and their materials in the nonexistence of a live speaker.

Moreover, infants in the Audiovisual group attended significantly more than toddlers in the A group, although the attention growth did not result in a growth in learning. On the contrary, some studies suggest how electronic media can help toddlers learn the language. Scheffler (2015) studied the language behavior of two Polish babies who acquired English by watching animation series. By the age of 4, they were more competent in English than children who took monolingual English instruction at school. It is suggested through the study that animation series can be used at school too for teaching language to very young children. Similarly, Forey et al. (2016) state that video games, television, social media contents play a significant part in the English language learning of children between five to eight years of age from Hongkong. Parents of these children use traditional methods like drilling and the other methods mentioned previously to make their children learn foreign languages.

Imitation and memorization are two significant aspects of babies' language acquisition process. Developmental variations in imitation were observed in three experiments with 6- to 24-month-old infants in a study conducted by Barr et al. (1996). Infants in the demonstration situation witnessed an experimenter perform three concrete actions with a puppet. Their capability to reproduce those actions was evaluated for the first time for the duration of the test in the nonattendance of prior practice. Children in the control situation received the same experience as the puppet and the experimenter but were not shown the target actions. The outcomes of Experiment 1 showed that 12, 18, and 24 months old infants displayed a clear indication of imitation following a 24-hour delay (deferred imitation). In addition, the results of Experiment 1 proved that the 18 and 24 months old babies reproduced more of the target actions during the test than the 12-month-olds. The results of Experiment 2 exposed that six-month-olds performed and 12-month-olds when tested without delay (immediate imitation). Finally, the results of Experiment 3 showed that, with additional exposure to the target actions, even 6-month-old infants exhibited deferred imitation following a 24-hour delay. Taken together, these discoveries have significant suggestions for current theories of the development of imitation and memory during the first two years of life.

Methodology:-

In this research, the researchers have used a mixed methodology. The researchers have used qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct the research work. Surveys and interviews of parents have been conducted to collect data. The research has been done on the parents of 01- 05 years old 12 babies in Bangladesh, who mainly live in Dhaka City and the sample has been collected purposively to ensure that almost all of the parents are educated enough to give the babies a Standard English-speaking environment. In addition, the researchers have taken interviews from the parents either via online, telephone, or through face-to-face conversation.

Then, the analysis of the data gotten from the interviews and surveys has been done. Though the researchers could not get an equal number of male and female babies, they have tried to research a minimum of one baby of every age.

List of Participants

SL	Age	Sex	Education	Occupation	Monthly Income
1	35	Female	MBBS, MD	Physician	40,000 BDT
2	34	Female	Postgraduate	Govt. Job Holder	50,000 BDT
2	34	Male	BSC Eng.	Teacher	75,000 BDT
4	33	Male	Graduate	Govt. Job Holder	50,000BDT
5	37	Male	Graduate	Flight Lieutenant	42,000 BDT
6	39	Male	BSC Eng.	Navy Officer	50,000 BDT
7	36	Female	MBBS	Physician	50,000 BDT
8	38	Male	Graduate	Govt. Job Holder	50,000 BDT
9	35	Male	Postgraduate	Engineer	2,75,000BDT
10	29	Female	Postgraduate	Engineer	63,000BDT
11	32	Male	BSC Eng.	Private Job Holder	40,000BDT
12	48	Male	HSC	Businessman	50,000BDT
13	38	Male	Graduate	Private Job Holder	60,000 BDT
14	37	Female	Graduate	Teacher	40,000 BDT
15	45	Male	Postgraduate	Businessman	1,00,000 BDT
16	36	Female	MBBS	Physician	70,000 BDT
17	31	Male	MSc Textile Eng.	Private Job Holder	60,000 BDT
18	31	Female	Postgraduate	Teacher	40,000BDT

19	34	Male	MBBS, FCPS	Physician	40,000 BDT
20	31	Female	MBBS	Govt. Job Holder	32,000BDT
21	27	Female	LLB	Homemaker	42,000 BDT (Family income)
22	30	Female	Graduate	Homemaker	50,000 BDT (Family income)

Discussion and Findings:-

1. What is your opinion regarding the process or way of EFL learning of a child? (By imitation, by input, by environmental reinforcement or by analogy and correction)

Process	Imitation	Input	Environmental Reinforcement	Analogy and Correction
Number of Babies	15	4	6	2
Percentage	56%	15%	22%	7%

The study reveals that 56% of parents believe that through imitation, children learn English. So, the majority of the parents think that imitation plays a vital role in the process of English language learning by toddlers. 22% of parents think that through environmental reinforcement, children learn English. 2. What are the factors, which can affect your baby's EFL learning?

Factor	School	Media	Peers	Others
Number of babies	11	12	10	3
Percentage	31%	33%	28%	8%

The majority of the parents think media to be the core influencer in their children's English language learning process. 33% of parents adhere to it. Whereas 31% of parents think that school plays a significant role in their babies' EFL learning. 28% of parents believe that mainly peers affect their baby's EFL learning.

Question		Physician	Engineer	Teacher	Homemaker	Businessperson	Other Job Holder
3. Do you allow your baby to watch videos on YouTube?	Yes	4	2	3	2	2	9
	No	0	0	0	0	0	0

All the participants respond that they allow their children to watch videos on YouTube.

Question	Total participant	Cartoon/ animated series	Rhymes/song	Games	DIY Tutorial video	Others
4. If yes, what type of videos does your baby watch in YouTube?	22	22	20	16	6	2
Percentage		100%	91%	73%	27%	9%

Findings suggest that the most popular content in YouTube for babies is cartoon or animated series. 100 percent parents answered that their babies watch various types of animated/cartoon series. Second most popular content is rhymes or songs. 91% parents said their children watch rhymes and songs on YouTube. Other less popular contents are games, tutorial videos and other contents.

Question	Total participant	Half to One hour	Two to three hours	Four to Five hours	More than five hours
5. How much time do you allow your baby to watch videos on YouTube?	22	2	17	3	0
Percentage		9%	77%	13%	0

Finding suggests that most babies watch YouTube for 2 to 3 hours per day. More than 77% of parents allow their babies this time or duration. 13 percent of parents said their babies watch YouTube for 3 to 5 hours, and 9% said they allow half to 1 hour.

Question		Physician	Engineer	Teacher	Homemaker	Businessperson	Other Job Holder
6. Do you think YouTube helped your baby in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL)?	Yes	4	2	3	2	2	8
	No	0	0	0	0	0	1

All except one participant said that they believe YouTube helps their children to learn English language.

7. Is there any foreign language word (English) that your baby learned through YouTube Videos? (Examples)

Common Words	Other Words
Yes, No, Thank you, Okay, Sorry, Welcome	Goodbye, Up, Down, Yummy, Mummy, Daddy, Hand, Hair, Stop, Doctor, Nice, Commando, Baby, Toy, Cow, Good morning, name of fruits, name of colours etc.

From the table it is clear that babies commonly learn greetings and some easy and frequently used proper nouns and adjectives from YouTube.

Question	Total	Yes	No
8. Do you think any other media exposure or experience has helped your child to learn EFL other than YouTube?	22	4	18
Percentage		18%	82%

The table shows that most parents believe that YouTube is the only medium to help a child learn English. On the other hand, only 18% of parents think that additional media exposure helps their baby's language learning process.

9. a. What was your baby's first foreign language (English) full word?

Answer: Yes, No, Thank you, Okay, Sorry, Welcome etc.

9. b. What was your baby's age when s/he learned first foreign language (English) word?

Age	1.5 years	2 years	2.5 years	3 years	Cannot remember
Sex					
Male	2	3	2	2	7
Female	0	1	2	2	

Learning and using foreign language words is one of the first steps of acquiring a new language. The study finds that the age of learning the first foreign language word differs for male and female babies. Male babies start from 1.5 years and continue to learn English words until three years. On the other hand, female babies start from 2 years to start learning English words. Surprisingly, this study finds that no female baby under the age of 2 has learned English words. Some parents could not remember the age of learning the first word. Understandably, this area needs further study.

10. At what age did your baby start meaningfully communicating in EFL?

Age	Total	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	Cannot remember
Number of babies	22	2	10	3	2	5
Percentage		9%	45%	13%	9%	

Around 45% parents said that their babies start meaningfully communicating in English at the age of 3. It is understandable that this area needs further study.

11. What is your baby's current EFL skill? Write briefly.

Age	Level		
	Meaningfully using words	Sentence formatting	Rhymes
From 4 to 5 years	✓	✓	✓
From 3 to 4 years	✓	✓	✓
From 2 to 3 years	✓	×	×

The study finds that babies from the age of 3 years and above can meaningfully use words, sentences and recite rhymes. Babies younger than three years can use only meaningful words.

12. What are the difficulties, your child is facing in the journey of his/her EFL learning? Do you think, your baby's psychological and language developments are ok?

Most of the participants answered that English is not a phonetic language, meaning we often do not say a word the same way it is spelled. Thus, their kids sometimes face pronunciation difficulties. In addition, as babies are continuously using social media like YouTube, their pronunciation varies. They also respond that their language development is okay, but some kids are affected by media because of excessive use of it.

13. If not, then in which problem he/she is suffering? Which therapy he/ she is taking? Write briefly about his/ her improvement?

Kids are affected by different media because of excessive use of it. It is a growing source of anxiety. From viewing cartoons, they are learning inappropriate sexual behavior. Some of the kids do not want to eat without cartoon series.

Question		Physician	Engineer	Teacher	Homemaker	Businessperson	Govt. Job Holder	Non-govt Job Holder
14. Do children need to have basic understanding in English (basic conversational or communication skills) before going to school?	Yes	0	1	3	2	2	6	3
	No	4	1	0	0	0	0	0

Most parents think that their children need to have basic conversational or communication skills in English before school. Only five parents out of 22 believe that children do not have Basic English skills before starting school.

Findings and Recommendations:-

1. The majority of the parents think that their children should begin learning English before starting school. Moreover, most parents believe that through imitation, children acquire language. So, children learning English as a foreign language need explicit modeling and quality exposure to accomplish the purpose.
2. Most parents think that YouTube is the leading media platform for EFL learning for their children. Educators who work with pre-school education should create quality contents for YouTube which will be both educative and enjoyable for children. Animation companies and pre-school educators can collaborate in this regard.
3. As children prefer to learn from e-resources, quality Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) can be designed, and parents can enroll their kids in such courses for EFL learning.
4. Many parents reveal that children have become addicted to devices, and screen time is necessary to make them do daily activities, such as taking food. Parents should be careful not to encourage such habit formation.

Watching cartoons/ listening to rhymes etc., should not be introduced to them as a reward for daily activities. Otherwise, they will form a correlation between media exposure and their activities/ responsibilities. Children's exposure to the device should be for a limited time.

5. Parents have expressed concern that different cartoons/animated series show inappropriate content or convey wrong messages. So, parents should have constant observations regarding the type of contents children are being exposed to.

Conclusion:-

In this era of globalization, the zeal for making children proficient in English from early childhood has become very popular among Bangladeshi parents, especially educated parents. Most parents believe that children learn language through imitation. Thus, proper exposure to correct English language use is necessary. Parents think that media plays a significant role in the EFL learning of their kids. They believe media play a more significant role than schools in children's EFL learning. Parents regard YouTube as the essential medium that influences English learning by their kids. Children are learning Basic English through YouTube. They are learning different names, verbs, personal greetings. However, parents' growing concern is that children are being exposed to inappropriate content that can negatively impact young minds. Also, children are getting addicted to different digital devices. However, more educative content on YouTube for kids, MOOCs for pre-school children's English language learning, and regulated exposure to digital devices can help in this regard.

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Appendix:-

1. Baby's Name
2. Baby's Sex
3. Baby's Age
4. Parent's Age
5. Parent's education
6. Parent's occupation
7. Parent's monthly income

1. Do you allow your baby to watch videos on YouTube?

Ans:

2. If yes, what type of videos does your baby watch in YouTube?

Ans:

3. How much time do you allow your baby to watch videos on YouTube?

Ans:

4. Is there any foreign language word (English) that your baby learned through YouTube Videos? (Examples)

Ans:

5. Do you think YouTube helped your baby in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL)?

Ans:

6. Do you think any other media exposure or experience has helped your child to learn EFL other than YouTube?

Ans:

7. a. What was your baby's first foreign language (English) full word?

b. What was your baby's age when s/he learned first foreign language (English) word?

c. How do you think your baby learned it?

Ans:

8. At what age did your baby start meaningfully communicating in EFL?

Ans:

9. What is your baby's current EFL skill? Write briefly.

Ans:

10. What is your opinion regarding the process or way of EFL learning of a child? (by imitation, by input, by environmental reinforcement or by analogy and correction)

Ans:

11. What are the factors, which can affect your baby's EFL learning?

Ans:

12. What are the difficulties, your child is facing in the journey of his/her EFL learning? Do you think, your baby's psychological and language developments are ok?

Ans:

13. If no then in which problem he/she is suffering? Which therapy he/ she is taking? Write briefly about his/ her improvement?

Ans:

14. Do children need to have basic understanding in English (basic conversational or communication skills) before going to school?

Ans: