

## English as a Second Language Acquisition in 8-Year-Olds through YouTube Media

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### Received:

June 10, 2025

### Revised:

June 15, 2025

### Accepted:

July 12, 2025

### Published:

August 1, 2025

### ABSTRACT

This research article discussed the acquisition of English as a second language in 8-year-old children through YouTube media. This research used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The research subjects were an 8-year-old child named Afnan, and his mother, Rantika. Data collection techniques included observation, non-formal interview, and library research. The results showed that; 1) Afnan's second language acquisition process is almost the same as his first language acquisition process. 2) YouTube is proven to promote language development, cross-cultural learning, and motivation in an authentic second language learning environment. Through the medium of YouTube, Afnan is able to communicate in English after being exposed to English channels since the age of 2 years old. His mother deliberately introduced English to Afnan because she believes that it is important to master English from an early age. Therefore, this study also highlights the importance of second language acquisition during the golden age of children, where human absorption and memory are more optimal.

**Keywords:** *second language acquisition; teaching media; YouTube*

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## INTRODUCTION

Basically, everyone is born with a language acquisition device (LAD) that enables them to produce language to communicate. Every individual has a first language, otherwise known as a mother tongue, and most also learn a second language in addition to their first language. According to Salsabila et al., (2023), learning a second language involves a time-consuming process and skill in understanding, producing and using words to communicate with others. However, Irawan (2019) argued that learning a second language becomes easier if it is taught from an early age. This is because during childhood, the language acquisition process experiences optimal development at the age of 0-6 years. This period is considered a critical period in the LAD that allows a person to receive a variety of information to the maximum, so that children can easily and quickly learn language. In fact, during this critical period, children can learn more than one language at once, and the language will develop naturally through responses and stimuli from language speakers. This opinion is also confirmed by Farahsani et al., (2020), who stated that children aged 2-3 years are the peak time in acquiring language because at this age, they are able to make simple phrases or

sentences. Sometimes, they can also make longer sentences and are able to respond to what adults say.

The process of language acquisition does not happen automatically from birth. There are certain stages and processes in learning a language. In children, language acquisition occurs in two ways, namely naturally and influenced by the surrounding environment. Hendriyanto and Putri in Fardischa (2020) asserted that language develops when actions are often repeated by humans, so that human memory stores symbols which ultimately form language, both verbal and nonverbal, which is used to communicate. This research was in line with the concept of structuralism related to language acquisition by Suroso in Fardischa (2020), which stated that language is formed due to repeated practice. This structuralism perspective come from behaviorism psychology, which believes that all human actions can occur due to habits or training.

In addition, Annas (2019) also stated that according to the behaviorism perspective, language is the result of responses to stimuli. Thus, if one wants to improve his/her language use, he/she must increase the reception of stimuli. Therefore, the age of 4-5 years, which is considered as the golden period, is the right period to receive stimuli and stimulus in language development and acquisition

As revealed earlier, children have the ability to learn more than one language simultaneously, allowing for natural language development through responses and stimuli from speakers. An example of this phenomenon occurred in a child who was the subject of the study, where Indonesian was his first language while English became his second language. Both languages were acquired by the child during what is considered the golden years. For almost 5 years, the researcher lived in the same neighborhood as the child, and often heard the child speaking both languages, namely English and Indonesian.

## 1. Second Language Acquisition

### A. Second Language Acquisition perspective

According to Kadwa & Alshenqeeti (2020), Second language acquisition refers to the natural process of learning a second or foreign language through everyday communication, devoid of direct instruction or guidance from an educator or mentor. This progression lacks a standardized approach and varies for each individual, as each person adopts a second language uniquely. Language acquisition thrives through interactions facilitating communication. Key aspects of natural language acquisition involve its integration into daily interactions and its independence from intentional, structured teaching methods

In contrast to research conducted by Irawan (2019), Language acquisition primarily occurs unconsciously in children during their first language development. The fundamental difference between acquiring a first language and learning a second or foreign language lies in the structure of the learning process. Learning a first language is instinctive and unconscious, while learning a second language is a conscious and formal effort.

Meanwhile, Ann Pulsa et al., (2018) has a neutral point of view, that second language acquisition can be referred to as a conscious or unconscious process in which a language other than the mother tongue is learnt in a natural or guided setting in the development of phonology, lexicon, grammar, and pragmatic knowledge. He also proposed two types of second language acquisition, namely naturalistic and formal.

#### B. Second language acquisition process

In accordance with behaviorist theory, a child acquires spoken language by observing and imitating the language used by their parents, relatives, and surrounding environment. This process involves reinforcement through rewards and continuous practice. In interactions with the child, a mother provides input that the child absorbs, leading to a gradual language acquisition through trial and error.

Conversely, as per the mentalist theory advocated by Noam Chomsky, considered the father of modern linguistics, he posits that children are inherently equipped with the capacity for language. All languages worldwide share fundamental universal traits, such as subject-object relationships within sentences. These inherent principles serve as the foundational rules of language and are inherently present within the human brain. Through these finite rules, an infinite array of sentences can be generated. Chomsky contends that this universal grammar essentially constitutes the language's rules. Previously termed as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), Chomsky argues that this linguistic mechanism exists within the human brain specifically for the purpose of language acquisition as explained by (Admin, n.d.)

### 2. YouTube

#### A. YouTube Description

According to Fardischa (2020), YouTube is a social media platform that contains a variety of videos, ranging from films, music, TV series, and so on. The videos on YouTube can be watched by anyone and at any time as desired. Users can also easily upload videos to this platform. The easy availability makes this site in demand by various groups not only in Indonesia, but also around the world. Whether children, adults, or parents, almost all have used YouTube. Sianipar in Sayidin (2021) added that YouTube is a database containing video content that is popular on social media and provides a variety of very useful information.

#### B. YouTube Benefits

According to Sianipar in Sayidin (2021), YouTube allows searching for information or watching videos live. YouTube has a huge impact on the learning process of various forms of information for students because the use of YouTube media makes the internet a knowledge base for today's millennial generation. YouTube is designed as an information system. Furthermore, Dizon (2022) added that YouTube has been shown to promote language development, cross-cultural learning, and motivation in an authentic second language learning environment.

Upon investigation, it turned out that the child was used to watching English YouTube content since he was 2 years old, and interactions with his parents were also often in English. This phenomenon sparked the researcher's interest and led to the following research questions:

1. How is the process of second language acquisition acquired by the child (Afnan)?
2. How does watching YouTube affect the English language acquisition of the child (Afnan)?

## **METHOD**

This research used qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach. Ruslan in Irwansyah & Shabiburrahman (2022) explained that the aim of employing qualitative research methods is to grasp a comprehensive understanding of social reality as perceived by the participants involved. This comprehension isn't predetermined but is achieved through an examination of the focal social reality under study, leading to conclusions that encapsulate a broader comprehension of that particular reality.

The research focused on two subjects: an 8-year-old child named Afnan and his mother, Rantika. The methodologies for data collection encompassed observation, informal interviews, and library research. Information sourced from the library served as secondary data supporting the primary data derived from interviews and observations. Upon gathering data from these varied sources, a qualitative analysis was conducted. Post-analysis, the data underwent identification and classification to address the research inquiries. The tools used for data collection and analysis consisted of interview guidelines adapted from prior research, tailored to suit the specific requirements of the current study. For the child, the researcher adapted from (Fardischa, 2020); and for the mother, the researcher adapted from (Farahsani et al., 2020). In addition, the researcher also used a smartphone to record audio, and the researcher himself as a human instrument in conducting observations by taking notes.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

1. The process of second language acquisition acquired by the child (Afnan)

During observations, the researcher often found that Afnan used two languages in his daily life. Several times the researcher witnessed this directly, as well as through his mother's social media, such as WhatsApp stories. In the WhatsApp story, Afnan was seen watching YouTube content that used English, and his mother invited Afnan to talk in English about the content he was watching. Not only when watching YouTube, researcher also often found that mother and child communicated in English, sometimes mixing Indonesian and English. This finding is in line with the results of the researcher's interview with the child.

Researcher: Halo.  
Afnan: Halo  
Researcher: How are you today?  
Afnan: Good.  
Researcher: Good, so who are you?  
Afnan: Afnan  
Researcher: Oke, your name is Afnan?  
Afnan: (nodded)  
Researcher: What is your favorite hobby?  
Arfan: Playing  
Researcher: Oh playing, what kind? Like sport or the toys or what?  
Arfan: Toys and Phone  
Researcher: Oke, So Arfan Have you had your breakfast this morning?  
Arfan: Yeah  
Researcher: What?  
Arfan: Chicken  
Researcher: Chicken, okay. Who cook?  
Arfan: (pointing backwards where his mom was)  
Researcher: Mama, Okay So what will you do after this?  
Arfan: Playing  
Researcher: Playing again, Playing the toys or watching a movie or watching a movie Unspeakable again?  
Arfan: Watching YouTube  
Researcher: Okay watching YouTube but what channel? It's still the same?  
Arfan: Different  
Researcher: What? Do you remember?  
Arfan: I don't know  
Researcher: Okay, when you know what the channel you will watch after this You can tell to me, okay?  
Arfan: Okay  
Researcher: Okay that's all Arfan, thank you, thank you for the time  
Arfan: You're welcome

Based on the interview, it is evident that Afnan has the ability to respond and answer in English. Afnan is able to do this because since the age of 2, he has been introduced to YouTube shows in English. This was a deliberate decision by his mother as she believes that English is an important skill to master in the future. Hence, she made sure her children were accustomed to watching and listening to English from an early age. The reason was:

Afnan's Mom: ... it will be very easy for them to catch, imitate, get new words. Rather than if for example it's junior high school, it will be a little bit difficult for them to continue learning.

This statement indicates that this period is a golden period for humans, where human absorption and memory are more optimal. Therefore, the ability of human memory in this period tends to be more durable (Irwansyah & Shabiburrahman, 2022).

The researcher also asked to Afnan's Mom about Afnan's mother tongue, and whether English is on a par with Bahasa Indonesia. This is because both languages were taught and learnt by Afnan during his golden years. He learnt Bahasa Indonesia when he started speaking until he could communicate fluently and perfectly at the age of 2 years old, while he learnt English from the age of 2 years old until now at the age of 8 years old. His mother answered "no".

Afnan's Mom: His mother tongue is still Indonesian. If I want to speak English, then I invite him to speak English.

Then, in the process of acquiring English as a second language for Afnan. The process that occurs in the acquisition of the second language, namely English, is almost the same as the acquisition of the first language. During the interview, Arfan's mum explained as follows:

Arfan's mom: yes, it's almost the same as Indonesian. Afnan absorbs English directly word for word. the step is that he can speaks English, he pure imitates. Then he practices it in his daily life. So, from the age of 2, he has been given shows using English. But maybe he can only absorb it after 2 and a half years. At first, he just sees the pictures. He absorbs and translates or understands the context from the pictures. Then he started speaking in English when he was 3 years old. 3 years old already started to understand what I was talking about. But he started to imitate like that, when he was 2 years and a half, he already started imitating. When he was 3 years old, so he started to be able to capture, right the Octonauts (YouTube channel) he said there are layers of the sea. There is a territory that is the deepest, middle, and upper. He already knew that from there (Octonauts channel).

Arfan's Mom also stated that Arfan absorbed English, not learnt it. This was explained by his mother because when the researcher conducted an interview with the child about the translation from Indonesian to English sentences, the child could not answer. However, when the researcher and the child directly had a conversation, the child could respond and answer well.

Arfan's mum: I never teach them like please take a sit, so he, she, it is this, this, and this, well. They won't understand. Like oh If he, she, it, and if there's a verb, it has to be he walks, she walks, it walks. Never, I never teach like that. But yes, he had suddenly spoken like that. Arfan just said, she walks, she doesn't know, but he doesn't know where the word she doesn't know comes from. I never taught them, even taught them Jerapah is giraffe. Gajah is elephant, no need. Because when I say elephant, so what in their mind is like, oh so the elephant is a big animal that has ears, long trunk, like that.

That's why, like for example, Suci said that from Indonesia to English he finds it difficult. So, it's really straightforward to talk to them. Arfan, he can do it first, then he understands it.

According to Ann Pulsa et al., (2018), unconscious acquisition means that the speaker used the second language with a focus on meaning and purpose. Therefore, when Arfan communicates with his mother and the researcher, he speaks without thinking about the form, but rather the meaning.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded:

- a) Arfan's second language acquisition process is similar to the first language acquisition process described in the literature review section on language acquisition. Arfan starts by watching and listening to English YouTube content, trying to understand and translate its meaning, imitating words and sentences from the spectacle, and finally understanding when these words and sentences are used and practicing them in conversations with his mother. In addition, Arfan does have LAD which naturally helps him in acquiring the language. This conclusion answers the first research question, namely "How is the process of second language acquisition acquired by the child (Arfan)?"
- b) This language acquisition was assimilation, not learning, as Arfan acquired it naturally and not from teaching. His mother stated that Arfan was able to use English but did not understand how the words were produced. Arfan did not understand English grammar, but unconsciously used the language in his daily life. This research is in line with the understanding of second language acquisition conveyed by Kadwa & Alshenqeeti (2020) that Second language acquisition refers to acquiring a second or foreign language through daily communication, devoid of formal teaching or guidance. The process lacks standardization, with each person acquiring a second language uniquely. Language acquisition thrives through communicative interactions, fostering the development of language skills. Key characteristics of natural language acquisition involve its integration into daily communication and its independence from intentional, structured guidance or instruction..
- c) Arfan's mother's active role in using English is also very helpful in second language acquisition and mastery. As explained by Hauwaert in Irawan (2019), having parents who speak different languages is often considered an advantage for children, who will naturally master both languages. However, parental language differences will affect children's language acquisition. Children will try to express their intentions by using the words they hear. Therefore, it is important for children to learn both languages to communicate well with their parents.

## 2. How YouTube can affect children's English language acquisition (Afnan)

### A. Interested Media

YouTube can influence Afnan's acquisition of English as a second language because YouTube is an interesting media. This is proven because Afnan has been watching YouTube with English content since the age of 2 until now he is 8 years old. This is because the content of the YouTube content is diverse, so that children will not be bored. As said by Arfan's mum during the interview about the many genres and topics that can be watched by Arfan,

Arfan's mum: I still control what content they can watch. But then, after 4, it was a little bit difficult, so mostly now they watch the gaming content, but previously they watched mostly like natural phenomena, animals, and then what else.

This information is in line with the findings revealed by Fardischa (2020). YouTube is a social media platform that contains various types of videos, such as films, music, TV series, and other content that can be found there. The videos on YouTube can be watched by anyone and at any time as desired. Users can also easily upload videos to the platform. This ease of access makes the site in demand by various groups not only in Indonesia, but also in various other countries. Whether children, adults, or parents, almost all have used YouTube. In addition, the opinion expressed by Sianipar in Sayidin (2021) is also in line with this. He stated that YouTube provides a variety of information that is very helpful. YouTube has a huge impact on any form of information learning process for students, because the use of YouTube media makes the internet a knowledge base for today's millennial generation. YouTube is designed as an information system.

### B. YouTube is promoted language development, intercultural learning, and motivation in an authentic second language learning environment

This second point is the benefits of using YouTube media in second language acquisition which is then used by researcher as a point to analyses the results of the interview, this benefits is stated by Dizon (2022).

There were 3 situations told by Arfan's mum during the interview. First, it was also revealed in the previous interview that Arfan could know about the layers of the sea in the form of the deepest, middle, and upper territories through the YouTube channel the Octonauts. From this incident, it proves that in fact YouTube media makes children have knowledge independently, and are able to remember this knowledge. Based on this event, YouTube is promoted intercultural learning.

Secondly, Afnan's Mom also said that her son often gets new phrases and sentences.

"So, for example, yesterday he was able to say I'll figure it out. He won't understand what Indonesian means. But he understands. When he uses it, he understands. Like yesterday, Adek, please do this, please fix that, the lego. Then because of that, there were a lot of missing ones, please looking for them.



And he said "ok, I'll figure it out". How can he try to understand where the words come from?"

From this situation, it proves that YouTube is promoted language development because the language that is absorbed and practiced has developed even though grammatically the child does not know the phrases and sentences.

Then, on the third situation. Researcher asked about the English environment at school and at home. And Arfan's mom revealed that the English environment is stronger at home by using YouTube than at school.

"For English, the support is probably more support at home. Because at school, the pure language of English is only when it's English (lessons). for example, if you have to go to the bathroom, use English. If for example from hadith, for example there is a hadith, memories Indonesian, then translate it into English. But to meet with friends they talk, it still uses Indonesian. So, it means that the environment is stronger at home."

Afnan's mum also added:

"Fun fact, so before Afnan entered school when he was before kindergarten, his accent was good. But when he started to learn English from school, it was destroyed. So really when we don't build the environment properly at home, don't maintain the environment, (the result will be) destroyed. His accent is already Javanese. And because most of the teachers they don't speak English actually. Ok, English doesn't require you to have a Western accent. But it turns out that accent does make what yes, there is a sense of satisfaction. That's when people who don't learn English holistically, maybe half and half, the way they pronounce words is sometimes wrong. Like for example the number eight should be "āt", but they (the teacher) pronounce it "ekk". That goes to Afnan. So, the answer is that he can have a good accent because he absorbs it directly from the YouTube. But when he got to school, what he absorbed was so yes, "ekk". Then that is almost every day. So, he got carried away"

Through this situation, it can be said that YouTube is promoted motivation in an authentic L2 learning environment because the environment provided by YouTube is authentic. It is called authentic because the language acquisition obtained directly absorbs from the native speaker. The imitating done by the child also directly refers to the native person in pronouncing the words. And based on this event, the results obtained do not match the understanding of SLA put forward by Irawan (2019), he stated that second language acquisition is done consciously and formally. Based on the results obtained, in fact, when children start the English acquisition environment at school, the quality of English that has been obtained previously decreases.

Based on the situations above, the researcher concluded and presented the answer to research question no. 2, namely "How does watching YouTube affect Afnan's English language acquisition".

- a) YouTube is an interesting media with various genres and topics inside.
- b) YouTube is promoted language development, intercultural learning, and motivation in an authentic L2 learning environment.

## CONCLUSION

In this research, it was found that the acquisition of a second language in children aged 8 years through YouTube media shows that YouTube has an influence on the acquisition of a second language in children who speak English in Afnan. Afnan, the research subject, was able to communicate in English after being exposed to English-language YouTube counters from the age of 2 years until he is currently 8 years old. This shows that exposure to a second language from an early age can influence children's language skills positively. Apart from that, Afnan's mother deliberately introduced English to her child because she believed that English was an important skill that had to be mastered from an early age. YouTube media has been proven to promote language development, cross-cultural learning, and motivation in authentic second language learning environments. The results of this research also highlight the importance of acquiring a second language during a child's golden years, where human absorption and memory are more optimal. Therefore, this research provides an important contribution to the understanding of second language acquisition in early childhood through YouTube. It is hoped that the results of this research can become the basis for developing more effective second language learning methods in early childhood.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD), Yogyakarta, for providing the academic environment and resources that have greatly supported the completion of this research.

My sincere appreciation goes to Dr. Dwi Santoso for his invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous encouragement throughout the entire process. His expertise and thoughtful insights have been instrumental in shaping the direction and quality of this work.

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