

Enhancing Early Second Language Acquisition through Parent-teacher Practices

¹Muhammad Haikal, ²Fahrul Rozi,

Email : ¹ muhammad.haikal@unida.gontor.ac.id, ² fahrulrozi431@gmail.com

¹Universitas Darussalam Gontor; ²Universitas Ahmad Dahlan

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of the second language has been widely spread which demands many parents to let their children learn as early as possible. Parents and teachers are the two stakeholders who can grant this idea. This study was conducted to present teachers' and parents' practices in teaching and/or introducing English as a second language and see whether or not the two perspectives were in line. The phenomenology of the qualitative study was employed in this study by using the interview as the research instrument, and two teachers were chosen as the research participants. Therefore, the data analysis of this research was conducted by transcribing the interview, open coding, analytical coding, axial coding, and selective coding, and emerging the theme of coding. In addition, the researcher found several findings related to early second language acquisition through parent-teacher practices such as language exposure, language accuracy, encouragement of parent-child interaction, fun learning to foster motivation of language learning, realia teaching aid, reward presentation, and the use of video after completing the data analysis by coding.

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Introduction

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is defined as the study of how people learn or acquire their second language (L2) as an addition to their first language (L1). How second languages are addressed as learning or acquiring depends on how the process is implemented, either by parents or teachers. According to Krashen (1981), there are two independent systems of foreign language, namely the learned system and the acquired system. A learned system is a way of how the language is received consciously and generally set by some rules or instructions from teachers or parents. For example, a second language is taught in class about how to create sentences with different structures or grammar rules. On the other hand, the acquired system or acquisition is received subconsciously by a natural process such as interactions with adults or other advanced fluent interactions. In addition, this process is considered like children who attempt to acquire their first

language. Therefore, when the second language is developed at a young age, it is mostly acknowledged as acquisition.

Furthermore, it has been uttered that the ideal time for mastering a second language is established at a young age since the critical period of humans begins in the first six years of life. During this period, children's cognition can be effectively operated to absorb the phenomena that happen or surrounds their environment including language (Ortega, 2009). Consequently, the second language can be proficiently acquired based on several factors including consistency and practice to boost the four skills in the second language: writing and speaking (productive skill) and listening and reading (receptive skill), intelligence, cognitive process, attitude and aptitude, age, and self-motivation.

The factors influencing early second language acquisition are possibly achieved by how teacher-parent practices are administered both at school and at home. Before children are enrolled in school to experience their academic journey, the family seems to be the first environment in which they undertake social interaction. By this time, parents will be their 'first teachers' to interact with and create a communicative atmosphere. Accordingly, interactions are believed as the source of exposures that those children will have and start to precede all the information toward their cognition as a preproduction stage. However, it should also be contemplated about other parents' practices which ought to be covered, developed, and avoided, especially in the association with second language acquisition.

Additionally, another stakeholder involved to reach the factor of successful SLA for the young learner is teachers. The phenomenon of starting school, kindergarten level, at a very young age has somehow mushroomed. Apart from all the situations, teachers, in the end, will be not only teaching instructors but also as substitute parents during school time. As teachers, they are required to employ teaching practices that can adequately booster children's cognitions along with SLA. In the setting of kindergarten, children are usually exposed more to a second language by teachers as they are especially occupied with not only pedagogical knowledge but also the second language itself (Johnson, 2004). In addition, there are numerous activities that teachers can execute from the sources available such as school curriculums, teachers' creativity, and other resources as their teaching practices to support early second language acquisition.

The idea of conducting this research is to find out how parent-teacher practices can essentially impact on SLA of young learners especially at three-six years of age because some studies only focus on either teachers' or parents' perspectives. Besides, this research intends to see how teachers' and parents' practices are related to each other from their point of view on early second language acquisition. In addition, the endowment of this study is intended for the field of English language teaching and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Eventually, this research is expected to provide

ideas on how to enhance young learners' second language acquisition by looking at two different points of view, especially in the Indonesian context. Therefore, parents and teachers can benefit from each other by sharing their own experiences, and the research findings can create new insights for children's stakeholders, readers, and future researchers. Regarding the phenomena mentioned, this researcher is interested in researching to investigate the parent-teacher practices to support early second language acquisition.

1. Theory of Second Language Acquisition

The theory of SLA has been favorably discussed in several fields as the process of SLA itself may be derived from across disciplines of social science not only in linguistics but also applied linguistic, psycholinguistic, and language education (Chen, 2018). However, regarding the definition stated in various research and books, Miller (2017) mentioned that the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) is always attached to the discussion of SLA. Furthermore, one of the most well-known theories of SLA was delivered by Krashen (1981) as cited in Brown (2004) so-called main hypotheses:

- a. The acquisition-learning hypothesis: This hypothesis lies in two different systems of a second language. The acquisition is the language constructive process occurring subconsciously for example from a natural environment such as school or home. Meanwhile, learning is done consciously through language instruction in class (Yacob & Yunus, 2019).
- b. The monitor hypothesis: it basically deals with learners' performance. The learning process is monitored with purposes such as seeing learners' progress and intending to improve if mistakes or errors are found.
- c. The Input hypothesis: learners acquire a language by understanding an input that contains a structure slightly above the current ability formulated with $(i + 1)$ where 'i' is the learner's current ability. Understanding the input in this hypothesis covers understanding the meaning of an utterance.
- d. The Natural order hypothesis: each individual tends to obtain a grammatical structure of a second language after a predictable natural order. Therefore, they are more likely to obtain certain grammatical structures before other people. The acquisition pattern is different between the first language and the second language. However, the pattern of acquiring it tends to be the same for both adults and children.
- e. The Affective hypothesis: People's emotions act as filters that help or hinder language acquisition. Someone who is highly motivated and confident with a low level of anxiety will be more successful than those with low motivation, low self-confidence, and a higher level of anxiety in acquiring a language. Besides, low motivation and confidence will hamper the process of subconscious acquisition.

2. Five Stages of Second Language Acquisition

Furthermore, some stages are also taken into account as an important part before children start to process their SLA. In accordance with it, Hayness (2017) claimed that there are five stages of language acquisition such as preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency. Firstly, Hayness (2017) declared preproduction as a silent period in which children do not use their oral skills to speak, but gradually absorb the language from other speakers such as 500 new vocabularies. In addition, this process is acknowledged as repeating or echoing languages. Early production is the second stage which usually allows learners to speak in short phrases between one or two words from their 1000 acquired vocabulary. Also, they can remember some pieces of words from the language despite facing some difficulties and errors when using it.

Thirdly, speech emergence is explained as learners can communicate with simple usage of sentences and ask with simple question sentences as well from the 3000 words that they have acquired. The fourth stage is intermediate fluency which learners have acquired 6000 words and been able to use them to communicate with more complex sentences. Besides, they can start sharing their thoughts and opinions, yet make some mistakes while forming complex sentences. Lastly, advanced fluency is usually achieved between five to ten years of learning a second language. Ellis (2003) added that at this stage, learners' ability is getting closer to sounding like a native speaker. Gömleksiz (2018) on the other hand, asserted that many factors affect SLA, yet she emphasized on motivation and age more.

3. Early Second Language Acquisition

In the acquisition and learning of a new language, there have been some predictors mentioned even conducted in research in addition to age. Bećirović and Hurić-Bećirović (2017) asserted that age is essentially represented as a factor of learners to attach their motivation and ability to succeed in the SLA. Both children and adults achieve two different elements of language children will master the acquisition level in phonetic rules, while adults are more into syntactic and semantic rules (Liu, 2018). Besides, most scholars shared the idea about the strong correlation between age and language learning in the explanation of a child's neurological maturity. Nevertheless, he also highlighted that only in the critical period of age can this effectively work; otherwise, it will not be as effortless as it was. Additionally, according to Marco (2000) as cited in Bećirović and Hurić-Bećirović (2017), two variables of factors impact children's language learning namely external factors (home and school) and internal factors (age, motivation, attitude, and cognition).

Furthermore, as the role of learning a foreign language has increasingly grown to be a long-term goal and privilege in the future, societies especially parents found this trend and ended up enrolling their children into a bilingual or international school at a very young age (Dahari & Ya,

2017). Therefore, the following question may arise: when is the best time for children to learn another new language apart from their L1? Ghasemi and Hashemi (2018) appealed that it has been concluded by experts that learning another language before 10 years of age grants the possibility for children to have native-like speaking ability. He also demonstrated that the sooner they are assigned, the better it will be. This is in line with Hardach (2018) who explained that babies are equipped with the ability to hear different sounds while toddlers can acquire accents of native fast. However, achieving children's language development will certainly need children's stakeholders such as parents and teachers to get involved (Spilt, Koomen, & Harrison, 2017).

4. Teachers' Practices

The main aim of learning especially in the 21st century is to create individual learning and support learners to be lifetime learners, active, and independent. Therefore, teachers are required to be their learning coaches to guide and encourage them to reach their goals in learning (Calvo, 2018). To reach its goals, here are the following practices supported by theory and literature.

a. Learning environment.

To succeed in the aims and objectives of learning, the environment is an unavoidable factor. Leu (2004) maintained that teachers are the promoters of creating a positive learning environment in terms of their subject matter knowledge, teaching time, effective classroom delivery, understanding of the implementation of the school curriculum and its purpose, flexibility of teaching approach, reflection, and feedback on their teaching-learning process. In addition, this is related to Lizio as cited in Farver, Lonigan, and Eppe (2017) that the definition of an effective learning environment consists of the teaching pedagogy, creating independent learners, having clear objectives and standards, and proper assessment and evaluation.

b. Student-centered learning.

The idea of applying this practice as a teaching method is to involve more students' participation than teachers. Student-centered learning puts teachers' position as facilitators to focus on students' interests, needs, abilities, and learning preferences (Larasati, 2018). Besides, the use of this teaching method is believed as an alternative to changing the traditional teaching styles, a teacher-centered approach. According to Calvo (2017), the application of student-centered learning in second language learning is one of the practical teaching methods to switch the traditional teaching that can encourage students to be more active and find their learning styles to understand grammar rules and engage themselves in speaking activity with their peers comfortably.

c. Language games

Another way that parents can apply for children to acquire language is through games. The sensation and feel of playing games are joyful and pleasure so those will remain as a memory that affects their cognition toward SLA. Games proposed for language learning hold benefits to foster learner SLA along with oral language skills as the atmosphere felt by learners is positive (Yacob & Yunus (2019)). Moreover, as it was previously affirmed by Krashen (1981) that language acquisition is achieved through interaction subconsciously. Consequently, Thirusanku and Yunus (2017) argued that language games involved two players or more, so that learners consciously practice their language skills to construct sentences with correct grammar freely through interaction. The situation of real life takes its role as a way for learners to enhance their SLA.

d. Parents' Practices

The role of parents toward their children's language development is undeniable as they are pointed as a fundamental communicative factor in as much as both children and parents will spend most of their time together. Yusup and Mansora (2018) stated that parents' support in the family environment is believed as a decisive factor in children's English learning.

e. Interaction.

Rumfola (2017) mentioned that parents are addressed as the primary person to engage and interact with their children. Hereinafter, interactions with a second language between parents and children are always campaigned as it is important to shape and foster children's language acquisition and literacy (Gömlüksiz, 2018). Vygotsky emphasized his beliefs about interaction in children's language acquisition. According to Vygotsky as cited in Brown (2002), social interaction presents a significant role in learning and leads to the process of Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) where children start formulating and constructing their new knowledge of the language through what is called social media interaction.

f. Home literacy environment

One of the practices which parents can implement to foster children's SLA is by introducing literacy as young as possible. From the statement mentioned, it is in accordance with Farver, Xu, Lonigan, and Eppe (2017) who stated that applying literacy in early childhood ought to be taken into consideration as its advantage in building children's language acquisitions such as vocabulary understanding, reading habits and comprehension, printed materials, and word spelling. Relating to parent-child interaction, the concrete example of home literacy that parents can do is the establishment of writing and reading activities. This is assured to insist on two positive results such as children's SLA and school readiness (Farver, Xu, Lonigan, & Eppe, 2017).

g. The use of video

The main purpose of encouraging children to involve in the learning process is to create enjoyment so that they can actively participate. This is slightly correlated to Gallacher (2003) that one of the objectives of introducing and teaching English to early childhood is to impart to them that learning a language is a pleasant experience leading them to consider learning as equal to play which can be obtained through video, forming interesting and attractive learning environment. Adapted from Gömleksiz (2018), three roles of videos are information provider of the language learning development such as linguistic competence, the enhancement of intercultural education to know how diversity can be connected through English, and the value of video art which can impress them and remain on their mind.

Method

This study aimed to find out about the practices performed by parents and teachers toward early SLA, phenomenology was applied as a qualitative research design. According to Creswell (2007), phenomenology describes the meaning of conscious individual experience about a concept or phenomenon. The study involved three English teachers and three parents. The criteria in determining the participants in which the teachers should be the ones teaching English classes to young learners from the age of 3-6. In addition, parents were selected as the participants whose children are also at the age of 3-6. The criteria were decided as the involvement of both with young learners is intense, so the perspectives shared were rich and deep. Pseudonyms were applied for confidential reasons; besides, to help the researcher order the category based on the research findings obtained namely Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3 as the teacher participant and Parent 1, Parent 2, and Parent 3 as the parent participants. According to Allen and Wiles (2016), a pseudonym is an unreal name that is often used by researchers or writers to personally keep participants' privacy. Henceforth, the consideration of choosing those participants is to see whether parent-teacher practices were related to early second language acquisition or not from the same children.

In addition, the instrument used in this research was an interview to collect the data. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) defined the interview as a flexible instrument for data collection, allowing multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken, and heard. Besides, the type of interview used in this study was standardized open-ended interviews because the researcher meant to reduce interviewers' bias and effect when doing the interview. Also, the researcher provided some lists of questions as a guideline for conducting the interview. After conducting the interview, the data analysis was continued by transcribing the data, doing member checking by sending the transcribed data to the participants, validating them to ensure their

trustworthiness, and coding the text. Furthermore, the researcher employed four types of coding, namely open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to analyze the data of this research adapted from Cohen, Manion, and Morison (2011). In addition, Cresswell (2012) stated that the process of coding is to create and categorize texts to have detailed themes. Eventually, all the coded data will be reported by explaining them in paragraphs.

Discussion

In this part, the researcher reported the findings based on the data analysis and the discussions of the research results. The research findings showed the data obtained from the analysis results to see early second language acquisition through parent-teacher practices. After completing the data analysis by coding, several themes emerged such as language exposure, language accuracy, encouragement of parent-child interaction, fun learning to foster motivation of language learning, realia teaching aid, reward presentation, and the use of video. Furthermore, several studies have already been conducted concerning the early second language acquisition context. Farver, Xu, Lonigan, and Eppe (2017), Bingham, Jeon, Kwon, and Lim (2017), and Derakhshan, Khalili, and Beheshti (2017) have already carried out studies on investigating certain aspects of the early second language acquisition perceived by teachers and parents. Based on the summary results of those studies, teachers emphasized the importance of appropriate methodology and techniques which were in accordance with the early second language acquisition context. The results of previous studies included providing language sources: vocabulary understanding, reading habit and comprehension, printed materials, word spelling, concrete examples of home literacy, ensuring language accuracy towards broadened language understanding, and applying multimedia learning tools and audio to form an interesting and attractive learning environment. Likewise, focusing activities on these topics allowed for plenty of creativity in the lesson plans in the teaching-learning intercourse in the early second language acquisition. Furthermore, most of the previous studies have been undertaken at different elementary schools which will be a gap to conduct the current research at early schools. For this reason, no research has been carried out on early second language acquisition through parent-teacher practices specifically before. Following this, the previous studies have focused on investigating challenges and strategies of early second language acquisition while this current study aims at exploring early second language acquisition through parent-teacher practices which could fill the study gap as well. Therefore, each research result is explained in the following paragraphs briefly.

1. Providing Language Sources

The first research result of early second language acquisition through parents' and teachers' practices was language exposure. Teacher 1 said that as the class was also assisted by teaching

assistances in which they could speak in their first language, it is necessary to fully speak in English as one of the teaching practices.

“The teaching assistant normally helps to explain in Bahasa Indonesia if in some cases, they do not really understand. However, for me, I always use English in my class, so that some of them who speak fully in Bahasa Indonesia will later follow what I said in English although in simple instruction”

In addition, Parent 3 asserted that to allow children to learn new languages, it is essential to provide them with sources of the language learned such as home literary activities.

“As I might not have much time to prepare the materials for my child to learn English, I usually buy some English books that fit to my child’s age. When I am free from work, I can use the books as the source to study together with my child” (Parent 3).

Farver, Xu, Lonigan, and Eppe (2017) stated that applying literacy in early childhood ought to be taken into consideration as its advantage in building children’s language acquisition such as vocabulary understanding, reading habits and comprehension, printed materials, and word spelling. The concrete example of home literacy that parents can do is the establishment of writing and reading activities. This is assured to insist on two positive results such as children's SLA and school readiness (Farver, Xu, Lonigan, & Eppe, 2017).

2. Ensuring Language Accuracy

In this second finding, always ensuring the language correctness spoken and/or taught was also mentioned by both teacher and parent. Teacher 1 stated that it is necessary as a teacher to pay attention to this aspect as this will remain for a long period of their life.

“For example, in the pronunciation context, I do not want to pronounce the words incorrectly like instead of saying 'kyōo,kəmbər, and I spelt Kakamər. I am afraid of spelling the words incorrectly which will fossilize on the students’ head and remain a mistake. Therefore, as I am not a native speaker of English, so I have to check some words in dictionary if I have a doubt” (Teacher 1).

Besides, Parent 2 shared a similar opinion that parents need to check language accuracy to assist children to learn English. As it is not their first language, creating errors in terms of pronouncing or writing is also possible.

“As we are not a native speaker of English, we can make mistake in saying or writing the words. I would recommend all parents who are not fluent in English to prepare this, so children can receive the information accurately” (Teacher 2).

This was in line with Derakhshan, Khalili, and Beheshti (2017) who asserted that language accuracy comes as a vital teaching component of a second or foreign language for most language educators to be equipped with since it can encourage and fossilize the language learners to imitate correct pronunciation in language learning. Thereupon, every language educator should have broadened language understanding, especially in language accuracy to prevent incorrect pronunciation of the English words in the language learning intercourse.

3. Conducting Parent-child Interaction

Both teacher and parent agree on the encouragement of interaction between parents and children. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 shared the same practices of supporting parents to have an interaction with their children by inserting simple features of English in the conversation.

“For the parents, when they pick up their children, I usually talk to them whose children still look confused with the interaction and communication during the class, to try using simple instructions in English for example to tidy up their toys “could you please tidy up your toys?” That is what I usually talk to some parents” (Teacher 1)

“If the children have learnt about fruits, their mothers can practice with them at home. If they want fruit, the parents should not use Indonesian language. Parents can mix it; I think that it is ok. If they want to say “Mangga”, switch the language into English and say mango” (Teacher 2)

Likewise, Parent 2 highlighted the same practice due to the amount of time spent between parents and children being more than teachers and children.

“My child’s learning time at school will last for several hours only, and for the rest of the day it will be with me as the parents. As I want to improve my child’s English, one of the ways I normally do is to interact with them by having a conversation in English, doing story telling or reading English story book” (Parent 2).

The finding of this study was in line with Bingham, Jeon, Kwon, and Lim (2017) who explained that interactions with a second language between parents and children are always campaigned as important to shaping and fostering children’s language acquisition and literacy. Besides, Vygotsky as cited in Brown (2004) added that social interaction presents a significant role in learning and leads to the process of Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) where the children start formulating and constructing their new knowledge of the language through what is called social media interaction. Hence, early second language acquisition could be obtained from the encouragement of parent-child interaction in the process of the language learning process.

4. Applying Multimedia Learning Tools

The researcher obtained the activities administered by parents and teachers to foster children's motivation in second language learning. All teacher participants believed that it could be achieved by creating a pleasant environment for children such as inserting interactive multimedia learning tools, e.g., audio and video.

"If parents might be thinking that video can help children learn better from school to acquire their vocabulary, they can also do it. There are many videos on YouTube teaching about phonics and alphabet songs. Mothers can play the alphabet song, and children can learn unconsciously. It is called as facilitating children to learn or use the concept of English learning by the simple way such as video" (Teacher 1).

"Sometimes, I usually use a video to attach their attention and support their understanding as children prefer visual as their learning style. So yeah, it also helps me using a video. The reason I chose it because children can't be taught or introduced only once, and they get it. They need the aids such as visual, audio, and songs or even dance if possible" (Teacher 2).

"For some children who have less fluency of English, but they still want to mix the language, I usually motivate them by initiating a conversation, and sometimes, I ask them to sing "who wants to sing a song?" and sing a nursery rhyme together" (Teacher 3).

This opinion was also supported by Parent 2 who claimed that children learning a second language is the same as introducing them to something new, so it should be conducted with an interesting technique such as animation videos and songs.

"The way children learn is different than adults. We need to impress them first with something that is close to their world. In this era, it is all about digital. I would say to allow them learn second language enthusiastically, use cartoon or animation videos and songs" (Parent 2).

These findings were correlated to Gallacher (2003) emphasizing the importance of video and audio for teaching English in early childhood and relevant to Gömleksiz (2018) who mentioned the prominent roles of video and audio in language learning development.

5. Employing Teaching Aids

Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 revealed that they used various teaching aids in assisting children to learn a second language. The use of flashcards or puppets was uttered by both teachers as the aim is also to introduce the language concept to children so that children can feel the real experience of their learning.

"I also use flashcards or puppets if for example, I aim to introduce greetings like "Hello, how are you?" or I intends to teach fruits or hobby, I use flashcard. For example, of flashcard, I put

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them in order to ask the children jump and step on it to find some words I mention like orange or apple. This technique also intends to introduce the concept of language they learn to be more real” (Teacher 3).

“I want my students in class to experience excitement. Especially when it comes to learning second language, they need to learn things in concrete like they can see and feel it. In this case, I use flashcards and other objects in class” (Teacher 2).

It was in line with Kiatkheeree (2018) who stated that the definition of an effective learning environment consists of teaching pedagogy, creating independent learners, having clear objectives and standards, and proper assessment and evaluation. Accordingly, the majority of language teachers should consider that realia came as a teaching aid to help them deliver the material topic of language usage to their students in the teaching and learning context.

6. Presenting Reward

Lastly, Teacher 2 mentioned rewarding the children when expected learning goals are reached. The form of reward in this practice is not merely on a concrete object. It can be in the form of praise or sticker.

“I think a simple reward means everything for them, so I have always tried to give them reward by giving them stars on the board or high-five/ten whenever they did something great. Even when it is simply just following teachers’ moves when dancing, I will still give them that reward. Then, at the end of the class, I allow well-behaved students to pick one sticker which they like just to make them feel appreciated” (Teacher 2).

Rumfola (2017) explained that students learn through the social cues of their teachers as to what constitutes acceptable behavior. For example, if one student is praised for the desired behavior, other students also learn that this behavior is acceptable which results to more praise. Henceforth, giving rewards to children could be one of the effective teaching practices in the context of language learning as they might feel appreciated.

Conclusion

Acquiring a second language as early as possible is believed as one of the effective ways to be established by parents and teachers. Besides, most parents expect that enrolling their children in school at a very young age allows more time and the possibility to learn the language. There are various factors to consider supporting children in learning a second language at an early age. Parents and teachers are the closest two agents of change for children so that they can encourage children effectively through their practices. Hence, this research presented several findings which eventually resulted in the practices by both parents and teachers, namely providing language

sources, ensuring language accuracy, conducting parent-child interaction, applying multimedia learning tools, employing teaching aids, and presenting rewards.

The endowment of this study is presented to the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), yet it focused more on the perspectives of parents and teachers about children as young learners. Apart from the widespread beliefs of various scholars about whether a second language is learned or acquired, this study is solely intended to provide more insights to children's stakeholders about parent-teacher practices to enhance children's SLA. Moreover, as this study selected English as the second language, this could be more beneficial for non-English speaking communities to see how the practices were applied. Eventually, it was expected that the results might add more recommendations, especially for other parents and teachers as these two are indicated to collaborate with each other especially when it deals with children learning both in schools and at home. However, due to the limited time of this research, this becomes the limitation of the study which the researchers were not able to gain in-depth information dealing with early second language acquisition through parent-teacher practices by utilizing questionnaires to enrich the research findings.

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