

## Acquiring English Vocabulary at Children Aged 9-11 Years Old During Covid-19 Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

Covid19 pandemic has changed the education system. Almost all educational institutions reduced face-to-face learning and applied online learning. The Indonesian government supports this system by providing internet credit subsidies to students and teachers. It triggers students to often use gadgets such as learning, playing online games, or browsing internet sites. One of the impacts of this pandemic period is the process of English Language Acquisition in children. The purpose of this study was to determine the process of acquiring English vocabulary and kinds of English vocabulary in children aged around 9-11 years. The researchers applied a descriptive qualitative study by involving three participants aged 9,10,11 years old. To get more valid data, researchers observed participant activities, especially how their English vocabulary was obtained and the English vocabulary was what they produced. In addition to deepening data, researchers also conducted semi-structural interviews with participants. Interviews were also carried out to determine the extent to which they understood the English vocabulary they produced. The results showed that there were several ways children to obtain English vocabulary during Covid 19 pandemic, imitating someone's words, hearing or reading from online games, listening to music, watching television, and reading vocabulary on food wrap. The types of English vocabulary they get are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. It can be concluded that children acquired English vocabularies during the Covid 19 pandemic which is one of the consequences of the use of gadgets that must be for learning activities. However, some English vocabularies are still taboo for them. The results of this study are expected to increase parents' awareness in overseeing the use of gadgets for children because not all English vocabulary they get is by Indonesian culture.

*Keywords: Language acquisition; children aged around 9-11 years; English Vocabulary; Covid 19 Pandemics*

### ABSTRAK

*Pandemi Covid19 telah mengubah sistem pendidikan. Hampir semua lembaga pendidikan mengurangi pembelajaran tatap muka dan menerapkan pembelajaran online. Pemerintah Indonesia mendukung sistem ini dengan memberikan subsidi pulsa internet kepada siswa dan guru. Hal tersebut memicu siswa untuk sering menggunakan gadget seperti belajar, bermain game online, atau browsing situs internet. Salah satu dampak dari masa pandemi ini adalah proses Pemerolehan Bahasa Inggris pada anak. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui proses perolehan kosakata bahasa Inggris dan jenis-jenis kosakata bahasa Inggris pada anak usia sekitar 9-11 tahun. Peneliti menerapkan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan tiga partisipan berusia 9,10,11 tahun. Untuk mendapatkan data yang lebih valid, peneliti mengamati aktivitas partisipan, terutama bagaimana kosakata bahasa Inggris mereka diperoleh dan kosakata bahasa Inggris apa yang mereka hasilkan. Selain pendalaman data, peneliti juga melakukan wawancara semi struktural kepada partisipan. Wawancara juga dilakukan untuk mengetahui sejauh mana mereka memahami kosakata bahasa Inggris yang mereka hasilkan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada beberapa cara anak untuk memperoleh kosakata bahasa Inggris selama pandemi Covid 19, meniru kata-kata seseorang, mendengar atau membaca dari game online, mendengarkan musik, menonton televisi, dan membaca kosakata pada bungkus makanan. Jenis kosakata bahasa Inggris yang mereka dapatkan adalah kata benda, kata kerja, kata sifat, dan kata keterangan. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa anak-anak memperoleh kosakata bahasa Inggris selama pandemi Covid 19 yang merupakan salah satu konsekuensi dari penggunaan gadget yang harus untuk kegiatan belajar. Namun, ada beberapa kosakata bahasa Inggris yang masih tabu bagi mereka. Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan dapat meningkatkan kesadaran orang tua dalam mengawasi penggunaan gadget pada anak karena tidak semua kosakata bahasa Inggris yang mereka dapatkan sesuai dengan budaya Indonesia.*

*Kata kunci: pemerolehan bahasa; anak-anak berusia sekitar 9-11 tahun; Kosakata bahasa Inggris; Pandemi Covid 19*

## INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the media used by humans to express what they feel, including to communicate with other people. According to Prasasti (2016: 3) language is the identity of a country as a means of communication. Everyone needs language when interacting, expressing ideas and opinions, and other social relationships. Humans need language as a means of social interaction, whether it is using the first or second language. Language is the first thing produced by children since they were born, that is why the relation between children and language is very close. One of the studies dealing with how language can be acquired is called Language Acquisition. Language Acquisition is the study that accounts for the child's language development in a natural setting. It refers to the children's development of language comprehension and production (Paivio and Beg, 1981: 213-252).

After obtaining the first language naturally, a child can also get a second language either consciously or not. That language is acquired by children in stages based on brain development and the context of learning (Arung: 2016). A child can naturally get a second language by using a smartphone, watching TV, imitating someone, seeing the vocabulary around them, and so on. On the other hand, children formally can obtain a second language vocabulary by studying the second language in formal education institutions, such as in elementary schools, junior high schools, high school, and later at the university.

Children at the age of 9-11 years are categorized as elementary school students which at that time the brains of children are still growing very rapidly. It can be seen in a natural context where children can easily and quickly get and stimulate new things around them. Children are easily affected by what they see, what they hear, what people around them do, and so on. In other words, the environment around them is an important thing that can build abilities in the acquisition, for example in obtaining English vocabulary.

Children's language is interesting to be observed because it has its own and unique system. How Children aged 8-11 years learn foreign languages from their environment and make analysis, then they try to pronounce and step by step their language development. Another interesting thing is that children will force themselves to keep them remembering it. The researchers see the phenomenon in the village environment of Sungai Deras. There was a child aged ten years. In his daily activity, he inserts at least one English vocabulary in his conversations. As it is known, the Sungai Deras Village is a village located in Rokan Hulu district, where the majority of the people speak local languages. Children in Sungai Deras village are very happy to play and chat with their friends, they like to say the things they just got, like when they finish playing games on their smartphones. Some examples of conversations that researchers have quoted from previous observations of the child are as follows:

*“Child: bang, bahasa Inggris nya senjata, weapon kan?”*

*The researcher: Kamu tau dari mana?”*

*Child: aku tau dari game free fire bang.”*

From the conversation above, it can be seen that the child used the English words weapon and game free fire. The child acquired the English vocabulary from their environment. The phenomenon of inserting English vocabularies during conversations by children aged 9-11 years who are estimated to be in grades 3, 4 and, 5 is interesting to be studied. It is caused since 2019, the Ministry of Education decided that English at the elementary level has been eliminated. Consequently, elementary school students cannot learn basic English in Elementary school. It means in a formal context; the children do not learn English vocabulary at that age. Although there are no English lessons in elementary schools, based on researchers' observation, some children aged 9-11 years use some English vocabularies while they are talking in Indonesian or local languages in their everyday life.

There were some previous researches related or relevant to language acquisition towards children. Indrawati (2013) in her research, "Language Acquisition by the Children (A case study of early child language acquisition aged 2-3 years old)". The findings showed that the psychological effects of children and their mothers, their family members & the people around the children affect the children's language acquisition, both in terms of phonology and mastery of vocabulary. Another research was conducted by Isnawati (2009) with the title "The Application of Learning Styles in Second Language Acquisition at the Second Semester Students of English Literature Department of Adab and Humanity Faculty of Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar." She found that auditory, visual, and tactile types of learners had differences in learning styles. The implication of the research of learning styles is likely to influence how the students respond and benefit from a given instructional program. From the two previous findings above, the researcher assumes that both of them have similarities with this research who also observed language acquisition. However, there are some differences such as the age of participants and the aims of the research. This research tried to find the processes of English vocabulary acquisition of an 8-11 years old child and the types of English vocabulary mostly acquired.

Children have their way of acquiring language, especially in acquiring English as a foreign language. Their English acquisition process can be influenced by many aspects. Based on this fact, the researchers formulated the research questions namely how do children acquire the English vocabulary? And what kinds of English vocabulary that they acquire?

## METHODOLOGY

To answer research questions, researchers used qualitative descriptive research methods. Descriptive qualitative research is used in this research because the researcher tries to produce descriptive data, factual, and accurate about the real and the existence of the process of language acquisition. According to Best and Khan (2006: 12), descriptive research is also non-experimental research or correlation research, or theories that have universal validity; it is concerned with functional relationships. This research is more also known as the term of naturalistic inquiry (is research that does not make counting with numerals), that gives images about the condition factually and systematically. This method was used together with the psycholinguistic perspective in looking for the case of the language acquisition process of the students in learning English.

In deciding the participants, the researchers selected three participants. Patton (1990) explains that there are no rules regarding the number of respondents in qualitative research. The number depends on what the researcher wants to know, such as the purpose of the study, what is useful, what has credibility, and what can be done with time and resources which are available. To comply with research ethics, the name of the participant is disguised using the initial name. They are TR, MN, and RZ.

In retrieving data, researchers did several ways such as observation, fieldnote, recording, and interviews. Observation is a data collection technique by observing research subjects. This observation is carried out at an early stage in the analysis of the need for the acquisition of English vocabulary. Observations were made by looking at the daily activities of the children, how the children acquire English vocabulary. Researchers followed every child's activity from morning to afternoon in their environment, the distance between the location of the child and the researcher was very close, making it easier for researchers to observe. Researchers also invited them to play and watch to stimulate their acquisition of English vocabulary. During the observation, the researcher also wrote and recorded the vocabulary that the children acquired.

Moreover, researchers also interviewed the participants. It was to explore the data that the researchers found during observation. It also clarifies the data related to what forms of vocabulary the participants acquired. By interviewing the participants, the researchers also want to know how they could acquire English vocabulary in their environment. After collecting the data, the researchers analyzed the data. The researchers identified the form of English vocabulary acquired by children aged 9-11 years old. After that, the researchers described how children aged 9-11 years can acquire English vocabulary in a non-English speaking environment.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collected through observation, field notes, recording, and interviews with the participants, the researchers presented the result of the research. It is described into two subheadings including the description of the way of children in acquiring the English vocabulary and a description of the kinds of English vocabulary those participants acquired.

### The process of acquiring English vocabulary.

The process of acquiring English vocabulary focuses on children aged 9-11 years who acquire English vocabulary, not through the learning process at school but focus on acquisition through their daily activities in their environment. Researchers found several ways for participants to acquire English vocabulary, including the following:

Table 1. The ways of acquiring English vocabulary

No	The ways of acquiring English vocabulary
1.	Imitating someone's words
2.	Hearing or reading from online games
3.	Listening to the Music
4.	Watching the TV
5.	Reading vocabulary on the food wrap

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the processes of acquiring English vocabulary were various. The process of acquiring English vocabulary is the first, namely through imitation of someone's words. Based on the observations, the researchers heard English vocabularies were acquired by imitating from someone's speech that they heard. For example, TR said to his friends that he was **handsome** after he heard someone said the word **handsome**. The behavior of children in imitating someone's speech was in line with Skinner's (2013: 1) argument that children acquire language by imitating other people's speech. When a child succeeds in producing words and those words receive praise and encouragement, then they will be motivated to repeat them. This reinforcement helps the child's use of language and encourages development.

The second process of acquiring English vocabulary was through playing online Games. Online games usually can be played by many people. The participants also like to play online game such as FREE FIRE. They used to insert the English vocabulary found in that game while doing dialogue to someone. For example, when MN said "*Aku nanti ganti **weapon** biar menang*" while talking to his friends. MN inserted the word **weapon** that he heard or read during playing the "Free Fire game". Moreover, the participants said that there are many English words that they read or heard. When they were asked the meaning of words they heard or read, commonly they knew what the words meant although they were not exactly sure.

The third process of acquiring English vocabulary is through listening to Music. Right now, people can easily listen to the music through a smartphone. The three participants also have ever listened to music from smartphones including English songs. One of the English songs that was popular for them was “Baby shark”. During observation, the researcher often heard the participants sang the “Baby shark song”. Although they did not pronounce the lyrics clearly, they knew the meaning of lyric song into Bahasa Indonesia.

The next process of acquiring vocabulary is through watching on the television. It is not surprising that children enjoy watching television, as did by the three participants. They are very happy watching television. During Covid19 Pandemic, the frequency of watching TV was higher than before. From the data collected, the participants also acquired English vocabulary through watching television. For example, the words **fish** and **crab** that they got through watching the Sponge Bob cartoon film. (Hasram et al., 2020) argue that online games are able to gain attention and interest in vocabulary learning. The increasing rise of interest in online games in learning is due to its conceptualization as an enjoyable factor in language learning.

This result is in line with the statement of Warschauer and Healey (1998, as cited in Sørensen & Meyer, 2007); They said that games have often been utilized to increase motivation and authentic communicative practices, since games have been conceptualized as an enjoyment factor in language learning.

The last process of acquiring vocabulary is through reading food wrap. For example, TR acquired English vocabulary by reading English words written in the food wrap that he bought. He said “*Bang beli snack bang*” to someone. However, when the researchers asked him to spell the word **snack** TR cannot write it appropriately.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that during the covid19 pandemic where students mostly spent their time at home, the participants acquired English vocabularies by five ways namely imitating someone's words, hearing or reading from online games, listening to music, watching television, and reading vocabulary on food wrap.

### Kinds of vocabulary that the participants acquire

After the researchers collected English vocabulary acquired by the participants, the researchers grouped the English vocabulary into a table based on the word categories. The following table is an accumulation of English vocabulary types acquired by participants.

Table 2. The Acquired English Vocabulary

The way of Word Acquisition	Kinds of English Vocabulary			
	Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
<b>Imitating someone's words</b>	- handphone	- go	- okey	- home
	- pig	- thank you	- yes	
	- dog		- good	
	- friend		- handsome	
	- you		- no	
	- me		- smart	
	- headset		- stupid	
	- school			
<b>Hearing or reading from online games</b>	- game	- start	- dead	- please
	- weapon	- lose	- online	
	- headshot	- win		
	- skin	- play		
	- lord	- kill		
	- blood	- open		

	- free fire	- Knock
	- gun	
	- armour	
	- player	
<b>Listening to the Music</b>	- baby shark	
	- super hero	
<b>Watching the TV</b>	- apple	
	- fish	
	- power	
	- queen	
	- king	
	- crab	
	- shark	
<b>Reading vocabulary on the food wrap</b>	- snack	
	- milk	
	- corn	
	- food	
	- cow	

The table above shows that there are five categories of English words acquired by three participants, namely: Noun, Verb, Adjective, and Adverb. Moreover, it also shows how the English vocabulary is acquired by children during the Covid19 pandemic. First, viewed from the word categories, nouns are the types of words most acquired by children. Second, viewed from how children acquired English vocabulary, most children acquire English vocabulary through playing online games. It can be concluded that games online can increase children's English vocabulary. However, the parents also need to control them to avoid them acquiring inappropriate words.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Regarding the findings of this research, there are two main points related to the English language acquisition at aged 9-11 years old during Covid19 Pandemic that can be summarized based on the problem statements such as the processes of acquiring English vocabulary by children at aged 9-11 years were various, namely imitating someone's words, hearing or reading from online games, listening to music, watching television, and reading vocabulary on food wrap and there are five categories of English words acquired by three participants, namely: Noun, Verb, Adjective and Adverb. Furthermore, it demonstrates how youngsters acquire the English language during the Covid19 pandemic. Considered from the word categories, nouns are the kinds of words most learned by youngsters. Second, when it comes to how children learn English vocabulary, the majority of children learn English vocabulary by playing online games. It may be stated that playing online games can help youngsters improve their English vocabulary. However, parents must maintain control over their children in order to prevent them from learning inappropriate words.

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