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# Language Acquisition among Early Childhood Diaspora: The Role of Indonesian in Malaysia's Kepong Guidance Studio

Vera Putri Meytasharoh<sup>1</sup>, Ida Yeni Rahmawati<sup>2</sup>, Hadi Cahyono<sup>3</sup>, Ikhwan Fauzi Nasution<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo, Indonesia, <sup>4</sup> Sanggar Bimbingan Kepong, Malaysia

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## Correspondence to

Vera Putri Meytasharoh,  
Early Childhood Education,  
Universitas Muhammadiyah  
Ponorogo, Indonesia.

## e-mail:

[veraputri16@gmail.com](mailto:veraputri16@gmail.com)

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## Abstract

This study investigates the acquisition and development of Indonesian as a second language among early childhood learners within the Indonesian diaspora at the Kepong Guidance Studio in Malaysia. Utilizing a qualitative case study methodology, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving 21 children aged 4-6 years, their educators, and the principal. Despite the structured Indonesian curriculum, findings revealed that the dominant use of Malay significantly influences language development. Teaching strategies incorporating traditional Indonesian games and songs were found to be effective in enhancing language acquisition. Observational data indicated that 60% of children aged 4-5 years showed significant development in understanding and using Indonesian, while 87.5% of children aged 5-6 years exhibited strong repetition and communication skills in Indonesian. However, challenges included inconsistent language usage and the influence of the children's first language, Malay. The study underscores the necessity of tailored educational strategies that address individual learning needs and emphasize active parental involvement to reinforce language skills acquired in educational settings. Triangulation ensured data reliability and validity, though the small sample size and context-specific nature limit the generalizability of the findings. These results highlight the importance of inclusive and adaptive learning environments that cater to the linguistic and cultural needs of diaspora children. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of these educational strategies on language proficiency and cultural identity, with a broader scope and larger sample sizes to enhance understanding and support effective educational policies and practices for diaspora communities globally.

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## Introduction

The phenomenon of language acquisition and preservation among diaspora communities is an area of growing interest and significance in a globalized world. These communities maintain their cultural and linguistic ties to their countries of origin while adapting to new sociocultural environments. This is particularly evident in the Indonesian diaspora, whose children often grow up speaking a mix of their heritage language and the language of their host country (Axel, 2004; Singh & Koiri, 2018). The early childhood phase is critical for language development, which forms the foundation for cognitive, social, and academic skills (Fadillah et al., 2014; Nurasyiah & Atikah, 2023). However, diaspora children, such as those in the Kepong Muhammadiyah Special Branch (PRIM) community, face unique challenges in accessing formal education and maintaining their native language, making it essential to understand and support their language acquisition processes (Sunanih, 2017).

Previous studies have highlighted the complexities of language acquisition among bilingual and multilingual children. For instance, the presence of multiple languages in a child's environment can influence vocabulary size and grammatical development (O'Toole et al., 2017;

Quinto et al., 2021; Salomé et al., 2024). Additionally, the quality and quantity of language exposure, as well as the educational status of parents, play crucial roles in shaping linguistic outcomes (Finnman et al., 2021; Saeed et al., 2024). Research has shown that children's engagement in language learning activities and their interactions with responsive adults are pivotal for effective language acquisition (Lucas, 2023; To et al., 2022). These findings underline the importance of providing structured and supportive learning environments for diaspora children.

Despite the insights gained from these studies, there remain significant gaps in understanding how diaspora children acquire and use their heritage language alongside the dominant language of their host country. For instance, the acquisition of Indonesian as a second language among diaspora children in Malaysia is not well-documented. Studies on bilingualism often focus on major world languages and overlook smaller linguistic communities, which results in a limited understanding of the unique challenges faced by these groups (Betti, 2021; Ellis, 2003). Moreover, the specific educational practices and policies that effectively support bilingual or multilingual development in such contexts are under-researched (Finnman et al., 2024).

The existing literature on second language acquisition (SLA) provides a theoretical framework for understanding how children learn additional languages. Chomsky's theory of an innate language faculty suggests that children have a natural ability to acquire language, which can be activated through exposure and interaction (Dardjowidjojo, 2005). However, the practical application of these theories to real-world settings, particularly in diaspora communities, requires further empirical investigation. Studies have shown that early exposure to a second language can lead to proficiency levels comparable to native speakers, especially if supported by a conducive learning environment (Bdeir et al., 2022; Datta et al., 2020). The role of early childhood education programs in facilitating language acquisition is therefore critical (Goodrich et al., 2016; Kapalková et al., 2016).

There is also a need to address the socio-cultural dimensions of language learning among diaspora children. Language is not only a means of communication but also a symbol of cultural identity and social belonging (Alwi, 2021; Arnianti, 2019). For Indonesian diaspora children, learning their heritage language helps maintain cultural connections and fosters a sense of community (Rahmawati et al., 2023). However, this process can be complicated by the lack of structured educational support and the challenges posed by living in a multilingual environment (Alipour et al., 2023; Cheong et al., 2018). The interplay between maintaining a heritage language and acquiring the language of the host country requires careful consideration of both linguistic and cultural factors.

Given these complexities, the current study aims to fill the gaps in the literature by investigating the acquisition and use of Indonesian as a second language among the early childhood diaspora in Malaysia. The study will explore how these children develop bilingual proficiency and the impact of their linguistic environment on their language development. By examining the educational practices at the Kepong Guidance Studio and analyzing the children's language use, this research seeks to provide insights into effective strategies for supporting bilingual education in diaspora communities. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader field of second language acquisition and inform policy and practice in multicultural educational settings.

The primary objective of this research is to identify the patterns of Indonesian language acquisition among the early childhood diaspora. By focusing on the Kepong Guidance Studio, this study aims to understand the specific challenges and successes in teaching Indonesian as a second language to young children in a diaspora context. The research will not only contribute to the academic understanding of language acquisition in multilingual environments but also provide practical recommendations for educators and policymakers. Ultimately, this study hopes to enhance educational practices and support the cultural and linguistic identity of

diaspora children, ensuring they have the necessary tools to thrive both linguistically and culturally.

**Methods**

This study employed a qualitative research design (Moleong, 2017), utilizing Robert K. Yin's case study methodology to understand how the Indonesian language is acquired, used, and developed among early childhood learners within the diaspora context (Nur'aini, 2020). The qualitative descriptive approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of language development phenomena through detailed descriptions and visual data representations. The research was conducted at the Kepong Malaysia Guidance Studio, involving a purposive sample of 21 Indonesian children aged 4-6 years, comprising 13 females and 8 males. Key informants included the principal, Mr. Ikhwan Fauzi Nasution, and educators Mrs. Salimah, Mrs. Nurul, and Mrs. Nadya, as well as Mrs. Salimah's manager.

Table 1. Interview grid

No.	Asked about aspect	Indicator
1.	Curriculum	a. The curriculum used by the cocoon guidance studio b. Curriculum content
2.	Language learning strategies	Indonesian learning strategies at Kepong Guidance Studio
3.	Learning materials	The theme of the material delivered to children every day

Data collection methods incorporated interviews, observations, and documentation. An interview grid (Table 1) was developed to explore curriculum details, language learning strategies, and daily learning materials used at the studio. The curriculum served as a framework for appropriate learning activities, while the language learning strategies aimed to facilitate Indonesian language acquisition among students, who primarily speak Malay (B1 level). Observation grids (Table 2) were utilized to evaluate children's language comprehension and usage capabilities, categorized by age group (4-5 years and 5-6 years). Primary data were collected through participatory observations at the studio on specified dates in February 2023, and interviews conducted with managers, the principal, and teachers on separate dates within the same month. Secondary data were sourced from relevant literature, including books and journal articles.

Table 2. Observation grid

Age	Observation
4-5 years	Children can understand the words of others who use Indonesian.
	Children understand 2 commands spoken by educators using Indonesian.
	Children can imitate 3-4 sequences of Indonesian words correctly.
	Children can sing using Indonesian
5-6 years	Children can name objects in the surrounding environment using Indonesian
	The child can repeat Indonesian sentences that he has heard.
	Children can question and answer and communicate with educators using Indonesian.
	Children can make sentences from 3-5 syllables using Indonesian.
	Children can tell stories about themselves using Indonesian.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's model (Figure 1), encompassing data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, A. Michael, Saldana, 2018). Data were systematically encoded, categorized, and narrated to provide meaningful insights. To ensure data reliability and validity, triangulation was employed, involving cross-verification from multiple sources (Moleong, 2017). This included repeated processes and consistency checks to authenticate findings. Triangulation was integral in

validating the data through thorough examination and testing, reinforcing the robustness of the study's outcomes (Hikmawati, 2020; Sugiyono, 2017).

## Result

### 3.1. Indonesian as a Second Language in Early Childhood Diaspora

Based on the results of interviews with three informants and observations, the following data were obtained. Firstly, regarding the learning place of diaspora children and student data. The students at Sanggar Bimbingan Kepong do not have state documents. Muhammadiyah, together with the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, established a guidance center for diaspora children. The center is located at Pelangi Magna Blok A, Jalan Prima 3, Kepong, Kuala Lumpur. The studio was inaugurated to provide education to diaspora children who do not have access to formal education in the country where they reside.

Observations revealed that the use of the Indonesian language among diaspora children is still often mixed with Malay. This is because Malay is the first language of diaspora children and thus remains dominant in its usage. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to consistently speak Indonesian correctly during classroom learning. This policy is reinforced by the head of the Kepong guidance studio, Mr. Ikhwan Fauzi Nasution, who mandates that all students communicate in Indonesian when at the guidance center. This rule applies to all components within the studio, including teachers and managers. Despite being in Malaysia, the studio maintains the use of Indonesian as a strength and a second language learning center for diaspora children.

In addition to providing formal education, educators at the studio also introduce language through play activities. This makes the studio an educational forum that not only focuses on academic aspects but also on developing the national identity of diaspora children. For instance, play activities such as traditional Indonesian games and children's songs are part of the teaching methods used. One informant, Mrs. Siti Nurhasanah, stated in an interview, "*The children are very enthusiastic when invited to play traditional games. This not only makes them happy but also enriches their Indonesian vocabulary.*"

In an interview with one of the students, Ali, he stated, "*Here, I learn a lot about the Indonesian language. The teachers always use Indonesian, so over time I get used to it and become more fluent.*" This quote illustrates how direct interaction with the language in a supportive educational environment can enhance the Indonesian language skills of diaspora children. These observations and interviews highlight the importance of a learning environment that consistently supports the use of the Indonesian language to maintain and develop the cultural and linguistic identity of diaspora children abroad.

### 3.2. Indonesian Acquisition Process

Basically, in the curriculum of this guidance studio, there is no written Indonesian language learning. Based on my interview with the principal, the curriculum used as a learning guideline refers to Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL). The curriculum contains general and special goals, the general goal is "Forming true Pancasila people who are devoted to God Almighty, who are capable, healthy and skilled, and responsible for God Almighty, society and the country". The series of curriculum consists of themes, learning plans, and development fields. So, because it is not written in the curriculum, Indonesian learning is carried out in 2 hours a day.

Educators introduce Indonesian through the alphabet and its correct pronunciation. Language learning in diaspora early childhood carries the following themes, the curriculum includes myself, my environment, my needs, animals, plants, recreation, work, water, air, fire, my homeland, and the universe. The teaching technique uses movement song, and vocabulary recognition. On the theme of himself, the teacher used the song "Two Eyes of Me" with the following lyrics:

<i>Dua mata saya, hidung saya satu Dua kaki saya pakai sepatu baru</i>
--

*Dua telinga saya, yang kiri dan kanan  
 Satu mulut saya tidak berhenti makan  
 Dua mata saya, hidung saya satu  
 Dua kaki saya pakai sepatu baru  
 Dua telinga saya, yang kiri dan kanan*

The lyrics of the song can be translated into English as follows: "My two eyes, I have one nose. My two feet are wearing new shoes. My two ears, left and right. My one mouth does not stop eating. My two eyes, I have one nose. My two feet are wearing new shoes. My two ears, left and right." This translation maintains the playful and rhythmic nature of the original song, describing the various parts of the body simply and repetitively, emphasizing the new shoes and the constant activity of eating.

This self-theme also introduces geometric shapes with image media. Some of the geometric names introduced are square, rectangle, circle, and triangle. In the theme of my environment, the sub-theme of my family, the teacher introduces the vocabulary of family members' names, including father, mother, uncle, aunt, and grandmother. The theme of my needs sub-theme food teacher introduces the vocabulary of food names in four healthy five perfect including rice, side dishes, vegetables, fruits, and milk. Next on the animal theme with the pet sub-theme, namely the song "My Rabbit" with the following lyrics:

*Kelinciku kelinciku kau manis sekali,  
 Melompat kian kemari sepanjang hari,  
 Aku ingin menemani sepulang sekolah,  
 Bersamamu lagi menari-nari.*

The lyrics of the song can be translated into English as follows: "My bunny, my bunny, you are so sweet. Hopping here and there all day long. I want to accompany you after school. Dancing with you again." This translation captures the affectionate tone and playful imagery of the original song, highlighting the joy and companionship shared between the child and their pet bunny. The simple and rhythmic structure of the lyrics is maintained, emphasizing the delight in spending time with the bunny and the anticipation of their after-school activities together. Some of the animal names introduced in this lesson are chicken, duck, cat, rabbit, buffalo, and cow.

Then on the plant theme, the sub-theme of the plant section introduces vocabulary including flowers, leaves, stalks, roots, and fruits. In the theme of recreation, the sub-theme of land transportation uses the song "Ride the Train" with the following song lyrics:

*Naik kereta api, tut-tut-tut,  
 Siapa hendak turut?,  
 Ke Bandung-Surabaya,  
 Bolehlah naik dengan percuma,  
 Ayo, Kawanku, lekas naik,  
 Kretaku tak berhenti lama,  
 Lekas kretaku jalan, tut-tut-tut,  
 Banyak penumpang turut,  
 Kretaku sudah penat,  
 Karena beban terlalu berat,  
 Di sinilah ada stasiun,  
 Penumpang semua turun.*

The lyrics of the song can be translated into English as follows: "Train, train, toot-toot-toot, who wants to join? To Bandung-Surabaya, you can ride for free. Come on, my friend, quickly get on, my train does not stop for long. Quickly my train moves, toot-toot-toot, and many passengers are joining. My train is already tired because the load is too heavy. Here is a station, all passengers get off." This translation retains the inviting and lively essence of the original song, depicting a bustling and energetic train journey with a sense of urgency and camaraderie among passengers. The repetitive sounds and rhythms mimic the movement and sounds of the train, adding to the overall playful and animated feel of the song.

In this recreation theme, the teacher introduced the vocabulary of land transportation names such as cars, trains, pedicabs, motorcycles, and bicycles. The sub-theme of the work of various types of teachers' jobs introduces vocabulary such as traders, teachers, pilots, drivers,

and captains. The theme of water, air, fire, sub-theme of water use, teachers introduce vocabulary: bathing, brushing teeth, watering plants, washing dishes, and washing clothes. The theme of my homeland sub-theme introduces the song Indonesia Raya with the following lyrics:

*Indonesia, tanah airku,  
Tanah tumpah darahku,  
Di sanalah aku berdiri,  
Jadi pandu ibuku,  
Indonesia, kebangsaanku,  
Bangsa dan tanah airku,  
Marilah kita berseru,  
Indonesia bersatu,  
Hiduplah tanahku,  
Hiduplah negeriku,  
Bangsaku, rakyatku, semuanya,  
Bangunlah jiwanya,  
Bangunlah badannya,  
Untuk Indonesia Raya.  
Indonesia Raya, merdeka! Merdeka!  
Tanahku, negeriku yang kucinta  
Indonesia Raya, merdeka! Merdeka!  
Hiduplah Indonesia Raya!*

The lyrics of the song can be translated into English as follows: "Indonesia, my homeland, the land where my blood was spilled. There I stand, to be my mother's guide. Indonesia, my nationality, my nation, and my homeland. Let us all proclaim, that Indonesia unites. Long live my land, long live my country, my nation, my people, all of them. Rise the spirit, rise the body, for Great Indonesia. Great Indonesia, independent! Independent! My land, my country that I love. Great Indonesia, independent! Independent! Long live Great Indonesia!" This translation preserves the patriotic and emotional sentiment of the original song, celebrating the unity, independence, and spirit of the Indonesian nation. The repetition of "independent" and "long live Great Indonesia" emphasizes the pride and love for the country, encouraging the rise of both spirit and body for the nation's greatness.

Finally, the theme of the universe sub-theme of natural phenomena knows vocabulary, namely floods, landslides, earthquakes, and tsunamis. Each vocabulary introduction is done with as many as 3-5 syllables. This is by the indicators obtained on the standard of child development achievement. Apart from the guidance studio environment, the role of the family is quite influential in the acquisition of a second language.

The habituation pattern carried out by teachers in learning Indonesian is by singing, telling stories, and playing methods. This singing is done through movement and song activities. Furthermore, telling their own stories usually children tell stories about themselves, such as introducing themselves in front of the class or activities during holidays (Sundays). The play method is carried out by the teacher during breaks by approaching the child personally to invite communication and playing guessing. Students in this guidance studio are not given homework because every time they are given homework, they are not done. Parents of students here are also busy with work so they do not pay attention to their children.

From several strategies and habituation patterns carried out by educators, the researcher made observations related to the language development of children aged 4-6 with the following results:

Below are the results of the observation of language development in children aged 4-5 years, presented in a table format based on Table 3:

Table 3. Observation of language development in children aged 4-5 years

Description	Not Developed (%)	Starting to Develop (%)	Developing as Expected (%)	Very Well Developed (%)
<b>Children can understand Indonesian</b>	0	20	20	60
<b>Children understand 2 commands and the words</b>	0	60	20	20

<b>of others spoken by educators using Indonesian</b>				
<b>Children can imitate 3-4 sequences of Indonesian words correctly</b>	0	40	60	0
<b>Children can sing using Indonesian</b>	0	80	0	20
<b>Children can name objects in the environment with B2</b>	0	100	0	0

The observation results indicate that children aged 4-5 years show varying levels of language development in Indonesian. Notably, 60% of children are very well developed in understanding Indonesian, with 20% starting to develop and another 20% developing as expected. When it comes to understanding commands spoken by educators, 60% are starting to develop, 20% are developing as expected, and 20% are very well developed. In imitating 3-4 word sequences, 40% are starting to develop, and 60% are developing as expected. Singing in Indonesian shows that 80% of children are starting to develop, while 20% are very well developed. Lastly, in naming objects in the environment with B2, 100% of the children are starting to develop. Overall, while there is significant progress, certain areas such as command comprehension and word sequence imitation show room for further improvement.

Table 4. Observation of Language Development of Children Aged 5-6 years

<b>Description</b>	<b>Not Developed (%)</b>	<b>Starting to Develop (%)</b>	<b>Developing as Expected (%)</b>	<b>Very Well Developed (%)</b>
<b>The child can repeat the Indonesian he has heard</b>	0	0	12.5	87.5
<b>Children can question and answer sentences that communicate with educators using Indonesian</b>	0	43.8	56.3	0
<b>Children can make sentences from 3-5 syllables using Indonesian</b>	0	18.9	81.1	0
<b>Children can tell stories about themselves using Indonesian</b>	0	50	50	0

The observation results indicate that children aged 5-6 years show a significant ability to repeat the Indonesian they have heard, with 87.5% being very well developed and 12.5% developing as expected. In questioning and answering sentences to communicate with educators, 56.3% of children are developing as expected, while 43.8% are starting to develop. When it comes to making sentences from 3-5 syllables using Indonesian, 81.1% are developing as expected, and 18.9% are starting to develop. Additionally, 50% of children are both starting to develop and developing as expected in telling stories about themselves using Indonesian. These observations highlight strong progress in language repetition skills, with noticeable development in sentence formation and storytelling abilities.

For the achievement of ages 5-6, almost all children have been able to repeat sentences in Indonesian that have been heard, 9 children have been able to communicate with educators and 13 children have been able to make sentences from 3-5 syllables using Indonesian. But in telling stories about himself using Indonesian only 8 children can, the other half are still developing. In the pronunciation of sentences when communicating, many children still mix

Indonesian with Malay. Examples such as "You don't want to play with you!", "My mother wants to go to the toilet."

From some of the explanations above, it can be seen that the Kepong Guidance Studio shows a high commitment to maintaining the national identity of Indonesian diaspora children in Malaysia. An approach that uses a variety of strategies gives children the opportunity to develop a variety of language skills engagingly and diversely. Children's achievement results are a challenge that shows the need to adapt learning strategies to meet the individual needs of children. Sanggar needs to adopt an inclusive and differential approach to language learning. Identifying children's individual needs and preferences and developing adaptable strategies are key to improving learning effectiveness. Don't forget to always involve parents in the language learning process at home to increase consistency and support children's language development outside the studio environment.

### Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the use of Indonesian as a second language among early childhood diaspora children. This research is crucial given the unique linguistic and cultural challenges faced by these children, who are often raised in environments where the dominant language differs from their heritage language (Axel, 2004; Singh & Koiri, 2018). The Kepong Guidance Studio in Kuala Lumpur serves as an educational haven for these children, providing them with the necessary tools to maintain their linguistic and cultural identity amidst a predominantly Malay-speaking environment (Sunanih, 2017). The ability to speak Indonesian fluently is not only a linguistic skill but also a vital aspect of preserving cultural identity and ensuring that these children maintain a connection with their homeland. The study's findings are pivotal in understanding how diaspora children acquire and use Indonesian and how these practices shape their overall language development and identity (Rahmawati et al., 2023; Setiyadi & Salim, 2013).

The results indicate that while Indonesian is actively promoted within the Kepong Guidance Studio, its use among children remains interspersed with Malay. This bilingual mixture is primarily due to Malay being the first language for these children, necessitating a more structured approach to reinforce Indonesian language use (Betti, 2021; Ellis, 2003). Observations revealed that educators play a critical role in promoting the consistent use of Indonesian, employing various interactive methods such as songs and games to engage the children (Finnman et al., 2021; Goodrich et al., 2016). These methods include play activities like traditional Indonesian games and children's songs, which not only enrich the children's Indonesian vocabulary but also instill a sense of enjoyment and engagement in the learning process. This interactive approach not only aids in language acquisition but also fosters a sense of cultural identity and pride among young learners (Aulina, 2018; Safitri & Pujiati, 2023). The importance of creating a supportive and immersive language environment is underscored by the enthusiasm and improved language skills observed among the children participating in these activities.

Further examination of the language development outcomes showed significant progress in certain areas, such as understanding and repeating Indonesian words, though challenges remain in command comprehension and sentence formation (Datta et al., 2020; Lucas, 2023). For children aged 4-5, 60% were very well developed in understanding Indonesian, whereas only 20% were developing as expected in understanding commands (Smolander et al., 2021; Su et al., 2020). This discrepancy highlights the need for more targeted interventions to address specific areas of weakness, particularly in comprehending and following instructions in Indonesian (Hong & Kellogg, 2016; Lahti-Nuuttila et al., 2021). The structured exposure to



Indonesian through educational activities is crucial, but additional support and reinforcement may be required to enhance comprehension and practical usage. Moreover, the variation in language development among children indicates that individual differences, such as prior exposure to Indonesian and the home language environment, play a significant role in shaping language acquisition outcomes.

Among children aged 5-6, the ability to repeat Indonesian sentences and form 3-5 syllable sentences was more advanced, with 87.5% being very well developed in repetition and 81.1% developing as expected in sentence formation (Cheong et al., 2018). However, storytelling in Indonesian showed varied results, indicating that while basic linguistic skills are solidifying, expressive language abilities still require enhancement (Alipour et al., 2023; To et al., 2022). The mixture of Indonesian and Malay in speech underscores the influence of their primary language environment, necessitating more immersive Indonesian language experiences (Hidayah, 2020; Pallawagau & Rasna, 2022). This finding suggests that while the foundational linguistic skills are being acquired, the ability to use Indonesian in more complex and expressive ways, such as in storytelling, needs further development. This can be addressed through activities that promote narrative skills and creative language use, encouraging children to use Indonesian more fluently and confidently.

It is evident that the bilingual environment of diaspora children significantly impacts their language acquisition processes. The foundational influence of Malay as the first language creates both opportunities and challenges for learning Indonesian as a second language (Fadillah et al., 2014; Nurasyiah & Atikah, 2023). Prior research supports the notion that early exposure to a second language enhances proficiency, but it also stresses the importance of structured and consistent language use policies in educational settings (O'Toole et al., 2017; Quinto et al., 2021). The findings align with studies indicating that second language acquisition benefits from both formal education and everyday conversational use (Hidayat, 2022; Philp et al., 2008). Moreover, the role of social and familial contexts in supporting language learning is critical, as interactions within the home and community can reinforce the language skills acquired in the educational environment.

The role of cultural and social factors in language learning cannot be understated. The educational strategies employed at the Kepong Guidance Studio, including songs, games, and storytelling, are consistent with effective pedagogical practices that promote language acquisition in a culturally relevant context (Pflepsen et al., 2015). These methods not only facilitate language learning but also strengthen cultural ties and identity among diaspora children (Simamora et al., 2023; Widiarsi et al., 2022). The cultural relevance of the educational content and activities ensures that children remain connected to their heritage, fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride. However, the integration of more diverse and individualized learning activities is essential to address the varied linguistic needs and capabilities of the children (Finnman et al., 2024; Saeed et al., 2024). Tailoring educational approaches to meet the specific needs of each child can enhance their language learning experiences and outcomes.

The findings of this study have significant implications for the development of educational policies and practices aimed at supporting diaspora children. It underscores the importance of creating inclusive and adaptive learning environments that cater to the linguistic and cultural needs of these children (Anita, 2015; Santrock, 2007). By incorporating more tailored and engaging educational strategies, such as small group discussions and role-playing, educators can enhance the language development and overall learning experience of diaspora children (Gkonou et al., 2016). Additionally, involving parents in the language learning process at home can reinforce the skills acquired in the educational setting, promoting consistency and

furthering language proficiency (Bangli, 2022; Wahyuni, 2023). The collaboration between educators and parents is crucial in creating a supportive language learning environment that extends beyond the classroom.

This study highlights the critical role of structured educational interventions in supporting the Indonesian language development of early childhood diaspora children. The findings advocate for a holistic approach that includes diverse pedagogical methods, parental involvement, and a supportive learning environment to address the unique challenges faced by these children (Kruk et al., 2013; Subakti et al., 2021). Future research should continue to explore the most effective strategies for bilingual education, particularly in diaspora contexts, to ensure that these children can maintain their cultural identity while achieving linguistic proficiency (Alfian et al., 2021; Dardjowidjojo, 2005). By fostering a strong foundation in both their first and second languages, we can better support the overall development and well-being of diaspora children. This comprehensive approach will not only enhance their language skills but also contribute to their cognitive, social, and emotional development, ensuring their success in both academic and personal realms.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the use of Indonesian as a second language among early childhood diaspora children, revealing that while Indonesian is taught within the Kepong Guidance Studio, its usage is still influenced by Malay, the children's first language. The findings indicate that while Indonesian is actively used, it often blends with Malay, the children's first language. The enforced policy of communicating solely in Indonesian within the studio has reinforced its use, supported by structured learning activities such as traditional games and songs which have effectively expanded the children's vocabulary. The implications of these findings are significant for educational policy and practice, highlighting the necessity of creating inclusive and adaptive learning environments tailored to the linguistic and cultural needs of diaspora children. Involving parents in the language learning process at home can enhance consistency and reinforce the skills acquired in educational settings. However, the study's limitations include the lack of a written curriculum for Indonesian language instruction and the short duration of daily lessons, which pose challenges to comprehensive language acquisition. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term effectiveness of such language programs, develop a structured curriculum that integrates formal and informal learning techniques, and explore the role of parental involvement more deeply, as well as conduct comparative studies between different diaspora communities to provide a broader understanding of effective language acquisition strategies for early childhood learners in diverse contexts.

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