

The Social Interaction Theory in Malay Language Acquisition among Students of the Integrated Special Education Programme

Kavenia Kunasegran*, Nurdenna Najwa Binti Khiril Anuwar

Malay Language Department, Faculty of Modern Language and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author Email: kavenia@upm.edu.my

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Abstract

This study examines parents' perceptions of the effectiveness of the social interaction theory in the acquisition of the Malay language among students of the Integrated Special Education Programme (PPKI) with learning disabilities. PPKI students, particularly those within the autism spectrum, often face difficulties in communication and Malay language speech. This study employs a mixed-method approach involving a questionnaire administered to 30 parents and semi-structured interviews with five selected respondents. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis. The findings indicate that parents demonstrate a very high level of acceptance regarding the effectiveness of social interaction in supporting Malay language acquisition among PPKI students. In addition, the study identifies several challenges faced by parents. Overall, the findings suggest that social interaction plays a significant role in supporting the acquisition of the Malay language among PPKI students.

Keywords: Social Interaction, Malay Language Acquisition, Ppki Students, Parents

Introduction

The right to inclusive and equitable education has become a central priority in modern educational systems, particularly in addressing the diverse needs of students with learning differences. In Malaysia, the Integrated Special Education Programme (PPKI) was established to provide structured and inclusive educational opportunities for Students with Special Education Needs (MBPK), including those diagnosed with autism and other learning disabilities. These students often experience significant challenges in communication, particularly in reading, writing, understanding instructions, and speaking in the Malay language.

Such communication difficulties can impede effective language acquisition and are frequently associated with speech delay among PPKI students. Language development is not only a cognitive process but is also deeply influenced by social environments. According to Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory (1978), children acquire language through meaningful

interactions and experiences with others. Social engagement, therefore, plays a critical role in facilitating vocabulary development and functional language use.

Within the PPKI context, students engage in social interactions through daily conversations and shared activities, which may support their acquisition of the Malay language in more meaningful and practical ways. However, the extent to which these interactions contribute to language development, particularly from the perspective of parents, remains insufficiently explored. This study introduces a novel perspective by foregrounding parents' experiential insights as primary data in evaluating the effectiveness of social interaction as a language acquisition approach among PPKI students. By situating parental perspectives within Vygotsky's theoretical framework, the study contributes to the social sciences by bridging the gap between theory and lived experiences, while offering context-specific evidence from Malaysia's special education setting. Therefore, this study focuses on examining parents' views on the effectiveness of social interaction as an approach to Malay language acquisition among PPKI students.

Problem Statement

Speech delay is one of the most prevalent challenges faced by students enrolled in the Integrated Special Education Programme (PPKI). Recent data from the National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2022 reported a significant rise in the number of children experiencing speech delay, totalling 56,452 cases, highlighting the growing seriousness of this issue in Malaysia.

This concern is further compounded by findings from Wan Natrah (2021), which indicate that many parents fail to recognise early signs of autism and often perceive speech delay as a normal developmental phase. Such misconceptions contribute to delays in early intervention, which is crucial for improving language outcomes among children with special needs. Additionally, limited parental knowledge regarding effective language acquisition approaches further hinders the development of communication skills among PPKI students.

Although Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory has been widely acknowledged as a valuable framework for supporting language development through interaction and experience, there remains a lack of empirical evidence regarding its effectiveness specifically within the PPKI context. Studies that incorporate parents' perspectives on the use of social interaction as a language acquisition approach are still limited.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by evaluating the effectiveness of social interaction in supporting Malay language acquisition among PPKI students from the parents' viewpoint. It also seeks to identify the challenges faced by parents in facilitating language development, with the goal of contributing to more effective intervention strategies to address speech delay.

Study Objective

1. To identify parents' views about the effectiveness of the social interactions in the acquisition of Malay Language for PPKI students.
2. To elaborate on the challenges faced by parents in helping PPKI students master Malay Language.

Literature Review

Parents' views on the Effectiveness of Social Interactions

A Comparative Study of Vygotsky's Perspective on Child Language Development with Nativism and Behaviourism by Mahdi Dastpak, Behjat and Taghinezhad (2017) compared the theory of language acquisition by Vygotsky with the theories of Behaviourism and Nativism. A study finding shows that Vygotsky's theory is more effective compared to other theories by proving that the active participation of children in the social environment has successfully catalysed the language acquisition more efficiently. This study selection serves as the main reference, or a strong theoretical foundation in assessing the effectiveness of the social interactions as a language acquisition approach, especially for PPKI students who require continuous support.

Apart from that, in *Aktiviti Sokongan Bagi Pembangunan Bahasa dan Communication Kanak-Kanak* by Zainiah Mohamed Isa (2021) social interaction activities such as conversations, playing, singing and reading are justified as successfully encouraging children's language acquisition. It is evident that consistent social interactions are able to increase vocabulary and encourage two-way communication. Thus, this study is selected to support the study objective which is to assess the effectiveness of the social interactions through the parents' role as the language model in carrying out social interaction activities.

The Challenges of Parents in Guiding PPKI Students In Mastering Malay Language

The study entitled *Effect of Disruptive Behavior on Speech Delay Autism in Children in Kindergarten in Pahang State* by Nur Atiqah and Mohd Nizam (2023) looked into the challenges of language acquisition among autistic children who experience speech delay. Behavioural problems and excessive exposure to, and use of, gadgets stand to be the main challenges that impede the two-way interactions and affect the language acquisition. This study provides a clear picture about the communicative challenges that may be experienced by teachers. Thus, this past study also identified if the parents had a similar problem to the teachers. In *Strategies and Role of Parents on Language Acquisition of Children with Special Needs* by Estri Tri Wardani et al. (2024), the focus rests on the parents' roles and challenges in aiding the language acquisition in children with special needs. Parents tend to experience difficulties especially in encouraging their children to interact in a new social environment, and this indirectly urges them to adopt strategies such as encouraging their interactions with peers. Choosing this past study as reference is to fill the gap about the challenges faced by the parents which is consistent with the second objective.

Methodology

Study Design

This study opted for the combined method of quantitative and qualitative is spurred by the need to get a comprehensive picture about the effectiveness of Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory as an approach to the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students quantitatively, and a profound observation through the qualitative approach regarding parents' challenges when implementing the approach.

Study Theories

Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory (1978)

Vygotsky asserted that the social and cultural experiences serve as the dominant factors in aiding the language acquisition and development, particularly among children. The theoretical framework used below is the association with the topic in question, as illustrated in the diagram below.

Study's Conceptual Framework

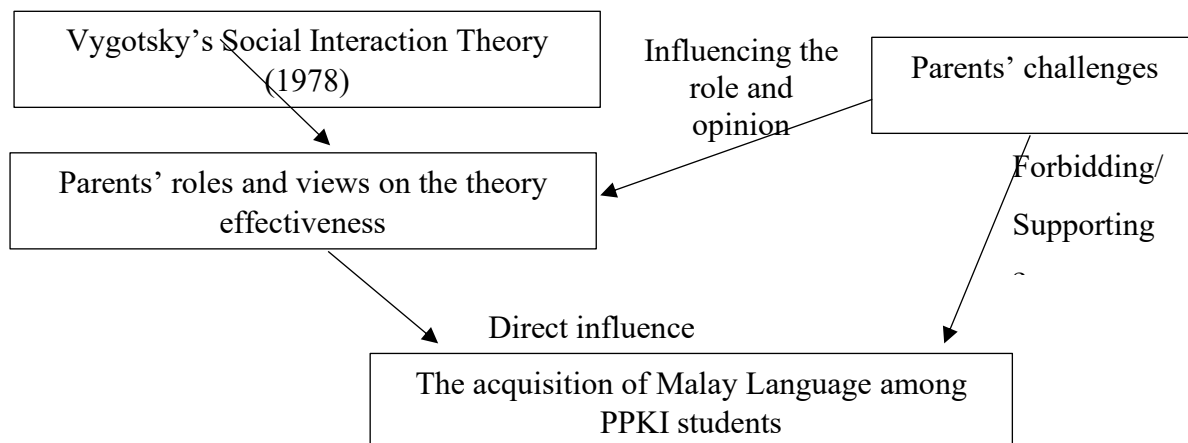


Diagram 1: The Association Between Theory and Objective

The conceptual framework comprises four main components. The first component is Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory 1978 as the basic theory to the overall study. This theory functions as the platform to understand an effective approach applied in catalysing the language acquisition of PPKI students. The second component is the roles and views of the parents that become the main factor in the implementation of this approach. Parents' views will be measured through a questionnaire form as a general overview of the roles and the implementation of the social interaction approach.

Next, the third component is the challenges faced by parents- this is the mediating factor. This can impede or support the implementation of social interactions, including time constraints, level of patience, the influence of technology, child's behaviour, and the suitability of the environment. Finally the last component is the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students that strives as the main outcome of the study, which is whether or not the PPKI students are able to master the Malay Language through the social interactions. Therefore, the diagram of this concept portrays that the success of the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students really depends on the active role of the parents in applying the social interactions at home, by taking into account the challenges that they have to face.

Population and Sampling

The study population comprises parents to PPKI students who have learning problems. The selection of this population is due to the fact that parents are the closest individuals who are greatly involved in the language acquisition and development of the children at home, since they were very young. Thus, parents' views and experiences are thought to be the most relevant data sources to evaluate the effectiveness of the Social Interaction Theory as the approach of the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students. 30 parents will be selected to answer the questionnaire that is specifically designed to gather information about

their views on the effectiveness of the Social Interaction Theory– this is for the quantitative component. Next, five from the 30 parents had answered in detail about the challenges faced in guiding their children- this is for the qualitative component. The type of sampling used is the purposive sampling whereby only parents who have children in PPKI are rendered qualified as samples. This selection is made specific, to ensure that the respondents are really relevant to the study objectives.

Study Location

The entire study was done online using a digital platform. The decision to choose this location is thought to be suitable and convenient for data collection from the parents of the Integrated Special Education Programme (PPKI) students. Researcher used the Google Questionnaire Form to obtain quantitative data related to parents' views conducted an interview session comprising semi-structured questions through applications like WhatsApp Audio Chat or through the threads of conversation of parents on WhatsApp to obtain the qualitative data about the challenges the parents are facing. The selection of the online method was made to offer flexibility to parents who have limited time and responsibility in caring for these children with special needs.

Data Analysis Method

The data analysis process in this study was conducted using the mixed-design approach, involving two types of data- quantitative data using questionnaire form and qualitative data taken from the semi-structured interview. The information gathered through the questionnaire forms (online Google Form) was transferred for analysis. The analyses were the descriptive statistics, involving the calculation of frequency, percentage and mean for every item in the questionnaire form. This seeks to identify the pattern, tendency and level of parents' views of the effectiveness of the Social Interaction Theory implementation as the approach adopted for Malay Language acquisition. Other than that, the qualitative data from the semi-structured interview was analysed using the thematic analysis method. This analysis process involves six major steps, reading and comprehending data, generating initial code, identifying theme, revising the theme, naming the theme and writing the report. The recorded interview data will be transcribed verbatim prior to coding and classification by main theme, concerning parents' challenges in helping their PPKI children acquire Malay Language.

Analysis and Discussion

Objective 1: To identify parents' views regarding the effectiveness of social interactions in the acquisition of Malay language for PPKI students

The main objective of the study relates with Vygotsky's approach about language acquisition through social interactions. The questionnaire form comprises 10 items which are divided into two main domains (i) Social interactions and two-way Communication, and (ii) Effectiveness of Social interactions. The data evaluation used the Likert Scale and was analysed quantitatively based on the mean and percentage values. The following is the table showing item distribution by domain:

Table 1

Distribution of Item by Domain

DOMAIN	ITEM
(i) Social Interactions and Two-way communication	1.I often talk and interact in Malay Language with my child at home.
	2.I encourage my child to use Malay Language when communicating with family members and friends.
	3.I see that the two-way interactions help my child understand the meanings of words in Malay Language better.
	4.I use social game activities like riddles or role-plays to encourage speaking in Malay Language
	5.I give positive feedback when my child tries to communicate in Malay Language.
	6.I tell my child to communicate in Malay Language rather than other languages when interacting with me or other people.
(ii) Effectiveness of the Social interaction Approach	7.I believe that social interactions can expedite my child's process of acquisition of Malay Language.
	8.I notice an improvement in my child's vocabulary and speech after interacting with him/her consistently
	9.I think the Social Interaction Theory is more effective than the natural theory (children learn language naturally since birth) and the behaviourism theory (language is acquired through imitation and repetition in the environment)
	10.I am confident that the Social Interaction Theory is suitable to be applied to the PPKI students compared to other theories in the learning of Malay Language.

Domain (i): Social interactions and Two-way Communication

Table 2

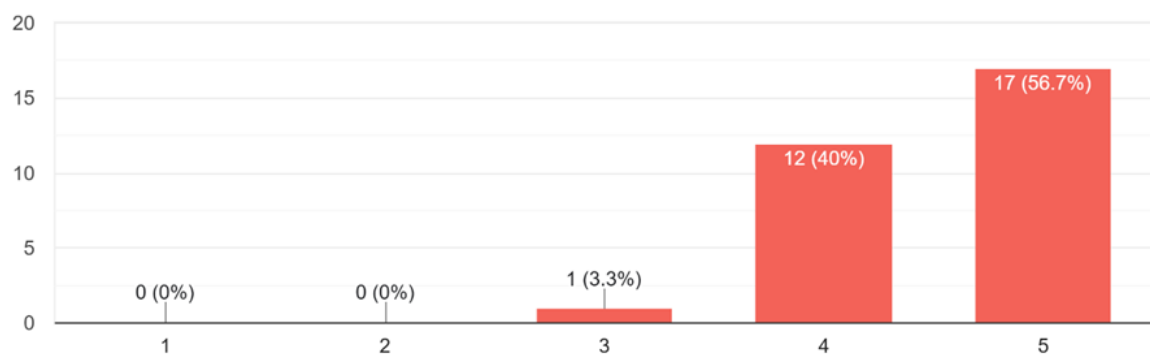
Calculation of Domains' Means (i)

Likert Scale	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Not sure		4 Agree		5 Strongly Agree		Mean
Item	∑	%	∑	%	∑	%	∑	%	∑	%	∑X/N
1	-	-	3	10	2	6.7	6	20	19	63.3	4.37
2	-	-	1	3.3	2	6.7	11	36.7	16	53.3	4.40
3	-	-	-	-	1	3.3	12	40	17	56.7	4.53
4	-	-	1	3.3	5	16.7	11	36.7	13	43.3	4.20
5	-	-	-	-	4	13.3	9	30	17	56.7	4.43
6	-	-	2	6.7	4	13.3	8	26.7	16	53.3	4.27
Mean for Construct 1: Very high											4.37

Based on Table 2, the overall mean average for domain (i) Social interactions and Two-Way communication is 4.37. Based on the average mean score of the Likert Scale's point value, this reading is at a Very High level. This represents parents' situation, where they still prioritise social interactions in the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students, especially through the two-way communication between parents and students. This high mean value goes to prove that parents' trust over activities such as chatting, playing and having two-way communication between parents and children directly encourages the acquisition of Malay Language and increases their motivation to learn Malay Language more. The means of all items have passed a very high score. Nonetheless, the third item 'I see that the two-way

interactions help my child understand the meanings of words in Malay Language better' shows the highest mean value.

Item 3: Two-Way Interactions Help Children Understand Meanings of Words in Malay Language Better



interactions by choosing Agree (12 people) and Strongly Agree (17 people). According to the mean value for this item which is 4.53, parents strongly agreed that two-way interactions are important as they realised that the communication with children is able to stimulate the acquisition of Malay Language in a more efficient way. As evidence, these effective two-way interactions involve parents who give orders, involve their children in conversations, pose open questions, make gentle corrections if the children make mistakes when speaking and encourage the children to voice their opinions.

This finding is strengthened with a finding from Zainiah Mohamed Isa (2021) in her study entitled *Aktiviti Sokongan Bagi Pembangunan Bahasa dan Komunikasi Kanak-Kanak* which focused on the basic principle that children require a consistent language model to acquire and use language in daily communication. In the context of this study, parents function as the main language model that guides children through daily conversations, responsive questions and ongoing feedback. The two-way interactions between parents and children also help in the acquisition of the Malay Language vocabulary. Therefore, it is clear that past studies supported item 6, which is 'interactive communication not only increases the understanding on the word meanings, but it also forms children's language proficiency more effectively and efficiently'.

Other than that, the fourth item 'I use social game activities like riddles or role-plays to encourage speaking in Malay Language' marks the lowest mean value compared to other items, which is 4.20.

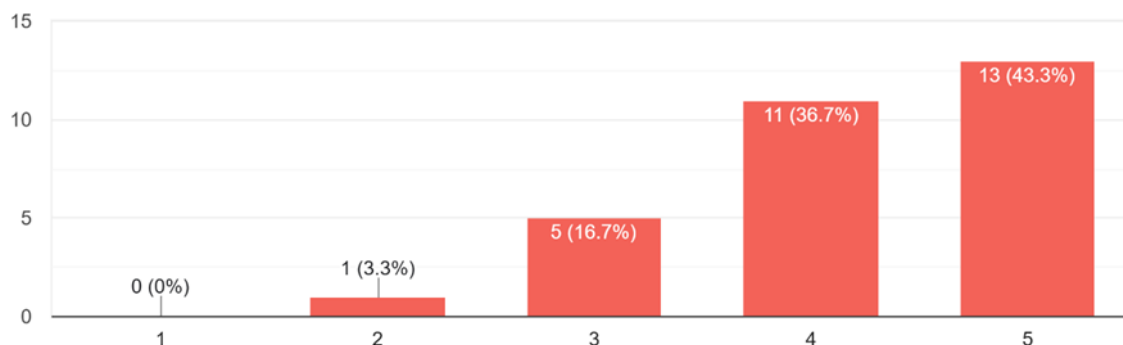
Item 4: Social Game Activities such as Riddles or Role-Plays to Encourage Speaking in Malay Language

Diagram 3: Data Collection for Item 4

Based on the bar chart above, this item received the lowest score as the parents disagreed and were even unsure with the item. This is because not all parents have the awareness or confidence to use the social game activities such as riddles and role-plays as specific strategies that can encourage the acquisition of Malay Language among their children. Some parents may not be exposed to the game-based learning concept or they may be of the opinion that such an activity would be better done in school rather than at home.

Other than that, there is a possibility that parents face time constraints, or they are busy working. These challenges cause some parents to be unable to do the activity consistently with their children. Thus, this finding shows that although parents lend support to their children's language acquisition and development, they tend to choose more practical and flexible methods, compared to social game activities that are more structured.

The overall mean value for this domain shows the reading Very High, and this finding is consistent with Vygotsky's Theory that stresses that student's cognitive development and language happen through more effective social interactions compared to other methods. All in all, the data collection for this construct suggests that parents are encouraged to actively support their children's social interactions at home, for instance, through a session of reading together, talking about a lesson, or helping the child do his or her assignment through discussion. Parents' involvement through social interactions and two-way communication can aid the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students, at the same time preventing the students from suffering from speech delay. Thus, the active involvement of parents in their social interactions and two-way communication with their children has evidently succeeded in supporting the acquisition of Malay Language, while contributing to the students' social development, self-confidence and cognitive skills.

Domain (ii): The Effectiveness of the Social interaction Approach

Table 3

Calculation of Domains' Means(ii)

Likert Scale	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Not sure		4 Agree		5 Strongly Agree		Mean
Item	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	ΣX/N
7	-	-	-	-	3	10	6	20	21	70	4.60
8	-	-	-	-	3	10	9	30	18	60	4.50
9	-	-	-	-	4	13.3	10	33.3	16	53.3	4.40
10	-	-	-	-	4	13.3	10	33.3	16	53.3	4.40
Mean Construct 2: Very High											4.48

Based on the Table, the overall mean value average for domain (ii) Effectiveness of Social interaction Approach is 4.48, showing Very High level. This feedback demonstrates that parents view that the approach used in the social interactions is very effective to support the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students. This high mean value indicates that parents believe that social interactions play an important role in supporting the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students since the early development. Active daily communication through conversations and questions has become an eye-opener to parents about the approach that can be used to guide their children in acquiring Malay Language.

Apart from that, parents also regard the social interaction approach as a practical, easy-to-implement method without needing any special facilities or tools. This situation strengthens their belief towards the Social Interaction Theory that is able to help stimulate the acquisition of Malay Language effectively since birth, in line with the view about language development through social relations and meaningful communication. The mean details by item show that the seventh item 'I believe that social interactions can expedite my child's process of acquisition of Malay Language' has the mean value average of 4.60.

Item 7: I believe that social interactions can expedite the process of acquisition of Malay Language

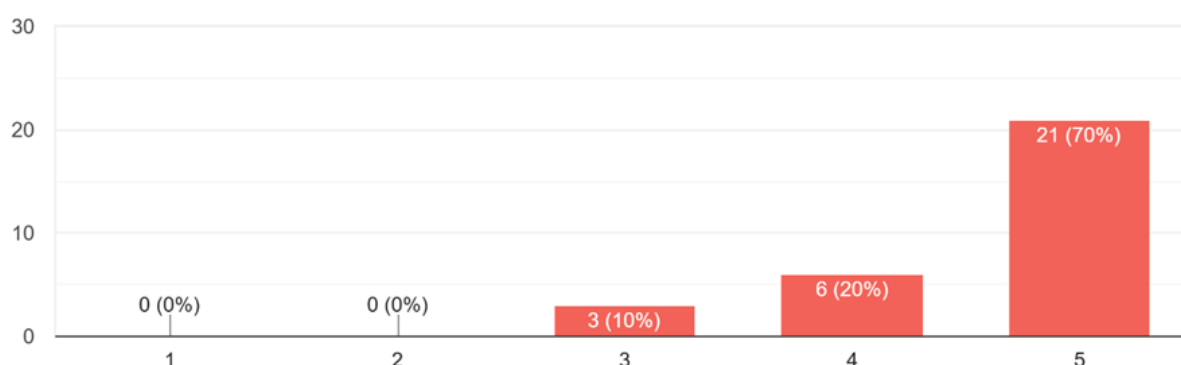


Diagram 4: Data Collection for Item 7

Based on the above diagram, this item notes the highest mean value, which is 4.60 with the average feedback from parents choosing Agree and Strongly Agree (respectively 6 and 21

people). The exposure on the vocabulary, pronunciation and sentence structure will take place when parents interact with their children. This experience has helped their children, who are PPKI students, to acquire and process the language faster compared to listening passively. This is proven when the parents begin to realise that their children's involvement in the two-way communication has made them braver in speaking and asking questions in Malay Language.

That said, there are parents who are not sure about the effectiveness of this theory; possibly they have time constraints or they are busy working. They may have different challenges to spend enough time with their children, and encourage the social interactions consistently with them. The finding for this item can be linked with the past study by Estri Tri Wardani et al. (2024) that explained about the significant role of parents at home in aiding the language acquisition process among these special children.

Although parents tend to face various problems, they still need to play a part in ensuring that their children acquire language at the supposed age. Thus, parents' efforts in encouraging their children's interactions with their peers are a proactive action in supporting the acquisition of Malay Language, and preventing speech delay. Through frequent social interactions, children will be exposed to various forms of language use and indirectly stimulates the development verbal communication skills.

Also, items 9 and 10 respectively note the lowest score, which is 4.40. Item 9 is 'I think the Social Interaction Theory is more effective than the natural theory', whereas item 10 is 'I am confident that the Social Interaction Theory is suitable to be applied to the PPKI students compared to other theories in the learning of Malay Language'. Both these items have the lowest mean value although the score value is Very High.

Item 9: Social Interaction Theory Is More Effective to be Used Compared to the Natural Theory

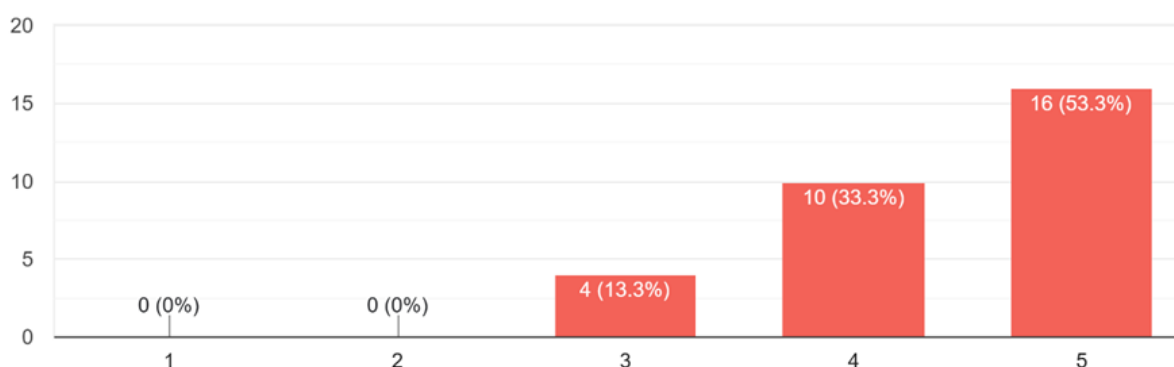
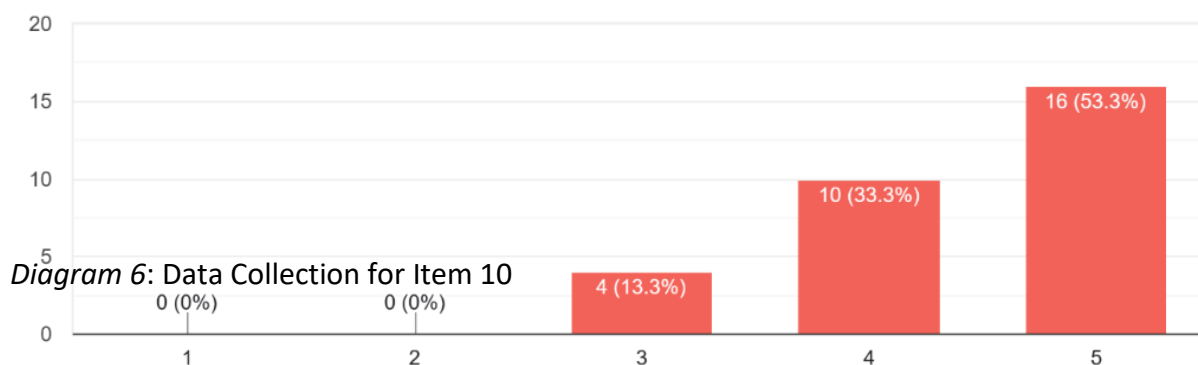


Diagram 5: Data Collection for Item 9

Item 10: Social Interaction Theory Is More Suitable to be Applied to PPKI students Compared to Other Theories



Based on Diagrams 5 and 6, both items recorded the same data collection and both have 4 parents who are not certain about the questions regarding the effectiveness of the Social Interaction Theory. This may be due to the fact that these parents are more prone to choose other approaches that they think suitable, based on their personal experience or their understanding about language learning. Some parents may be of the opinion that the methods of imitation, repetition or learning naturally since birth are easier to be applied at home, or are more in tune with their children's learning style. This has made them become doubtful to give full agreement about the effectiveness of this approach.

However, Vygotsky's approach is more effective compared to other approaches, as has been discussed in previous works by Mahdi Dastpak, Fatemeh Behjat, and Ali Taghinezhad (2017) which explained about the effectiveness of Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory compared to the Behaviourism and Nativism theories on children's language acquisition and development. Based on the comparison of the three theories in the past studies, the Social Interaction Theory is the most effective for language acquisition in children. The behaviourism stresses on repetition and practice, which help children remember language, but gives a limited and less flexible communication space. The nativism theory emphasises on the natural language acquisition, but the practical outcome in daily communication is still unclear as this process happens in the brain without clear interactions.

By contrast, Vygotsky's theory lays an emphasis on the social interactions with other people, making language acquisition not only about memorising words, but also about understanding meaning, adapting the language to the context, and developing real communication skills. For example, PPKI students are able to chat, joke around, request for something and express feelings naturally to their parents and other people in their surroundings. Thus, parents need to be confident that by instilling the social interaction at home, their children who are PPKI students can acquire Malay Language easier, other than learning the sentence structures and vocabulary to use the language effectively in their daily lives.

Objective 2: Elaborating the challenges faced by parents in helping PPKI students master Malay Language.

The second objective is to elaborate on the challenges faced by parents in helping PPKI students master Malay Language, with five from 30 respondents of the questionnaire selected for interview, labelled from R1 to R5. To answer this objective, researcher builds four

main themes based on the literature, the language acquisition theory, and previous studies, namely (i) Challenges in Guiding PPKI students and (ii) Steps and Suggestions to Overcome Challenges. The theme division enables researcher to analyse the issue thematically and comprehensively, evaluate the level of challenges in detail, also identifies the dominant challenge that influences the parents' efforts in helping the children master Malay Language. The following is the Table showing the division of subtopics and questions by theme:

Table 4

Division of Sub-topics and Questions by Theme

THEME	SUB TOPIC	EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS
(i) Challenges in guiding PPKI students	1. The main challenge to interact in Malay Language	What are the main challenges that you face when you interact with your child in Malay Language?
	2. Issues of time constraint, work load, child's behaviour	Do factors like time constraint, workload, or child's behaviour give an impact to your efforts in executing social interactions at home?
	3. Lack of guidance, support from school	Have you received any guidance or support from the school or teachers about the way of training your child to speak in Malay Language?
(ii) Steps and Suggestions to Overcome the Challenges	4. The method or approach used by parents to overcome challenges	What are the methods or steps you used to overcome challenges when helping your child to interact in Malay Language?

Theme (i): Challenges faced in guiding PPKI students

Table 5

Conclusion of answers for Theme (i)

SUBTOPIC	RESPONDENT'S CODE	ANSWER
The Main Challenges to Interact in Malay Language	R1	The issue of language inconsistency at home and at school
	R2	The difficulty in understanding the child's emotions and needs
	R3	Mixture of languages from the influence of the digital media
	R4	The difficulty in understanding the child's desire due to his/her difficulty in speaking
	R5	Time constraint due to work commitment
The Issues of Time Constraint, Work load and Child's Behaviour	R1	Workload limits the time spent with the child
	R2	Child's refusal to learn
	R3	Child's unstable emotions
	R4	Time constraint causes the interaction to be restricted.
	R5	Busy work schedule and child's lack of focus
Lack of Guidance or Support from the School	R1	Not receiving any guidance from school and having to make own effort
	R2	No guidance from school and having to make own plans

	R3	Finding own initiative for child's speech treatment
	R4	School prioritising basic skills and not language skills
	R5	Only receive development report

The table above shows the conclusion of the answers for this theme. This theme is important to achieve the second objective of this study, which is to understand the challenges faced by parents in guiding the PPKI students, at the same time helping them to become more aware towards their child's needs and aspects that require improvement. This theme is formed based on previous study by Nur Atiqah and Mohd Nizam (2023) showing that the behaviour of special education students can disrupt learning, evoke some emotional impact, reduce classroom interactions, and contribute to speech delay. The emphasis on various challenges is significant to give an overall picture about the reality of PPKI families and allows for more effective support intervention recommendations. To exhibit this theme comprehensively, three subtopics have been introduced.

The Main Challenges to Speak in Malay Language

The first subtopic for this theme is stressing on the main challenges faced by parents in guiding PPKI students to adopt the Social Interaction Theory. This challenge arises when parents need to weigh various daily responsibilities and obligations. This has indirectly affected their capability in giving full commitment to the consistent and quality guidance to their children. What these parents are going through should not be treated as trivial. This is because, these challenges will influence the smooth process of communication at home and make the efforts to guide the children more challenging. For this subtopic, researcher has commented on this to understand if the challenge leaves an impact to parents' involvement.

Every respondent faces different challenges. The main challenge for R1 in the child's effort to interact using Malay Language is the dominant use of English at school and at the therapy centre. Nonetheless, the use of English as the medium of instruction is unavoidable and it is not appropriate for R1 to forbid the school from using it. At home, couple R1 tends to use a great deal of English. This situation shows that the PPKI students have to deal with an environment that uses a different and inconsistent language. This can affect the acquisition and use of Malay Language in daily interactions. This is very worrying because smooth interactions in Malay Language require ongoing efforts without being disrupted by other languages.

The issue of language inconsistency also happened to one respondent, R3, when helping his/her child interact in Malay Language. Even so, this language mixture stems from the influence of the digital media and video games. PPKI students are more easily exposed to various languages including English and Indonesia that is often mixed with Malay Language. According to R3, words in Indonesian Language often confuse the child as they are similar to Malay Language. Consequently, the child's understanding of, and tendency to use, the Indonesian Language can affect the use of Malay Language in his/her daily communication. The same challenge is experienced by R4 where he/she stated that his/her child's exposure to gadgets and foreign languages like English and Indonesian Language also create a challenge

when it comes to retaining the use of Malay Language consistently at home. Nonetheless, digital devices are not the main problem for R4.

R4 shared the challenge he/she faced since his/her child's early phase of development until the present time. This challenge leaves a great impact to his/her efforts to continue guiding the child to interact in Malay Language. At the early stage, R4 explained that the main difficulty was to understand the child's needs as he/she tended to use sign language and he/she had not acquired any language yet. Parents can only guess what the child is trying to say, and this situation often leads to emotional stress for both parties.

Recalling the process of his/her child growing up, R4 also shared his/her experience about the social pressure he/she faced when his/her child was compared with other children. This is because PPKI students have certain weaknesses compared to other normal children. This respondent often receives negative comments from family and the society about his/her child. Such a pressure has affected parents' emotions and tends to worsen their psychological burden. The next challenge is that, as these PPKI students get older, their parents tend to face access issues, like access to professional treatment and support. According to R4, this normally incurs high costs and the journey from home to the treatment centre is normally very far. However, parents need to keep on exerting their efforts as they lack the knowledge and guidance about methods to stimulate the language development in their PPKI children.

Also, R2 experiences a different main challenge, which is understanding the needs that the child is trying to convey and adapting to their emotional condition. R2 highlighted the fact that high level of patience is needed as the emotions of these students are unstable, and this indirectly influences the effectiveness of their daily interactions. They will start to detach themselves and avoid from communicating with family and the society. This propels parents to pay attention to their child's emotional wellbeing during the interaction. The challenge also demands continuous energy and patience from parents, especially when the child exhibits unpredictable behaviour.

Next, R5 also faces the biggest challenge when interacting with his/her PPKI child in Malay Language, which is time constraint. R5 is one of the parents who are busy working and often coming home late. This is often the cause for fatigue, and the indication for time constraint, impeding the method to be applied. From R5's perspective, it suggests that time constraint and physical fatigue can affect the process of interactions with the children. Other than that, R5 also mentioned that his/her child's lack of focus also becomes the main challenge in realising the Social Interaction Theory approach. PPKI students are easily disrupted by things happening around them, causing them to find it hard to focus on anything in particular. For instance, when parents wish to interact with children, they can be easily disturbed by the noise around them.

All in all, every parent tends to face multiple challenges in guiding PPKI students to use Malay Language. The challenges include language inconsistency, time constraint, fatigue, and the child's unstable emotions. Understanding these challenges is important, to enable the formulation of intervention that can enhance the acquisition of Malay Language and quality of the social interactions of PPKI children.

Issues of Time Constraint, Workload, Child's Behaviour

This subtopic focuses on the challenges faced by parents, related to time constraint, workload and child's behaviour in the effort to guide these PPKI students. Researcher wishes to identify if the implications of these challenges credit parents' capability of conducting consistent and effective guidance. Time constraint and workload can limit parents' opportunity to give full attention in spending time interacting with their children. The child's behaviour that is unpredictable or difficult to concentrate can also add pressure to the parents. It is important to understand these challenges, to evaluate if these factors affect parents' involvement, and to formulate recommendations of support and intervention strategies deemed suitable for parents in guiding the students.

According to R1, the time constraint that happens is due to heavy workload. This burden causes restrictions to the time spent interacting with the child. As its implication, the child spends more time with the partner who is more comfortable teaching the child in English. This situation shows that parents' time constraint and workload reduce the opportunity for the parents to implement the social interaction approach in Malay Language consistently, and further affects parents' engagement in their children's language development. This situation leads to the use of different languages which can confuse the children. The statement issued by R1 also echoes that of R4.

Based on the interview session with R4, time constraint has left a significant impact to their efforts to continue their social interactions at home with their special children. Nevertheless, R4 contended that they continue to make efforts, by interacting in Malay Language. The efforts include reprimanding the child for producing wrong sentences or words, and giving explanation for the child's questions in Malay Language. Other than that, R5 also shared the same opinion with R4. Despite being busy at work, R5 also stressed that he/she has made the effort to interact with his/her child, especially during his/her free time.

Respondent asserted that although challenges do exist, the guidance does not stop fully and he/she has made necessary efforts to the best of his/her ability. This situation emphasises parents' consistency and commitment as significant icons in ensuring social interactions and the use of Malay Language, despite being restricted by time and other challenges.

There are also respondents who do not have any time constraint, as their work schedule is quite flexible. That said, this does not mean that they do not experience other challenges, like their children's behaviour. According to R3, PPKI students find it difficult to speak actively and they also have rather sensitive emotions. For example, they can easily cry if they receive instructions in a high or harsh tone of voice. Thus, interactions have to be done softly and with full of patience. Parents always need to adapt the communication approach to make sure that interactions can take place without causing any emotional strain to their child. Other than the students' emotional instability, their refusal to learn is also a challenge to their parents.

R2 explained that a child's attitude that he/she refuses to learn and is lazy, has dampened parents' efforts to guide. Parents need to coax their children so that they can cooperate during the learning session. Resulting from this attitude, parents need to enhance their level of patience to ensure that the children can give responses without exerting emotional and

physical pressures to them. If parents do not prioritise children's emotions, consistent and quality interactions are difficult to achieve as children do not give full cooperation when their emotions are disturbed. Other challenges faced by the children include their lack of concentration and they often act beyond parents' control. The combination of these traits has given a direct impact to the effectiveness of the social interaction guidance, including the efforts to retain the use of Malay Language consistently at home.

Based on the findings gathered from all respondents, clearly challenges related to time constraint, workload, and child's behaviour leave a great impact on the parents' efforts in guiding the PPKI students. Time constraint and work load can restrict parents' chance to give full attention in the social interactions, whereas children's unpredictable behaviour, their lack of focus or refusal to cooperate can really challenge parents' patience and extra energy.

The Lack of Guidance or Support from the School

This subtopic concerns the challenges experienced by parents with regard to the scarcity of guidance or support from the school when it comes the effort to guide PPKI students. Researcher seeks to identify if the school does give guidance, or support that can help parents implement the social interactions and guide children's language development. This is important to know if parents obtain sufficient help from the school or if they need to take their own initiatives in guiding their children. An understanding of this situation can evaluate the role of the school in supporting parents guiding their children in language acquisition.

Based on the interview, every respondent had given different statements. For instance, R1 stated that there is no guidance or support given to the parents by the school about guiding their PPKI children at home. With the lack of guidance, R1 needs to find his/her own way and lay out his/her own strategy to guide his/her child. The effort includes sending the child to a speech therapy centre. This experience provides an initial idea that parents may have to deal with the extra pressure when no guideline or support is provided.

This is similar to R2 who stated that the school does not establish any clear guideline or support for parents when it comes to guiding their PPKI children at home. However, R2 mentioned that the teaching and learning at school tends to be more interesting. For example, writing simple sentences, reading an excerpt a week, and that every activity is accompanied by encouragement or reward, such as stickers as the reward for enhancing the students' motivation. This is because of the fact that PPKI students do not open their books at home. Therefore, parents have to work on their own in making sure that their children continue to learn. As a result of this lack of support, is that parents need to take full initiative in planning their children's learning activities, and automatically this will add to their work pressure and burden.

Other respondents like R4 also have never received any specific guidance from the school to guide PPKI students' speech or language development at home. Every effort made outside school hours needs to be made and planned by the parents themselves. According to R4, the school only concentrates on the basic skills and development of the PPKI students. Having interviewed these respondents, the lack of support has caused parents to make full effort in finding the right support materials or strategies that can guide their children.

However, R3 did get little guidance from the school, especially on the syllables exercise at home. The training was given as the PPKI student easily forgets and finds it hard to focus. R3 also takes his/her own initiative to look for a private treatment centre that can guide his/her child's language acquisition and development. Other than that, R5 also received help from the school. Nonetheless, the guidance given was only in the form of homework to PPKI students. The parents have never received specific guidance from the school about the way to train their children to speak at home. The school only prepares the child's development report without being accompanied by any guideline or samples of activities that can be executed at home. According to R5, if the school prepares a practical communication technique or activity, parents are able to guide the acquisition of Malay Language. As the impact, parents need to depend fully on their own initiative to plan and implement the speaking session, other than having their own workload and emotional stress.

Thus, the support and guidance from the school in guiding PPKI students at home are limited and insufficient. The lack of guidance causes parents to take their own initiative to plan the learning activities, to look for support materials, and to send their children to the private treatment centre to ensure that children acquire Malay Language. This situation stresses on the fact that practical support from the school is very much needed to help parents implement the guidance more effectively, at the same time ensuring that the language development and social interaction skills of the PPKI students can be enhanced.

Theme (ii): Steps and Suggestions to Overcome Challenges

Table 5

The conclusion of answers for theme (ii)

SUBTOPIC	RESPONDENT'S CODE	ANSWERS
Method Or Approach Used By Parents To Overcome Challenges	R1	Makes video calls at the workplace
	R2	Encourages the use of technology for children to interact
	R3	Uses game application and interactive animation
	R4	Stresses on parents' self-consolidation
	R5	Uses games to kill the boredom

The table above is the conclusion of the answers given by respondents for this theme. This theme concentrates on the steps taken by the respondents to overcome the challenges faced when guiding the PPKI students. The challenges are the things they experience and these have been mentioned in the previous subtopics. This theme aims to identify the practical strategies used by parents to overcome this issue, including their way of maintaining the consistency of their social interactions in stimulating the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students. Other than surveying the actions that have been done by the respondents, practical suggestions and guidance are also successfully produced as reference for other parents who face the same challenges.

The Method or Approach used by Parents to Overcome Challenges

This subtopic focuses on the method and approach employed by the respondents to overcome challenges in guiding the PPKI students be it related to time constraint, workload, child's behaviour or the lack of guideline from the school. Researcher wishes to know the

specific strategy instilled by parents to ensure that the children's social interactions and development of Malay Language continue to be consistent and effective.

Based on the interview conducted, the issue of time constraint is caused by busy workload, and R1 will ensure that the time to interact and communicate with PPKI children in Malay Language is allocated every day. Although he/she is busy, R1 will resort to meeting his/her child directly at home, and benefit from the digital technology like video calls on WhatsApp to communicate during working hours. All the communication is done in Malay Language to ensure that the child continues to be exposed to, and become familiar with, using the language. A positive technology involvement that is up-to-date can successfully help parents find the way to guide their children.

The technology-based approach that serves as a solution is also carried out by other respondents. For example, to overcome his/her PPKI child's refusal to learn, R2 encourages the use of technology so that the child is exposed to the Malay Language. According to R2, through the technology, the child will use Malay Language to interact online with his/her classmates. For instance, PPKI students tend to communicate with their children in Malay Language be it through phone calls or messages. As a mother, R2 prioritises the child's wishes to try and to stay consistent about using Malay Language in their daily interactions. This approach shows that parents adopt continuous and repeated exposure to stimulate the use of Malay Language.

Apart from that, R3 also employs technology to overcome the issues of boredom and lack of focus among the PPKI students. This initiative is one that encourages interactivity in digital form such as playing-while-learning applications, and animation in Malay Language. It is the same approach used by R5 who uses games as the primary method in guiding students to acquire Malay Language. Games are one of the most effective ways to engage children's interest, especially for PPKI students who require a more flexible and fun approach. Through games, parents can insert the element of teaching Malay Language and indirectly increase their readiness to communicate. Nonetheless, R3 also emphasised the importance of parents choosing the applications that can help in the teaching of syllables, spelling and reading, and not merely games or entertainment.

The use of animation in Malay Language is also highly encouraged to avoid boredom in learning Malay Language. For instance, R1 chose interesting Malay Language cartoons such as 'Upin & Ipin' and 'Omar & Hana' to retain the child's interest towards Malay Language. This approach shows that parents adopt creative and flexible strategies, combine direct interactions, use of technology, and the right selection of media materials to stimulate the use Malay Language in the children's daily lives. The integration of the use of Malay Language in the digital environment helps parents sustain the learning consistency, although they have a busy schedule.

Next, R5 also overcame the problem of attitude, like the fact that the PPKI student easily gets bored and refuses to learn based on the approach of choosing the right time. According to R5, the right time to train the child is when they are in a calm state of mind. Their period of calm is usually in the morning and at the weekend. Parents also tend to use weekends for this purpose because they are off-work at this time. This period also becomes a favourite choice

as the situation is more peaceful and children tend to pay attention better. This approach ensures that the interaction done can become more effective and will not put a stress on the child.

Finally, for the psychological and emotional challenges borne by parents when guiding the PPKI students, R4 encouraged parents to equip themselves first. Consolidating oneself includes enhancing one's patience and openness when guiding the PPKI students. This approach will help parents find the new knowledge and input about positive literacy guidance. Emotional management and parents' behaviour play a great role in determining the effectiveness of the interactions and guidance given to their children.

In addition, R5 also stated that another proactive action that can be taken by parents is by adding knowledge related to the teaching techniques for PPKI students at home. R5 often refers to 'YouTube' videos that display the teaching strategies for PPKI students especially the communication techniques and the methods of introducing basic language. This approach shows that self-development and parents' mental preparation make the early steps in overcoming challenges to guide PPKI students to acquire Malay Language.

All in all, parents employ various strategies to overcome challenges in guiding PPKI students, including benefiting from the technology, choosing the right timing, using games, and providing ongoing exposure in Malay Language. They also take their own initiatives in finding application, learning videos and interactive materials due to the lack of guidance from school. Other than that, self-consolidation that increases patience and openness also helps them in managing their emotional stress when they guide their children. These approaches show that the creativity, consistency and proactive efforts of the parents become the main key in supporting their acquisition of Malay Language.

Conclusion

In sum, this study looks into parents' challenges and views of the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students, especially those having problems in learning and those with autism. In further detail, the finding of the quantitative study shows that social interactions play a significant and effective role in supporting the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students when it is implemented consistently and becomes meaningful to the parents. The quantitative finding shows a high level of agreement among parents towards the first domain related to the use of two-way communication in daily contexts in helping to increase vocabulary, to understand the meaning and to brush up student's confidence to speak. This proves that social interactions are not only the medium of communication but also a space for authentic linguistic acquisition that is harmonious with the principles of Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory.

The qualitative finding, on the other hand, details the reality of the challenges faced by the parents in applying social interactions in an effective way. Challenges like time constraint, emotional fatigue, the influence of digital device, student's inconsistent behaviour, and the lack of environmental support are found to not give any direct impact to the quality and frequency of language interactions at home. However, this finding is also an eye-opener, highlighting the fact that parents' awareness of the importance of the social interactions and

the adaptation efforts based on child's capability are able to reduce the effect of the challenges.

Thus, parents are recommended to carry out social interactions systematically and continuously at home through the two-way communication and students' involvement in daily social activities to strengthen the Malay Language acquisition. The school has to prepare support, in the form of guideline, as guidance to coordinate the approach between the home and the school. For further studies, the comparative studies between parents' approach at home and teachers' approach at school are recommended to evaluate the different strategies and their effect towards the PPKI students' language acquisition. This recommendation can hopefully leave a practical impact to parents and the school, also contribute to the research development in more detail in the fields of language acquisition and special education.

Study Implication

As a whole, this study produces some impact, both academic and practical ones. From the academic standpoint, this study contributes to the consolidation of the basic theory in the field of language acquisition, particularly Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory in the context of special education in Malaysia. The study finding proves that social interactions are not only relevant in children's language acquisition, but it is also very significant in supporting the acquisition of Malay Language among PPKI students who have autism and learning problems. This study also expands the academic discourse by highlighting parents' perspectives as the primary data source, one that still lacks exploration in the study of special education students' language acquisition. Through the combined quantitative and qualitative data, this study gives a more comprehensive picture about the relationship between the theory, daily practices and the reality of the challenges at home. Thus, this study can serve as academic reference in linguistic course, language acquisition, special education and Malay Language pedagogy.

Practically, this study gives a direct implication to parents, teachers and the school. The finding shows that consistent social interactions at home such as chatting, giving feedback, playing games and engaging the child in daily activities are able to increase vocabulary, meaning comprehension and confidence for the PPKI students to use Malay Language. Therefore, parents are recommended to be more aware about their role as the primary language model and to continuously apply two-way communication in their daily lives. This study shows the need for the school to prepare a more systematic and practical guidance for parents. The intervention of the parents and the school has the potential to reduce the possibility of speech delay and to support the language development of the PPKI students holistically.

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