
A Case Study of Parental Involvement in Fostering Their Child's English-Speaking Skills

BUNGA AYU WULANDARI¹, RENY HERYANTI², RIZKI DWIKI REZA USMAN³, AHMAD RIDHA*⁴, AND FORTUNASARI⁵

Abstract

This research investigates how parents support their children's English language development. Interviews with the parents of a nine-year-old Indonesian girl named *Acha* (pseudonym) were conducted to learn more about how they perceived their involvement in their daughter's development of English-speaking abilities. When the research was conducted, *Acha* was a third grader at an elementary school with 364 subscribers on her YouTube channel. Her competence in speaking English is exhibited in her YouTube videos. This research indicates that *Acha's* English language acquisition process has involved her parents' interventions directly and indirectly. This research reveals several helpful practices performed by *Acha's* parents, including early exposure to simple vocabulary, a positive home literacy environment (HLE) situation, encouragement of *Acha* to use English, and facilitation of *Acha's* access to English-language YouTube content. According to the results of this research, *Acha's* parents' practices are mediated by their educational experiences, socioeconomic status, and digital literacy skills. This research demonstrates the beneficial effects of parental participation on children's language development.

Keywords

Incidental learning, parental involvement, second language learning

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^{1&3, 4} Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

² Student-Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

³ Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi, Indonesia; Corresponding author: ahmad.ridha@unja.ac.id

Introduction

This case study aims to examine parental involvement in developing English-speaking skills of a nine-year-old Indonesian girl, *Acha*. The little girl has her own YouTube channel, where she had uploaded 139 videos by the time this research was conducted. *Acha* and her parents live in the provincial capital city of Jambi in Indonesia. The videos are primarily about her daily activities. Interestingly, as displayed in her videos, she speaks English instead of Indonesian language. Identifying the object of this research, *Acha*'s ability to speak English fluently, this research explored how *Acha* has acquired the skills. In particular, the researchers examined her parents' roles in fostering her English-speaking skills.

Informed by the Critical Period Hypothesis, it has long been acknowledged that young children learn a second language more productively (Cameron, 2001). The supporters of this hypothesis believe that the effects are due to children's brains still using the mechanism that facilitated them acquiring their first language. This hypothesis, to some extent, is supported by the theory of the golden age (between 4-11 years old), conceived by Scott and Ytreberg (1990), as the period of fundamental years of children's development. However, Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle (1978) revealed that young children learning a second language before puberty do not automatically pick up the language as effectively as the first language acquisition. Even Brown (2007) argued that it is merely a myth that learning a second language earlier guarantees better results than learning it later. He said that adults had developed notable cognitive faculties and abstract thinking capacity to grasp instruction and conception, which helped them acquire the new language. The dichotomy of the effective age to learn a second language has informed the researchers of this current research in portraying the findings of this research.

McLaughlin (1987) asserted that children have the potential to attain a native-like accent because they work out the target language phonology better than adults. It is also possibly because children do not hesitate to utter foreign words, unlike adult English learners who are cautious about pronouncing them. However, Harley et al. (1995) argued that children learn L2 grammar slower than older learners. Instead, for children, spoken language facilitates them to experience, comprehend, exercise, and acquire the new language (Cameron, 2001). Furthermore, research by Mitchel and Martin (1997) showed children produced different types of languages depending on teachers' beliefs and styles. Cameron (2001) explained further that children learning a second language through immersion acquire it more effectively than children learning it as a subject lesson at school. Understandably, children who begin to learn English early will acquire the language through the spoken form of the language. Therefore, a new language is mainly presented orally, comprehended orally and aurally, exercised, and utilized orally.

Assuming *Acha*, who was in the third grade of elementary school at the time this research took place, had English as a subject for less than two hours a week, the researchers pursued her parents' involvement in fostering her ability to speak English fluently. As a result, the researchers believed her English-speaking fluency had developed beyond her formal English classes. Based on Vygotsky's theory that other people have an impact on

children's cognitive development in their environment, this research looks at *Acha's* parents' attitudes and behaviours concerning their capacity to have an impact on *Acha's* life and aid in her learning to speak English. This research, therefore, focuses on exploring:

1. How do *Acha's* parents present English to *Acha*?
2. Why do *Acha's* parents support *Acha* in acquiring English?
3. How do *Acha's* parents support *Acha* in developing her English-speaking skills?

The importance of this research lies in its illustration of helpful parenting practices for developing children's English-speaking skills. As a result, the situation of *Acha's* fluency in English merits further investigation, which is what this research did. The relevant research on parental engagement and the variables influencing parental involvement in children's education is reviewed in the section that follows.

Literature Review

Parental involvement

According to Brito and Waller (1994), parent involvement can be conceived as parents' participation in various school-related activities, such as once or regular visits to parent-teacher meetings or school events. Tomlinson (1991) described four forms of parental involvement: exchanging information, engaging personally in educational issues, and informal and formal engagement. Epstein (1995) proposed inclusive types of home and school relationships consisting of parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Şad and Gürbüzürk (2013) revealed that parents preferred to talk directly with their children, provide supporting facilities at home, encourage their children's improvement, and help out with homework rather than doing volunteer jobs at school.

Three decades ago, several academics emphasized the positive correlation between parental involvement and students' academic achievement. Henderson (1987) stated that parental involvement promotes school achievement. Similarly, Epstein (1992) contended that students whose parents are attentive, well-informed, supportive, and engaged would likely have better academic work and positive attitudes at school. Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2016) suggested that parents' engagement influences children's academic achievement and social, emotional, psychological, and interactional development.

Kalayci and Öz (2018) explained that family, school, and community have their part in supporting children's development. Parents, as the first teachers of their children, prolong their roles when their kids begin their educational journey by collaborating with teachers at school. In the previous research conducted by Georgiou (1997), it was indicated that parents who emphasize achievement and personality improvement positively related to children's achievement at school. On the contrary, parents who emphasize pressure have an adversarial relationship with children's academic achievement. Therefore, it should be highlighted that psychological support will contribute to good achievement, while over help and pressure from parents could result in unexpected outcomes.

The researchers in this research do not find the efforts to describe parent engagement satisfactory because the definition restricts involvement in school-related

activities rather than all activities in children's lives. The purpose of the current research is to examine the English fluency of nine-year-old *Acha*, as demonstrated in her YouTube videos, without focusing solely on her academic performance. The researchers broaden the scope of parents' involvement in this current research beyond the school accomplishment criterion to explore *Acha's* capacity to speak English fluently.

Factors affecting parental involvement in children's education

This current research also addresses the factors affecting parental engagement. It has been reported that socioeconomic status, parents' education, teaching staff, administrative staff's attitudes, and culture had influenced parents' choices to be involved in their children's education. For example, [Calzada et al. \(2015\)](#) declared that parents of low social-economic status exhibited less engagement in their children's education. [Idris et al. \(2020\)](#) argued that educated fathers and mothers positively correlate with their children's academic achievement. They explained that parents' educational background contributes to their children's attainment of intelligence and values. Educational experiences that parents have had help their children to form their performances which direct them to thrive in an educational pathway. Parents and children's interactions, such as parents' support, sharing, communication, and help to decide educational decisions, contribute positively to students' academic achievement ([Idris et al., 2020](#)). [Harb and El-Sharawi \(2006\)](#) even stated that students' educational accomplishment was influenced by home organizations informed by their understanding and educational experiences.

[Muraina and Ajayi \(2011\)](#) declared that the higher accomplishment of parents in their educational journey, the higher they will be aware and conscientious of their children's education. Interestingly, [Jeynes \(2007\)](#) claimed that parents with low educational backgrounds do not strongly influence their children's educational attainment because of their lack of psychological factors. However, [Wati \(2015\)](#) revealed that parents with lower education and income were more enthusiastic about supporting their children's education. Yet, as her research revealed, they could not provide foreign language resources for their children due to financial restraints.

Methodology

Utilizing a qualitative approach, this research obtained information about parents' involvement in fostering *Acha's* ability to speak English fluently. [Creswell \(2017\)](#) stated that a qualitative research design is an approach to delve into and comprehend personal experiences. This research is a case study by the nature of its inquiry. [Brown et al. \(2009\)](#) illustrated a qualitative case study as a study of an individual's experiences. Therefore, this case study provided more extensive insights into parents' involvement in developing their child's language acquisition.

The participants of this research are the parents of *Acha* (a pseudonym), a nine-year-old girl who speaks English fluently, as demonstrated in her videos on her YouTube Channel. The parents confirmed their acceptance to participate in the research by signing a consent form, and they also acknowledged that the research could result in the release of their daughter's identity and YouTube videos. Both *Acha's* parents hold bachelor's

degrees, her father graduated in economics, and her mother graduated in computer science. Her father works as a civil servant while her mum stays at home. *Acha* is the first daughter of two children in the family. The second child is a boy born a few months before the data for this research was collected. Thus, *Acha* and her brother are eight years apart. When this research was taking place, she was in the third grade at a private elementary school.

The researchers collected the data by interviewing *Acha's* father and mother individually for about 60 minutes each at their home. The interviews were conducted in the Indonesian language, *Bahasa Indonesia*, and audio recorded. The researchers prepared a set of guiding question for the semi-structured interview. It consisted of primary inquiries about *Acha's* parents' educational backgrounds, their contribution in presenting English to her, their intention to have her speak English, and their practices to facilitate her development of English-speaking skills.

The researchers listened to the audio-recorded data collected from the interviews three times to get familiar with them. The data were then transcribed into verbatim transcription manually. The researchers then read the transcription three times before organizing the coding process to answer the inquiry of this research. According to [Saldaña \(2015\)](#), coding is a more accurate way to organize a particular and realistic perspective from the interviews. Next, the data was organized into keywords and crucial responses. Finally, the data that was considered unrelated to the research inquiry was removed before the researchers interpreted the data. The constant comparative method, recommended by [Glaser \(1965\)](#), was used in this research to compare incidences from the data, distinguish the elements, examine the correlation, and put them into a representation to explain the issues researched.

Findings and Discussion

The central inquiry of this research is to examine parental involvement in fostering their child's English-speaking skills, a case study of *Acha's* ability to speak English fluently. The discussions below centered around parents' contribution in presenting English to their child, their intention to have their child speaks English, and practices to help their child develop her English-speaking skills.

Theme 1: parents' contribution in presenting English to Acha

Both *Acha's* parents graduated from university. Her father works as a civil servant while her mum chooses to stay home. They reside in a nice home in a peaceful neighbourhood. *Acha* attends a prominent private school. She was the only child of her parents for around eight years. Just before the research was taking place, her mum gave birth to her baby brother. A brief examination of the family has given the researchers hints that the parents have sufficient resources and time availability to provide *Acha* with facilities and support to develop her potential.

Acha's mother does not have any formal English language education background. However, although *Acha* first acquired Bahasa Indonesia when she was an infant, her mother

used to greet *Acha* in English and introduced *Acha* to basic vocabularies, such as colours and things around us. She said,

“Since she was a baby, I’ve used to speak simple English with her, for example, saying hello or good morning, and I’ve used some daily vocabulary, for example, colours and things around us.”

Acha’s parents also bought her children’s storybooks in English. *Acha*’s mother confessed that she introduced *Acha* to English programs on YouTube.

“We showed *Acha* the English educational videos we had found on YouTube, which included common words and phrases. I think that’s when she first started learning to speak English.”

A lot of research validated that parents have contributed to children’s linguistics and social skills development (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Mooij et al. (2014) also suggested that parents’ education influences their children’s learning achievement. This current research corroborates the previous research because the participants are educated so that with their academic experiences, they can provide proper support for *Acha*. Idris et al. (2020) also argued that educated parents communicate with their children at home using sound vocabulary, good pronunciation, and logical arguments in discussion contribute to children’s language development. As *Acha* was once the only child of her parents for eight years, there was sufficient room for her parents to spend time with *Acha*. Her mother has preferred to stay home and contributed to developing *Acha*’s self-esteem. As indicated by Idris et al. (2020), educated mothers have high self-esteem, which in turn nurtures their children’s confidence. The researchers agree that a mother is a fundamental part of children’s lives, and she can inspire children’s lives.

At home, *Acha* has been facilitated by a learning-friendly environment supported by their parents informed by their educational experiences. Her parents have provided basic facilities, including a Wi-Fi connection, for *Acha* to explore the potential beyond the school curriculum. Jeynes (2007) explained that educated parents’ views reflect in the educational facilities they provide for their children. Hanafi (2008) said educated parents adopt innovative academic environments for their children at home. Educated parents are also claimed to be motivating and assisting in children’s educational tasks, which in turn build children’s beliefs about their parents and increase their self-confidence (Idris et al., 2020). *Acha*’s father confirmed that they started introducing simple vocabulary to *Acha* early. He said,

“At the age of 4, she spoke English fluently as if it was her mother tongue.”

Cameron (2001) believed that starting to learn English very early benefits children in terms of native-like fluency attainment. *Acha*, in this research, has the benefits of learning and using English at an early age. Thus, it is reasonable to say that *Acha* has the fluency to speak English as if it is her mother tongue.

We have mentioned that *Acha's* mother contributes significantly to assisting her in developing her English-speaking skills and promoting her self-confidence. Meanwhile, as the sole breadwinner, *Acha's* father contributes directly to providing facilities at home. He affords a lovely home in a good environment, basic daily needs, books, toys, and extra facilities for *Acha*. For example, by attaining digital literacy, *Acha's* father has cared enough to record *Acha's* activities and upload them on YouTube. It justifies parents' role in direct assistance for their children's computer-mediated assignments (Buckingham & Alpaslan, 2017). As Lancker and Parolin (2020) stated, home circumstances mediate students' learning. The privilege *Acha* has with digital technology has been possible due to her parents' help. *Acha's* father said,

“We set up a YouTube channel and posted *Acha's* video for keeping family memory. It turns out she really likes it and now she wants to produce at least one video every week. Sometimes, she begs me to buy her toys and film her unboxing the toys. There were times when she recorded herself without our assistance, but we always remind her that before uploading it on YouTube, she needs to provide it to us so we could review the stuff she created.”

Acha could be seen in several videos unwrapping brand-new toys that her parents had bought for her. Suleman et al. (2012) stated that parents who earn large salaries have flexibility in supporting their children's needs and providing extra facilities for a positive influence on their children's academic achievement. Kuchah (2018) found that parents' socioeconomic status (SES) is correlated with the resources they provide to help their kids acquire a second language. Butler (2015) previously mentioned that the connection could also be due to more out-of-class chances to use a second language.

Acha's fluency in speaking skills and her parents' socioeconomic status corroborate previous studies by Butler (2013) and Huang et al. (2018), which reported positive connections between children's interest and success in learning a second language. The research also informed that students with high socioeconomic status parents surpassed their friends with low socioeconomic status parents in terms of speaking skills. As *Acha* in this research, the children also had the high motivation and practical approaches to learning the second language (Shin & So, 2018).

Theme 2: Parents' intention to have Acha knows English

The interview with *Acha's* parents revealed that they are both aware of how good English proficiency opens a wide range of potential opportunities for *Acha's* professional and personal life in the future. Most parents today believe that facilitating their children in acquiring English is one of the best preparations they give them. *Acha's* mother, in particular, said,

“We are now living in a digital age. Therefore, kids must learn technology, and the primary language of technology is English. We introduced English to

Acha as early as possible because, for example, she could use a laptop at an early age so she could find resources to support her study. It will be beneficial for her academic life and her future.

Acha's parents are concerned that good English competence will help *Acha* thriving in a digital environment because they understand most visited websites are in English. In fact, according to Web Technology Surveys, English is used by 61.7 % of all the websites whose content language we know (https://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/content_language retrieved on 15 July 2022). Therefore, *Acha's* parents' opinion is justified. These concerns initiate them to support and assist *Acha* in nurturing her English. *Acha's* father mentioned that he did not push *Acha* to learn English. Knowing that *Acha* had used English as a means of communication instead of learning English formally, they facilitated *Acha* to develop her competence in English speaking skills.

“I am aware that in the future, wherever she goes, whatever she does if she has good English, she will find it very helpful.”

Acha's father relates his opinion to the opportunities that *Acha* might have, for example, for her future education, job opportunities, and traveling to foreign countries. *Acha's* father understands that even in Indonesia, universities expect their students to have a certain level of English indicated by the English unit that should be taken and the English test at the end of the study period. Like any other parents today who have realized that many scholarships are offered to pursue education in foreign countries, *Acha's* parents also hope their daughter has the fortune. Employers frequently state in current job postings that they are looking for individuals with strong English communication skills, as well as the ability to comprehend IT software, user guides, and other documentation, which is frequently written in English. This research illustrates *Acha's* parents' favourable attitudes toward English, which, as several studies have demonstrated, play a significant role in defining language acquisition achievement (Berowa et al., 2018). Their attitudes eventually shaped *Acha's* positive attitude toward English.

With parents' awareness of the potential use of English for their kids today and tomorrow, many parents are inspired to support their kids in acquiring English. However, young English learners still need help from their parents because, as Tao and Xu (2022) argued, this group of learners lacks self-regulated learning capacity. The current research also indicates that *Acha*, nevertheless her inclination to learn English, and her parents' rationales for having her ability to speak English have regulated her English skills development.

Theme 3: Parents' practices to help Acha developing English-speaking skills

As mentioned earlier, *Acha's* parents explained how they have helped *Acha* attain English from an early age. Initially, they provided *Acha* with simple vocabulary related to daily activities such as colors, fruits, and household appliances. Then, they purposely use some English in their daily conversation. In the interview with *Acha's* mother, she preferred *Acha* to learn English enjoyably. *Acha's* mother said,

“I have wanted *Acha* to like speaking in English and find it thrilling. I purposively used some English in our regular talk. She is now more interested in English than Bahasa Indonesia because she has grown so fond of it.”

The advantages of learning English for *Acha's* academic, personal, and professional lives are well known to *Acha's* parents, but they have never fully conveyed them to *Acha*. Maybe it was *Acha's* age. Up until now, their inspiration for *Acha* has only come from a sense of enjoyment that speaking English is awesome and thrilling.

Acha has been introduced to English literature and multimedia resources at home, where she has spent most of her time learning the language. *Acha's* parents confirmed that they had set up English movies or videos, for instance, for *Acha* to learn the language, even though most of these were not formal English education programs. As a result, *Acha* has undergone incidental learning or *en passant*. *Acha* gained vocabulary and a better understanding of grammatical structure from watching YouTube videos. Since English is currently the most widely spoken language, children have the opportunity to learn the language before enrolling in formal English classes. Huckin and Coady (1999) defined this process as a “by-product, not the target, of the main cognitive activity” (p. 182). In addition, borrowing terms from Kuppens (2010), *Acha's* way of acquiring English is termed “incidental foreign language acquisition from media exposure” (P. 65).

From *Acha's* case, it can be learned that providing digital learning resources has proven helpful in exposing children to English. This finding supports Uchikoshi's research (2006), which reported that watching educational TV programs is positively associated with children's development of oral language and literacy skills. However, it should be noted that, as mentioned before, *Acha* watched more entertaining videos instead of educational videos. *Acha's* father said,

“We initially helped *Acha* by providing her with English-language children's movies. Then, we also got her English-language books because it is so easy to find bilingual English-Bahasa Indonesian books these days.”

The home literacy model recommended by Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) suggested that the activities of a home literacy environment fall into two independent dimensions, namely informal literacy experiences and formal literacy instruction. The activities practiced by *Acha's* parents are categorized as informal home literacy experiences. Yeung and King (2015) explained that informal home literacy activities influenced listening and speaking development. When *Acha* was younger and unable to read, her parents read aloud to her from books. Some research has justified that parent-child reading supports young children's language and literacy skills (Bus et al., 1995; Scarborough et al., 1991). In addition, Chiu and McBride-Chang (2010) explained that children's oral language and literacy skills were associated with books available at home. Another research by Johnson et al. (2008) informed that children with more than 30 books have a higher vocabulary than those with fewer books at home.

Acha's parents encouraged *Acha* by telling her stories about people who were fluent in English, which inspired her. *Acha* formerly wished to produce YouTube videos. Her parents encouraged her to create the videos in English. *Acha's* mother said,

“We asked her whether she could create English-language videos when she wanted to create a video for YouTube. I said to her, making a YouTube video was something that many Indonesian children did, but if you did it in English, it would stand out and be cool. She enthusiastically agreed and was eager to accomplish that.”

Göktürk (2016) stated that video recording benefits second-language learners' speaking competencies, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency. Self-recording videos have also been suggested by several researchers to promote second language learners' paralinguistics use skills, self-confidence, and enthusiasm, and to moderate students' anxiety, as well as to increase students' skills in information and communication technology (Hakim, 2016; Menggo et al., 2019; Muslem & Abbas, 2017). This research suggests a self-recording video for *Acha* has facilitated her speaking skills development and confidence. *Acha's* mother explained that she realized perhaps she made mistakes in pronouncing some words,

“We use English children's movies or content on YouTube to familiarize *Acha* with proper and correct pronunciation because we realize that ours perhaps are not accurate.”

She continued,

“*Acha* watched many English children's movies and videos on YouTube, and we also gave *Acha* lots of English books.”

Lefever (2010) investigated 182 children's English skills and revealed that participants in his research showed a basic understanding of spoken and written English and were involved in simple English conversations before they started formal English instruction. Lefever (2010) was confident that the variety and quantity of language input children received in a naturalistic environment supported their English skills. *Acha* has mainly watched videos on YouTube daily for entertainment, providing her natural environment to acquire English. Additionally, Maness (2004) argued that learners can have positive input when they watch authentic situation videos.

Some research has suggested that multimedia such as video is effective for learning (Zahn et al., 2011; Zahn et al., 2010). One of many social media platforms that provides viewers with videos and has been acknowledged as an appealing social medium that has influenced education is YouTube (Bonk, 2009). Duffy (2008) noted that the use of YouTube by English instructors is growing. It is due to easy and fast access to various videos needed by the instructors for their students. Moghavvemi et al. (2018) recommended YouTube as an effective learning instrument that instructors can integrate into the courses by using relevant videos to the subject. Some research has proven the effectiveness of integrating YouTube into traditional classroom settings (Clifton & Mann, 2011; Dupuis et al., 2013; Johnson &

Mayer, 2009). The research was mainly conducted in a higher education setting. Meanwhile, the discussion of the effectiveness of using YouTube in learning English for children was still under-researched.

Although this research indicated the positive contribution of utilizing YouTube as a medium for enhancing English speaking skills, parents' supervision towards the use of YouTube by their children is highly required. Parents are suggested to download YouTube Kids app for their children and use a family link to create a Google account, set up parental controls, and turn on restricted mode either on YouTube or in the gadget. Therefore, parents can monitor their kids' access to YouTube and screen time.

Conclusion

From the findings and discussion about *Acha's* ability to speak English fluently, the researchers suggest that the home literacy environment (HLE) aspects have influenced *Acha's* speaking skills. Indonesian students learn English as a foreign language as a school subject and rarely practice English for daily communication. However, many Indonesian students have undergone informal experiences of learning and using English. In this case, *Acha*, whose parents practiced shared reading and home-teaching to help *Acha* acquire English. *Acha's* parents have positively portrayed English to *Acha* so that *Acha* has acquired English without hesitation. Growing up, *Acha* then had the second language input dominantly from videos she watched on YouTube. *Acha's* parents' role is crucial in monitoring *Acha's* access to YouTube. *Acha* has not been immersed in the English language environment, but she has been exposed to English from media exposure, which has facilitated her acquiring English. From the findings of this research, there is an underlying premise of the benefits of using YouTube to foster children's self-regulated learning.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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Human Participants

Participant and research place were masked to protect their confidentiality.

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Biographical Notes

BUNGA AYU WULANDARI, PhD. is working at the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi, Indonesia.

RENY HERYANTI is working at the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi, Indonesia.

RIZKI DWIKI REZA USMAN was a student at the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi, Indonesia.

AHMAD RIDHA, MA. is working at the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi, Indonesia.

DR. FORTUNSARI is working at the Indonesian Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi, Indonesia.