



Parents with Different Mother-Tongue and its Effect on their Children's Language Identity

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the effects of parents with different mother-tongue on their children's language identity since the native language is very important in every individual because a child's first language is part of the social, personal, and cultural identity. The participants were 10 pairs of parents with different native languages. The participants are chosen based on a criterion that male participants must have the same native languages and female participants must have different native languages. Every male participant in this study has the same Tagalog language, while the female participants have different languages, namely Bisaya and Bicolano. The researcher used qualitative and quantitative research methods consisting of questionnaires and interviews. The results showed that if parents want to teach their children to learn both native languages, the one-parent-one language approach is the best practice because it is easier to implement and use. The research shows that parent often finds ways to motivate his/her children to use the native language he/she had; it also reveals that somehow, parents are still providing and using some ways or techniques and exerting efforts to these techniques to promote their native language to their children. This study would exemplify the possible factors affecting having a parent with different native languages to the language identity of their children.

Keywords: Language identity, L1, Mother-tongue, Native language, Sociocultural theory.

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Contribution of this paper to the literature

The data of this study is based on new knowledge and facts. The study results show the best practice for teaching children the mother tongue of parents with different L1. Since native language is very important in every individual because a child's first language is part of the personal, social, and cultural identity.

1. Introduction

Language acquisition is the excellence of human endeavor. Every person learns to understand and speak at least one of their languages in childhood: their mother tongue. It's a process that seems to happen without apparent effort. Learning a second language, especially among adults, poses more challenges. This study aims to compile quality monographs on language acquisition. This series is aimed at people who want to learn more about language acquisition issues in general and/or language acquisition in specific contexts.

Meanwhile, parents play a vital role in the overall development of their children; one of these roles is setting their children's "language identity," the language their children use. Language, aside from culture, is fundamental to a child's identity. It helps the child to know who she is and where she came from and be confident of her identity. This is where parents take place concerning their place in this matter, but problems may occur in the child's language if the child's parents have a different native language or L1. Pearson (2008) believes linguistic input to be the greatest factor that parents and communities can provide; if there is enough input, there will be learning. "Without interacting with people using the language, no learning takes place. Without enough interaction, learning can take place, but the children do not reach enough of a comfort level in the language that they will willingly use it."

Juan-Garau and Pérez-Vidal (2001) found that high-quality interaction, adult recasts (a form of correcting linguistic mistakes through correctly recasting the proper utterance to the child), and focused language input in the home language by the parent contributed to the degree of home language use by the child. All these definitions infer that linguistic input and interactions of parents are big factors that contribute to concluding what language their children will use. Having parents with different languages does make it harder to conclude what language must be used or if one language will be labeled as "more important" and the other as "less important."

Parents treat their children as a full communication partner in a small conversation at home, this can be a tricky balance to talk to them as if they are adults, but through this process, parents can improve their language skills. On the other side, they should know the language development of their children and the practices as well as the techniques that they can use in teaching and promoting both of their native languages.

Knowing the effects on the child's language identity of having parents with different native languages will make the parents aware if their children are having a hard time learning two different languages and what help they can give their children regarding this matter. Also, parents will know what their role in the language development of their children will be. On the other hand, the children can choose whether to use both languages or use one of the two languages. As for the experts, if parents want to teach their children two different languages, they can provide some techniques and methods to do it effectively.

The researcher's aim in this study is to ascertain the effects of parents with different mother-tongue on the language identity of their children since parents make a huge contribution to their children's language development.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The study's general objective is to analyze the effects of parents with different mother-tongue on the language identity of their children. The specific objectives of the study are the following:

1. To know the children's language development in terms of.
 - a. Exposure to the languages spoken by the parents.
 - b. Children's language history.
 - c. Current language usage.
2. The practice that the parents can use in teaching their languages.
3. To understand the way/s the parents promote their mother tongue to their children.

1.2. Related Theories

Social interactions or experiences are the most effective way to learn. The most important thing for a person to develop is to learn the language. Language is the means for an individual to communicate, mostly learned through social interactions. As early as childhood, a person is already developing and learning his language through his interactions in his environment, especially with his parents and siblings or with other people around him.

According to the interaction theory of language development, exposure to language in the child's surroundings and a person's natural biological capacity for language acquisition work together to help a person learn a language. It acknowledges that biological and environmental influences on language development are both significant. Additionally, it holds that children naturally engage with their environment, particularly their parents or caregivers, leading to language development. Finally, language develops because kids connect with the people who matter most.

Given that infants can be impacted by their surroundings, nurture arguments are also included in Vygotsky's social interactionist theory and the language input children receive from their caregivers. According to the interaction theory, language is only learned through interaction with adults and older children and is only useful for conversation. In early childhood development, since social interaction initially equips the child with the means of comprehending their behavior and how they see the outside world, it highlights the importance of the culture and environment in which the language is learned.

Additionally, Vygotsky believed that language was man's most powerful tool and a way for him to interact with the outside world, and language is said to develop from social interactions for communication that language develops from social interactions for communication purposes. Family, especially parents, as part of these social interactions and the basis of a child's interaction, is reinforced and affects a child's language development.

Moreover, Bruner's learning theory is also concerned with the importance of social interaction in a child's learning development. Bruner, Like Vygotsky, emphasizes a child's environment, especially the social environment;

Both parties concur that adults should actively support children's learning. Like Vygotsky, Bruner stressed the social aspect of learning and suggested that others should scaffold a child's skill development (McLeod, 2008). Bruner's learning theory is also concerned with language. For Bruner cited at McLeod (2008) the improved capacity to deal with abstract concepts depends on the language. According to Bruner, language may code inputs and liberate a person from the limitations of focusing exclusively on appearances, resulting in a more complicated but flexible cognition. Bruner underlines the crucial role of the social and interactional milieu in a young child's language acquisition. He does not assert, though, that language can be learned exclusively from data gleaned from the social environment in which it is encountered. Instead, he sees it as a system of support that reinforces the child's propensity to develop a linguistic system (Bruner, 1975, 1983 cited at Clibbens (1993)). Bruner introduced the term "scaffolding" to describe how young children learn oral language. Young children are given the instinctive frameworks to learn a language by their parents when they first begin learning to talk. Classic examples include read-alouds and bedtime stories. Concerning the above statements, the usage-based theory suggests that children develop their language in the beginning through concrete constructions based on individual words or frames based on the speech they hear and use. According to Tomasello (2003) the theory developer, this means that children learn language from their encounters with it, and as they use it, a linguistic structure develops. Furthermore, Saxton (2010) research shows that the more frequently a linguistic form appears in the input, the more frequently the child experiences it and the more strongly the child represents it. In the future, when they use it themselves, it will activate more quickly. As a result, the child's mental image is reinforced or solidified, And the more firmly established a form is, the more likely it is to act as the foundation for the child's verbal output.

Sociocultural theory by Levs Vygotsky declares that social interaction within the family and with knowledgeable community members is the primary means by which children acquire behaviors and cognitive processes relevant to their society. In this situation, adult or peer assistance is crucial to growth. The goal of sociocultural theory (SCT) is to suggest that the best way to learn a language is to do so from where it is being used and to interact with native speakers. Sociocultural theory holds that language can be learned quickly by allowing students to socialize and interact with either other learners or with speakers of the language they are learning (Aimin, 2013).

Another concept that is connected to social interactions is the human ecology theory. The ecological systems theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner as cited in Sincero (2012) asserts that people experience various settings throughout their lives that may have differing degrees of influence on their behavior. The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem are some of these systems. Language developments can be included in this behavior. In the said five systems, in microsystem, where the direct interaction is happening within our family, neighbors, and other people, as well as in the exosystem, are the systems that are most close in the influence of parents in the development of their children. The theories stated above have different views regarding language development, but all these theories point out one major concern, which is how language development is reinforced by interactions, most especially through social interactions.

1.3. Related Literature

A person is exposed to their native language or mother tongue from birth or during a vital period. Parents are their children's first teachers in the early years — exploring nature, reading together, and counting together. When a young child begins formal school, the parent's job is to show him how the school can extend the learning you began together at home and how exciting and meaningful this learning can be. In many cases, it requires parents to use and teach their language as a primary language at home or in a wider community. Parents primarily relied on their personal experiences with their native language learning in making decisions for their children's language. They explore how they make this decision; how do parents decide which language to teach their children if they have two different native languages. Every spoken language in the world is said to represent a unique culture, melody, color, and asset, according to research by Guvercin (2010). The mother tongue is undoubtedly one of our lives greatest treasures for everyone. Our obligation is to protect it, keep it up, and pass it on from one generation to the next. Whether we are urged by necessity or for other reasons, learning another language brings many advantages.

Miller (2006) believed that one factor in learning a certain language is the child's comfort in the current place of residence. Most children move to a new place because of a parent's job, not by choice. Because of this, a person's motivation to learn a new language may differ depending on whether they arrived willingly. Fortunately, if a youngster feels accepted by their teachers and encouraged by their parents, their attitude can change, even if they are first dissatisfied. The present study would exemplify the possible factors affecting having a parent with different native languages to the language identity of their children.

1.4. Methods of the Study

To have a broad and genuine background of the effects of parents with different L1 on the language identity of their children, the researcher used qualitative and quantitative research methods consisting of questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire was adopted from a study, an article, and a journal. The first part of the questionnaire was adopted from the studies of Hardin, Scott-Little, and Mereoiu (2013) it has three parts: (a) the child's family context, (b) the child's language history, and (c) the child's current language. The second part was from an article written by Bélanger (2014). Lastly, the third part was derived from a journal written by Guvercin (2010).

Interviews were also used to collect data on the practice/s that parents can use in teaching their language and enhance the data from the questionnaire. Some of the answers in the interviews have been transcribed, which are used to explain the author's analysis.

1.5. Participants of the Study

The participants were ten (10) pairs of parents with different native languages. The participants were chosen based on a criterion that male participants must have the same native languages and female participants must have different native languages. Every male participant in this study has the same Tagalog language, while the female participants have different languages, namely Bisaya and Bicolano.

2. Results and Discussions

The following discussion analyzes and interprets data gathered from 10 pairs of parents with different native languages namely Tagalog, Bisaya, and Bicolano. The participants are grouped by pairs according to their native language; in every pair, the father must acquire a Tagalog native language, and the mother may acquire either Bisaya or Bicolano native language. The researcher gathered the parents' responses through questionnaires and interviews.

Part 1. – Personal Characteristics of the Parents

This part refers to the parents' personal characteristics in terms of their sex and native languages.

Table 1. Distribution of parents in terms of personal demographics.

A. Sex	Frequency	Percentage
1. Male	10	50%
2. Female	10	50%
Total	20	100%
B. Native Language		
1. Tagalog	10	50%
2. Bisaya	6	30%
3. Bicolano	4	20%
Total	20	100%

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage of the participants in terms of their details like sex and native language. It could be seen that the respondents in terms of sex were equally distributed with ten (10) or 50%. In the native language, most of the parents were native in Tagalog (10, or 50%), followed by Bisaya (3, or 30%), and lastly Bicolano (2, or 20%).

Part 2. – Children's Language Development

This part refers to the questions regarding the children's language development based on the context, history and current language.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of the children's exposure to the parents' languages.

Questions	Choices	Frequency	Percentage
1. Language spoken by other children and adults in home	Mother's Language	0	0%
	Father's Language	10	100%
	Both	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
2. Language used to watch television shows	Mother's Language	0	0%
	Father's Language	10	100%
	Both	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
3. How often	Everyday	10	100%
	1-3 times/week	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
4. Language used to tell stories	Mother's Language	0	0%
	Father's Language	10	100%
	Both	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
5. How often	Everyday	4	40%
	1-3 times/week	6	60%
	Total	10	100%
6. Language used to read to child	Mother's Language	0	0%
	Father's Language	10	100%
	Both	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
7. Important to speak Mother's Language	Not important	7	70%
	Somewhat important	3	30%
	Very important	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
8. Important to speak Father's Language	Not important	0	0%
	Somewhat important	0	0%
	Very important	10	100%
	Total	10	100%

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of the children's exposure to their parent's languages. When asked what language other children and adults spoke at home, the entire parents or 100% reported speaking the father's language only. When asked about the language used for various activities like watching television and reading books, the father's language was the only language the children used (100% each). The same goes for parents who use only the father's language in telling stories to their children (100%). When asked how much importance they placed on their child speaking their languages, 30% reported it was somewhat important that their children speak in the mother's language. In comparison, all the parents, or 100%, indicated it was very important that their child speaks in the father's language.

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of the children's language history.

Questions	Choices	Frequency	Percentage
1. Age of first word	5-11 months	0	0%
	12-18 months	6	60%
	24 months	4	40%
	36 months	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
2. Language of first word	Mother's language	0	0%
	Father's language	10	100%
	Both	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
3. Language spoken at age 1	Mother's language	0	0%
	Father's language	10	100%
	Both	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
4. Language spoken at age 3	Mother's language	0	0%
	Father's language	10	100%
	Both	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
5. As infant/ toddler, language used when playing with other children	Mother's language	0	0%
	Father's language	10	100%
	Both	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
6. As infant/ toddler, language used when playing with adults	Mother's language	0	0%
	Father's language	10	100%
	Both	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
7. As infant/ toddler, language used in routine activities	Mother's language	0	0%
	Father's language	10	100%
	Both	0	0%
	Total	10	100%

Table 3 represents the frequency and percentage of the children's language history. Most of the parents (60%) indicated that their children spoke his/her first word by 18 months, and 40% indicated that their children spoke his/her first word by 24 months. All (100%) parents reported that their children spoke his/her first word in the father's language. One hundred percent of the parents reported their children used the father's language as their language at the age of 1 and 3. When asked if their children spoke in their mother's language, father's language, or both languages in a variety of situations as an infant and toddler (e.g. when playing alone, with children, with adults), all (100%) parents declared that the father's language is the prime language used.

Table 4 pertains to the frequency and percentage of the children's current language usage. In the current language spoken by children, there is an equal amount in the average and many users in the father's language (50% each). While 70% indicated that their children spoke a few amounts in their mother's language. When asked about the number of words used by children in various situations, respondents indicated that there is a 40% amount on average and an equal amount (30% each) in the few and a lot when talking with other children. When talking with their siblings, 50% was the average amount, 40% a lot, and 10% are few. When asked about the receptive language skills of their children (e.g., point to objects when asked in their mother's language or father's language), all of the parents (100%) reported that their children could respond in their father's language, while there is only 10% reported that their children can respond in the mother's language. On the more complex requests like answering questions and following directions, all the children (100%) can follow and answer when asked in the father's language, and all (100%) cannot respond in the mother's language.

Part 3. – Practices that can be Use in Teaching Two Different Languages

This part refers to the practices parents can use to teach their children their languages.

Table 5 displays the frequency and percentage of one-parent-one language practices that the parents can use in teaching their languages.

1. One Parent-One Language

In one parent-one-language approach, each parent consistently speaks only one of the two languages to the children. As indicated, all the parents (100%) chose one parent-one language if they ever wanted to teach their native languages to their children. Based on the interviews, the main reason why they chose this practice is because it seems like it is easy to be applied, and they will not have a hard time using this because they are both fluent in their languages.

2. One Place-One Language

In one place-one language, parents and children use one of the two languages when they are in one particular place/s. All the parents (100%) did not choose to use the said practice, but based on the interview conducted with the parents, they said that they could use this practice if they are frequently visiting the mother's province, which they are not doing.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage of the children's current language usage.

Questions	Choices	Answer	Percentage
1. Current number of words spoken in Mother's language	A few	7	70%
	About average	3	30%
	A lot	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
2. Current number of words spoken in father's language	A few	0	0%
	About average	5	50%
	A lot	5	50%
	Total	10	100%
3. Number of words used when talking with other children	A few	3	30%
	About average	4	40%
	A lot	3	30%
	Total	10	100%
4. Number of words used when talking with brothers/sisters	A few	1	10%
	About average	5	50%
	A lot	4	40%
	Total	10	100%
5. Child points to object when asked in mother's language	Yes	1	10%
	No	8	80%
	Sometimes	1	10%
	Total	10	100%
6. Child points to object when asked in father's language	Yes	10	100%
	No	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
7. Child follows direction in mother's language	Yes	0	0%
	No	10	100%
	Total	10	100%
8. Child follows direction in father's language	Yes	0	0%
	No	10	100%
	Total	10	100%
9. Child answers question in mother's language	Yes	0	0%
	No	10	100%
	Total	10	100%
10. Child answers questions in father's language	Yes	0	0%
	No	10	100%
	Total	10	100%

Table 5. Frequency and percentage of the practices that parents choose in teaching their languages.

Choices	Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1. One Parent-One Language	Yes	10	100%
	No	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
2. One Place-One Language	Yes	0	0%
	No	10	100%
	Total	10	100%
3. One Activity-One Language	Yes	0	0%
	No	10	100%
	Total	10	100%

3. One Activity-One Language

In one activity-one language, the parents set one of the two to be used in one particular activity, and the same goes for the other language. One hundred percent of the parents did not choose this practice. When asked why they did not choose this practice, the majority of the parents say that it is because they think that it is difficult to implement, and their children will surely put much effort into doing this.

Part 4. – Techniques in Promoting Native Language

This part refers to the techniques parents use to promote their native languages to their children.

Table 6. Frequency distribution of the ways of parents to promote their native language.

Choices	Mother	Father	N/A	Total
1. Finding ways that motivate and encourage children to use the language	9	10	1	20
2. Speak to children only in your mother tongue at home	1	10	9	20
3. Devote time each day to reading and writing in your mother tongue	1	8	11	20
4. Tell stories and discuss interesting topics in your language to develop both their oral and vocabulary skills	3	8	9	20
5. Have books and multimedia for children in the home language	0	10	10	20
6. Listen to songs in your mother tongue	0	10	10	20

Note: Multiple response(s).

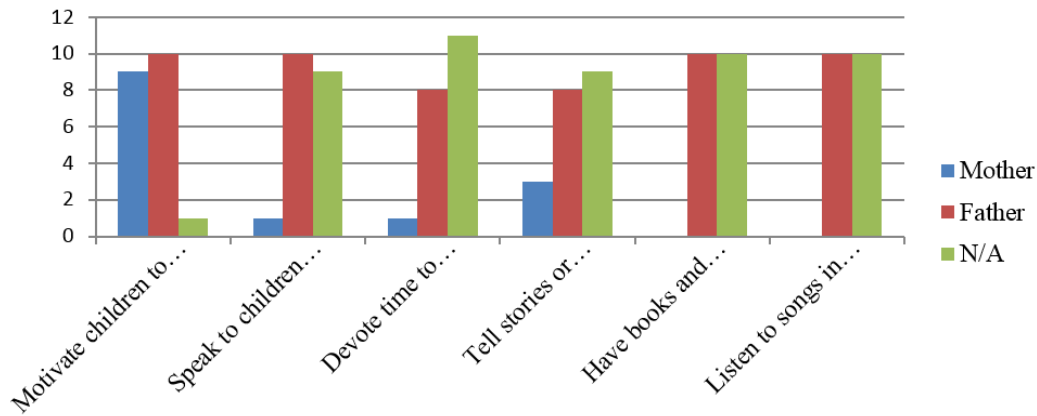


Figure 1. Graphical representation of the ways used by parents to promote their native languages.

Table 6 and Figure 1 present the frequency distribution of parents' ways of promoting their native languages. Since it is a multiple response/s, almost all parents motivate their children to use their language. It seems that fathers are more willing to spend more of their time reading, writing, telling stories, and discussing interesting topics in their native language with their children. Also, the books and multimedia, along with the songs that can be listened to in the home, are in the father's language.

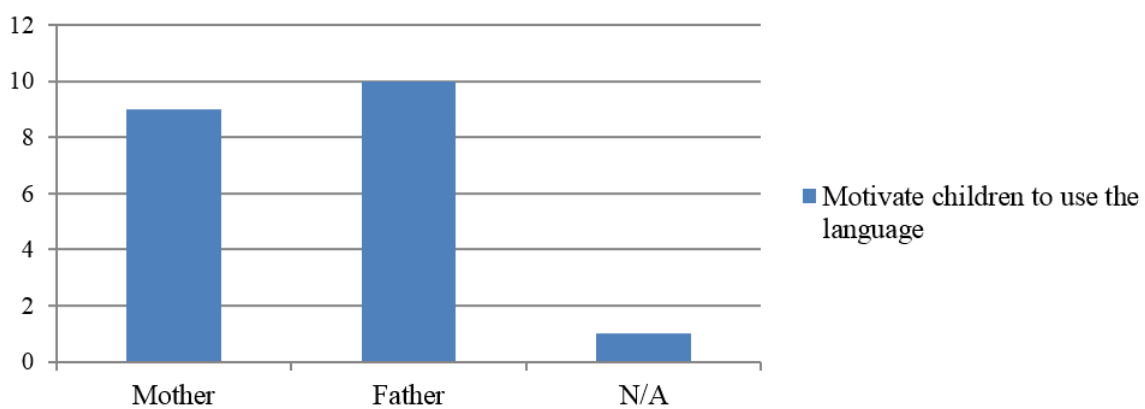


Figure 2. Graphical Representation of the numbers of parents that motivate children to use their native language.

1. Motivate Children to Use the Language

Figure 2 presents a graphical representation of the number of parents that motivate children to use their native language. It shows that 9 mothers and 10 fathers are finding ways to motivate children to use their native language, while only 1 mother is not.

According to Miller (2006) when children are interested or motivated in learning a language, and they see meaningful connections to their lives, they begin to take risks to produce language, which helps them to acquire it faster.

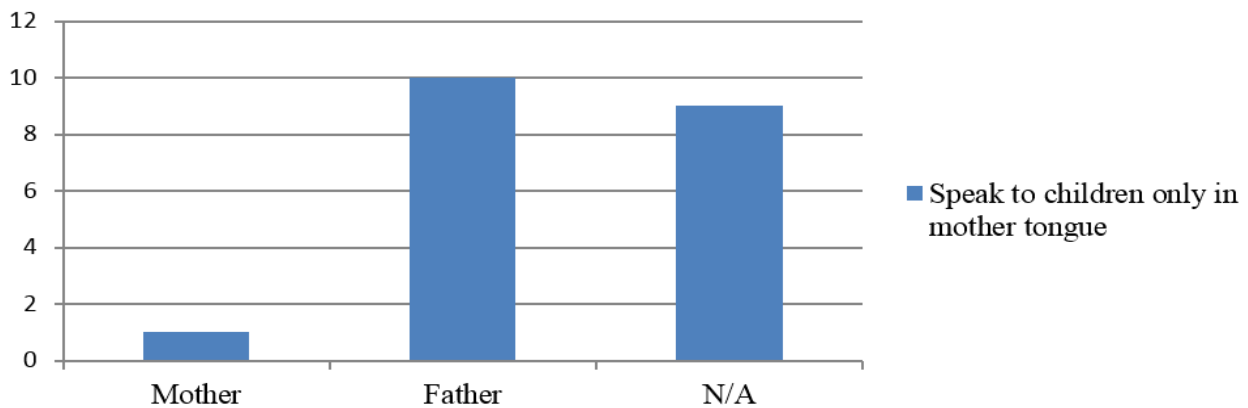


Figure 3. Graphical Representation of numbers of parents who speak only in their mother tongue.

2. Speak to Children Only in their Mother Tongue

Figure 3 exhibits the graphical representation of numbers of parents who speak only in their mother tongue. In this graph, the totality of fathers (10) is speaking in their mother tongue. In contrast, out of 10 mothers, only 1 indicated that she is speaking in her mother tongue, and it is rarely done by her according to the interview. Speaking to children only in their mother tongue is a great way for a parent to teach her native language.

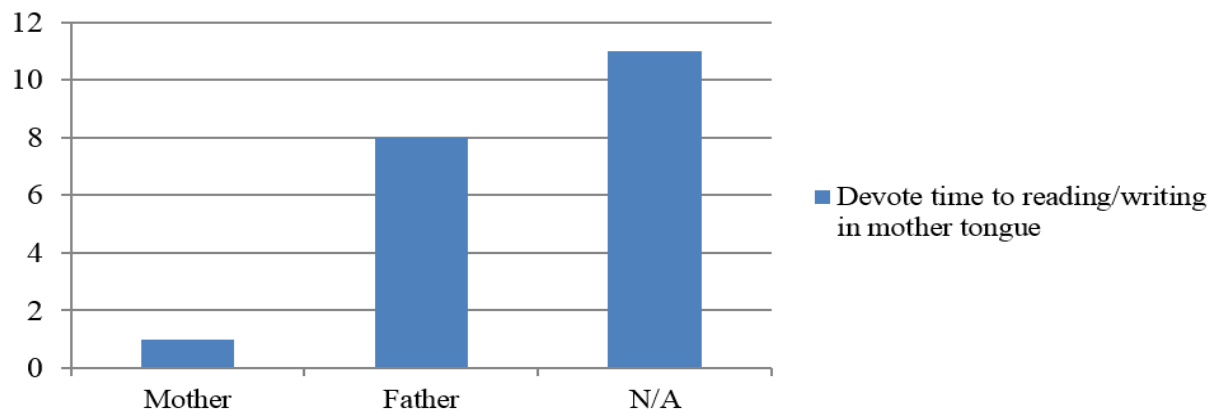


Figure 4. Graphical Representation of the number of parents who devote time to reading/writing in their mother tongue.

3. Devote Time to Reading and Writing in their Mother Tongue

Figure 4 exemplifies the graphical representation of the number of parents who devote time to reading/writing in their mother tongue. Parents who teach their children how to read and write in their mother tongue are a great help for the children to learn how to speak in their parent’s native language. Although there are a huge number of parents who do not have time to read and write in their mother tongue to their children, most particularly on the mother’s side, there are still 8 fathers and 1 mother who still devote time to teaching how to read and write on their mother tongue to their children.

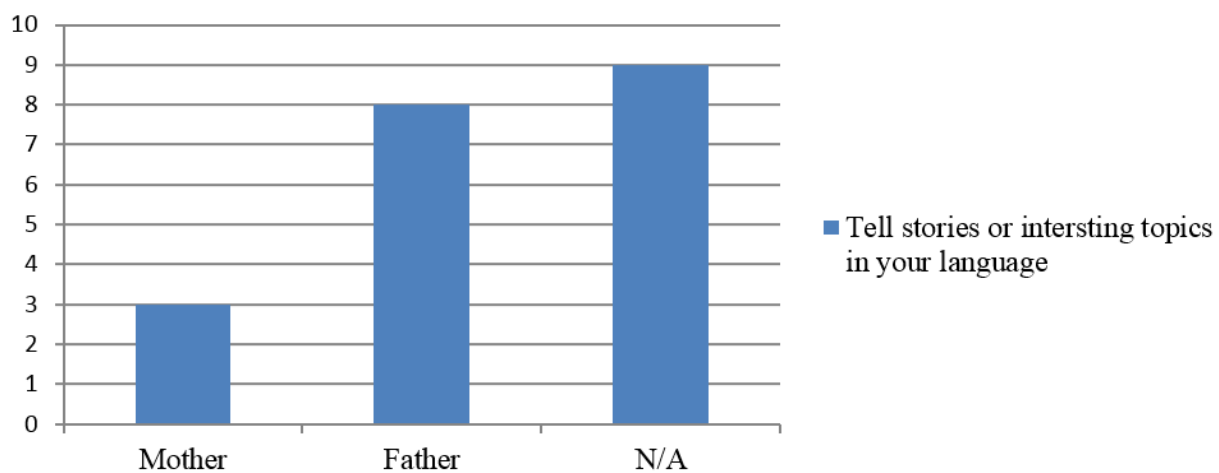


Figure 5. Graphical Representation of the numbers of parents who tell stories or interesting topics in their native language.

4. Tell Stories or Interesting Topics in their Language

Figure 5 is a graphical representation of the numbers of parents who tell stories or interesting topics in their native language. It is a good start for children to hear stories and interesting topics in their parent’s language to develop their oral and vocabulary skills. But it seems that in this study, only a few parents are doing this (8 fathers and 3 mothers). The rest of the parents (9) have no time to tell stories or to discuss interesting topics with their children.

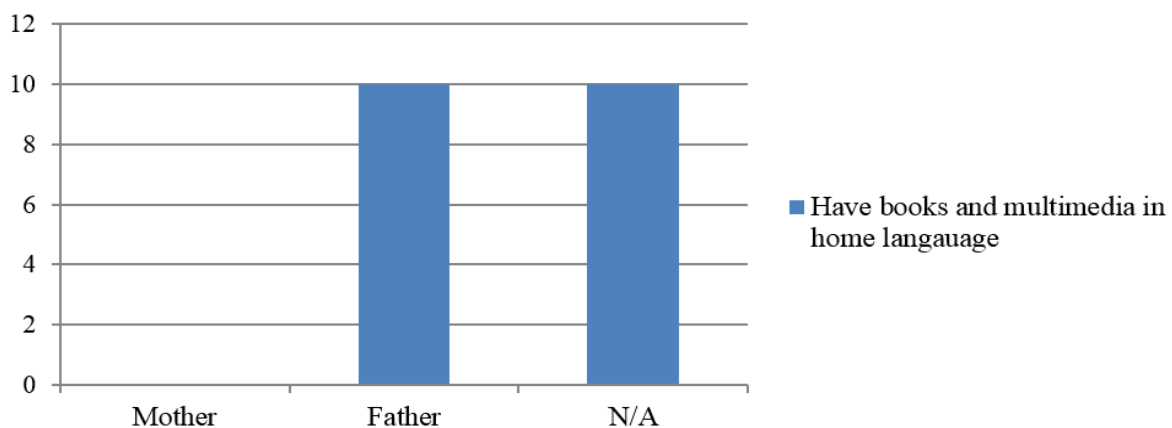


Figure 6. Graphical Representation of the number of parents who have books and multimedia in their home language.

5. Have Books and Multimedia in the Home Language

Figure 6 shows a graphical representation of the number of parents who have books and multimedia in their home language. Keeping books and multimedia in the home language for children will help them learn the native languages of his/her parents. All fathers (10) are reported to have some books and multimedia in their home language, while all mothers (10) are reported to have none. According to Tuominen (2009), parents’ educational and socioeconomic statuses also influence the shifts toward particular language usage because poor and less-educated parents have few resources to help them with home language maintenance.

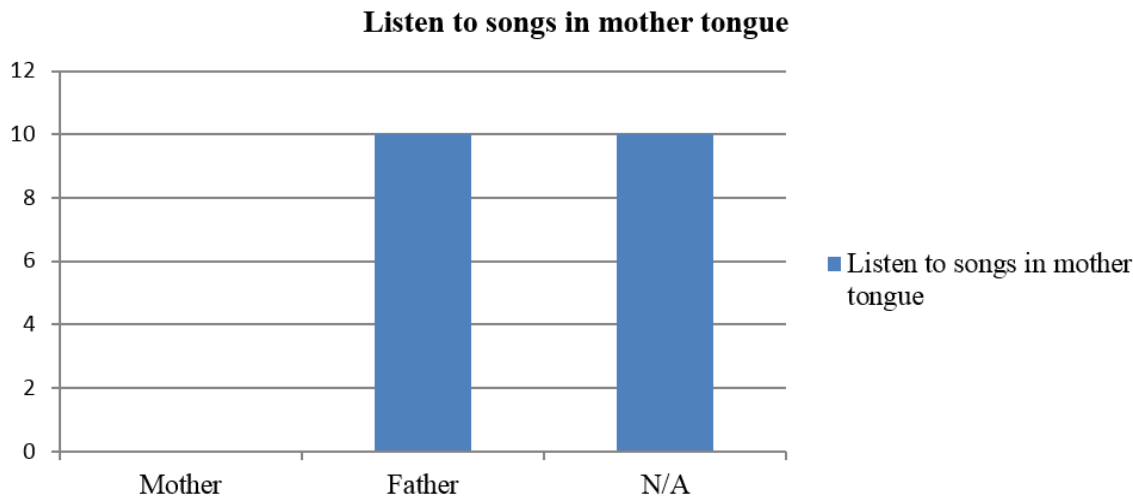


Figure 7. Graphical representation of the number of parents who provide songs in their mother tongue.

7. Listen to Songs in their Mother Tongue

Figure 7 illustrates a graphical representation of the number of parents who have listened to songs in their mother tongue. It shows that all fathers (10) indicated that they have some songs in their mother tongue at home that can be listened to by their children, and in the other hand, all mothers (10) indicated that they have no songs at home in their mother tongue. Providing some activities for children like listening to songs in their parents' native languages is a good technique for the children to be familiar with his/her parents' languages

3. Conclusions

Based on the results found on children's language development, which include exposure to the parents' languages, language history, and current language usage, children's language identity was discovered to be not affected if one of the parents is not using his/her native language as a home language. Language, based on the social interactionist theory (as cited in Mcleod (2007)) exists for communication and can only be learned in the context of interaction with adults and other people.

Therefore, if one of the parents is not interacting with the children using his/her native language, children tend not to learn his/her language; another is that if one of the two native languages is not typically used by the children. Also, it was observed that the place where the children are currently residing also influence the language that they used, mainly if the children are exposed in an environment where only one particular language is used by the people around them, this is in accordance to what Vygotsky stresses that the environment and culture in which the language is being learned during early childhood development is important because this social interaction is what first provides the child with the means of making sense of their own behavior and how they think about the surrounding world.

The results show that if parents want to teach their children to learn both of their native languages, one parent-one language approach is the best practice they choose because it is easier to implement and use.

The research shows that parent often finds ways to motivate his/her children to use the native language he/she had; it also reveals that somehow, parents are still providing and using some ways or techniques and also exerting efforts to these techniques to promote their native language to their children.

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