



*School of Education,
Culture and
Communication*

Swedish Toddlers' Learning English through Digital Tablets

From a Parental Perspective

English 3: Bachelor's Degree Project

ENA311

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the attitudes and practices of Swedish parents regarding the use of digital tablets for their toddlers' English language acquisition. The study focuses on the perceptions of parents regarding the role of tablets in supporting or hindering the development of English language skills in English language learners during early childhood. A qualitative research design was adopted, employing a thematic analysis approach to analyze the data collected from semi-structured interviews with six participating parents. The interviews aimed to investigate the ways in which parents perceive the impact of tablet usage on their children's English language learning. The study revealed that parents generally viewed the use of digital tablets as a positive tool for supporting their children's English language learning. The tablets facilitated early exposure to a foreign language and sparked their child's interest in language learning. However, concerns about potential drawbacks such as excessive screen time were also expressed. Parents reported various strategies and techniques to support their children's language learning, including parental controls, child-friendly language learning apps, and active participation in tablet-based activities. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of research on technology use in early childhood education and provides valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of Swedish parents regarding their toddlers' English language learning through digital tablets.

Keywords: Toddlers, Sweden, English language learning, digital tablets, parental perceptions, semi-structured interviews, qualitative study

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my son, Philip, who sparked my interest in the topic of toddlers learning English through digital devices. Your curiosity, enthusiasm, and love for learning inspired me to pursue this research, and I am forever grateful for the joy and meaning you bring to my life. May this work serve as a reminder of the power of curiosity, the importance of education, and the unconditional love between a parent and child.

1. Introduction

In today's society, children have become increasingly attached to their tablets. This widespread affinity for tablets among children has presented me with an opportunity to explore the potential impact of digital technology on language learning, specifically in the context of English acquisition. This was due to the fact that I observed this phenomenon first-hand in my own toddler, who started incorporating English words into his vocabulary, which he had picked up from using the tablet. This observation fueled my interest in understanding the role of digital tablets in facilitating language acquisition among young children. However, there are mixed opinions about young children using digital tablets, and concerns about the potential negative effects on development, such as social interaction and communications skills, continue to persist.

The use of digital devices for language learning among young children has gained considerable attention in recent years. Previous research has explored the role of various digital media, such as television and computer programs, in language development. However, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the specific impact of digital tablets on language learning outcomes. Despite the widespread use of tablets by young children, there is limited research conducted specifically on their effectiveness and potential benefits or drawbacks in facilitating language acquisition. This research gap highlights the need for further investigation. By addressing this gap, the current study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the implications of tablet use for language learning. Expanding on these initial reasons and understanding the importance of conducting this research, I aim to investigate, based on parents' perceptions, the use of digital tablets in supporting young children's language learning, specifically English language acquisition.

The importance of this study lies in its potential to provide insights, guidance, and practical suggestions for parents, researchers, and teachers in supporting young children's language learning through digital devices. The study aims to contribute to the field and ultimately enhance language learning experiences and outcomes for young learners. It is essential to conduct more research to explore strategies to mitigate negative effects while harnessing the potential of digital devices as tools for language learning.

Recent research conducted by the Swedish Government Media Council (2017, p. 4) has shown an increase in the usage of digital devices among young children and has urged parents to be aware of the risks associated with their children's use of digital devices.

Excessive screen time has been linked to decreased language and social skills development in young children. Additionally, parents can consider using digital devices as a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, other forms of learning and entertainment. By doing so, they can help ensure that their children's use of digital devices is beneficial rather than harmful to their development. Furthermore, it is anticipated that this study will make a valuable contribution to the current discourse surrounding technology integration in education and language acquisition.

1.1 Aim of the study and research questions

The aim of this study is to explore the attitudes and practices of parents regarding the use of digital tablets for their children's English language learning. Specifically, the study aims to investigate how the use of tablets affects parents' participation in their children's language learning and identify the strategies or techniques that parents use to support their children's English language learning through the use of digital tablets.

The following research questions will be focused on:

- 1) What do parents think about their children using digital tablets for learning and developing their English language?
- 2) In what way does the use of tablets affect parents' participation in their children's English language learning?
- 3) What strategies or techniques do parents use to support their children's English language learning through the use of digital tablets?

2. Background

This section provides an overview of the concept of "extramural English" introduced by Pia Sundqvist and its relevance to English language learning in Sweden. It also explores the classification of Sweden as an ESL country based on factors such as high English proficiency levels, extensive language use and exposure, bilingual competence, language acquisition practices, and social and cultural integration. It highlights the practicality of addressing Sweden as an ESL country due to the widespread use of English in various domains and the early introduction of English in the education system. The section also discusses the significance of parental involvement in early language acquisition, emphasizing the role of caregivers in shaping children's speech development. It highlights the positive impact of parent involvement

on children's language learning and suggests ways in which parents can support their children's language development.

2.1 The concept of extramural English

Considering the concept of "Extramural English" introduced by Pia Sundqvist in relation to English language learning in Sweden (Sundqvist, 2020, p. 123). Sundqvist's research focuses on the role of out-of-school language learning contexts and activities in language acquisition, specifically in the case of English as a second language (ESL) learners. These extramural language learning experiences include informal and non-formal activities outside the classroom, such as watching English movies, listening to English music, playing video games in English, and using digital devices to engage with English-language content (Sundqvist, 2020, p. 125).

Sundqvist's concept of extramural English highlights the significance of informal language learning opportunities in shaping learners' language skills and proficiency. It emphasizes that language learning is not limited to formal classroom settings but extends to the various contexts and activities in which learners engage outside of school (Sundqvist, 2020, p. 128). These extramural experiences can contribute to vocabulary acquisition, oral fluency, and cultural understanding, complementing and enhancing formal language instruction.

In the context of this study, understanding the concept of extramural English is relevant as it explores the potential of digital tablets on young children's English language acquisition. The use of tablets provides an extramural language learning experience for children, allowing them to engage with English-language content in digital and interactive formats. By considering the concept of extramural English, this study acknowledges the broader language learning landscape and the role of informal learning experiences in supporting children's language development (Sundqvist, 2020, p. 130).

2.1.1 English as a second language in Sweden

Although Sweden is traditionally classified as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) country, there are several justifications to consider it as an English as a Second Language (ESL) country. These justifications are based on high English proficiency levels, extensive language use and exposure, bilingual competence, language acquisition practices, and social and cultural integration. Firstly, Sweden consistently ranks among the top countries in English proficiency according to the EF English Proficiency Index (EF Education First, 2021, p. 6). This indicates

a strong command of English among the Swedish population. Moreover, English is widely used in various domains within Sweden. For instance, English is frequently employed alongside the Swedish language in higher education, research, business, and popular culture (Melchers et al., 2019, p. 179). This extensive use of English indicates its significance as a language for communication and interaction, further supporting the ESL classification. Furthermore, the bilingual competencies of many Swedes highlight the practicality of addressing Sweden as an ESL country. Swedes often display a high level of proficiency in both Swedish and English, seamlessly switching between the two languages in their daily lives (Graddol, 2010, p. 97). This bilingualism further strengthens that English is not merely a foreign language but an integral part of Swedish society.

When it comes to the acquisition of a second language, it has become increasingly significant in today's globalized world, where English is often used as the lingua franca for communication. As Melchers et al. (2019, p. 179) suggest, English may serve as a lingua franca for groups who are not part of the local language community, such as exchange students, tourists, and immigrants. Moreover, English may also be used in certain domains within the country, such as research, education, publicity, business, popular culture, and mass media, alongside local languages (Melchers et al., 2019).

In terms of language acquisition, English is introduced early in the Swedish education system. This early exposure and systematic teaching of English contribute to the development of English language skills among young Swedes. According to Skolverket (2022, p. 35), learning English offers numerous opportunities for individuals to participate in different social and cultural contexts, international studies, and working life, and it is a required subject in the Swedish curriculum. English language skills are taught throughout students' school years, with several hours of English lessons per week that increase the older the children get (Skolverket, 2020, para. 1). By learning multiple languages, individuals can provide a deeper understanding of various lifestyles and fresh perspectives on the world and enhance our ability to connect with other people.

The purpose of English as a subject is to help students understand the language and how it is used in different situations and to increase their confidence in using it. Skolverket (2022, p. 35) aims to develop students' comprehensive communication skills, including understanding spoken and written English, expressing their thought, interacting with others, and adapting to different circumstances and audiences. Effective communication also involves having confidence in language use and applying strategies to overcome limitations.

In conclusion, the Swedish education system places a strong emphasis on English language instruction, beginning at an early age. English widespread presence and integration across various domains of Sweden society signify its status as an essential part of the linguistic landscape, going beyond its classification as a foreign language.

2.2 Caregivers and parental involvement in early language acquisition

In the realm of acquiring a second language, infants and toddlers demonstrate exceptional abilities to attain linguistic competence through familial interaction during the initial three years of life. The primary caregiver's speech, featuring concise sentences and frequent repetition, and their input, characterized by interrogative structures and accentuated intonation patterns, facilitate the child's acquisition of their initial language (L1) (Yule, 2020, p. 202).

According to Yule (2020, p. 206), at the time when children turn three, their vocabulary grows to include hundreds of words, and they begin to develop more distinct pronunciations. At this stage, it is of paramount importance to consider the role of adults in shaping the child's speech development. Research conducted by Harper and Pelletier (2010) indicates that parent involvement in their children's language learning positively impacts their academic development (Harper and Pelletier, 2010, p. 104). Likewise, Skolverket (2018) emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in children's education, including language learning. They suggest that parents can support their children's language development by reading books together, talking and engaging in conversations, and encouraging language use at home (para 6).

Furthermore, parent-child conversation analysis has revealed that parents' responses to their children's early language mixing of Swedish and English profoundly influence the child's language use more than previously assumed. According to Dörnyei & György-Ullholm (2012, p. 50), children as young as two years old can adjust their language use based on their conversational partner. For example, a child might use more simple and repetitive language when speaking with a younger sibling but switch to more complex and varied language when speaking with an adult.

In line with the significance of early childhood development, The World Health Organization (2019) has recently stated that “early childhood is a crucial period for development, during which family lifestyle patterns can be adapted to boost health gains” (para 2). Consequently, WHO recommends reducing screen time for children under five years old. Similarly, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) provided guidelines for parents' use of

digital media with young children. The guidelines were developed by a multidisciplinary group of experts, and they included recommendations for parents on how to use digital media with young children to promote learning and development while minimizing potential negative effects. Notably, the study suggests that parents should engage in limited and active use of educational media, allowing them to bridge any gaps in their child's comprehension of the media content and device usage (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013, p. 959).

2.3 Parental perspectives on digital device usage for language learning

Recent research has shed light on the increasing access and usage of digital devices among young children, emphasizing the need to understand parents' perspectives on the role of digital media in language learning. The insights provided by these studies offer valuable insights into the benefits, concerns, and challenges associated with the integration of digital media in early language acquisition. For example, research conducted by the Swedish Government Media Council (Småungar & Medier, 2017) aimed to investigate young children's access to and use of media in Sweden. The study was conducted through a survey of parents with children aged 0-9 years old, and the data was collected through an online survey. This survey included questions about the children's access to and use of digital media devices and their parents' attitudes and concerns about their use. The study shows an increase in digital device usage among young children, and it reported that 55% of one-year-olds and 85% of five-year-olds have access to a digital tablet at home, indicating that young children are becoming more exposed to digital devices at an earlier age (Småungar & Medier, 2017, p. 4).

A previous study conducted by Neumann et al. (2020) shows that parents hold positive perceptions regarding their children's use of tablets. They viewed tablets as engaging and interactive learning tools that can support their child's development. Parents believe that tablets have educational benefits, including enhancing early literacy and numeracy skills, fostering creativity, and facilitating language learning. Parents also appreciated the convenience and accessibility of tablets, as they offer a wide range of learning resources and activities. Although the benefits of using the tablet were mostly positive, there were several concerns regarding cyber safety and its impact on young children's opportunities for social interaction (Neumann et al., 2020, p. 1757).

However, research carried out by Song and Klang (2020, p. 138) found that some parents feel inadequate in providing support for their child's language learning through digital devices, particularly when it comes to choosing appropriate apps or content and monitoring

their child's usage. However, some parents are more confident in their ability to support their child's language learning through digital devices and may actively seek out and use digital resources to supplement their child's language education. For example, a study conducted by Marsch et al. (2015) investigated how young children between the ages of 0 and 5 engage with apps on tablets. The study aimed to determine whether these apps promote playfulness and enhance children's creativity. In their study, they asked the participating parents to offer other parents' advice on preschoolers' use of apps, and they replied that “encourage your child so that they can use the apps themselves” and “try and get involved in it [...] if they know you enjoy it, I think they enjoy it as well” (Marsch et al., 2015, p. 8). The study emphasizes that children learn more from media when adults interact with them.

In a study by Vulchanova et al. (2017), it was shown how parents use digital tablets with their young children for language learning. The study involved interviews with parents of 30 children aged 1-6 years old who had experience using digital tablets for language learning. The interviews were conducted in Norway and Bulgaria, and they focused on the parents' attitudes and experiences regarding their children's use of digital tablets for language learning. The study reported that some parents actively engage in their children's use of digital tablets and that the use of digital tablets can enhance language learning opportunities for children. However, the study also highlighted the importance of parental guidance and control over children's tablet use to avoid potential negative effects such as addiction and screen time.

Moreover, according to Sergi et al. (2017, p. 1155), parents use tablets as a reward for good behavior in their children. This study used a mixed-method approach, including surveys and interviews with parents of children aged 3-8 years old. The surveys were distributed through social media and email to a convenience sample of parents, and the interviews were conducted with a subset of the survey respondents. The study aimed to provide insights into the ways in which parents are navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by portable digital devices in their children's lives. However, they also express worries about addiction, reduced social interaction, and less physical activity. These concerns are not unfounded, and therefore, it is important for parents to monitor their children's use of digital devices and ensure that they are using them in moderation and in appropriate ways. This can involve setting limits on screen time, monitoring the content that their children are accessing, and engaging in activities that promote physical activity and social interaction.

3. Method

This method section describes the participants, data collection, ethical considerations, analytical procedures, and limitations of the study. The study consisted of six parents with children aged 2-5 years old, and data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the methods of thematic analysis.

3.1 Participants

For this qualitative study, I conducted interviews with six different parents who all have children aged 2 to 5 years old. The age range was chosen because it aligns with the research question and objectives of the study, as it corresponds to the developmental stage during which language acquisition and the use of digital devices are of particular interest. The participants in this study exhibited diverse demographic characteristics, encompassing a range of educational backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. While all participating parents were native Swedish speakers, their levels of proficiency in the English language varied. In terms of education, none of the parents had attained a level of education beyond university. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that only one of the participating parents was a first-time parent, as seen in the table below.

Table 1. *Overview of the respondents*

| Respondents | Participating parents | Age of the parents | Age of the child | Number of siblings |
|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Respondent 1 | Mother | 27 | 4 | 1 |
| Respondent 2 | Mother | 28 | 3 | 1 |
| Respondent 3 | Father | 33 | 5 | 2 |
| Respondent 4 | Mother | 35 | 2 | 3 |
| Respondent 5 | Mother | 27 | 2,5 | 3 |
| Respondent 6 | Father | 27 | 2,5 | 0 |

3.2 Methodology

The reason I chose a qualitative study was that I was seeking to understand the parents' perspective on their children's English language learning, let them talk about their experiences, and, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) put it, “understand subjects from the everyday world from the interviewees own perspective” (p. 39). A qualitative study was believed to be more appropriate in comprehending the parental viewpoint as compared to a quantitative study since it enables a thorough investigation of individual experiences and perspectives. The snowball sampling technique was employed to recruit participants for the study. According to Parker et al. (2019, pp. 4-5), the snowball effect is a technique that involves the selection of participants based on referrals from other participants. In this case, I approached a few individuals whom I believed would be suitable candidates for the study. Then, I asked family, friends, and a few of the already gathered respondents whom they thought would also be suitable for the study. Through this process, I was able to reach the desired number of respondents for the interview.

The selection of respondents was based on several criteria, including the age of their child, the use of digital devices such as tablets at home, and the aim of achieving a diverse mix of ages among the participating parents' children, to avoid having all parents with only 2-year-old children, for instance. This approach ensured a wider range of ages among the participants.

As this study is exploratory in nature, the goal was to gain a deep understanding of the perspectives and experiences of the parents involved. Therefore, a small sample size was deemed appropriate as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of individual experiences and perceptions. While a larger sample size could have provided more generalizable results, it was not the aim of this study. Rather, the focus was on gaining a comprehensive understanding of the specific experiences and perceptions of the parents in relation to their child's language exposure and learning through digital devices.

3.3 The collection of data

For this study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which involved a flexible and conversational approach to cover the key topics of interest while still allowing the participants to share their thoughts and experiences freely. The interviews

were held face-to-face and were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. After the participants agreed to participate, a letter of information and a letter of consent was provided to explain the purpose of the study, the interview process, and how the data would be used (See Appendix 2 and Appendix 3).

Participants who agreed to participate were then scheduled for an interview. An interview guide was prepared beforehand to ensure that the key topics of interest were covered. However, not all questions were explicitly asked during each interview, as some participants had already provided relevant information in response to other questions. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 1.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the interviews were conducted in Swedish, which is the native language of the participants, and they were later translated into English for the analysis and reporting of the findings. The translation process aimed to maintain the essence and meaning of participants' responses while ensuring clarity and accuracy in the English version. The respondents were given the opportunity to review the translated versions of their interviews and provide feedback or clarifications to ensure the accuracy and validity of the translated data. This step aimed to maintain the participants' perspectives and ensure that their intended meanings were accurately conveyed in the English transcripts. However, it is worth noting that not all participants may have read the translations.

3.4 Analytical procedure

After conducting audio-recorded interviews with the respondents, the next step was to transcribe all the interviews, followed by analyzing the collected data. To achieve this, the transcriptions were subjected to a thematic analysis, following the methodology outlined by Bengtsson (2016, pp. 11-14). The process consists of four stages, starting with decontextualization, which involves becoming familiar with the text. In order to achieve this, the transcriptions were carefully proofread and then broken down into smaller units to identify similarities and differences between the responses. The next stage in the process is recontextualization, where the aim of the study is evaluated to see if it has been met. This step is crucial in ensuring that the study remains focused and relevant. The third stage is categorization, where themes and categories are identified within the text. The third stage is categorization, where themes and categories are identified within the text. This involves grouping the data based on

similar characteristics or patterns, allowing for a more organized and systematic analysis. Finally, the compilation stage involves taking the themes and categories that have been identified and using them to analyze and write up the findings. By following these four stages, a comprehensive analysis of the collected data can be achieved (Bengtsson, 2016).

3.5 Ethical considerations

Throughout the data collection process, ethical considerations were considered, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, and following ethical guidelines set forth by the research organization Swedish Research Council (2017, p. 40). Prior to conducting the interviews, a brief overview of the interview's purpose was sent to the participants. Participants were also informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Before the interview, participants were asked for their consent to audio-record the session, and they were informed that their anonymity would be maintained throughout the study to protect their personal information.

By using semi-structured interviews, this study was able to gather rich qualitative data from participants who met the specific criteria related to the research question. The ethical considerations taken into account throughout the data collection process ensured that the participants were treated with respect and that the data collected was reliable and trustworthy. Overall, the combination of a specific participant selection process, a flexible interview approach, and ethical considerations contributed to the quality and relevance of the data collected for this study.

3.6 Limitations

The findings of this research are not immune to limitations that may affect the accuracy and validity of the data collected. One such limitation is the potential for participants to feel pressure to provide socially desirable responses when asked about the duration of their children's tablet use per day. This could lead to potential inaccuracies and reduced data validity. During the interviews conducted for this study, this phenomenon was observed, with many respondents initially reporting shorter usage times before correcting themselves and disclosing slightly longer durations:

Another limitation of this study is related to the environment in which the interviews took place. During one of the interviews, the participant was distracted by her child, who was present in the room. The participant's attention appeared to shift away from the interview questions at times as she focused on her child's activities. This may have impacted the depth and quality of the responses provided during this interview, and as such, it should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results.

Additionally, participants' individual circumstances, such as their parenting styles, educational backgrounds, or employment status, may further impact their responses. These contextual factors can shape participants' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors related to their children's tablet use, potentially introducing variability and limitations to the data collected.

4. Results

In this section, I present the findings of a qualitative analysis conducted on interview transcripts, which allowed me to identify several key themes illuminating the ways in which parents utilize digital devices to facilitate their children's language learning. The first theme pertains to the role of digital tablets in fostering language exposure, while the second theme focuses on the frequency, duration, and types of language content being used. The third theme centers on the use of digital tablets as a means to engage in interactive language practice, whereas the fourth theme addresses the challenges and limitations of utilizing such devices for language learning purposes. Lastly, the fifth theme highlights parental concerns regarding screen time and the need for parental involvement.

4.1 The various ways in which digital tablets facilitate language exposure

One significant theme that emerged from the interviews was the role of digital tablets in facilitating language exposure for toddlers. It was observed that these devices served as a medium for language input in the child's everyday life through the use of interactive videos and language learning apps. For example, a respondent mentioned that their child had been introduced to the English language solely through the use of a tablet at a young age.

He definitely wouldn't know as much English as he does now if it wasn't for the tablet. His interest in the English language has come from the tablet, from what he watches. Then we've added a little, but 90% comes from things he's picked up while watching the tablet (Respondent 1).

These apps apply a combination of text, images, and audio to provide English language input to children, allowing them to see and hear words and phrases in context. In addition to this, tablets also serve as a valuable tool for parents and caregivers to interact with their children using language, such as reading digital books together or engaging in conversations.

One respondent indicated that they used the tablet alongside their child to assist with language acquisition and provide explanations about the content being viewed:

My son has always been interested in colors, so we found a clip together where they sing about different colors. They sing about fruits and then say the fruit and the color of the fruit in English. So, he's picked up on that. Now he knows it's a red apple and says "Mamma, jag vill ha ett apple" and mixes Swedish and English (Respondent 5).

Overall, the use of digital devices played an important role in facilitating language exposure and language learning opportunities for respondents' toddlers. The participants were requested to share details regarding the specific applications they employed, resulting in varying responses. Notably, one of the respondents mentioned that their child would navigate between different English-language programs available on regular YouTube. However, the majority of the respondents reported that YouTube Kids was their preferred app for English language learning, and they were confident that their children's exposure to English was primarily through the use of this app on their tablets.

According to one participant, the limited availability of Swedish versions of children's videos prompted their children to watch videos in English instead:

When my daughter started using a tablet, there weren't as many children's programs translated from English to Swedish as there are now that my 2-year-old son is starting to watch more (Respondent 2).

As a result, it can be inferred that the limited availability of Swedish versions of children's videos prompted the participant's children to watch videos in English instead.

The respondents reported that their children used the other apps mentioned, such as Bolibompa, Radioapan, Disney+, and SVT Play, mainly for playing games and watching films and videos. In contrast, Polyglutt, another app mentioned, is specifically designed for language learning through exercises, quizzes, and interactive activities. Interestingly, only two respondents mentioned this app, and they used it solely for reading books in Swedish. Meanwhile, another app mentioned was Roblox, a massively multiplayer online game platform and game creation system, which was only mentioned by one respondent. It features a blocky, pixelated visual style and provides a virtual world where players can design their own game and play various games created by other users while also interacting with each other.

Moreover, the respondents reported that they appreciated the interactive and engaging nature of YouTube Kids, which made language learning enjoyable and fun for their kids. However, some parents expressed concerns about the quality and accuracy of the content on the app and felt that they needed to monitor their child's use of the app to ensure that they were not exposed to inappropriate material.

One of the respondents reported that she could leave her child with the apps that she trusted:

I could leave him with Polyglutt and Bolibompa, but not with YouTube Kids because I want to have some control. Since there are so many shortcuts for hackers to put in a lot of garbage, I am happy to be present, but for the other two apps, I have full confidence (Respondent 5).

It seemed that the apps used were chosen based on the children's interests, and one of the respondents reported that their child had watched videos he was interested in:

When he is learning English, it's from YouTube Kids. But when he was younger, he watched something called Blippi on regular YouTube, and when the programs that were translated into Swedish ran out, he continued to watch the other clips available in English (Respondent 5).

The respondent reported that he also believes that YouTube Kids is more child-friendly than regular YouTube and said, "But even if he watches YouTube Kids, you

have to be with him and watch or listen to what he is watching. There can be weird stuff there sometimes” (Respondent 5).

Overall, digital tablets, particularly through the use of interactive videos and language learning apps, have played a significant role in facilitating language exposure and language learning opportunities for the respondents' children of this study. The tablets serve as a medium for language input in the child's everyday life, allowing them to see and hear words and phrases in context.

4.2 The frequency and duration used for language exposure

Regarding the frequency and duration of language exposure through digital tablets, the data revealed that the toddlers used the tablets for an average of 1-3 hours per day. This suggests that digital tablets have the potential to provide a significant amount of language exposure to young children. When asked about the opportunities and challenges of letting the child use a tablet to learn another language, one of the respondents reported that their child found it difficult to disengage from the tablet, which was seen as a challenge:

The downside is that it can be a bit too much screen time and he wants it all the time. Then again, it's good that he's learning things, but he's not learning all the time. He becomes a bit distracted and loses focus on what's happening around him. He can't let go of it and gets very upset when you take away the tablet from him (Respondent 6).

Likewise, another respondent exaggerated the amount of time spent on the tablet to underscore their point about screen time and commented, “I think it can become a bit too much if they sit with the tablet for 10 hours a day” (Respondent 2). Then again, the respondent also recognized the benefits of digital devices in language learning and added, “But I also think it can be beneficial because they learn” (Respondent 2).

Accordingly, to the majority of the respondents, there were instances where the screen time exceeded their intended limit. They mentioned that the tablets were sometimes used for the child to wind down, especially before bedtime or when the parent had urgent tasks to attend to.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital tablets have the potential to provide a significant amount of language exposure to young children, which can support their

language development. However, the amount of time spent on the tablet can be excessive and impact the child's ability to engage with their surroundings.

4.3 The impact of language content on toddlers' language development

When it comes to language exposure for toddlers, the type of content they are exposed to plays a crucial role in their language development. As stated in section 4.1, a majority of the respondents reported that YouTube Kids was the most used app for language learning. Some of them also mentioned regular YouTube for language-based content. YouTube Kids provides a variety of content for language learning, including educational videos, songs, nursery rhymes, and cartoons. Some of these videos are specifically designed to teach children the basics of a language, while others provide exposure to the language in a more natural and immersive way.

There was a general belief that the incorporation of text, images, and audio in these videos could help children learn new words and phrases and improve their listening and comprehension skills. One of the respondents said that “It has become quite common for them to pick up phrases from there” referring to YouTube Kids.

Moreover, YouTube Kids offers a range of language learning apps that use gamification and interactive element to make language learning engaging and fun for young children. The other apps mentioned by the respondents, besides YouTube Kids and regular YouTube, were primarily used for playing games and reading activities and had nothing to do with the children's English language learning.

In terms of language content, one of the respondents shared a positive experience they had with their child regarding language learning:

He becomes very happy when he learns something new, like counting in English or saying the colors both in Swedish and English. He is very verbal and outgoing in language overall, so I think that's why English has been able to stick so well too. His grandparents say "Wow, he speaks a lot of English", but he mixes a lot from Swedish to English (Respondent 6).

Similarly, another participant remarked that their young child had a strong interest in vehicles and enjoyed watching videos featuring various types of automobiles. The respondent recognized that the child's first word in English was ‘excavator’, which

highlights the child's early exposure to English vocabulary related to their fascination with construction machinery:

I didn't even know what word he was using at first. Then he came and said it and I had to think, "What does it mean? How did he learn that?" It was probably one of the first things he said that made us realize he was picking up words from the tablet (Respondent 1).

This highlights the importance of exposure to language content that aligns with a child's interests and preferences. In this case, the child's fascination with vehicles led him to watch videos featuring different types of automobiles, which resulted in the child learning the word and using it in context. It also shows how parents may be surprised by the language their child has learned through digital devices and how it can lead to conversations about their child's language development.

4.4 The use of digital tablets as a tool for interactive language practice

One way in which tablets are utilized by parents is by engaging their children in conversations in English. By doing so, a language-rich environment is provided for the children, and correct language use is modeled. For instance, some respondents reported that they would initiate conversations about a specific topic or ask their children questions that they knew their children had acquired on their tablets. By doing so, it provided the parents with a convenient and effective way to support their children's language development. One of the respondents said that they asked questions on their child's level and based on what they were watching on the tablet:

I can hear what they are watching on the tablet, and then I might say "The floor is lava!" which I know they say on the tablet, and then I know what she should say back because she says things she's seen on the tablet. So, we might converse in the same way they do on the tablet. But also, sometimes I ask questions in Swedish, and she answers me in English (Respondent 2).

However, in contrast, one of the respondents stated that their child solely used the tablet for playing games and not for any language learning purposes. When asked if the child had acquired any new words or phrases in English since she started using a tablet, the answer was that she had not:

Oh, not in English actually. She doesn't watch so many different things. She mostly plays, watches children's programs, and is on an app called Roblox. It's a game for children aged 4-8 that is entirely in Swedish. But not anything in English that she has said that I have heard or thought of (Respondent 3).

It is important to note that while the use of digital tablets can be a valuable tool for supporting children's language learning, not all children use tablets for language-based content. As we move forward, it will be interesting to see how the use of digital tablets for language learning evolves and how it continues to impact children's language development.

4.5 The challenges and limitations of using digital tablets for language learning

As with any technology, the use of digital tablets for language learning also comes with its own set of challenges and limitations. In this section, I will discuss the various difficulties that parents and children face when using digital tablets for language learning and the limitations that technology currently has in providing effective language learning.

Based on the interviews, one of the challenges that emerged from using digital tablets for language learning was the issue of screen time. Most of the respondents expressed concern about the amount of time their children spent on tablets and other similar devices. They recognized that excessive screen time could have negative effects and that it would result in under-stimulation. The under-stimulation was said to result in fewer opportunities for face-to-face interactions and immersive language development:

I think time can easily pass by and they become understimulated, and the tablet can function a bit like a babysitter. But then again, all children are different, our child needs to move around, and he gets restless if he sits for too long (Respondent 1).

Another respondent stated that limited interaction was another problem with using the tablet too much and that verbal communication should be more emphasized:

The tablet makes the child stay interested for a longer period than a book might in certain situations. Plus, it has become normalized. But I believe it can't take over because verbal communication and what you read should still be the focus of learning (Respondent 5).

Another respondent expressed concerns about development in the mother language:

You want them to develop in the Swedish language, and you know that they do that by reading books in Swedish. You also want them to have a large vocabulary in Swedish and then maybe also learn the words in English. But I think that if they use the tablet too much, they will learn limited vocabulary in both Swedish and English (Respondent 2).

Another respondent stated some concerns about not learning grammar through the use of the tablet:

I also think that what doesn't come on YouTube is spelling and grammar. It's more about pronunciation now. So, I don't know if the learning style in school may not fit what he has learned so far. Maybe you don't really get how to spell the words yourself in the same way as when you learn English in school from the beginning. Maybe you miss out on this with sentence structure (Respondent 1).

In conclusion, then, the interviews revealed that excessive screen time and limited interaction were some of the challenges parents and children faced. There were also concerns about the development of the mother language and the limitations of learning grammar through the use of tablets.

4.6 Highlights of the results

The themes that surfaced from the interviews indicate that digital tablets played a crucial role in offering language exposure and learning opportunities for young children. The majority of the respondents used YouTube Kids as their preferred app for English language learning. The app's interactive and engaging nature made language learning enjoyable and fun for children, although some parents expressed concerns about the quality and accuracy of the content.

The frequency and duration of tablet use for language exposure varied, with most toddlers using the tablets for an average of 1-3 hours per day. While digital devices have the potential to provide a significant amount of language exposure to

young children, it is important to note that the optimal amount of language exposure for language development in toddlers is still a matter of debate among researchers. Also, the majority of the respondents perceived this as a positive development, citing the ease with which their children could learn English through interactive activities on the tablet. They believed that this exposure to a foreign language would be beneficial to their children in the long run.

While some respondents expressed concerns about the negative effects of digital devices, particularly the lack of proper time management, they also recognized the benefits of using these devices as a tool for learning. Moreover, most of the respondents had developed various strategies and techniques to support their children's language learning through the use of digital tablets, such as implementing parental control settings and using child-friendly apps. However, some respondents felt that the tablet should not be used as a “babysitter” and advocated for more active parental involvement in their children's language learning experiences.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital devices, when used appropriately, can serve as a valuable tool for facilitating language exposure and language learning opportunities for toddlers. Furthermore, parents' active involvement in their child's language learning, such as engaging in meaningful conversations and providing guidance during device use, enhances the effectiveness of digital language learning experiences.

5. Discussion

This discussion section presents the views of parents on the use of digital tablets to facilitate their children's learning of English as a second language with the help of digital tablets. The various perspectives identified in the analysis will be subsequently correlated with the research questions mentioned in the literature review in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of Swedish toddlers' acquisition of English as a second language.

5.1 What parents think about their children using digital tablets for learning and developing their English language learning

When analyzing the responses of the respondents, the consensus was that the use of digital tablets had played a significant role in facilitating the early introduction of a language that was not spoken at home or readily encountered in the children's environment, and the respondents reported that using tablets as a tool for learning a second language had a positive impact. All of the respondents agreed that it was due to the tablets that their children began learning English at an early age.

The overall findings of the interviews revealed that tablets were generally seen as a valuable resource for English language learning as long as they were used in moderation. Parents expressed concerns about potential drawbacks such as reduced social interaction, limited stimulation, and the need for parental settings and supervision to monitor tablet usage effectively. This is similar to previous research conducted by Marsch et al. (2015), who put emphasis on the fact that children learn more from media when adults interact with them (p. 7).

However, it is important to note that parental attitudes and concerns about digital tablet usage may vary based on factors such as cultural background, socioeconomic status, and personal beliefs. Therefore, further research is needed to better understand the nuances of parental attitudes toward digital language learning devices.

5.2 Parents' participation in their children's English language learning

It was reported by several respondents that the need to supervise and monitor their child's device use was emphasized. The importance of participating and monitoring the child's device use to ensure appropriate content consumption was stressed. This aligns with the literature review, which suggests that active engagement in children's use of digital tablets for language learning is carried out by some parents, while others feel inadequate in providing support or express concerns about the quality and educational value of digital media (Song and Klang, 2020, p. 138). However, it was acknowledged by a number of respondents that digital tablets were frequently utilized by their children without adult supervision.

The findings indicate that although a desire to be more involved in their children's tablet use was expressed by parents, the reality was that tablets were often provided to the child during times when parents had other responsibilities, resulting in the child using the tablet alone. This suggests that the parents' involvement in their children's use of digital tablets for language learning may have a significant impact on the quality and appropriateness of the content consumed by their children. It is possible that their exposure to inappropriate or low-quality content may negatively impact their second language learning experience, as admitted by some parents who acknowledged their children often used digital tablets without adult supervision. This finding is in alignment with the study carried out by Vulchanova et al. (2017), which highlighted the importance of parental guidance and control over children's tablet use to avoid potential negative effects such as addiction and excessive screen time.

However, different forms of parental involvement in children's language learning can be observed. It was found in the study that many parents expressed willingness to have more spoken English at home with their children to support their language acquisition and maintain their child's interest in the language. Yet, challenges in finding the time, resources, or knowledge to effectively monitor and support their children's language learning activities may be faced by parents who desire to participate in their children's digital tablet use for language learning. Therefore, a balance between parents' responsibilities and involvement in their children's language learning, especially in relation to digital tablet use, is important.

5.3 Strategies and techniques parents use to support their children's English language learning through the use of digital tablets

When asked about how they support their children's English language learning, it was found that the respondents have devised multiple strategies and techniques through the use of digital tablets. These strategies included the implementation of parental control settings on the tablet to limit inappropriate content, the encouragement of the use of child-friendly apps that focus on language learning, and the active presence and involvement of parents when their child is using the tablet.

Overall, the findings suggest that active involvement by parents in supporting their children's English language learning through the use of digital tablets is evident,

and a variety of strategies are being employed to ensure exposure to appropriate and engaging language learning materials.

Additionally, the study by Vulchanova et al. (2017) supports the finding that some parents actively engage in their children's use of digital tablets for language learning. The study revealed that parents recognized the potential of digital tablets to enhance language opportunities for their children. This aligns with the observation made in this study that some parents mentioned setting aside designated times for language learning activities on the tablet and using the device as a tool for interactive learning activities with their child. However, it is essential to note that the study by Vulchanova et al. (2017) also emphasized the importance of parental guidance and control over children's tablet use to mitigate potential negative effects such as addiction and excessive screen time. This suggests that while parents in this study may have focused on the positive aspects of tablet use by children, as noted in the concern expressed by some parents regarding their children using the tablet for non-educational purposes.

Another technique used by parents to facilitate their child's English language learning was the consideration of the particular applications their child was using, with some apps being considered more trustworthy than others. However, it is important to note that not all parents may be aware of the potential negative effects of excessive screen time and inappropriate content consumption on their children's language learning and overall development. Therefore, the importance of parents being informed and educated about the appropriate use of digital devices for language learning purposes cannot be overstated. This also aligns with the study by Sergei et al. (2017, p. 1154) in terms of the consideration of particular applications for language learning by parents. Both the previous study and this study acknowledge that parents take into account the specific apps their children use to facilitate their English language learning, with some apps being perceived as more trustworthy than others. Additionally, the current study aligns with the previous one in the way it both highlights the potential lack of awareness among parents regarding the negative effects of excessive screen time and inappropriate content. Both emphasize the importance of parents being informed and educated about the appropriate use of digital devices for language learning purposes. Therefore, the reference by Sergei et al. (2017) supports and aligns with the findings of this study, reinforcing the significance of considering

app selection and raising awareness among parents about the potential risks associated with digital tablet use in language learning.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aimed to explore the attitudes and practices of parents regarding the use of digital tablets for their children's English language learning. Through semi-structured interviews with six parents who have children aged 2 to 5 years old, the study investigated how the use of tablets affects parents' participation in their children's language learning and identified strategies and techniques that parents use to support their children's English language learning through the use of digital tablets.

The findings revealed that parents generally have a positive attitude towards the use of digital tablets for their children's language learning, citing convenience and effectiveness as the main reasons. The use of tablets was also found to positively impact parents' participation in their children's language learning by making it easier for them to provide support and engage in learning activities with their children. Moreover, parents reported using a range of strategies, such as using educational apps and watching videos together, to support their children's English language learning through the use of digital tablets.

The field of toddlers learning English through digital tablets is important for several reasons. Firstly, with the increasing globalization of our society, the ability to speak more than one language is becoming increasingly valuable. By starting to learn English as a second language at a young age, toddlers have the opportunity to develop stronger language skills and a more diverse vocabulary, which can benefit them later in life. Secondly, digital tablets have become an increasingly popular tool for educational purposes, especially in early childhood education. Toddlers are often drawn to the interactive and engaging nature of digital tablets, which can make learning more enjoyable for them. Therefore, exploring how toddlers can effectively learn a second language through digital tablets can have significant implications for the development of educational technology and early childhood education. Finally, studying how toddlers learn a second language through digital tablets can also provide insights into how technology can be used to enhance language acquisition and development. By better understanding how toddlers interact with and learn from

digital tablets, researchers and educators, such as teachers and parents, can develop more effective tools and strategies for teaching language skills.

Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of how parents are using digital tablets to support their children's language learning and provides insights into the strategies and techniques that parents are using to facilitate their children's language learning through the use of digital devices. These findings can inform the development of effective digital tools and educational resources to support parents in their children's language learning and help them make the most of the digital devices available to them.

Future studies within the field of toddlers learning English as a second language through digital tablets could investigate the impact of different types of English-language learning apps: There are a wide range of apps available that claim to help children learn English as a second language. Future research could investigate the effectiveness of different types of apps, such as those that focus on vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation, and whether certain types of apps are more effective for different age groups or language proficiency levels. Or another interesting study could be examining the role of parental involvement: Many parents reported that they use digital tablets as a way to supplement their child's English language learning. Future studies could investigate the impact of parental involvement in the learning process, such as whether children who have more parental involvement in their language learning demonstrate better outcomes.

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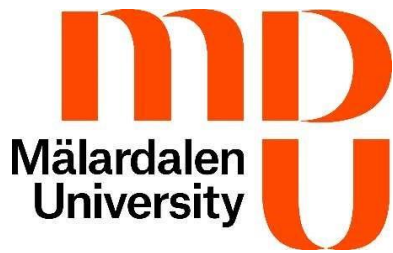
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Appendix 1 – Interview Questions

1. How many children do you have?
2. Do you use digital tablets in your home?
3. Does your child have free access to digital devices in your home?
4. How often does your child use digital devices on a regular basis?
5. How do you balance screen time and other activities for your child, especially when it comes to language learning?
6. What is your perception of your child's second language skills by using digital devices in your home?
7. What do you consider beneficial for your child's second language learning through using digital devices?
8. What are your thoughts on opportunities and challenges with letting your child use digital tablets in hence of learning a second language?
9. In what way do you think it's a good/bad idea to participate with your child when he/she is playing with digital devices?
10. Can you share an example of a successful language learning experience you had with your toddler using a digital tablet?
11. In what way do you think using digital tablets has impacted your child's motivation to learn a second language?
12. How do you perceive the impact of using digital tablets on your child's second language acquisition? In what ways has it made it easier or more difficult for them to learn, and why?
13. What new skills or techniques have you developed to support your child's language learning through digital tablets?
14. How do you feel your child's confidence in speaking English as a second language has been affected by the use of digital tablets?
15. What advice would you give to other parents who are interested in using digital tablets to help their toddlers learn a second language?
16. Do you have older children who didn't grow up playing with digital devices?
17. If yes, do you notice any differences between your children in learning a second language through the use of digital tablets and not? If not, can you think of any differences in the effect a digital tablet has as a learning tool for young children?

18. What program/apps does your child use the most?
19. What are your thoughts about those apps?
20. In what ways do you think the use of digital tablets can supplement or complement formal language learning for children?

Appendix 2 – A Letter of Information



*School of Education,
Culture, and
Communication*

2023-04-05

Dear xxx,

I am writing to invite you to participate in an interview as part of a research study on toddlers learning English as a second language through digital tablets based on their parent's perceptions. The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness and challenges of using digital tablets as a language-learning tool for young children.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer a series of questions about your experience based on your toddler learning a second language through digital tablets. The interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes and will be conducted at a time and location that is convenient for you.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time during the interview without any penalty. Additionally, your participation in this study is strictly confidential, and your personal information will be kept anonymous.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study or the interview, please do not hesitate to contact me at sjostrandemma@outlook.com or give me a text or phone call at 076-xxx xx xx. Thank you for considering this request, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
Emma Sjöstrand
Mälardalens Universitet

Student's name and contacts:
Emma Sjöstrand
Mälardalens Universitet
076-xxx xx xx
sjostrandemma@outlook.com

Name of supervisor:
Sandra Jederud
Sandra.jederud@mdu.se

Appendix 3 – A Letter of Consent



*School of Education,
Culture, and
Communication*

2023-04-05

Dear xxx,

I am writing to request your consent to participate in my research study, which aims to examine parents' views on their children's second language acquisition through digital tablets and the impact of children's use of digital tablets on their ability to learn English as a second language.

If you agree to participate, I will ask you to take part in a semi-structured interview that will be audio-recorded. The recording will be used solely for the purpose of the study, all identifiable information will be kept confidential, and the recording will be securely stored. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. The interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes and will be conducted at a time and location that is convenient for you.

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided in this letter and that you consent to participate in the study.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study or the consent form, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for considering this request, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Name of participants

1. _____

2. _____

Sincerely,
Emma Sjöstrand
Mälardalens Universitet

Student's name and contacts:
Emma Sjöstrand
Mälardalens Universitet

076-xxx xx xx
sjostrandemma@outlook.com

Name of supervisor:
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