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The BISA Strategy: Interest-Based Mother Tongue Stimulation for Young Children through Facilitator-Parent Collaboration

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Abstract. Mother tongue, in this study referring specifically to Indonesian as children's first and dominant daily language, is an important foundation for young children's communication, social interaction, and learning development. From an Islamic perspective, language ability is part of human potential that should be nurtured according to children's nature and developmental stages. However, mother-tongue stimulation at home and in early childhood education settings is often implemented separately, while learning activities do not always begin with children's interests, including children who show stronger interest in a foreign language. This study aims to formulate the BISA Strategy as an interest-based mother-tongue stimulation approach through collaboration between facilitators and parents. The study combines a literature review of primary Islamic sources, the Qur'an and Hadith, together with national and international studies on the home language environment, mother-tongue use in early childhood education, parental involvement, educators' roles, and language stimulation activities, with an empirical illustration involving a parent interview and facilitator observation of a 4-year-5-month-old child. The findings show that the home and school language environment supports children's language development, mother-tongue use increases children's engagement in learning, and parent-facilitator collaboration strengthens continuity of stimulation. The interview and observation revealed that the child's interest in toys and storybooks was used as an entry point for stimulation, foreign vocabulary was consistently paired with Indonesian equivalents, and communication approaches were continuously adjusted, resulting in improved use and understanding of the mother tongue over time. Based on this synthesis, the BISA Strategy is formulated through four operational stages: Building closeness and identifying children's interests, Identifying context-activity-vocabulary, Synergizing facilitator and parent roles, and Observing and adapting continuously. The BISA Strategy is expected to provide meaningful, natural, consistent, and developmentally appropriate mother-tongue stimulation for young children, even when children show interest in foreign languages.

Keywords: *BISA strategy, children's interests, facilitator-parent collaboration, mother tongue.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is an important potential in early childhood development because it supports communication, social interaction, comprehension, and the learning process. From an Islamic perspective, the human capacity to communicate is a divine gift. The Qur'an states that linguistic diversity is one of the signs of God's greatness [1]. Surah Ar-Rahman [55]:1-4 positions the ability to speak clearly (al-bayan) as a gift from God to humankind [1], while Surah Ibrahim [14]:4 explains that every messenger was sent using the language of his own people so the message could be understood [1]. These foundations establish that communication and learning should use a language comprehensible to the recipient.

The term mother tongue in this study refers specifically to Indonesian, as children's first and dominant everyday language, distinguished from a foreign language (English) also of interest to some young children in this study's context. This interest-based stimulation principle is also relevant to studies on regional-language maintenance as cultural identity [2], [3], [4], although the main focus here is strengthening Indonesian amid children's interest in a foreign language.

Young children acquire language experience through their immediate environment, particularly the family. The quality and variety of the home language environment relate to children's language development [5], while home language experience and parental knowledge relate to school readiness in a bilingual context [6]. This aligns with Surah An-Nahl [16]:78, which describes humans as born knowing nothing, then given hearing, sight, and hearts as means of learning [1]. Stimulation should therefore be provided through concrete experiences and an environment appropriate to children's developmental stage.

Mother tongue is closely tied to children's everyday experience. Its use in learning helps children understand instructions, increases engagement, and has been shown to increase activeness and interaction in class [7]. A mother-tongue approach has also proven important in designing oral language learning for young children [8].

The family is the primary environment providing repeated language stimulation through conversation, storytelling, reading, singing, and daily interaction [9]. Parents play an important role in language development at ages 5-6 [4]. From a Hadith perspective, children possess a natural disposition (*fitrah*), and the parental environment greatly influences its formation [10], [11]. Parents should therefore be positioned as key partners in stimulation, including when children show interest in a foreign language that needs redirecting without eliminating that interest.

Beyond the family, facilitators help create an environment supporting children's language use. Supporting home language requires educator competence, professional development, and communication with parents [12]. Shared activities with parents, including book reading, also support early literacy [13], making continuity of stimulation between home and school important.

Message delivery to children must consider the recipient's ability. Clear communication is reflected in the Hadith on the clarity of the Prophet Muhammad's speech [14], consistent with the principle that facilitators need to adjust communication to children's abilities, including using a foreign language already familiar to the child as a bridge rather than something to avoid.

Collaboration between teachers and parents has been shown to create a more consistent learning environment for children's language development [15]. However, a strategy is still needed that explicitly positions children's interests, including interest in a foreign language, as the starting point for mother-tongue stimulation while connecting facilitator and parent roles.

Based on this gap, the BISA Strategy was developed as an interest-based mother-tongue stimulation approach through facilitator-parent collaboration. Children's interests serve as an entry point for determining the context, activities, and vocabulary of stimulation. Facilitators act as guides and observers, while parents continue the stimulation in daily life, creating stimulation that is meaningful, natural, consistent, and appropriate to children's developmental needs.

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design, combined with a literature review (library research) as the basis for formulating the strategy. Principles drawn from primary Islamic sources (the Qur'an and Hadith) and empirical research on early childhood language development were synthesized into an operational strategy, which was then illustrated empirically through a small-scale case study involving one child, his parents, and his facilitator.

The focus of this study is to formulate the BISA Strategy as an interest-based approach to mother-tongue stimulation through facilitator-parent collaboration, and to illustrate its real-world application through the experience of one child who shows interest in a foreign language while also undergoing stimulation in Indonesian as his mother tongue.

Study Site and Participants

This study was conducted at Sekolah Otak Kanan Indonesia, using a purposive sampling technique, in which the participant was deliberately selected based on the fit between his characteristics and the study's aims, rather than at random. The participant in this study was a 4-year-5-month-old child (initialed R), together with his parents and facilitator, selected because he displayed a language-exposure pattern relevant to the study's focus: a strong interest in English-language media occurring alongside Indonesian mother-tongue stimulation at home.

Literature Sources and Review Procedure

Two categories of literature were reviewed in this study. The first comprised primary Islamic sources, the Qur'an [1] and Hadith collections [16], [10], [11], selected for verses and narrations relevant to language, communication, and the nurturing of children's *fitrah* (natural disposition). The second comprised national and international peer-reviewed studies, most published within the last five years, addressing four themes: (a) the home and school language environment [5], [6], [17]; (b) mother-tongue use and children's engagement in early-childhood learning [7], [8]; (c) parental involvement, educators' roles, and language-stimulation activities [9], [18], [13]; and (d) facilitator-parent collaboration and its continuity [15], [12], [19]. Studies on regional/heritage-language maintenance [2], [3], [4] were additionally reviewed to inform the principle of treating a child's existing linguistic interest, including interest in a foreign language as an entry point for

stimulation rather than a competing concern. Literature was retrieved through academic database and Google Scholar searches using combinations of the keywords “home language environment,” “mother tongue,” “parental involvement,” and “teacher-parent collaboration” with “early childhood education.”

Empirical Illustration: Participant and Instruments

Table 1. Parent Interview Guide.

No	Stage (Aspect)	Theoretical Basis	Indicator
1.	Build Closeness & Identify the Child's Interest	Home language environment relates to children's language development [16]; parental knowledge of children's language experience relates to bilingual readiness [3]	Parents can identify the child's interests since early on
			Parents can name the child's favorite activities/media specifically
			Parents are responsive to the child's new interests
			Information about the child's interests is exchanged between parents and teacher
2.	Identify Context, Activity, and Vocabulary	Mother tongue as the language of instruction increases children's activeness [11]; a mother-tongue approach in oral-language learning design [5]	Parents use the child's interest as a home mother-tongue stimulation activity
			Parents can identify vocabulary frequently spoken by the child
			Parents deliberately pair foreign vocabulary with Indonesian vocabulary
			Parents recognize effective moments/times for vocabulary stimulation
3.	Synergize the Roles of Facilitator & Parents	Teacher–parent collaboration creates a consistent learning environment [15]; supporting home language requires active educator–parent communication [6]	Parents receive information on the child's language development from the teacher
			Parents follow up at home on information from the teacher
			There is a shared agreement between teacher and parents on the language approach
			Parents can identify the support needed from school
			Parents show awareness of the importance of family alignment
4.	Observe and Adapt Continuously	Parental involvement in shared activities mediates children's early literacy [2]; the fit between home language and bilingual learning [20]	Parents have a way of monitoring the child's language development
			Parents adjust their strategy based on the child's response
			Parents can identify obstacles in language mentoring
			Family/religious values are identified as influencing language mentoring (QS Ibrahim:4 [1]; hadith on fitrah [10], [11])
5.	Closing/Reflection	—	Parents can articulate their hopes for the child's language development

To illustrate the formulated strategy in a real setting, an empirical case was documented involving a 4-year-5-month-old child (initialed R) enrolled at Sekolah Otak Kanan Indonesia, together with his parents and classroom facilitator. Two instruments were used. First, a semi-structured parent-interview guide comprising 30 questions organized into five stages aligned with the BISA framework: building closeness and identifying interest; identifying context, activities, and vocabulary; synergizing facilitator and parent roles; observing and adapting continuously; and closing reflection. Second, a classroom-observation checklist comprising 12 behavioral indicators grouped into four stages (Build, Identify, Synergize, Observe), rated on a three-point scale (emerged, sometimes emerged, not yet emerged) with space for descriptive field notes.

Procedures

Interview procedure

A semi-structured, audio-recorded interview was conducted with the child's mother as the primary informant, covering the child's interests, home stimulation activities and vocabulary, home–school collaboration, and the family's ongoing observation and adaptation of stimulation strategies. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and organized according to the five interview stages before analysis.

Observation procedure

Classroom observation was carried out over two consecutive days (11–12 August 2026) by the facilitator, who rated the child's language behavior on the 12-indicator checklist and recorded supporting descriptive notes for each indicator.

Data Analysis and Strategy Formulation

Literature findings and empirical data were analyzed using thematic synthesis. Recurring principles identified in the literature were grouped under four operational stages, mirrored against the case-illustration data organized under the same stages, so that each stage of the BISA Strategy is grounded both in a literature-based rationale and in a concrete illustration of how it appears in practice. Observation data were additionally

tabulated by indicator and cross-checked against the interview findings to triangulate parents' reported practices with the child's observed classroom language behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Home and School Language Environment Supports Children's Language Development

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that the quality and variety of the home language environment relate to children's language development [5], and that home language experience together with parental knowledge relates to children's school readiness in bilingual contexts [6], [21]. Evidence from a rural setting further shows that variation in the home language environment is associated with differences in early language development [17]. Taken together, these studies suggest that the language environment at home and at school is not a passive backdrop but an active contributor to how, and how well, young children develop language, reinforcing the Qur'anic principle that human learning begins from a state of not-knowing and progresses through the faculties and environment provided to the child [1].

Mother-Tongue Use Increases Children's Engagement in Learning

The use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction has been shown to help children understand instructions and to increase activeness and interaction in the classroom, supporting a more child-friendly learning atmosphere [7]. Consistent with this, a mother-tongue approach has been found important in designing oral-language learning activities for young children [8]. These findings support positioning Indonesian, as the children's dominant everyday language, at the center of stimulation activities, even when children are simultaneously drawn to a foreign language.

Parent-Facilitator Collaboration Strengthens Continuity of Stimulation

Collaboration between teachers and parents has been shown to create a more consistent learning environment for children's language development [15], while supporting home-language use requires educator competence, ongoing professional development, and active communication with parents [12]. Shared parent-child activities, particularly book reading, further support children's emergent literacy and can mediate the influence of socioeconomic background on heritage-language learners [13]. Complementary international evidence shows that parental beliefs, knowledge, and acculturation shape children's bilingual outcomes and heritage-language maintenance [22], [23], [24], that teachers' beliefs about matching home-language proficiency influence their practice with emergent bilingual learners [20], and that parents' socialization of children's emotions is intertwined with bilingual, bicultural development [19]. These findings underline that stimulation is most effective when facilitators and parents share information and expectations rather than acting independently.

Empirical Illustration: The Case of R

The empirical case illustrates how these literature-based principles appear in practice. R has shown a strong interest in toy cars since the age of one, an interest influenced by his father's own habit, and enjoys being read to, including books on Indonesian tradition as well as English-language books and shows (*Blade and Blaze*, *Sleepy*). His parents responded to his interests through a gradual, explanatory approach (e.g., promising “maybe tomorrow” rather than an outright refusal), and routine communication with the preschool functioned as a channel for exchanging information about his evolving interests.

Stimulation at home was embedded in bedtime reading (sometimes repeated in the morning, afternoon, and evening), drawing and coloring vehicles, and painting with watercolors, during which the parents deliberately matched R's favorite English words with their Indonesian equivalents (*water-air*, *carrot-wortel*, *fast-cepat*, *market-pasar*, *cow-sapi*). A consistent “daily mantra” reminding him not to hit, snatch, or throw toys had already been memorized, functioning as repeated, consistent vocabulary reinforcement. The main difficulties identified were pronouncing closed syllables (e.g., *jalan*, “street/walk”) and articulating the /r/ sound.

The parents deliberately postponed enrolling R in formal English lessons, prioritizing the strengthening of Indonesian first. The preschool functioned as a partner for exchanging information, while at home an interesting family dynamic emerged: the mother tended to be more reactive and anxious, the father calmer and more supportive, with additional input from grandparents who frequently asked the child to recount his day, showing that alignment is needed across the extended family, not only between the parents themselves. Over time, the parents observed rapid progress since R began attending preschool and shifted their communication style from a firm, raised tone toward a calmer, “cooling-down” approach, which was associated with greater cooperation from the child, whose character is markedly kinesthetic.

**Distribution of Classroom Observation Results
(12 Indicators, Participant R)**

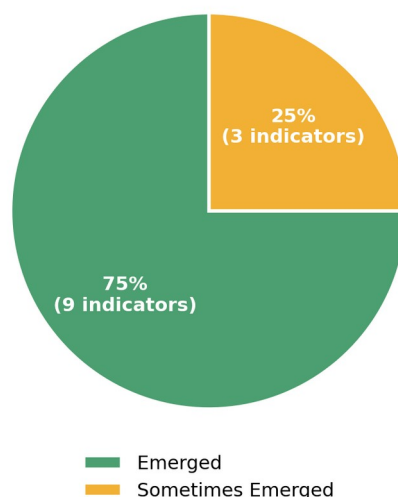


Figure 1. Pie chart of classroom observation results for participant R (4 years 5 months), 11–12 August 2026.

The observation shows consistently “emerged” ratings for interest expression, initiative, response to the facilitator, mother-tongue vocabulary production, instruction comprehension, word repetition, social interaction in language, consistency of use, and progress over time (indicators 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12), corroborating the parents' account of steady progress. Foreign-vocabulary production, active participation during explicit vocabulary matching, and articulation clarity (indicators 4, 7, 11) were rated only “sometimes emerged,” converging with the parents' report of continuing difficulty with closed syllables and the /r/ sound, indicating that receptive and imitative language skills are currently ahead of spontaneous production and articulation.

Formulating the BISA Strategy

Synthesizing the literature review with the empirical illustration, the BISA Strategy is formulated through four operational stages.

Build closeness and identify interest (B)

Grounded in evidence that a rich, attentive home language environment supports children's language development [5], [6], this stage directs parents and facilitators to first build emotional closeness with the child and to identify his or her specific, recurring interests, as illustrated by R's early and consistent interest in vehicles and storybooks, as the entry point for all subsequent stimulation.

Identify context, activity, and vocabulary (I)

Building on evidence that mother-tongue use increases engagement and supports oral-language design [7], [8], and on findings concerning mother-tongue-based learning materials [18] and shared reading [13], this stage translates the child's interest into concrete home and classroom activities, reading, drawing, coloring, and painting in R's case, through which target Indonesian vocabulary is consistently modeled and repeated, including deliberate pairing of favorite foreign words with their Indonesian equivalents.

Synergize facilitator and parent roles (S)

Drawing on evidence that teacher–parent collaboration creates a more consistent learning environment [15], that supporting home-language use requires educator competence and communication with parents [12], and that parental beliefs and teacher beliefs about home-language matching shape outcomes for bilingual and heritage-language learners [25], [20], this stage establishes a two-way information channel between facilitator and parents, and as R's case shows, ideally extends to alignment within the wider family, so that stimulation efforts at home and at school reinforce rather than fragment one another.

Observe and adapt continuously (A)

Consistent with evidence on the emotional dimension of bilingual socialization [19] and on differential outcomes depending on the consistency of home-language exposure [25], [17], this final stage requires ongoing observation of the child's language behavior and willingness to adapt the communication approach, illustrated by R's parents shifting from a firm to a calmer communication style in response to his kinesthetic character and evolving needs.

Discussion

Overall, the convergence between the literature review and the empirical illustration supports the BISA Strategy as a coherent, interest-based framework for mother-tongue stimulation that is grounded both in Islamic principles concerning communication and fitrah [1], [10], [11] and in contemporary empirical research on home language environments, mother-tongue pedagogy, and parent–facilitator collaboration [5], [7], [15]. The case of R demonstrates that when a child's interests, including interest in a foreign language, are treated as an asset rather than a distraction, they can be channeled into consistent, natural Indonesian-language stimulation with observable gains in comprehension, vocabulary retention, and social use of language. At the same time, both the literature and the case illustration point to spontaneous production and articulation, and to alignment within the extended family, as areas that require sustained, deliberate attention. As this study relies on a single illustrative case, the generalizability of these empirical observations is limited, and the BISA Strategy should be regarded as a strategy formulated from synthesis and illustration rather than as a strategy already validated across a broader population.

CONCLUSION

This study formulated the BISA Strategy, Build closeness and identify interest, Identify context-activity-vocabulary, Synergize facilitator and parent roles, and Observe and adapt continuously, as an interest-based approach to Indonesian mother-tongue stimulation for young children, grounded in Islamic principles on communication and fitrah and in national and international research on home language environments, mother-tongue pedagogy, and parent–facilitator collaboration. The empirical illustration involving a 4-year-5-month-old child showed that anchoring stimulation to the child's genuine interests, consistently pairing favorite foreign vocabulary with Indonesian equivalents, and maintaining open communication between facilitator, parents, and the wider family were associated with steady gains in the child's understanding, vocabulary retention, and social use of the mother tongue, even as spontaneous production and articulation continued to develop more gradually.

The BISA Strategy is expected to offer facilitators and parents a meaningful, natural, consistent, and developmentally appropriate framework for mother-tongue stimulation, including in cases where children show strong interest in a foreign language. Because the strategy was formulated primarily through literature synthesis illustrated by a single case, future studies involving a larger and more diverse group of children, families, and educational settings are recommended to empirically test and refine the BISA Strategy's four stages.

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