



Differences in Social Development between Children who Use Local Language and Indonesian Language in Daily Life

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ABSTRACT

Social development involves the ability to build relationships, understand norms, and adapt to social environments. This study aims to examine differences in social development between children who use local languages and those who use Indonesian in their daily lives. A quantitative method with a descriptive-comparative approach was employed, involving 80 children aged 5–6 years from eight TK Pembina in Sungai Penuh, Jambi Province. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using univariate and bivariate analysis with the Independent Sample t-test. The results showed that children who used local languages demonstrated better social development compared to those who used Indonesian. Based on the Independent Sample t-test, the significance value was $0.004 < 0.05$ and the t-value was $3.007 > 1.665$, indicating a significant difference in social development between the two groups. These findings have practical implications for teachers and parents to promote the balanced use of both local languages and Indonesian in children's daily interactions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Every human being experiences development throughout their life span, Starting from the womb to old age (Jambak *et al.*, 2024). These stages of development include various aspects, such as physical, cognitive, intellectual, emotional, social, moral, religious, and language (Suryana *et al.*, 2022). Each stage has its own characteristics and challenges that affect how individuals adapt to their environment. One of the most rapid and decisive periods of development is early childhood. Early childhood is an individual who is in the early phase of childhood, often referred to as the golden age, where basic abilities begin to form and develop rapidly (Rijkiyani *et al.*, 2022). From birth, individuals do not yet have the skills to interact socially, so they need guidance from their immediate environment. This period is a crucial point in the course of development because various potentials begin to appear and are ready to be directed.

Development takes place gradually, purposefully, and continuously (Mahmud *et al.*, 2023). Although the aspects that develop in each person are generally similar, differences in speed can occur. Each aspect, whether physical, cognitive, intellectual, social, emotional, language and others do not always progress at the same time. Some aspects develop first, while others follow later. However, all of these aspects remain interconnected and move harmoniously in a unified developmental process. One aspect that stands out and needs special attention at this time is social development, because at the early age stage children begin to build the ability to interact, adjust, and understand social norms in the surrounding environment.

Social development is an important aspect of a child's life that includes the ability to establish relationships, understand norms, and adapt to the social environment (Lismayani & Pratama, 2023). However, recent studies indicate that children who rely predominantly on one language either the local language or Indonesian may experience differences in their social interactions, such as difficulties in communicating with peers who use a different language. This situation becomes more urgent in multicultural environments, where limited language exposure can affect cooperation, participation in group activities, and the development of social skills. Therefore, it is necessary to examine whether the language used in daily interactions contributes to differences in social development among early childhood learners. This process occurs through psychosocial stages involving interaction and personality formation (Rizki, 2022). Children need interactions with peers, parents, and other adults to fulfill their social needs (Shin & Park, 2022). From an early age, social skills begin to be seen in the way children respond to the environment, recognize expressions, and understand the behavior of others. This development is influenced by parenting, social experiences, and a supportive environment, such as homes and schools that are open and provide space for children to express themselves (Fitriya *et al.*, 2022). Parents and teachers play an important role in shaping children's social behavior from an early age.

At the age of 5-6 years, children begin to build social skills such as cooperation, empathy, and participation through interactions with the environment (Khatijah *et al.*, 2025). Social behaviors that emerge at this age include friendliness, empathy, cooperation, but can also be defiance, aggressiveness, or competition (Hafifah *et al.*, 2024). All of these behaviors are strongly influenced by daily communication patterns, including the language children use in everyday life. Language is the main tool in communication that serves to convey ideas, ideas, and feelings to others (Ningrum & Tazqiyah, 2024). Language is not only a communication tool, but also a psychological tool that plays an important role in children's social development. Language helps children regulate behavior, understand social norms, and build relationships with the surrounding environment (Etnawati, 2021). Through language, children acquire knowledge, shape their way of thinking, and develop social skills (Mailani *et al.*, 2022).

Language acquisition occurs naturally from an early age through daily interactions, especially in the family environment. The first language or mother tongue is usually acquired without formal teaching, but through the experience of communicating (Almaghfiroh *et al.*, 2024). Early life is a critical period for language development, because the child's brain is very sensitive to language stimuli (Sae *et al.*, 2024). Good language skills affect children's ability to establish social relationships, express emotions, and adjust in groups (Bamicha & Drigas, 2022). Therefore, language use cannot be separated from social development because both support each other and take place simultaneously, especially in early childhood which is a crucial phase in the formation of personality and social skills.

Local languages are generally the first language mastered by children within their family environment, while Indonesian is introduced later as a second language, primarily in formal education settings (Amalia *et al.*, 2024). The dynamics of using these two languages have the potential to affect children's social development, both in terms of social interaction, group acceptance, and in shaping self-identity and broader communication skills, and one of the real conditions of this dynamic can be found in Sungai Penuh City, Jambi Province, particularly in Pembina Kindergarten which is the site of this study. Rachmawaty *et al.*, (2022) also highlights the importance of cultural and contextual factors in shaping early childhood development. Ahdad *et al.*, (2023) emphasized that learning strategies based on local wisdom can significantly influence the development of values and social behaviors in children, while Tumbularani *et al.*, (2025) found that introducing Yogyakarta's local culture helps foster children's identity and sense of belonging to their community. However, these studies focused more on cultural strategies and identity formation, not specifically on the influence of language choice whether local language or Indonesian on social development. This underlines the novelty of the present study, which aims to compare early childhood social development based on the dominant language used in daily life.

Based on preliminary observations in eight Pembina kindergartens in Sungai Penuh City, it was found that children use local language more often in their daily activities. Of the 62 children observed, 60% communicated more often using local language, while 40% used Bahasa Indonesia. According to teachers, children are more active when speaking in local language, but less fluent and confident when speaking in Bahasa Indonesia. Similarly, parents reported that children were more comfortable using local languages at home and school. Observations also show that children who are accustomed to using local languages tend to be more sociable, actively interact and quickly adjust socially. In contrast, children who used Bahasa Indonesia more often appeared more passive and took longer to blend in. These findings indicate that the language children use in their daily lives can affect their social development, especially in terms of self-confidence, ability to interact and build social relationships.

This condition is important for research to determine the comparison of early childhood social development between those who use local languages and Indonesian. Sungai Penuh City, which is located in Jambi Province, has a wealth of local languages and cultures that are still strongly preserved and passed down, including in the early childhood environment. The existence of local languages has various impacts on the use of Indonesian. Positively, local languages enrich the vocabulary of Indonesian, strengthen cultural identity, and create a familiar atmosphere of communication within the community. In addition, local languages also symbolize the nation's cultural wealth and reflect the characteristics and identity of a tribe or region. However, behind these benefits, there are also negative impacts that need to be considered. Language differences between regions can cause communication barriers, and

even lead to misunderstandings due to vocabulary that is similar in sound or spelling but different in meaning.

Research on bilingualism in children has been conducted and shows mixed results. Bilingual children often experience confusion when using two languages at once, which can affect their ability to establish social relationships effectively (Adniy *et al.*, 2022). Research by Annisa (2021) found that bilingualism has both positive and negative impacts on children's social development; on the one hand, children become more adaptable and confident, but on the other hand, they may experience social pressure and difficulties. However, this study did not differentiate the impact based on which language is predominantly used in daily communication, leaving a gap in understanding the role of local language versus Indonesian in shaping social interactions. Similarly, research by Hia *et al.* (2025) examined children's language development in bilingual families and found that children accustomed to using two languages demonstrate good linguistic abilities, but are also at risk of language mixing. Nevertheless, this study focused more on language competence rather than social aspects. These gaps indicate that there is limited empirical evidence comparing social development between children who primarily use local languages and those who use Indonesian in daily life. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by analyzing the differences in social development based on the dominant language used by children, which represents the novelty of this research.

Based on previous research, no studies have been found that specifically compare early childhood social development based on the language used in everyday life, especially between children who use local languages and children who use Indonesian. This shows a research gap in this study, namely the lack of studies that focus on the differences in social development between children who use local languages and Indonesian in everyday life. Therefore, this research is important to fill the gap.

Based on the background and research gap described above, this study emphasizes a novelty by directly comparing the social development of children based on the dominant language they use in daily life local language or Indonesian which has rarely been examined in previous studies. The objective of this research is to determine whether there are significant differences in social development between children who predominantly use local languages and those who use Indonesian in their everyday interactions. The purpose of this study is to determine and analyze whether there are differences in social development between children who use local languages and Indonesian. The limitation of this research is only focused on early childhood 5-6 years old who attend kindergarten Pembina Full River City, Jambi Province. It is hoped that the results of this study can show that even though children use local languages or Indonesian in their daily lives, their social development can still develop optimally and show no difference.

2. METHODS

This research uses quantitative methods with a comparative descriptive approach. Quantitative research is an approach that aims to prove a theory by measuring several variables (Ghanad, 2023). The measurement results are then analyzed statistically and presented in the form of numbers. While the comparative research approach is a method used to examine relationships by comparing, through direct observation of factors that are thought to be the cause of differences between groups (Bolbakov *et al.*, 2020). This research was conducted in eight Pembina kindergartens in Sungai Penuh City, Jambi Province. This research was conducted in April - May 2025.

The population in this study were all students from eight Pembina kindergartens in Sungai Penuh City, totaling 417 children. The sample was determined using purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of samples based on certain considerations (Chudasama, 2023). The reason researchers use purposive sampling is because not all samples have criteria that match the criteria studied. The sample criteria in this study were children aged 5–6 years and willing to be respondents. This age range was selected because it represents the final stage of early childhood, during which social development becomes more complex and children actively interact with peers, making it an ideal period for observing differences in social skills based on language use.

In this study, the Slovin formula was used to determine the number of samples to be used. The Slovin formula is a formula used to calculate the minimum sample size when the population size is known (Maimunah *et al.*, 2020). If the population is too large for direct sampling, then the Slovin formula can be used to determine the required sample size (Hartanto & Savitri, 2022). The Slovin formula used is as follows (Anugraheni *et al.*, 2023):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + ne^2}$$

Description:

n = Sample Size

N = Population

e = Error Rate (10% = 0,1)

$$n = \frac{417}{1 + 417 (0,1)^2} = \frac{417}{5,17} = 80,65$$

Based on the calculation, the number of samples obtained was 80.65 and rounded up to 80 respondents to facilitate research. Because the population came from 8 different Pembina kindergartens, a disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was used, which is a sampling method when the number of members of each stratum is not comparable (Chudasama, 2023). This technique is done by dividing the population into subpopulations (strata) based on each kindergarten proportionally, then sampling is done randomly from each stratum. The formula for determining the number of samples from each stratum is presented in **Table 1** below:

Total Sample= (Number of Subpopulations)/(Total Population) x number of samples required

Table 1. Sample respondents of Pembina Kindergarten in Sungai Penuh City

No	Kindergarten Name	Number of Students	Sample Allocation
1	TK Pembina Koto Renah	90	17
2	TK Pembina Pondok Tinggi	17	3
3	TK Pembina Tanah Kampung	30	6
4	TK Pembina Koto Baru	46	9
5	TK Pembina Kumun Debai	9	2
6	TK Pembina Hamparan Rawang	65	13
7	TK Pembina Talang Lindung	33	6
8	TK Pembina Sungai Penuh	127	24
Total 417		80	

To measure the early childhood social development variables in this study, researchers compiled a questionnaire that refers to the indicators of early childhood social development

variables aged 5-6 years listed in Permendikbud Number 137 of 2014. The questionnaire grids used in this study are presented in **Table 2**:

Table 2. Research questionnaire lattice

Variable	Indicator	Statement Numbers	Number of Items
Social development of 5-6 year old children	1. Self-awareness	1–6	6
	2. Sense of responsibility for self and others	7–17	11
	3. Proportional behavior	18–40	23
Total statement items			40

The data analysis techniques used in this study are univariate analysis and bivariate analysis. Univariate analysis was used to analyze each variable separately without relating it to other variables, with the aim of describing the conditions or characteristics of the phenomenon under study. Meanwhile, bivariate analysis was used to determine the differences in social development between groups of children using local language and Indonesian language, using the Independent Sample t-test.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Univariate Analysis

The research sample consisted of 80 respondents spread across eight Pembina kindergartens in Sungai Penuh City, Jambi Province. The results of univariate analysis are presented in **Table 3** below:

Table 3. Frequency distribution of respondents' characteristics based on age and gender in children using Indonesian and local language

Everyday Language	Characteristics	Category	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Indonesian	Child's Age	4–5 years	0	0.0
		5–6 years	31	100.0
	Gender	Male	13	41.9
		Female	18	58.1
Total			31	100.0
Local Language	Child's Age	4–5 years	0	0.0
		5–6 years	49	100.0
	Gender	Male	20	40.8
		Female	29	59.2
Total			49	100.0

Table 3 shows that out of a total of 80 young children, 31 children use Indonesian and 49 children use local languages in their daily lives. All respondents were at the age of 5-6 years. Based on gender, the Indonesian language user group consisted of 41.9% males and 58.1 females. While the group of local language users consisted of 40.8% males and 59.2% females. In general, there are more girls, namely 47, than boys, who number only 33. These results illustrate that language choice in early childhood is influenced by the surrounding environment and cultural conditions, but at the same time, the distribution of language users between males and females appears to be almost balanced. Several previous studies have

shown that the language used by children in their daily lives plays a major role in shaping the way they interact and in the process of developing their identity (Ahdad *et al.*, 2023; Tumbularani *et al.*, 2025). However, these studies emphasise cultural strategies and value formation rather than a direct comparison between the use of Indonesian and regional languages. This reveals a research gap that has rarely been explored, so this study aims to fill that gap by specifically examining how the dominance of the language used by children affects their social development. The frequency Distribution is presented in **Table 4** below:

Table 4. Frequency distribution of social development categories between children using Indonesian and local language

Everyday Language	Social Development		Total
	Good	Poor	
Indonesian	29 (93.5%)	2 (6.5%)	
Local Language	41 (83.7%)	8 (16.3%)	
Total	70 (87.5%)	10 (12.5%)	

Table 4 shows that most children aged 5–6 years at Pembina Kindergarten in Sungai Penuh City have good social development, both in the Indonesian language and regional language groups. Although the achievement percentage is higher in the Indonesian language group (93.5%), the number of children with good social development is higher in the regional language group. This finding is in line with Hasan *et al.*, (2024), which shows that the use of local languages is more dominant in children's daily interactions and supports social skills. The Indonesia at Melbourne Report also emphasises that the mother tongue strengthens children's cultural identity and self-confidence. However, previous studies have focused more on cultural aspects, while this study highlights the direct differences in children's social development based on the language used in daily life, which is a novelty of this study.

Bivariate Analysis

Independent Sample t-Test

The hypothesis proposed in this study is H0: There is no difference in social development between children who use local language and Indonesian language in daily life. H1: There is a difference in social development between children who use local language and Indonesian language in daily life. The following are the results of the independent sample t-Test test in this study are presented in **Table 5**:

Table 5. Independent sample t-test results

Assumption	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
Equal variances assumed	0.759	0.386	3.007	78	0.004	8.479	2.819	2.866 – 14.092
Equal variances not assumed			3.091	69.608	0.003	8.479	2.743	3.008 – 13.950

Based on table 5 shows that the results of bivariate analysis conducted using the Independent Sample t-Test test, obtained a sig equal variances assumed value of 0.004 < 0.05, and a tcount value of 3.007 > 1.665 ttable. So H1 is accepted and H0 is rejected, meaning that

there is a difference in social development between children who use local language and Indonesian in their daily lives.

This finding suggests that the use of language that is more familiar to the child's social environment, such as local language, plays an important role in shaping the child's ability to interact effectively with others around them. Children who are used to using local languages in their daily communication generally show better social development. Local languages used in the family environment, school environment and neighbourhood help children feel more comfortable and confident in conveying feelings, understanding instructions, and responding to social situations. In this case, language not only functions as a communication tool, but also as an emotional bridge between children and their environment.

This strengthens the opinion that social development is closely related to children's ability to adapt and adjust to the norms and values that apply around them (Masitah *et al.*, 2023). In addition, according to the theory of language development proposed by Vygotsky, the process of social interaction plays an important role in the development of children's language skills. Children who are used to using two languages in their daily lives have a greater chance of developing a more flexible way of thinking and understanding the differences in structure between languages from an early age. However, if one language is used more predominantly, the acquisition of the other language may be slower.

When children use a language they already know well, such as a local language, they are more likely to understand the social context, capture the meaning of the conversation, and actively participate in group activities. This is one of the factors that support the formation of healthy social relationships from an early age. The bilingual condition is also an important factor to consider. Children who are in a bilingual environment and receive balanced support in the use of local and Indonesian languages tend to have better social adaptation skills. Conversely, an imbalance in the acquisition of two languages can lead to barriers in understanding instructions, expressing ideas, and adjusting socially.

Language has an important role as a means of communication for everyone, including early childhood. Through language skills, children can develop socialisation skills both with other people and with the surrounding environment. Without a good command of language, a person will have difficulty in establishing effective communication with others (Forat & Salih, 2024). Apart from language, children's social development is also influenced by several factors, one of which is the family, which is the first and main environment in shaping children's personality and interaction patterns from an early age. A positive family environment will provide a strong foundation for children in building social relationships. In addition, physical and psychological maturity also plays an important role because it allows children to respond appropriately to social situations and understand the dynamics of interaction with others. The socio-economic status of the family also influences parenting and the values instilled, which in turn shape the way children behave in the social environment. Education is equally important as a directed socialisation process, providing children with the knowledge, skills and social values needed in everyday life (Rahiman & Koto, 2022).

This study is in line with the results of research by Hia *et al.*, (2025) which states that children who often use local languages in the environment have a better ability to understand the structure of the language, including mastery of vocabulary and grammar. In addition, they also more quickly grasp the meaning of conversations in local languages used by family, peers, teachers, and the surrounding community. On the other hand, children who have been exposed to Indonesian from an early age through media and interaction with peers generally have more fluent communication skills in Indonesian. However, they often experience

difficulties in understanding local language vocabulary, especially if parents rarely use local languages in daily conversations in the family environment.

In line with these findings, research by Julianti & Siagian (2023) shows that the use of local languages from an early age helps children more easily interact socially in their environment. Local languages used in the family and community shape children's confidence in communicating, while fostering emotional closeness to the surrounding environment. The local cultural values inherent in local languages also strengthen children's social skills from an early age. In addition, research by Adniy *et al.*, (2022) states that children's bilingual ability from an early age can affect their social development. Factors such as family and environment play an important role in shaping children's language skills, and if given the right stimulus, these skills can develop well and have a positive impact on children's ability to interact socially.

The results of this study show that language use in daily life has an influence on children's social development. Children who use local languages more often tend to show better social skills, because the language is closer to their social environment. This closeness helps children feel more confident, adaptable, and able to establish healthy social interactions from an early age.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the data analysis that has been carried out, it can be concluded that there are significant differences in early childhood social development based on the language used in everyday life. The Independent Sample t-test results show a significance value of $0.004 < 0.05$ and a calculated t value of $3.007 > t$ table 1.665, which means that the difference is statistically significant. The data showed that out of a total of 80 young children in Pembina Kindergarten in Sungai Penuh City, Jambi Province, overall, 70 children (87.5%) in both groups showed good social development, and only 10 children (12.5%) were classified as deficient. This study shows that the language used by children in their daily lives, especially the language familiar to their social environment such as local languages, plays an important role in shaping the comfort of interacting, strengthening emotional bridges with the environment, and helping them adjust to the prevailing social norms.

However, this research has several limitations. First, the study was conducted only on children aged 5–6 years in one specific region, so the findings may not represent children in different cultural or linguistic contexts. Second, this research focused on the difference in social development based on everyday language use but did not explore other influencing factors such as family background, parental education, or the intensity of language exposure.

Therefore, future research is recommended to include a more diverse sample across various regions and cultural backgrounds. It is also suggested to use a longitudinal design to examine the long-term impact of language use on children's social development and include additional variables such as socio-economic status and family language policies to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

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