



## Exploring Speaking Skills Development of 4–5-Year-Old Children: The Role of One-on-One Interaction and Experience-Based Storytelling

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### Abstract

Children's speaking skills at ages 4–5 are a key indicator of language development, influencing social interaction, learning processes, and school readiness. This study aims to explore the speaking skills of children aged 4–5 years in early childhood education (PAUD), focusing on vocabulary, sentence structure, articulation, and verbal expression. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design that involved 15 children at Kiddie Care PAUD in Gorontalo. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured teacher and parent interviews, and recordings of children's conversations. The findings show that most children's speaking skills are in the "Starting to Develop" to "Developing as Expected" categories. Children demonstrate strong abilities in storytelling and responding to questions based on personal experiences. However, difficulties remain in producing complex sentences and articulating certain phonemes such as /r/, /s/, and /l/. The findings highlight that socio-pedagogical interventions, specifically one-on-one teacher–child interaction and experience-based storytelling, play a significant role in improving children's speaking fluency, articulation and self-confidence. These results emphasize the importance of interactive and contextual learning approaches in early childhood language development. This study contributes to the development of context-based language learning strategies and provides empirical support for effective language stimulation programs in early childhood education.

### Keywords:

Speaking Skills Development, One-on-One Interaction, Experience-Based Storytelling

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**Abstrak**

Kemampuan berbicara anak-anak pada usia 4–5 tahun merupakan indikator kunci perkembangan bahasa, yang memengaruhi interaksi sosial, pembelajaran, dan kesiapan untuk pendidikan formal. Penelitian ini menggambarkan perkembangan berbicara anak-anak usia 4–5 tahun di pendidikan anak usia dini (PAUD), dengan fokus pada kosakata, struktur kalimat, artikulasi, dan ekspresi verbal. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain studi kasus yang melibatkan 15 anak di Kiddie Care PAUD in Gorontalo. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara semi terstruktur dengan guru dan orang tua, serta rekaman percakapan anak-anak. Hasil menunjukkan keterampilan berbicara sebagian besar anak berada dalam kategori “Mulai Berkembang” hingga “Berkembang Sesuai Harapan” (BSH). Anak-anak menunjukkan keunggulan dalam bercerita dan menjawab pertanyaan tentang pengalaman pribadi. Namun, beberapa anak mengalami kesulitan dengan kalimat kompleks dan pengucapan fonem seperti /r/, /s/, dan /l/. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa intervensi sosiopedagogis, khususnya interaksi guru-anak secara langsung dan kegiatan bercerita berbasis pengalaman, memainkan peran penting dalam meningkatkan kelancaran berbicara, artikulasi dan rasa percaya diri anak-anak. Studi ini berkontribusi dalam mengembangkan strategi pengajaran bahasa berbasis konteks dan memberikan dukungan empiris untuk program stimulasi bahasa yang efektif di PAUD.

**Kata Kunci:**

Pengembangan Keterampilan Berbicara, Interaksi Langsung, Bercerita Pengalaman

**Cara Mensitasi:**

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## INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are a fundamental aspect of early childhood language development, shaping social interaction, learning readiness, and identity formation. At ages 4–5, children experience rapid language growth, including the development of more complex sentence structures, clearer emotional expression, and improved conversational skills such as turn-taking and appropriate intonation (Barman, 2014; Hidayah et al., 2021). These developments position speaking skills as a key indicator of school readiness.

Piaget's preoperational stage highlights the emergence of symbolic thinking, where language functions as a tool for representing and organizing experiences. Meanwhile, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emphasizes that language development occurs optimally through guided social interaction with more capable individuals, such as teachers and parents (Marinda, 2020). Therefore, consistent and meaningful interaction plays a central role in fostering children's speaking abilities.

Social interaction and emotional support are critical factors in children's speaking development. Responsive teacher–child interaction has been shown to enhance vocabulary acquisition and verbal expression, while emotionally supportive environments increase children's confidence in speaking (Hansen & Broekhuizen, 2021; Puspita et al., 2022). Children who feel secure and supported tend to demonstrate greater verbal fluency and expressive competence.

In addition to social factors, cognitive and phonological development influence speaking skills. These components develop gradually and often unevenly, particularly in early childhood (Filipe et al., 2023). However, children's speaking development currently faces significant challenges, particularly in the post-pandemic context. Recent evidence suggests that children who experienced the COVID-19 pandemic for extended periods show delays in phonological acquisition and a higher frequency of erroneous word production compared to typical development standards (Acero-Ferrero et al., 2024). This environment has also been linked to broader delays in communication and social-emotional

skills, emphasizing the critical role of sustained verbal interaction and emotional support in early childhood settings (Saefudin et al., 2025).

Similarly, recent studies have reported that children born during the pandemic tend to exhibit slower expressive vocabulary and phonological development compared to previous cohorts, often resulting in Late Language Emergence (LLE) due to disrupted social stimulation (Christakis, 2025; Yafie et al., 2022). Furthermore, excessive screen exposure has emerged as a significant risk factor in the Indonesian context; high intensity of digital device use is strongly correlated with delayed language milestones, as it reduces the quality of direct verbal engagement needed for vocabulary acquisition (Amanda & Shareeff, 2024). By synthesizing Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development with these recent findings, this study posits that the lack of high-quality 'social scaffolding' is the primary barrier to communicative competence today. This challenge is further amplified in Indonesia's multilingual environment, where a child's vocabulary competence is heavily dependent on the 'environmental intake' and the social position of parents in providing consistent linguistic models (Syaurudin et al., 2022).

In a multilingual environment such as Indonesia, children are often exposed to multiple languages or dialects simultaneously, which can enrich cognitive flexibility but may also lead to temporary interference in pronunciation, vocabulary use, and sentence structure (Khadiva & Zulfahmi, 2024). This unique linguistic context makes Indonesia a critical setting for examining natural speaking development in early childhood.

In the specific context of Gorontalo, Indonesia, the linguistic landscape is characterized by the intensive interplay between the local Gorontalo language and the national Indonesian language, where regional languages are increasingly marginalized in early childhood environments (Hulukati et al., 2017). This setting provides a unique natural laboratory to observe how children navigate phonological acquisition—such as the mastery of liquid phonemes (/r/, /l/)—within a community where dialectal influences may offer distinct phonetic models compared to

standardized linguistic environments. Recent evidence suggests that children often struggle with these specific phonemes as they require complex articulatory movements and are typically among the last sounds to be mastered in Indonesian first language acquisition (Alhafidz et al., 2025; Madjid, 2022).

Despite extensive research on language development, most previous studies have focused on intervention-based approaches, such as educational media, symbolic play, or storytelling techniques to boost verbal output. However, there remains limited research that descriptively examines children's natural speaking behavior in authentic classroom and home contexts, particularly within multilingual environments such as Indonesia. While mapping phonological abilities has been attempted in specific regional contexts like Tasikmalaya, research remains fragmented and lacks a synthesized understanding of how spontaneous socio-pedagogical interactions shape diverse linguistic outcomes (Pratiwi et al., 2025).

While current literature has extensively documented the role of formal pedagogical interventions—ranging from digital media integration (Hidayah et al., 2021) to structured storytelling and symbolic play (Handayani et al., 2024), there is a noticeable 'blind spot' regarding the socio-pedagogical dynamics of spontaneous interactions. Recent studies suggest that emotional security and parent-child bonding are prerequisites for verbal fluency (Saefudin et al., 2025). However, these findings have predominantly emerged from Western-centric settings or focus on generalized developmental patterns. There is a lack of synthesized evidence on how these social mediators operate in naturalistic, multilingual classrooms where the teacher-child bond must bridge both linguistic and cultural gaps (Hulukati et al., 2017). Consequently, there remains limited research that descriptively examines children's natural speaking behavior in authentic contexts, particularly regarding the specific phonetic and grammatical difficulties found in multilingual environments like Gorontalo (Bakari et al., 2024).

This gap is significant because naturalistic data provides a more accurate representation of children's actual

communication abilities, including early identification of speech delays through classroom interaction, which cannot always be captured through structured or experimental methods (Khadijah et al., 2025). Without such data, educators and parents may rely on generalized assumptions that do not fully reflect children's real linguistic experiences

Therefore, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and contextualized description of the speaking abilities of children aged 4–5 years, covering vocabulary, sentence structure, articulation clarity, and expressive competence. In addition, this study seeks to identify socio-environmental and pedagogical factors influencing variations in speaking abilities, including family background, learning environment, and daily interaction patterns.

## METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the speaking abilities of 4–5-year-old children in early childhood education (PAUD) settings. This design was chosen to facilitate an in-depth investigation to understand the dynamics of language development and the social pedagogical factors influencing variations in children's speaking skills. The research process followed a systematic and transparent procedure, from participant selection to data analysis, to ensure methodological rigor and replicability.

Participants in this research were 4–5-year-old children from Kiddie Care PAUD in Gorontalo who were selected through purposive sampling. A total of 15 children ( $n = 15$ ) participated in this study. The selection criteria included: (1) children aged 4–5 years enrolled for at least six months, (2) consistent attendance, (3) parental consent, and (4) absence of diagnosed speech or hearing impairments. This sample size is considered appropriate for qualitative research, as it allows for in-depth exploration of children's speaking behaviors within a natural context rather than statistical generalization.

In addition, basic socio-economic background data of parents were collected, including education level, occupation, and general income category. These data were used to provide contextual understanding of the

children’s language development environment, although they were not treated as primary variables in the analysis.

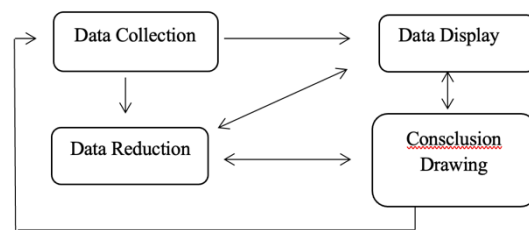
Data collection involved prolonged observations, semi-structured interviews and audio recordings as documentation. An observation checklist based on 15 speaking indicators (BB–BSB categories) was used to guide systematic recording of children’s verbal behaviors. Direct observation focused on verbal interactions between children and teachers, as well as peer interactions during learning and play activities. Interviews with teachers followed a five-question guide designed to explore their perceptions of children’s speaking progress, challenges, and classroom support strategies. The natural conversations were recorded to capture authentic phonetic and grammatical behaviors.

Each speaking development category (BB, MB, BSH, BSB) was operationally defined based on observable verbal behaviors across the 15 indicators to ensure consistency in assessment following the Indonesian early childhood assessment standards as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Operational Definition of Speaking Development Categories

Category	Description	Operational Indicators
BB (Not Yet Developed)	The child has not yet demonstrated the expected speaking ability	Unable to respond verbally, very limited vocabulary, unclear articulation, requires full assistance
MB (Starting to Develop)	The child begins to show speaking skills, but inconsistently	Produces single words or short phrases, incomplete sentences, frequent pauses, and limited clarity
BSH (Developing as Expected)	The child demonstrates age-appropriate speaking ability	Uses simple sentences, responds appropriately, has understandable articulation, able to express ideas clearly
BSB (Developing Very Well)	The child exceeds expected speaking ability	Uses more complex sentences, fluent storytelling, clear articulation, confident and spontaneous expression

Data analysis employed Miles and Huberman’s interactive model of data analysis, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (See Figure 1). Triangulation was implemented by comparing observational findings with teacher interview data and documentation notes to ensure data validity. Two researchers independently coded qualitative data and achieved an inter-rater reliability agreement of approximately 85%, enhancing the study’s credibility.



**Figure 1.** Miles & Huberman Interactive Data Analysis Technique

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The data analysis using open, axial, and selective coding revealed a comprehensive picture of children’s speaking abilities and the factors influencing their development in early childhood education settings. The findings are presented based on the results of direct observation on speaking skills aspects and then deepened by the results of interviews and recordings organized into three main themes: (1) Narrative and Reflective Speaking Skills, (2) Phonological and Grammatical Challenges, and (3) Pedagogical and Environmental Supports.

**Table 2.** Speaking Skills Development Data

No.	Aspect Measured in Speaking Ability	BB	MB	BSH	BSB
1	Use of simple question sentences: what, how many, where, why, and how	20%	50%	30%	-
2	Articulation and pronunciation such as /r/, /s/, or /l/	20%	40%	40%	-
3	Tell stories about surrounding events	-	-	20%	80%

4	Answer questions about short stories, 5-6 sentences told by the teacher	-	-	20%	80%
5	Understand the use of pronouns: I, you, he/she when telling stories	10%	45%	40%	5%
6	Understand instruction and question sentences	20%	40%	40%	-
7	Answer questions about information or descriptions simply	10%	35%	55%	-
8	Arrange and tell the content of a series of pictures	15%	50%	35%	-
9	Continue simple stories/poems started by the teacher	15%	50%	35%	-
10	Mention as many uses of an object as possible.	10%	40%	45%	5%
11	Retell experiences or stories from the teacher with a clearer sequence	-	-	20%	80%
12	Use simple conjunctions like 'and', 'but', and 'or'	50%	50%	-	-
13	Recite simple rhymes	10%	50%	35%	-
14	Make as many words as possible from the provided syllables orally	-	45%	35%	-
15	Tell stories about pictures they have made themselves	-	-	30%	70%

As shown in Table 2, children’s speaking abilities vary across different indicators, with the majority falling within the “Starting to Develop” (MB) to “Developing as Expected” (BSH) categories. Stronger performance is consistently observed in narrative-based tasks rather than grammatical and phonological aspects. For instance, a significant 80% of children reached the “Developing Very Well” (BSB) category in retelling personal experiences and responding to teacher-led narratives, while 70% excelled in narrating self-created drawings. These findings suggest that 4–5-year-olds perform better in speaking when stimulated through concrete, meaningful, and experience-based activities that connect learning with their daily lives.

### ***Narrative and Reflective Speaking Skills***

Children demonstrated stronger abilities in narrative and reflective speaking tasks. A high proportion reached the Developing Very Well (BSB) category in retelling personal experiences (80%), answering questions about short stories (80%), and narrating self-created drawings (70%).

These findings indicate that children are more capable of expressing ideas when speaking activities are connected to meaningful and experience-based contexts. This suggests that contextual relevance and personal engagement significantly support children’s verbal expression.

Teacher interview data support this pattern. One teacher stated, “*When they talk about something they experienced themselves, they speak more fluently.*” This highlights that reflective speaking is closely linked to children’s lived experiences and emotional involvement.

### ***Phonological and Grammatical Challenges***

Despite strengths in narrative abilities, children experienced difficulties in phonological accuracy and grammatical complexity. Table 2 shows that 50% of children were categorized as Not Yet Developed (BB) in the use of conjunctions, while the remaining 50% were Beginning to Develop (MB). This indicates that complex sentence structures are not yet used spontaneously. Similarly, articulation of phonemes such as /r/, /s/, and /l/ remains challenging, with distributions across MB and BSH levels, and 20% still experiencing difficulty. These findings suggest that phonological and grammatical development progresses more gradually than narrative ability.

Teacher insights reinforce this finding. For example, one teacher explained, “*The letter R is the hardest. Many can’t say ‘roda’ clearly.*” Additionally, children often struggled to organize longer sentences, as reflected in the statement, “*They still tend to jump around when telling long stories.*” These results indicate that while children can generate ideas, their ability to structure and articulate them linguistically is still developing.

### ***Pedagogical and Environmental Supports***

The findings highlight the significant role of pedagogical strategies and environmental support in children’s speaking development. Observations and interviews show that interactive, emotionally supportive, and experience-based learning environments enhance children’s verbal participation.

One key finding is the effectiveness of one-on-one interaction. Teachers reported that children were more engaged and responsive in individualized communication. As one teacher noted, *“When talking one-on-one, the children are more open and focused.”* This suggests that personalized interaction provides a supportive space for verbal expression.

In addition, visual and experiential learning media—such as picture series, storytelling, and play-based activities—were found to stimulate children’s speaking abilities. These strategies help children organize ideas and express them more clearly.

Teacher questioning strategies also played an important role. Asking open-ended questions encouraged children to elaborate their responses, supporting the development of more complex language use.

To synthesize the interplay between the observational data and the qualitative insights discussed across these three themes, Table 3 provides a systematic overview of the interview results. This thematic summary captures the core narratives and researcher interpretations that define the children’s speaking environment.

**Table 3.** Thematic Table of Interview Results

<b>Main Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Source Quote (Teacher)</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Children's Verbal Expression in Meaningful Activities	Children are active when recounting personal experiences	“When they talk about something they experienced themselves, they speak more fluently.”	Children find it easier to express themselves when speaking about something familiar or real.
	Picture stories as a trigger for speaking	“Picture series are very effective; the children are	Visualization helps children structure the storyline and

		immediately excited to tell each of their pictures.”	convey their ideas.
Sentence Structure and Phonological Difficulties	Long sentences are still difficult to pronounce	“They still tend to jump around when telling long stories. Sometimes they are confused about how to organize the words.”	Children have not fully mastered the narrative structure or systematic thinking order.
	Articulation of sounds such as /r/, /s/, /l/ is unclear	“The letter R is the hardest. Many can’t say ‘roda’ clearly.”	Additional phonetic practice and articulation stimulation strategies are needed.
Teacher's Stimulus in Verbal Interaction	The teacher frequently asks questions to train children	“I often ask back, for example, ‘why is that?’ to make them think.”	This strategy trains children to use question sentences and explain reasons.
	One-on-one interaction is more effective	“When talking one-on-one, the children are more open. They want to answer and are more focused.”	One-on-one interaction can enhance verbal response and child engagement.
Language Usage in Daily Activities	Instruction language is starting to be understood	“The children can already differentiate instructions like ‘take’ or ‘put’ in daily activities.”	Understanding of simple command sentences has developed according to their age.
	Conjunctions are rarely used explicitly	“Conjunctions like ‘but’ or ‘and’ are rarely spoken unless I model them.”	The use of complex grammatical structures is not yet spontaneous and needs modeling from the teacher.

Based on the synthesis, the speaking ability of 4–5-year-olds develops gradually and is significantly influenced by meaningful and contextual learning experiences. Children tend to advance more rapidly in speaking tasks tied to concrete and emotionally engaging

activities, while linguistic components such as sentence complexity, conjunction use, and articulation require continued reinforcement. This study fills a gap in the literature by integrating quantitative developmental data with qualitative narratives from teachers' lived classroom experiences.

The findings offer practical implications for designing communicative, reflective, and child-centered language curricula that emphasize one-on-one interaction, contextual storytelling, and visual-based media use in early childhood education.

However, the study does not yet provide specific and actionable intervention strategies, particularly in addressing articulation difficulties and the development of complex sentence structures. Therefore, further research is needed to translate these findings into concrete pedagogical practices that can be effectively implemented in classroom settings.

## Discussion

The study reveals that speaking ability in 4–5-year-old children develops variably, depending on the type of language skills and the social and pedagogical context. This finding is significant as it demonstrates that early language development is not merely a biological function of age, but is profoundly shaped by the quality of linguistic interactions and emotional bonding within the learning environment (Saefudin et al., 2025). Overall, children in this age range generally fall into the "Starting to Develop" (MB) to "Developing as Expected" (BSH) categories, demonstrating strong reflective and narrative performance—especially in storytelling and describing self-created pictures. However, they continue to struggle with phonological accuracy and grammatical complexity, reflecting uneven growth that requires targeted optimization through consistent verbal stimulation (Manurung, 2019).

Findings indicate that 4–5-year-old children find it easier to master reflective and narrative speaking aspects than grammatical and phonological ones. They excel in storytelling based on personally meaningful and contextually grounded experiences, such as recounting family events or describing teacher-led stories. This suggests that speaking abilities develop more effectively in authentic

and emotionally engaging contexts where children can draw from direct experiences. The use of storytelling as a pedagogical tool proves highly effective in this regard, as it provides a concrete framework for children to organize their thoughts and express ideas spontaneously (Bron et al., 2025; Handayani et al., 2024).

However, the study also reveals persistent challenges in aspects of syntactic complexity and phonological articulation. The use of conjunctions and spontaneous question formation remains limited, and children often misarticulate sounds such as /r/, /s/, and /l/. These findings suggest that phonological precision and grammatical structuring emerge more gradually than narrative fluency, aligning with evidence that children in the post-pandemic era often exhibit higher frequencies of phonological errors and delayed speech production due to disrupted linguistic exposure (Acero-Ferrero et al., 2024). This developmental unevenness highlights a critical "blind spot" where children may possess the ideas but lack the phonetic and structural tools to express them clearly (Bakari et al., 2024).

Children tend to speak more actively when communication occurs within personally meaningful and socially engaging contexts. Environmental stimuli such as pictures, real objects, and direct experiences—particularly through interactive storytelling—act as strong verbal triggers that bridge the gap between abstract thought and verbal output (Handayani et al., 2024). Similarly, the quality of adult–child interaction is crucial for fostering expressive language and mitigating risks of speech delay (Khadijah et al., 2025; Saefudin et al., 2025). It is characterised by emotional warmth and consistent verbal scaffolding (Arifin, 2024; Syafitri, 2017).

These findings align with research by Uysal et al. (2019) that further emphasize the importance of one-on-one teacher–child interactions as key triggers for spontaneous verbal expression. Personalized attention and individualized scaffolding foster children's confidence and engagement, providing a secure space for linguistic experimentation that is often absent in large-group settings (Saefudin et al., 2025). Interview data from this study support this, showing that when teachers provide direct, focused feedback, children demonstrate a higher willingness to

communicate and a more diverse use of vocabulary.

However, the limited development of complex sentence structures, such as conjunctions and explicit question forms, diverges from previous findings by Hettiarachchi (2016) and Zamani et al. (2018), who observed advanced narrative structures through structured role-play. In the Indonesian context, this variation may stem from cultural interaction norms, differing levels of language exposure, or teacher-centered instructional patterns that limit spontaneous dialogue.

This study also found persistent articulation difficulties involving /r/, /s/, and /l/ sounds. These findings correspond with recent evidence that these specific phonemes are among the last to be mastered in Indonesian first language acquisition, as they require high articulatory precision and complex tongue positioning (Alhafidz et al., 2025; Madjid, 2022). Consistent with Hamad & Alnuzaili (2022), these challenges do not necessarily indicate clinical disorders but rather a developmental progression that benefits from continuous, targeted phonetic stimulation.

This progression, however, has been further complicated in the post-pandemic period by a lack of diverse phonetic models in children's immediate environments (Acero-Ferrero et al., 2024). Therefore, as suggested by Manurung (2019), teachers and parents should prioritize "optimization" through structured articulation modeling and phoneme-based play activities to enhance clarity in children's speech.

A key contribution of this study lies in its integration of quantitative developmental data and qualitative insights, offering a holistic understanding of children's speaking development. Unlike studies reliant solely on test-based assessments, this research captures teachers' lived narratives and contextualized observations, revealing how pedagogical strategies and classroom environments shape linguistic outcomes (Bakari et al., 2024). Moreover, this approach acknowledges the significant role of preschool peers in fostering a rich linguistic environment, which is essential for natural language acquisition (Purtell et al., 2021). This mixed approach demonstrates the interplay between measurable progress and experiential, socially

grounded learning processes (Khadijah et al., 2025).

In terms of originality, this study contributes empirical, context-specific insights from Indonesia, where descriptive developmental analyses remain limited. The use of developmental categories (BB, MB, BSH, BSB) provides a standardized yet locally adapted framework that strengthens cross-cultural dialogue in global early childhood literature, which often centers on Western contexts. The study also offers practical pedagogical guidance, including the use of visual media, experiential storytelling, and reflective one-on-one dialogues as responsive language teaching strategies that align with children's developmental needs (Handayani et al., 2024).

Overall, this study addresses a persistent gap in the literature, which has traditionally emphasized quantitative outcomes over social interactional processes, a central tenet in Vygotsky's language development theory. This study aligns with the findings of Purtell et al. (2021), who emphasize that the quality of peer interactions in early childhood settings directly contributes to the expansion of a child's communicative competence. By integrating interviews and observations, this study bridges theoretical and practical domains, demonstrating how socially mediated, contextual experiences underpin children's speaking growth and laying groundwork for future research on interactive and culturally embedded pedagogical models.

In addition, to address practical classroom constraints, these strategies can be adapted for settings with limited resources. For example, one-on-one interactions can be implemented through small-group rotations or brief individualized interactions during classroom activities, even in large classes. Furthermore, visual-based media can be substituted with low-cost or natural materials, such as pictures from recycled magazines, handmade drawings, or objects from the surrounding environment. These adaptations ensure that communicative and child-centered language practices remain feasible and effective across diverse educational contexts.

While this study provides deep contextual insights, the small sample size from a single early childhood education setting

limits statistical generalizability, suggesting the need for broader longitudinal studies. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of this research captures developmental snapshots rather than long-term trajectories. Therefore, future research should employ longitudinal designs or larger-scale experimental studies to evaluate the long-term efficacy of one-on-one interaction strategies and experience-based storytelling across diverse socio-cultural and resource-constrained environments.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study confirms that the speaking abilities of 4–5-year-olds develop gradually and are strongly shaped by social interaction quality and contextual learning environments. Children typically fall within the “Starting to Develop” (MB) to “Developing as Expected” (BSH) categories, showing notable strengths in reflective and narrative speaking tasks such as personal storytelling, answering story-related questions, and describing self-created drawings.

However, persistent challenges remain in complex linguistic domains—particularly grammar and phonology—including conjunction use, spontaneous question formation, and articulation of specific phonemes (/r/, /s/, and /l/). These findings confirm that narrative and reflective fluency emerge earlier than syntactic and phonological mastery, illustrating the dynamic, domain-specific nature of early speaking development.

This research highlights the importance of contextual and socially mediated language stimulation, emphasizing individualized teacher–child interaction, experience-based storytelling, and visual media integration. These strategies align with Vygotsky’s social constructivist perspective, which underscores the centrality of guided participation and scaffolding in language development. Furthermore, this study provides evidence that these interactive strategies remain feasible in resource-constrained settings through practical adaptations such as small-group rotations and the use of low-cost or natural materials.

Methodologically, this study demonstrates the value of combining quantitative developmental indicators with qualitative teacher narratives to provide a

comprehensive understanding of language growth. It contributes to Indonesian early childhood literature through the systematic application of developmental categories (BB–BSB) within natural learning contexts. Future research should expand longitudinally to explore how social, cultural, and pedagogical variables such as home language environment, teacher training, and resource availability shape children’s long-term speaking trajectories.

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