

Description of Speaking Skills in Children Aged 4–5 Years at Pembina Agropolitan Kindergarten, Kabila District, Bone Bolango Regency

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Abstract

Speaking ability is an important aspect of early childhood language development, yet several children still experience difficulties in vocabulary use, sentence construction, and oral communication during learning activities. Previous studies mostly focused on improving speaking ability through instructional methods and media, while qualitative studies describing children's actual speaking conditions remain limited. Therefore, this study aimed to describe the speaking ability of children aged 4–5 years at TK Pembina Agropolitan, Kabila District, Bone Bolango Regency. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach involving six children as the main research subjects. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings showed that some children were able to use simple vocabulary, construct understandable sentences, answer questions appropriately, and express ideas confidently during classroom activities. However, several children still demonstrated limited vocabulary, incomplete sentence structures, hesitation in speaking, and low confidence during oral interaction. The discussion revealed that speaking ability develops through social interaction, language stimulation, and classroom communication experiences. These findings indicate that interactive learning activities and teacher support are important in improving children's confidence and speaking development in early childhood education.

Keywords: Speaking Skills; Children; Education

Introduction

Education is a learning process that plays an important role in children's development from an early age. According to Dewantara (2017), education is a conscious effort to guide children's development toward a better life. However, several studies indicate that the development of children's basic abilities in learning activities is still not optimal (Hidayat & Nurlatifah, 2023; Qoirika et al., 2025). This condition highlights the importance of paying attention to child development in early childhood education.

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Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the initial stage in providing stimulation for children's overall development. UNESCO explains that education is based on four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be (Handayani, 2023). However, several studies show that children's language development still faces challenges in learning activities (Jamil et al., 2025). These problems are influenced by the lack of language stimulation and verbal interaction during classroom activities (Anjelika et al., 2025).

Speaking ability is an important aspect of early childhood language development. According to Vygotsky (1962), speaking skills develop through social interaction and communication with the surrounding environment. However, some children still experience difficulties in word pronunciation, vocabulary use, and confidence in speaking in front of teachers and peers (Komalasari et al., 2026; Mulyani & Siagian, 2023). These problems are reflected in children's low ability to answer questions and express ideas orally during learning activities (Komalasari et al., 2026).

Children aged 4–5 years are ideally able to use simple vocabulary and arrange simple sentences in daily communication. According to Piaget (2005), children at this age are in the preoperational stage, characterized by the development of symbolic thinking and language. However, several studies indicate that some children still have difficulties in using vocabulary, arranging simple sentences, and answering teachers' questions appropriately (Komalasari et al., 2026). This condition shows that speaking ability in children aged 4–5 years still requires further attention.

Based on preliminary observations at TK Pembina Agropolitan, Kabila District, Bone Bolango Regency, 6 out of 17 children aged 4–5 years still experienced difficulties in speaking during learning activities. Some children spoke softly, used limited vocabulary, and were unable to tell stories or express opinions coherently in classroom interactions. In addition, some children tended to remain silent and only spoke when asked by the teacher during question-and-answer or storytelling activities. This condition indicates the need for a deeper description of children's speaking abilities based on actual classroom situations.

Previous studies on early childhood speaking ability have mainly focused on improving speaking skills through learning methods and media (Aulia & Normaliza, 2024; Mulyani &

Siagian, 2023). Research discussing children's speaking ability based on vocabulary use, simple sentence construction, ability to answer questions, and ability to express ideas orally is still limited. Therefore, this study aims to describe the speaking ability of children aged 4–5 years at TK Pembina Agropolitan, Kabila District, Bone Bolango Regency, based on real conditions in classroom learning activities.

Methodology

This study was conducted at TK Pembina Agropolitan, Kabila District, Bone Bolango Regency. The research location was selected because it was relevant to the focus of the study on the speaking ability of children aged 4–5 years. Preliminary observations indicated that several children still experienced difficulties in speaking during classroom learning activities. In addition, the school provided support and access for the implementation of the research.

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative design. The qualitative approach was used to understand children's speaking abilities in a natural classroom setting. According to Sugiyono (2013), qualitative research emphasizes understanding social phenomena contextually, while Creswell & Creswell (2017) explain that descriptive qualitative research presents findings narratively based on observations and interactions. Therefore, this method was considered appropriate for describing the speaking ability of children aged 4–5 years.

The researcher acted as the main instrument in collecting and analyzing the data. Data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from children aged 4–5 years and classroom teachers, while secondary data were collected from school documents, learning records, and classroom activities. Data were gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation to ensure the validity of the findings through triangulation.

Observation was conducted to identify children's abilities in using vocabulary, constructing simple sentences, responding to questions, and expressing ideas orally. The observation instrument was developed based on several indicators of speaking ability. The grid of the observation instrument is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Observation Instrument

Variable	Indicators	Descriptors	Items
Speaking Ability of Children Aged 4–5 Years	Vocabulary use (Morphology)	Mentioning objects in pictures	1
		Identifying people or characters in pictures	2
		Explaining activities in pictures using simple language	3
		Using appropriate vocabulary in storytelling	4
	Simple sentence construction (Syntax)	Delivering simple sentences clearly	5
		Using subject and predicate structures	6
		Describing daily activities in simple sentences	7
		Speaking with understandable sentence patterns	8
	Responding to questions (Pragmatics)	Answering teacher's questions appropriately	9
		Responding during classroom interaction	10
		Understanding simple questions from teachers	11
		Participating in question-and-answer activities	12
	Expressing ideas and opinions (Pragmatics)	Expressing simple opinions orally	13
		Expressing wishes confidently	14
		Giving simple reasons for opinions	15
		Telling experiences using simple language	16

In addition to observation, interviews were conducted with classroom teachers to obtain information regarding children's speaking development during learning activities. The interviews focused on vocabulary use, sentence construction, responses to questions, and the ability to express ideas orally. The teacher interview grid is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Teacher Interview Grid

Aspect	Indicators	Interview Focus	Question Number
Vocabulary use	Children's ability to recognize vocabulary	Ability to mention objects, people, and activities	1
Sentence construction	Children's ability to arrange simple sentences	Ability to speak using simple sentence patterns	2
Responding to questions	Children's ability to understand and answer questions	Ability to respond during classroom interaction	3
Expressing ideas and opinions	Children's ability to express ideas orally	Ability to communicate ideas and opinions	4

Data collection procedures in this study consisted of observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted during classroom activities, interviews were carried out with teachers, and documentation was collected to support the research process. The procedures of data collection are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Data Collection Procedures

Technique	Activities	Instruments	Data Obtained
Observation	Observing children during learning activities	Observation sheet	Vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency data
Interview	Conducting interviews with teachers	Interview guideline	Information about speaking development
Documentation	Collecting photos and learning documents	Camera and documents	Supporting visual and written data

The data analysis technique used in this study followed the qualitative descriptive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and simplifying relevant data from observations, interviews, and documentation. The reduced data were then presented in narrative and tabular forms to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were continuously verified to ensure the validity and consistency of the research findings.

Findings

Based on the results of observations conducted at TK Pembina Agropolitan, Kabila District, Bone Bolango Regency, the speaking ability of children aged 4–5 years showed different levels of development during classroom learning activities. The study focused on six children who became the main research subjects. During the learning process, several children were able to communicate actively with teachers and peers, while others still experienced difficulties in expressing ideas orally. These differences were observed in vocabulary use, sentence construction, responses to questions, and confidence during speaking activities.

Table 4. General Findings of Children's Speaking Ability

Student	General Findings
Student 1	Able to communicate actively and answer questions confidently during classroom activities.
Student 2	Able to use simple vocabulary and construct understandable sentences.
Student 3	Participated actively in storytelling and classroom interaction activities.
Student 4	Still hesitant when speaking and often needed teacher guidance.
Student 5	Demonstrated limited vocabulary and responded with very short answers.
Student 6	Showed low confidence and tended to remain silent during discussions.

The findings related to vocabulary use showed that some children were able to mention objects, people, and activities shown in pictures using simple and understandable words. Several children could also explain simple experiences during storytelling activities using appropriate vocabulary. However, other children still demonstrated limited vocabulary and often repeated the same words while speaking. Some children also required assistance from the teacher before continuing their explanations. These findings indicate that children's vocabulary mastery was still developing gradually through classroom interaction and language stimulation.

Table 5. Findings on Vocabulary Use (Morphology)

Student	Observation Results
Student 1	Mentioned objects and activities clearly using appropriate vocabulary.
Student 2	Recognized pictures and used simple words appropriately.
Student 3	Able to explain simple experiences during storytelling activities.
Student 4	Frequently repeated words while speaking.
Student 5	Used very limited vocabulary during communication.
Student 6	Needed teacher guidance to explain pictures or activities.

In terms of sentence construction, the observations revealed that several children were able to communicate using simple subject–predicate sentence patterns. These children could explain daily activities and answer teachers' questions with relatively clear sentences. However, some children still produced incomplete sentences and paused frequently while speaking. A few children only responded using one or two words during classroom interaction. This condition showed that children's ability to construct sentences was still in the developmental stage and required continuous communication practice.

Table 6. Findings on Simple Sentence Construction (Syntax)

Student	Observation Results
Student 1	Able to arrange simple subject–predicate sentences clearly.
Student 2	Communicated ideas using understandable simple sentences.
Student 3	Explained daily activities fluently during classroom interaction.
Student 4	Produced incomplete sentence patterns.
Student 5	Frequently paused and repeated words while speaking.
Student 6	Had difficulty arranging sentences independently.

The findings also showed differences in children's ability to respond to questions and participate in classroom interaction. Several children actively answered teachers' questions and participated in question-and-answer sessions during learning activities. Meanwhile, some children tended to remain silent, avoid eye contact, or respond only after encouragement from the teacher. In several

situations, children appeared hesitant and lacked confidence when speaking in front of the class. This finding indicates that teacher support and classroom interaction played important roles in encouraging speaking development among children.

Table 7. Findings on Responding to Questions and Expressing Ideas

Student	Observation Results
Student 1	Responded confidently and expressed ideas clearly.
Student 2	Participated actively during question-and-answer sessions.
Student 3	Able to express opinions and simple experiences orally.
Student 4	Responded only after encouragement from the teacher.
Student 5	Frequently remained silent during classroom discussions.
Student 6	Spoke softly and appeared hesitant during oral activities.

Overall, the findings suggest that the speaking ability of children aged 4–5 years at TK Pembina Agropolitan was still developing and required continuous stimulation, interactive learning activities, and supportive classroom communication to improve children’s confidence and verbal abilities.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that the speaking ability of children aged 4–5 years at TK Pembina Agropolitan varied across several aspects, including vocabulary use, sentence construction, responses to questions, and the ability to express ideas orally. Some children demonstrated good speaking abilities during classroom interaction, while others still experienced difficulties in verbal communication. These findings indicate that speaking ability in early childhood develops gradually through interaction, stimulation, and communication experiences in the learning environment. This result supports Vygotsky (1962) theory, which explains that children’s language development is strongly influenced by social interaction and communication with people around them.

The findings related to vocabulary use revealed that several children were able to identify objects, people, and activities shown in pictures using simple and understandable vocabulary. However, some children still demonstrated limited vocabulary and frequently repeated words during storytelling activities. This finding is consistent with Komalasari et al. (2026), who stated that children’s vocabulary development is influenced by language stimulation and communication activities in the classroom. Similarly, Anjelika et al. (2025) explained that limited verbal

interaction may reduce children's opportunities to develop vocabulary mastery during learning activities. In contrast, children who actively interacted with teachers and peers showed better vocabulary use during classroom communication.

In terms of sentence construction, the findings showed that some children were able to arrange simple subject–predicate sentence patterns and explain daily activities clearly. However, several children still produced incomplete sentences and experienced hesitation while speaking. This finding supports Piaget (1952) theory that children aged 4–5 years are in the preoperational stage, where symbolic thinking and language abilities continue to develop gradually. The findings are also in line with Sulastri (2023), who found that some early childhood learners still experience difficulties in arranging simple sentence structures during oral communication activities. Nevertheless, the ability of several children to communicate using understandable sentences indicates that classroom interaction contributes positively to children's language development.

The findings regarding children's responses to questions indicated that several children actively participated in classroom discussions and answered teachers' questions appropriately. However, some children tended to remain silent, provide very short responses, or speak only after encouragement from the teacher. This condition reflects differences in children's confidence and communication experiences during learning activities. According to Mulyani & Siagian (2023), children who are less confident in speaking activities often show hesitation and reduced participation in classroom interaction. These findings also strengthen Vygotsky (1962) perspective that speaking ability develops through active social interaction and supportive communication environments.

The findings related to expressing ideas and opinions showed that only a few children were confident in storytelling and expressing experiences orally in front of the class. Several children still appeared shy and lacked confidence when communicating verbally. This finding is consistent with Hoerudin (2023), who explained that early childhood speaking development is often influenced by opportunities to communicate actively during classroom learning. In addition, Aulia & Normaliza (2024) stated that interactive learning activities can help children improve confidence and oral communication skills. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that children's

speaking abilities require continuous stimulation, teacher support, and interactive classroom activities to encourage active verbal participation.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that the speaking ability of children aged 4–5 years at TK Pembina Agropolitan is still in the developmental stage and differs among children. The results confirm that vocabulary mastery, sentence construction, responsiveness, and confidence in expressing ideas are influenced by interaction and language stimulation during classroom activities. These findings contribute to the understanding that early childhood speaking development requires supportive learning environments and consistent communication opportunities. Therefore, teachers play an important role in creating interactive learning activities that encourage children to communicate actively and confidently during the learning process.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the speaking ability of children aged 4–5 years at TK Pembina Agropolitan showed different levels of development. Some children were able to use vocabulary, construct simple sentences, and respond to questions appropriately during classroom activities. However, several children still experienced difficulties in expressing ideas orally and communicating confidently in front of teachers and peers. Therefore, teachers are expected to provide more interactive learning activities and communication opportunities to support children's speaking development.

This study found that previous research mostly focused on improving speaking ability through instructional methods and learning media. Studies describing children's actual speaking conditions through qualitative approaches are still limited, especially regarding vocabulary use, sentence construction, and oral interaction. In addition, this study only involved six children and was conducted within a limited observation period. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to involve more participants, different school settings, and longer observation periods to obtain more comprehensive findings regarding early childhood speaking development.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

AI Use Statement

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