

Psycholinguistic Analysis of Language Disorders (Speech Delay) in Early Childhood and Treatment Efforts

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This study aims to analyze language disorders (speech delay) in early childhood from a psycholinguistic perspective and identify various treatment efforts. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation of early childhood children, parents, and teachers. The results of the study indicate that speech delay in early childhood is influenced by various factors, including a lack of language stimulation in the family, excessive use of gadgets, minimal verbal interaction between children and their surroundings, and children's emotional factors. In psycholinguistic studies, speech delay occurs due to obstacles in the process of language acquisition, especially in the aspects of phonology and semantics. These obstacles cause children to experience difficulty in pronouncing words, understanding the meaning of language, and communicating verbally. Children with speech delay also tend to be more passive in social interactions and lack confidence when communicating with others. Treatment efforts include providing regular language stimulation through active communication, speech therapy, educational play activities, and collaboration between parents, teachers, and professionals. The results of the study indicate that consistent treatment can help improve children's speaking and social interaction skills gradually. Thus, communicative and stimulating environmental support is an important factor in helping the language development of early childhood children who experience speech delay.

Keywords: Psycholinguistics, Speech Delay, Early Childhood, Language Disorders

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1. Introduction

Language development in early childhood is a fundamental aspect of human growth and development, inseparable from cognitive, social, and emotional development. Language is the primary tool children use to express their thoughts, feelings, and needs to their surroundings. During early childhood, particularly between 0 and 6 years, language development occurs rapidly and is a crucial period for children's future communication skills (Rahma et al., nd). Therefore, any obstacles to language development during this period require serious attention, as they can impact other aspects of development as a whole.

One form of language development disorder frequently found in early childhood is speech delay. Speech delay is characterized by a child's delay in achieving age-appropriate language milestones, such as late first word development, limited vocabulary, difficulty constructing simple sentences, and a lack of verbal communication skills (Wahyuni & Hasanah, 2023). This condition not only impacts language skills but can also affect a child's self-confidence, social skills, and readiness to enter formal education (Setiawati et al., 2023).

From a psycholinguistic perspective, speech delay is understood not only as a mechanical impairment in speech, but also as a complex phenomenon involving the relationship between mental processes, language

acquisition, and the child's social environment. Psycholinguistics views language ability as the result of an interaction between cognitive structures in the brain and language stimuli received from the environment. Thus, speech delay can occur due to impairments in cognitive processes, a lack of language stimulation, or a mismatch between the child's neurological development and linguistic experience (Fithriyyah et al., 2024).

The factors that cause speech delay are diverse and interrelated. Biological factors such as hearing loss, neurodevelopmental delays, or certain developmental disorders can be the primary causes. However, environmental factors also play a significant role, such as a lack of communication between parents and children, an environment with minimal language stimulation, and excessive gadget use, which can lead children to become passive listeners rather than active communicators (Rodia, 2023). These conditions indirectly hinder the optimal development of children's language skills. In addition to biological and environmental factors, a child's psychological aspects also influence language development. Children who receive insufficient emotional attention, experience anxiety, or lack a sense of security in interactions tend to develop speech skills more slowly. This demonstrates that language development cannot be separated from a child's emotional and psychological state, as a sense of security and emotional support are essential foundations for a child's courage to express themselves verbally (Putri et al., 2024).

The family environment plays a crucial role in supporting children's early language development. Intense verbal interactions between parents and children, such as talking, telling stories, singing, and reading books, can enrich children's vocabulary and improve their language structure. Conversely, families that lack verbal communication tend to delay children's language development due to the lack of linguistic stimulation received in everyday life. In addition to the family, early childhood education institutions, such as preschools (PAUD), also play a strategic role in fostering children's language development (Aflahah et al., 2021). Teachers, as educators, play a crucial role in providing language stimulation through various enjoyable learning activities such as role-playing, storytelling, simple discussions, and singing. These activities not only help children improve their language skills but also foster their courage to communicate in front of others and enhance their social skills.

In psycholinguistic studies, the process of language acquisition in children involves several important components, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Children with speech delays often experience difficulties in one or more of these components, such as difficulty pronouncing certain sounds (phonology), difficulty forming words (morphology), difficulty constructing sentences (syntax), or difficulty understanding word meaning (semantics). This indicates an imbalance between the child's cognitive development and linguistic abilities. Early detection of speech delay is crucial so that treatment can be initiated as early as possible. Parents and teachers need to have a good understanding of the signs of speech delay, such as a child not speaking at the expected age, a lack of response to communication, or difficulty imitating simple words. The sooner this disorder is recognized, the greater the child's chance of receiving appropriate intervention and catching up on their language development (Aminah, 2022).

Speech delay treatment can be achieved through various approaches involving speech therapy, home language stimulation, and collaboration between parents, teachers, and other professionals. Speech therapy focuses on pronunciation exercises, vocabulary development, and communication skills, while home stimulation helps reinforce language learning in everyday life. Consistency in providing stimulation is key to successfully treating this disorder. Furthermore, the use of engaging and interactive learning media can also help improve children's language skills. Media such as picture books, flashcards, educational games, and learning videos can encourage children to communicate more actively. A play-based approach (learning through play) has also been proven effective in helping children learn language naturally without pressure, making it easier for them to understand and use language in appropriate contexts.

This study aims to identify and analyze in depth language disorders (speech delay) in early childhood from a psycholinguistic perspective, including the factors causing speech delay, the process of language acquisition that experiences obstacles, and forms of treatment efforts that can be carried out by parents, teachers, and professionals in helping optimize children's language development according to their developmental stage. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "Psycholinguistic Analysis of Language Disorders (Speech Delay) in Early Childhood and Its Treatment Efforts".

2. Literature Review and Problem Statement

Definition of Psycholinguistics

Psycholinguistics is a branch of science that studies the relationship between language and the human psychological processes involved in understanding, acquiring, and using language. This science examines how humans produce language, understand speech, store language in memory, and the mental processes that occur when someone communicates. Psycholinguistics originates from a combination of two disciplines: psychology and linguistics. Psychology studies human behavior and mental processes, while linguistics studies the structure and systems of language. Thus, psycholinguistics focuses on the mental processes related to language use in everyday life (Damayantiet al., 2025).

In psycholinguistic studies, language is seen as a crucial part of human cognitive development. The language process involves not only the ability to speak, but also the ability to think, understand, remember, and interpret meaning. Therefore, psycholinguistics plays a crucial role in understanding language development in children, including various language disorders such as Speech delay. Through a psycholinguistic approach, language disorders can be analyzed from the perspective of language acquisition, mental development, and environmental influences on a child's communication skills.

Speech Delay

Speech delay is a condition in which a child's ability to speak develops more slowly than other children of the same age. Children with speech delay generally experience delays in saying their first word, have a limited vocabulary, have difficulty constructing simple sentences, or have difficulty expressing desires through verbal communication. This condition is often found in early childhood and can impact a child's social, emotional, and academic development if not properly addressed. Language disorders in children can be caused by various factors, both internal and external. Internal factors include hearing loss, neurodevelopmental delays, neurological disorders, and certain medical conditions. Meanwhile, external factors include a lack of language stimulation, minimal verbal interaction within the family, parenting styles, and excessive use of gadgets that reduce active communication between the child and their environment. From a psycholinguistic perspective, speech delay occurs due to obstacles in the language acquisition process. Children experience difficulty understanding language sounds, constructing words, or connecting meaning to the speech produced. Therefore, speech delay management requires a comprehensive approach, taking into account the child's psychological, linguistic, and environmental aspects (Rodia, 2023).

Efforts to Handle Speech Delay in Early Childhood

Handling Speech delays in early childhood require collaboration between parents, teachers, and professionals to ensure optimal language development. One approach is to provide intensive language stimulation through active communication with the child. Parents can engage in conversation, storytelling, singing, and reading to enrich their vocabulary and develop their speaking skills. In addition to language stimulation at home, speech therapy is also an effective treatment for children experiencing speech delays.

Speech therapy aims to gradually improve articulation, pronunciation, and communication skills according to the child's developmental needs. Early intervention provides a greater opportunity for children to achieve optimal language development (Aminah, 2022).

The educational environment also plays a crucial role in fostering children's language development. Teachers in early childhood education institutions can provide stimulation through play, storytelling, role-playing, and group activities that encourage children to actively communicate. Furthermore, the use of engaging learning media such as pictures, flashcards, and educational games can help improve children's language skills in a more enjoyable way. With appropriate and consistent management efforts, children experiencing language difficulties can experience improved language development. Therefore, early detection and appropriate stimulation are crucial steps in helping children develop optimal communication and social interaction skills.

3. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. This approach aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of speech delay in early childhood through a psycholinguistic perspective. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding naturally occurring conditions in the field, allowing researchers to obtain more in-depth data on children's language development, factors contributing to speech delay, and the types of treatment implemented by parents and teachers. This descriptive approach was chosen because it seeks to systematically and factually describe the condition of children experiencing speech delay without manipulating the research subjects (Sugiyono, 2021).

The subjects in this study were early childhood children who experienced language disorders (speech delay), while research informants included parents, teachers, and other parties involved in children's language development. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly observe children's communication skills and language behavior in daily activities. In-depth interviews were conducted with parents and teachers to obtain information about children's language development, factors causing speech delays, and treatment efforts that have been implemented. Meanwhile, documentation was used to supplement the research data in the form of child development notes, activity photos, and other documents supporting the research (Rukminingsih, 2020).

The data analysis technique in this study was carried out through several stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and focusing data relevant to the research objectives, then presenting the data in descriptive form for easier understanding. After that, the researcher drew conclusions based on the results of the data analysis that had been obtained in the field. To maintain data validity, this study used source triangulation and technical triangulation techniques, namely comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation so that the data obtained was more valid and reliable.

4. Results and Discussion

Research results

Research results indicate that language disorders (speech delay) in early childhood are influenced by various factors, both internal and external. Based on observations conducted by researchers, most children with speech delays show delays in speaking skills compared to children their age. Children tend to use only one or two words to communicate and more often use sign language, such as pointing to objects or pulling parents' hands when they want something. During classroom learning activities, some children appear

passive and less involved in communication with their peers. Teachers explain that children tend to be quiet when asked to answer questions or express opinions.

One of the teachers said that the delay in speaking in children was quite visible during the learning process.

*"In class, it's very obvious that a child has a speech delay. When his peers are able to answer questions or tell stories, he's mostly silent or just points. Sometimes, when asked a question, he just nods or shakes his head."*said one of the PAUD teachers during a research interview.

This statement indicates that speech disorders affect children's communication skills in social and educational settings. Interviews with parents revealed that gadget use is a significant factor influencing speech delays in children. Most parents admitted to giving their children cell phones as a form of entertainment to keep them calm at home. Children spend significant amounts of time watching videos without two-way communication with their parents. This leads to children becoming more passive in their speech, as they only receive one-way stimuli.

One parent said that his child played with gadgets more often than interacting with the surrounding environment.

*"My child can spend a lot of time on his phone, sometimes for hours. He prefers watching movies to talking to people at home. Maybe that's also what's causing his delay in speaking."*said one informant.

This statement demonstrates that a lack of *verbal* interaction between children and their family environment can impact their language development. In addition to gadget use, communication patterns within the family are also a factor influencing children's language development. Research shows that some parents admit to rarely engaging their children in intensive conversation due to their busy daily lives. Children are often cared for by grandparents or other family members who tend to indulge their children's desires without actively engaging them in communication. As a result, children lack optimal language stimulation during their early development.

This is reinforced by the results of an interview with one parent who said that communication with children is still not done regularly.

*"Sometimes I come home from work exhausted, so I rarely have long conversations with my kids. I usually just feed them, bathe them, and then let them play by themselves or watch something."*said the research informant.

This statement suggests that limited family interaction time also impacts early childhood language skills. Observations also show that children who receive regular language stimulation have better communication development than those who receive less verbal stimulation. Children who are frequently talked to, read to, and engaged in play while learning appear more active in pronouncing new words. They also understand simple instructions more quickly and are more confident in speaking with others. One teacher explained that consistent language stimulation has a positive impact on children's development.

*"If you talk to a child frequently and give them constant practice, they usually show improvement. At first, they're quiet, but over time, they'll start to speak, albeit only in small words."*said the teacher during the interview.

This statement shows that repeated verbal stimulation can help improve children's speaking ability. From a psycholinguistic perspective, research results show that children who experience *speech delay* experiencing difficulties in phonology and semantics. In phonology, some children have difficulty pronouncing certain sounds, making pronunciation unclear. For example, they may not be able to pronounce certain letters, such as /r/ or /s/, correctly. Meanwhile, in semantics, children experience limited vocabulary, making it difficult to understand and use words in everyday communication contexts.

One teacher revealed that children often have difficulty pronouncing words correctly.

"Sometimes a child wants to talk, but their pronunciation isn't clear. So the teacher has to guess what they mean. There are also some whose answers don't make sense when asked because they might not understand the meaning of the words." said the research informant. This statement shows that there are obstacles in the process of children acquiring language.

Research also found that emotional factors influence children's language development. Children who receive less attention and emotional support tend to be quieter and more afraid to speak. In some cases, children appear reluctant to try saying new words for fear of making mistakes or being scolded by adults. This emotional state can lead to children lacking confidence in communication.

One parent said that his child became quieter when he was often scolded while talking. *"I used to get angry when my child didn't speak clearly because I couldn't understand. But over time, my child became reluctant to talk and became more silent."* This indicates that the environment's response to a child's speaking efforts significantly influences the development of their communication skills.

In treatment efforts, research shows that regular speech therapy and language stimulation have a positive impact on children's language development. Parents who reduce gadget use and engage their children more actively in conversation experience significant changes. Children begin to develop new vocabulary and speak more frequently. Responding to communication and beginning to speak confidently with those around him. One parent reported changes in her child's development after receiving regular therapy and stimulation at home.

"There's been a change now. My child is starting to talk more often, although not fluently. When asked to tell a story, he's also willing to answer a little." said the research informant.

This statement shows that consistent treatment can help improve children's speaking skills gradually. Thus, the research results show that *speech delay* Early childhood language development is influenced by environmental and psychological factors, as well as a lack of language stimulation. Collaborative interventions between parents, teachers, and professionals have been shown to improve children's language development. A communicative and supportive environment is crucial in helping children develop optimal speaking skills.

Based on the results of the research that has been carried out, it can be understood that language disorders (*speech delay*) in early childhood is not a condition that occurs suddenly, but is influenced by various interrelated factors, such as a lack of language stimulation, excessive use of gadgets, minimal verbal interaction within the family, and the child's emotional factors. From a psycholinguistic perspective, speech delay is closely related to the language acquisition process that experiences obstacles in the child's phonology, semantics, and social communication skills. Therefore, handling speech delay cannot be done instantly, but requires a gradual, consistent process, and involves support from various parties in the child's environment.

Furthermore, this study also shows that regular language stimulation through active communication, speech therapy, educational play activities, and positive emotional support can significantly improve children's speaking skills. Children who were previously passive and had difficulty communicating began to show courage to speak, expand their vocabulary, and interact more actively with their surroundings. Therefore, collaboration between parents, teachers, and professionals is crucial in helping children overcome speech delays so that their language, social, and emotional development can develop optimally according to their age.

Discussion

Psycholinguistic Analysis of Language Disorders (Speech Delay) in Early Childhood

Language disorders (speech delay) in early childhood are a form of communication development barrier that is closely related to the child's language acquisition process. In psycholinguistic studies, language ability is influenced not only by biological abilities but also by mental processes, cognitive development, and the child's social interactions with their environment. Early childhood is in a phase of very rapid language development, so any obstacles in this process will impact the child's communication skills and overall social development. (Rahma et al., nd).

Based on research findings, it was found that children with speech delays exhibit difficulties in understanding and producing verbal language. They have difficulty pronouncing words clearly, have a limited vocabulary, and are less able to construct simple sentences appropriate to their developmental stage. From a psycholinguistic perspective, this condition indicates a disruption in the brain's language processing, particularly in the ability to understand sounds, remember vocabulary, and convey meaning through speech.

Furthermore, children with speech delays also exhibit difficulties in social interactions. They tend to be quieter, less self-confident, and more likely to use nonverbal communication, such as pointing or pulling others' hands, to convey their needs. This demonstrates that language skills are closely linked to a child's social and emotional development. When a child experiences language difficulties, their ability to build social relationships is also affected.

In psycholinguistic studies, the process of language acquisition involves several important aspects, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Research shows that most children with speech delays experience difficulties in phonology and semantics. Children have difficulty pronouncing certain sounds, making pronunciation unclear and difficult to understand. Furthermore, children also experience limitations in understanding word meaning and using vocabulary in everyday communication. This condition demonstrates that speech delays are not only related to the physical ability to speak, but also to the child's mental processes and language comprehension.

Factors Causing Speech Delay in Early Childhood

Research results indicate that various factors contribute to speech delay in early childhood, both internal and external. Internal factors include neurodevelopmental disorders, hearing impairments, and delays in cognitive development. Meanwhile, external factors include family environment, parenting styles, lack of language stimulation, and excessive use of gadgets. These factors are interrelated and significantly influence a child's language development.

One of the most dominant factors identified in this study was a lack of language stimulation within the family environment. Children who are rarely spoken to tend to experience delays in their verbal communication development. Busy working parents reduce the intensity of communication with their children, thus preventing them from receiving sufficient language stimulation. Verbal stimulation plays a crucial role in the process of language acquisition because children learn language through direct interaction with their surroundings. (Anggraini et al., 2019).

Besides a lack of language stimulation, excessive gadget use is also a significant factor that significantly impacts children's language development. Research shows that children who use gadgets excessively tend to be more passive in communication. They receive information only one way through videos or digital games, without active verbal interaction. This condition results in children's ability to understand and use language being underdeveloped. From a psycholinguistic perspective, language acquisition requires two-

way interaction so that children can understand meaning, imitate sounds, and use language in social communication contexts.

Emotional factors are also a contributing factor to speech delays in children. Children who receive insufficient attention, affection, and emotional support tend to be more withdrawn and afraid to speak. An environment where children are frequently criticized for speaking can cause them to lose confidence in communication. As a result, children become reluctant to try new words and prefer silence. This demonstrates that a child's language development is influenced not only by linguistic aspects but also by their psychological and emotional state.

In addition to family factors, the educational environment also influences a child's language development. Teachers play a crucial role in providing language stimulation through interactive and communicative learning activities. Children who receive limited opportunities to speak in the school environment tend to experience barriers to communication development. Therefore, a learning environment that encourages children to actively speak and interact with their peers is essential.

Efforts to Handle Speech Delay in Early Childhood

Based on research findings, addressing speech delays in early childhood requires collaboration between parents, teachers, and professionals to ensure optimal language development. Early intervention is crucial because early childhood is a critical period for language development. The sooner a disorder is identified and addressed, the greater the child's chance of catching up on their language delay.

One of the most effective forms of treatment is providing regular language stimulation in everyday life. Parents can talk to their children, play while learning, read stories, and respond positively to every communication effort they make. Consistent verbal interaction helps children expand their vocabulary, understand the meaning of language, and increase their confidence in speaking. From a psycholinguistic perspective, repeated language stimulation significantly aids children's language acquisition because the child's brain becomes more active in processing and storing linguistic information. (Lindriany et al., 2022).

In addition to language stimulation at home, speech therapy is also an important effort to support children's language development. Research shows that children who regularly receive speech therapy show significant progress in their speech skills. They begin to pronounce words more clearly, understand simple instructions, and become more active in communicating with those around them. Speech therapy helps children develop articulation, speech coordination, and language comprehension gradually, according to their developmental needs.

The educational environment also plays a crucial role in supporting speech delay management. Teachers can provide language stimulation through various activities such as singing, role-playing, storytelling, and simple discussions that involve active communication among children. These activities not only support children's language development but also enhance their social skills and confidence in interacting with others. Children who receive positive support from the school environment tend to be more confident in speaking and expressing their thoughts.

Furthermore, emotional support from the family is a crucial factor in managing speech delay. Children need a comfortable, warm, and non-pressurizing environment as they learn to speak. Parents need to acknowledge every small development their child demonstrates so they feel valued and motivated to continue learning to communicate. With good collaboration between family, school, and professionals, children with speech delays have a greater opportunity to develop optimally in their language and social communication skills.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that language disorders (speech delay) in early childhood is a condition of delayed language development influenced by various factors, such as a lack of language stimulation in the family, excessive use of gadgets, minimal verbal interaction, and emotional factors of the child. In psycholinguistic studies, speech delay is related to obstacles in the language acquisition process that involves the ability to understand language sounds, vocabulary mastery, and the child's ability to convey meaning through verbal communication. Children who experience speech delay tend to have difficulty pronouncing words clearly, understanding simple instructions, and interacting actively with their surroundings. In addition, this study also shows that the family and school environment have a very large influence on children's language development because children acquire language through a continuous process of social interaction.

Based on the research results, it is recommended that parents be more active in providing language stimulation to their children through intensive communication, reading stories, playing while learning, and reducing excessive gadget use so that children's speaking skills can develop optimally. Teachers are also expected to be able to create interactive and communicative learning activities so that children are more confident in speaking and interacting with their peers. Furthermore, collaboration between parents, teachers, and professionals such as Speech therapists are essential for helping address speech delays in early childhood. With appropriate, consistent, and early treatment, children with speech delays have a greater chance of developing language, social, and emotional skills appropriate to their age.

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