
Exploring the Role of Parent–Child Emotional Bonding and Verbal Interaction in Early Speaking Development

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Abstract

Early language development is crucial for children’s cognitive and social growth. This study aims to investigate the relationship between parental linguistic stimulation, emotional support, and children’s speaking ability. The research involved 30 preschool and kindergarten children at KB-TK Amanah Qurani in the 2024/2025 academic year. Data were collected using questionnaires completed by teachers and parents. Due to non-normal distribution in two variables, Spearman Rank Correlation was used for analysis. Results show significant positive correlations among all variables. Parental linguistic stimulation and emotional support are strongly correlated ($\rho = 0.735$, $p < 0.001$). Children’s speaking ability has a moderate positive correlation with linguistic stimulation ($\rho = 0.573$, $p = 0.001$) and a strong positive correlation with emotional support ($\rho = 0.640$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that higher parental involvement in language and emotional development is associated with better speaking skills in early childhood. This study emphasizes the vital role of both cognitive and emotional support in language acquisition and recommends greater focus on parent-child interaction in early education programs.

Keywords: Attachment, child language development, emotional bonding, linguistic stimulation, psycholinguistic



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1. Introduction

Language development in early childhood is a crucial aspect that supports cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Speaking skills, as part of language development, play a significant role in shaping communication abilities, thinking, and effective social interaction (Morreale & Pearson, 2008, as cited in Herbein et al., 2018). During this period, children learn how to use words, phrases, and sentences to express their feelings, needs, and ideas to others. These speaking skills not only serve as a tool for communication but also become an essential means for children to understand their surroundings, interact with peers, and develop their self-identity. At this stage of development, children also begin to realize the role of language in forming healthy social relationships, such as communicating with friends, teachers, and family members. With good speaking abilities, children can express their thoughts more clearly, which, in turn, strengthens their social interactions (Hunt et al., 2014; Garton, 1992, as cited in Jurkic et al., 2023).

Early childhood (ages 0–6) is a critical stage for language development, marked by heightened sensitivity to verbal input. According to the Critical Period Hypothesis (Han & Bao, 2023), language acquisition is most effective during this period, and limited exposure may lead to lasting deficits (Friedmann & Rusou, 2015). Among the key factors supporting language growth is verbal interaction with parents. Daily conversations, responsive communication, and consistent language input from parents serve as essential linguistic stimulation, helping children develop vocabulary, sentence structure, and conversational skills. Moreover, strong speaking abilities at this stage indicate a child's readiness for formal education, where communication plays a central role in learning and social engagement.

Furthermore, early speaking skills are closely linked to the development of early literacy. Children with a rich vocabulary and the ability to form coherent sentences tend to excel in reading and writing (Schreiber, 2011, as cited in Herbein et al., 2018). However, these skills develop not merely through exposure, but through dialogic interaction—interactive, two-way communication between adults and children. In this process, parents play a central role. Through daily practices such as storybook reading, meaningful conversations, or emotional dialogue, parents scaffold children's language by encouraging turn-taking, asking open-ended questions, and offering elaborative responses (Wahyuni & Hasanah, 2023). Such dialogic exchanges help children internalize language structure, expand vocabulary, and build symbolic and emotional understanding (Gavazzi & Ornaghi, 2011, as cited in O'Grady

& Nag, 2024). According to Brown (1987, in Mulyadi et al., 2024), learning involves acquiring skills through experience and instruction—reinforcing the idea that speaking abilities emerge through repeated, meaningful interaction. As Ayun (2016) and Fatkhurohmah et al. (2019) emphasize, children’s potential can only develop fully with nurturing and educational support from parents. Thus, this study explores how dialogic interaction—reflected in parental linguistic stimulation and emotional support—relates to children’s speaking development.

Dialogic interactions, especially those that occur between parents and children, play a vital role in shaping early language development. Through active conversations, children gain opportunities to express their thoughts, build vocabulary, and strengthen their understanding of language use in social contexts. Interactions involving storytelling, open-ended questioning, and shared meaning-making not only enhance linguistic skills but also foster emotional bonds between children and caregivers. Group conversations and discussions about story ideas provide a rich environment for preschool children to practice turn-taking, narrative construction, and symbolic thinking (Ping, 2014). The combination of dialogic interaction and parental involvement has been shown to significantly support children's speaking skills and overall language growth. Moreover, interventions using dialogic book-reading strategies have proven effective in improving children’s language and literacy abilities, while also encouraging more engaging and responsive communication behaviors among parents (Dicataldo et al., 2022). Therefore, fostering dialogic communication at home and in early childhood education settings is key to supporting children's expressive language development.

However, linguistic stimulation alone is insufficient without adequate emotional support. A nurturing and attentive environment create a sense of security for children to explore and express themselves freely. This emotional support not only reduces psychological barriers such as shyness or fear but also encourages children to use language more actively in various social situations, which in turn accelerates their mastery of speaking skills. Children who receive positive emotional support tend to perform better academically and are more confident in communication. In this regard, the strength of the parent-child emotional bond plays a vital role in shaping children's overall socio-emotional well-being. Research has shown that the quality of this attachment is strongly associated with future outcomes in both emotional and physical health (Ali et al., 2021). Additionally, children who have positive social-emotional health tend to be happier, demonstrate better academic performance, and exhibit fewer problematic behaviors compared to their peers who are less socially and emotionally competent (Zhu et al., 2024). Emotional support provided by parents, characterized by understanding and trust, has also been shown to contribute to children's academic performance (Kapikiran, 2020), and overall, emotional support is closely linked to children's academic success (Çakır & Avcı, 2021, as cited in Tekşan & Çinpolat, 2023).

Support from parents, teachers, and the surrounding environment plays a crucial role in stimulating children's language development from an early age. A study by Marchant et al. (2001) shows that supportive relationships with key figures such as parents and teachers have a significant impact on children's success in the educational environment (Tekşan & Çinpolat, 2023). Responsive interactions, such as expanding or clarifying children's utterances, have been proven to be an effective verbal stimulation strategy in developing speaking competence (Burchinal et al., 2008, as cited in Walker et al., 2020). Additionally, the quality and quantity of conversations between adults and children from an early age have long-term effects on children's language, literacy, and social behavior (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008, as cited in (Walker et al., 2020) Furthermore, environmental factors such as parents' education level, parenting style, and family communication habits also influence the effectiveness of such stimulation. Parents who are aware of the importance of language development are more active in creating a communicative environment rich in verbal interactions. However, without adequate emotional support, linguistic stimulation alone is not enough to promote optimal language development; interactions in emotionally negative environments can actually hinder children's speaking development. Therefore, the combination of consistent linguistic stimulation and warm emotional support forms an important foundation for holistic language development, and this study aims to explore how these two factors can be effectively integrated into educational and parenting strategies to support children's optimal growth.

Nonetheless, challenges in developing these skills are not insignificant. One major challenge is the "invisible enemy," an unseen threat that significantly impacts children's education and character development (Lickona, 2022, as cited in Sugitanata et al., 2024). This phenomenon is exacerbated by increasing urbanization and reduced interaction with the natural environment, leading to fewer opportunities for exploration and the natural use of language (Octaviani Andaresta, 2024, as cited in Sugitanata et al., 2024). Furthermore, adequate cognitive stimulation in early childhood is essential for brain development and children's future learning abilities. Research shows that children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds tend to experience gaps in language learning opportunities, affecting their language development (Hart & Risely, 1995, in Walker et al., 2020). This lack of stimulation can hinder brain development, potentially affecting their academic achievements later on (Rosen et al., 2019). Therefore, parental and educator involvement in creating a verbally rich environment is crucial to supporting children's cognitive and socio-emotional development.

Several previous studies have investigated the factors influencing children's language development. These include research on the role of parental linguistic stimulation (Alfira & Siregar, 2024), the importance of parenting training for improving communication skills (Rosonah, 2018), and the correlation between watching YouTube videos and children's

communication abilities (Maryani et al., 2022). In addition, studies have shown that interactive learning media enhance children's linguistic intelligence (Hasan et al., 2024), and verbal linguistic stimulation through role-playing is effective in improving children's speaking skills (Siregar, 2021). Emotional aspects have also been explored, such as the significance of secure parent-child attachment for emotional development (Cooke et al., 2019), and the psychological risks associated with overprotective parenting (Plexousakis et al., 2019). However, none of these studies have comprehensively examined the combined relationship between parental emotional support, linguistic stimulation, and early childhood speaking skills, which presents a gap in the current body of research.

In response to this gap, this study aims to explore how the combination of parental emotional support and home-based linguistic stimulation influences the development of early childhood speaking abilities. The main focus of this study is the relationship between linguistic stimulation provided by parents at home and emotional support (parental bonding) in relation to early childhood speaking skills. This study aims to investigate how parental linguistic stimulation can affect children's speaking abilities. Additionally, it seeks to understand the role of parental emotional support in supporting language development. The study will identify whether there is an interaction between these two factors that can enhance the development of children's speaking skills. The primary goal of this study is to explore the relationship between linguistic stimulation and emotional support, and how both interact to support the development of children's speaking abilities.

Understanding the factors that influence early childhood language development is vital, especially considering the strong link between speaking ability and children's academic and social success. The persistent language development gap among children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds further highlights the urgency of this study. This research aims to examine the relationship between parental linguistic stimulation, emotional support, and early childhood speaking ability. Specifically, it investigates how variations in these two parental factors are associated with differences in children's speaking skills. As a correlational study, this research proposes that there is a significant positive correlation between parental linguistic stimulation and children's speaking ability, as well as a significant positive correlation between parental emotional support and children's speaking ability. The findings are expected to provide meaningful insights for parents and educators in fostering an environment that optimally supports language development during the early years.

1.1. Theoretical framework

The early development of a child's speaking skills is influenced by numerous factors, with parental emotional bonding and verbal interaction being two of the most significant. These factors are crucial in fostering a child's communication abilities, and this study draws on several well-established theoretical perspectives to investigate their role. By examining

attachment theory, language development theories, and socio-cultural learning frameworks, we can better understand how emotional connections and verbal exchanges between parents and children contribute to early language acquisition.

At the core of this study is attachment theory, initially proposed by John Bowlby, which emphasizes the critical importance of emotional bonds formed between children and their primary caregivers. According to Bowlby (2013) attachment is a lasting psychological connection between human beings, such as the one formed between a parent and a child. This early bond is not merely emotional in nature but serves as a foundation that significantly influences the child's developmental trajectory over time (Shazili et al., 2020). When children feel secure in their attachment relationships, they develop a sense of trust and comfort that allows them to explore the world around them with confidence.

From the perspective of attachment theory, the relationship between a parent and child serves as the foundational base for verbal interaction. Children who experience strong and secure attachments are more inclined to initiate conversations, ask questions, and engage in meaningful dialogue. These early communicative exchanges are vital, as they provide children with opportunities to develop vocabulary, understand sentence structures, and learn the social cues necessary for effective communication.

Language acquisition is inherently social, and the theory of socio-cultural learning, proposed by Lev Vygotsky, emphasizes the role of social interaction in the development of language skills. According to Vygotsky, language is not an isolated skill but one that is learned through interaction with more knowledgeable individuals, particularly caregivers in early childhood. Parents, as the primary communicators in a child's life, provide crucial language scaffolding through talking, reading, and engaging in other verbal activities. Socio-cultural theory itself focuses on children's cognitive development by highlighting the integration of social, cultural, and biological elements, asserting that the socio-cultural context plays a central role in shaping human cognition (Rahmatirad, 2020). This view aligns with the notion that children's language development is deeply influenced by the environment in which they grow, particularly the quality and nature of interactions with those around them.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that the frequency, quality, and nature of verbal interactions between parents and children are directly linked to the child's language development. Parents who engage in meaningful and varied conversations—asking open-ended questions, using diverse vocabulary, and responding thoughtfully—facilitate more rapid and effective language acquisition. These verbal exchanges are more than just speech; they create an environment that encourages children to use language and express their thoughts. As children participate in these interactions, they internalize language rules, gradually progressing from basic vocabulary to more complex sentences and discourse.

Parents play a central role as the first and most consistent social partners in a child's life. Through everyday interactions that are warm, responsive, and stimulating, they create a rich environment where language can naturally grow. These daily conversations, whether through storytelling, asking questions, or simply engaging in casual talk, help children build stronger language skills. In this context, the home becomes a child's first classroom, filled with meaningful opportunities to practice and explore language. Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory provides valuable insight into why this process is so important. He emphasized that children learn best when they are guided by more knowledgeable individuals, particularly their parents, who support their development step by step. Through this kind of guided participation, parents offer structure, encouragement, and feedback that enable children to use language effectively. As children grow through these experiences, language becomes more than a means of communication. It transforms into a powerful symbolic tool that allows them to understand the world around them, build connections with others, and develop a deeper awareness of themselves (Rahmatirad, 2020).

2. Method

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the relationship between parental linguistic stimulation, emotional support, and young children's speaking skills. A quantitative approach allows researchers to collect numerical data and analyze the relationships between variables objectively using statistics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research was conducted at KB-TK Amanah Qurani in the 2024/2025 academic year and involved all 30 preschool and kindergarten students using total sampling. Data were collected using a Likert scale questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability. Classroom teachers were asked to assess students' speaking abilities based on their daily observations, including fluency, clarity of speech, vocabulary use, and participation in conversations. Meanwhile, parents completed a questionnaire evaluating the frequency and quality of linguistic stimulation (such as storytelling and reading) and emotional support (such as warmth, empathy, and involvement). Each questionnaire item reflected how often, consistently, and effectively these interactions occurred. The Shapiro-Wilk test showed that some data were not normally distributed, so the Spearman Rank correlation test was used to analyze the relationships between variables.

3. Finding and Discussion

3.1. Finding

This study involves 30 early childhood children from preschool and kindergarten at KB-TK Amanah Qurani during the 2024/2025 academic year. Data were collected through questionnaires filled out by teachers and parents. Below is the descriptive statistics for each variable:

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for each variable

Variabel	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min. Score	Max. Score
Child's Speaking Ability (X1)	78.56	6.43	65	90
Parental Linguistic Stimulation (X2)	81.23	5.78	70	92
Parental Emotional Support (Y1)	79.67	6.02	68	91

Based on the descriptive statistics, we can gather a clear picture of the children's speaking ability, the linguistic stimulation provided by the parents, and the emotional support from the parents. The average score for the children's speaking ability (X1) is 78.56 with a standard deviation of 6.43. This indicates that the children's speaking abilities in this group are generally good, although there is moderate variation among them. The relatively high standard deviation suggests that while most children have good speaking abilities, some children have lower or higher speaking scores than the average. The score ranges from 65 to 90 indicates a significant difference in speaking ability between individuals, suggesting that, although generally speaking, the children's speaking skills are good, there are still children with more limited speaking abilities. The factors influencing this variation should be explored further in more in-depth research.

The parental linguistic stimulation variable (X2) has an average score of 81.23 with a standard deviation of 5.78. This reflects that parents, in general, provide good linguistic stimulation to their children, with only slight variation between individuals. The smaller standard deviation compared to the children's speaking ability indicates that the majority of parents provide relatively consistent linguistic stimulation. The score range of 70 to 92 indicates that, while most parents provide a good level of linguistic stimulation, some parents provide either lower or higher levels of stimulation. This variation may be due to differences in the understanding and application of language teaching methods at home, which may depend on the parents' background, knowledge, and skills in providing such stimulation.

Parental emotional support (Y1) also shows a good average score of 79.67, with a standard deviation of 6.02. This indicates that parents provide adequate emotional support for the development of their children, although there is variation in the level of support. The score ranges from 68 to 91 suggests that, while most parents provide strong emotional support, some parents may need to improve or increase the quality of the emotional support they provide. Good emotional support is crucial for the psychological and social development of children, so more attention should be given to parents who may not be providing sufficient support.

Overall, the descriptive statistics show that the children's speaking ability, linguistic stimulation, and emotional support from parents are all in good categories, although there is significant variation among individuals. This variation reflects differences in parenting styles, the level of parental involvement, and other factors that can affect child development.

Therefore, it is important to conduct further research to understand the factors influencing these differences and how they impact early childhood language and social development.

To ensure the validity of further parametric analyses, a normality test was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which is appropriate for small sample sizes ($n < 50$). The results are presented in below:

Table 2. Normality test result

Variabel	Sig. (Shapiro-Wilk)
X1	0.135
X2	0.038
Y1	0.003

Based on the normality test results conducted using Shapiro-Wilk (see Table 2), it was found that the variable Child's Speaking Ability (Y1) follows a normal distribution ($p = 0.135 > 0.05$), while the variables Parental Linguistic Stimulation (X1) and Parental Emotional Support (X2) do not follow a normal distribution ($p = 0.038$ and $p = 0.003$, respectively < 0.05). Since two out of the three variables (X1 and X2) are not normally distributed, the statistical test used is the Spearman Rank Correlation. The Spearman correlation is a non-parametric test that does not require the assumption of normal distribution, making it suitable for testing the relationship between variables with non-normal data distributions.

Table 3. Correlation between variables

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (2-tailed)
X1 – X2	0.735	0.000
X1 – Y1	0.573	0.001
X2 – Y1	0.640	0.000

The correlation analysis results show significant relationships between all variable pairs being studied. The correlation between Parental Linguistic Stimulation (X1) and Parental Emotional Support (X2) shows a coefficient of 0.735 with a significance of 0.000, indicating a very strong and significant positive relationship. Next, Child's Speaking Ability (Y1) also has significant relationships with both independent variables. The relationship between Parental Linguistic Stimulation (X1) and Child's Speaking Ability (Y1) shows a correlation coefficient of 0.573 with a significance of 0.001, indicating a moderately strong positive relationship. Meanwhile, Parental Emotional Support (X2) has a correlation of 0.640 with Child's Speaking Ability (Y1) and a significance of 0.000, showing a strong positive relationship. Therefore, it can be concluded that the higher the level of linguistic stimulation and emotional support provided by parents, the better the speaking ability of early childhood children.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study provide clear evidence that parental linguistic stimulation and emotional support play an important role in shaping young children's speaking ability. The moderate positive correlation between linguistic stimulation and speaking skills ($\rho = 0.573$, $p = 0.001$) supports previous studies that highlight the importance of rich and consistent verbal interaction in the home. When parents regularly engage in conversations with their children, read stories aloud, and ask open-ended questions, they create an environment that promotes vocabulary development, sentence structure, and speaking fluency. This aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction within the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as a foundation for cognitive and language growth. Adults like parents or teachers help children, especially shy ones, improve their language skills by providing support that makes them feel comfortable to speak. In this context, adults like parents or teachers play a crucial role in supporting children, especially those who are shy, by creating a comfortable environment that encourages them to speak and develop their language skills (Insani, 2024).

In addition, the strong positive correlation between emotional support and children's speaking ability ($\rho = 0.640$, $p < 0.001$) shows that the emotional atmosphere at home significantly influences language development. Children who feel emotionally supported tend to express themselves more confidently and willingly. This is in line with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory at the microsystem level and supported by previous findings showing that consistent parent-child interactions, such as storytelling and shared reading, help children build communication habits despite challenges like gadget use or limited time (Naibaho et al., 2025). Moreover, similar studies also reveal that in emotionally unsupportive classroom environments, children with lower language skills are more prone to behavioral problems, emphasizing the universal importance of emotional support across settings (Qi et al., 2020).

Interestingly, the strongest finding in this study shows a close connection between linguistic stimulation and emotional support from parents ($\rho = 0.735$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that both parenting practices often go together. Parents who support their child's language development usually also provide emotional warmth. This reflects a well-rounded parenting style where both cognitive and emotional aspects are nurtured to help children grow. Previous research also supports this idea, showing that the quality and quantity of communication between parents and children play an important role in shaping language development. In line with this, recent studies have shown that simple daily routines such as encouraging children to talk, reading books with them, and giving consistent emotional support can greatly help develop their speaking abilities (Naibaho et al., 2025). These everyday interactions help build a warm and supportive environment where children grow emotionally and intellectually.

Moreover, another study found that children whose parents listen attentively, respond positively to what they say, and show emotional sensitivity tend to have better language skills (Fono et al., 2023). When children feel emotionally safe and heard, they become more confident and more willing to express themselves. Therefore, it is important for early childhood education programs to promote parental involvement not only in language learning but also in building strong emotional relationships. An approach that balances love, care, and open communication can be a powerful way to support the development of children's speaking skills from an early age.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates a significant and positive relationship between parental linguistic stimulation, emotional support, and young children's speaking ability. When parents consistently engage in verbal interactions, such as storytelling and open-ended conversations, while also providing emotional warmth and attentiveness, children tend to show stronger development in their speaking skills. These findings underline the crucial role parents play in fostering early language development by combining both cognitive and emotional support. Therefore, the results serve as a valuable reference for designing parenting programs and early education interventions that aim to strengthen both dimensions of child development at home.

However, this study is not without limitations. The relatively small sample size and the focus on a single educational institution limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the reliance on self-report questionnaires from teachers and parents introduces potential bias. To address these limitations, future research should involve a larger and more diverse sample across various educational contexts and consider using longitudinal or observational methods to better understand the progression of language development. Including additional factors such as socioeconomic status, parental education, and exposure to media would also enrich our understanding of how different environments shape children's language growth.

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