

Analysis of Early Childhood Diction Patterns through Spontaneous Storytelling Activities in Preschool Classroom

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Abstract

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Language development in early childhood is a critical phase that requires appropriate stimulation, and diction is an important aspect in the development of children's language skills. This study aims to analyze the diction patterns of early childhood children in spontaneous storytelling activities in early childhood education (PAUD) classes. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design involving children aged 5-6 years in grade B of PAUD. Data were collected through participant observation, audio-visual recording, and interviews with teachers. The results showed that the diction patterns of early childhood children in spontaneous storytelling have distinctive characteristics that include the use of concrete words, repetition, the influence of the social environment, and the child's cognitive development stage. These findings provide important implications for the development of language learning strategies in PAUD that are more responsive to children's individual needs.

Keywords: *Diction, Early Childhood, Spontaneous Storytelling, Language Development*

Abstract

Perkembangan bahasa pada usia dini merupakan fase kritis yang memerlukan stimulasi tepat, dan diksi menjadi salah satu aspek penting dalam perkembangan kemampuan berbahasa anak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pola diksi anak usia dini dalam aktivitas bercerita spontan di kelas PAUD. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus yang melibatkan anak usia 5-6 tahun di kelas B PAUD. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, perekaman audio-visual, dan wawancara dengan guru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pola diksi anak usia dini dalam bercerita spontan memiliki karakteristik khas yang meliputi penggunaan kata-kata konkret, repetisi, pengaruh lingkungan sosial, dan tahap perkembangan kognitif anak. Temuan ini memberikan implikasi penting bagi pengembangan strategi pembelajaran bahasa di PAUD yang lebih responsif terhadap kebutuhan individual anak.

Kata Kunci: *Diksi, Anak Usia Dini, Bercerita Spontan, Perkembangan Bahasa*

INTRODUCTION

Language is the primary means for children to convey their thoughts, feelings, and daily experiences (Farista & Priyanti, 2023). During early childhood, between the ages of 0 and 6, language development is in a golden phase, where children's language skills develop rapidly when given the right stimulation (Sujiono, 2013). Language development during this period provides a crucial foundation for children's communication and cognitive abilities in later life stages (Santrock, 2025). According to Vygotsky (2018), language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a thinking instrument that shapes a child's cognitive structure.

Early childhood language development is a complex process involving phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Between the ages of 3 and 6, children experience rapid language development, characterized by an increase in vocabulary quantity and quality, the ability to construct more complex sentences, and an understanding of language rules (Khadijah, 2018). (Morrison, 2013) noted that by the age of 5, the average child has mastered approximately 2,500 words and is able to produce sentences with relatively complete structures.

Language development theory explains that children acquire language through a combination of innate abilities and interactions with the environment (Daroini, 2018). The socio-interactionist approach proposed emphasizes the importance of scaffolding, or adult support, in helping children develop their language skills. In the context of early childhood education, teachers act as facilitators who provide a rich language environment and are responsive to children's communication needs (Isjoni, 2009). Language development in early childhood is also closely related to cognitive development. According to Piaget's (2023) theory, children aged 2-7 years are in the preoperational stage, characterized by egocentric thinking and the use of symbols, including language. At this stage, children begin to use language to represent objects and their experiences. Vygotsky (2018) added that language plays a mediating role in the development of children's higher mental functions, so the quality of verbal interactions experienced by children greatly determines their cognitive development.

One aspect that plays a crucial role in language development is diction, or word choice. Proper diction not only helps children communicate their messages but also influences the formation of more structured and logical thought patterns (Bandura, 2001). Keraf (2016) emphasizes that diction is the ability to accurately distinguish the nuances of meaning from the ideas one wishes to convey, as well as the ability to find a form that suits the situation and the values held by the listening group. In the context of early childhood, mastery of diction is an important indicator of language development, reflecting their cognitive maturity and social experience (Otto, 2015).

Diction or word choice is one of the important elements in the effective use of language. According to Keraf (2016), diction includes three main things: (1) the choice of the right word or group of words to express an idea, (2) the choice of words that are appropriate to the situation and context, and (3) the choice of words that can evoke the same idea in the reader or listener. In the context of early childhood, mastery of diction

is closely related to vocabulary development and understanding of word meanings (Nurgiyantoro, 2019). Sari et al (2022) classifies diction based on several criteria, including: general words and specific words, concrete words and abstract words, denotative words and connotative words, and popular words and technical words. For early childhood, research shows that they tend to master concrete words, general words, and words with denotative meanings because they are easier to understand and directly related to their sensory experiences (Sompotan & Sinaga, 2022).

The development of diction in early childhood does not occur in isolation but is strongly influenced by the social environment and interactions they experience (Irhandayaningsih, 2019). According to Bronfenbrenner's (2005) developmental ecology theory, microsystem environments such as family, school, and peers have a direct influence on children's language development. Exposure to rich, high-quality language from adults around children will expand their vocabulary and improve their ability to choose appropriate words (Christie, 2011). Word choice in early childhood is also influenced by several internal and external factors. Internal factors include the child's level of cognitive development, memory, and personal experiences. External factors include language input from the environment, the frequency of exposure to certain words, and the social context of communication (Hofstede, 2001). Lovita dan Ismet (2021) explains that children use the principles of contrast and conventionality in choosing words, where they attempt to distinguish meanings between words and follow the conventions of word usage that apply in their community.

As children develop, their vocabulary develops from very general and common words to more specific and precise words. Children begin to understand that the word "run" is different from "walk," or that "big" is different from "giant." This development demonstrates an increase in semantic understanding and the ability to distinguish nuances of meaning (Bloom, 2000). In the learning process in Early Childhood Education (PAUD), spontaneous storytelling is a natural activity that allows children to express themselves without formal restrictions. Spontaneous storytelling differs from structured storytelling because it gives children the freedom to choose topics, organize thoughts, and express ideas in their own way (Hidayat, R. & Nur, 2024). Through this activity, educators can observe how children choose words, structure sentences, and express meaning based on their experiences. Spontaneous storytelling is also an effective vehicle for developing narrative skills, which are essential skills in literacy). (Snow, 1996)

Spontaneous storytelling is an activity in which children construct and convey narratives based on their experiences, imagination, or knowledge without formal preparation (Gottschall, 2024). Unlike reading stories or guided storytelling, spontaneous storytelling gives children complete autonomy to determine the content, structure, and delivery of their stories. According to Jalongo (2011), this activity is invaluable for language development because it encourages children to organize their thoughts, choose words, and construct a coherent narrative. Research by Morrow (2015) shows that spontaneous storytelling provides opportunities for children to develop a

variety of integrated language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics. In the context of early childhood education, this activity also supports social-emotional development as children learn to share experiences, listen to others' perspectives, and interact in meaningful contexts (Paley, 2004).

Spontaneous storytelling has several characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of narrative. First, the resulting story is personal and authentic because it originates from the child's own experiences or imagination. Second, the narrative structure tends to be more flexible and does not always follow conventional patterns such as orientation, complication, and resolution. Third, the child has full control over topic selection and story development (Parapat et al., 2023). In the context of early childhood education, spontaneous storytelling can be facilitated through various strategies (Iqbal et al., 2024; Warmansyah et al., 2025; Wulandari et al., 2025). Teachers can create a supportive environment by allocating dedicated time for storytelling, providing engaging prompts or stimuli, and demonstrating a responsive and appreciative attitude toward children's stories (Nicolopoulou, 2011). The use of supporting media such as puppets, pictures, or real objects can also help children develop story ideas and enrich their word choices.

Early childhood diction patterns are generally simple, tend to be repetitive, and are heavily influenced by their immediate environment, such as family and teachers (Mustafa, 2020). Children at this age are still developing metalinguistic skills, namely the ability to consciously reflect and manipulate language (Piaget, 2023). For example, when children describe activities at home, they often use words or phrases they have heard before in everyday interactions. Research by (Wijayanti, 2018) shows that children aged 5-6 years tend to use concrete words that refer to objects or events that can be directly observed.

Various studies have demonstrated the importance of analyzing children's language in naturalistic contexts. According to Ninio and Snow (1996), observing children's language in spontaneous situations provides a more authentic picture of their linguistic competence than formal tests. In her research, (Sujiono, 2013) found that spontaneous storytelling activities in early childhood education (PAUD) can reveal variations in the use of verbs, adjectives, and nouns, reflecting the level of children's language development. Meanwhile, Armanila et al., (2022) emphasized that analyzing diction patterns can be a diagnostic tool for identifying children's individual learning needs.

In-depth studies of early childhood diction patterns in the context of spontaneous storytelling are still limited, especially in Indonesia. Most existing research focuses more on general vocabulary development or storytelling skills from an early literacy perspective, without specifically analyzing how children choose and use words in constructing their narratives (Nurlaila et al., 2025; Wardani et al., 2023; Warmansyah et al., 2024). However, understanding these diction patterns is crucial for designing developmentally appropriate learning interventions. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing diction patterns in spontaneous storytelling activities in early childhood

education (PAUD) classrooms. This study aims to: (1) identify the types of diction used by early childhood children in spontaneous storytelling, (2) analyze factors influencing children's diction choices, and (3) describe educators' strategies for facilitating children's diction development through spontaneous storytelling activities. The results of this study are expected to serve as a basis for educators in designing more meaningful story-based learning strategies, so that storytelling activities are not only entertaining but also become an effective means of developing children's language skills.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to analyze early childhood diction patterns through spontaneous storytelling activities. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand the phenomenon in depth and contextually, especially related to how children choose and use words in natural communication situations (Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, 2018). The research participants were children aged 5-6 years in grade B PAUD who were selected purposively. The participant selection criteria included: (1) children aged 5-6 years, (2) have adequate Indonesian language skills for communication, (3) are active in class activities, and (4) have permission from their parents to participate in the study. The total participants in this study were 10 children consisting of 5 boys and 5 girls.

Data were collected through three main methods. First, participant observation was conducted to observe children's spontaneous storytelling activities in a natural classroom setting. The researcher participated in classroom activities while observing and recording patterns of children's language use. Second, audio-visual recordings of spontaneous storytelling activities were conducted to obtain more complete and accurate data. Each storytelling session was recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Third, semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers were conducted to obtain their perspectives on children's language development and the learning strategies implemented. Data analysis was conducted using two main techniques. First, content analysis was used to identify patterns and categories of diction used by children. Verbatim transcripts of the storytelling recordings were analyzed to identify the types of words used (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs), the level of specificity of words (general vs. specific), and the context in which words were used within the narrative structure. Second, thematic analysis was used to understand factors influencing children's word choice, including environmental influences, personal experiences, and cognitive developmental stages.

Data validity was maintained through source and method triangulation, as well as member checking with the classroom teacher. Source triangulation was conducted by collecting data from various sources (children, teachers, and documents). Method triangulation was conducted using various data collection techniques (observation, recording, and interviews). Member checking was conducted by confirming initial findings with the teacher to ensure the accuracy of interpretation. The transcription process was conducted verbatim to ensure the accuracy of the language data used by the

children, including the use of non-standard words, repetition, and grammatical errors that reflect the children's language development stage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Early Childhood Diction Patterns in Spontaneous Storytelling

Analysis of spontaneous storytelling transcripts shows that early childhood diction patterns have several distinctive characteristics. First, children tend to use concrete words that refer to objects, people, or events that can be directly observed. For example, when describing play experiences, children use words like "doll," "car," "swing," and "slide," which refer to concrete objects around them. This finding aligns with research by Sompotan dan Sinaga (2022), which states that early childhood children are more proficient in words with clear physical references.

Second, the use of verbs dominates children's stories compared to other word classes. The most frequently occurring verbs are action verbs such as 'play,' 'eat,' 'run,' 'take,' 'love,' and 'see.' This dominance of verbs reflects children's orientation toward action and direct experience. As Tomasello explains, children at this age are actively constructing their understanding of the world through action, so verbs become the primary means of describing their experiences (Lovita & Ismet, 2021).

Third, significant repetition patterns were found in word usage. Children often repeated certain words or phrases in their stories, both as a form of emphasis and as a strategy to maintain the floor in the conversation. For example, one child recounted: "I played in the park, played on the swing, played on the slide, played with my friends." The repetition of the word "play" in this context functions as an anchor that ties together the various activities in the narrative. Peterson and McCabe (2013) explain that repetition is a common narrative strategy in early childhood and plays a role in organizing stories.

Fourth, the use of general words is more dominant than specific words. For example, children more often use the word 'flower' rather than the name of a specific flower such as 'rose' or 'jasmine', or use 'animal' rather than the name of a specific species. This indicates that children's vocabulary is still at the basic category level as explained by Rosch et al.(1976), where children first learn words at the category level that are most informative and useful in everyday life.

Fifth, the use of words reflects the influence of informal and regional languages. Some children use words like 'gak' for 'tidak', 'udah' for 'sudah', or insert words from their regional languages. This phenomenon indicates that language input from the family and community environment significantly influences children's diction patterns (Hofstede, 2001). It also reflects the reality that children grow up in multilingual or diglossic environments where they are exposed to multiple registers and language variations.

Factors Influencing the Selection of Diction

Analysis of interview and observation data identified several key factors influencing children's choice of diction in spontaneous storytelling. The first factor is the child's direct experience. Children tend to use words associated with activities or objects they have personally experienced. For example, children who frequently go to the zoo have a richer vocabulary of animal names, while children who frequently play in parks have a wider variety of words related to outdoor play. This supports Piaget's constructivist theory, which states that children's knowledge, including language, is constructed through direct experience with their environment.

The second factor is language input from parents and teachers. Interviews with teachers showed that children whose parents interact frequently verbally with them tend to have a wider variety of diction. They are able to use more specific and descriptive words. Conversely, children who receive minimal verbal stimulation at home tend to use more limited and general words. This finding is consistent with research by Suarca et al (2016), who found that the quality and quantity of language input at home significantly influences children's vocabulary development.

The third factor is exposure to storybooks and media. Children who are frequently read to show a greater variety of vocabulary and sometimes use words rarely used in everyday conversation, which they likely learned from books. For example, the use of the words "giant" or "witch," which are typical vocabulary words in children's stories. In their study, Yoni (2020) found that shared book reading significantly contributes to children's vocabulary development and narrative skills.

The fourth factor is the child's level of cognitive development. Children with more mature cognitive abilities tend to be able to use more abstract words and make more complex semantic relationships. They are also better able to choose appropriate words according to the context of the story. Conversely, children with slower cognitive development tend to use more concrete words and simpler sentence structures. This aligns with Vygotsky's (2018) theory of the close relationship between language and cognitive development.

The fifth factor is the social context of storytelling. Observations show that children adjust their word choice based on who is listening to their story. When telling stories to teachers, children tend to use more formal and complete language. However, when telling stories to peers, they use more casual language and sometimes use slang or colloquialisms they know. This phenomenon indicates that, although still developing, young children already have a pragmatic awareness of language registers. (Anderson, 2003)

Teacher Strategies in Facilitating Diction Development

Observations and interviews identified several strategies teachers use to facilitate children's diction development through spontaneous storytelling. The first strategy is providing adequate time and opportunities for children to share their stories.

Teachers allocate specific times in daily routines, such as during circle time or after specific activities, where children are given the opportunity to share their stories. Creating this safe and supportive space is crucial for giving children the confidence to express themselves verbally.

The second strategy is the use of scaffolding techniques, or gradual support. When a child has difficulty finding the right words to express their ideas, the teacher provides assistance by asking open-ended questions, providing word choices, or modeling more appropriate word usage. For example, when a child says, "I play on that big one," the teacher asks, "Oh, you play on the big swing, huh?" thereby providing a more specific word model. This technique aligns with Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development.

The third strategy is recasting, or repetition with correction. The teacher repeats the child's statement using the correct grammatical structure or more precise wording, without explicitly correcting the child. For example, when a child says, "I ate an apple at home this morning," the teacher responds, "Oh, you ate an apple at home for breakfast this morning, didn't you?" This technique has been shown to be effective in helping children internalize more precise language forms without hampering their self-confidence. (Otto, 2015)

The fourth strategy is the use of media and visual aids. Teachers provide pictures, puppets, or real objects that children can use as stimuli for storytelling. These media not only help children develop story ideas but also enrich their vocabulary with new words related to the objects or situations depicted. The use of concrete media is very appropriate for the thinking characteristics of young children, who are still in the concrete operational stage.

The fifth strategy is providing positive and specific feedback. Teachers don't just praise children with general words like "good" or "clever," but provide specific praise related to the use of interesting words or the development of a coherent story. For example, "Wow, you used the word 'sneak' to describe the cat. What an interesting word!" Specific feedback like this helps children understand which aspects of their language use are effective and need to be maintained or developed.

Discussion

This study reveals the unique characteristics of early childhood diction patterns in spontaneous storytelling, which are strongly influenced by their cognitive developmental stage and experiences. The findings indicate that children tend to use concrete words referring to physical objects such as swings and slides that can be directly observed, in line with Sompotan dan Sinaga (2022) theory on the mastery of words with clear physical references at an early age. The dominance of action verbs such as play, eat, and run reflects children's orientation towards direct experience and the process of constructing understanding through action, as explained by Mawaddah, (2024)

Significant repetition patterns in children's stories serve not only as emphasis but also as narrative strategies to organize the story and maintain turn-taking. The use of general words like "bunga" (flower) rather than specific names like "rose" (rose) indicates that children's vocabulary is still at the basic category level (Eleanor Rosch, Carolyn B. Mervis, Wayne D. Gray, David M. Johnson, 1976). The use of informal language such as "tidak" (no) and "oleh" (already) and the insertion of regional languages reflect the strong influence of language input from the family and community environment, confirming that children grow up in a multilingual or diglossic context.

The factors influencing children's choice of diction are multidimensional and interrelated. Direct experience has been shown to be crucial, with children who frequently visit the zoo having a richer vocabulary about animals, supporting Piaget's constructivist theory. Language input from parents and teachers is a crucial factor, consistent with Suarca et al., (2016) research on the influence of the quality and quantity of verbal stimulation on vocabulary development. Exposure to storybooks significantly contributes to variations in diction and the use of literary words such as giant or witch (Bus et al., 1995). The level of cognitive development correlates with the ability to use abstract words and make complex semantic relationships, in line with Vygotsky's (2018) theory. Interestingly, the social context of storytelling influences the language register used, demonstrating children's early pragmatic awareness of adapting language based on audience.

Teacher strategies in facilitating diction development demonstrate effective and theory-based practices. Providing time and opportunities for storytelling creates a safe space for verbal expression. Scaffolding techniques through open-ended questions and word choice apply Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development. Recasting, or repetition with correction, has been shown to effectively help internalize appropriate language forms without hindering self-confidence. The use of visual media is highly suited to the concrete thinking characteristics of early childhood. Providing positive and specific feedback helps children understand aspects of effective language, such as praise for "Wow, you used the word sneak to describe that cat," an interesting word that has more meaning than simply "nice." Thus, this study provides comprehensive insight into the complexity of early childhood diction development and emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach that considers cognitive, social, and environmental factors in facilitating children's language development.

CONCLUSION

This study produced several important findings related to the diction patterns of early childhood children in spontaneous storytelling activities in early childhood education classes. First, the diction patterns of early childhood children have distinctive characteristics which include: (1) the dominance of the use of concrete words that refer to observable objects or events, (2) the use of action verbs that are more dominant than other word classes, (3) significant repetition patterns as a narrative strategy, (4) preference for general words over specific words, and (5) the influence of informal

language and regional languages in word choice. Second, a child's choice of diction is influenced by various interacting factors, including: the child's direct experience with objects and events, the quality and quantity of language input from parents and teachers, exposure to storybooks and media, the child's level of cognitive development, and the social context in which storytelling takes place. These factors shape each child's unique diction patterns and reflect individual differences in language development. Third, teachers have a crucial role in facilitating the development of children's diction through a variety of responsive and developmentally appropriate strategies. These strategies include providing time and opportunities for storytelling, using scaffolding, recasting, visual media, and providing positive and specific feedback. The implementation of these strategies demonstrates teachers' understanding of the importance of creating a rich and supportive language environment for children's language development.

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