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A Comparative Study of Teachers' and Parents' Strategies for Stimulating Language Development in Early Childhood

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis secara komparatif strategi stimulasi bahasa guru dan orang tua, mencakup bentuk kegiatan, pola interaksi, pemanfaatan media, serta persamaan dan perbedaannya. Penelitian kualitatif dengan desain studi komparatif ini dilaksanakan di RA Darul Muhsinin NW Kotaraja dengan 15 partisipan (empat guru dan sebelas orang tua) yang dipilih secara purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan wawancara semi-terstruktur, lalu dianalisis secara tematik melalui kondensasi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Guru dan orang tua sama-sama menerapkan percakapan dan tanya jawab, pengembangan kosakata dengan benda konkret dan media visual, bercerita, bernyanyi, bermain peran, bantuan bertahap, pemodelan pengucapan, dan penguatan positif. Keduanya mendorong interaksi verbal dan memberikan pendampingan responsif. Guru cenderung menyusun stimulasi secara terstruktur dalam pembelajaran, sedangkan orang tua mengintegrasikannya secara fleksibel ke dalam rutinitas keluarga. Penerapan strategi berkaitan dengan keragaman kemampuan anak, keterbatasan waktu dan perhatian guru, serta ketersediaan waktu orang tua. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya kesinambungan interaksi verbal antara sekolah dan keluarga.

***Kata kunci**: anak usia dini, studi komparatif, stimulasi bahasa, strategi guru, orang tua*

Abstract

This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of language stimulation strategies used by teachers and parents, including the types of activities, interaction patterns, use of media, as well as their similarities and differences. This qualitative study with a comparative design was conducted at *raudhatul athfal* Darul Muhsinin NW Kotaraja with 15 participants (four teachers and eleven parents) selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed thematically through data condensation, data presentation, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. Both

teachers and parents employed conversation and question-and-answer sessions, vocabulary development using concrete objects and visual aids, storytelling, singing, role-playing, gradual prompting, pronunciation modeling, and positive reinforcement. Both encouraged verbal interaction and provided responsive guidance. Teachers tend to organize stimulation in a structured manner during learning, while parents integrate it flexibly into family routines. The application of these strategies is related to the diversity of children's abilities, teachers' time and attention constraints, and parents' availability. These findings underscore the importance of continuity in verbal interaction between school and family.

Keywords: early childhood, comparative study, language stimulation, teacher strategies, parents

Introduction

Language skills form the foundation for children's cognitive, social, emotional, and academic development (Madyawati, 2017), as well as serving as a means to think, understand their environment, build social relationships, and express ideas (Kurnia, 2020). Early childhood, often referred to as the "golden age," is a critical period because children are highly receptive to acquiring vocabulary, understanding meaning, and developing communication skills (Wahidah and Latipah, 2021); thus, appropriate and sustained language stimulation is essential (Arrumaisha et al., 2023).

Theoretically, social interaction is a key factor in children's language development. Vygotsky (1978) defined the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as the gap between a child's current level of development as evidenced by their ability to complete tasks independently and the potential level of development that can be achieved through guidance from more competent adults or peers. The concept of scaffolding was introduced by Wood et al. (1976) to describe the temporary support provided by more competent individuals to help children complete tasks they are not yet able to perform on their own (Mihai and Classen, 2023). Thus, teachers and parents are in a strategic position as providers of high-quality stimuli (Yang et al., 2021).

Teachers serve as facilitators who design activities such as storytelling, role-playing, singing, group discussions, reading aloud, and the use of visual media to enhance listening and speaking skills and enrich vocabulary (Wu et al., 2025). Through these strategies, teachers foster interactions that enable children to develop their communicative skills

gradually. On the other hand, parents are the first and primary educators, with the longest duration of interaction. The family is the first place where children acquire language (Blom et al., 2023), and simple activities such as talking, reading stories aloud, and responding to children's questions contribute significantly to language development (Brushe et al., 2025). Warm and responsive communication enriches children's vocabulary and builds their self-confidence (Leung and Suskind, 2024). Thus, school and family are two environments that complement one another.

An initial diagnostic observation at *raudhatul athfal* Darul Muhsinin NW Kotaraja on August 8, 2026 which focused on communication styles, verbal stimuli, children's responses to questions, and language support revealed that at school, language stimulation tends to occur through structured activities such as question-and-answer sessions and conversations during lessons, whereas in the family setting, stimulation is integrated into everyday conversations, such as sharing experiences and introducing vocabulary through shared activities. These conditions form the basis for a comparative analysis of language stimulation strategies employed by teachers and parents.

Previous empirical studies have generally focused on only one of these environments. Aulia et al. (2022), through a case study of three informants at Al-Kautsar Kindergarten, demonstrated that bilingual communication and parental involvement must be considered when understanding children's language barriers. Yaqin et al. (2025) identified storytelling, interactive conversations, singing, as well as visual media and teaching aids as strategies used by teachers at the AS-Sa'adah Early Childhood Education Center. In the family context, Nirmala and Hartono (2023) found that parents stimulate language development through conversation, reading stories aloud, storytelling, singing, role-playing, and picture books in daily life, while Afriliani et al. (2023), in a study of 120 families, demonstrated that the quality of verbal interactions and parents' role as language models are associated with children's language development. These studies have not directly compared teachers' and parents' strategies.

A study linking the two was conducted by Khoirotin et al. (2025), through a qualitative case study at Al-Hidayah 67 Kindergarten in Jember, showing that collaboration between teachers and parents is realized through two-way communication, parental involvement, and the alignment of strategies at home and school. Wachidah and Putikadyanto (2024) examined teacher-parent collaboration in developing language literacy

through the Read It Again-Prek! (RIA) program. Both studies provide an important foundation regarding the continuity of stimulation, but they focus on collaboration and language literacy.

Based on these studies, the novelty of this research does not lie in the simultaneous discussion of the roles of teachers and parents, but rather in a more systematic comparison of their respective language stimulation strategies. From an ecological perspective, school and family are understood as the two closest contexts that shape a child's language experiences, and the interconnection between them serves as the basis for examining the continuity of stimulation. This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the strategies used by teachers and parents to stimulate the language development of young children in school and at home, covering the types of activities, interaction patterns, use of media or learning resources, and implementation challenges, including their similarities and differences. The results are expected to serve as a foundation for strengthening the continuity of stimulation between school and home.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a comparative study design to understand language stimulation practices based on participants' experiences and the contexts in which they are applied, while comparative analysis is used to identify patterns that distinguish and connect practices in schools and families (Yin, 2018). The units of comparison are teachers' strategies in learning activities and parents' strategies in daily interactions. The dimensions of comparison namely, the forms of stimulation activities, patterns of verbal interaction, vocabulary development, the use of questions and feedback, and guidance were established as initial categories based on the research objectives and were open to inductive development according to themes emerging from the data.

The study was conducted at *raudhatul athfal* Darul Muhsinin NW Kotaraja with 15 participants four teachers and eleven parents selected through purposive sampling. Teachers were selected based on the criteria of actively teaching children aged 3–5 years, being directly involved in learning, and having experience in language stimulation. Parents were selected based on the criteria of having children aged 3–5 years enrolled at the institution, being directly involved in child-rearing and language support, and engaging in daily verbal interactions. These eleven parents were the parents of children in the classes

taught by the four participating teachers, ensuring that both groups shared the same contextual connection to the children.

Data were collected through observations and semi-structured interviews from August 8–15, 2026. Observations were conducted repeatedly at the school and in the families for 30–45 minutes per session, covering interactions between teachers and children during learning as well as communication between parents and children in daily activities including when dropping off or picking up children and during Posyandu activities using guidelines, observation sheets, and field notes. Interviews were conducted with four teachers and eleven parents, lasting 5–10 minutes per participant. Teacher interviews focused on stimulation strategies, scaffolding, and adjustments to children's abilities, while parent interviews explored communication patterns, vocabulary development, and support at home. Interviews were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis included data condensation, data presentation, and the derivation and verification of conclusions (Miles et al., 2014). Coding was performed manually by the researcher by combining a deductive approach based on the research focus and an inductive approach based on patterns of findings. During the condensation stage, transcripts and observation notes were selected, coded, and grouped into themes such as vocabulary development, storytelling, asking questions, providing feedback, and scaffolding. The data were then presented in thematic descriptions and comparative matrices organized by theme, linking information from teachers and parents as it pertained to the child, to identify similarities, differences, and continuity in stimulation practices.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation compared information among teachers and among parents within each group, while methodological triangulation cross-checked the results of observations and interviews regarding the same aspects. Differences in information between teachers and parents were not treated as data inconsistencies but were analyzed as differences in practices at school and at home. Member checking was conducted by confirming summaries of information and interpretations of interviews with selected participants. The study adhered to ethical guidelines by obtaining institutional approval, explaining the research objectives and procedures, and securing informed consent from participants prior to data collection. Participant identities were kept confidential using the codes G1–G4 for teachers and O1–O11 for parents.

Results and Discussion

1. Teachers' Strategies for Stimulating Language Development in Early Childhood

Interviews with four teachers revealed that language stimulation strategies vary according to children's needs and learning conditions, and observations showed that stimulation occurs through both planned activities and spontaneous interactions. The first strategy is conversation and question-and-answer sessions. Teacher G1 stated that conversations take place before the lesson by asking about the children's activities at home, consistent with the observation that the teacher asked questions about the children's daily experiences. Questions closely related to the children's lives provide a familiar communicative context, allowing children to understand the questions and respond verbally, while also giving the teacher an opportunity to observe the children's language abilities (Houen et al., 2022).

The second strategy is storytelling and role-playing. G2 uses picture books to capture the children's attention, followed by question-and-answer sessions and retelling the story in their own words, which helps develop listening skills, expand vocabulary, and construct sentences. Role-playing as a doctor, teacher, salesperson, or customer helps children ask questions, respond, express their desires, and adapt their speech to their conversation partner, thereby supporting both receptive and expressive language skills (Deshmukh et al., 2019).

Vocabulary development is carried out using concrete objects, pictures, stories, songs, and media appropriate to the theme. G3 explained that objects that can be seen and touched make it easier for children to understand the meaning of words. Observations showed that the teacher brought a plant into the classroom, introduced the roots, stem, leaves, and flowers, and then asked the children to name or point to the corresponding parts, while G2 used pictures of animals and asked questions about their names, sounds, and characteristics. These concrete and visual materials help children recognize the meanings of words and reinforce their memory of vocabulary (Wu et al., 2025).

Teachers also provide opportunities for speaking and offer positive reinforcement. G4 allows children to express their opinions fully without immediately

correcting inaccurate answers and praises them for their courage, thereby boosting their self-confidence and willingness to communicate (Wasik et al., 2022).

Teachers adapt their strategies to the children's language abilities. G3 simplifies questions or turns them into multiple-choice format; G1 provides simple example sentences for children to imitate; and G2 encourages children to communicate confidently before gradually demonstrating correct pronunciation. These practices reflect scaffolding gradual support tailored to the children's abilities (Salminen et al., 2021).

Challenges faced by teachers include variations in children's language abilities, limited time for individual support, and diversity in language exposure within families. Interviews with eleven parents revealed that seven families (63.64%) primarily use the Sasak language at home, while four families (36.36%) primarily use Indonesian; thus, for some children, the Indonesian language at school constitutes a context that teachers must consider when introducing vocabulary and helping children express their ideas (Sholihah et al., 2022). G4 noted that some children spoke actively, while others were shy or only answered when asked. Teachers addressed this by varying activities, forming small groups, and using pictures and concrete objects. Teachers also communicated with parents to obtain information on children's language development and to encourage continued stimulation at home (Wachidah and Putikadyanto, 2024).

2. Parental Strategies for Stimulating Language Development in Early Childhood

Parents stimulate language through verbal interactions integrated into daily activities. The most common strategies involve simple conversations about school activities, playmates, and the child's favorite activities. Parent 1 encourages the child to talk about school activities, and Parent 2 extends the conversation after school with follow-up questions to encourage the child to tell longer stories. Observations show that verbal interactions also occur when dropping off or picking up the child and during Posyandu sessions, so stimulation occurs naturally through communication closely tied to the child's experiences (Blom et al., 2023; Leung and Suskind, 2024).

Parents also make use of daily activities, word repetition, and storytelling. O3 introduces the names of objects and food items while shopping or cooking; O4 reinforces vocabulary through repetition; and O5 reads bedtime stories accompanied

by questions about characters and events to help the child understand and retell the information they've heard. These three approaches complement one another within family routines (Levickis et al., 2020).

Parents utilize stories, songs, games, and educational media. Parent 6 uses role-playing, such as "playing doctor," to encourage the child to form sentences. Parent 7 uses picture books, word cards, and educational videos on YouTube, while Parent 8 uses actual fruits to introduce the names and characteristics of objects. The choice of media takes into account the child's interest in visual stimuli (Yuliastanti et al., 2024). However, parents consider viewing alone to be less effective if the child merely watches without conversation or guidance; therefore, media should be accompanied by verbal interaction for example, asking the child to name objects or retell the content of the program (O'Fallon et al., 2020).

When children have difficulty understanding or expressing words, parents adjust their communication style. O9 simplifies complex questions into simpler ones with multiple-choice answers to support receptive language, while O10 gives children the freedom to express their desires without being frequently interrupted and encourages them to articulate their needs verbally to support expressive language (Brushe et al., 2025; Ferjan Ramírez et al., 2020).

Challenges within the family include time constraints and differences in the child's interests. O11 noted that household responsibilities limit opportunities to provide specialized support for the child, while the child's low interest in certain activities—such as reading books—requires adjustments to daily routines. Parents address this by utilizing mealtimes, playtime, bath time, and outings as opportunities for interaction, ensuring that stimulation can occur without always relying on planned activities.

Parents also communicate with teachers. O1 and O9 inquired about their children's speaking abilities in class because children's communication behaviors at school may differ from those at home, while O7, O10, and O11 stated that teachers suggested encouraging children to speak more often, reading stories aloud to them, and giving them opportunities to tell stories. This communication aligns support provided at school and at home (Khoirotin et al., 2025).

3. A Comparison of Teachers' and Parents' Strategies for Stimulating Children's Language Development

The results of the comparative analysis show that teachers' and parents' strategies share similarities in the forms of interaction and the principles of guidance, but differ in their patterns of implementation—specifically, in the organization of activities, the intensity of individual guidance, and the context of stimulation. These similarities and differences are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Teacher and Parent Strategies

Aspect	Teachers' Strategies	Parents' Strategies	Comparative Findings
Verbal Communication	Conversations and question-and-answer sessions integrated into learning activities.	Conversations conducted during daily activities.	Both use direct communication, but differ in context and organization.
Vocabulary Development	Introducing vocabulary through learning themes, pictures, real objects, and repetition.	Introducing vocabulary through objects and activities in the home environment, as well as word repetition.	Both use contextual stimuli and repetition to introduce vocabulary.
Storytelling	Integrating stories with learning themes and asking questions.	Reading stories aloud and asking questions about the story content.	Both use stories as a context for communication and vocabulary development.
Play Activities	Guiding play activities according to learning objectives and themes.	Using games and role-play more spontaneously.	Both utilize play as an opportunity for communication, but differ in the level of planning.
Use of Media	Utilizing visual media and concrete objects in learning activities.	Using picture books, picture cards, educational videos, and concrete objects.	Both use media as communication stimuli, with media choices adapted to their respective environments.
Guidance	Adjusting questions and assistance to	Providing more individualized assistance	Both provide gradual support, but differ in the

	children's abilities during group activities.	according to children's needs and responses.	extent of individual guidance.
Language Correction	Providing correct pronunciation examples and guiding children to repeat them.	Repeating children's utterances using the correct forms of words without explicitly pointing out mistakes.	Both use language modeling, but teachers tend to provide more explicit guidance.
Confidence-Building Support	Providing simple questions, praise, and opportunities to answer.	Providing opportunities to speak, listening to children, and giving praise.	Both use positive reinforcement to encourage children's confidence in communicating.

Source: Results of a comparative analysis of interview data from teachers and parents, as well as observation notes on the school environment and observed family interactions, 2026.

A common strategy involves actively engaging children in communication through conversation and questions to encourage them to share their experiences, respond, and express their desires. This pattern can be explained through Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development and Wood et al.'s (1976) concept of scaffolding: teachers and parents provide simple questions, vocabulary repetition, pronunciation modeling, and opportunities to respond as support tailored to the child's needs (Rowe, 2022). Both approaches also utilize stories, games, and concrete materials, in line with the work of Nirmala and Hartono (2023), Aulia et al. (2022), and Yaqin et al. (2025) (Arrumaisha et al., 2023; Suprapto, 2026).

The main differences lie in the organization of activities and the patterns of support. Teachers implement structured stimulation activities based on themes and learning objectives within groups of children with diverse abilities, whereas parents are more flexible, incorporating family routines and tailoring interactions to the child's interests (Levickis et al., 2020; O'Fallon et al., 2020). This aligns with Luthfiyah and Yuliana (2023), who view schools and families as environments with distinct yet complementary functions. Language correction patterns also differ: teachers provide examples of correct pronunciation and explicitly ask children to repeat them, whereas parents indirectly repeat

the child's utterances in the correct form. Both represent different forms of scaffolding in terms of delivery methods and application contexts (Jamil et al., 2025).

Language use also influences the context of stimulation. Since seven of the eleven families primarily speak the Kotaraja dialect of Sasak, while instruction is conducted in Indonesian, teachers and parents need to consider the children's language experiences when providing speech examples and asking questions (Luthfiyah and Yuliana, 2023). These findings underscore the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents in maintaining continuity in language stimulation—for example, through regular communication about the child's speech development, sharing information about language difficulties, and agreeing on simple activities to continue at home, such as storytelling, reviewing vocabulary, and encouraging the child to describe their daily experiences (Rowe and Weisleder, 2020).

Conclusion

This study shows that teachers and parents stimulate early childhood language development through conversation, question-and-answer sessions, storytelling, role-playing, vocabulary introduction, the use of visual media and concrete objects, language modeling, and positive reinforcement. Both groups share a common approach in encouraging verbal engagement and providing guidance tailored to the child's abilities, but they differ in their implementation strategies. Teachers tend to carry out stimulation in a planned manner through group learning activities, whereas parents integrate it more flexibly into daily activities at home. These differences in practice are related to variations in children's abilities and self-confidence, family language backgrounds, limitations on teachers' time and attention, parents' availability, and children's interest in language activities. These findings confirm that continuity in stimulation between school and home does not have to be achieved through identical methods, but rather through responsive, context-appropriate, and sustained language experiences. In practical terms, early childhood education institutions need to develop varied stimulation activities, such as dialogic conversations, interactive story reading, role-playing, and small-group activities, while parenting programs can focus on strengthening responsive communication, reading stories together, and introducing vocabulary through daily activities. These efforts need to be

supported by regular communication between teachers and parents so that language support can be tailored to the children's needs. However, this study has limitations because it involved only four teachers and eleven parents at a single institution; information on family practices was primarily obtained through interviews; it did not include systematic observations at home; and it did not use instruments to measure children's language achievements. Therefore, the study results describe patterns and characteristics of stimulation practices rather than proving the effectiveness of strategies or establishing a cause-and-effect relationship with children's language development. Future research is recommended to involve more institutions and participants, expand direct observations within the family environment, and use instruments to measure language development through longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to gain a deeper understanding of the continuity of stimulation and children's language development over time.

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