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# Language Production of Children Aged 3-4 Years in Working and Non-Working Parents in Kalikapas Hamlet, Lamongan Regency: A Psycholinguistic Study

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## Abstract

The role of parents is crucial in determining a child's ability to produce speech and develop vocabulary. Socioeconomic changes and parental involvement in work have led to a decrease in the intensity of communication, which has the potential to hinder children's language acquisition and social interaction. This study aims to describe the differences in language production abilities among children aged 3–4 years in Kalikapas Hamlet, Lamongan Regency, between those whose parents are employed and those whose parents are not employed. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing data collection techniques that included observation and in-depth interviews with 11 informants. The data were analysed through transcription, speech classification, and social context interpretation with triangulation of sources. The study's results indicate that there are differences in the language production abilities of children from working and non-working families. Children of non-working parents demonstrate better phonological and syntactic skills, can form complex sentences with subject-predicate-object-adverbial structures, and have more precise pronunciation. The study's results indicate that there are differences in the language production abilities of children from households with working and non-working parents. Children of non-working parents demonstrate better phonological and syntactic skills, can form complex sentences with subject-predicate-object-complement structures, and have more precise pronunciation. The results also show that children of working parents tend to have limitations in phoneme pronunciation and simple sentence construction due to lower intensity of interaction. These findings confirm that the frequency and quality of two-way conversations between children and parents play a crucial role in children's language development. A home environment rich in verbal stimulation and simple literacy activities, such as storytelling and reading together, has been shown to support the improvement of children's vocabulary and syntactic structure.

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## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is a crucial foundation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goals 4: Quality Education and 3: Good Health and Well-being. Language mastery as a communication instrument is one of the critical indicators of children's cognitive and social development. Through language, children learn to express emotions, build social relationships, and understand the environment around them. Therefore, optimal language acquisition and production are integral parts of realizing healthy and intelligent child growth and development through a holistic approach (Hilayati et al., 2024).

A mother tongue is the first language that children master through daily interaction with their family, especially their parents (Chomsky, 2000). This language acquisition occurs naturally from birth to the age of 3–4 years, a period known as the "golden age of linguistics," when the child's cognitive development reaches approximately 80% of adult capacity (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2015). This phase has accelerated rapidly in the acquisition of phonology, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics. In this age range, children begin to produce longer sentences, use subject-predicate-object structures, and exhibit a significant increase in the use of new vocabulary through daily communication activities (Padli & Marselina, 2025).

From a psycholinguistic perspective, children possess a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that enables them to formulate language rules naturally; however, this innate mechanism develops optimally only when supported by sufficient linguistic input (Chomsky, 2000). Children's language skills are formed through social interaction in *the zone of proximal development* (ZPD), where dialogue with adults helps children internalize more complex language structures. The concept of *the Language Acquisition Support System* (LASS) suggests that children require social assistance in the form of scaffolding, such as speech expansion, prompting, and supportive correction, to facilitate linguistic development and reach a higher stage (Bruner, 1983). The age range of 3–4 years is a critical focus in this study because it is a period when innate capacity, social environment support, and scaffolding mechanisms work most intensively in shaping children's language production.

The role of parents greatly determines children's ability to produce speech and develop vocabulary (Wengman & Forssman, 2025). However, amid socioeconomic changes and increased parental involvement in work, a phenomenon has emerged of reduced communication intensity between children and parents, which has the potential to hinder children's language acquisition and social interaction (Kozak et al., 2021).

The results of the study show that there is a relationship between psychological and linguistic aspects in language acquisition (Senen, 2022). According to Suharti et al. (2021), Psycholinguistics describes how children process linguistic experiences into structured language skills, including the process of language comprehension, production, and acquisition. Social environmental factors, such as parenting and the level of parental involvement, are the main determinants in children's language skills. Children who grow up in families with limited interaction time, especially children of working parents, are more likely to have speech delay than children with parents who do not work (Nuique, 2024).

Several previous studies have shown that the intensity of communication and parenting have a significant effect on children's linguistic abilities. Children who engage in high verbal interaction have better vocabulary and syntactic structure (Romeo et al., 2021). Socioeconomic status and time spent with family also affect the breadth of children's vocabulary (Ebert et al., 2020). Thus, language acquisition is determined not only by biological factors, but also by the quality of the social environment that favors verbal stimulation from an early age.

Although a number of studies have confirmed the role of socioeconomic factors, parenting, and communication intensity in early childhood language development (Ebert et al., 2020; Kozak et al., 2021; Romeo et al., 2021), There have been no studies that specifically compare the language production of children aged 3–4 years based on parental employment status. Previous research has also not examined in depth how the difference in the intensity of daily interactions between working and non-working parents has an impact on children's phonological, syntactic, and lexical aspects. This gap is the primary focus of this research. This study compares the language production of children aged 3–4 years from working and non-working parent families in Kalikapas Hamlet, Lamongan Regency, using a psycholinguistic approach.

This study aims to describe the influence of different parenting styles on children's ability to produce sounds, vocabulary, and simple syntactic structures. The research findings are expected to support efforts to achieve SDG 4 through improving children's early literacy and provide practical insights for families and educators on the importance of active communication between

parents and children in stimulating language development.

## METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to describe the phenomenon of children's language production in relation to people's employment status in Kalikapas Hamlet, Lamongan Regency. Data were collected through observation and structured interviews with children, parents, and caregivers. Unstructured interviews were conducted with parents using the Simak-Libat-Cakap (SLC) technique. The *Listen-Engage-Talk (LET) technique is an approach to language data collection where researchers participate in conversations while listening to the informant's speech, allowing researchers to capture the use of language in a* contextually and authentically (Setyaningsih, 2020).

The primary data source is derived from the child's speech and actions, while the secondary data consists of documentation, including photos, voice recordings, and field notes. The research sample used a purposive sampling technique with a total of 11 (eleven children) who met the criteria of age, residence, parenting or permanent caregiver, and willingness to be a research participant. The 11 children, 6 of whom were working parents and 5 of whom were not, were selected based on their age (3-4 years) and accessibility to the study site.

To obtain data that authentically represent children's linguistic abilities, the researcher conducted direct observations of children's verbal interactions in the home environment and conducted semi-structured interviews with parents to explore communication patterns, the frequency of verbal stimulation, and the forms of language support provided. Researchers documented children's speech through audio recordings and recorded the context of the conversation as part of the field documentation. The collected data is then transcribed, categorized, and analyzed which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014).

The psycholinguistic analysis approach is employed to identify phonological patterns, sentence structure, and lexical development, thereby providing a comprehensive picture of the relationship between the intensity of linguistic input and the child's language production ability. The results of the analysis were then triangulated between groups of children from working and non-working parents to draw conclusions about differences in language acquisition and production at preschool age.

## Theoretical Studies

Children's language production is a dynamic result of the interaction between children's cognitive capacities and *the social-linguistic* environment that provides input, feedback, and opportunities for meaningful interaction. The process not only reflects the child's internal ability to understand and process language structures, but also their response to the quality of verbal input they receive from caregivers, educators, and the wider social environment (Xu, 2025). Good input is characterized by the number of words exposed to the child, variations in sentence structure, rich linguistic content, and responsive feedback, which is strongly related to the speed of vocabulary development, the ability to form phrases and sentences, and the pragmatic abilities of preschoolers.

Family factors affect children's language production. Parents' education level, socioeconomic status, and parental verbal involvement (i.e., home learning environment) were positively correlated with vocabulary size and sentence complexity in 3–to 4-year-old children. These differences can arise from preschool age and are related to the frequency and quality of language interaction at home. Language gaps are associated with variations in parenting practices and opportunities for linguistic stimulation (Volodina et al., 2023). Children aged 3–4 years experience an acceleration in language development, characterized by the expansion of vocabulary, the formation of more complex sentences, and the understanding of pragmatic functions in social communication. This phase has shown the ability to produce combinations of two to four words and begins to use declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences in his speech (Viora & Wahyuningsi, 2025)

The role of scaffolding or caregiver includes techniques such as *prompting*, expanding the child's speech, and asking questions that trigger an active response from the child, which, collectively, enriches the child's vocabulary and syntactic structure. Interaction strengthens children's proximal development and has been shown to enhance their speech skills in the context of play and daily activities (Grahmayanuri et al., 2025).

Parents' employment status, for example, whether they work or do not work, shows a negative impact if work starts very early or demands long working hours, reducing the time for quality interaction between parents and children during sensitive periods (especially the first years). The impact of parental work can be reduced or even reversed if the work improves family welfare (e.g., income, access to learning resources) or if there is a

substitution of stimulation (e.g., quality caregivers, early childhood education centers). It can be concluded that work/non-work, the quality of interaction time, substitute support *(care arrangements),* and the linguistic richness of the environment determine children's language production (Safi'i & Harahap, 2024; Volodina et al., 2023).

*Home Language and Literacy Environment* (HLLE) is one of the most important determinants in the development of early childhood linguistic vocabulary and competence, the quality and quantity of verbal input at home directly shape the breadth of language exposure that children receive. Stimulation-rich home environments, such as meaningful conversations, shared book readings, and consistent emotional and linguistic responses from parents, have been shown to accelerate lexical development and help children generate more complex sentence structures (Ebert et al., 2020).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the comparison of language production in children aged 3–4 years between those from working and non-working families in Kalikapas Hamlet, Lamongan Regency. The characteristics of the informants in this study are children who are the subjects of research, ranging in age from 3 to 4 years, and who live in Kalikapas Hamlet. The colloquial languages used are Indonesian, Javanese Ngoko, and Javanese Alus. The child who is chosen is fluent in speech and those who are not fluent in speaking, and the child is cared for by his own parents or by other people (caregivers, grandmothers, or grandfathers). The characteristics of the subject can be seen in the table below:

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Informants

| No. | Initials | Gender | Age | Mother's Work |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | PIN | F | 3 yo | Not Working |
| 2. | INN | M | 3 yo | Working |
| 3. | MFA | M | 3 yo | Working |
| 4. | MIQN | F | 4 yo | Not Working |
| 5. | EFF | M | 4 yo | Not Working |
| 6. | MMR | M | 4 yo | Working |
| 7. | AFA | F | 4 yo | Not Working |
| 8. | APA | F | 4 yo | Not Working |
| 9. | AFF | M | 3 yo | Not Working |
| 10. | ARW | M | 3 yo | Not Working |
| 11. | AOS | F | 3 yo | Not Working |

Table 1. Informant characteristics can be found that the majority of respondents are female. The majority of respondents are 3 years old, and the majority of mothers are homemakers. Based on the results of interviews with 11 respondents, the following findings can be obtained.

The results showed a difference in the language production ability of children aged 3-4 years from working parents and non-working parents. In data collection activities, researchers use images of objects and animals around children to elicit verbal responses and observe children's linguistic abilities. Through the media, children are asked to mention the names of recognized animals:

> *"buaya..zebra..harimau…harimau (RZ, 11 November 2023)".*
> *"crocodile.. zebra.. Tiger... tiger (RZ, November 11, 2023)".*

The majority of respondents were able to perform repeated pronunciation and recognition of concrete vocabulary, although the resulting sentence structure is still simple and not fully developed syntactically. The results of the study, based on in-depth observation and interviews, show that two out of three children from working parents are able to pronounce the names of objects quite precisely; however, they still experience difficulties with pronouncing the "R" sound. There is still one other child who is not able to compose sentences well. As mentioned in the manuscript. one other child could barely pronounce sentences well and had to be guided by the mother:

> *F : "kusi F, 11 November 2023)".*
> *IF: "Kursi (ibu F menegaskan)".*

> *F : "kusi F, 11 November 2023)".*
> *IF: "Chair (F's mother affirms)".*

The group of children of non-working parents found that five out of eight children were able to produce nouns clearly and precisely. The results showed that some respondents were unfamiliar with the names of animals, such as rhinos, but their pronunciation demonstrated progress. The majority of children can pronounce well and correctly. The eight children were already able to produce syntactic sentences, both

declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences with a complex structure of S–P–O–K:

> *"aku sekolah SPS ayah (A, Sabtu 21 Oktober 2023)".*
> *"I am my father's SPS school (A, Saturday, October 21, 2023)".*

These findings confirm that the difference in interaction time between children and parents has a significant influence on children's language development. Children of non-working parents receive more intensive verbal stimulation, enabling their syntactic and pronunciation skills to develop more rapidly. Children whose parents work less in producing nouns. Meanwhile, children of parents who do not work show good language development. The results of the study indicate that the active role of parents in daily communication is the primary factor in supporting the acquisition and production of language in early childhood in Kalikapas Hamlet. The results of the study can be concluded as follows:

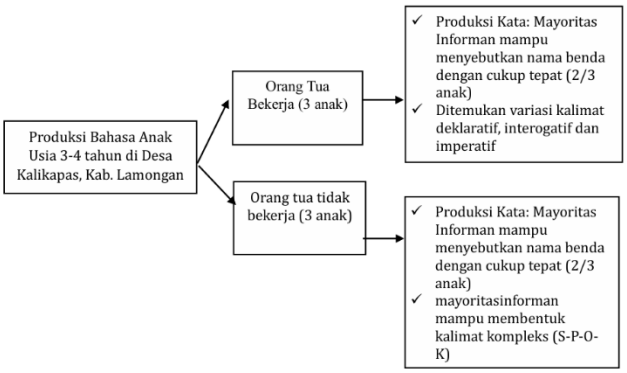


**Figure 1.** Conclusion of the research results

The study's results showed a difference in language production ability between children aged 3-4 years who had working parents and did not work in Kalikapas Hamlet. Children whose parents did not work showed better phonological and syntactic skills, such as word pronunciation with a complete subject-predicate-object structure, while children of working parents still showed limitations in phoneme pronunciation and simple sentence structure. The difference is due to the higher intensity and quality of verbal interaction between children and parents who are not working. Parents who are not working have more time to engage in conversations and language stimulation activities at home. The frequency and quality of verbal interaction with caregivers are strong predictors of early childhood language development (Romeo et al., 2021).

The findings of limited phoneme production /r/ in two children of working parents show a lack of exposure to the correct phonetic model. This finding aligns with the research results reported by Suttora et al. (2017). The quality *of speech input* significantly contributes to phonological acquisition. Children's difficulties in pronouncing the phoneme /r/ appear especially in groups of working parents. This can be explained by the low frequency *of conversational turns*, which have previously been shown to increase activation of Broca's area (Romeo et al., 2021). Parents who do not work are more often spoken to, questioned, and corrected in a supportive way, thus enabling them to develop more complex sentence structures. The role of parents has a role as the main source of linguistic input. Children acquire language competence through the mechanisms of imitation, feedback, and scaffolding that arise in everyday interactions (Vergahen et al., 2022). Two-way interaction between children and adults, or conversational turns, is positively associated with increases in receptive and expressive language scores (Romeo et al., 2021).

The results of the study also emphasized the importance of *the home language and literacy environment* (HLLE) in shaping children's language production skills. A home environment rich in verbal stimulation, book reading, and meaningful conversation can increase a child's lexical and syntactic capacity (Ebert et al., 2020). In the context of this study, children of non-working parents were more likely to engage in domestic conversations and simple storytelling activities, while children of working parents had more limited interaction time due to work and fatigue factors. As a result, their linguistic environment tends to be less conducive to optimal language development.

HLLE variation contributes significantly to differences in vocabulary between children, with families engaging in more intensive home literacy practices having children with stronger receptive and expressive language skills. The findings indicate that differences in vocabulary are influenced not only by biological factors, but also by the quality of daily interactions at home, so that children who grow up in rich HLLEs gain substantial linguistic advantages compared to children living in environments with low verbal stimulation (Ebert et al., 2020)

The influence of parental work on child development is not absolutely negative. Parents' work can also have a positive impact through increased economic resources, which enable the provision of nutritious food, educational facilities, and improved access to education (Fuller et al., 2025). Therefore, the gaps found in this study appear to be more influenced by aspects of interaction time and quality of verbal stimulation,

rather than solely the working status of parents. This implication reinforces the importance of intervention programs that help parents continue to provide quality communication time with their child, even if it is of limited duration.

The economic benefits of work are only effective if there is still compensation in the form of quality interactions at home. In this case, the absence of stimulation substitution, e.g., caregivers trained in language stimulation, causes children of working parents to receive fewer linguistic inputs, resulting in slower phonological and syntactic development. Children need not only extensive language exposure, but also high-quality input through two-way conversations and positive feedback (Rivero et al., 2023). The process of expanding children's speech *(expansion)* or correcting in a supportive way has been proven to improve children's syntactic and phonological abilities (Suttora et al., 2021). This is evident in children of non-working parents who more often obtain direct communicative responses at home.

Variations in the linguistic stimulation given by parents are directly related to children's language skills. New ability development occurs when the child is in the ZPD *(Zone of Proximal Development),* which is the distance between skills that can be done independently and skills that can be achieved with the help of adults or *more knowledgeable others*, such as parents, through supportive verbal interaction and scaffolding. These interactions facilitate the internalization of the more complex language structures of everyday conversation (DU et al., 2024). The role of the Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) is to scaffold children's speech expansion through parental scaffolding, including questions that provoke responses and targeted feedback, which helps the child develop their syntactic abilities beyond their initial abilities (Romeo et al., 2021).

These findings have important implications for the development of early childhood education policies and programs. The government and related institutions should strengthen home-based intervention programs that train parents to enhance the quality of conversations with their children, such as shared book reading or simple language games. Brief training for parents can improve a child's verbal interaction and language skills within three months (Roberts et al., 2019).

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the employment status of parents affects the language production ability of children aged 3-4 years in Kalikapas Hamlet, Lamongan Regency. Children of non-working parents tend to exhibit better phonological, syntactic, and vocabulary abilities than children of working parents, as they often experience a higher intensity of communication and emotional closeness at home.

The results of this study also show that language acquisition is influenced not only by biological factors but also highly dependent on the quality of the social environment and parenting that supports verbal stimulation from an early age. It is hoped that parents, especially those who work, can make effective use of time with their children through meaningful conversations, reading activities, and simple language games, thereby allowing children's linguistic development to grow optimally.

The limitation of this study lies in the small sample size of only 11 and the limited context of a single village. Follow-up research is recommended using a larger sample or online analysis to measure the frequency of issues such as speech delay, thereby providing a more comprehensive and general picture of the results.

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