

Synergy of Teachers and Parents in Dealing with the Challenges of Speech Delay in Children Aged 3–4 Years

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ABSTRACT

Speech delay is one of the language development problems that is quite often found in early childhood. This condition can affect communication skills, social interaction, and children's readiness to enter the next level of education if not handled appropriately. This study aims to analyze the form of synergy between teachers and parents in dealing with speech delay in children aged 3–4 years. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was obtained through observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and parents, and documentation of child development. Data analysis is carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that the success of handling speech delay is influenced by intensive communication between teachers and parents, consistency in providing language stimulation at school and at home, the use of educational media, and collaboration with professionals when needed. The main obstacles include limited parental time, low understanding of speech delay, and excessive use of gadgets. This study confirms that planned, sustainable, and child-based collaboration is able to improve the development of language skills optimally.

Keywords: Speech Delay, Teacher and Parent Synergy, Early Childhood, Language Stimulation, Effective Communication.

INTRODUCTION

The 3–4 year age period is the golden age of children's language development, where cognitive and social development is highly dependent on verbal communication skills (Papalia & Martorell, 2021). At this age range, children should ideally be able to string 3–4 words together in one simple sentence and understand the instructions in stages. However, the phenomenon of speech delay is increasingly found in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institutions. Globally, WHO (2020) estimates that around 5% to 10% of preschool-age children experience delays in language development. In Indonesia, data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2021) shows that the prevalence of language development disorders in early childhood ranges from 5% to 8%, where this figure has increased significantly after the pandemic along with the high duration of use of gadgets.

Various empirical studies confirm the triggering factors of this phenomenon. Research by Madigan et al. (2019) shows that children who are exposed to more than 2 hours of screen time per day at the age of 3 years have a 2.17 times higher risk of speech delay than children with device restrictions. In addition, a study by Sunderajan and Kanhere (2019) noted that the lack of two-way verbal interaction at home contributed 42% to delays in children's articulation and vocabulary comprehension development. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of sensory stimulation and oral-motor exercises in daily activities.

Children who experience *speech delay* often face various emotional and behavioral obstacles due to limitations in expressing their needs, desires, and feelings. This condition can cause frustration which then manifests in the form of tantrums, aggressive behavior, or a tendency to withdraw from social interactions with peers (Hurlock, 2015). In general, children aged 3–4 years who experience *speech delay* show limited vocabulary, difficulty composing simple sentences, and communication skills that are not in accordance with their age developmental stages. Therefore, early detection and continuous provision of language stimulation through cooperation between teachers and parents is an important step to optimize children's language, social, and emotional development.

The handling of this problem cannot be partially imposed on teachers at school or parents at home. Schools have limitations in the duration of daily interaction (an average of only 3–4 hours per day), while parents often face obstacles in methodological understanding of structured language stimulation techniques (Epstein, 2018). Therefore, a structured and continuous synergy between teachers and parents is the central key. Synergy in this context does not just mean the delivery of weekly learning outcome reports, but the active and planned involvement of both parties in designing, implementing, and evaluating stimulation programs consistently (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). This research was conducted to examine in depth how the synergy pattern is formed, the fundamental obstacles faced, and the real impact of home-school collaboration on the achievement of language skills of children aged 3–4 years.

Various studies show that the factors that cause *speech delay* are multidimensional, including biological factors, family environment, lack of language stimulation, and excessive exposure to gadget use. Excessive use of gadgets without adequate verbal interaction has been proven to increase the risk of delays in language development in early childhood (Abida, 2024). In addition, parents' habits in using digital devices also affect the quality of parent-child interaction, which has an impact on children's language skills (Wan et al., 2025). Therefore, handling *speech delay*

requires the involvement of various parties, especially teachers and parents as the closest environment that has a strategic role in providing continuous language stimulation (Tripathi et al., 2025).

Teachers have a role as learning facilitators who are able to provide language stimulation through play, storytelling, singing, and active communication activities at school. These activities provide opportunities for children to enrich vocabulary, practice communication skills, and increase confidence in expressing their ideas and feelings. On the other hand, parents are the first educators who are responsible for providing consistent language stimulation in the family environment through daily interactions, reading storybooks, playing together, and building responsive communication. Synergy between teachers and parents is an important factor in ensuring the sustainability of children's language development stimulation so that the intervention process can take place optimally both at school and at home (Nuryanti & Pamungkas, 2025).

Unfortunately, the collaboration of teachers and parents in dealing with *speech delay* has not always run optimally. Differences in understanding of children's language development stages, limited parental time due to work activities, lack of communication between school and family, and lack of knowledge about language stimulation strategies are still obstacles in the process of assisting children. Recent research shows that the success of interventions for children with *speech delay* is greatly influenced by the intensity of communication, the similarity of learning strategies, and the commitment of teachers and parents in monitoring children's language development in a sustainable manner (Situmeang & Suparno, 2025). Therefore, a structured partnership model between schools and families is needed so that each form of stimulation provided can complement each other and have a more optimal impact on the development of children's language skills (Nuryanti & Pamungkas, 2025).

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the form of synergy between teachers and parents in dealing with the challenges of speech delay in children aged 3–4 years, supporting and inhibiting collaboration factors, and strategies that can be applied to optimize the development of children's language skills.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to explore in depth the dynamics of collaboration between teachers and parents in the context of handling speech delay.

Research subjects³ PAUD/Kindergarten teachers (including Classroom Teachers and Accompanying Teachers Aged 3–4 Years).⁴ pairs/parents of children aged 3–4 years who are indicated to have speech delay based on the initial assessment of language development. Data Collection Techniques, Semi-Structured Interviews: Exploring perceptions, experiences, communication patterns, and intervention strategies applied by teachers and parents. Limited Participatory Observation: Observing children's language responses and social interaction patterns during classroom learning activities and at pick-up moments. Documentation: Analyze the child's developmental records, anecdotal notes, liaison books, and daily stimulation guidelines.

Data analysis uses the interactive model Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data Triangulation To ensure the validity of data (trustworthiness), this study applies source triangulation (comparing data from teachers and parents) and technique triangulation (testing the consistency of interviews, observations, and documentation results) according to the principles of Sugiyono (2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Early Detection and the Beginning of Synergy

The results of the study show that collaboration begins at the early detection stage. Most cases of speech delay are first identified by classroom teachers when the child enters the school environment, where the differences in the child's articulation and vocabulary are clearly visible compared to their peers. This is in line with the view of Morrison (2012) who stated that PAUD institutions function as a means of early screening of children's growth and development.

Interview Findings: Teachers took an empathetic approach through personal counseling sessions with parents, not just labeling, but presenting evidence of concrete observation notes. This persuasive approach has proven effective in fostering acceptance from parents more quickly without feeling defensive.

Summary of In-Depth Interview Findings by Research Subject:

Perspectives of Early Childhood Education Teachers (G1, G2, G3):

Detection & Transparency: Teachers identify delays by observing social interactions in the classroom (children use gestures, hits, or withdraw when talking).

Empathic Approach: Confront the initial attitude of denial from parents by showing video recordings and anecdotal notes of children's behavior in class objectively.

Stimulation Instructions: Requires shared book reading, oral-motor exercises (blowing bubbles/straws), and total screen time restrictions.

Parent Perspective (OT1, OT2, OT3, OT4):

Acceptance Process: Had considered it reasonable ("later you can also be yourself") before finally realizing it after seeing the evidence of the teacher's documentation.

Changes in the Home Environment: Stop access to gadgets (zero active screen time) and replace them with sensory games and direct verbal interactions.

Field Obstacles: Post-work physical fatigue and differences in parenting styles with grandparents/caregivers who often directly win the child's wishes without demanding verbal communication.

Post-Synergy Outcomes & Evaluation (8–12 weeks):

The frequency of tantrums decreases drastically because the child begins to be able to express basic desires through simple vocabulary/sentences., eye contact improves (lasts > 5–10 seconds) and the understanding of instructions gradually increases.

2. Forms of Intervention Synergy

Synergy has proven effective when translated into joint action programs in two primary settings (school and home), as formulated in the parent engagement model by Epstein (2018):

- a. Stimulation Method Alignment: If at school teachers use interactive flashcard techniques, singing (nursery rhymes), and shared book reading, parents are instructed to continue the

same technique at home without exposure to gadgets (zero active screen time during interaction). Research by Read et al. (2014) confirms that reading books together interactively has been proven to be effective in accelerating children's vocabulary mastery.

- b. Communication Media Liaison & Modification Book: The use of a daily communication book or special short message group to monitor the progress of new words that children succeed in saying every day.
- c. Simple Oral-Motor Exercises: Teachers guide parents to train their children's oral muscles at home through fun activities, such as blowing bubbles, using straws, or gently massaging the area around the mouth to support articulation strength (Bahr, 2010).

3. Post-Synergy Children's Language Development

After the implementation of the synergistic intervention for 8–12 weeks, significant changes were obtained in the children of the study subjects which are summarized in the following table:

Development Indicators	Before Synergized Interventions	After Synergized Interventions
Eye Contact & Response	Tends to ignore calls	Responsive and staring at the speaker
Vocabulary Mastery	< 10 separate words	30–50 words + able to compose 2 words
Emotion Regulation (Frustration)	Frequent tantrums when not understood	Start using simple gestures + words

4. Discussion and Obstacles

The results of this finding strengthen Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1979), in which the school and home microsystems must support each other for the optimal development of children. The key to the success of speech delay interventions lies in the consistency of the environment. When stimulation at school does not continue at home, the development of children's language expressions tends to stagnate.

Some of the key barriers identified in this study include:

- a. Parental Workload Factor: The high busyness and fatigue of parents at work often leads to the transfer of parenting back to passive media (gadgets) as an instant alternative.
- b. Inconsistency in Parenting Between Family Members: There is a difference in treatment from other family members (such as grandparents or caregivers) who do not comply with the intervention agreement, for example directly obeying the child's wishes without demanding verbal communication first (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

Overall, the synergy of teachers and parents acts as a complementary support system. Teachers provide pedagogical methodological insights, while parents provide emotional reinforcement and habituation of continuous training durations at home.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that synergy between teachers and parents is the main factor in dealing with the challenge of *speech delay* in children aged 3–4 years.

Collaboration carried out through intensive communication, equalization of language stimulation strategies, regular developmental monitoring, and consistent activities in the school and home environment have been proven to support the improvement of children's language skills. The role of teachers as learning facilitators and the role of parents as first educators complement each other in creating an environment rich in language stimulation.

This study also shows that the success of handling *speech delay* is influenced by several supporting factors, such as the commitment of teachers and parents, openness in communication, and support for a conducive learning environment. On the other hand, the inhibiting factors that are still found include a lack of understanding of parents about the stages of children's language development, limited time to perform regular stimulation, and excessive use of gadgets so as to reduce the opportunity for children to interact directly.

Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen partnerships between schools and families through structured communication programs, education to parents about early detection and stimulation of language development, and collaboration with professionals, such as psychologists or speech therapists, if indications of delays are found that require further treatment. With continuous synergy, it is hoped that the development of children's communication skills can develop optimally so as to support their readiness in social, emotional, and academic aspects at the next level of education.

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