

# Strategy Preschool Teachers' Experiences in Handling Early Childhood Children with Indications of Speech Delay

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## Article Information:

Submission : November 09, 2023  
Revision : December 19, 2023  
Accepted : April 20, 2024  
Available Online : April 20, 2024  
doi : [10.33086/cej.v5i3.5770](https://doi.org/10.33086/cej.v5i3.5770)

## Abstract

Dealing with these situations, educators must approach them with sensitivity and take the right steps to handle them. The purpose of this study is to determine the role of the teacher and the strategies they use in handling children with speech delays. The subjects of this study were preschool teachers who directly worked with such children. The data was collected through interviews and observations. The qualitative data showed that participants faced various challenges. The researcher concluded that the teacher's role is to create a conducive learning environment, encourage children to participate actively in activities, facilitate children to interact and cooperate in small groups, make learning plans, conduct continuous assessments, and create reports on children's individual development and learning. Teachers should use various learning methods, educational media, and provide positive feedback to students.

**Keywords:** Creative Thinking, Loose Parts, Natural Materials.

## INTRODUCTION

Knowing the indicators of such delays allows health professionals and educators to identify children who require early intervention. Timely intervention can help minimize the negative impact of speech delays on children's language development, social skills, and learning ability. (Musa and Dergaa, 2022). Therefore, an in-depth understanding of the indications of speech delay in early childhood can help improve children's quality of life and contribute positively to their future development.

The problem of speech engagement in early childhood has an impact on children's language development, cognitive development, and social-emotional development. The impact of speech involvement on children's language development is that children will experience difficulties in understanding and using language, which will hinder the development of communication and social interaction. Furthermore, the impact on children's cognitive development is that children will have difficulty understanding abstract concepts to inhibits intellectual development (Mambetalina et al.,

2023). In addition, language delays in children will also have an impact on the social-emotional development of children in the form of difficulties in establishing relationships with others and have an impact on increasing the risk of child behavior problems (Goh et al., 2021).

The prevalence of speech delay in the United States and Canada is around 8–12% in preschool-aged children and in school-aged children as much as preschool age and in school-age children as much as 12% Farrag the incidence of speech delay in Canada in 2017 was 8.04% (MO, 2020). Research conducted by Lahore hospital Pakistan as much as 46.5% (Mumtaz et al., 2021). The incidence of speech delay in Spain estimated at 9%–20% in children aged 24–36 months, there are also a number of children who late bloomers (their development delayed compared to other children of the same age) as much as 50%–70% of children aged 4–5 years old (Pérez-Pereira, 2021). Research conducted by conducted by Mondal, et al (2016) in India obtained total speech delay in children aged 13–24 months as many as 29 people (52.7%) of the total number of children 55 people in children aged 5–7 years found as much as 2–25%. Data in Indonesia in prevalence of speech delay is 5%–10% in children in preschool age, data obtained from the Ministry of Health obtained from the Ministry of Health Indonesia in 2010 mentioned as many as 11.5% of toddlers with impaired growth and development in Indonesia (Prasetya and Najamuddin, 2021). Research The Cochrane study found a prevalence of 2.3%–19% of preschool-aged children with speech delay. with speech delay. Observations in the long-term observations found a prevalence of speech delay in children under 5 years old (toddlers) as much as 42.5% (Mardiah and Ismet, 2021). According to (Mahmudianati et al., 2023); (Widyawaty et al., 2021) dan (Jeniu et al., 2017) the impact of speech delay is a decrease in intellectual function in children who are not in line with their peers, have difficulty communicating and interact because of abnormalities in the child's speech organs in children, and tend to be passive in socialising because children have difficulty understanding socialising because the child has difficulty understanding vocabulary of the interlocutor if no coping is done. coping with anxiety can make parents stressed.

The problem of speech delay in children of this age will have a negative impact on various aspects of child development. The solution in addressing these problems is the role of Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers in dealing with children who experience involvement in speaking. This is because Kindergarten teachers can provide appropriate language stimulation to children to help them develop their language skills. An empirical study conducted by Ibatova et al., 2021 highlighted that the use of structured play-based approaches and creative activities can improve speech in early childhood with indications of speech delays. In addition, research by Drigas et al., 2022 emphasizes the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents, and child development specialists to develop a holistic intervention plan. Therefore, it is through strong linkages by teachers to provide more effective and coordinated support in addressing early childhood speech delays in ECD settings. This is because teachers' experience in implementing targeted pedagogical strategies and collaborating with various parties forms a solid foundation for holistic and effective solutions to address the challenges of early childhood speech delays in ECD contexts.

Based on information through the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 137 of 2014 concerning National Standards for Early Childhood Education, regarding the Standard Level of Child Development Achievement (STPPA) in the scope of the language aspects of children aged 5–6 years, namely repeating complex sentences, answering questions, communicating orally, having a vocabulary, and composing simple sentences. Casillas et al., 2021 suggest that speech delays in children are caused by a lack of social interaction and language experience in the surrounding environment, and language use is more related to social needs therefore improving academic ability. Children with speech delays often have difficulties in learning language and reading. Through addressing speech impairment, children can improve academic performance and gain long-term advantages in careers and life (Casillas et al., 2021).

Research by Yafie, Olufunke, et al., 2021 stated that the teacher's experience in conducting

learning with imaginative methods can stimulate thinking in children. This is because children will imagine and will practice speaking related to what is imagined so that they can develop language and social-emotional skills in children. Furthermore Yafe, Gonadi, et al., 2021 explain that it is important to prevent and stimulate speech delays in children through the participation of parents in parenting and the collaborative role of Kindergarten teachers.

Research by Yafe, Gonadi, et al., 2021 used an experimental method with a population of children and parents in Malang City who experienced speech delays. Broadly speaking, the study concluded that the provision of mobile-assisted training based on seamless learning can improve parenting skills in parents and can also be applied at school to overcome speech delays in children. Research by Sun and Verspoor, 2022 used quantitative methods on preschool education providers, namely 24 kindergarten schools, and involved 31 teachers. The study concluded that teachers play an important role in children's language development. In addition, the study also concluded that teacher experience plays an important role in language skills in early childhood. The novelty of this research is that it uses qualitative methods with narratives so that it can explain descriptively related to the findings, namely the teacher's experience in dealing with indications of children who experience speech delays. The results of this study are expected to provide an understanding that indications of speech delays in children are important to know early on, especially by a teacher who plays a role in developing children's education at school. Based on this background, the purpose of this study is to find out the role of Kindergarten teachers' experience in dealing with early childhood who have indications of delays in speaking.

Many interventions have been carried out including (Rahmi et al., 2017; Dini, 2022) using self-introduction intervention strategies, and using learning media such as puzzles, picture cards and so on. (Taseman et al., 2020) using a media approach and special actions, namely working with parents and involving experts in the field of early childhood development. (Nirvana, 2018) focus interventions on emotional development, socialisation, tools and articulation and postoperative trauma. (Mawarni, 2023) using a strategy of handling close relationships between teachers, parents and psychiatrists as well as additional special hours for assisting children with speech delay disorders. so that from previous studies conducted related to intervention, it has not been found how the personal experience of the teacher as an actor who intervenes. how teachers with the capacity as education in kindergarten can find and intervene with all limitations and others.

Many studies on speech delay have been conducted, for example Puspita Sari in 2022 which focuses more on speech delay intervention strategies with a sample of parents, 2020 Rahayu examines speech delay focusing on the factors that cause speech delay, as well as other studies that focus on interventions and strategies to overcome or prevent speech delay. what is missing from previous research is to examine more deeply the experience of teachers, especially kindergarten teachers, in dealing with children diagnosed with speech delay.

## **METHOD**

### **Data Collection**

A qualitative approach was used in this study a type of narrative research that aims to examine the experiences and challenges faced by teachers in dealing with children who are indicated to have speech delays. Direct structured interviews were conducted by the researcher to collect data. Prior to data collection, the interview instrument was constructed and validated by experts. This research was conducted from August to November 2023 at the Islamic Fullday School Kindergarten, Cilengsi District, Bogor Regency, West Java Province.

### **Data Analysis**

The participants selected were class teachers and accompanying teachers who were experienced in indicating and overcoming speech delays in children. The analysis in this study pays attention to the experiences of participants over time and in various places which include social interaction relationships in a holistic narrative study of the dimensions of space and time and the sociocultural

context that influences the discourse of the participants’ experience stories which are complex and dynamic.

To analyse the data, the researcher listened to the interviewees’ responses, transcribed and coded the data, and classified it into several categories, namely: First, learning strategies and methods used by kindergarten teachers; second, the role of teachers in supporting children’s language development; third, teachers’ cooperation with parents and families in overcoming speech delay problems; fourth, factors that influence speech delay in early childhood. and the fifth is how each teacher’s experience in dealing with children with speech delay disorders In addition, to obtain participants, researchers used purposive sampling by involving 2 teachers who were directly involved and had faced children with speech delay disorders for many years.

**Table 1.** Participant’s Data

School Name	Participant	Class Teacher	Gender	Measurement
Islamic Fullday School Kindergarten	Ms. Y	KINDERGARTEN A	Female	5 Years
Ms. I	KINDERGARTEN B	Female	4 Years	
Ms. F	KINDERGARTEN B	Female	4 Years	

In the context of the research, coding and grouping informants from the data collected from interviews, observations and documentation plays a crucial role in the analysis process. Grouping informants allows researchers to compare and contrast information between different groups or individuals, supporting an understanding of the demographic context that influences informants’ perspectives. The demographic aspects in this study include school origin, grade level taught, gender, and length of teaching. By selecting informants from different groups, researchers can seek more in-depth information, improve sample selection, and increase the generalizability of research findings. The combination of coding and informant grouping ensures that the analysis of interview data is systematic and produces reliable findings, enriching the understanding of the phenomenon under study.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Results**

**Research Findings**

During data analysis, key findings emerged from the participants’ narratives and experiences. These findings were then organized into categories and presented in the form of key points. The findings included indications of speech delay in children, handling strategies, and motivation for children to actively participate in learning activities at school.

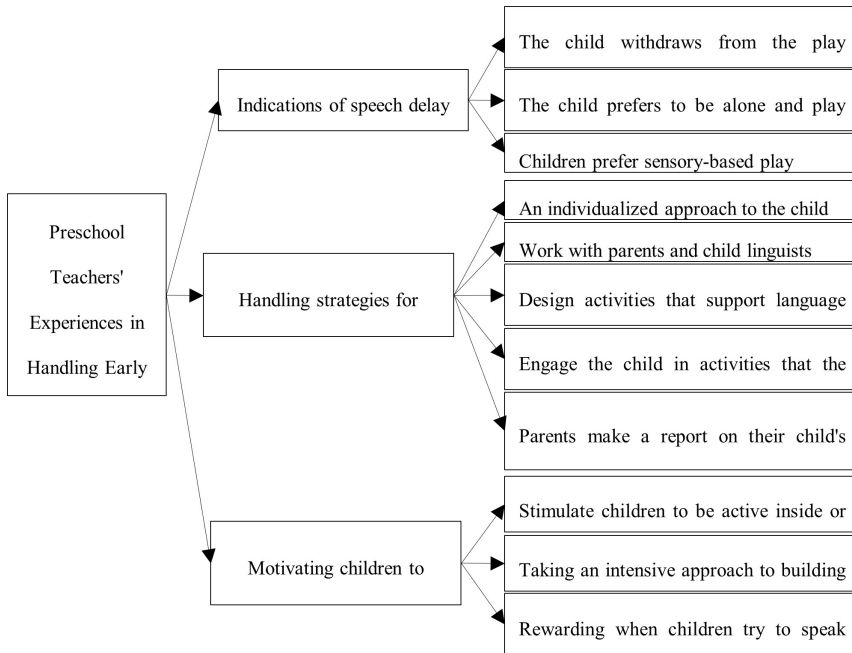


Figure 1. Preschool Teachers' Experiences in Handling Early Childhood Children with Indications of Speech Delay.

Table 2. Research Category

Theme	Sub Theme	Informant
Indications of Speech Delay in Children	The child withdraws from the play environment with peers	Ms.Y
	The child prefers to be alone and play with his/her toys	Ms. I
	Children prefer sensory-based play	Ms. F and Ms. I
Handling strategies for children with delayed speech	An individualized approach to the child	Ms. F
	Work with parents and child linguists	Ms. F
	Design activities that support language development in children (playing with words and simple stories)	Ms. F and Ms. I
	Engage the child in activities that the child enjoys, such as singing and drawing	Ms.Y
	Parents make a report on their child's learning progress which is then reported to the class teacher and assistant	All informant
Motivating children to actively participate in learning activities	Stimulate children to be active inside or outside the classroom	Ms. Y
	Taking an intensive approach to building personal communication with children	Ms. Y and Ms. I
	Rewarding when children try to speak and tell stories with simple sentences	Ms. F

Based on the findings of interviews with class teachers and accompanying teachers at the Islamic Fullday School Kindergarten, there are three important points found based on the results of interviews with informants, namely indications of speech delays in children, strategies for handling children who indicate speech delays, and motivation for children to actively participate in learning activities.

Indications of learning delays in children can be in the form of children withdrawing from the play environment with peers. This is usually done because children have difficulty interacting

with their peers. Furthermore, children prefer to be alone and play with their toys. The tendency of children to be alone and prefer to play with their toys is because children do not find comfort when playing with peers, difficulty interacting by talking directly is a major factor in this problem. The last indication of learning delay in children is that children prefer sensory-based games. This tendency is because children seek distraction and stay away from interaction with others due to speech limitations.

The handling strategy for children who are indicated to be late in speaking is through an individual approach to the child. An individualized approach can provide a sense of comfort and build courage in children to express feelings or desires with simple sentences. Furthermore, namely worked with parents and linguists on children. The form of cooperation is a step in conveying obstacles and an in-depth approach to the problem of speech delay in children. The next strategy is to design activities that support language development in children (playing with words and simple stories). This step is taken to train courage and speech skills in children with fun steps so that children tend not to get bored. Next is to involve children in activities that children like, such as singing and drawing. These activities are not only able to increase children's skills in speaking but also able to hone the potential possessed by children. The last strategy for handling children who are indicated to be late in speaking is that parents make a report on the child's individual learning development which is then reported to the class teacher and companion. Monitoring with parents can be an indicator of the ease of teachers in monitoring children's development and delays in speaking.

Motivating children to actively participate in learning activities is stimulating children to be active inside or outside the classroom. Stimulus to children can help increase children's courage and ability not only inside but also outside the classroom. Next is to take an intensive approach to building personal communication with children. The last motivation is by giving awards when children try to speak and tell stories with simple sentences. Awards as a form of appreciation can increase children's enthusiasm in starting to speak with simple words and sentences so that children can have courage and confidence in interacting with others.

## Discussion

### Indications of Speech Delay in Children

Children indicated to have speech delay can be in the form of children withdrawing from the play environment with peers, children prefer to be alone and play with their toys, and children prefer sensory-based games. Delayed speech development in children can be associated with withdrawal from social interaction and play activities with peers. Research shows that language development plays an important role in the cognitive development of children aged 1–3 years old (Babik et al., 2022). In addition, parenting style has been identified as a significant factor influencing speech delay in children. This highlights the importance of parenting style in language development (Suttora et al., 2020). Factors such as prematurity have been associated with speech delay in children aged two to five years indicating that this problem is multifaceted (Zambrana et al., 2021). Speech delay in children can be associated with their withdrawal from social interactions and play activities with peers, highlighting the complex interplay between language development, parenting style, gadget use, and social skills in effectively addressing this issue (Mujahidah et al., 2021; Rahmadhani et al., 2021).

Delayed speech development in children can be attributed to their preference to play alone and interact with their toys. Research shows that parental involvement and the family environment play an important role in children's development, including their speech and social behaviour (Liu et al., 2020; Mujahidah et al., 2021). In addition, the use of traditional games and art stimulation has been explored as a means to stimulate various aspects of child development, including speech and social skills (Rahngang et al., 2023). Furthermore, the utilization of play therapy, such as puzzle games, has been investigated as a method to address anxiety in preschool-aged children, demonstrating the potential

of play activities to address various aspects of development (Rapee et al., 2023). It can therefore be seen that the family environment, parental involvement, traditional play, and play therapy all play an important role in addressing speech delays and influencing children's play preferences and social interactions.

Delayed speech development in children can be attributed to children's preference for sensory-based play activities. The results of this study are supported by research Alsaedi, 2020 which states that motor skill delays occur in 70% of children with language development disorders. This points to a potential relationship between sensory-based play and speech delays. In addition, gadget use and early exposure to sensory stimuli have been associated with the risk of delayed language development in children, potentially influencing their preference for sensory-based play (Simpson et al., 2022; Puradireja, 2022). In addition, the role of therapeutic group therapy and developmental stimulation in enhancing children's growth and development has been explored, indicating the potential impact of sensory-based interventions on speech delay (Niutanan et al., 2020). Based on the findings, it can be concluded that delayed speech development in children can be associated with children's preference for sensory-based play activities. Family environment, parental involvement, gadget use, and sensory-based interventions all play an important role in addressing speech delays and influencing children's play preferences.

### **Handling Strategies for Children with Delayed Speech**

The appropriate handling strategies for dealing with children who are indicated to be late in speaking based on the results of this study include individualized approaches to children, working with parents and linguists on children, designing activities that support language development in children (playing with simple words and stories), involving children in activities that children like, such as singing and drawing, and parents make individualized learning progress reports on children which are then reported to class teachers and assistants.

The results of this study show that one of the strategies to deal with children who are indicated to be late in speaking is through an individual approach to the child. The findings are supported by research by Rinaldi et al., 2021 found that the treatment efficacy of children with speech and language development delays was significant. The results of this study provide a strong basis for the need for an individualized approach in designing more effective intervention programs. In addition, research by (Rapee et al., 2023) using the Test for Reception of Grammar (TROG-2) measurement tool highlighted the importance of more specific measures of language ability in assessing areas for improvement. These findings support the view that individualized evaluation is a key step in the treatment strategy.

Furthermore, working with parents and linguists in children is considered to be one of the strategies in dealing with children who have indications of speech delay. The results of this study are supported by research Rojas-Torres et al., 2020 collaboration with parents has been shown to increase the effectiveness of interventions, especially in the context of children's speech delays. This approach utilizes parents' understanding of the context of the child's environment and ensures that intervention strategies can be integrated into the family's daily routine. Research by Canfield et al., 2020 supports the importance of involving parents in the evaluation process to gain a holistic understanding of the child's language skills.

Designing activities that support language development in children (playing with words and simple stories) can be a strategy that can be done to overcome children who are indicated to have speech delays. The findings in this study are supported by Rinaldi et al., 2021 has shown that interventions involving play activities can improve the language skills of children with speech delays. In this context, designing wordplay activities can include the use of word games, selecting storybooks with the active involvement of children, and creating simple stories together.

The last strategy that can be done to overcome speech delays in children is for parents to make a report on the child's individual learning development which is then reported to the class teacher and



companion. This is important because it can be an indicator of the development of language skills in children. The results of this study are supported by Yulianti et al., 2022 highlighting the importance of parental involvement in the intervention process, and emphasizing that close collaboration between parents and education professionals can lead to more positive outcomes, especially in the context of children's speech delays. Involving parents in the production of individualized learning progress reports provides an opportunity to detail information about the child's progress in the context of the home and daily environment.

### **Motivating Children to Actively Participate in Learning Activities**

Children's motivation is a key element as it can provide a positive impetus for their engagement in learning activities designed to stimulate language development. Previous studies, such as the study by Law et al., 2004 show that children's motivation levels are positively correlated with intervention success and better language development. The importance of child motivation in the context of speech delay is also reinforced by the concept of Behavioral Activation, as described in research Dong et al., 2020. This research highlights that designing activities that trigger positive responses and a desire to participate can have a significant impact on improving children's speech delay. An approach that emphasizes the importance of child motivation requires the integration of various elements, such as selecting activities that match children's interests, providing positive rewards for achievement, and building a supportive learning environment.

The findings in the field confirm that this research is in line with previous research, some important points that indicate that this research is in line are how to determine children who experience speech delays with indications of happy to play alone, less able to interact and others, as well as the handling carried out by teachers that actually teachers cannot stand alone handling children with speech delay disorders, but there must be cooperation with other parties such as parents, even psychologists. the third indicator found in the field is the importance of motivation for children who experience disorders, this is in line with the theory of early childhood development that fostering a sense of enthusiasm and struggle in children is a factor that determines the success of children out of the developmental problems they face.

The strategies used by teachers lead to competitive advantage. Some of the strategies used are included in the competitive advantage. According to Rangkuti (2015:40) competitive advantage is a specific activity in the form of storytelling, singing, and other activities that focus on the abilities of students. In this case, the field findings that the teacher's strategy also builds warm interactions with children. Building positive interactions is very important for early childhood so that they will have adaptability, social, and social, and good communication skills with peers and adults.

The use of strategies found in the field based on the results of interviews is in line with those found by Khodijah (2016:38). According to Khodijah (2016:38), the strategies that can be done are to train children to speak correctly, slowly, and repeatedly, pay attention to ready words and spoken language, and involve children in speaking in every situation by controlling and correcting what children say when they are wrong. These results are also in line with the findings of Taseman, which states that the strategies used by teachers to deal with speech delay children's interactions include dealing with speech delay children such as providing special private lessons through gestures, hands, and lips, providing additional equal learning to get to know more words to buy lessons on how to compose words (Taseman et al., 2020). Similarly, the results of Nurdayanti concluded that the strategies used by teachers to handle speech delay children's interactions include using the storytelling method (Nurdayanti and Badroeni, n.d.).

In addition, teachers build cooperation with parents is a strategy that suits the needs of students to get out of the problem of speech delay, where we often find that parents rarely talk to children can cause children to experience speech delay due to minimal stimulation from the environment. Minimal stimulation will result in vocabulary being mastered. These results are in line with the findings of Istiqlal (2021: 54) who concluded that children can experience speech delay because



children do not get good models to imitate in speaking using the right words, children do not have strong motivation to speak. The same results were also found in (Siregar and Hazizah, 2019) which concluded that speech delay is caused by a lack of word knowledge, difficulty recognising letters, children are confused about using language in speaking, and parents are too busy and pay less attention to child development.

### Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that there are three important points, namely 1) indications of speech delay in children, 2) handling strategies for children who are indicated to be late in speaking, and 3) motivation for children to actively participate in learning activities. Indications of speech delay in children based on the results of the study include children withdrawing from the play environment with peers, children prefer to be alone and play with their toys, and children prefer sensory-based games. The strategies for handling children who are indicated to be late in speaking include individualized approaches to children, working with parents and linguists on children, designing activities that support language development in children (playing with simple words and stories), involving children in activities that children like, such as singing and drawing, and parents make reports on children's learning progress which are then reported to class teachers and assistants. Finally, the importance of motivating children to actively participate in learning activities is important because it is positively correlated with the success of the intervention and better language development.

### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

L.H conceived of the presented idea, developed the theory, verified the analytical methods, and analyzed the data and interpreted it. L.F and W.R encouraged, to investigate and supervised the findings of this work. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

### DECLARATION

The authors of this study certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

### DATA AVAILABILITY

The dataset generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

We thank all respondents involved in this research project. We also thank Jakarta State University

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