Correlation Between Expressive Language Ability and Early Literacy in Preschool Children: A Study At Kanisius Semanggi Kindergarten

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Abstract

Early childhood is a critical period for language development, particularly in expressive language skills and early literacy. Understanding the correlation between these skills is essential for enhancing language acquisition in preschool education. This study examines the correlation between word-level expressive language ability and early literacy in preschool children at Kanisius Semanggi Kindergarten. A cross-sectional quantitative approach was employed with a total sampling method involving 50 respondents. Data were analyzed using the Kendall Tau correlation test. The study found a significant positive correlation (p = 0.000, r = 0.818) between expressive language ability and early literacy. Children with higher expressive language skills demonstrated superior literacy abilities. The findings highlight the importance of fostering expressive language skills in early education to improve literacy outcomes. Future research should explore intervention strategies for children with lower expressive language abilities

Keywords: *Expressive Language, Literacy Development, Preschool Education*

1. BACKGROUND

Early childhood is when an individual has extraordinary talents and abilities; if they are trained correctly, they will become extraordinary people, too. Aspects of early childhood development according to "regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture number 137 of 2014 concerning national standards for early childhood education are religious and moral values, physical motor skills, cognitive, language, social emotions, and art. Early childhood development must be carried out to understand aspects of child development so that plans can be made to encourage normal child development. Thus, Kindergartens (TK), PAUD/Playgroup playgroups, and child care centers (TPA) are examples of early childhood education facilities in Indonesia. Thus, Kindergartens (TK), PAUD/Playgroup playgroups, and child care centers (TPA) are examples of early childhood education facilities in Indonesia. (Husna & Eliza, 2021).

Children's language development at preschool age aims to improve children's language skills based on their developmental characteristics, especially the ability to speak, listen, read, and write. Language development is also the ability to respond to sounds, follow commands, and speak spontaneously. Language is a tool a child can use to communicate with other people by using sound symbols that can be made from the words of the person they are talking to. Therefore, language skills need to be nurtured, paid attention to, trained, and developed from an early age because they are closely related to the development of children's mouths, especially children's vocabulary. Language skills can be considered as part of the knowledge component. Because it is essential for children, such as helping them communicate well, learn many things, develop good literacy skills, develop good cognitive abilities, and create conditions for children to interact with the environment. Moreover, improving preschool children's language skills is crucial for their future (Gunawan, 2023).

The proper support can help children develop a desire to read and write. According to the results of a survey published by PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) by the Organization for Economic and Development (OECD) (2019), Indonesia's literacy rate is 62/70 countries (UNESCO also stated that the level of literacy interest of the Indonesian people is only 0.001%. Therefore, the community's literacy skills are still very low. Therefore, there needs to be an active literacy program from the government and the community. The location of this study was selected based on Kanisius Semanggi Kindergarten, which is one of the private kindergartens in the city of Surakarta. The aim is to

assess and monitor preschool children's early literacy skills and expressive language of preschool children so that they can easily trace the obstacles to implementing compulsory education in the next 12 years (Yusida et al., 2022). The selection of this study in the city of Surakarta Because Surakarta City is a Child-Friendly City (KLA) and has received awards five times in a row from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection on Friday, July 22, 2022, in Bogor City, West Java. This has confirmed that Surakarta City has a good reputation in the child development process. Based on the explanation above, research in the field of Early Literacy and Expressive Language at the Word Level in Preschool Children is vital, so researchers will conduct a study entitled "The Relationship between Early Literacy Skills and Expressive Language Skills at the Word Level of Preschool Children at Kanisius Semanggi Kindergarten" (Fauzan et al., 2024).

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted using a quantitative research type, a correlational design, and a cross-sectional data collection approach. Quantitative research is carried out systematically to identify phenomena by collecting measurable data. Data is usually collected through questionnaires and surveys. Because this method is quite common and often used, this method is also often referred to as the traditional method. This method is considered scientific because it is consistent, objective, measurable, rational, and systematic because this method can be found and developed into a new method. Correlational Design is research that focuses on identifying statistical relationships between two or more variables without investigating cause and effect. Moreover, cross-sectional data collection is research that uses observation to study risks or effects, and the goal is to collect data simultaneously. Therefore, this Design is used to conclude the cause (Abduh et al., 2022). The sampling technique in this study is Total sampling. It is considered total sampling because sampling from the population takes everything from the total population (Sugiyono, 2023). This study used a sample size of 50 respondents. This research was conducted from July 2024 to November 2024 at Kanisius Kindergarten in Semanggi, Surakarta City..

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

Based on the validity test, information was obtained that out of 45 questions, 44 statements had sig. $p < 0.05$, so it was declared VALID. Only question number 15 was invalid with the sig. p result of 0.285, $p > 0.05$, so question number 15 was invalid. à valid if r count> r table (2-sided test with sig. 0.05), then the instrument or question items correlate significantly with the total score and are declared valid (Sanaky et al., 2021).

Table 1. Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	N Of Items
,743	45

Source: SPSS 2024

Based on Table 1, the reliability test is stated as reliable if sig. $p > 0.07$. Based on the reliability test, information was obtained from 45 questions, and the results were sig. p 0.743, then sig. $p > 0.07$ so that the instrument was stated as reliable. So, this instrument is valid and reliable and can be used for research. Because a good data collection tool or instrument is a valid and reliable tool or instrument (Setyawan, 2022).

Table 2. Frequency Distribution by Gender

Gender	Frekuensi	Persen (%)
Male	23	46%
Female	27	54%
Total	50	100%

Source: SPSS 2024

Table 2 shows that 50 respondents in this study consisted of 23 male respondents, or equivalent to 46%, and 27 female respondents, or equivalent to 54%.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution By Age

Age	Frekuensi	Persen (%)
4 year	23	46%
5 year	27	54%
Total	50	100%

Source: SPSS 2024

Based on Table 3, information was obtained that the 50 respondents were 4 years old, amounted to 23 respondents or equivalent to 46%, and 5 years old, amounted to 27 respondents or equivalent to 54%.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Children's Word Level Expressive Language Ability

TKVE	Frekuensi	Persen (%)
Very high	0	0%
High	28	56%
Average	22	44%
Low	0	0%
Very low	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Source: SPSS 2024

Based on the results of 4, it was obtained information that respondents who obtained expressive language ability scores at the word level using the Verbal Expressive Vocabulary Test (TKVE) with the category of very high results 0 (0%) respondents, high 28 (56%) respondents, average 22 (44%) respondents, low 0 (0%) respondents. And very low 0 (0%) respondents.

Table 5. Frequency Distribution Based on Early Literacy Skills

Early Literacy Skills Results	Frekuensi	Persen (%)
High	23	46%
Average	27	54%
Low	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Source: SPSS 2024

Based on Table 5, it is known that respondents who received a high category score were 23 (46%) respondents, an average of 27 (54%) respondents, and a low category of 0 (0%) respondents.

Table 6. Kendall Tau Analysis Results of the Relationship between Word Level Expressive Language Ability and Early Literacy Ability of Preschool Children at Kanisius Semanggi Kindergarten

Variable	Word Level Expressive Language Skills
Early Literacy Skills	P = 0,000
	r = 0,818
	n = 50

Source: SPSS 2024

Table 6 shows that the expressive language ability at the word level with the early literacy ability of children at preschool age has a significant level of 0.000, which means that the p-value <0.05 so that H0 is rejected and Ha is accepted. The correlation coefficient value is 0.818, meaning that the correlation or relationship between the two variables is in the range of 0.76 to 0.99, a powerful category in a positive or unidirectional correlation direction. The better the expressive language ability of a child, the better the child's early literacy ability, and vice versa. The correlation coefficient value can be said to be strong

if the correlation coefficient shows a relationship between two variables, the value ranges from 0 to 1 1 (+ or -), with the smallest value being 0, and a perfect or powerful relationship can be expressed in a correlation coefficient of 1 or -1 (Sugiyono, 2023).

3.2. Discussion

This study aims to determine whether there is a relationship between expressive language skills at the word level and early literacy skills in preschool children at Kanisius Semanggi Kindergarten. This study was located at Kanisius Kindergarten in Semanggi, Surakarta City. Moreover, this study was conducted from November to December 2024. The number of samples in this study was based on the population at Kanisius Semanggi Kindergarten, totaling 50 respondents. The analysis test used was the Kendall tau test because there were more than 30 respondents. This test technique can be used with more than 30 respondents (Setyawan, 2022). The analysis used in this study was univariate analysis and bivariate analysis. In this study, univariate analysis was carried out to determine the percentage of each variable. One independent variable, namely expressive language skills at the word level, and the dependent variable, namely early literacy skills, were used. A bivariate analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between children's expressive language skills at the word level (ordinal data scale) and preschool age's early literacy skills (ordinal data scale). Based on the results of the data processing that has been carried out, the following interpretation results were obtained regarding the relationship between expressive language skills at the word level and early literacy skills of preschool children:

3.2.1. Frequency Distribution of Expressive Language Skills at the Word Level

Based on the results of the frequency distribution table analysis, it is known that the results of 50 respondents obtained a score for expressive language skills at the word level of preschool children using the Expressive Verbal Vocabulary Test (TKVE) with a high category of 28 respondents or equivalent to (56%), an average category of 22 respondents or equivalent to (44%). Expressive language skills are children's ability to convey thoughts, feelings, and ideas through body language and words. The expressive language of preschool children is essential for their cognitive development. Using words, sentences, and body and facial expressions to communicate are components of this ability (Miftahurrohmah & Hasibuan, 2024). In general, language skills are divided into two, namely expressive language skills and receptive language skills. Language skills consist of speaking and writing, which involve the transfer of meaning and symbols that children process and express. Language skills must also be mastered by children, especially children who have entered preschool age (Winangun et al., 2022).

Most children start their development by crying before they start memorizing new vocabulary and showing reactions to various stimuli given by their environment. Children will continue to acquire new vocabulary, and at 3-4 years old, they begin to learn to construct interrogative and imperative sentences. Language development aims to improve children's ability to communicate well in their environment. Moreover, children who are five can collect approximately 8,000 new vocabulary words and make sentences well. One way to assess a child's language ability is to examine their expressive language. Expressive language is a person's ability to convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings verbally or with the help of facial expressions, body movements, and voice intonation. Children's expressive language skills are essential for developing their thoughts and opinions to others. This expressive language ability helps them build good social relationships with their environment. Indicators that measure children's language abilities include speaking orally, answering more difficult questions, composing simple sentences in a complete structure, and having a broad and extensive vocabulary (Yus & Saragih, 2023). Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 146 of 2014 concerning the 2013 curriculum states that children aged 5-6 years old have begun to be able to express their desires, feelings, and opinions using simple sentences in two-way communication. Moreover, it can tell simple stories (Setiawati et al., 2022).

3.2.2. Frequency Distribution of Early Literacy Skills

Furthermore, for the results of the early literacy skills of preschool children, respondents who scored in the high category were 23 respondents or equivalent to 46%, and early literacy skills with an average category were 27 respondents or equivalent to 54%. Literacy is a skill needed in the 21st century. The development of children's literacy at the age of five to six years will impact their social, emotional, and cognitive development. Improving their literacy will help them improve the basic skills needed at the next level. Therefore, literacy must be developed through fun and meaningful play activities from an early age (Pratiwi & Pratama, 2023).

Early childhood knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to reading and writing are known as early literacy skills, which are needed before they master formal skills, including language skills and phonological awareness (Ramdani & Zaman, 2022). When children are three years old, children should be able to distinguish books from their covers, write letters, listen to stories, and pretend to read; at the age of three to four years, children should be able to recognize simple writing and understand different language sounds, relate stories in books to real life and be interested in reading (Hewi, 2020) So literacy skills in children need to be instilled as early as possible and all parties are required to pay special attention. Because literacy is not just reading and writing but also includes thinking using the information in the form of visual, digital, and auditory print (Cahya et al., 2022)

Results of the Analysis of the Relationship Between Word-Level Expressive Language Ability and Early Literacy Ability of Preschool Children at Kanisius Semanggi Kindergarten. The results of the correlation analysis show that the p-value is 0.000 where the significant number is less than (sig. 0.000 <0.05) ha is accepted and h0 is rejected, which means that there is a relationship between word-level expressive language ability and early literacy ability in normal preschool children at Kanisius Semanggi Kindergarten with a correlation coefficient of 0.818 or an r-value of 0.818, which means that the correlation value is extreme. The correlation is in the same direction.

The existence of a relationship between these two variables means that the development of word-level expressive language ability in preschool children is closely related to the child's literacy ability. Such as Understanding Language, understanding several commands simultaneously, being able to repeat more complex sentences, being able to understand the rules in a game, enjoying reading, being able to communicate well and clearly, being able to answer questions well, being able to mention the components of the given image, being able to communicate verbally and in writing, being able to recognize written symbols, being able to read, write and count (Anita et al., 2024) early childhood literacy skills are closely related to the development of children's language skills, incredibly expressive language. At the age of five to six, children must understand and convey language well. According to Permendikbud 137 of 2014, early expressive language skills of children aged five to six years include communicating ideas, thoughts, ideas, and feelings verbally, in writing, or using various media (Pratiwi & Pratama, 2023). Based on several previous studies, language skills, especially expressive language and early literacy understanding in early childhood, are two interrelated constructs that present children's future abilities in reading comprehension and word use. Other studies have also found that when early childhood or preschool children learn to decipher words, their understanding is better, and their ability to read is better related to their comprehension skills (Masfufah, 2021).

Since birth, a child has begun to show expressive language skills through crying and laughing. Children's expressive language must continue to be developed to ensure their early literacy skills are also good. Because children's expressive language skills greatly influence their literacy skills. There are many cases of children who experience learning disorders such as learning difficulties, difficulty writing, difficulty reading, and counting due to the lack of children's expressive language skills.

4. CONCLUSION

The study's conclusion above shows a correlation or relationship between Word Level Expressive Language Ability and Early Literacy Ability of Preschool Children at Kanisius Semanggi Kindergarten with a p-value of 0.00, which indicates a significant relationship between the two variables. The direction of the correlation can be seen from the correlation coefficient value of 0.818, which means

there is a positive correlation between early literacy ability and word-level expressive language ability in preschool children at Kanisius Semanggi Kindergarten.

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