



Original Article

Analysis of Indonesian Language Proficiency Among Early Childhood Learners in Pandeyan Village, Maospati Sub-district, Magetan Regency, Using Illustrated Storybooks

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Abstract:

Teachers and students use Indonesian as a communication tool to facilitate productive interactions throughout the daily learning process. The author conducted observations of PAUD/TK in Pandeyan Village, Maospati District, Magetan Regency. There is a grammar between students and teachers during classroom learning that is still not good, because it is mixed with local languages or the lack of students' ability to speak well. This is caused by the family background of students who use local languages as their daily language. Kemala Bhayangkari 59 Kindergarten and Sosiawati Kindergarten have implemented a learning model using picture story media to improve their students' language skills, so it is necessary to assess and study the level of success of these efforts. Purpose: The purpose of this study is to measure the level of Indonesian language skills of students in Pandeyan Village Kindergarten, Maospati District, Magetan Regency by implementing a learning model with picture story media. Method: This study uses a qualitative method with data collection techniques through interviews and observations, then presented in the form of words and sentences, then discussed, analyzed and described together with relevant theories and empirical study results. Results: Both schools have implemented illustrated storytelling media in their learning as an effort to improve students' language skills. Based on information and observations, illustrated storytelling media is able to improve children's language skills, but further development is needed with the assistance and collaboration of parents at home, especially for children who are accustomed to using their regional language or mother tongue at school.

Keywords: *Fun Illustrated Media, Language Skills, Early Childhood Education Students.*

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Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) spans from birth to six years of age, as this developmental period is critical for ensuring adequate care and sustained attention to children ([Ariningtyas et al., 2023](#)). Patterns of oral communication occurring among students during classroom learning have been a central concern in field-based studies of instructional processes, particularly regarding teachers' appropriate use of Indonesian in classroom interactions. Students' appropriate language use is closely associated with politeness values that embody moral principles inherent in social interaction; therefore, it constitutes a key focus of observation in the present study. Whether intentional or unintentional, every utterance conveys particular meanings. Verbal communication represents one of the primary modes through which such engagement is enacted. Accordingly, verbal interaction is governed by conventions or politeness norms that should be observed in communicative practice ([Anggraini, 2025](#)). Moreover, language functions as a tool for thinking as well as for self-presentation ([Ishak & Awaliah, 2023](#)).

Children grow and develop rapidly from early childhood. Teachers, parents, caregivers, and other adults who interact with children should create stimulating environments that enable them to realize their full potential ([Muhalisiah & Darmayanti, 2023](#)). Indonesian, as the national language, functions as a unifying medium within the country's culturally diverse historical context; therefore, its use is of fundamental importance. Teachers and educators are expected to consistently model appropriate Indonesian usage in classrooms and across the school environment. In time, students will acquire Indonesian when teachers use it frequently; nevertheless, gradual incorporation of students' everyday language varieties may also be accommodated as part of the learning process ([Jadidah et al., 2023](#)). Language variation refers to context- and function-sensitive forms of language use that remain aligned with the fundamental norms of the language in question ([Alimin, 2016](#)). Importantly, all students should be able to comprehend the language employed in instruction. When children speak Indonesian, they tend to interact more easily with others, communicate more effectively, and adapt more readily to their surrounding environment. Consequently, children's everyday functioning and academic success are closely dependent on their language development (Handayani, 2023).

Based on the foregoing, teachers and students use Indonesian as a communicative medium to facilitate productive interaction throughout daily instructional activities. Beyond fostering reciprocal engagement and ensuring that learning content is delivered in accordance with pedagogical principles, Indonesian serves as an effective instrument for communication during the teaching-learning process ([Kurniawati, 2023](#)). Children's language development is shaped by multiple factors, particularly age, environmental conditions, cognitive ability (IQ), socioeconomic circumstances, and physical condition ([Aisiyah, 2023](#)). Proficiency in Indonesian is not acquired merely through rote memorization; likewise, lecturing or one-way explanation is insufficient as a primary instructional approach. Preschool-aged children require explanation and even guided support during classroom learning because they cannot develop language skills solely by sitting and listening to teachers' explanations ([Wahab, 2022](#)). Language proficiency can be strengthened through practice of accurate and appropriate Indonesian conversation and through sustained engagement in language-based activities ([Sari, 2018](#)). As children's language abilities develop alongside emerging literacy skills such as reading and writing they are better able to communicate and to understand others' thoughts and emotions ([Hidayati & Chandra, 2023](#)). Conversely,

children who experience difficulties in speaking may encounter constraints in learning, social participation, and emotional development ([Bancin & Nisak, 2024](#)).

The author conducted observations in early childhood education settings (PAUD/TK) in Pandeyan Village, Maospati Sub-district, Magetan Regency, and identified shifts in oral communication between learners and teachers during classroom instruction. These changes in speaking practices appear to have contributed to a gradual erosion of previously upheld ethical values. The hierarchical stratification of teacher–student relations has become less distinct; patterns of eye contact have changed; vocal intonation differs; physical distance has decreased; and the level of familiarity, as well as conversational topics, has also shifted. In TK Sosiawati Pandeyan, during Indonesian language lessons, the classroom atmosphere was frequently difficult to manage: many children engaged in side conversations or displayed disorderly behavior, thereby disrupting the learning process. This was partly attributable to some teachers' continued use of local languages or non-standard forms when communicating with students. Such communicative practices were intended either to enhance students' comprehension or to build rapport so that learning felt more enjoyable. In contrast, at TK Kemala Bhayangkari 59 Pandeyan Maospati, most students were relatively proficient in producing appropriate Indonesian. According to Ms. Anis, the principal, the majority of children at TK Kemala Bhayangkari 59 are accustomed to using Indonesian at home as their primary medium for everyday conversation. Nevertheless, a small number of students remain less proficient or have limited vocabulary, which is associated with reduced parental accompaniment due to both parents working, resulting in caregiving being delegated to grandparents or hired caregivers.

Language, as an interactional tool, serves three key purposes: communicating with others, exploring situations, and persuading others to engage in or refrain from particular actions; additionally, it fulfills an entertainment function by providing amusement, enjoyment, or emotional satisfaction ([Dhenggo & Wahyuningsih, 2023](#)). Teachers seek to achieve these aims by using language accurately and effectively so that students can model their linguistic behavior. It is widely acknowledged that language constitutes a crucial instrument for human communication and education ([Mubin & Aryanto, 2023](#)). Supporting evidence from other observations indicates that many students routinely use inaccurate and non-standard Indonesian in daily life due to home-based parenting practices. [Lubis, \(2024\)](#), for instance, reported that kindergarten students at TK 101771 Tembung continued to exhibit multiple errors, including the tendency to use Indonesian primarily only during Indonesian language lessons, while non-standard forms persisted even within the elementary school context. Similarly, [Idawati & Fatimatuzzahra, \(2024\)](#) found that teachers used Indonesian predominantly in classrooms, whereas outside classroom settings they more frequently relied on local languages.

Findings from Aisyah further revealed that many students at TK Tarlawi experienced difficulties understanding instructional content because they could not comprehend Indonesian beyond their home language used in everyday communication. Accordingly, when delivering educational content, a trilingual strategy becomes important. Integrating multiple languages into teaching and learning may create additional opportunities for students to enhance their language competence ([Aisyah, 2021](#)). Excessive reliance on local languages in educational environments may hinder the optimal development of Indonesian proficiency, despite the substantial cultural value of local languages. Consequently, students' oral and written communication competence in

the national language may be adversely affected ([Firnandha et al., 2025](#)).

Students' limited ability to comprehend formal Indonesian terminology can negatively affect learning outcomes and examination performance. Proposed solutions include strengthening Indonesian use in the classroom, providing bilingual educational training for teachers, and employing Indonesian-based instructional materials. To enhance Indonesian proficiency in the home environment, collaboration between parents and teachers is essential. At the same time, maintaining local languages without undermining Indonesian as the official national language requires a comprehensive approach ([Inarwati, 2025](#)).

Communication is a critical factor that motivates students to learn; if teachers lack effective communicative competence, students may be less motivated to engage in classroom learning. Learning interactions also continue to exhibit phonological errors (speech sounds) and orthographic errors relative to the standards of proper and correct Indonesian in accordance with PUEBI. Local languages remain in use for teacher–student communication in classroom settings ([Wulandari & Muhroji, 2025](#)). One method for improving young children's language competence is the use of illustrated storytelling. Storytelling techniques for preschool-aged children can be delivered through various media, including picture books, teacher-guided storytelling, as well as cartoons, animations, and 3D entertainment on television; however, picture books are among the most commonly used media for classroom storytelling ([Afnida & Fitriani, 2016](#)).

Illustrated storybooks constitute a highly promising alternative for strengthening children's linguistic abilities. Teachers should recognize that picture-book reading can support vocabulary growth, phonological awareness, and letter recognition ([Ratnasari & Zubaidah, 2019](#)). The preschool period is an optimal time for learning; because children's curiosity is especially high at this stage, it is important to maximize learning opportunities to cultivate appropriate language use ([Selian et al., 2019](#)). Evidence from Fesi Purnama Sari's study suggests that children's foundational language abilities, particularly speech development, can be enhanced through picture-book media. For example, teachers may encourage children to comment on images or story content, engage them in discussion, and prompt them to retell picture-book stories, thereby supporting children's language development, especially in speaking ([Sari, 2022](#)). Based on the author's observations, both TK Kemala Bhayangkari 59 and TK Sosiawati have implemented learning models that utilize illustrated story media. However, Indonesian proficiency remains suboptimal in some students because local languages and mother tongues continue to dominate peer-to-peer communication as well as communication with teachers. To understand conditions and the evaluative function of such interventions, assessment and analysis are required so that schools can plan strategies to improve children's language competence.

On the basis of the preliminary observations and initial review presented above, the author considers it necessary to conduct an in-depth study examining the level of appropriate Indonesian use among kindergarten learners in Pandeyan Village, Maospati Sub-district, Magetan Regency, as part of the implementation of the university's Tri Dharma. This consideration is particularly important in early childhood education (TK/PAUD), given the strategic role of Indonesian. Through language, children begin to acquire and understand various foundational concepts, and their future academic, socio-emotional, and social competence is strongly influenced by robust language skills ([Anggraini, 2025](#)). Storytelling is widely regarded as an effective approach for fostering

children's language development ([Akhir et al., 2024](#)). Through the use of illustrated storybooks, children are provided opportunities to enhance language competence by expanding vocabulary knowledge, particularly in syntactic language skills ([Rahmah et al., 2024](#)). By engaging with illustrated storybooks that combine textual narratives with visual imagery, children's language competence can be assessed through their ability to explain the content of the presented stories ([Istiani, 2024](#)).

The objective of this study is to measure the level of Indonesian language competence among kindergarten students in Pandeyan Village, Maospati Sub-district, Magetan Regency, through the implementation of a learning model using illustrated storybook media. The findings are expected to provide constructive feedback for schools, particularly given that some learners still exhibit limited Indonesian vocabulary and do not yet demonstrate consistently accurate and appropriate language use.

Methods

This study employed interview and observation techniques to collect data within a qualitative research design. The key informants were the principals of TK Kemala Bhayangkari 59 (Ms. Anis Kurniawati) and TK Sosiawati (Ms. Nety Sri Lestari), both located in Pandeyan Village, Maospati Sub-district, Magetan Regency. The interviews used open-ended questions to elicit participants' experiences and perspectives concerning the research topic. Subsequently, the data were examined to identify the major issues that emerged ([Sugiyono, 2019](#)).

The interview instrument adopted in this study ([Lubis, 2024](#)) comprised the following aspects:

1. The level of students' communicative ability in using correct and fluent Indonesian.
2. Students' errors when speaking Indonesian appropriately.
3. Strategies to strengthen students' understanding of accurate and appropriate Indonesian.
4. The role of parents in supporting children's development of correct and appropriate Indonesian use.
5. The influence of illustrated storybook media on the accurate and appropriate use of Indonesian.

The interview findings were derived from the informants' opinions and responses, particularly regarding the correct use of Indonesian when interacting with peers. To address the importance of fluent Indonesian for learning, the researcher posed a series of questions. The resulting data were then presented in the form of words and sentences, followed by discussion, analysis, and interpretation in relation to relevant theory and empirical evidence ([Arikunto, 2016](#)).

Results

Sub 1 Students' Level of Competence

The interview questions regarding the Indonesian-speaking ability of TK Kemala Bhayangkari 59 students at school—particularly in peer interactions were found to be effective. Overall, students demonstrated adequate competence in communicating in appropriate Indonesian. This pattern may be explained by the fact that most families at TK Kemala Bhayangkari 59 are newcomers affiliated with the Indonesian Air Force (TNI-AU). The school environment is surrounded by diverse

ethnic groups, and Indonesian is commonly used as the language of everyday communication at home. Moreover, because Indonesian is also used across subjects beyond the Indonesian language lesson, the use of mother tongues or local languages tends to be less frequent.

In contrast, most students at TK Sosiawati come from long-established local families residing in Maospati Sub-district and continue to use local languages or their mother tongue in daily life. This family educational context constitutes a key factor underlying students' continued use of local languages in school-based conversations. As a consequence, children's ability to use Indonesian appropriately may be constrained by limited vocabulary.

These findings align with Alimin's account that language variation may emerge among particular groups sharing similar interests or occupational backgrounds. Meanwhile, language mixing generally refers to the linguistic diversity used by speakers whose language practices do not substantially deviate from their mother tongue, given the influence of multiple factors shaping speech events ([Alimin, 2016](#)). Given the students' diverse backgrounds, the family environment appears to encourage communication in Indonesian. This result is consistent with prior research indicating that preschool and primary school children who are proficient in Indonesian tend to use it habitually in classroom settings, which in turn facilitates comprehension of learning materials ([Jadidah et al., 2023](#)).

Sub 2 Prevalent Learner Errors

Regarding common errors observed across the two schools, students may occasionally wish to use a local language when encountering peers from the same ethnic background. However, to date, such behavior has not been observed among students at TK Kemala Bhayangkari 59. In TK Sosiawati, where most students come from long-established local families in Maospati (predominantly Javanese), children sometimes tease or joke in Javanese. In these instances, teachers monitor the interaction and provide guidance to ensure that students continue to use appropriate Indonesian in their conversations. Compared with TK Kemala Bhayangkari 59, TK Sosiawati students use Javanese more frequently; those who consistently use Indonesian typically do so to maintain politeness or because they are not familiar with refined (*krama*) Javanese pronunciation.

Children who predominantly speak Indonesian commonly use the pronouns *saya* ("I") and *kamu* ("you") to refer to themselves and others. By contrast, children who more often speak Javanese tend to employ more informal or coarse Javanese forms when addressing peers and teachers in the classroom environment, both in interactions with classmates and with teachers.

Overall, the frequency of errors in Indonesian use either by students or teachers—was minimal, particularly in contexts where students' families are not ethnically Javanese, thereby reducing opportunities for lexical mixing with local languages. This finding is consistent with the view that language variation represents a linguistic manifestation realized across diverse social contexts in which language users interact ([Alimin, 2016](#)). The present results also align with prior research suggesting that students who are habituated to using Indonesian both inside and outside the classroom benefit from improved interactional comprehension. To support students in grasping implicit meanings conveyed by teachers and to reduce errors, learners should be encouraged to use Indonesian appropriately and accurately

across their everyday environments ([Kurniawati, 2023](#)).

Sub 3 Strategies to Enhance Learners' Understanding

Both informants emphasized that teachers should place greater focus on the accurate use of standard Indonesian in accordance with *Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan* (EYD) during classroom instruction, supported by resources such as Indonesian dictionaries and other reference books that guide students in constructing sentences and speaking effectively using correct Indonesian structures. To cultivate students' communicative habits with peers, teachers consistently provide ongoing instruction on how to speak Indonesian properly in everyday classroom interactions. Teachers also continuously encourage and guide students who are not yet fluent to keep learning Indonesian through various instructional approaches, one of which involves the use of illustrated storybooks.

This approach aligns with the view that teachers should demonstrate fluent and appropriate Indonesian, particularly in classroom teaching. Educators have a professional responsibility to communicate using correct Indonesian both inside and outside the classroom ([Idawati & Fatimatuazzahra, 2024](#)). To support children's language development, teachers should emphasize the use of standard Indonesian throughout the learning process by employing diverse media and innovative instructional models ([Krismawati et al., 2024](#)).

Sub 4 The Role of Parents

Given that many TK Sosiawati students come from long-established local families in Maospati (Javanese), language practices in the home environment frequently involve the use of local languages, which may then be carried over into classroom communication. In contrast, most students at TK Kemala Bhayangkari 59 use Indonesian both at home and at school. This indicates that home-language practices are naturally reproduced in classroom interaction. Over time, such conditions may contribute to more passive use of Indonesian among children who predominantly rely on local languages. Accordingly, strengthening parental involvement can enhance students' understanding and habitual use of Indonesian. Schools provide parents with guidance on how to support their children's Indonesian learning at home. Close collaboration between teachers at school and parents in the home environment is therefore essential to help learners use Indonesian appropriately and apply it in everyday communication.

A small proportion of students in both schools were still observed using local languages, which may pose potential barriers to educational development. This supports the argument that optimal development of Indonesian proficiency can be constrained by excessive use of local languages in educational contexts. As a result, students' oral and written competence in the national language may decline ([Firnandha et al., 2025](#)). Parental support is thus crucial for building children's vocabulary and habituating the correct use of Indonesian. This position is further reinforced by the view that Indonesian plays a central role in fostering national identity and improving students' literacy levels. If Indonesian use is not strengthened from an early age, children may experience difficulties acquiring adequate language skills. In the longer term, this may lead to weak writing ability, limited formal communication competence, and poor reading comprehension capacities that are essential for higher education. Therefore, systematic efforts are needed to cultivate

children's Indonesian language habits, particularly in multilingual environments ([Wulandari, 2025](#)).

Sub 4 The Impact of Using Illustrated Story Media

Illustrated story media offers substantial potential for early childhood education; however, observations of four key elements across both schools indicate that several pedagogical and technical adjustments remain necessary. First, the need for technical support during implementation suggests that teachers have not yet fully mastered the delivery of this medium. This implies that although picture-story books are intended to facilitate learning, educators still have considerable scope for improvement. To optimize the use of storybooks in instructional practice, teachers need greater competence in presentation techniques and in integrating the medium within the intended learning content framework.

Second, during learning sessions that employed this approach, children demonstrated high levels of attention and enthusiasm. This positive response indicates that multimodal strategies are effective in capturing children's interest and fostering a more immersive learning environment. By engaging multiple communicative channels such as visual cues, auditory input, and bodily movement picture story media can enhance comprehension and strengthen engagement among young learners through story-based delivery.



Figure 1. Classroom Learning Activities Using Illustrated Storybook Media

Further examination of children's responses and activities indicates that an educational game based approach integrated into illustrated storybooks exerts a positive influence. Interactive features can be highly engaging, enabling children to participate actively in the narrative process rather than remaining passive listeners. This aligns with constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively construct their own knowledge through interaction with their surrounding environment. Children's intrinsic motivation may be enhanced through engaging and appropriately challenging game-based learning experiences, which can increase their enthusiasm to follow and even to revisit the storyline. However, additional observations suggest that some children may attend more to the game mechanics than to the substantive elements of the story. This phenomenon underscores the critical role of the teacher as a facilitator who can balance playful components with cognitive learning objectives, ensuring that enjoyment remains directed toward meaningful and comprehensive understanding of the story content.

These findings are consistent with prior studies in similar contexts. For example, research conducted at RA Al-Hidayah reported that the use of illustrated storybooks improved children's language abilities by helping learners understand how to communicate and by expanding their vocabulary repertoire ([Muhalisiah &](#)

[Darmayanti, 2023](#)). Supporting evidence from other work likewise indicates that picture-story media whether delivered through printed books or digital formats has a significant effect on improving students' language competence at TK Mayang, Pekanbaru City. Learners demonstrated stronger vocabulary mastery and improved expressive abilities through more effective communication ([Selian et al., 2019](#)).

Drawing on the present observations and the results reported in this study, illustrated story media appears to possess strong visual appeal that captures children's attention and stimulates creativity. In addition, these stories can strengthen children's confidence in speaking, broaden vocabulary, and provide opportunities to practice storytelling techniques. Beyond written text, picture books include vivid and engaging illustrations; the integration of text and visuals can enhance children's narrative comprehension, imagination, and lexical development.

Conclusion

This study found that, across both research sites, some learners still demonstrated limited proficiency in using Indonesian appropriately. At TK Kemala Bhayangkari 59, most learners were already proficient, largely due to family backgrounds in which Indonesian is used as the primary language of everyday communication; consequently, children experienced relatively few difficulties engaging in formal communication at school. In contrast, most learners at TK Sosiawati still required ongoing guidance and instructional support from teachers to strengthen their ability to use Indonesian accurately and appropriately.

Both schools have implemented illustrated story media as part of their instructional practices to improve learners' language development. Based on the informants' accounts and observational findings, picture-story media can enhance children's language abilities; however, further improvement remains necessary through parental support and home school collaboration, particularly for children who are accustomed to using local languages or mother tongues in their daily interactions at school. This study is limited by its reliance on interview and observation data and by time constraints. Future research is therefore recommended to employ more targeted measures for each dimension of language ability using more specialized instruments, in order to produce more selective assessments and more optimal, evidence-based solutions.

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