

Needs Analysis of Teaching Aids to Enhance Monosyllabic English Reading Skills among Six-Year-Old Preschool Children

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Abstract

Teaching English monosyllabic reading is a crucial component in fostering early literacy and cognitive development among preschool children. This study aims to identify the level of need for teaching aids that can effectively support six-year-old preschool children in developing English monosyllabic reading skills. A total of 30 teachers from preschool and kindergarten settings participated in this study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using SPSS for Windows Version 27 to obtain mean scores and standard deviations. The findings indicate a high level of need for the development of teaching aids, with an overall mean score of 4.51. Teachers reported facing challenges in teaching monosyllabic English words due to the limited availability of teaching aids that are developmentally appropriate, interactive, user-friendly, safe, and visually engaging. Additionally, teachers emphasised the importance of teaching aids that align with the National Preschool Standard Curriculum and are capable of capturing children's attention to enhance engagement in learning. The implications of the study suggest that suitable teaching aids can not only facilitate effective teaching practices but also serve as alternative tools for assessment while promoting active student participation through play-based learning approaches. In conclusion, the identified needs highlight the urgent requirement for teaching aids that are engaging, curriculum-aligned, and developmentally appropriate for preschool children. Future efforts should focus on further development, implementation, and evaluation of such teaching aids to determine their practical impact and to strengthen early literacy instruction in Malaysia.

Keywords: Children, Preschool, Reading, English Literacy, Need Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Reading skills among preschool children are an important foundation of early literacy development. This study is grounded in the need to identify appropriate teaching aids that can support and enhance English monosyllabic reading skills among six-year-old preschool children. At this age, various educational activities can be implemented to strengthen children's English proficiency, as English serves as an international medium of communication. According to Hashim and Mohd Zamri (2023), English is one of the most widely used languages globally and is recognised as a major lingua franca.

In Malaysia, the teaching of English as a second language has been emphasised since the preschool level. To support children's language development, the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK) was developed and later revised, with the latest version introduced in 2017. Under

the Communication Pillar, preschool children are expected to achieve several learning objectives, including listening and responding using verbal and non-verbal cues, communicating using simple and polite sentences, reading and understanding simple sentences, and writing words and phrases. The focus on reading and understanding simple sentences highlights the need for children to develop a strong foundation in early reading skills, beginning with the ability to decode monosyllabic words.

Mastery of monosyllabic reading is a crucial stepping stone for children before progressing to more complex words. To read effectively, children must be able to recognise alphabetic symbols and blend individual sounds to form syllables and words. Preschool children aged six are at a critical stage of language acquisition, and the development of these fundamental skills will significantly influence their later literacy outcomes. In this regard, the use of interactive teaching aids is highly appropriate, as it enhances engagement and creates meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences (Tasripin et al., 2021). Therefore, teaching and learning activities must align with children's interests, abilities, and developmental needs through the incorporation of effective and interactive teaching aids.

According to the KSPK (2017), preschool children are expected to combine phonemes to form single-syllable words, indicating that they should possess foundational knowledge in alphabet recognition and phonological blending. However, in practice, many preschool children continue to struggle with English reading skills. Research by Khairul Anuardi et al. (2022) highlighted a decline in children's reading habits due to a lack of interest and technological distractions. Similarly, Suhaimi and Nasri (2021), in a study focusing on English writing, found that challenges such as linguistic background, mother tongue influence, and low motivation hinder children's mastery of second language literacy skills.

Studies also reveal limitations in classroom teaching practices. Abdullah et al., (2014) found that some teachers were not familiar with phonics methods or had never used them in teaching, resulting in children lacking strong early reading foundations. In addition, Ahmad Yalani and Abu Bakar (2017) reported that student interest tends to be low when conventional teaching methods are used. According to Ellangoan and Jamaluddin (2022), low motivation further impedes children's language mastery. Children with weak reading skills may experience poorer academic performance, reduced self-confidence, diminished interest in learning, and negative impacts on their language and cognitive development.

Given these challenges, the present study aims to identify the level of need for teaching aids that can support and improve English monosyllabic reading skills among six-year-old preschool children. A needs analysis will provide valuable insights into existing gaps and guide the development of more effective, engaging, and developmentally appropriate teaching aids for early literacy instruction.

In line with these issues, the purpose of this study is to conduct a needs analysis on the types of teaching aids required to enhance monosyllabic English reading skills among six-year-old preschool children. The needs analysis seeks to identify the specific challenges faced by children in recognising and decoding monosyllabic words, the constraints experienced by teachers in delivering effective early literacy instruction, and the gaps in existing teaching aids used in the preschool classroom. Understanding these needs is essential to ensuring that teaching aids are developmentally appropriate, pedagogically sound, and responsive to the literacy demands of young learners.

Furthermore, this study is positioned within the broader context of teaching and learning assessment in early childhood education. The integration of assessment with instructional resources is crucial, as assessment practices provide valuable insights into children's reading readiness, phonological awareness, and decoding abilities. Study from Welly and Abdul Rani (2024) stated that the knowledge and skills of teachers in terms of technology must be taken into consideration in order to create an effective English language learning environment for young children. By examining how teaching aids can be aligned with assessment outcomes, this study encourages educators to adopt evidence-informed decision-making in selecting or designing teaching aids. It also promotes the exchange of ideas on how assessment data can guide the refinement of instructional materials, ensuring that teaching aids not only support teaching but also facilitate systematic monitoring of children's reading progress. Through this alignment, teaching aids can function as both learning tools and assessment indicators, contributing to more targeted and effective early literacy interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading skills form a fundamental component of early literacy and are essential for children's academic and cognitive development. Usop et al. (2022) reported that findings from the National Preschool Assessment Instrument revealed weak achievement and mastery levels in English among preschool children, with 17.7% of children unable to master reading skills. This highlights the persistent literacy challenges among young learners, especially in acquiring basic reading competencies. Reading is not only a vital skill on its own but also underpins other literacy-related abilities such as writing and numeracy. Without adequate reading proficiency, children may struggle to develop their overall academic skills, limiting their ability to access learning opportunities effectively. Hussin et al., (2022) further emphasised that reading serves as a crucial medium through which learners comprehend and construct meaning, reinforcing the idea that reading mastery is central to educational success.

Baharudin et al. (2021) also noted that reading is a challenging skill for preschool children to acquire. They argued that learning cannot be fully meaningful if confined to the classroom alone, as consistent practice in various contexts, including at home, is necessary to reinforce reading skills. The researchers highlighted the importance of teachers creating an engaging and stimulating learning environment that captures children's interest, utilises classroom time effectively, and promotes holistic development. The role of teachers in facilitating early literacy is therefore critical, particularly in ensuring that young learners acquire foundational reading skills interactively and enjoyably.

Reading difficulties among children cannot be overlooked, as early deficits may have long-term consequences. Mohamed Isa and Abdul Hamid (2019) reported that approximately 40% of 469,038 Year One pupil exhibited difficulties in reading and writing Malay, which indicates the significant prevalence of literacy challenges at the early primary level. Such challenges not only affect academic achievement but also children's confidence, motivation, and interest in learning. Early interventions, including the provision of effective teaching aids, are therefore crucial to support literacy acquisition and prevent long-term negative outcomes.

In response to these challenges, the Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah Kebangsaan (KSPK, 2017) advocates for diverse teaching approaches, including thematic instruction, learning through play, and other child-centred strategies to engage learners effectively. Hussin, Ahmad Kamel, and Mokhtar (2019) emphasised that the use of visual images in teaching enhances children's interest and facilitates understanding of abstract concepts, thereby promoting cognitive development. Creating a stimulating and enjoyable learning environment is essential for motivating children and ensuring that they achieve the expected levels of reading proficiency.

Monosyllabic reading skills, particularly in English, are explicitly addressed in the KSPK standards, and acquiring these skills requires specialised teaching strategies. Marima (2016) found that the majority of preschool teachers (90%) employed the phonics approach, while 10% used the whole-language approach. Phonics instruction focuses on teaching children to decode words by sounding out individual letters, whereas the whole-language approach introduces children to words as complete units, encouraging recognition of meaningful words and sentences as a whole. Abdullah, Mohd Radzi and Zain (2021) explained that phonics emphasises letter-sound correspondence, while whole-language instruction exposes children to complete words, enabling them to recognise words in context. The appropriate integration of these methods is necessary to strengthen preschool children's mastery of English syllables and early reading fluency.

International perspectives also support the importance of a structured approach to early reading development. Saputri et al., (2021) observed that young children do not read in the same manner as adults; they acquire reading skills gradually through exposure to spoken language, listening, and interaction with their environment. Literacy acquisition involves listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, all of which require effective pedagogical techniques to support children's literacy development (Baharudin et al., 2021). Phonics and whole-language approaches are widely recognised as the primary methods for teaching English syllable reading to preschoolers. Wood et al. (1992) highlighted that the whole-language approach emphasises recognition of whole words and meaningful sentences, rather than isolated letters or sounds. This contrasts with phonics-based instruction, which begins with the systematic teaching of sound-symbol correspondences.

Overall, the literature consistently highlights that early reading development is a complex process that requires careful planning, effective instructional methods, and active engagement from teachers. Children benefit from interactive and varied teaching strategies that incorporate both phonics and whole-language approaches, along with consistent practice and reinforcement across different learning environments. The use of effective teaching aids plays a critical role in supporting these processes, facilitating both learning and assessment, and enhancing children's ability to decode and comprehend monosyllabic words in English. Therefore, teachers need to employ instructional strategies that are engaging, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with curricular expectations to ensure that preschool children acquire a strong foundation in reading before entering primary school.

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to conduct a needs analysis of teaching aids to enhance monosyllabic English reading skills among six-year-old preschool children. The methodology was designed to systematically identify current challenges, gaps, and expectations related to teaching aids in preschool English instruction.

The study involved 30 preschool teachers from both government preschools under the Ministry of Education (KPM) and private kindergartens in Kuala Terengganu, representing a mix of urban and semi-urban contexts. The inclusion of teachers from multiple school types ensured a broad range of perspectives and enhanced the representativeness of the findings.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling according to the following criteria: which currently teaching children aged five to six years, possess at least two years of teaching experience, have knowledge and experience in early childhood education and curriculum implementation, and willing to participate and provide informed responses.

Teachers who were not actively teaching, lacked early childhood education experience, or did not consent to participate were excluded. This approach ensured that the collected data were relevant, reliable, and directly applicable to understanding the needs for teaching aids in English instruction.

Prior to the main study, a pilot test was conducted with 30 preschool teachers who were not included in the main sample. The participants were purposively selected from different institutions within Kuala Terengganu to ensure varied representation. The purpose of the pilot study was to assess the clarity, appropriateness, and reliability of the questionnaire items. Research from Wan Risad et al. (2023) stated that the pilot needs analysis was also carried out to identify the likelihood of potential issues and to address them within a more specific and manageable scope.

Two experts in early childhood education evaluated the content validity of the questionnaire, using a Likert scale (1–5) to assess item relevance and clarity. Items scoring 4 to 5 by the majority of experts were considered valid (Sanuddin and Hashim, 2017). The internal consistency of the instrument was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded values between 0.70 and 0.95, indicating satisfactory reliability (Elias, 2017). The pilot study confirmed that the questionnaire was suitable for the main study.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Form through WhatsApp for convenience. The questionnaire captured teachers' perspectives regarding the need for teaching aids in enhancing monosyllabic English reading skills, preferred features and characteristics of effective teaching aids, and challenges encountered in teaching English reading at the preschool level.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 27, calculating mean scores and standard deviations to identify dominant needs and priority features of teaching aids. These analyses addressed the primary research question: *“What are the needs for teaching aids to improve monosyllabic English reading skills among six-year-old preschool children?”*

All participants were provided with information about the study objectives, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Respondents Demography

Table 1 shows the gender breakdown of preschool teachers. Based on the chart below, it can be concluded that the majority of preschool teachers who answered this questionnaire were female teachers, which was 29 people, equivalent to 96.7%, while there was only one male teacher involved in answering this questionnaire, equivalent to 3.3%.

Table 1 Genders demography

Profile	Item	Frequency	Percentages (%)
A1. Gender	Men	1	3.3
	Women	29	96.7

Table 2 shows the age category breakdown for preschool teachers. Based on the following chart, it can be concluded that half of the total number of teachers who participated in this study was 18 people, which is equivalent to 60%, who were in the age range of 25 to 35 years. In addition, the percentage of the highest age category who participated in this survey was the age range of 36 to 45 years, which recorded a percentage of 26.7%, equivalent to 8 teachers, followed by the third age category, the age range of 46 to 55 years, which recorded a percentage of 10%, equivalent to 3 people. Finally, the age category of 56 years and above recorded the lowest percentage, which was 3.3%, equivalent to only one teacher who participated in this study.

Table 2 Ages demography

Profile	Item	Frequency	Percentages (%)
A2. Age	25 – 35 Years	18	60
	36 – 45 Years	8	26.7
	46 – 55 Years	3	10
	56 Years and above	1	3.3

Table 3 shows that the majority of preschool teachers who participated in this study had a Bachelor's degree academic qualification, which was 66.7%, equivalent to 20 preschool teachers. Meanwhile, the number of teachers who had an SPM/Diploma academic qualification recorded a percentage of 30%, equivalent to 9 teachers, followed by the next academic qualification category, which was SPM/SVPM, recording only one teacher who participated in this study, equivalent to 3.3%. For the academic qualifications of Master's and PhD, no teachers with these qualifications participated in this study.

Table 3 Academic qualifications demography

Profile	Item	Frequency	Percentages (%)
A3. Academic Qualifications	SPM/ SVPM	1	3.3
	STPM/ Diploma	9	30
	Bachelor Degree	20	66.7
	Master	-	-
	PhD	-	-

Table 4 shows the total number of respondents who participated in this study. Teaching experience can be divided into five fractions as shown. Teachers with teaching experience of less than 5 years recorded the highest percentage, which is 53.3% representing 16 teachers, followed by the second highest percentage which recorded the same percentage, which is 16.7% representing 5 teachers who have teaching experience of 5 to 10 years and 16 to 20 years. Meanwhile, teachers with teaching experience of 11 to 15 years were 3 people, which is equivalent to 10% and the number of teachers with teaching experience of more than 20 years was only one teacher, which is equivalent to a percentage of 3.3%. This shows that on average, the respondents have a wide period of teaching experience, which can help in supporting the study conducted.

Table 4 Work experiences demography

Profile	Item	Frequency	Percentages (%)
A4. Work Experiences	< 5 Years	16	53.3
	5 – 10 Years	5	16.7
	11 – 15 Years	3	10
	16 – 20 Years	5	16.7
	> 20 Years	1	3.3

2. Teaching Aid Needs

For the construct data that has been consolidated using the mean value, the mean value for this entire construct is 4.51. Based on Pallant (2007), the results of the study found that Table 5, which is the need to develop teaching aid in improving English one-syllable reading skills, is at a high level.

For each item that has been analysed, this study found that the entire item, namely items B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, and B7, is at a high level, exceeding the value of 4.0. Item B1 is related to the challenge of helping children read one syllable in English, B2 is related to teaching aids to help children read one syllable in English, B3 is related to the design of teaching aids that are easy to use and can help children achieve learning objectives, B5 is related to the safety element that needs to be given priority in the development of teaching aids for children, item B6 is teaching that uses interactive teaching aids that can attract children's attention, item B7 is related to the need to use teaching aids that reach the level of development that has been set in the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK).

Table 5 Number and percentages of respondents on teaching aid needs

Item	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Not Sure (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean	SD	Level
Teachers face the challenge of helping children read a single syllable in English.	-	-	-	13 43.3%	17 56.7%	4.57	0.504	High
Teachers need teaching aids to help children read a single syllable in English.	-	-	-	7 23.3%	23 76.7%	4.77	0.430	High
The design of teaching aids that are easy to use can help children achieve learning objectives.	-	-	-	8 26.7%	22 73.3%	4.73	0.450	High
The current resources are sufficient to support teaching aids.	-	3 10%	15 50%	10 33.3%	2 6.7%	3.37	0.765	Moderate
Safety elements need to be given priority in the development of teaching aids for children.	-	1 3.33%	-	6 20%	23 76.7%	4.70	0.651	High
Teaching reading a single syllable in English requires interactive teaching	-	-	1 3.33%	9 30%	20 66.7%	4.63	0.556	High

continued

aids with visual elements to increase children's attention.								
Teaching aids need to help children achieve the developmental level set in the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK).	-	-	1 3.33%	5 16.7%	24 80%	4.77	0.504	High
Overall Mean						4.51	High	

Item B4 recorded a moderate mean value of 3.37. This item is about whether the current resources are sufficient to support teaching aids. Figure 4.5 shows the comparison of means for the items contained in Construct B.

3. Discussion of Study Findings

The findings of the study indicate that teachers face significant challenges in assisting children to read monosyllabic English words, with a high mean score of 4.57. This demonstrates a strong need for teaching aids that are appropriate to the developmental level of six-year-old preschool children. According to Balanadam and Jamaluddin (2021), factors contributing to children's difficulties in reading include individual weaknesses, lack of interest, ineffective teaching strategies, grammatical errors, and difficulties in identifying syllables. Similarly, Usop et al., (2022) reported that 17.7% of preschool children did not master reading skills, highlighting the persistent challenges teachers encounter in supporting early English literacy.

The analysis also revealed that teachers perceive a high need for teaching aids to facilitate monosyllabic reading, with a mean score of 4.77. Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (2012) emphasises that teaching aids (BBM) are an essential component of effective teaching and learning, providing tangible support for learners' understanding. Baharudin et al. (2021) further argued that reading skills are particularly challenging for preschool children to acquire, underscoring the importance of appropriately designed teaching aids to support literacy development at this stage.

Teachers also expressed a strong need for teaching aids that are simple and easy to use, reflected in a mean score of 4.73. According to Osman (2023), self-designed tangible models and replicas can enhance students' critical thinking while supporting learning objectives. Therefore, teaching aids that are practical, functional, and user-friendly can facilitate effective teaching without overcomplicating classroom activities.

Regarding existing resources, teachers reported a moderate level of adequacy, with a mean score of 3.37. Bakar and Alias (2021) highlighted that teachers' knowledge and skills in utilising teaching materials are crucial in maximising classroom efficiency and enhancing students' understanding. This finding suggests that while basic resources exist, their effective use depends on teachers' creativity and initiative. Therefore, identifying specific needs for teaching aids can help address gaps where resources are limited.

Safety considerations were also highlighted as a critical need, with a mean score of 4.70. Arman et al., (2024) emphasised that preschool equipment should be safe, well-maintained, and conducive to learning, as outlined in the Preschool Management Guidelines (GPPP). Prioritising safety in the design and selection of teaching aids is essential to ensure the well-being of children during learning activities.

Furthermore, teachers indicated a high need for teaching aids with interactive and visual elements, scoring a mean of 4.63. Zazali and M. Nasir (2022) found that interactive teaching methods increased preschool children's attention and engagement, leading to better understanding of the subject matter. This is consistent with Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which posits that children aged two to seven years engage in symbolic and egocentric thinking (Huffman, 2000). Therefore, visual and interactive features in teaching aids are crucial for capturing attention and supporting learning objectives.

Finally, teachers emphasised the importance of aligning teaching aids with the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK), recording a high mean score of 4.77. Masnan and Mohd Radzi (2015) highlighted that preschool teachers must possess knowledge and skills in planning activities and preparing teaching aids in accordance with KSPK guidelines. Ensuring that teaching aids are consistent with curriculum standards strengthens instructional quality and supports early literacy development.

The reliability analysis of the instrument, measuring teachers' perceived needs for teaching aids, yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.89, indicating high reliability. This confirms that the questionnaire items were consistent and appropriate for assessing teachers' needs.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate a high need for teaching aids that are developmentally appropriate, user-friendly, safe, interactive, and aligned with the curriculum to support monosyllabic English reading skills among six-year-old preschool children. These insights underscore the importance of systematically identifying teachers' needs to enhance early literacy instruction effectively.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights a strong need for teaching aids to support the development of monosyllabic English reading skills among six-year-old preschool children. The findings indicate that teachers face significant challenges in teaching reading due to the limited availability of appropriate and developmentally suitable materials. The analysis underscores the importance of teaching aids that are user-friendly, safe, interactive, visually engaging, and aligned with the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK), ensuring they effectively support early literacy instruction.

However, this study has several limitations. The sample size was relatively small and limited to specific areas, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study relied solely on quantitative data collected through questionnaires, without complementary qualitative methods such as interviews or classroom observations. The scope was also focused exclusively on monosyllabic reading skills, without addressing more advanced literacy abilities such as sentence construction or reading comprehension.

Future research is recommended to involve a broader and more diverse sample from various geographic and institutional contexts, as well as to adopt a mixed-methods approach to obtain deeper and more comprehensive insights into teachers' needs. Expanding the scope to include more complex literacy skills and exploring innovative approaches to teaching aids may further enhance the effectiveness of early literacy interventions.

In conclusion, the study confirms a clear and pressing need for appropriately designed teaching aids in preschool English literacy instruction. Addressing these needs has the potential to improve the quality of early childhood education and better support children's foundational reading skills, thereby laying a strong basis for future academic success.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data used and presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding authors. Rest assured that the real names and other personal information of the participants will remain anonymous.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist with language editing, sentence restructuring, and improving clarity and academic writing quality. After using this tool, the authors carefully reviewed, revised, and edited the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the publication.

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Needs Analysis of Teaching Aids to Enhance Monosyllabic English Reading Skills among Six-Year-Old Preschool Children

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