

Teacher Strategies in Stimulating Early Reading Skills in 5-6 Year Old Children at Asisi Kindergarten, Samarinda

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe teachers' strategies in stimulating early reading skills in 5-6 year old children at Asisi Samarinda Kindergarten. Early reading is an important stage in literacy acquisition that needs to be developed from an early age. The research subjects consisted of teachers in class B and 15 children aged 5–6 years. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation, while data analysis used the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which included data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the teacher's strategies in stimulating early reading included three main aspects: (1) early identification of reading difficulties, (2) application of a multisensory approach based on the phonics method, and (3) teacher-parent collaboration through shared reading activities. The multisensory phonics approach combines visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile aspects through letter cards, picture books, memory games, and alphabet songs. The results show an increase in children's ability to recognize letters and sounds, as well as an increase in interest and motivation to read. Thus, creative, adaptive, and collaborative teacher strategies play an important role in developing early literacy in young children.

INTRODUCTION

Early reading skills are the main foundation of literacy that determines a child's success in understanding various knowledge at the next level. At an early age, children begin to recognize letters, sounds, and syllables through concrete and fun activities. Several studies show that early reading stimulation has a significant impact on children's ability to connect letter symbols with their sounds and improve their academic readiness in the future (Amanah et al., 2024; Nurhanifah, 2022; Shidikiyah Hilda, 2025; Eka Ningsih, 2024).

In the context of early childhood education, teachers play a central role in designing strategies that stimulate interest and early reading skills. Several studies confirm that the success of early reading learning is influenced by the creativity of teachers' strategies, the selection of appropriate media, and a supportive learning environment (Nanda Banowati Eka et al., 2023; Rahmadani, 2024). Effective strategies generally include a playful approach, the use of engaging visual media, interactive methods such as storytelling and singing, and the provision of structured and contextual literacy activities.

Although much research has been conducted on teachers' strategies for developing early reading skills, previous findings show limitations. For example, Indrawati (2022) and

Rahma (2022) emphasize the use of reading corners, picture cards, and literacy games, but do not discuss how these strategies are adapted to the characteristics of children in a heterogeneous classroom context. Jayanti (2024) explores the use of folk tales as a literacy medium, but does not provide an overview of how this method is applied sustainably in daily learning practices. Similarly, several studies focus on the effectiveness of certain media (e.g., flashcards or phonetic games), but have not examined how a combination of strategies and classroom management contributes to comprehensive early reading development (Angkur, 2025).

From these studies, it appears that the research gap lies in the lack of studies that describe in depth how teachers integrate various media learning strategies, interactive methods, play activities, and experience-based literacy approaches in the context of real classrooms with diverse learning dynamics. In other words, previous studies have not provided a comprehensive picture of how these strategies are applied in a planned and consistent manner to stimulate early reading skills.

Based on preliminary observations at Asisi Samarinda Kindergarten, it was found that teachers had implemented various strategies such as picture cards, storybooks, phonetic games, singing, and letter tracing activities. However, no research has been conducted to examine whether this combination of strategies is in line with the principles of early reading development and how these strategies work in a classroom of 15 children with diverse characteristics. Given these conditions, this study aims to describe the strategies used by teachers to stimulate early reading skills in 5-6 year old children at Asisi Kindergarten in Samarinda. This study is expected to provide an empirical description of effective early literacy learning practices and offer relevant practical recommendations for early childhood teachers and similar educational institutions.

METHOD

This study uses a phenomenological approach combined with qualitative research methodology. Based on available field data, this approach was chosen to describe the actual situation, including teachers' tactics in improving early reading skills in children aged 5 to 6 years at Asisi Kindergarten in Samarinda. The phenomenological approach is a study that aims to understand a person's life experience in depth from their own point of view. This research seeks to explore the meaning and significance of experiences in a person's life, rather than simply presenting numerical data or statistics (Nasir et al., 2023).

This study was conducted at Asisi Kindergarten, Samarinda City. The subjects of this study were 15 children aged 5-6 years old in group B. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. The type of observation used was participatory observation. The researcher directly observed the teaching and learning activities in class B at Asisi Kindergarten in Samarinda, especially when the teacher applied reading strategies. The method used was an observation sheet to record children's behavior and responses to reading activities in class B at Asisi Kindergarten in Samarinda. The type of interview used was semi-structured interviews. The researcher interviewed the teacher of class B at Asisi Kindergarten to find out their views on the strategies applied and the progress of children in early reading in class B at Asisi Kindergarten in Samarinda.

The data collection process took place from February to March 2025. Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, consisting of four stages. In the first stage, namely data collection, researchers gathered information from observations, interviews, and documentation related to teachers' experiences in implementing early reading strategies. The second stage was data reduction, which in this study was carried out through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding was done by identifying units of meaning from interview transcripts and observation notes. Axial coding was done by grouping these categories into broader themes, such as diagnostic strategies, multisensory approaches, media adaptation, or parent collaboration. Selective coding was then used to find core themes that described the essence of teachers' experiences in stimulating early reading skills. The third stage was data presentation, which involved organizing the reduced data into thematic narratives, interview excerpts, and tables to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships between themes.

Next, the fourth stage is drawing conclusions and verification. At this stage, researchers conclude patterns and important findings, then verify them through a data validation process. Data validity in this study is maintained through several techniques, namely technical triangulation (combining observation, interviews, and documentation), member check (confirming findings with teachers as key informants), peer debriefing (discussion with colleagues to assess the consistency of interpretations), and audit trails (storage of field notes, transcripts, coding results, and supporting documents as evidence of the research process). The use of these validity techniques ensures that the research findings are scientifically accountable and reflect the authentic experiences of teachers in early reading instruction (Ainunisa Zurianti & Hayati Nur, 2024).

Table 1. Interview Guidelines

No	Indicator
1.	What approach or method do you use to teach early reading in this class?
2.	How do you adapt the reading material to the developmental level of the children in the class?
3.	Do you focus more on introducing letters, sounds, or words first?
4.	How do you introduce letters and sounds to children?
5.	How important do you think games are in introducing letters and sounds to young children?
6.	What tools or media do you use to help children learn early reading?
7.	To what extent do picture books or interactive games play a role in teaching reading to young children, in your opinion?
8.	Do you use technology (such as apps or videos) to support children's reading learning process in the classroom?
9.	How do you identify children who have difficulty recognizing letters or reading simple words?
10.	What steps do you take to help children who are slow in learning to read?

RESULTS

The teacher's strategy in stimulating early reading skills at Asisi Samarinda Kindergarten is to identify children who have difficulty reading, conduct direct observation, test their recognition of letters and simple words, and record their learning progress. Mrs. NL said,

"I noticed that some children still had difficulty recognizing letters and sometimes forgot the sounds of letters even though they had been taught several times, so I took a special approach using interesting media tailored to their interests," said Mrs. NL, a classroom teacher.

The assessment is conducted individually using checklists, photo series, and observations of the children's work, so that each child receives treatment according to their needs. Children who have difficulties are usually characterized by slow letter recognition, forgetfulness, and a lack of interest in reading activities. To address this, teachers provide additional individual guidance with a patient, consistent approach and create a fun learning environment to maintain children's motivation.

Nama Anak	Usia	Tanggal Pengamatan	Aspek Perkembangan	Indikator	Hasil Observasi	Catatan Guru
Ananda A	5 Tahun	10 Oktober 2024	Bahasa	Mengenal huruf A sampai E	Bisa menyebutkan huruf A, B, C dengan baik	Perlu latihan membaca kata sederhana
Ananda B	5,5 Tahun	10 Oktober 2024	Motorik Halus	Memegang pensil dengan benar	Sudah mampu memegang pensil dengan benar dan menulis garis lurus	Perlu diajarkan menulis angka
Ananda C	6 Tahun	10 Oktober 2024	Sosial Emosional	Bergaul dengan teman sebaya	Aktif berinteraksi dengan teman, mudah berbagi	Perlu dorongan untuk mengungkapkan perasaan

Figure 1. Example of Recording Children's Learning Development at Asisi Kindergarten in Samarinda

Based on interviews and field observations at Asisi Samarinda Kindergarten from February to March 2025, the following findings were obtained. On the first day, teachers at Asisi Samarinda Kindergarten used a multisensory approach with a gradual phonics method to teach early reading. Mrs. NL said,

"We start by introducing the shape of letters, then the children feel the texture of the letters, listen to the sounds, and imitate the movements of the letters together. For example, children learn to pronounce the sound /a/ for the letter 'A', then combine the sounds into simple words such as 'Bapa'."

The material is adjusted by observing each child individually to ensure that learning is more effective and tailored to the needs of the students. On the second day, the focus of teaching is on introducing letters and sounds simultaneously. The letters and sounds were

introduced through games, such as matching pictures with letters. For example, there was a memory game where children matched picture cards (e.g., Horse) with cards bearing the initial letter (H). Next, the children were invited to sing songs about letters. Based on field observations, the children showed excited expressions. The children responded enthusiastically when matching the picture cards. The children also engaged in fine motor activities such as writing their own names in the worksheets, allowing them to learn in a fun and memorable way.



Figure 2. Creating Letter Shapes and Feeling Textures

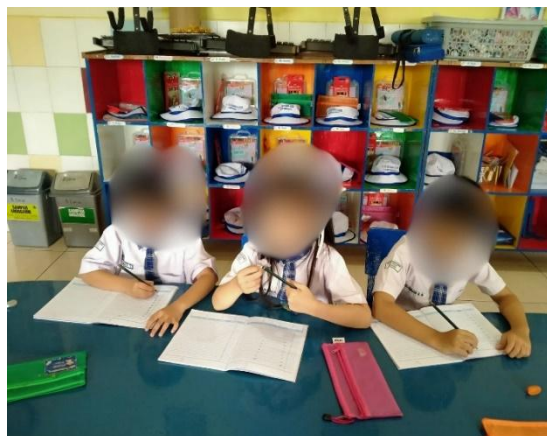


Figure 3. Writing Names on the LKPD

The learning media used include letter cards, picture books, letter blocks, visual aids to reinforce visual and auditory learning, and loose parts such as seeds, bottle caps, and rocks. Teachers also utilize technology such as educational videos and simple reading applications as learning aids. Another factor that supports early reading at Asisi Samarinda Kindergarten is the cooperation between teachers and parents. Asisi Samarinda Kindergarten regularly holds reading sessions with parents at the school every semester, once a week. Mrs. NL said,

“The role of parents is very important in supporting children's literacy development. These shared reading activities strengthen children's social-emotional bonds with their parents and bridge the learning methods between school and home.”

Asisi Kindergarten recognizes that early literacy development cannot rely solely on classroom learning; parents play a crucial role in developing children's literacy. These activities can strengthen children's social-emotional bonds with their parents through focused and intimate literacy activities. This weekly program ensures that children have a strong literacy routine and helps bridge the gap between school learning methods and reading practices with parents at school, which is key to improving early reading skills in young children at Asisi Kindergarten in Samarinda.





Figure 5. Reading Together with Parents at School program

DISCUSSION

The strategy used by teachers to stimulate early reading skills at Asisi Samarinda Kindergarten shows a pattern that focuses not only on the application of learning methods, but also on the process of continuously identifying children's learning needs. Based on field observations, teachers conduct systematic observations, including simple letter and word recognition tests and daily progress notes. These findings show that teachers do not simply teach reading, but recognize early obstacles such as slow letter recognition, difficulty remembering sounds, and lack of interest in literacy activities. This sensitive approach to learning conditions illustrates that teachers apply responsive diagnostic strategies. These findings are in line with the research by Nafisa et al. (2024), but this study found that Asisi kindergarten teachers developed a more informal and flexible early detection model compared to the formal evaluation format that is commonly used.

In addition, the multisensory phonics learning strategy implemented by teachers is central to stimulating early reading skills. Teachers not only introduce phonemes gradually, but also facilitate learning through various senses such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. At Asisi Kindergarten, phonics is implemented in a more adaptive way, namely by adjusting to each child's interests and learning style. For example, children who are more kinesthetic are given more activities such as tracing letter shapes with their fingers or using concrete objects. These findings reinforce the results of research by Tammardia Siregar et al. (2024), which states that the phonics method is effective, but this study adds the insight that differentiation in phonics is a key strategy for improving the effectiveness of early reading learning. This is also consistent with Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, which is evident in the gradual reduction of assistance as children's abilities improve (Mupidah et al., 2025), but this study emphasizes how scaffolding emerges through multisensory phonics adaptation, not just verbal instruction.

Varied learning media are also an important component in supporting the early reading process at Asisi Kindergarten. The use of memory games, picture letter cards, letter songs, creative worksheets, and loose parts such as seeds and bottle caps provides a concrete and enjoyable learning experience. Unlike the research by Azzahra et al. (2025), which emphasized the benefits of visual media, this study found that loose parts media can be effectively combined with the phonics method, for example, by asking children to arrange letters using concrete materials while pronouncing their sounds. The integration of loose parts into the phonics method expands on the findings of Haryanto & Twiningsih, (2024), which previously highlighted loose parts for creativity, but in the context of this study, loose parts actually support phonological literacy stimulation.

Learning activities that combine games and visual media create a holistic learning environment. Play activities have been proven to help children focus better, be more enthusiastic, and understand the relationship between letters and sounds more quickly. This is reinforced by the findings of Rahmadani, (2024), which indicate that interactive games improve early reading skills. This study adds that games combined with individual teacher observation make learning more effective because each activity is selected based on the child's developmental needs. The use of educational technology such as instructional videos and simple reading applications in small groups also adds variety to the stimulation, in line with the findings of Febrina Damayanti, (2025). However, this study contributes that the integration of technology is not done as the main tool, but as a support after the teacher analyzes the individual needs of the child.

Efforts to stimulate early reading skills at Asisi Kindergarten are also reinforced by collaboration between teachers and parents through a weekly reading program held once a week each semester. This program not only provides additional stimulation, but also builds a continuous literacy routine at home. These findings confirm the results of Qayla Ramadhanti, (2025) research on the importance of parental involvement, but this study adds new value by showing how scheduled reading programs at school can create a more structured continuity of home-school literacy practices.

Overall, the combination of diagnostic strategies, adaptive multisensory phonics, the use of varied and innovative media, and parental involvement shows that teachers at Asisi Samarinda Kindergarten not only apply learning theories but also develop contextual and responsive approaches to the characteristics of early childhood. Fun, child-centered, and individually oriented learning has been proven to effectively stimulate early reading skills. Thus, this study confirms that the success of early literacy stimulation is not only determined by the method, but by the suitability of the strategy to the real needs of children, which is an important contribution to understanding early reading learning practices in early childhood education.

Table 2. Cross comparison

Findings of This Study	Previous Research	New Connections / Contributions
Teachers conduct early detection through observation, simple phonics tests, and developmental records.	Nafisa et al., 2024 emphasize the importance of engaging media for motivation.	This study adds that media are selected based on individual diagnosis, not merely on appeal.
Phonics is multisensory and differentiated.	Tammardia Siregar et al., 2024 proved phonics to be effective	New contribution: phonics as an adaptive method tailored to each child's character

Loose parts are used for phonics.	Haryanto & Twiningsih, 2024 highlights loose parts for creativity	New insight: loose parts applied as a medium for phonological literacy
Game media combined with individual observation	Azzahra et al., 2025 on the importance of concrete experiences	This study demonstrates the integration between games and diagnostic strategies.
Educational technology as a support	Febrina Damayanti, 2025 on the potential of reading applications	This study confirms the use of technology as a complement, not the center of learning.
Weekly reading program with parents	Qayla Ramadhanti, 2025 on parental involvement	New contribution: a scheduled home–school literacy interface model
Fun learning increases motivation	Rahmadani, 2024	This study adds that motivation increases due to the combination of games individual adaptation.

CONCLUSION

Teachers at Asisi Samarinda Kindergarten implement effective strategies to stimulate early reading skills in children aged 5–6 years through a multisensory phonics approach and collaboration with parents. This approach improves children's ability to recognize letters and sounds, as well as motivates them to read from an early age. This study confirms that enjoyable, creative, and socially interactive reading instruction is key to early literacy success in early childhood education. This study has important implications for teachers, early childhood education institutions, and future researchers. Practically, the multisensory phonics strategy can be used as a reference for teachers in designing enjoyable early reading activities that are adaptive to children's needs. Theoretically, this study reinforces Vygotsky's scaffolding and Piaget's constructivism concepts in the context of early childhood literacy. Institutionally, the results of this study encourage the need for teacher training and strengthening of family literacy programs at Asisi Samarinda Kindergarten and similar schools. Further research is recommended to explore the effectiveness of this strategy in the context of children with more complex literacy difficulties.

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