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A Needs Analysis of Kindergarten Students' Reading Engagement in English Learning through Storybooks

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kebutuhan keterlibatan membaca siswa taman kanak-kanak dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris melalui penggunaan buku cerita di PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif yang melibatkan seorang guru taman kanak-kanak dan sekelompok siswa TK B. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan guru. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan siswa dalam kegiatan membaca masih tidak konsisten dikarenakan media bacaan yang terbatas dan tidak memadai. Sebagian besar siswa kesulitan mempertahankan perhatian dan berpartisipasi secara aktif selama sesi membaca bersama. Media bacaan yang tersedia, khususnya buku cerita berukuran A4, dianggap tidak efektif karena teks dan ilustrasinya tidak terlihat jelas untuk kegiatan membaca berkelompok. Guru juga mengidentifikasi beberapa faktor yang memengaruhi keterlibatan siswa, termasuk ilustrasi yang menarik, alur cerita yang bermakna, elemen interaktif, dan teknik membaca bersama yang ekspresif. Selain itu, kosakata siswa yang terbatas dan rentang perhatian yang pendek memengaruhi partisipasi mereka dalam kegiatan membaca. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya menyediakan media bacaan yang menarik secara visual, sesuai dengan tahap perkembangan, dan interaktif untuk menumbuhkan minat membaca dan pengembangan literasi di kalangan siswa usia dini. Temuan-temuan ini diharapkan dapat memberikan wawasan bagi para guru dan pengembang media pembelajaran dalam merancang kegiatan membaca yang efektif dan menyenangkan untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggris pada masa kanak-kanak.

Kata kunci: *Buku Cerita, Keterlibatan Membaca, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Pengembangan Literasi.*

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the reading engagement needs of kindergarten students in English language learning using storybooks at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design involving a kindergarten teacher and a group of TK B students. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with the teacher. The findings indicate that students' engagement in reading activities remains inconsistent due to limited and inadequate reading media. Most students struggle to maintain attention and participate actively during shared reading sessions. The available reading media, particularly A4-sized storybooks, are considered ineffective because the text and illustrations are not clearly visible for group reading activities. The teacher also identified several factors influencing student engagement, including engaging illustrations, meaningful storylines, interactive elements, and expressive shared reading

techniques. Additionally, students' limited vocabulary and short attention spans affect their participation in reading activities. This study highlights the importance of providing visually engaging, developmentally appropriate, and interactive reading media to foster reading interest and literacy development among early childhood students. These findings are expected to provide insights for teachers and instructional media developers in designing effective and enjoyable reading activities for English language learning in early childhood.

Keywords: Story Books, Reading Engagement, English Language Learning, Early Childhood Education, Literacy Development.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a very crucial time for the development of children's language and literacy capability because it is at the early childhood time that children can be very sensitive to their surrounding environment. Between the age of 3-5, children's brain develops rapidly and rich literacy experiences help strengthen neural connections that support language comprehension and expression (Kurniawati et al., 2024). The study stated that children's developing brains will absorb information faster than adults do. So, it would be great if literacy media such as books could be introduced to children from an early age. Strong early literacy skills can contribute on a better academic achievement, writing skills, and critical thinking skills, and in order to develop and hone young learners' literacy skills, they are required to have engagement in reading (Annisa et al, 2025), it can foster children positive attitude towards reading and making them feel happy and comfortable to explore books, which in return this can become a strong foundation for young learners in strengthening their literacy skills, comprehension skills, and critical thinking skills.

The concept of reading is not merely about sorting out words or text but is also a complex cognitive process in which readers extract meaning, concept, and message from a written language (Yung et al., 2024). Reader's active involvement in reading can be shown through their participation, frequency of reading, and personal mental and behavioral engagement (Cremin & Teresa 2023). The study also stated, we can see someone's engagement in reading from the amount of time they read frequently and voluntarily, find reading absorbing and meaningful, interact socially with others about what they read, and motivated by interest or enjoyment. Overall, reading engagement shows how readers connect with text through their participation, interest, and involvement in reading activity.

One effective strategy to promote reading engagement among young learners is through shared reading. Shared reading is collaborative reading activity where a teacher and students read a text together, with the teacher guiding the process and encouraging student's participation (Ollerhead & Pennington, 2024). Shared reading can positively influence children early literacy foundation and reading engagement and encourage interactive reading behaviors, such as focusing on illustration, using gestures, and responsive talk, which increased children's active participation during shared reading session (Bergström, 2024). These behaviors reflect higher levels of attention and engagement, which are the key components of early literacy development.

Unlike adults who consume books with more complex words and story line, children tend to like books that contain visual support, simple language, and engaging narratives. Children like it when the story is fun and they can interact with the book through their imagination, with them interacting with visual elements and participating in meaningful reading activity (Antariani et al., 2021). With engaging visuals and simple yet meaningful story line that stimulate children's curiosity, storybooks became a reading media that provide concrete image and text to children, making them easier to comprehend certain concept (Darmawan & Wuryandani, 2022). Through storybooks, children can connect language with context, making learning more interactive and enjoyable.

However, findings from previous study stated that children are more likely to not engage in reading and this is not because of individual child ability limit but because of their

attention span and the lack of reading media that are given at school, resulting in children not being used to reading and it affects their interest in reading (Agustina & Depalina, 2025). In addition, limited vocabulary and lack exposure to English text may further reduce student's engagement in reading activities. This issue indicates that the implementation of reading activities at school, including through shared reading and storybooks, may not yet fully address the actual needs of young learners. Understanding student's needs is very important to design an effective and engaging reading instruction and media, especially in early childhood education.

Previous studies have shown that the use of storybooks can enhance children's literacy skills and increase their motivation in learning English. But there is still limited research that focuses on the need analysis of kindergarten students regarding their reading engagement, especially in a specific local context. Understanding students' needs is very important to design appropriate learning media and strategies that aligned with children's many characteristics and learning preferences. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the reading engagement need of kindergarten students at PAUD Pelita Kasih in English Learning using storybooks. The findings of this study are expected to improve insight for teachers in developing effective and engaging reading activities and media, particularly in early childhood English education.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design to explore the reading engagement needs of kindergarten students in English learning using storybooks. Qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it allows researcher to obtain deep insight on participants' experiences and perspectives in natural classroom setting. The study was conducted at PAUD Pelita Kasih, focusing on TK B students where reading is one of the few activities that is used by the teacher that aims to explain a certain concept to students. Participants included one kindergarten teacher who was selected purposively because of her experience in teaching English and literacy using instructional media. A group of young learners was also involved through classroom observation during their regular reading activity. This setting was chosen because it provided natural context to observe students' reading engagement and to evaluate the use of the existing learning media. The study did not interfere with the learning process in the classroom, allowing researcher to document real authentic classroom practices.

The data for this study were collected through classroom observations and semi structured interviews with the teacher. The observation was conducted to examine students' behaviors, participation, and response during reading activity using storybook, mainly in the context of shared reading. The researcher recorded how students interact with the storybook that is being read by the teacher and the interaction between the teacher and students regarding the story. Field notes were used to record important events and interaction that took place during the reading activity. Additionally, semi structured interview was used to dig into teacher's professional perspective towards students' needs, challenges, and the strategies used in teaching reading. The interview allowed flexibility for the researcher to further explore relevant issues while maintaining focus on the research objectives.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis framework to identify patterns and core needs that are related to students' reading engagement. The analysis process involved in several steps. Such as, data familiarization, where researcher reviewed the observation notes and interview transcript to gain the overall understanding of the data. After that, relevant data were coded and grouped into categories based on similarities. And finally, themes were developed to represent the main findings of the study, especially those related to students' needs in engaging with reading activities. This approach enabled the researcher to logically interpret the data and draw meaningful conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**Findings****Findings from Classroom Observation**

The findings of this study were gained through classroom observation and semi structured interview with the English teacher at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja. The findings focus on students' reading engagement during reading activity and the teacher's need regarding suitable and proper reading media for early childhood learners. Overall, the result showed several important issues related to students' engagement and participation in reading activities and the limitations of the reading media currently used in the classroom.

Classroom observations were conducted to investigate students' reading engagement during reading activity using the existing learning media. The results of the observation are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Result of Classroom Observation on Students' Reading Engagement

Aspect Observed	Indicators	Findings
Availability of Reading Media	Quality and Variety	There are still very few reading media available, and some media are not adequate for classroom instruction.
Suitability of Text	Age appropriateness	The text and illustrations are appropriate for the students, in terms of sentence simplicity, plot of the story, and the visual of the media.
Size of Reading Media	Visibility for students	The reading media used were of medium size, which is A4 paper. The text on the media was not clearly visible to students during the reading activity.
Reading Strategy	Shared reading practices	Teacher used shared reading strategies during reading activities in the classroom. Teachers interact with students by pointing to the text, using gestures, reading the text with a specific tone, and discussing the story she is reading with students.
Students' Attention	Focus during reading	Six out of ten students did not seem very focused on the reading activity, while the other half appeared to be paying attention to the teacher.
Students' Participation	Active involvement	Six students appeared reluctant to interact with the teacher during reading activity, while the other four were eager to interact and respond to the teacher during the reading activity.
Engagement Consistency	Beginning vs end of activity	Students' engagement appeared inconsistent, as students seemed focused and enthusiastic at the start of the activity but gradually began to look bored from the middle through to the end of the activity.
Vocabulary Understanding	Language difficulty	Students had trouble understanding some vocabulary words that were difficult to pronounce, but they already understood some simple, everyday vocabulary words that are easy to pronounce.
Overall Engagement	Level of engagement	Students' reading engagement has not yet fully developed due to limited reading media and media that are still not of sufficient size.

The result of classroom observations indicated that students' engagement in reading activity remains highly inconsistent and incomplete. Although the activity had been implemented, the reading media used are still inadequate due to their limited variety and small size specifically A4 paper. This makes it difficult for students to see the text and illustrations on the media. Additionally, Table 1 shows that six out of ten students demonstrated limited attention spans and low participation during reading activities. Students appeared easily distracted and showed little engagement in the activity while some students initially appeared enthusiastic and interacted with the teacher, they gradually lost engagement towards the end of the activity, indicating that the available reading media were unable to sustain students' reading engagement during the class reading activity.

From strategic perspective, the teacher had applied shared reading practices, in which the teacher read aloud the text from the reading media, point to the text and illustrations, and involve students in the reading activity. However, students' engagement is limited to repeating phrases and offering general responses while deeper interactions related to the story have not yet been fully implemented in the classroom. These findings indicate that even when appropriate strategies are implemented, limitations in reading media particularly their size and design can affect students' overall engagement in reading.

Findings from Teachers Interview

Findings from semi-structured interview further support the result of classroom observations. The interview results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Teacher Interview

Aspect	Teacher's Response
typically used reading media	A4 size children's storybooks, which include fewer words and pictures is typically used for reading activities.
Students' general preferences and reading habits	Several students are enthusiastic as they have good basic English skills. However, several of them tend to ignore the teacher, particularly when they realise the story is not interesting.
Factors that motivate or discourage students from reading	- The factors that foster students' motivation are interesting storybooks, imaginative yet meaningful, close to their experience, and the way the teacher delivers the story. - Meanwhile, several reasons were found why the students are discouraged, including long texts, the supporting elements are common, and the distraction of other friends.
Challenges that students face when engaging with reading media	Their ability to read, as most of them cannot read yet, they were difficult for them to understand the story. In addition, conventional reading strategies also influence their lower engagement.
Students' behavior when engaged or disengaged during reading activities	Students were engaged in reading activities, as can be seen from their facial expressions. Like smiling and eyes on the teacher reflect that they were interested in the story and their response, whether commenting on the attractive elements they love or parts that they thought were different from the plot. When they talked with friends, busy with their interests, looked away from the teacher, and didn't respond to anything reflected that they were disengaged.
Strategies used to foster students' comprehension and engagement	Ask several questions, allow them to predict the continuation of the storyline, and invite them to imitate some movement and sound included in the story.
Key factors that	It is supposed to be the pictures' compatibility, engaging story.

influence students' reading experiences	Such as, asking the students to do a little move, imitate a voice, and so on, and the way of delivering the story that must be expressive and powerful.
Expected learning media for early childhood learners.	It is expected that the learning media include interactive elements, supporting appropriate pictures, cheerful colour tone, and avoiding long text, a short yet meaningful storyline.

For the teacher, these challenges are compounded by students' limited attention spans, for instance they looked away from the teacher and did not respond when asked. The fact that some students are still not proficient in reading also took part on the teacher's challenges in reading activity. Long text and common supporting elements from the reading media is part of why some students appeared more disengaged as stated by the teacher. As shown in Table 2, the teacher also emphasized that the school has limited reading media, with reading media that lack sufficient size and interactive elements.

The quality of the available media is considered inadequate to encourage students' active engagement in reading activities. Therefore, the teacher stated that interactive elements, appropriate pictures, color tone, and meaningful storylines suitable for children are essential in reading media so that children can engage more deeply and better comprehension towards the context and content of the story.

Discussion

An investigation in the classroom at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja revealed that reading activities in the classroom were not entirely successful because many students still lost focus during class. Based on the observations conducted, it was found that six out of ten students, or 60%, had difficulty paying attention during reading activities in the classroom. One main reason is the reading media used by the teacher. The teacher mostly uses only A4-sized picture books. The media used are arguably too small for the students, so they cannot clearly see the text or illustrations in the book. At the beginning of the activity, the students appeared excited and enthusiastic, but as time went on, their interest decreased because they could not clearly see the media or engage with the teacher's reading media. Ultimately, the students appear bored and distracted. This indicates that the current reading media are not suitable for group reading activities because the visuals are difficult to see and the word choice in the media being used is not suitable for early childhood learners, which prevents students from engaging, staying interested, and focusing on the reading activity (Bakhtiar, 2025; Chen et al., 2021; Fahmiah et al., 2025; Kurnia & Satria, 2022).

The study also found that many students did not actively participate during reading activities. About 60% of students rarely answered the teacher's questions or engaged with the story. Many children also struggled to understand vocabulary and pronounce words correctly, making it difficult for them to follow the teacher's instructions. As a result, students spent more time repeating words and sounds than actually understanding and enjoying the story (Ghalebandi & Noorhidawati, 2017; Hutabalian et al., 2023; Istihari, 2024; Solekhah & Mustadi, 2019). The classroom atmosphere became more focused on passive listening rather than actively exploring and discussing the reading media. This indicates that the current reading media are not engaging enough and that students need more visually appealing and clear media to make reading activities more enjoyable and interactive.

The interview with the teacher reinforced the findings from classroom observations and revealed that students' short attention spans posed a major challenge during reading activities. Although the teacher has already implemented shared reading strategies, the currently available teaching media were limited and lacked the appeal needed to encourage active participation. The teacher suggested reading media to have interactive elements, suitable illustration, color tone, and meaningful storylines appropriate. Using the suitable reading media are essential to foster students' engagement and enjoyment during reading activities, better comprehension towards the context and content of the story. By moving

away from A4-sized reading media toward a broader reading and visual media experience, the teacher believes that the classroom can be transformed into a more collaborative and focused learning environment. This shift will enable more effective instruction in a more complex phrase and words (Fitri et al., 2023; Hare et al., 2024; Khikmah & Ningsih, 2023; Latifa et al., 2023).

In conclusion, this study shows that the development of the Big Book is a crucial solution for this class. The teaching strategies currently being used are indeed effective, but the learning process remains limited because the class lacks suitable size, appropriate storylines, and engaging visual teaching media. Although this study involved only ten kindergarten students in PAUD Pelita Kasih, Singaraja, the findings still indicate that students need reading media that are visually clear, engaging, and easy to understand. The use of adequate reading media can help students stay engaged and become more active during reading activities in the classroom, rather than merely repeating words or phrases. By providing appropriate reading media, teachers can create a more effective, interactive, and enjoyable reading environment for young learners.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of conducting a needs analysis before developing reading media for early childhood students. The findings indicate that students require engaging, colorful, and story-based reading media to help increase their engagement in reading. Teachers also need learning media that are appropriate for children's developmental levels and support active participation during reading activities. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to use engaging and contextually relevant reading media to make shared reading activities more interactive and enjoyable. Teachers should also facilitate classroom discussions to help children better understand the story content. Additionally, media developers are encouraged to create reading media using simple language, easily identifiable characters, and everyday situations suitable for early childhood students. This study can also serve as a foundation for future research on the development and evaluation of reading media to support children's reading engagement and literacy development.

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