

## **Mastery of Reading Skills in Malay Language among Preschool Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges for Teachers**



**Norsita Ali, Phd<sup>1</sup>, Hashimah Hashim, Phd<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Pendidikan Islam

**ABSTRACT:** The new norms of education during the COVID-19 pandemic caused many to worry that year one children would not be able to master reading skills. This study aims to identify the mastery of Malay language reading skills among preschool children from the perception of teachers and explore the challenges faced by preschool teachers when conducting teaching and facilitation at home (TFH). This qualitative study uses a case study method by interviewing four participants consisting of preschool teachers and teachers teaching year one pupils. The research participants were selected using the purposive sampling method. The interview protocol was self-administered by the researcher and data were collected through audio recording equipment by telephone conversations. Interview transcripts were analyzed thematically. The results of the analysis found that the majority of six-year-old children in preschool have not yet mastered reading skills in preparation for year one of primary school. Teachers have no satisfaction in teaching online and face many challenges to apply reading skills among children. The challenge is that teachers find it difficult to teach children in a 'one to one' manner and the children's constant absence in class made it difficult to help them. Teachers had to allocate a large amount of time and had to seek the cooperation of parents to overcome this problem. This study also suggests that there are appropriate methods, books or equipment that can help engage children in learning to read.

**KEYWORDS:** reading skills, preschool children, illiteracy, COVID-19 pandemic.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the world since 2019, has had a profound impact on all aspects of human life including the education system involving a total of 1,576,021,818 students in 188 countries (UNESCO, 2020). Many countries have implemented curfews to break the COVID-19 disease chain. The Malaysian government has also taken a similar initiative by enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) nationwide on 18 March 2020 (Rashid & Dorashid, 2020) to curb the spread of this epidemic. This situation presents a huge challenge to the government to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning (TL) because such a situation has never happened before (Chang & Yano, 2020). All countries have adapted different measures to address the education crisis during this pandemic.

With the enactment of MCO, the education system has also changed from conventional method to online learning system which is the main choice of educators when implementing Teaching and Learning at Home (TLH). The current trend of education using online learning applications was stated by the 8th Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin in a special message on the temporary closure of the education sector during the MCO period. Therefore, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has called on all educators and students to use the online platform as an alternative to TL (Rafiee, et al.2020).

### **Background research**

The MOE has ordered all schools to be closed during the country's period in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, in line with the enforcement of the MCO. However, Learning and Facilitation (LF) has been replaced by TLH. The implementation of TLH has caused several issues to arise in the field of education including home-based learning, online teaching, offline teaching, teacher salaries and many other related issues (Azlini, 2020; Siti Nurbaizura & Nurfaradilla, 2020; Wan Mohd Azizi, 2021). Among the educational issues that received attention was the issue of preschool children lagging behind in reading skills due to the difficulty of teaching one-on-one (face to face) between teachers and children during TLH. This issue is a concern among preschool teachers and first year teachers as they will receive these pupil the following year where majority of the pupils are expected not being able to read and this concern is also among the parents (Hazhari Ismail, 2021).

# **Mastery of Reading Skills in Malay Language among Preschool Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges for Teachers**

## **LITERATURE RESEARCH**

### **Current TLH COVID-19**

The World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) insists, children should be given special attention in the context of education (OMEP Executive Committee, 2020). In Malaysia, this priority can be seen when the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK) has been compiled by giving priority to basic knowledge and skills, including values that cover the six pillars of learning namely 1) spiritual communication, 2) attitudes and values, 3) humanity, 4) science and technology, 5) physical and aesthetic development, and 6) self -skills (Nur Hazirah & Masayu, 2020). During MCO, preschool children also receive special attention in TLH for the continuity of learning in accordance with the priorities of preschool education to prepare children with strong foundation before entering the formal education, year one in the primary school. (KPM, 2020a).

When the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, the MOE issued official instructions on the implementation of TLH online and the provision of modules as a guide for teachers. TLH is a TFH that takes place in a non-physical form and can be implemented in any location such as at home, community center and other suitable places. TLH can be implemented online, offline or off-site in a structured and planned manner (KPM, 2020b). Several options are given to teachers to conduct TLH, which is completely online, offline with modules or project -based learning (PBL) or a combination of online and offline.

MOE has also emphasized the role of teachers in the TLH process:

“... The materials provided should be appropriate to the topic of learning and easily accessible, teachers should ensure that all assignments or exercises given, reach the hands of students, and a variety of assessment methods are allowed such as quizzes, worksheets or projects...”

(KPM, 2020b).

MOE also recommended that teachers work together with parents or guardians to ensure the successful implementation of TLH because the success of TLH depends on the commitment of students and students' understanding of the content of the lessons delivered. Teachers also need to record student involvement in TLH using appropriate methods (KPM, 2020b).

Many studies show that the new paradigm of TLH has been implemented throughout the pandemic, the methods are constantly being improved and need to be adapted to current needs. In addition, teachers and students need to master various knowledge and skills (Azura, Abidin & Hassan, 2021; Che Azizan & Nasri, 2020) specific to online learning so that TLH runs smoothly. Teacher knowledge mastery includes content knowledge, application of theoretical concepts and diversity of teaching methods (Mohd Nor, Nik Yusof & Haron, 2020; Mazin et al., 2020; Anesman, Hussain & Zulkifli, 2020). To ensure that TLH in the new paradigm of education is implemented effectively, various skills need to be adapted such as communication skills (Mohd Nawi, 2020), practical skills, affective skills (Mazin et al., 2020) and audio/visual skills (Daud, Abd Raman & Ab Jalil, 2020). To ensure the quality and effectiveness of online learning, adaptation, implementation and reporting are three important elements of this new TL paradigm. Implementation always requires change as well as improvement. Therefore, all parties involved need to work together and be committed to the planning and implementation of online learning. (Rabindarang, & Arjunan, 2021).

### **The importance of reading**

The Malay language skills expected from preschool children include reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. Reading is a major language skill because weaknesses in language proficiency will affect a child's progress. This is because language is an intermediate medium to receive all kinds of knowledge as well as a medium that will enable children to acquire, organize and convey their ideas and experiences (Thanavalli, 2016).

Reading and language abilities will be able to help children to progress academically and be able to communicate better with others. Without language and communication skills, children will be at risk in literacy, academically, socially and emotionally. Furthermore, when they become adults, they will be at risk of unemployment and poor mental health without these skills (Mc Kean et. Al., 2015). Parental support and guidance, will make human beings successful and will also be able to inculcate the attitude of lifelong learning (Ilyia Dayana, et al., 2020).

Previous studies have suggested that reading modules be formulated so that reading skills can be developed compared to the process of learning to read without modules (Kamisah & Rohaty, 2012). Reading skills should also be nurtured through play methods (Sharifah & Aliza, 2011; Aliza & Zamri, 2015) and approach modules based on play methods and visual literacy methods such as cartoons should be included in reading learning modules (Nur Idayu Yusi, 2017) to strengthen language skills preschoolers. Phonics method is found to be one of the suitable methods used to improve the skills of reading simple sentences and spelling words in Malay (Sharipah & Syed Ahmad, 2015).

The findings of previous studies also show that reading is very important to support writing skills. The findings of Surayah & Aminah (2013), found that preschool children can use appropriate vocabulary and have clear sentence cohesion but the sentence structure produced is less diverse. From the aspect of idea generation, preschool children are able to produce writing

## **Mastery of Reading Skills in Malay Language among Preschool Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges for Teachers**

independently even though the ideas presented are limited, less appropriate and less creative. Therefore, preschool children need to be guided and encouraged to write independently to curb various writing problems from an early stage. This is also supported by the findings of the study of S.Nachiappan et. al., (2012), who found that preschool teachers can still make improvements in the process of preparing challenging written activities, through hermeneutic method i.e. a process of interpreting text by finding meaning in written words or recording findings while studying what is desired (S. Nachiappan , Gan Sue Yin & Sangkari, 2018).

Reading habits among the Malaysian community are still at a moderate level with an average of between eight to 12 books a year. Problems in mastering reading skills can affect the school's efforts to produce knowledgeable students (Razali and Ayob, 2018). Reading aims to derive meaning from the material read (Mohamed Isa & Che Husin, 2012). Early childhood education teachers or parents, need to guide children in recognizing their environment such as animals, plants and many more (Romarzila, 2017) as children begin to read through visual images.

Play is a natural trait of children and it is not surprising that some of them are more interested in playing than reading even though a lot of reading material is available. This will cause a delay in children in mastering reading skills. Thus, preschool teachers need to play a role in ensuring that children's reading development reaches the appropriate level. This depends on the technique or approach used by the teachers involved. Children will also read less as a result of the lazy attitude of parents who like to allow children to fill their free time by using gadgets compared to reading materials such as story books (Nabilah Asha, et al., 2020). Teachers also need to apply a more creative approach or method in an effort to attract children's interest in books as one of the learning mediums. According to Gober (2008) in Bacotang and Mohamed Isa (2016), the selection of TL methods of early reading skills for children is one of the major challenges to educators. Teachers need to diversify reading teaching techniques in order to make teaching more varied, interesting and able to arouse students' interest in learning.

### **The Role and Challenges of Preschool Teachers**

Preschool teachers play an important role in the implementation of preschool curriculum and are highly dependent on the understanding and appreciation of teachers in the classroom (Rosmah Abd. Ghani & Mariani Md Nor, 2020). However, teachers can modify curriculum content according to circumstances and situations. Therefore, preschool teachers need to have knowledge related to child psychology, are sensitive to children's differences in terms of abilities, interests and backgrounds as well as being sensitive to changes and developments in modern education (Zawawi, 2008).

In addition, excellent preschool teachers need to possess high knowledge, expertise, skills and motivation in performing responsibilities, especially in teaching and facilitate (TF). The role of the teacher is as a TF facilitator, as opposed to giving lectures in the conventional era. As facilitators, teachers deliver learning content, generate an active and constructive learning environment, as well as encourage children to submit questions and ideas. Teachers need to be smart so that TF becomes a meaningful experience for children (Nur Hazirah & Masayu, 2020). As facilitators, teachers need to ensure that TF tools and materials are interesting and varied in order to attract children to learn. It is important to understand children's needs about their engaging learning environment given that adult and child perspectives are different. Teachers will be able to provide materials, space and opportunities for children based on their needs when this understanding is in place (Sahimi & Said, 2012).

The role of teachers is very important in educating children so that they become educated and educated human beings at an early stage. Teachers need to provide quality education. This is because of the heavy, role played by the and their responsibility are the determining factor of the success in every aspect of education. As preschool teachers, it is very important that these teachers understand the concept of the language that they use as an example in mastering the core of Bahasa Malaysia communication in preschool. This is because, mastery of reading skills is very important as this ability will help children when they enter primary school. Teachers need to prioritize reading activities for each preschool children during reading activities. These reading skills can help children speak and read books well (Nik Muhammad Ambare & Faridah (2020).

The main challenge for preschool teachers during the COVID-19 and MCO pandemics was the implementation of online TF to ensure that children could follow and perform TF activities while at home. Preschool teachers need to adapt TF to TLH and online learning mediums to replace the face -to -face interactions (Nur Hazirah & Masayu, 2020). In line with Karacop's (2016) study, student involvement in learning can improve student achievement, develop an appropriate learning environment, and maximize achievement. Thus, the skills and competencies possessed by teachers can lead to the effective delivery of the lesson for learning and ultimately maximize student's achievement.

### **The Role of Parents in the Education of Children**

The findings of Agustien Lilawati's (2021) study show that parental involvement in children's education can encompass a variety of initiatives and program adaptations that can be specifically planned. Parents feel that learning at home is more effective because many tasks through activities such as in the module can be completed. There are also parents who think that the convenience of equipment such as information technology devices should be taken into account when learning at home is implemented. This is

# **Mastery of Reading Skills in Malay Language among Preschool Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges for Teachers**

because there are families who cannot afford to provide such facilities. Parents also agree, as long as the learning takes place from home, it is the parents who need to help the children do the tasks given by the teacher.

For children, to understand written language they need experience in the form of spoken and written language. This can be achieved through their experiences of hearing their parents reading books to them and when they witness parents reading books, magazines and other reading materials. Parents are role models to children. All these experiences, spoken language and writing are a solid foundation to literacy (Mohamed Isa & Che Husin, 2012). Teacher support in school, and parental guidance at home in children's learning process is important to ensure the process of reading, recognizing and counting (3M) runs smoothly (Fazurawati Che Lah, 2019). Parental support and guidance, will make children successful human beings and will also be able to instill a lifelong learning attitude in themselves (Lylia, et. Al., 2020).

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Reading skills are very important in one's life because all learning processes require reading skills apart from writing and counting skills. Therefore, reading skills need to be introduced to children from an early age so that their learning process to the next level is not disrupted. Reading skills need to be applied through interesting, entertaining and psychologically appropriate methods in order to arouse their interest to continue learning (Emmi Silvia Herlina, 2020).

However, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the enforcement of MCO, have had a major impact on preschool children who are predicted to lag behind in reading, writing and counting skills (3M) (Selan, August 2021). The inability of preschool children to master reading skills when they move up to year one is one of the effects of the implementation of TLH. The decline in literacy rates among children as a result of face-to-face teaching sessions had to be stopped and changed to online teaching sessions throughout the MCO are worrying the year one teachers. Although TLH is implemented through various digital platforms, educators argue, such forms of teaching are ineffective for the vast majority of students (Selan, S., August 2021; Lau, Alizah & Rosliah, 2020).

Therefore, this study aims to explore the problems faced by teachers in teaching Malay, especially the ability of preschool and year one children to master reading skills. In addition, this study is an effort to increase the literature on reading skills of preschool children and year one primary school pupils in Malaysia.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The objectives of the study were to;

- i. To identify the mastery of Malay language reading skills among preschool children from the teacher's perception.
- ii. Exploring the challenges of teachers in applying Malay reading skills among preschool children by TLH during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The questions of this study are;

- i. How is the mastery of Malay reading skills among preschool children from the teacher's perception?
- ii. What are the challenges faced by teachers in applying Malay reading skills among preschool children by TLH during the COVID-19 pandemic?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design**

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach in a case study through the method of interviews on study participants.

### **Sampling**

The study sample or interview participants consisted of four preschool teachers and one Year One teacher.

### **Research Instruments**

The instruments and research tools used in this study were the interview protocol and the researcher himself was the main instrument of data collection and analysis (Cresswell, 2012; Noraini, 2010).

### **Research Procedures**

This study was conducted while Malaysia was enforced with the Tightened Movement restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Prior to conducting the study, the researcher has obtained written permission from the Education Policy Planning and Research Division (BPPDP), Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) in the Eras system and the Rector of the Malaysian Institute of Teacher Education.

# Mastery of Reading Skills in Malay Language among Preschool Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges for Teachers

Study data were obtained through interviews conducted with preschool teachers, Year One teachers and mothers of preschool children. Preschool teachers were interviewed to gain in-depth information and understanding on the mastery of Malay reading skills of preschool children and the challenges faced by teachers when conducting online TLH during this pandemic situation. Data was collected through audio recording equipment.

Interviews were transcribed first before being analyzed based on the objectives and questions of the study. The purpose of the interviews conducted on Year One teachers is as a method of data triangulation to confirm the data obtained from the interviews on the teachers. The findings of the interviews were analyzed thematically to explore the mastery of reading skills of preschool children during the COVID-19 pandemic situation as well as the challenges faced by teachers.

## FINDINGS

### Study Participant Profiles

A total of four participants were interviewed consisting of two government primary school preschool teachers, a private preschool teacher and a first year teacher. The response profile of the qualitative study is as in Table 1. All teacher participants were female, had teaching experience over 20 years and were over 40 years old. One holds a Master’s degree, one teacher holds a Degree, and one holds a Diploma.

**Table 1. Interview Respondent Profile**

No	Participants Code	Gender	Highest Education	Length of service	Marital Status	Age
1.	G1	P	Post Graduate	25 years	Single	49
2.	G2	P	IP	23 years	Married	52
3.	G3	P	Diploma	25 years	Married	48
4.	G4	L	Diploma	20 years	Married	50

G (teacher)      IP (First Degree)

## RESULT

The analysis of the findings of this study aims to answer the following two research questions:

### i) Research Questions 1

What are the teachers’ perceptions of the mastery of Malay reading skills among preschool children?

The findings of the study found that the mastery of reading skills of preschool children during the COVID-19 hit and about to enter year one of primary school next year is quite alarming. This can be seen from the results of interviews with study participants as follows:

*‘Every year, I target at least 80% to be able to read while 20% are often unavoidable. But, when the TLH is over, only 50% or 60% can read because the children lack training. Although they can read not as fast as usual, crawling and can't read long sentences. As much as 40% to 50% more is quite bad, even the letters need to be re-introduced’. (G3/TB/S1)*

*‘My children who want to enter year one in 2022, 50% are illiterate. Of the 22 children, 8 (36%) were completely illiterate. I want to help them, but the TLH class doesn't even come in, how can they be good at it’. (G1/TB/S1)*

This situation is supported by year one teachers who accepted preschool children in early 2021 and had attended year one classes until July 2021 as per the following interview clippings;

*‘At the beginning of the year, the children I accepted into year one really couldn't read. The mastery of reading until this July of 2021, is bad because we can't face them. Of my 31 children, a total of 8 (25%) people until now can still not read and it is very bad, even spelling is not allowed, the letters are sometimes familiar and sometimes unfamiliar’. Pupils who can actually read are only 7 (22%) people’. (G1/TB/S1)*

If pupils entering year one cannot read, they will continue to fall behind as per the following year one teacher interview clippings;

*‘The level of year one books is very high, if students cannot read, they cannot follow and cannot practice. This means that year one pupils must be able to read fluently and can already understand, then they can do year one book exercises’. (G4/TB/S2)*

## **Mastery of Reading Skills in Malay Language among Preschool Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges for Teachers**

### **ii) Research Question 2**

What are the challenges for teachers to apply Malay reading skills among preschool children by TLH during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The findings of the study related to this problem will lead to the challenges faced by teachers in applying reading skills among preschool children. Among the challenges of teacher TLH are categorised as; 1) Teachers have no satisfaction in teaching in TLH, 2) It is difficult to teach children in a 'one to one' manner, 3) It is difficult to monitor children's achievement and mastery, 4) Children's attendance during TLH is unsatisfactory, 5) Parental Involvement and, 6) Spend More time.

### **Teachers Have No Satisfaction Teaching by PdPR**

Teachers are important drivers in the application of mastery of reading, writing and counting (3M) skills of preschool children. However, the findings of the study show that teachers' teaching is hindered due to a pandemic situation that does not allow face-to-face teaching to be implemented. The findings of the study from interviews with teachers show that teachers have no satisfaction in teaching by TLH. This is clearly shown in the interview excerpt below;

*'There is no satisfaction in the teacher because the child is not in front of or with the teacher. In addition the teacher cannot help the child fully and depends on the role played by the parents'.* (G1/TB/TP)

The findings of the above study explain that teachers have no satisfaction in teaching. This will also cause the quality of teachers' teaching to be affected and not the same as face-to-face teaching. This is stated by the teacher as per the interview excerpt below;

*'The quality of face-to-face teaching is not the same as TLH. If face to face, the teacher can ask the children to read many times. Compared to the evidence of reading through video recordings sent by parents who are likely to be assisted by the mother and reading/pronunciation only once'.* (G1/TB/TP)

This is also acknowledged as the following interview excerpt;

*'Teaching face-to-face we feel more satisfied because we can listen longer and can repeat. Compared to TLH, you have to limit the time and it can't be long. Furthermore, children are not focused during TLH's class.'* (G3/TB/TP)

### **Difficult to teach children 'one to one'**

The findings of the study also showed that the teachers who participated in this interview faced difficulties in teaching children in a 'one to one' manner.

*'Teachers can't hear children read properly and can't give very many activities. Parents send in video recordings of their child saying or reading the syllables the teacher gives them.'* (G1/TB/SA).

The interview excerpt above shows that the G1 used the WhatsApps app during TLH. Parents were asked to make video recordings of children saying words or reading syllables given by the teacher. This is in stark contrast to the norm that teachers will face children directly. As a result, it is difficult for teachers to monitor and assess children's actual abilities in Malay reading proficiency. This is because it is likely that parents help children pronounce words or spell or pronounce syllables when recordings are made. This is as stated as follows;

*'For reading skills such as syllables, parents will record and send a video of the child mentioning the syllables or pictures in the worksheet given by the teacher. Sometimes hear a parent's voice say the same word before the child says'.* (G1/TB/SA)

This was also felt by G2 who said it was difficult to teach internally in addition to the lack of attendance and commitment of children such as the interview excerpt below;

*'Teachers can teach reading by Goggle Meet (GM) but the problem is there is no commitment from children and of course parents do not help. Teachers are a bit stressed like this'.* (G2/TB/SA)

*'If face to face, we can teach reading every day, but when PdPR goes through GM only once a week'.* (G3/TB/SA)

### **It is difficult to monitor children's achievement and mastery**

Teachers have difficulty monitoring children's involvement and achievement in a given task and skills. For example, Teacher 1 assessed students' abilities based on video recordings sent by parents. But sometimes in the video recording received by the teacher, whispers or voices of the mother or father are heard helping their children to say the word or sound or spell the syllables given by the teacher. This is stated as an interview excerpt below;

*'It is difficult to monitor children's mastery because teachers assess based on videos sent by parents. Sometimes in the video that was sent, we could hear his mother's voice saying the word even though it was slow '... so this child can pronounce it with help not because it has mastered'.* (G1/TB/P)

## **Mastery of Reading Skills in Malay Language among Preschool Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges for Teachers**

This is also faced by G2 who also face difficulties in monitoring the work and mastery of students, such as the following interview excerpts;

*'How do you want to monitor, if only 8 people enter the PdPR class and the same person every day. Even the worksheet that was given, I don't know who made it. If we look at it in terms of writing, we already know that it is not the writing of preschool children because we know our students' writing'.* (G2/TB/P)

### **The presence / involvement of children during PdPR is unsatisfactory**

The findings of this study indicate that teachers face challenges with the presence or involvement of children during PdPR that is less encouraging. This is stated based on the answers of Teacher 1's interview as follows;

*'A total of five people were not directly involved in the PdPR. In addition there are also children who are involved but are sometimes to submit assigned assignments late. For example, today's activity or assignment but they send it to the teacher via video recording the next day because it depends on the parent's presence at home'.* (G1/TB/K)

In addition, the findings of the study also show that the involvement of children is dependent on the presence of the mother or father at home. It is stated as follows;

*'The presence of PdPR is only eight or ten people, hardworking children and the same every day. The rest cannot enter PdPR because their mother works. Indeed, they do not take part in the GM at all and even if they give training through WhatsApp, more than 50% of the children never show up until the teacher is reprimanded by the PPD because of the very low attendance of students'.* (G1/TB/K)

The involvement of children depends on the presence of the mother or father at home at the time of PdPR. Children are unable to attend or are unable to participate during PdPR because their parents are out for work. Parents will submit assignments given by the teacher after they have returned home from work.

### **Parental Involvement**

Findings show that reading skills need to be taught every day because children need practice, reinforcement and repetition so that it is not easily forgotten. The limitations and difficulties of teachers conducting PdPR during the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult, making the involvement of mothers very important in teaching children to read. This can be seen through the following interview sections;

*'... these reading skills need to be taught every day... children easily forget... when entering year one. These children's reading skills depend on the parents. If parents play a role, insyaAllah children will be able to read. Mother and father must both help teach the child to read every day at home, then the child can read'.* (G1/TB/IB)

*'GM time, children are really not know, so it all depends on the parents to teach their children. Teachers ask for help, demonstrations and give instructions to parents on tasks that need to be done by children through WhatsApps application'.* (G2/TB/IB)

Based on the above findings, parents also need to sacrifice and take the time to teach children to read. Yet it is quite difficult to get a commitment from most mothers to also help teach their children to read such as the following interview excerpt;

*'Teachers always remind parents to take the time to teach their children to read, especially on weekends so that the children do not drop out when they enter year one'.* (G1/TB/IB).

*'Teachers have to give other time according to the parents' suitability for teachers to teach children to read 'one tu one' through GM, but it is very difficult to get time and commitment from parents'.* (G2/TB/IB)

However, parents should not be blamed in this case as they also have other commitments and have to work to earn a living. This is illustrated through the following G3 interview clippings;

*'We want to expect help from parents, but they are also busy working'.* (G3/TB/IB)

### **Sacrifice of Time and money**

The findings of the study show that PdPR demands sacrifices from both teachers and parents for the good of children's learning. This can be seen based on the following G1 interview excerpts;

*'I don't do face -to -face online because there are parents who work during the day. So even teachers need to have a sense of consideration. sometimes in the afternoon or some at 10.00 pm some have just submitted assignments. WhatsApps teachers each*

## Mastery of Reading Skills in Malay Language among Preschool Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges for Teachers

*parent personally so they are not confused about a given assignment. Teachers have to sacrifice a lot, so that the objectives of PdPR can be achieved'. (G1/TB/K)*

The same situation was also acknowledged by Teacher 2, as per the following interview excerpt;

*'Because during the day, the parents work, so the teacher has to call the parents in the evening or at night until the teacher felt drowsy'. (G2/TB/K)*

*'We want to teach the children, even at night we spend time, but the children do not show up'. (G2/TB/K)*

In addition, teachers also sacrificed financially to provide hardcopy materials such as books and worksheets for the children where left with the school's security guards for parents to collect. This is like the following G2 interview clip;

*'Teachers have to go out of their own way to buy exercise books or print worksheet materials for children. In addition teachers had to provide gifts for children who completed a given career sheet. by the teacher'. (G2/TB/K)*

### DISCUSSION

Findings show that reading skills need to be taught every day because children need practice, reinforcement and repetition so that it is not easy for them to forget what they have learnt. The limitations of teacher teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic complicate the situation and require parental involvement to help children read. The overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector from a positive aspect shows that there is open space for teachers to be more creative and innovative to produce PdP materials online while among the negative effects is student dropout in learning (Siti Aisyah & Khadijah, 2021)

In addition, teachers and parents have to sacrifice a lot of time, energy and expense to ensure that children's learning runs smoothly and does not drop out. The role of the mother is more dominant in the home-based learning process. In the implementation of home-based learning. Parents have not only become their motivators but also educators, facilitators, and assist the school in the TL process. Among the challenges faced during the home-based learning process are the limitations of time, technology, and parental education. The smoothness of home-based learning requires communication and cooperation from teachers and parents (Putu Indah & Elizabeth, 2021).

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, preschool and first year children who have not mastered the reading skills are in need of help. Teachers need to increase efforts by diversifying methods that are not only easy to follow but can also attract the children to learn to read. Therefore, parents as caregivers and the people closest to them need to have knowledge and awareness of their role in providing appropriate stimuli for their children's development. The cooperation of all parties, including parents are, needed to ensure that the literacy rate and reading ability of preschool children who will progress to year one the following year can be improved.

Therefore, further research needs to be conducted to identify the preschool's children level of mastery of the Malay reading skills before moving on to year one in the primary school. This study also suggests that there are interesting methods, modules or books with a variety of colors and pictures to attract interest and help teachers and parents teach children to read.

### REFERENCES

- 1) Abdul Majid, A. H., Makhtar, M., & Shamsuddin, S. N. W. (2018). Virtual Reality-Based Learning Needs in Computer Component Assembly Constructs for SPM Education TMK Subjects in Malaysia: A pilot study. *Asian People Journal (APJ)*.1(1), 28-44.
- 2) Agustien Lilawati. (2021). The role of parents in supporting learning activities at home during the pandemic. *Journal of Obsession : Journal of Early Childhood Education*. DOI: 10.31004/obsession.v5i1.630
- 3) Alawamleh, M., Al-Twait, L. M., & Al-Saht, G. R. (2020). The effect of online learning on communication between instructors and students during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Asian Education and Development Studies*.
- 4) Aliza Ali & Zamri Mahamod. (2015) Analysis of the needs of the target users of the play-based approach module for teaching and learning preschool children's language skills. *Asia Pacific Journal of Curriculum & Teaching*. 3(1), 1-8.
- 5) Amornsinlapachai, P. A. D., K. (2012). Developing the Model of Web-Based Learning Environment Enhancing Problem-Solving for higher education students. *American Journal of Scientific Research*. 52, 21-32.
- 6) Anesman B. W., Hussain, M. A. M., & Zulkifli, R. M. (2020). Teaching Vocational with technology: A study of teaching aids applied in Malaysian vocational classroom. *International Journal Of Learning, Teaching And Educational Research*. 19(7), 176-188.
- 7) Atherton, J. S. (2013). Learning and teaching; Constructivism in learning. <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/constructivism.htm>



## Mastery of Reading Skills in Malay Language among Preschool Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges for Teachers

- 8) Azuara, S., Abidin, S. Z., & Hassan, Z. (2021). The effectiveness of online learning and teaching (e-learning) on student learning at Hulu Langat Community College. *International Journal of Humanities Technology and Civilization*. 10(2), 1-14.
- 9) Bacotang, J., & Mohamed Isa, Z. (2016). Development of Early Literacy Module (Lit-A Module) for kindergarten children. *National Journal of Early Childhood Education*. 5, 30-48.
- 10) Clarke, D. & Hollingsworth, H. (2002). Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 18, 947-967.
- 11) Daud, R., Abd Raman, N. A., & Ab. Jalil, Z. (2020). The use of Augmented Reality Video in TVET education. *International Journal of Education and Pedagogy*. 2(1), 253-263.
- 12) Duai, B., & Mohd Nasri, N. (2021). A technology-assisted learning approach from the perspective of marginalized students during the Covid19 pandemic. *Journal of Social Science Research (JOSSR)*. 4(10), 134-147.
- 13) Esteve-Faubel, R. P., Oller-Benitez, A., & Aparicio-Flores, M. P. (2020). Perceptions of future teachers of audiovisual education and communication. *Challenges in training for a sustainable. Education Sustainability*.12 (10296).
- 14) Fazurawati Che Lah. (2019). 3M seminar for parents. *Harian Metro Online*.  
<https://www.hmetro.com.my/bestari/2019/02/421910/seminar-3m-untuk-ibu-bapa>
- 15) Kamishah Buang & Rohaty @ Rohatiah Mohd Majzub. (2012) Development and testing of preschool Malay reading intervention modules. *National Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 2(1), 65-86.
- 16) Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2020a). Teaching and Learning Manual at Home. Malaysia Education Ministry. 1-9.
- 17) Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2020b). Guidelines for teaching and learning the new norms of SVM/SKM and DVM. Vocational Technical Education and Training Division. 1-35.
- 18) Maulana, R., Helms-Lorenz, M., & van de Grift, W. (2015). A longitudinal study of induction on the acceleration of growth in teaching quality of beginning teachers through the eyes of their students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 51, 225-245.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.07.003>.
- 19) Mazin, K. A., Norman, H., Nordin, N., & Ibrahim, R. (2020). Student self-recording videos for TVET competency in MOOCs. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*.
- 20) Mohd Nawawi, M. Z. (2020). Transformation of multimedia teaching and learning in Islamic Education: A discussion. *Journal of ICT in Education*. 7(2), 14-26.
- 21) Mohd Nor, R., Nik Yusoff, N. M. R., & Haron, H. (2020). Exploring the teaching methods of the Selangor Visual Art Education Excellence Teacher (GCPSV): A case study. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*. 5(5), 125-140.
- 22) Mohamed Isa, Z., & Che Husin, N. F. (2012). The effect of repeated reading on preschool children's comprehension. *National Journal of Early Childhood Education*. 1, 1-16
- 23) Nabilah Asha, Saedah Siraj, Hazhari Ismail, Romarzila Omar, Suzatul Akmar Samad, & Enayatul Fadliyah Ninari. (2020). The use of big books among kindergarten teachers for the development of children's literacy. *National Early Childhood Education Journal (Special Issue)*. 9, 106-112.
- 24) Nik Muhammad Ambare Nik Abdullah & Faridah Yunus. (2020). The use of the KST Model to help preschool students who lack communication skills in reading and writing KVKVKV syllables. *World Journal of Education*. 2, (3), 60-71.
- 25) Nor Fauzian Kassim & Fauziah Hanim Abdul Jalal. (2015). Early Childhood Education Curriculum and Moral Education Module: Current issues and challenges.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/NorKassim/publication/303381860\\_CURRICULUM\\_PENDIDIKAN\\_AWAL\\_KANAKKANAK\\_DAN\\_MODUL\\_PENDIDIKAN\\_AKHLAK\\_ISSUE\\_DAN\\_CABARAN\\_MASA\\_KINI/links/573f3d0e08ae9f741b321b36/CURRICULUM-PENDIDIKAN-AWAL-KANAKKANAK-AND-MODUL-PENDIDIKAN-AND-KABARAN-KINI.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/NorKassim/publication/303381860_CURRICULUM_PENDIDIKAN_AWAL_KANAKKANAK_DAN_MODUL_PENDIDIKAN_AKHLAK_ISSUE_DAN_CABARAN_MASA_KINI/links/573f3d0e08ae9f741b321b36/CURRICULUM-PENDIDIKAN-AWAL-KANAKKANAK-AND-MODUL-PENDIDIKAN-AND-KABARAN-KINI.pdf)
- 26) Nur Hazira Hairia'an & Masayu Dzainudin. (2020). Online teaching and facilitation during the Movement Control Order. *National Journal of Early Childhood Education*. 9, 18-28.
- 27) Nur Idayu Yusi. (2017) Implementation of visual literacy in teaching and learning. *PENDETA Journal of Malay Language, Education and Literature*. 8, 66-71
- 28) OMEP Executive Committee. (2020). World Organization for Early Childhood Education. OMEP Position Paper: Early Childhood Education and Care in the Time of COVID-19. *IJEC*52,119-128 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-020-00273-5>
- 29) Ornstein, A.C. & Hunkins F.P. (2012). *Curriculum: Foundations, principles, and issues*. (6th ed.) Pearson
- 30) Rabindarang, S. & Arjunan, V. (2021). The new paradigm of PdPR: A study highlight. *Asian Journal of Education*. 2(1), 19-24. <https://www.arsvot.org/index.php/aspen/article/view/66/73>

## Mastery of Reading Skills in Malay Language among Preschool Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges for Teachers

- 31) Razali, R. M., & Ayob, A. (2018). The effectiveness of using the Interactive Module on the reading achievement of remedial students. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*. 3(19), 34-56.
- 32) Romarzila Omar. (2017). Project-based learning in early childhood education for preschool children. Doctoral Degree in Philosophy, National University of Malaysia.
- 33) Rosmah Abd. Ghani & Mariani Md Nor. (2020). Factors that affect the role of teachers in the implementation of the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK) in Malaysia. *Asia Pacific Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*. 8(4).
- 34) Sahimi, N. N. & Said, I. (2012). Young children selections of the physical elements in the preschool environment. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 38 , 176–183. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.03.338
- 35) Sharipah Amalhayaty Syed Ahmad. (2015). The use of the Phonics method in teaching preschool children's early reading skills. (Unpublished Master's Dissertation). Sultan Idris Education University.
- 36) Sharifah Nor Puteh & Aliza Ali. (2011) A play approach in teaching language and literacy for preschool education. *Journal of Malay Language Education*. 1(2), 1-15.
- 37) Sidek, S., & Hashim, M. (2016). Video-based instruction in student-centered learning: A critical analysis and review. *Journal of ICT in Education*. 3, 24-33.
- 38) Suppiah Nachiappan, Subashini Santhrasaygran, Hari Krishnan Andi, Velayudhan, P. K. Veeran & Fatimah Mohd Zulkafaly. (2012) Application of cognition in teaching and learning in preschool through hermeneutic pedagogy analysis. *Journal of Early Childhood Education*. 1, 34-52.
- 39) Suppiah Nachiappan, Gan Sue Yin & Sangkari Chandra Sehgar. (2018) The application of cognition skills in the teaching and learning of Malay language essays in SJK (Chinese) in Sabak Bernam district. *PENDETA Journal of Malay Language, Education and Literature*. 9, 32-40.
- 40) Surayah Zaidon & Aminah Ayob. (2013) Preschool children's language skills, idea generation and writing. *National Journal of Early Childhood Education*. 2(1), 58-82.
- 41) Syafrimen. (2010). Construction of Eq Module for teachers' Emotional Intelligence training in Malaysia Thanavalli Subrahmonion. (2016). Analysis of the application of cognition in the backbone of Bahasa Malaysia preschool communication. (Unpublished Master's Dissertation). Sultan Idris Education University.
- 42) Yin, C.C, Mo, M.C.M. & Kwok, T.T. (2001). Towards a new knowledge base for teaching effectiveness and teacher development. *Teaching Effectiveness and Teacher Development Towards a New Knowledge Base*. The Hong Kong Institute of Education.
- 43) Zainiah Mohamed Isa, Iylia Dayana Shamsudin, Grace Annammal Gnana Piragasam, Juppri Bacotang, Mazlina Che Mustafa, & Suzani Mohamad Samur. (2020). National Child Development Research Center (NCDRC).
- 44) Zawawi Ismail (2008). Evaluation of the implementation of the Arabic communication skills curriculum in national religious secondary schools. PhD thesis, National University of Malaysia.



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.