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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH READING  
SKILL TEACHING STRATEGY MODEL  
FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS  
IN MALAYSIA



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IDRIS MARIAM OLUWATOYIN

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop a teaching strategy model for preschool English Reading skills in Malaysia using the Design and Development Research Approach (Richey & Klein, 2007). The study was conducted in three phases, namely the needs analysis, design development, and evaluation. The need analysis used a questionnaire, the questionnaire was distributed to 101 Malaysian government preschool teachers in Selangor. Data were analyzed descriptively using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 software. The results for the first phase showed that the mean for the needs analysis is 4.607. These findings conclude that there is a need to develop a model of English Reading skills teaching strategies in preschools. The second phase was to design and develop a preschool teaching strategy model using interviews, focus group discussions, Delphi Fuzzy Technique (FDM), and Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM). In this study, the threshold of 'd' values was less than 0.2, and the percentage of expert consent was higher than 75.0%. The 15 expert panels reached a consensus on the suitability of the elements in the teaching strategy model with respect to the elements taken from the literature review. FDM decision data were used during the ISM process to develop teaching strategy models. Experts decided that there are three components of the model developed by ISM, which are teaching strategies for children who are advanced, moderate, and less able. The expert agreed that the model is holistic. The usability evaluation phase involved the descriptive analysis using an open-ended questionnaire. The results of phase three in the questionnaire show that experienced preschool teachers are satisfied with the suitability and usability of the teaching strategy model for preschool English Reading skills. As a result, this model contains strategies for teaching advanced, moderate, and less-able students.





## PEMBANGUNAN MODEL STRATEGI PENGAJARAN KEMAHIRAN MEMBACA BAHASA INGGERIS UNTUK GURU PRASEKOLAH DI MALAYSIA

### ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk membangunkan model strategi pengajaran bagi kemahiran Membaca Bahasa Inggeris prasekolah di Malaysia menggunakan Pendekatan Reka Bentuk dan Pembangunan (Richey & Klein, 2007). Kajian ini dijalankan dalam tiga fasa, iaitu analisis keperluan, pembangunan reka bentuk, dan penilaian. Analisis keperluan menggunakan soal selidik yang diedarkan kepada 100 guru prasekolah kerajaan di Selangor. Data dianalisis secara deskriptif menggunakan perisian Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0. Keputusan untuk fasa pertama menunjukkan bahawa min untuk analisis keperluan adalah 4.607. Dapatan ini menyimpulkan bahawa terdapat keperluan untuk membangunkan model strategi pengajaran kemahiran Membaca Bahasa Inggeris di prasekolah. Fasa kedua adalah untuk mereka bentuk dan membangunkan model strategi pengajaran prasekolah menggunakan temubual, perbincangan kumpulan fokus, Teknik Fuzzy Delphi (FDM), dan Pemodelan Struktur Interpretif (ISM). Dalam kajian ini, ambang nilai 'd' adalah kurang daripada 0.2, dan peratusan persetujuan pakar melebihi 75.0%. Panel pakar yang terdiri daripada 15 orang mencapai konsensus mengenai kesesuaian elemen dalam model strategi pengajaran berkenaan elemen yang diambil daripada kajian literatur. Data keputusan FDM digunakan semasa proses ISM untuk membangunkan model strategi pengajaran. Pakar memutuskan bahawa terdapat tiga komponen dalam model yang dibangunkan oleh ISM, iaitu strategi pengajaran untuk kanak-kanak yang maju, sederhana, dan kurang berkemampuan. Pakar bersetuju bahawa model ini adalah holistik. Fasa penilaian kegunaan melibatkan analisis Temubual Berstruktur menggunakan soal selidik terbuka. Keputusan fasa ketiga dalam temubual berstruktur dengan guru prasekolah yang berpengalaman menunjukkan bahawa mereka berpuas hati dengan kesesuaian dan kegunaan model strategi pengajaran untuk kemahiran Membaca Bahasa Inggeris prasekolah.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR	The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
DDR	Design Development and Research
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ELL	English Language Learner
FDM	Fuzzy Delphi Method
ISM	Interpretive Structural Modeling
LAD	Language Acquisition Devise
MOE	Ministry of Education
NPSC	National Preschool Standard Curriculum
NPSCA	National Standard-Based Preschool Curriculum and Assessment Document
NKRA	National Key Results Area
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
ZPD	The Zone of Proximal Development





## APPENDIX LIST

- A Questionnaire of Need Analysis
- B Validity of language need analysis questionnaire
- C Validity of Content need analysis questionnaire
- D Interview elements asked
- E FDM Questionnaire in English
- F Language Validity of the Questionnaire
- G Item Validity of the FDM questionnaire
- H ISM result
- I Questionnaire Instrument for Usability Evaluation Phase of the Teaching Strategy Model
- J Item validity of Usability Evaluation Questionnaire
- K Language Validity of Usability Evaluation Questionnaire





## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION



This chapter provides an overview of the research, as well as a problem statement, research objectives, and research questions. The significance of the study and the framework that governs it are briefly discussed in the following parts. Finally, the structure of the thesis will be outlined at the end of the chapter

#### 1.2 Background of the research

Learning to read and write is essential for an individual's growth as well as the benefit of society as a whole (Bowen, 2018). The ability to read is one of the most important of all developmental tasks because success in other subjects depends on





reading and success in reading equates to school success (Chambers et al., 2006). Acquiring the ability to read is a great challenge to many learning English as a Second Language (ESL). Reading is a crucial skill for academic achievement in the classroom because it gives pupils access to information, while at the individual level, reading in the 21st century is an important gateway to personal development, social and civic life (English, 2011). In essence, reading is essential for a country's development, personal success, and academic success. This suggests that in the modern world, reading proficiency tends to drive development across all facets of life. According to the National Reading Panel (2008), many scholars, educators, and parents believe that children's failure to read has long-term consequences for their academic progress and beyond. Also, Tirozzi and Ferrandino (2004), stated that underdeveloped literacy abilities are the leading cause of youngsters falling behind and failing to graduate from high school.



The ultimate purpose of reading is to construct meaning from written texts based on visually encoded information (Perfetti & Dunlap, 2008). It is more than a simple matter of decoding and recognizing or understanding individual words. Initially, the child has to “crack the code” of how their particular language maps onto its orthography but then go beyond that initial stage and process other linguistic elements such as words, morphemes, and sentence structures in conjunction with their world knowledge to construct a coherent representation of the text (Snowling & Hulme, 2011). It is a highly complex process, and thus, takes time to develop these high-level skills.





The initial fundamental process in learning to read in any language involves a process of matching the visual symbols or graphemes on the page to the sound system or phonology of the spoken language. Typically, the phonology of a language and the orthography that the language maps onto different-sized segmentation units or grain sizes (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005). Grain size refers to the lexical units that are converted into phonological structures when reading different orthographies; hence, the size of the mapping unit can be for instance the phoneme, syllable or whole word (Frost, 2006). When learning to read, the child's task is to find shared or common segmentation or grain size units that allow a consistent or reliable mapping between the orthography and phonology of the language (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005). In a relatively transparent alphabetic orthography such as German, children are able to access and map the smallest grain size of graphemes onto phonemes within their first year of learning to read. In contrast, in English, a relatively irregular or non-transparent orthography, children can take several years to gain a similar level of competence (Goswami, 2000, 2003). This creates more literacy challenges for children growing up in a multilingual context such as Malaysia compared to their counterparts in English-speaking countries (Winskel, 2020).

English literacy and proficiency is a concern in Malaysia. Many efforts are put in to ensure students improve in this language. However, the measures planned for English literacy and proficiency are focused on the primary school level onwards (Borrego et al., 2012). The root of the problem, which is education before formal schooling is briefly touched (Saidi et al., 2013). Upon closer perusal of the NPSC, it is found that the prescribed curriculum guidelines are very general. For English





lessons, for instance, the learning outcomes specified by the NPSC for English are that children may be able to listen and respond using verbal and non-verbal responses, communicate using simple sentences, read and comprehend simple sentences and also able to write words and phrases (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2016, p.32). Due to these “generic” guidelines, it was reported that some preschool operators (mainly private ones) resorted to complementing the syllabus with other materials provided by various education franchisors available on the market, such as Smart Reader, Q-DEES, Kinderland, and Montessori (Saidi et al., 2013). The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the Ministry does not supply or indicate any English reading textbook at the preschool level, although the decision is understood as this will help the preschool teachers to select reading books based on the nature of the students they are dealing with. For public preschools, and low-budget private preschools the budget might be limited, and the preschools may not be at liberty to subscribe to such privately sourced materials. Thus, the intended model based on reading skill teaching strategies may be able to contribute by developing a specific English reading skills teaching strategies framework that will assist teachers in conducting effective English reading lessons in class in preschool. Since many children are now attending preschools, and groups at the highest risk for reading difficulties include children from low-income and minority families and children with limited English proficiency (Lesaux, 2012) their education at this level is worth to be analyzed at a deeper level.

Furthermore, the Malaysian government has undertaken several educational changes to improve the standard of English among Malaysian students, ranging from pre-independence to post-independence (Gill, 2013). Through what is known as





‘The Roadmap 2015-2025,’ given this the government has recently taken the initiative to modernize English language learning in schools (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). The Roadmap is a resource for English language curriculum designers and educators who want to help Malaysian students meet worldwide English communication standards, as measured by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). CEFR is an international standard aimed at creating learners who can communicate and connect in any language, or English in this context. This move illustrates the fact that there is a thematic continuum of English language education from preschool to tertiary studies (MOE, 2017).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is defined as an international guideline describing the language competence of English language users at different levels (Council of Europe, 2018). At an early stage, it was utilized as a major language learning approach for learners of different languages as part of the administrative policies in education, workplace entry, immigration, and citizenship in Europe (Council of Europe, 2001; (Taylor, 2004). More recently, it is widely employed as a framework for developing teaching and learning a foreign language in other non-European countries. The main goal of the framework is to provide a standard or international benchmark for language assessment and language proficiency. The CEFR scales are divided into six levels of language proficiency: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 (Cambridge English, 2016). With the focus on communicative competence, CEFR views language as a tool for social, educational, and career success. Therefore, its emphasis is on describing what learners can achieve at different proficiency levels by introducing the ‘can do’ statements. These statements identify the language ability that learners at each level





should demonstrate in the area of spoken and written reception, interaction, and production (Council of Europe, 2018). Nevertheless, there are some problems and limitations arising from CEFR implementation in many countries (Fulcher, 2004). These include teachers' insufficient knowledge and experience of CEFR, teachers' language proficiency, lack of experts producing local CEFR textbooks, and lack of training to guide teachers on how to integrate CEFR in their teaching classroom. There is also the misconception that CEFR plays a role as a language proficiency measurement rather than a goal for describing language learning ability (Foley, 2019). In 2018 the modified version of CEFR was launched by the Council of Europe to deal with these issues and criticisms as well as to update the concepts related to native-speakerism, plurilingual, and pluricultural competence that may be absent in the original version published in 2001 (Council of Europe, 2018).

Specifically, in this updated version, CEFR gives more focus to the varieties of English used for communication in the context of English as a lingua franca and considers the need for multiculturalism awareness to be a competent language user in a global setting.

According to University of Cambridge (2011), The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (hereafter the CEFR) is based on the centrality of language activity in its model and a language activity is defined as "the observable performance on a speaking, writing, reading or listening task (a real-world task, or a classroom task)." Similarly, it is also claimed that "the CEFR is neither language nor context specific and "it does not attempt to list specific language features (grammatical rules, vocabulary, etc.) and cannot be used as a curriculum or checklist of learning points. Hence, users need to adapt its





use to fit the language they are working with and their specific context” especially through “language-specific Reference Level Descriptions” (p. 4). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) aims to provide a theoretical as well as a practical basis for developing foreign language teaching curricula, materials, and methods of assessment. Although much has been written about many aspects of it, analyses that focus on specific language skills regards to how they are treated in the Framework are needed. In this study, all dimensions of reading, as they appear in the Framework, will be examined to understand the theoretical as well as practical issues related to reading skill to develop an effective English reading skill strategy model for the preschools in Malaysia.



Curriculum (Revision 2017) which requires preschool students to develop fundamental skills in preparation for primary school. Basic skills include socialization and personality development, as well as communication, social skills, and the 'three Rs,' (reading, writing, and arithmetic) according to the Ministry of Education (2014). It is an ideal period for children at this age to develop their physical, social, cognitive, and communication domains, as well as their linguistic skills. Preschool education is defined as a program for children aged four to six years old, according to the Malaysian Education Act (1996).

The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has outlined the concept of appropriate practices used for the education of preschool children through the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (Ministry Education, 2010), and the





National Preschool Standard Curriculum and Assessment (Curriculum Development Division, 2017).

To guarantee that the curriculum is up to date with contemporary needs, the National Preschool Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2001) was changed and upgraded to the National Standard Preschool Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2010). The National Curriculum was modified in April 2016, with a learning standard called the National Standard-Based Preschool Curriculum and Assessment Document emphasizing higher-order thinking skills. The English language learning standard, which includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, as outlined in the curriculum paper considers reading as an important skill (Ministry of Education, 2017). Also, Susser and Robb (1990) stated that in traditional English Language classrooms, reading is the most emphasized skill. This emphasis is necessary considering that reading is not a skill that can be automatically learned. Rather it involves a complex process of making meaning from a text for variety of purposes and in a wide range of contexts (Allan & Bruton, 1997).

However, one important aspect of teaching reading has been overlooked, that is the need to use the appropriate strategies in teaching and learning reading skills (Huraian Sukatan Relajaran Sekolah Rendah, 2001). A closer inspection of the Primary School Syllabus Specification reveals that the reading skills to be taught such as word attack skills and reading for main ideas were specified. No mention was made of the reading strategies that should be used in developing their reading competency of the students (Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Sekolah Rendah, 2001). In such a case, the responsibility falls on the shoulders of the teachers to select the





appropriate reading strategies in teaching the students. The question is: do the preschool teachers in the country teach reading with the appropriate reading strategies? Most importantly, are they aware of the need to do so?

It can be assumed then that the awareness of appropriate reading strategies is of crucial importance especially for preschool teachers and parents as early childhood development is the ideal time for parents and teachers to foster and build early reading abilities in preparation for a successful start to formal schooling. The ability to read fluently is a cornerstone to academic success in formal education, and as a result, the development of reading abilities should be considered a fundamental aspect of the early childhood curriculum. Teachers can construct an appropriate balance of instructional strategies to fulfill the different needs of learners, according to a comprehensive knowledge base of multiple instructional strategies and an in-depth understanding of learners' needs (International Reading Association Position Statement, 2014).

Teachers must play a significant role in assisting students' development of knowledge and skills for them to learn effectively. Teachers are not only essential in providing this support, but they are also indispensable in the classroom. Shulman and Sykes (1983) claimed that no system, be it a microcomputer or television, can completely replace an instructor. Due to the multiple domains in reading such as phonemic awareness, phonics, and the concept of print, teachers' knowledge of the strategies needed to teach reading and other literacy abilities is essential (Phelps & Schilling, 2004). There is the belief that a teacher's knowledge and understanding of a subject, as well as their qualifications, are important in impacting how they teach.





However, according to Reutzet et al. (2007) most private preschool teachers have no academic qualifications. With low educational background, they would not be able to justify which book is suitable in terms of the size, font, genre, illustration as well as content of the story. To them, any illustrative fairytale children's book is a good book for preschoolers.

For English learners, reading is a necessary ability. For the majority of students, it is the most vital skill to develop in order to achieve academic success. Learners of English tend to make more progress in other areas of language learning when their reading skills are improved (Wei & Pandian, 2012). For this reason, the mastery of reading skills in English as a second language is a priority. This skill has become increasingly important when the child enrolls in preschool as the skill allows the children to excel both intellectually and emotionally. A national study indicated that students with poor reading ability in third grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than those with a better reading ability (Hernandez, 2011).

Also, according to Mugnaini et al. (2009) children with reading difficulties are particularly vulnerable to vicious cycles of struggle, failure, demoralization, and a lack of interest in school, as well as emotional difficulties such as anxiety and frustration, behavioral issues such as aggressive-disruptive and delinquent-antisocial behaviors, and psychosocial maladjustments such as interpersonal relationships and school adjustment (Mugnaini et al., 2009). Monitoring the progress and assessing the reading in preschool students has been suggested to be useful and beneficial to parents and educators since it will detect students' weaknesses in the early stages as





well as assist in providing more appropriate instruction for them (Ritchey, 2008).

Individuals reading skills are critical for gaining information across subject domains in school and are thus a key indicator of their future socioeconomic success (Duncan et al., 2007; Ritchie & Bates, 2013). Reading skills do not come along when children are born, and the skills are developed and improve as they grow with much practice. The best way to learn reading is through phonological awareness, visual discrimination and memory, letter-sound understanding, auditory discrimination, and vocabulary growth (Majzub & Kurnia, 2010; Ritchey, 2008) . These abilities do not influence reading skills alone, but they are intertwined (Woodrome, 2006) and can predict future reading difficulties (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004). The suitable reading activities that suit preschool children are thematic,



When it comes to acquiring knowledge for personal development, reading abilities are unquestionably the bedrock. The possession of reading abilities among children is frequently at the Centre of the goals of teaching English to preschool children. As a result, reading is extremely important in everyone's education. It is a means of communication as well as a portal to knowledge and literacy, making it the most powerful weapon in the hands of anyone who wishes to live a fully literate life (Al-issa, 2010). The importance of reading may also be shown in the fact that it supplies people with a wealth of life experiences that would otherwise take a long time to obtain if we relied solely on physical interactions and connections (Nunan, 2003; Clark & Rumbold, 2006). The goals of language and literacy programs for children are to develop their ability to communicate orally through reading; as a





result, parents, teachers, and childcare providers must give appropriate time, learning materials, and a variety of exciting activities, as well as games for children to develop reading skills for later education.

All educational stakeholders (teachers, caregivers, curriculum researchers and designers, and other educational service officers) and the entire nation are concerned about children's reading abilities (Mckey, 2012; Huyen & Nga, 2017). This is because a learner's ability to read has a wide-ranging impact and, as a result, has become a vital entryway to information acquisition. Learners' reading skill levels have a significant impact on their language acquisition proficiency as well as their knowledge in all other disciplines (Sekyi-Baidoo, 2003). As a result, reading is essential in the lives of all people, young and old, especially preschool children who are just beginning to learn about themselves and the world around them.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

Literacy, as defined by UNESCO is a person's ability to understand, identify, interpret, and communicate printed and written materials according to their context (Mokhtar, 2020). It has been well documented that the early years involved the highest rate of learning for an individual and the reading ability formed at a young age will stay with them for a lifetime (Machado & Botnarescue, 2010). Children who develop poor reading skills are most likely to experience academic and behavioral difficulties at school and be at risk for later problems (Russo, 2012). Lonigan et al. (1998) reiterate that pre-schoolers with difficulty in learning to read





will also experience difficulties in learning to read during their school years. By reading, children can acquire the skills, knowledge, and values essential for success in school and in adulthood.

A report issued by the United Nations Children's Fund (2023) on education shows that Over 600 million children and adolescents worldwide are unable to attain minimum proficiency levels in reading, even though two-thirds of them are in school. Also, Studies have shown that English reading skills is one of the major concerns among Malaysian preschool students. The Departments of Curriculum Development under the Ministry of Education in March 2022 (IPPK\_KPPM\_2022) reported that the achievement of Mastery Level of Preschool Students level 5+ reading proficiency skills has the lowest point compared to other English language skills.

Likewise, according to a report released by the Selangor State Education Department (2019) on the National Preschool Assessment Instrument for 2019, only 59% of six-year-old students in the state were at level three for listening skills in English subjects, while 54% for reading skills, and 59% for writing skills the report shows reading skills as the lowest of all the skills of English Language. This report indicates that the children are at a moderate level and this calls for drastic measures to be taken by the education department and preschool teachers to work on how to increase the percentage of children's mastery of English Language skills, especially reading skills which shows the least on the scale. More so, the study by Zalizan and Khadijah (2018) stated that one out of every six Malaysian children (15%) has problems with reading at a young age. In addition, Lee and Wheldall (2011) examined word reading, letter knowledge, and phonological awareness in 46 Malaysian Grade 1 students. The result indicated that the majority of these students





were struggling readers. Additionally, Fong (2020) discovered that Malaysian learners' overall English literacy rate was only 27.2%. Reading difficulties among Malaysian pupils have been a focus of attention since the early 1960s (Vellutino et al., 2004). According to Mansor (2017), governments, educators, and other stakeholders in the education sector, all have an interest in inculcating reading habits because reading is a necessary skill for learners. As a result, the development of this model will assist preschool teachers in broadening the scope of their strategies to ensure that preschoolers can attain level A1 on the CEFR scale.

The field of education places a strong emphasis on knowledge. According to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2014), the English language skills criterion must be met by preschool teachers. English language teachers need to be actively involved in what they teach and possess a strong foundation in the subject (Goodwyn, 1997). According to a baseline MOE research from 2013, 62% of preschool teachers' English proficiency was below the A scale, 25% was on the B2 scale, and 13% was at the C1 level. The aforementioned data indicates that although the teachers are still at a low level of English language proficiency, 97% of them are interested in teaching the language. Research conducted by Goh (2019) has revealed that preschool teachers themselves struggle with English language proficiency as well as require some repetition and can only comprehend the major ideas of short passages or dialogues if they are presented at a slower pace than usual. Since all preschool teachers are required to teach preschool children the skills of English (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) they have become a part of the problem (MOE, 2014). It is an issue that calls for concern among the stakeholders because English is required in Malaysia from preschool to higher education.





Every teacher in Malaysia's preschool system is given a scheme of work (SOW) to follow, which serves as a guide to specify the format and subject matter of the academic program. The SOW is a comprehensive document that is transformed into an annual plan for preschool English. It contains learning requirements, content standards, themes for the preschool English syllabus for kids four and older, a work plan, and supplementary materials for the direction of each teacher (Amy, 2019). Preschool teachers, however, face a dilemma when they are expected to use their imagination to process the SOW using the National Preschool Standard Based Curriculum (reviewed 2017) without being supplied with modules, textbooks, or workbooks as provided for the year one, year two and year three children. Accordingly, it is prohibited for preschool teachers to use workbooks in their classrooms. Instead, they are encouraged by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to use their creativity in selecting, organizing, processing, and varying activities based on the Learning Standards to suit the needs of the students and to avoid relying too heavily on workbooks (Bahagian Pengurusan Sekolah Harian, 2018). For instructors to effectively offer lessons in this setting, they must possess a high level of knowledge competency (Bahagian Pengurusan Sekolah Harian, 2018). To address this problem, researchers will develop an English reading skills teaching strategy model for students of different ability levels to help teachers implement the reading skills teaching process more effectively.

Blanton (2020) study stated that frequent changes in the reading curriculum and reading programs, low confidence in the reading instructors, and inconsistent alignment practices are causes of preschool reading fadeout. The results showed the absence of a reading curriculum and the lack of confidence of the preschool teachers





will lead to poor grades among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. The findings portray a predominant view that one of the greatest causes of poor reading in preschool is Low self-confidence among the preschool teachers, which brings out poor outcomes on academic performance and engagement among the kids. This claim can be supported by Mardziah, Mariani, Damaety, and Chee (2017) study which explained that preschool teachers are less skilled in teaching English due to low self-confidence and their pessimistic opinion on the use of English. A survey study conducted by Nur (2017) has shown that preschool teachers have low effectiveness in teaching English. This situation shows that preschool teachers are less motivated, less confident, and constantly worried about English. This finding illustrates that the competency of preschool teachers in English teaching and learning is limited and makes it a challenge for them to teach English so that children can achieve the A1 level in various English language skills. Therefore, the existence of this English Reading Skills teaching strategy Model can reduce the anxiety of preschool teachers in the planning of exciting activities in the reading class so that the teaching process becomes more effective.

The majority of preschool teachers are not English majors. It makes it difficult for them to communicate constructively with preschool children and to conduct activities like reading classes with the right strategies (Canpolat et al., 2015). After the 'Ujian Kompetensi Bahasa Inggris' evaluation conducted by MOE in 2016 to test the English proficiency level among preschool teachers, some of the preschool teachers claimed that they required a systematic teaching strategy to teach the four skills of English to benefit preschool children (Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah Kuantan, 2017). Appropriate teaching strategies, as proposed by Funk (2012) and





Yildirim (2016), play a vital part in children's learning; consequently, methods must be adjusted to suit class size, topic matter, and children's level of proficiency. English language instruction is still mostly dependent on intensive drill activities, which create a monotonous and discouraging classroom environment. It demonstrates that English teachers must be more innovative in their delivery of the subject. Depending on the skills of the preschool students, a range of teaching styles and strategies are necessary.

Given the foregoing, a new English language reading skill teaching strategy model is required, with a special focus on the Malaysian preschool system. The focus on preschoolers is inextricably linked to Malaysia's education National Key Results Area (NKRA), as preschool enrolment is predicted to increase, this new model might play a vital role in the development of high-quality English-language reading skills among preschool pupils, this requirement is also in accordance with the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which is to get a high-quality education. The model will inform linguists, teachers, stakeholders, and policymakers about the milestones in the acquisition of English reading skills among Malaysian preschoolers, and will directly assist in the design of developmentally moderated strategies, which are more efficient because they reflect the natural developmental path taken by child learners. This would then support the CEFR by providing preschool teachers and curriculum designers with defined, evidence-based reading milestones. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education's Standard Preschool National Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2010) and the Curriculum Development Division's Standard Preschool National Curriculum revised in 2017 (Curriculum Development Division, 2017) both place a strong emphasis on reading skills to raise





the English language learning standard. As a result, a model of teaching strategies to enhance reading skills must be established as a reference for preschool teachers.

#### 1.4 Purpose of the research

The goal of the research is to create reading skills teaching strategy model that will serve as a guide for preschool teachers in improving their students' English reading skills. Reading skills employed in preschool should be applicable to the English Language strand and curriculum. Furthermore, the reading skills teaching strategy model will be designed to assist preschool teachers in using appropriate instructional strategies when teaching reading skills to preschool children in accordance with the CEFR. Preschool teachers need to prepare preschool children to learn the English Language by providing early learning experiences as outlined in the English language reading skills curriculum (Curriculum Development Division, 2017). The preschool teachers need to understand the elements of the reading skills teaching strategy model that can help them in the teaching and learning process. The model will be developed with appropriate elements of teaching strategy to improve reading skills in mind. Apart from that, the model will be evaluated by a different panel of experts. The model will be divided into three stages based on the design and development research (DDR) approach (Richey & Klein, 2007) needs analysis, development, and usability evaluation.





## 1.5 Research Objectives

The primary goal of this study is to design and develop a preschool reading skills teaching strategy model. There are three stages to the research. The objectives for each phase are listed in Table 1.1

The research objective for the first phase is the needs analysis:

- i. To identify the need for developing an English reading skill teaching strategy model to improve teaching among preschool teachers in Malaysia.
- ii. To identify preschool teachers' perceptions of their competency in teaching reading skills.
- iii. To identify preschool teachers' level of acceptance of the development of the reading skill teaching strategy model.
- iv. To identify the characteristics of the reading skill teaching model needed by the preschool teachers to help their teaching.

The second phase concerns the design and development research:

- i. To identify the elements of the teaching strategy model based on the experts' agreement.
- ii. To identify the main components of the reading skills teaching strategy model based on experts' opinions.
- iii. To identify the elements in the components of the reading skills teaching strategy model, based on experts' agreement.
- iv. To identify the priority element of each of the key components of the reading skills teaching strategy model based on experts' opinions and decisions.





The third phase is the suitability and usability evaluation phase:

- i. To evaluate the suitability of the main components in the teaching strategy model, based on experts' opinions and decisions.
- ii. To identify the expert's views on the suitability of the elements for each component in the reading skills teaching strategy model.
- iii. To identify the expert's views on the suitability and usability of the elements in the reading skills teaching strategy model.
- iv. To identify the preschool teachers' views of the suitability and usability of the reading skills teaching strategy model in preschool.

## 1.6 Research Questions



The research questions for the study have been formulated according to the three phases of the design and development research approach, based on the research objective, problem statement, and justification. The needs analysis phase seeks to answer the following research questions in identifying the needs of reading skills teaching strategy model from preschool teachers' perspectives;

- 1.1. What is the preschool teachers' perception of their competency in teaching reading skills?
- 1.2. What is the preschool teachers' level of acceptance of the development of the reading skill teaching strategy model?
- 1.3. What are the characteristics of the reading skill teaching model needed by preschool teachers to help their teaching?





These are the research questions for Phase 2, which is the design and development phase for the reading skills teaching strategy model for Preschool reading skills in the English Language:

- 2.1. What are the elements of the teaching strategy model based on experts' agreement?
- 2.2. What are the key components of the reading skills teaching strategy model based on experts' opinions?
- 2.3. What are the elements in the main components of the reading skills teaching strategy model based on the experts' consensus?
- 2.4. What are the priority elements of each of the key components of the reading skills teaching strategy model based on the expert's consensus?



The reading skills in the English language teaching strategy model for preschool are evaluated in the final Phase 3 based on expert judgments and decisions. The evaluation phase aimed at addressing the following research questions:

- 3.1. What is the experts' agreement on the suitability of the component in the reading teaching strategy model?
- 3.2. What is the experts' agreement on the suitability of the elements for each component in the reading skills teaching strategy model?
- 3.3. What is the experts' agreement on the usability of the elements in reading skills teaching strategy models?
- 3.4. What is the experts' agreement on the usability of the reading strategy model?

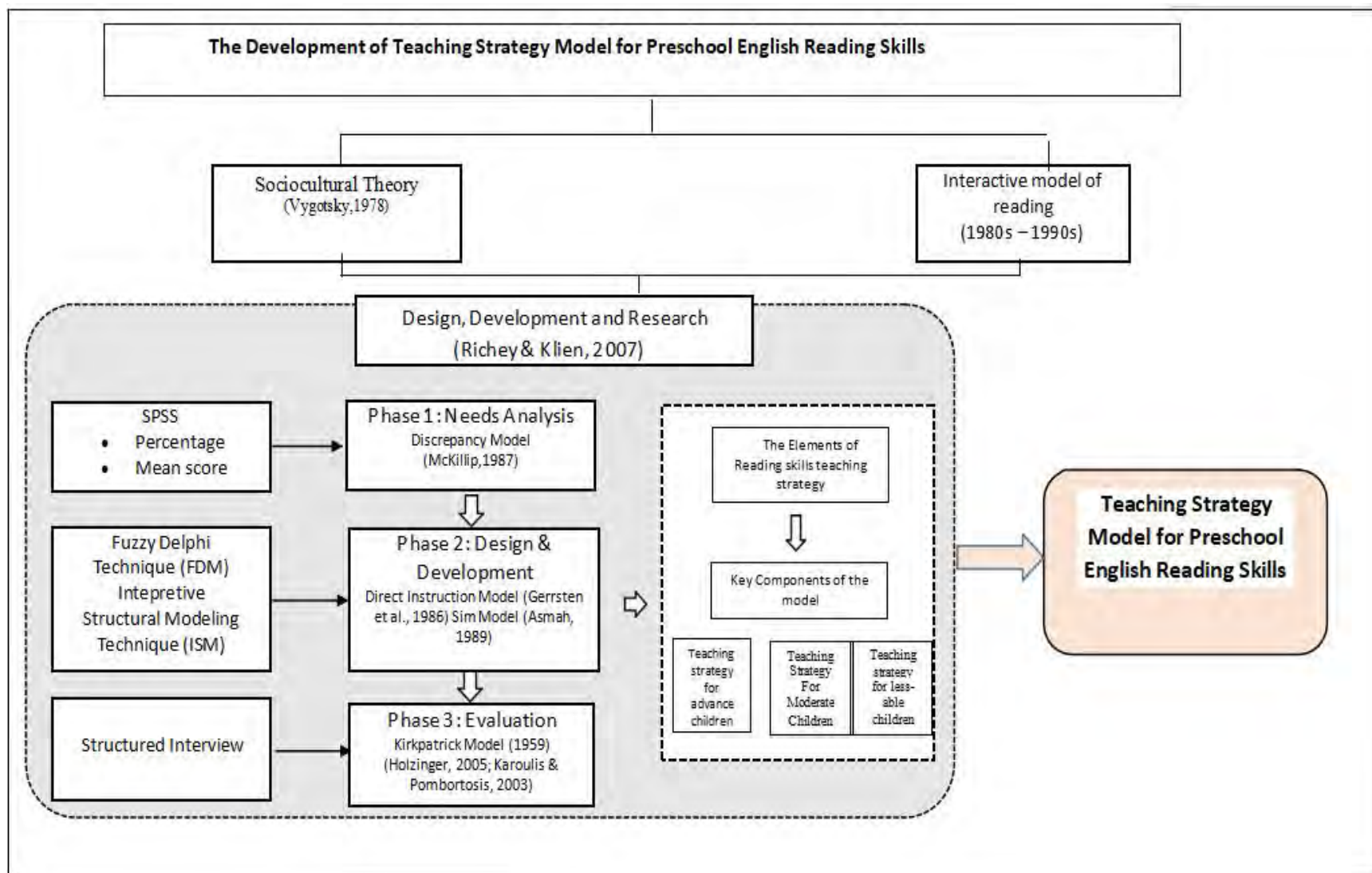


**Table 1.1***Research Objectives and Research Questions by Phase*

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Research Objective</b>	<b>Research Question</b>
<b>Phase 1: Need Analysis</b>	1.1 To identify the need for developing English reading skill strategy model to improve teaching among preschool teachers in Malaysia	1.1 What is the preschool teachers' perception of their competency in teaching reading skills?
		1.2 What is the preschool teachers' level of acceptance of the development of the reading skill strategy model?
		1.3 What are the characteristics of the reading skill model needed by the preschool teachers to help their teaching?
<b>Phase 2: Design and Development Research</b>	2.1 To identify the elements of the teaching strategy model based on the experts' agreement	2.1 What are the elements of the teaching strategy model based on experts' agreement?
	2.2 To identify the main components of the reading skills teaching strategy model based on experts' opinions	2.2 What are the key components of the reading skills teaching strategy model based on experts' opinions?
	2.3 To identify the elements in the components of the reading skills teaching strategy model, based on experts' agreement	2.3 What are the elements in the main components of the reading skills teaching strategy model based on the experts' consensus?



Phase	Research Objective	Research Question
<b>Phase 3: Evaluation</b>	2.4 To identify the priority element of each of the key components of the reading skills teaching strategy model based on experts' opinions and decisions	2.4 What are the priority elements of each of the key components of the reading skills teaching strategy model based on experts' consensus?
	3.1 To evaluate the suitability of the main components in the teaching strategy model, based on experts' opinions and decisions	3.1 What is the experts' agreement on the suitability of the components in the reading skills teaching strategy model?
	3.2 To identify the experts' views on the suitability of the elements for each component in the reading skills teaching strategy model	3.2 What is the experts' agreement on the suitability of the elements for each component in the reading skills teaching strategy model?
	3.3 To identify the experts' views on the suitability and usability of the elements in the reading skills teaching strategy model	3.3 What is the experts' agreement on the usability of the elements in the reading skills teaching strategy model?
	3.4 To identify the preschool teachers' views of the suitability and usability of the reading skills teaching strategy model in preschool	3.4 What is the experts' agreement on the usability of the reading skills teaching strategy model?

**Figure 1.1***Research Conceptual Framework*



## 1.7 Conceptual Framework

The concepts and theories will be reviewed based on a review of reading skills teaching strategy model design and development in preschool education. The previous section explains the conceptual research background in order to highlight the primary ideas, the notion of the reading teaching strategy model, and key variables that influence the development of the preschool English language teaching strategy model. Figure 1.1 shows the conceptual framework.

This conceptual framework is based on elements that have an impact on effective teaching strategies for teaching English reading skills, which is the process of employing effective teaching strategies in the teaching and learning of English.

This teaching strategy's components were chosen based on a richness of relevant literature, theories, and models. These three elements are combined to find effective reading strategies in English classrooms.

Teachers' strategies are critical for improving students' English reading abilities. Teachers' English talents and skills have a big impact on how well they communicate with students. Teachers' interaction with students is not just during English class, but also throughout the child's learning. Teachers are constantly challenged and encouraged in their teaching and learning to try to initiate interactions with their students. Teachers give students opportunities to interact with both themselves (teachers) and their peers.



The Conceptual Framework deals with the following (Yahya & Wood, 2017):

- a) The objective of the research.
- b) The main variables needed to be considered in the development of the reading skill teaching strategy model.
- c) The theories underpinning the variables and how the variables are connected to serve the purpose of the research.
- d) How the variables are positioned in the development process of the model.
- e) The theories and models involved in guiding the development process of the model.
- f) How the theories, models, and development process are connected, resulting in the end purpose of the research.

The conceptual framework will be elaborated in depth, based on the above-mentioned purpose:

- a) The research's overall goal is to develop reading skills teaching strategy model that may be used in preschool English literacy classes. The research's major objective is to design reading skills teaching strategy model to promote preschool children's reading skills in English Language learning, according to the research's problem statement. It adds to the body of knowledge by proposing how reading skills teaching strategy models could be included in preschool language teaching and learning to help preschool teachers meet both learning needs and target learning outcomes. The model will be developed within that context to guide the deployment of reading skills as a support to

preschool teachers in the classroom

- b) The reading skills teaching strategy model is intended to be developed based on the research's objective and scope, the problem statement, and the research questions. The conceptual framework illustrates the theories associated with this variable in this regard. The theories indicate how teachers could assist in the teaching of reading skills.
- c) As illustrated in the framework the methodology stages, (Design and Development Research Approach), variables are related to the model's development process through connected theories and models.
- d) To guide the development of the model, the conceptual framework incorporates models and methodologies used in each phase of the methodology.

Overall, the conceptual framework seeks to show how the research objective is achieved through the integration of variables, theories, frameworks, and models to create reading skills teaching strategy model. As previously said, the model is intended to serve as a guide for incorporating excellent reading skills into preschool education in order to improve the teaching of the English language. To use the reading skills teaching strategy model as a teaching tool, the conceptual framework reveals that the teaching strategy is an independent variable. While the dependent variable is the preschool children's reading skills.



## 1.8 Operational definitions

The following are definitions for some of the terms or phrases used in this study:

### 1.8.1 Model

A model, according to Tracey and Morrow (2006), is a type of concept illustrated in the form of graphics that helps the reader understand the process of work or activity. Likewise, Pastore and Andrade (2019) note that the model could be designed as a form in which teachers must be able to apply knowledge and abilities in a flexible, creative, and responsive manner.



### 1.8.2 Reading Skills Teaching Strategy Model

The **Reading Skills Teaching Strategy Model** is specifically designed to support English language instruction by focusing on the development of reading skills in preschool-aged children. This model equips preschool teachers with a variety of active reading strategies tailored for early childhood education. It can be used to design effective lesson plans and develop instructional modules for preschool classrooms.

The model in this study will be developed using the **Design and Development Research approach** (Richey et al., 2004). It aims to serve as a practical guide for preschool teachers, helping them adopt and implement effective





reading strategies that promote early literacy in their classrooms.

In this study, **preschool teaching** refers to the teaching and learning processes that take place in a flexible, safe, and engaging classroom environment. The intervention will span a maximum duration of four hours and will be aligned with the **National Preschool Standard Curriculum** (Ministry of Education, 2010), as well as the **Revised Standard Preschool Curriculum 2017** (Curriculum Development Division, 2017).

### 1.8.3 Reading skill

**Reading skill** refer to the ability to read, understand, interpret, and decode written language and texts. These skills are typically divided into four key areas: **decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and sentence comprehension**. Together, these components form the foundation of a child's overall reading ability, enabling them to understand and make meaning from what they read.

This study highlights the reading skills outlined in the **National Standard-Based Preschool Curriculum and Assessment** and aims to develop a **model for teaching reading skills**. During the **needs analysis phase**, data on the importance of reading skills for preschool children will be collected using **questionnaire instruments**. The researcher will then use this information, along with identified key elements of teaching reading, to design an effective **reading skills teaching strategy model**.





#### **1.8.4 Preschool children**

Preschool children in this study are children between the ages of four and six who attend preschool education programs under the Malaysian Ministry of Education. They follow the curriculum offered by the Ministry of Education Malaysia's NSPC (Ministry of Education, 2010), and most recently, the NSPCA Review 2017 (2017) is structured to aid their development and confidence in order to enable their transition to Year One.

Preschool students are expected to learn English as a primary exposure to the second language, according to the NSPC (Ministry of Education, 2010) and the NSPCA Review (2017). To make studying English as a second language enjoyable for students, teachers must create an appealing and suitable environment for them. Between the ages of four and six, children can acquire numerous languages at the same time.

#### **1.8.5 Advanced Preschool learner ( reading skills)**

A preschool student who exhibits reading skills above and beyond what is usually expected of them for their age, frequently including letter recognition, comprehension of print concepts, and even the start of word decoding.





### **1.8.6 Moderate preschool learner ( reading skill)**

A preschooler who is growing at a normal rate but might need a little more specialized help or training than peers who are doing well but not having a lot of difficulties.

### **1.8.7 Less-able preschool learner ( reading skills)**

A preschooler who is "less able" in reading indicates that they struggle with fundamental reading abilities like sounding out words or are not yet adept in identifying letters and sounds.



### **1.8.8 Preschool teacher**

A preschool teacher is someone who is hired to teach children between the ages of four and six. It is carried out by personnel who have the necessary qualifications and training in the field of Early Childhood Education. By the year 2020, all preschool teachers in Malaysia must have a minimum of a diploma in Early Childhood Education (Ministry of Education, 2016)

In this study Preschool teachers are competent, trained teachers who teach preschool children aged 4-6 years English as a second language. They come from a variety of backgrounds in terms of age, experience, and education, all of which may





influence how teaching and learning takes place in preschool classrooms. To improve children's reading skills, these teachers will use the reading skills teaching strategy model in the preschool classroom.

### **1.8.9 Teaching strategy**

The structure, system, methods, techniques, procedures, and processes that a teacher use during teaching is referred to as teaching strategy (Dewi et al., 2016). These are strategies that the teacher uses to help students learn. The teaching strategies are designed to assist students in comprehending the material of the chosen course and achieving attainable goals in the future.



Teaching strategy is defined in this study as the practical approach used by preschool teachers to improve preschool children's English language reading skills. The teaching strategy also assists preschool teachers in gaining confidence in their ability to teach reading skills in a systematic manner.

### **1.8.10 National Preschool Education Curriculum (NSPC)**

After the Education (Preschool Education) Act is changed, the National Preschool Education Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2010) and the NSPCA Review 2017 (Curriculum Development Division, 2017) are standard reference documents for all preschool teachers and kindergarteners. The National Preschool





Standard Curriculum is intended to promote and improve preschool education quality. It aims to stimulate thinking by building language and communication skills, thinking skills, positive attitudes, and morals, as well as enhancing fitness and health to nurture the optimal potential of preschool children, according to the National Standard Preschool Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2010) and National Standard Preschool Curriculum and Assessment Review 2017 (Curriculum Development Division, 2017).

In preparation for Year One, the NSPC (Ministry of Education, 2010) and NSPCA Review 2017 (Curriculum Development Division, 2017) are designed to nurture children's potential in all areas of development, acquire necessary skills, and encourage positive attitudes. Because of its status as a second language, the usage of English in everyday interactions is also stressed. To help children think, understand a concept, imagine, share ideas, interact, and communicate effectively, a strong emphasis on language competence is given across all components.

## **1.9 Significance of the research**

The findings of the study, according to the researcher, may be useful to stakeholders such as preschool children, preschool instructors, parents, early childhood policymakers, and researchers who are interested in preschool education, particularly in Malaysia. The discovery will be significant for several reasons.





### 1.9.1 Preschool children

This study is important for children in preschools aged 4 to 6 who are transitioning from pre-reading to reading skills. The reading skills teaching strategy model is a collection of systematic reading models that leads to preschoolers' literacy. Children will benefit from this study because they will be able to learn and practice English through positive interactions with teachers in Early Childhood Education. Because children's early years are so important (Vanhove, 2013), they should learn a second language through active reading skills.

### 1.9.2 Preschool teacher



Preschool teachers need to improve their teaching strategies for teaching and learning reading skills so that preschool children can understand the contents and participate actively in the teaching and learning process, particularly in reading skills exercises. Preschool teachers are also expected to come up with new and entertaining reading activities.

Preschool teachers can help children learn a second language by using active reading skills in and out of the classroom. This research will provide preschool teachers with the information they need to effectively teach English using a systematic teaching strategy. To optimize their everyday interactions with preschool children, preschool teachers are expected to understand the English language teaching strategy demands, skills, and knowledge.





### 1.9.3 Parents

Even though this study does not focus on parents, they are critical in fostering children's development. Preschool teachers can use the model to create opportunities for parents who want to help their children develop their reading skills at home in a fun way. As a result, the English reading skills teaching strategy model can help parents as well.

### 1.9.4 Early Childhood Policy Marker

The content of the early childhood education curriculum can be enhanced in order to increase the quality of early childhood education in Malaysia. As a result, this study is important in the early childhood education curriculum and in the Ministry of Education's efforts to improve the content of the existing curriculum, which includes gaining early reading skills. This research supports the Malaysian Education Development Plan's (2013-2025) first wave objectives, which emphasize the relevance of bilingual skills. Before proposing structural reforms that will start the second wave, the first wave will focus on enhancing the current education system, especially preschool education (2016-2020).

This study also directly supports the MBMMBI (2010) national policy by offering high-quality English language instruction and promoting its use so that the younger generation may master English, succeed at university, and compete worldwide.





### 1.9.5 Researcher

Researchers in the field of early childhood education, particularly those interested in developing research in the domain of reading skills, can benefit greatly from this study. This study can be utilized as a starting point for developing new strategies or techniques for children. As a result, the study's relationship is also valuable for researchers who want to expand the scope of early childhood reading skills.

### 1.10 Limitation of the research

The research is carried out using design and scientific techniques, with the best feasible control features to ensure that the research results are not compromised. Because this study focuses solely on teachers' teaching strategies for teaching English reading skills to children, it has significant drawbacks. The study's context is preschool education and second language acquisition.

The goal of this study is to design, develop, and test the usability of reading skills teaching strategy model for preschools. Because this is a research design and development study, the focus is solely on the model's design and development process.

This study will be fully dependent on expert group collaboration and contributions. As a result, when using survey data collection techniques, partial structural interviews, the Fuzzy Delphi technique, and Interpretive Structural





Modeling in the model development process, the degree of collaboration, commitment, and solicitude will have a significant impact on the research findings.

The design and development of models will take place among early childhood education specialists, and Excel software will be employed in the process. As a result of this constraint, research findings cannot be applied to all Malaysian preschool teachers because the study will be done in specific locations rather than a wide population of teachers.

### 1.11 Conclusion

Preschool education aims to develop the capacity of children aged 4 to 6 in terms of their physical, mental, moral, intellectual, and social growth in a safe and stimulating learning environment through fun, imaginative, and meaningful activities. The researcher chooses to use the reading skills components to obtain the aspects of each skill in this study. The model is a reading skill teaching strategy for preschool teachers to improve their English language ability. To plan their instruction, preschool teachers must improve their abilities, cultivate confidence, and develop a good self-concept.

