
English Teachers' Strategies in Teaching Preschool Students Using The Montessori Method: A Case Study at *Bale Anak Lombok* Montessori School Futura Indonesia

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Abstract: The increasing significance of English as a global lingua franca underscores the need for effective early language education strategies. This study examines English teachers' strategies in implementing the Montessori method at *Bale Anak Lombok* Montessori School to enhance pre-schoolers' vocabulary acquisition and address pedagogical challenges. Employing a qualitative descriptive case study design, data were collected through non-participatory classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with two teachers, and document analysis. Findings reveal that the Three-Period Lesson—a core Montessori strategy—was pivotal in introducing vocabulary through structured progression, using tangible materials and interactive activities to foster engagement and retention. Supplementary strategies included storytelling, songs with movements, and gamified activities, which addressed young learners' developmental needs and short attention spans. Articulation challenges were mitigated through repetition and individualized observation, while parent involvement reinforced learning consistency at home. The study highlights the Montessori method's alignment with constructivist principles, emphasizing hands-on, child-centered learning that supports holistic development. These findings suggest that integrating interactive, multisensory approaches can significantly enhance early language education. Implications include the need for professional training to adapt Montessori principles effectively and for future research to explore their application in diverse educational and cultural contexts.

Keywords: Montessori method, early language education, teaching strategies, preschool learners

INTRODUCTION

Considered a global lingua franca, English is increasingly important for enabling communication in all spheres of life, including business, education, and technology. English has gone beyond its conventional limits. It has evolved into a link between many civilizations and communities as globalization proceeds quickly (Suhendi, 2018; Crystal, 2003). As such, the requirement for English skills has shot up, for which early-age introduction becomes necessary to equip the future generation to meet the challenges of the fast-paced globe of today and tomorrow (Hartina, 2018; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Children develop cognitive preconceptions during the period when they're supposed to attain an English learning edge early on for acquiring this skill with ease and finesse (Scott & Ytreberg, 1993; Harmer, 2007).

Educational systems worldwide have recognized this need, prompting the integration of innovative teaching methodologies aimed at fostering language skills (Zamroni & Wijaya, 2024; Nation & Newton, 2009). The Montessori method has emerged as a noteworthy approach, prioritizing child-centered learning and nurturing children's natural curiosity (Montessori, 1988; Lillard, 2017). This philosophy aligns with contemporary educational goals, emphasizing holistic development alongside language acquisition. With English remaining the dominating medium of communication across the world, its mastery from early life is not merely a skill but a necessity for success later in life (Richards, 2015; Pinter, 2017).

Child-focused approaches help teachers provide a sound foundation that fosters linguistic competence and lifelong learning (Febyawati & Wulandari, 2021; Cameron, 2001). This dynamic interplay of language acquisition and

developmental psychology forms the basis of increasing emphasis on the education of the English language in early childhood (Ginsburg-Block & Fantuzzo, 1998; Ellis, 2008). Thus, researching successful pedagogical practices is highly relevant in the effort to understand how best to achieve the desired results of language learning; it becomes imperative to look at approaches like that of Montessori.

The philosophy of Maria Montessori insists on developing the child's natural curiosity and innate learning ability (Montessori, 1988; Lillard, 2019). The Montessori method was developed based on observations made of children's behaviors, advocating for an environment of learning tailored to the developmental needs of the children. This methodology emanates from the belief that the child has an inborn interest in learning about their environment (Nunan, 2015; Brown, 2007).

Among its foundational strategies, the Three-Period Lesson is one of the most essential: it provides structure with the ability to adapt to new concept introductions (Hamalik, 1983; Lillard, 2017). This progression would start with naming, where the child is introduced to objects or vocabulary, followed by association and recognition that give meaning. Using this, an educator would provide a sequential learning process for building confidence in developing linguistic prowess (Harmer, 2007; Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

METHODS

This study used a qualitative descriptive case study design to explore the strategies employed by English teachers in implementing the Montessori method at *Bale Anak Lombok* Montessori School. A qualitative approach was adopted in order to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon by capturing detailed insights in classroom practice and teacher perspectives. Case studies are particularly useful in the investigation of complex issues within specific contexts and therefore appropriate for the study of teaching strategies in a Montessori setting. The research participants were two English teachers who had been selected through purposive sampling on the basis of their availability and expertise. These teachers provided rich data that reflected the implementation of Montessori principles in language education. The design allowed the research to delve into teaching

strategies and challenges, thus giving a nuanced understanding of how the Montessori method supports language development in young learners. Data collection lasted for three weeks and was carried out using different methods to ensure triangulation and data validity.

Observations were an important part and formed the capturing of dynamic interaction between the teachers and the students in the classroom. These were non-participatory observations, and the researcher was allowed to observe and only document teaching strategies and classroom activities. A comprehensive observation sheet was used to help in the observation process consistently and comprehensively for data collection. Further details about the teachers' assessment of the effectiveness of their strategies and the problems they faced were obtained by interviewing the two teachers. The interviews adopted a semi-structured approach; there was the opportunity to explore certain topics while keeping most of the research questions in focus. Documentation, including lesson plans, students' work and materials displayed in the classroom, supplemented the observational and interview data. This multi-methods approach created a robust dataset that would capture the complexity of teaching practices in the Montessori context. The observations were carried out by using a predetermined protocol so that the data collected would be maximally reliable and deep. Each classroom session was observed from beginning to end, where the researcher took detailed notes and recorded key interactions. Specific strategies observed included the Three-Period Lesson, activities that involved pupil interaction, and multisensory teaching aids. Particular attention was given to how these strategies were adapted to meet the needs of individual students and classroom challenges. The researcher used a smartphone to record video clips of select activities, which were later analyzed to validate observational notes for accuracy. The observation schedule included three sessions per week, covering a range of activities and interactions. In this way, the researcher was able to observe a range of classroom scenarios and thus gain a holistic understanding of the teaching strategies employed and their impact on student engagement and learning outcomes. Interviews with both teachers were conducted to collect qualitative data regarding their experiences and views.

These interviews were intended to supplement the observational data through an exploration of the teachers' motivations, challenges, and reflections regarding their teaching practices. Each interview lasted about 40 minutes and was conducted in a quiet, private setting to ensure candid responses. Questions in the interviews were designed to center around three main themes: teaching strategies, challenges in implementing the Montessori method, and solutions to overcome these challenges. For instance, the teachers were asked to report on the interactive activities they implemented, the articulation therapy they provided, and how they involved parents in supporting learning. The accounts of the interviewees were audio-taped, with permission from the participants, and then transcribed verbatim for analyses. Analysis of interview data, combined with the observational data, allowed for the identification of recurrent themes and deeper insights into teaching practices at *Bale Anak Lombok* Montessori School. The documentation supported and enriched the observational and interview data.

Lesson plans gave an insight into the teachers' intentions and the structure of their lessons, showing how Montessori principles were embedded in their planning. Samples of student work included drawings and written exercises representing the outcomes from the strategies enacted, pointing toward areas of students' progress. Also, pictures of classroom set-ups and learning materials served to represent learning space visually in an enabling and motivating space. These were analyzed for patterns and relationships to the observational and interview data as a way of triangulating and comprehensively grasping the practice under study. The inclusion of documentation in the process of research served to render a deeper complexity and color of how the method is being put into practice. Data analysis used the thematic analysis framework developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), where it was based on three major processes, namely, data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions.

Data condensation involved the organization and summarization of raw data obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation into manageable categories. The data were coded into themes that repeated themselves, such as the use of the Three-Period Lesson, strategies for maintaining student

engagement, and approaches to overcome articulation challenges. Data display involved the development of visual representations such as tables and diagrams to show relationships among themes and give an overall view of the findings. Lastly, conclusion drawing involved synthesizing data to answer the research questions and identify key insights. The iterative nature of thematic analysis allowed the researcher to refine categories and themes throughout the analysis process for accuracy and depth in the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

As regards the theme related to teachers' strategies in implementing the Montessori Method, the data show that teachers employed the Three-Period Lesson as a core strategy, introducing vocabulary through a structured progression: introduction, recognition, and recall. This method utilized tangible materials and interactive activities, such as "*finding hidden objects*" and categorization exercises, to enhance engagement and retention. For instance, children identified and grouped objects by color, bridging abstract concepts with real-world experiences. One teacher explained, "We use materials like colored tablets and objects that children can touch and move around. This makes it easier for them to associate words with physical things, which improves retention." The tactile engagement provided by these materials allowed children to actively participate in their learning process, making the vocabulary more meaningful and memorable.

Other strategies included storytelling, songs with movement, and visual aids. These multisensory approaches catered to children's developmental needs, aligning with Montessori principles of fostering independence and active participation. Activities like coloring exercises and movement-based songs supported fine motor skills and language comprehension simultaneously. A teacher noted, "When we sing songs with actions, the children are more engaged. It's not just about learning words but also about connecting those words to actions, which helps them remember better." Another teacher emphasized the role of storytelling, saying, "Storytelling creates a sense of excitement and helps children see the words in a context they can relate to. They remember the

characters and the events, which makes the vocabulary stick.” These activities demonstrated the teachers’ commitment to creating a dynamic and interactive learning environment that encouraged holistic development.

Despite such findings, the study found that key challenges were found in children’s articulation difficulties and limited attention spans. Teachers addressed these issues through individualized observation, targeted training, and repetition. For example, articulation exercises focused on repetitive practice of sounds and words. “Some children struggle with pronouncing certain words, so we repeat them in fun ways, like through games or songs,” shared one teacher. This strategy guaranteed children enough practice in a pleasant and encouraging environment. Children who practiced repetition not only improved their pronunciation but also gained confidence in using fresh vocabulary in daily contacts.

Teachers included gamified components—such as hide-and-seek games using vocabulary flashcards—into courses to accommodate short attention spans. One teacher explained, “We try to keep activities short and engaging, switching tasks often to match their attention spans. Games work well because they make learning fun and keep the children focused.” This strategy was instrumental in maintaining engagement and ensuring that learning objectives were met without overwhelming the children.

To deal with challenges, teachers involved parents through workshops, promoting consistency in learning at home. One teacher emphasized, “Parent involvement is crucial. We hold seminars to teach parents how they might help their children's learning by, say, practicing vocabulary at home or using related teaching aids. These seminars gave parents tools and techniques to support classroom learning, so forging a smooth link between the home and the classroom. Another instructor said, “Parents can help their children practice and feel more confident when they know what we are doing in the classroom. It is a team effort. This cooperative approach reinforced the techniques used during school hours and stretched the learning process outside the classroom.

The findings of this study align with Hartina’s (2018) research on teaching strategies for young learners, which identified storytelling, games, and repetition as effective methods. Similarly, the strategies observed in this

research—such as the use of flashcards, songs, and repetition—parallel those employed at Cita Harmoni Montessori School (Febyawati et al., 2021). These studies collectively demonstrate that active, engaging, and child-centered strategies are universally effective in enhancing language learning among young children.

Discussion

These findings significantly correlate with the theoretical frameworks and past research dealt with in Chapter II, particularly relating to constructivism, the Montessori method, and teaching strategies related to young learners. The use of the Montessori Three-Period Lesson method as an approach exemplifies the underpinning principles of constructivist learning theory through children who actively construct knowledge in an engaging and interactive manner. Constructivism lays emphasis on active construction of what is learned by a learner rather than its passive acquisition. According to Suhendi (2018), the process of constructive learning relies necessarily on action-oriented, cooperative, creative classroom activities. The findings of this study, particularly the integration of games and interactive methods, resonate with these principles. For example, activities like “finding hidden objects” and organizing items by color reflect project-based and gamification-based learning strategies, allowing children to engage with content in meaningful ways. This supports the idea that learners must actively engage with their environment, as described by Hamalik (1983), to achieve lasting behavioral and intellectual growth. The Montessori method further supports constructivist theory, emphasizing the importance of a well-prepared environment and the autonomy of the learner. As noted by Montessori (1988), the sensitive period from birth to age six is critical for cognitive and psychological development. The findings align with this notion, as the use of tactile materials and the structured Three-Period Lesson provide opportunities for children to develop their independence and understanding. The role of the teacher as a facilitator, as emphasized by Montessori principles, is evident in the study, where teachers prepare the environment and guide activities without dominating the learning process.

The use of the Montessori Three-Period Lesson was shown to significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition in young learners. This

aligns with the study by Zamroni et al. (2024), which demonstrated a marked improvement in vocabulary understanding through the application of the Montessori method. In the current research, the structured progression from naming to recall parallels the findings of Zamroni et al., where students experienced a 24% improvement in vocabulary mastery from the first to the second cycle of instruction. This highlights the efficacy of this method in scaffolding learning and ensuring retention. The findings also support the notion of holistic development, a key tenet of Montessori education. According to Montessori principles, learning experiences should address intellectual, physical, emotional, and social aspects of development. The incorporation of storytelling, movement-based songs, and visual aids in this study underscores the importance of multisensory and interactive strategies. These findings are consistent with Scott and Ytreberg's (1993) recommendation that young learners benefit from activities involving movement, miming, and storytelling. These strategies foster not only language development but also creativity, fine motor skills, and social interaction.

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CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates how Montessori-based interventions, such as the Three-Period Lesson, are effective in teaching English to preschool children. Structured progression can, therefore, be combined with activities that are interactive for the teacher in order to enhance vocabulary retention and foster holistic development. The Three-Period Lesson follows an introduction, recognition, and recall sequence that makes sure young learners not only acquire new vocabulary but also develop a deeper understanding of language concepts through

repeated engagement and sensory experiences. These strategies are consistent with children's natural development needs and guarantee the realization of a child's cognitive and emotional development. The study also focuses on the ability to address issues such as articulation problems and short attention spans. Teachers in the study utilized targeted observation to identify individual needs, while repetition and engaging activities provided opportunities for practice and reinforcement. The collaborative involvement of parents further amplified the effectiveness of these methods, creating a consistent and supportive learning environment that extended beyond the classroom. This approach underscores the value of integrating home and school efforts in fostering language development. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate how the Montessori method's emphasis on autonomy and hands-on learning can significantly enhance early language education. Activities like storytelling, songs with movement, and gamification not only make learning enjoyable but also help children connect abstract concepts to real-world experiences. This holistic approach ensures that children develop critical language skills alongside creativity, independence, and social interaction, which are essential for their overall development. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of these strategies, particularly in diverse educational settings and multilingual classrooms. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how Montessori-based methods influence language proficiency, cognitive development, and academic performance over time. Additionally, examining the adaptability of these strategies across different cultural and linguistic contexts would be valuable for expanding their applicability and relevance globally.

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