

A Systematic Review of the Issues and Challenges of Preschool Teachers Regarding English Reading Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Researchers have extensively debated the use of English language instruction (ELT) at the preschool level. Although there is widespread consensus about the effectiveness of ELT and the implementation of English reading assessment (ERA) at the preschool level, significant challenges arise when it comes to acquiring a second, third, or foreign language. Hence, this comprehensive analysis examines the challenges encountered by preschool educators when assess the English reading skill and their perspectives on the appropriate use of ERA to young learners. By using three reputable databases, namely Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and Malaysian Citation Index (MyCITE), a total of 36 papers were selected from a pool of 87 publications published between 2012 and 2023. The selection process included applying exclusion and inclusion criteria. The research revealed eight primary challenges encountered by preschool educators while applying ERA: English language fluency, pedagogical expertise, teacher perspective, curriculum, instructional materials, training, socio-cultural factors, and classroom setting. Preschool teachers' opinions about ERA include four primary concerns: bilingual education, children's characteristics, curriculum modification, and instructors' experience. These results will provide teachers, authorities, and researchers with a comprehensive understanding of the specific challenges that arise during the implementation of ERA in preschools. They will also provide effective strategies to address these challenges, beginning with the challenges held by preschool teachers.

KEYWORDS: Issue, challenges, preschool teacher, English Reading Assessment

INTRODUCTION

There is a prevalent perception that younger individuals have an advantage in language acquisition. Each kid has the capacity to acquire and excel in intricate linguistic skills. In order to enhance their proficiency in a second language, it is crucial for individuals to be exposed to it at the earliest opportunity. Preschool-aged children have the ability to comprehend and become proficient in a second language while attending preschool (Uri & Abd Aziz, 2020). During the preschool years, children experience significant development in their capacity to learn language and comprehend verbal information. Young infants have a significant capacity to assimilate a substantial quantity of novel knowledge, particularly when acquiring a second language (Ismail, Yusof & Yunus, 2016). Thus, it is imperative that children get educational assistance to foster the growth of their linguistic abilities (Zaki & Darmi, 2021). The primary difficulty in English Language Teaching (ELT) to preschool children is in the question of "how to accomplish it?" Acquiring knowledge about their language learning process is necessary. According to Piaget (1964), preschool-aged youngsters are still operating at the 'concrete operational level'. They acquire knowledge via experiential learning by manipulating the items in their environment. Without experiencing a scenario, individuals are unable to surpass the limits of their imagination. Preschool-aged children acquire knowledge from their extensive range of experiences. In order to get a thorough understanding of a concept, individuals must personally experience the sensation associated with it (Piaget, 1964). Several variables influence children's proficiency in acquiring the English language, including the presence of competent instructors, strategic curriculum design, appropriate teaching resources, and effective

pedagogical approaches. When designing English language teaching (ELT) for preschool children, it is important to take into account factors such as motivation, teacher credentials, class size, session duration, course organization, teaching methods, and the learning environment of the children (Hendi & Asmawi, 2018). Although there is consensus about the effectiveness of English Language Teaching (ELT) and the use of English reading assessment (ERA) in preschool education, significant challenges arise when trying to learn a second, third, or foreign language (Zamin, Lotfie & Salleh, 2022). This study comprehensively examines the challenges encountered by preschool educators in assessing the English reading proficiency of young learners and their perspectives on the appropriate use of ERA. This report examines prior research to investigate the concerns and convictions of preschool educators in the ERA. The objective of this research is to identify and define the primary challenges and shared apprehensions related to ERA in preschools, as well as to examine the strategies used by instructors to address them. Furthermore, this research aims to ascertain the elements that contribute to the inadequate English language skills shown by preschool teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The expansion of English Language Teaching (ELT) in preschool education necessitates the presence of highly skilled and competent preschool teachers. What is the most effective approach for preschool teachers to address the specific requirements of preschool children who are learning English as a second language (ESL)? How can preschool teachers provide an inclusive atmosphere that promotes the growth of many cultures and languages? How can preschool teachers effectively augment their knowledge, consciousness, and instructional methodology to adequately meet the continuous educational requirements of the children?

Implementing ERA in preschool is a very demanding endeavour that requires distinct techniques compared to those used with primary school children or adults. Proficiency in ELT is not alone indicative of the ability to teach English in preschool; it requires well-trained instructors. According to Khurramovna and Bakhtiyarovna (2021), it is advisable for only seasoned educators to engage in teaching preschool-aged youngsters. English Language Teaching (ELT) in preschool involves more than passive activities such as sitting, reading textbooks, and conversing. The application of it in preschool should not be tedious. Preschool children should strive to independently gain information. The preschool teachers' presentation of a concept should be elucidated by providing concrete examples. English Language Teaching (ELT) in preschool should be designed to engage children via enjoyable activities. Preschool teachers have a crucial role in facilitating young children's acquisition of language (Elicker & McMullen, 2013). Teachers gain specialised knowledge via ongoing training, observation, and evaluation of preschool children (Siddek & Ismail, 2021).

Preschool children engage in substantial interactions with their instructors, which therefore has an impact on their social, emotional, and cognitive development (Sandhakumarin & Tan, 2023). The establishment of personal interactions between preschool teachers and children is essential for achieving excellent learning outcomes (Narea et al., 2022). The teacher's role is cultivating a congenial environment and devising suitable activities for the students. Preschool children should not be held accountable for their learning outcomes, since their progress is contingent upon the guidance and instruction provided by their instructors (Goh, 2019).

Recently, the majority of systematic reviews have focused on evaluating educational research assessments (ERA) at the elementary, secondary, or university levels (Lee et al., 2020). A minority of them have prioritised preschool. While there is research that specifically examines the impact of ERA in preschool settings (Nihazram, & Masnan, 2020), it seems to have a biased approach that primarily seeks to identify the shortcomings of preschool teachers in using ERA (Lim et al., 2018). As an instance, Goh et al. (2020) performed a comprehensive analysis of 20 research that specifically examined the obstacles hindering the utilisation of English by preschool educators within the classroom setting. One of the obstacles identified in the research is a deficiency in English language ability. Significantly, the research proposed that more investigation is necessary to have a deeper understanding of the difficulties by examining the challenges and attitudes of preschool teachers (Mohamed et al., 2012). In a systematic review conducted by Kim (2021), the focus was on the attitudes of preschool teachers towards English Language Learners (ELLs) and their

academic capabilities (Mohamed et al., 2010). The research analysed 25 articles that were published between 1985 and 2015. Evidence was presented to show that the instructors had contrasting views and attitudes. The study proposed that it is imperative to address the teachers' deficiency in knowledge, experience, and confidence required for successful instruction of English Language Learners (ELL). This is crucial considering the influence of teachers' views and attitudes regarding ELL.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the following research objective:

1. the issues encountered by preschool educators in the ERA.
2. the challenges held by preschool educators in the ERA.

METHODOLOGY

This systematic review used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses or PRISMA 2020 checklist, which is a strategy for conducting systematic reviews and meta-analyses. According to Liberati et al. (2009), PRISMA has the ability to enhance the lucidity and openness of reviews. The PRISMA statement had 27 checklist elements and four distinct processes: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. PRISMA is designed to promote consistency and accountability in recording systematic reviews, rather than serving as a tool for quality evaluation. The search primarily conducted a comprehensive analysis of the current literature and empirical research about the problems and views of preschool teachers in the field of early childhood education. This research used three databases, namely Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and Malaysian Citation Index (MyCITE), including publications published from 2012 to 2023.

Step 1: Identification

Several pertinent publications for this investigation undergo four primary stages. In the first stage, the process included the identification of keywords, which was then followed by the exploration of associated and analogous terms using thesauruses, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and previous research. Consequently, search queries were formulated in October 2023 (Table 1) after all relevant keywords were identified successfully.

A search methodology was devised for this systematic review to locate relevant material on early reading assessment in preschool settings. A sophisticated search function was used to enable intricate search queries using field codes, boolean operators, and proximity operators in order to refine the search parameters. To broaden the search, one may use Boolean AND and OR operators (Grewal et al., 2016). The Boolean OR operator is used to include alternate spellings and synonyms of terms, whilst the Boolean AND operator serves as a word separator to broaden the scope of search results and delve into specialised research.

Table 1. Search String Used in this Study.

Databases	Keywords Used
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Challenges" OR "Issues" OR "Problems" OR "Dilemma" OR "Difficulty" OR "Solution" OR "Obstacle" OR "Challenges" OR "Strategy" OR "Best" OR "Practices" OR "Ways" OR "Proper" OR "Suitable" OR "Appropriate" OR "Correct" OR "Right") AND ("English Reading Assessment" OR "ERA" OR "English Language Teaching" OR "ELT" OR "Teaching English as a second language" OR "TESL" OR "Teaching English as a foreign language" OR "TEFL" OR "TEACHING English to speaker of other languages" OR "TESOL" OR "English as a medium of instruction") AND ("Preschool" OR "Kindergarten" OR "Early childhood education" OR "ECE" OR "Nursery")

WoS	TS ("Challenges" OR "Issues" OR "Problems" OR "Dilemma" OR "Difficulty" OR "Solution" OR "Obstacle" OR "Challenges" OR "Strategy" OR "Best" OR "Practices" OR "Ways" OR "Proper" OR "Suitable" OR "Appropriate" OR "Correct" OR "Right") AND ("English language teaching" OR "ELT" OR "English language learning" OR "ELL" OR "Teaching English as a second language" OR "TESL" OR "Teaching English as a foreign language" OR "TEFL" OR "TEACHING English to speaker of other languages" OR "TESOL" OR "English as a medium of instruction") AND ("Preschool" OR "Kindergarten" OR "Early childhood education" OR "ECE" OR "Nursery")
MyCITE	English reading AND Preschool

Process 2: Screening (Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria)

An initial screening, without specific data requirements established, was conducted on the three databases to determine whether documents should be included or excluded. This screening yielded a total of 494 documents. Nevertheless, the original search rejected 301 publications, such as book chapters, periodicals, lectures, reports, conference papers, conference reviews, and dissertations. Consequently, a total of 193 papers, consisting of journal and review articles written in English between 2012 and 2022, met the specified criteria (Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of the Selected Articles

Data Perimeter		Inclusion	Exclusion
Literature type	Journal articles		book chapters, lecture notes, magazines, proceeding reports, conference papers, conference reviews, and thesis/ dissertations from the initial search
Language	English		Non-English
Year Publish	2012 - 2023		<2011

Process 3: Eligibility

Eligibility is a manual procedure that involves the inclusion or exclusion of items based on particular criteria set by the author. Following the preliminary evaluation, a grand total of 195 documents were prepared for the subsequent stage, referred to as eligibility. During this phase, we conducted a comprehensive examination of the titles, abstracts, and primary contents of all articles to verify their compliance with the inclusion criteria and study purpose. Out of the first screening, a total of 97 publications were deemed unrelated to the study aims and were discarded. Additionally, 10 duplicate articles were identified and deleted, leaving us with a final count of 87 papers that are acceptable for further screening.

Process 4: Included

Following the completion of the article eligibility procedure, a total of 87 eligible articles were chosen and then reviewed in the last stage, which is referred to as "Included". This systematic review included pertinent publications to address the study purpose and inquiries. A total of 36 papers were chosen for this systematic review (Figure 1).

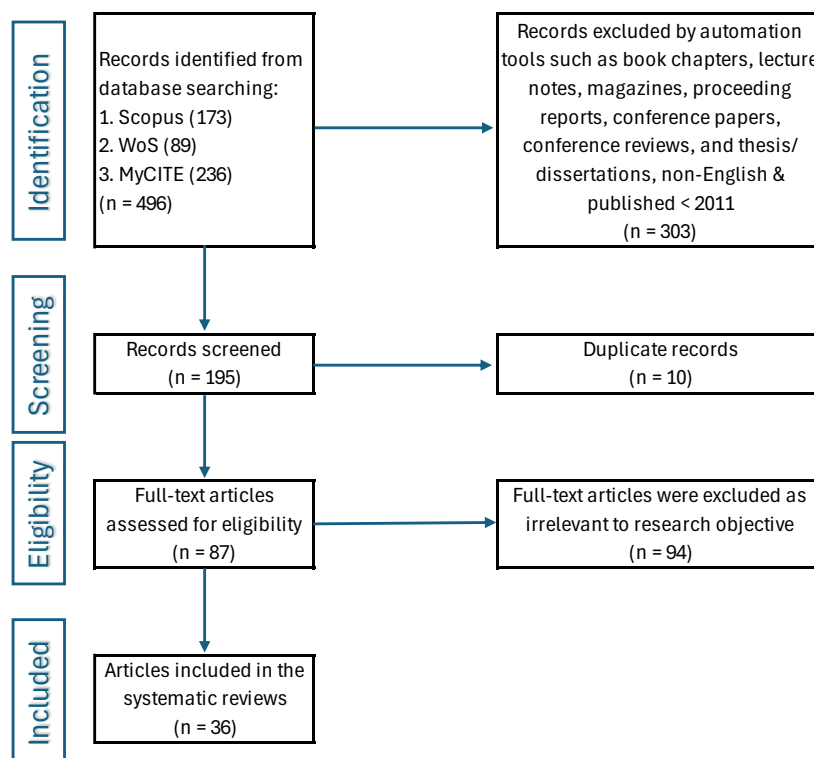


Figure 1. The Flow Diagram of the Study (Adapted from Nang et al., 2022)

Data Analysis and Abstractions

In this part, the outcomes of the 36 papers that were included were examined, assessed, and reviewed. The papers included in this systematic review examined the concerns and convictions of preschool educators in English reading assessment. The studies that are provided are condensed and shown in Table 3. According to Table A1, a total of 15 articles were chosen from Scopus, 11 from WoS, and 10 from MyCITE. The selection of these databases was based on the exceptional quality of the papers, particularly in the domain of preschool education.

Data Analysis Procedures

After selecting the papers, the Mendeley Reference Manager software was used to conduct a comprehensive examination of each article. The key data derived from the two study questions were emphasized, recorded, and organized in an Excel spreadsheet to discern patterns, correlations, and themes. In order to determine precise themes, it is necessary to use critical analysis and imagination to cluster, compare, find common patterns, and construct a coherent chain of evidence (Whittemore & Knaf, 2005).

The authors used thematic analysis to identify the primary topic in order to address two research inquiries:

1. What are the issues encountered by preschool educators in the ERA?
2. What are the challenges faced by preschool educators in the ERA?

Three evaluations by specialists were done to verify the authenticity of the discovered themes. Within the group of experts, there are two individuals who possess specialised knowledge in early childhood education and have backgrounds in teacher training institutions. Additionally, there is one expert who specialises in qualitative research. Domain validity was verified via the expert review process to ascertain the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of each topic. Based on the feedback and recommendations from specialists, the writers made revisions according to their own judgement. The author's decision is informed by recommendations from Creswell and Miller (2000), whereas several researchers have formulated their own understanding of validity.

For the first research question, a total of eight themes were found, whereas for the second research

question, four themes were identified. The following section presents an analysis of the discoveries made in this investigation.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1: “What are the issues encountered by preschool educators in the ERA?”

This systematic research categorizes the challenges encountered by preschool teachers in the English reading Assessment (ERA) into eight distinct themes: English proficiency, training, pedagogical competence, curriculum, teacher perspective, classroom environment, instructional resources, and socio-cultural factors. The concerns are classified in this manner to ease further discourse. Table 3 displays the classification of challenges faced by preschool teachers, as derived from the chosen publications.

Table 3. Categorization of Issues Faced by Preschool Teachers in ERA

Authors	English proficiency	Training	Pedagogical competence	Curriculum	Teacher perspective	Classroom environment	Instructional resources	Socio-cultural
Al-Darwish (2012)		✓		✓				✓
Auleear Owodally (2015)			✓				✓	
Alvira and González (2018)		✓						
Baker (2019)			✓					
Bernstein et al. (2021)	✓	✓						
Biricik and Özkan (2012)		✓	✓					
Chu (2014)	✓			✓	✓			
Ehri and Flugman (2018)		✓						
Fauzi et al. (2021)	✓						✓	
Goh and Luen Loy (2021)					✓			
Goh (2019)	✓	✓						✓
Huang et al. (2019)	✓	✓			✓			
Huang (2014)			✓				✓	
Hegde et al. (2018)		✓						✓

Jacoby and Lesaux (2019)	✓			✓				
Jawaid (2014)			✓	✓				
Lalani and Rodrigues (2012)				✓				
Lai-Reeve et al. (2018)	✓		✓					
Leung et al. (2013)	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓
Mahmoud Ghoneim and Abdelsalam Elghotmy (2015)	✓							
Milton et al. (2020)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Mede (2017)					✓			
Mustafa et al. (2019)								✓
Nafissi and Shafiee (2020)								✓
Ng (2015)	✓	✓	✓					
Pollard-Durodola et al. (2012)	✓	✓	✓					
Ping et al. (2020)	✓	✓	✓					
Prosic-Santovac (2017)				✓			✓	
Qin and Md Nor (2018)		✓		✓	✓		✓	
Sandhakumarin & Tan (2023)		✓	✓	✓				✓
Slapac and Dorner (2013)				✓		✓		
Wang and Hou (2021)		✓		✓	✓	✓		
Wong and Russak (2020)		✓						

Xiao et al. (2020)	✓		✓			✓		
Zucker et al. (2021)				✓	✓	✓		

Table 4 reveals that the primary or often encountered challenge faced by preschool teachers in ERA is the competency in the English language. There are a total of fourteen articles that discuss this issue. These articles are authored by Pollard-Durodola et al. (2012), Leung et al. (2013), Pink et al. (2013), Chu (2014), Mahmoud Ghoneim & Abdelsalam Elghotmy (2015), Ng (2015), Lai-Reeve et al. (2018), Goh (2019), Huang et al. (2019), Jacoby & Lesaux (2019), Milton et al. (2020), Xiao et al. (2020), Fauzi et al. (2021), Bernstein et al. (2021) and Sandhakumarin & Tan (2023). This problem often arises when the preschool instructor is not a native English speaker. The identified issues in practicing Early Reading Acquisition (ERA) in preschool include a limited vocabulary (Pink et al., 2013; Pollard-Durodola et al., 2012), insufficient knowledge of phonetics (Mahmoud Ghoneim & Abdelsalam Elghotmy, 2015), difficulties in pronunciation (Fauzi et al., 2021; Jacoby & Lesaux, 2019; Lai-Reeve et al., 2018; Leung et al., 2013), concerns about teaching incorrect English (Chu, 2014; Huang et al., 2019), and challenges in speaking and writing abilities (Goh, 2019). These concerns are commonly observed in the selected studies on ERA in preschool. The proficiency in the English language has a detrimental effect on the language performance and development of young children in the ERA, as shown by studies conducted by Leung et al. (2013), Ng (2015), Xiao et al. (2020), Milton et al. (2020) and Bernstein et al. (2021).

In addition to English proficiency, there are also fourteen articles that specifically address training issues in preschool English language teaching (ELT). These articles include the works of Al-Darwish (2012), Biricik and Özkan (2012), Pollard-Durodola et al. (2012), Pink et al. (2013), Ng (2015), Alvira and González (2018), Qin and Md Nor (2018), Ehri and Flugman (2018), Hegde et al. (2018), Goh (2019), Huang et al. (2019), Milton et al. (2020), Wong and Russak (2020), Bernstein et al. (2021), Wang and Hou (2021) and Sandhakumarin & Tan (2023). Preschool teachers are now awaiting formal training for English Language Teaching (ELT) in the preschool setting, which hampers their capacity to foster the development of English Language Learners (ELL) in young children (Qin & Md Nor, 2018). Preschool teachers should get training on the proper implementation of preschool educational research and assessment (ERA), as discussed by Ng (2015), Huang et al. (2019) and Milton et al. (2020). Preschool teachers possess a greater level of proficiency in early childhood education compared to their training in preschool English language teaching. While bilingual education (BE) is seen by some as an effective tool for fostering children's enthusiasm for learning English, it is also necessary to provide additional instruction. Preschool teachers acquire knowledge of behavioural economics (BE) via their teaching experiences and use it through their teaching methods (Bernstein et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2020; Sandhakumarin & Tan, 2023). Preschool teachers, while receiving appropriate training, do not adhere to the instructions (Wang & Hou, 2021). Despite the introduction of a curricular intervention accompanied by comprehensive instructional and supporting professional development training, preschool teachers tend to apply their techniques far outside the scope of the intervention. Additional assistance is required for their professional development training (Al-Darwish, 2012). Additionally, they need specialised instruction in areas such as behavioural economics (BE) and effective teaching methods for culturally diverse students (Goh, 2019; Hegde et al., 2018). Preschool educators need specialised training to provide high-quality teaching, especially for preschoolers who are at risk for dyslexia or have challenges in acquiring reading skills (Wong & Russak, 2020).

The third concern mentioned is instructional abilities. This review has identified eleven articles that specifically discuss issues related to pedagogical skills. The articles referenced include the works of Pollard-Durodola et al. (2012), Biricik & Özkan (2012), Leung et al. (2013), Pink et al. (2013), Huang (2014), Jawaid (2014), Auleear Owodally (2015), Ng (2015), Lai-Reeve et al. (2018), Baker (2019), Milton et al. (2020), Xiao et al. (2020), Fauzi et al. (2021) and Sandhakumarin & Tan (2023). A difficulty

that arises in this context is the absence of adequate advice on pedagogical abilities, as highlighted by Lai-Reeve et al. (2018), Leung et al. (2013), Milton et al. (2020), and Xiao et al. (2020). Preschool teachers lacking supervision rely only on textbooks as a primary source of pedagogical guidance for designing English Language Teaching (ELT) practices or activities (Jawaid, 2014; Pink et al., 2013). Baker (2019) conducted research which found that preschool teachers' English language teaching strategies are influenced by their attitudes, but they also assess the effectiveness of such approaches. Preschool teachers, while getting supervision, regularly demonstrate poor quality teaching, particularly in terms of their vocabulary abilities (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2012). Moreover, the pedagogical method used by preschool teachers, which places the teacher at the focus of instruction, leads to a sense of tedium among young children when it comes to acquiring English language skills (Biricik & Özkan, 2012). Teachers often use translation as a means to instruct young children in acquiring new language, particularly when visual aids are not available (Auleear Owodally, 2015). The preschool education system in ERA is marked by a focus on producing specific outcomes, often achieved via repetitive and intense teaching of language using mechanical methods (Ng, 2015). Preschool teachers primarily use repetition and imitation techniques during reading teaching (Huang, 2014).

In addition, the curriculum emerges as the fourth significant concern in the context of preschool ERA, as indicated by the eleven articles (Lalani & Rodrigues, 2012; Al-Darwish, 2012; Slapac & Dorner, 2013; Jawaid, 2014; Chu, 2014; Prosic-Santovac, 2017; Qin & Md Nor, 2018; Jacoby & Lesaux, 2019; Milton et al., 2020; Wang & Hou, 2021; Zucker et al., 2021). The extensive and mandatory curriculum in preschool English, which places a strong focus on academic achievement, has a detrimental impact on the principles of developmentally appropriate practice (Jawaid, 2014; Qin & Md Nor, 2018). Teachers are required to adhere to the curriculum with more strictness (Al-Darwish, 2012). According to Leung et al. (2013), the majority of preschool curriculums are too rigorous and meticulously organised. Preschool teachers effectively apply the curriculum, but it requires significant work and time to adapt the curriculum to meet the specific requirements of young children (Slapac & Dorner, 2013). Schools or districts need explicit directives to provide time for incorporating the curriculum (Zucker et al., 2021). Chu (2014) and Jacoby and Lesaux (2019) discovered that there was no meaningful impact of implementing a particular curriculum on the process of English language acquisition in preschool children. Curiously, it has been claimed that incorporating ERA (educational robotics and automation) into well-known cartoons that young children often watch at home stimulates their motivation to study more effectively than a curriculum focused only on grammar (Prosic-Santovac, 2017). Preschool teachers have challenges in evaluating their students' performance in relation to curricular requirements during the evaluation of preschool Early Reading Ability (ERA) (Wang & Hou, 2021). Teachers use various evaluation procedures to evaluate young children, which may not align with curricular criteria (Lalani & Rodrigues, 2012).

The fifth problem noted pertains to preschool teachers' perspective of ERA, as shown by seven papers (Chu, 2014; Mede, 2017; Qin & Md Nor, 2018; Huang et al., 2019; Goh & Luen Loy, 2021; Wang & Hou, 2021; Zucker et al., 2021). Preschool teachers should be aware that their views have the potential to influence their expectations of preschool children's English learning, either in a favourable or negative manner (Goh & Luen Loy, 2021; Zucker et al., 2021). Preschool teachers often believe that it is preferable to teach English using their native language, according to Chu (2014), Mede (2017), Huang et al. (2019), Qin and Md Nor (2018) and Wang and Hou (2021) discovered a discrepancy between teachers' assessment of the optimal approach and the actual implementation in preschool English language teaching (ELT). Preschool educators acknowledge the difficulties encountered in their profession and propose more effective approaches to enhance instruction. However, they are constrained by the need to adhere to directives from a superior governing body.

The sixth concern mentioned in six papers is the classroom atmosphere (Leung et al., 2013; Slapac & Dorner, 2013; Milton et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2020; Zucker et al., 2021; Wang & Hou, 2021). The classroom setting encompasses challenges such as high student enrollment (Milton et al., 2020; Wang &

Hou, 2021), inadequate classroom facilities (Leung et al., 2013; Slapac & Dorner, 2013; Milton et al., 2020;), and insufficient classroom management abilities (Zucker et al., 2021). Preschool teachers need assistance in managing big class sizes in order to effectively address the specific learning requirements of their students (Milton et al., 2020). Wang and Hou (2021) discovered that preschool teachers face challenges and obstacles in addressing the specific needs of individual students due to their responsibility for the whole class. Conversely, Zucker et al. (2021) argued that preschool teachers often need more proficiency in handling a small cohort of young children, particularly when instructing them to engage in tasks autonomously. This may be attributed to inadequate classroom management on the part of preschool educators. The lack of multimedia and context-dependent classrooms in preschools hinders interaction, collaboration, and game-playing activities, making them non-interactive (Xiao et al., 2020). Slapac and Dorner (2013) argue that the classroom's former state as a loud warehouse was not conducive to assisting English Language Learners (ELL). They suggest that improvements might be made to provide a more supportive environment for ELL students. According to Leung et al. (2013), the presence of literacy centres, writing areas, and library corners in classroom facilities is hindered by limited space.

The identification of teaching resources as the seventh problem is based on six related papers (Auleear Owodally, 2015; Huang, 2014; Prosic-Santovac, 2017; Qin & Md Nor, 2018; Milton et al., 2020; Fauzi et al., 2021). The studies indicate an issue of restricted availability of genuine materials, such as branded toys or items (Prosic-Santovac, 2017), readily accessible materials (Milton et al., 2020), digitalized materials (Fauzi et al., 2021), and inadequate books and other resources. Preschool classrooms often include visually appealing decorations such as drawings and mobiles. However, it is important for instructors to recognise and harness the potential of these decorations as effective instruments for stimulating cognitive development (Auleear Owodally, 2015). Preschool teachers use translations to facilitate children's acquisition of a second language, sometimes relying on limited teaching resources such as visual aids (Huang, 2014). Conversely, Qin and Md Nor (2018) discovered that preschool teachers lack specialised teaching tools, leading to passive learning.

The eighth and last problem mentioned is socio-cultural, which is discussed in six papers by Al-Darwish (2012), Leung et al. (2013), Hegde et al. (2018), Goh (2019), Mustafa et al. (2019), and Nafissi & Shafiee (2020). According to research conducted by Al-Darwish (2012), the desire of young children to learn English is crucial. This motivation might be hindered when parents prohibit their children from learning any other language. In addition, according to P. S. C. Goh (2019), preschool teachers believe that having a strong command of the English language may not be necessary, particularly when children are increasingly used to their native language. Preschool teachers argue that the ERA (English Reading Achievement) has an impact on the English language learning (ELL) of young children who have not yet developed their mother tongue language and socio-cultural identity, according to Nafissi and Shafiee (2020). Preschool teachers may provide several methods in Early Reading Acquisition (ERA), however there are situations when these methods do not align with the cultural background of English Language Learners (ELLs) (Mustafa et al., 2019). Leung et al. (2013) found that parents strongly want native English language instructors over local teachers. Hegde et al. (2018) said that preschool teachers acquire the necessary preparation to educate children only via firsthand experience in the classroom.

Research Question 2: "What are the challenges faced by preschool educators in the ERA?"

This systematic review investigated the challenges faced by preschool teachers in English Reading Assessment (ERA) for the second research topic. Challenges have a substantial impact on the formation of preschool teachers' educational and professional development. The connection between instructors' attitudes and ERA practices is robust (Chu, 2014). This review examined many fundamental aspects of the views of preschool teachers, as discussed in 34 chosen papers. Out of the chosen articles, 21 specifically addressed the difficulties faced by preschool teachers in the ERA. This systematic study identified and classified the obstacles faced by preschool teachers in English reading assessment (ERA) into four main themes: bilingual education, curriculum modification, children's characteristics, and

teachers' expertise. Table 4 displays the prevailing themes of preschool teachers' views as derived from the chosen publications for this study.

Table 4. Themes of Preschool Challenges on Articles Selected

Authors	Bilingual Education	Curriculum modification	Children's Characteristics	Teachers Expertise
Auleear Owodally (2015)	✓	✓		
Baker (2019)	✓	✓	✓	
Bernstein et al. (2021)	✓	✓		✓
Biricik and Özkan (2012)	✓			
Chu (2014)		✓		
Goh (2019)	✓			
Hegde et al. (2018)				✓
Jacoby and Lesaux (2019)	✓			
Jawaid (2014)	✓	✓	✓	
Leung et al. (2013)	✓			
Mede (2017)	✓			✓
Mustafa et al. (2019)		✓	✓	
Milton et al. (2020)	✓			
Nafissi and Shafiee (2020)			✓	
Ng (2015)				✓
Ping et al. (2020)			✓	✓
Pollard-Durodola et al. (2012)		✓		
Prosic-Santovac (2017)			✓	
Slapac and Dorner (2013)			✓	✓
Ungau et al. (2023)		✓	✓	✓
Wang and Hou (2021)			✓	

Xiao et al. (2020)	✓			
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Eleven articles on preschool teachers' challenges in bilingual education (BE) were found in this review. The articles are authored by Biricik & Özkan (2012), Leung et al. (2013), Jawaid (2014), Auleear Owodally (2015), Mede (2017), Goh (2019), Baker (2019), Jacoby & Lesaux (2019), Milton et al. (2020), Xiao et al. (2020) and Bernstein et al. (2021). The central concept discussed in this study is the incorporation of children's native language or home language as a method for teaching English as a second language in preschools. According to Milton et al. (2020), preschool teachers advocate for young children to acquire English language skills using their native language. Teachers are worried about the challenges, anxiety, and limited comprehension that young children have while learning English. As a result, they are aware of when it is appropriate to transition to the child's native language (Biricik & Özkan, 2012; Goh, 2019; Ungau et al. 2023). It is advisable to promote the use of the native language while teaching English, and instructors should provide a favourable environment for its use (Xiao et al., 2020). Auleear Owodally (2015) proposes that a strategy for implementing bilingual education (BE) involves fostering commonalities between the mother tongue and English language during instruction. In addition, Mede (2017) recommended that preschool teachers include ERA into their curriculum alongside other courses, since this may enhance the linguistic development of young children. Teachers see behavioural economics as a useful approach in preschools within the specified time period (Baker, 2019; Bernstein et al., 2021). The use of the preschool teachers' native language in English Language Teaching (ELT) has many advantages, including heightened motivation, enhanced self-assurance, promotion of engagement with young learners, and facilitation of language learning (Jawaid, 2014; Jacoby & Lesaux, 2019). In Hong Kong, bilingual education (BE) has been implemented as part of their language policy (Leung et al., 2013).

The second topic highlighted in connection to teachers' views in preschool ERA is curriculum adaptation, as reported in eight papers (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2012; Chu, 2014; Jawaid, 2014; Auleear Owodally, 2015; Baker, 2019; Mustafa et al., 2019; Bernstein et al., 2021; Ungau et al. 2023). Curriculum alteration refers to the modification of instructors' instructional or pedagogical expertise in the curriculum, guided by their opinions about the learning capabilities of young children. The modification of the curriculum might potentially affect the manner in which lessons are taught, while still adhering to the established objectives outlined in the curriculum (Mustafa et al., 2019; Ungau et al. 2023). Teachers sometimes modify the curriculum based on their own experiences (Bernstein et al., 2021). It is crucial to meet the educational requirements of young children by providing accessible and adaptable learning opportunities via high-quality teacher training (Auleear Owodally, 2015). In addition, Chu (2014) said that preschool teachers modify their lesson plans via self-reflection in order to facilitate the learning process for young children. They acknowledge the significance of evaluating the effectiveness of lesson plans and implementing corrective actions for pupils who have yet to achieve their predetermined learning goals. Furthermore, this study argued that including curricular intervention is a crucial component of curriculum modification. Curriculum intervention is a pedagogical approach that may provide instructional help to preschool teachers in designing optimal courses for young children (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2012). Furthermore, an additional element of modifying the curriculum is the instructors' conviction in collaboratively creating learning activities with children (Jawaid, 2014; Alvira & González, 2018; Baker, 2019; Ungau et al. 2023). Co-constructing learning activities involves empowering young children to propose activities of their choice, while being directed by their instructors. Young children will have an enhanced sense of significance when their viewpoints are esteemed.

The third topic discovered in ERA is preschool teachers' ideas about children's traits, which is supported by eight relevant papers (Pink et al., 2013; Slapac & Dorner, 2013; Jawaid, 2014; Prosic-Santovac, 2017; Baker, 2019; Mustafa et al., 2019; Nafissi & Shafiee, 2020; Wang & Hou, 2021; Ungau et al. 2023). Children characteristics pertain to the preschool teachers' understanding that every kid in the classroom have a distinct identity, which may be shaped by their socio-cultural background or interests and might

impact their English language learning (ELL) abilities. Preschool teachers may get insight into what is considered acceptable and undesirable in the current day by understanding and embracing the unique features of young children (Jawaid, 2014; Slapac & Dorner, 2013). Baker (2019) conducted research which revealed that preschool teachers actively promoted the expression of young children's Korean socio-cultural heritage within the classroom setting, while simultaneously facilitating their English language acquisition. They deemed it essential to include the socio-cultural background of young children into English Language Teaching (ELT). This exemplifies how educators provide occasions for young children to acquire knowledge in an impromptu manner (Mustafa et al., 2019). In addition, Nafissi and Shafiee (2020) found in their research that preschool teachers included elements of Iranian culture, such as rituals, cuisine, and lifestyles, into their teaching to engage ELL students. An essential feature of children's characteristics that preschool teachers in ERA believe in is comprehending the interests of young children, especially when addressing their conduct. Prosic-Santovac (2017) said that preschool teachers in ERA use popular films or branded toy cartoons as a means of incorporating strategic and pedagogical information to effectively engage young children in ELL. Preschool teachers hold the challenges that famous cartoons have a significant impact on the cognitive development and behavioural patterns of young children, shaping their knowledge and attitudes. Wang and Hou (2021) discovered in their evaluation that preschool teachers engaged in debates over the criteria for standardizing measurements used to evaluate the development of young children, without taking into account their individual features.

The fourth topic discovered in the study is the instructors' experiences, which pertains to their views in the ERA. There are six papers that pertain to this topic: Pink et al., 2013; Slapac & Dorner, 2013; Ng, 2015; Mede, 2017; Hegde et al., 2018; Bernstein et al., 2021. Preschool teachers' perspectives are significantly influenced by their teaching experience, as well as their educational and learning background (Mede, 2017). Ping et al. (2020) found that preschool teachers who are older or have more experience are better suited to working with young children. Teaching English as a second language in preschools requires a modest level of specialized expertise. What is essential for them is to have a high level of expertise in preschool education rather than English. According to Bernstein et al. (2021), there is a significant correlation between the age and teaching experience of preschool teachers. They consider English as a utilitarian instrument and encounter less challenges in the context of bilingual or multilingual perspectives on early childhood education. In contrast to the findings of Slapac and Dorner (2013), expertise in teaching language immersion is seen more significant than teaching experience in preschools. In their study, Hegde et al. (2018) discovered that experiential knowledge acquired via trial-and-error practices in a real classroom setting has more significance than attending training programmes for preschool education. Teachers prefer to rely on their own experience and intuition when formulating their approach to early childhood education. The researchers discovered that the training plan must have a greater level of importance and usefulness (Ng, 2015). Therefore, it is the duty of teachers, as decision-makers, to carefully evaluate the strategy and its suitability in the context of preschool education in the modern day (Mede, 2017).

DISCUSSION

The research revealed that a significant issue in almost all non-English speaking countries or communities that implement English Language Teaching (ELT) in preschools is the insufficient expertise of preschool teachers. In a similar vein, Moussu (2018) discovered that over 80% of non-native English instructors worldwide express apprehension regarding their fluency and competence in successfully teaching the English language. In order to secure their children's future academic achievements, several Chinese parents enrol their children in schools that use English as the primary language of instruction. Nevertheless, parents consider the competence of teachers in English Language Teaching (ELT) to be a noteworthy obstacle (Mwalongo, 2016). Recent research conducted by Zamin, Lotfie and Salleh (2022) reveals that preschool educators in Malaysia lack proficiency in the English language, particularly in productive abilities like speaking and writing. Consequently, the instructors' diminished confidence in using the language led to a restriction in the amount of vocabulary used in their interactions. Preschool

teachers must possess the requisite abilities.

Preschool teachers lack sufficient training in English Language Teaching (ELT). This data clearly demonstrates that the majority lack adequate knowledge and abilities in teaching English to young children. This aligns with the findings of a research conducted by Sikki et al. (2013), which revealed that 51% of preschool teachers in Indonesia had never received any kind of English Language Teaching (ELT) training. The solution to this issue is developing a more efficient and all-encompassing training regimen to guarantee enhanced performance (Reynolds et al., 2021).

This evaluation also identified the problem of preschool teachers facing difficulties in meeting the requirements of the specified curriculum, which places a strong focus on academic achievements. Preschool teachers, although having a predetermined curriculum, may modify it according to their own opinions and specific circumstances (Ntumi, 2016). The ministry of education, teacher training institutions, and specialists in preschool education should collaborate to thoroughly examine and devise optimal solutions to align curriculum plans with the perspectives of preschool teachers.

It is essential to modify the substance of the English curriculum, but it is also important to provide practical instructional assistance for preschool teachers. This study concluded that there is a lack of practical advice on instructional quality in the field of pedagogical practices. Providing instructional advice may enhance the quality of teaching, modify teaching practices, and bolster the pedagogical abilities of preschool teachers. Neuman and Dwyer (2009) found that preschool teachers who get explicit vocabulary teaching guidance in the Early Reading First programme had a beneficial effect on the vocabulary development and reading skills of young children. The survey revealed that the majority of preschool teachers choose the conventional teaching strategy, which entails instructing reading skills and memorising language. Preschool teachers, despite their knowledge of successful teaching methods, did not seem to fully implement the suggested strategy (Abdullah et al., 2017). According to research conducted by Michaelidou and Pitri (2022), preschool teachers express a desire to include creativity in their teaching methods but lack clarity on the specific strategies to achieve this goal. According to the research, preschool teachers need a framework and method to assist them in adopting a creative approach in early childhood education.

Moreover, this research investigated adverse teacher attitudes towards ERA. Majzub (2013) highlighted the insufficient degree of confidence among Malaysian preschool teachers in using English as a medium of instruction in education. In addition, Abdullah et al. (2017) discovered that preschool teachers are deficient in the fundamental competencies necessary for teaching English Language Teaching (ELT). The issue seems to endure, since Abdul Aziz (2019) discovered that preschool teachers exhibited ineffectiveness in the implementation of ERA. Aziz and Mamat (2018) proposed a training programme with the objective of enhancing teachers' effectiveness in teaching English as a second language in preschool. In addition, Reynolds et al. (2021) proposed that teacher education institutions should include English courses specifically focused on English for Academic Purposes (ERA). The classroom environment, including many aspects such as classroom characteristics, circumstances, and amenities, has a substantial impact on young children who are learning English as a second language (ELL). The learning goals of the classroom should be reflected in every area of its surroundings. Preschool teachers should ideally make use of classroom facilities that are roomy and designed to support interaction, cooperation, and game-based activities (Martin, 2006). Through the use of classroom amenities, young children may have access to a wider range of learning opportunities, stimuli, and experiences (Barrett et al., 2019).

Ultimately, it is imperative to tackle socio-cultural concerns. Based on the results, instructors are facing difficulties in integrating socio-cultural problems into preschool education and research activities (ERA). The consensus among academics is that the inclusion of cultural information is essential in language instruction (Vaish, 2012; Bell & Bogan, 2013; Harrer et al., 2015; Tazi & Wasmuth, 2015). According to

Harrer et al. (2015), the sooner individuals acquire knowledge about a different culture, the more significant its impact on their memory development. Nevertheless, research conducted by Tazi and Wasmuth (2015) suggests that despite attempts to integrate socio-cultural aspects into the preschool educational system, there remains a perceived threat to national identity. Additional investigation may be necessary to examine the influence of socio-cultural factors on the opinions of preschool teachers.

This analysis also assessed the conviction of preschool educators in implementing Early Reading Assessment (ERA) for young children. When examining BE, the majority of the evaluated studies concurred that the significant facet of preschool teachers' views in English Language Teaching (ELT) should not be disregarded. Preschool educators feel that in order to effectively teach English as a second or foreign language, it is crucial to preserve the significance of the native language. Research conducted by Ramírez et al. (2020) revealed that Spanish-speaking English Language Learners (ELLs) benefit from using Spanish in the classroom, as it facilitates the development of literacy and language abilities that can be applied to English. Although many teacher training programmes do not prioritise the use of BE (Bilingual Education) in English Language Teaching (ELT), practical experience in the classroom, especially when working with children who have different native languages, indicates that BE might be a successful approach for acquiring second languages (Vaish, 2012). However, it is not suitable to create training programmes using a uniform method that is intended to suit all individuals. It is important to prioritise the instruction of teachers in language transfer theories and their impact on the learning of English (Vaish, 2012). Furthermore, the study emphasises the preschool teachers' perspectives on modifying the curriculum. When instructors modify a curriculum, they often integrate new teaching material, processes, or teaching techniques into the current lesson. According to Sulaiman et al. (2015), the majority of modifications are insignificant, allowing instructors to readily integrate them. Recognising the significance of teachers in implementing the curriculum, it is crucial to acknowledge their knowledge, experience, and competence in any curriculum development project (Alsubaie, 2016).

In addition, the obstacles faced by preschool teachers in the ERA include the characteristics of children. Preschool teachers must possess a comprehensive understanding of many key characteristics of young children, such as their aptitude for indirect learning, inclination towards enjoyment, vivid imagination, enthusiasm for conversation, and limited capacity for sustained attention (Puskás, 2016). According to Sehan (2018), instructors who possess knowledge about the specific traits of young children may use innovative strategies to effectively educate English Language Learners (ELLs). Preschool teachers' experience is another crucial component identified in their struggles in the ERA. According to the reports, it seems that instructors become more efficient in teaching English as they get more experience. Teaching effectiveness and teacher experience exhibit some relationships; however, the specific nature of these correlations may be conceptualised differently (Graham et al., 2020). The research conducted by Haddad (2017) did not demonstrate any noteworthy disparities when considering the number of years of professional experience. According to the study, instructors that are highly motivated may have a significant impact on the achievement of young children who are English Language Learners (ELL). Preschool teachers contemplate the ways in which educational techniques and practices could be further enhanced. Further inquiry, analysis, and implementation are required to explore topics such as BE (behavioural economics), curriculum change, children's features, and the experience of preschool teachers.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, this systematic review analyzed papers pertaining to the problems and difficulties faced by preschool teachers in the ERA. A total of three databases, namely Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and Malaysian Citation Index (MyCITE), were used. From these databases, a total of 34 articles were chosen based on the predefined criteria for inclusion and exclusion. A theme analysis was used to classify eight concerns and four challenges related to preschool ERA. This assessment addresses eight concerns pertaining to preschool ERA. The factors that contribute to effective language education include: (a) a high level of fluency in the English language, (b) comprehensive training, (c) a well-designed curriculum,

(d) strong pedagogical skills, (e) a conducive classroom atmosphere, (f) enough teaching materials, and (h) awareness of socio-cultural factors. The perspectives of preschool educators about ERA centered around (a) multilingual instruction, (b) curriculum modification, (c) children's characteristics, and (d) teachers' expertise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary concerns for scholars studying the ERA are the English language competency of preschool teachers, their lack of training, the heavily mandated curriculum, and their insufficient pedagogical abilities. Teacher training institutes, researchers, and educational authorities in preschool education might engage with preschool teachers to narrow the disparity between the ambitious objectives of preschool English language teaching (ELT) and the actual outcomes. An in-depth examination and analysis of the current state of preschool English language teaching (ELT) is necessary in order to get a precise understanding of the situation. This will enable the identification of the most effective strategies to address the challenges at hand. Furthermore, the use of "active practices" and "real life experiences" by preschool teachers might be the most effective means of improving the preschool educational system. The views held by teachers must be thoroughly examined and analysed in order to ensure their suitability for teaching in preschools during the ERA. Examining and analysing teachers' ideas is a valuable tool for fostering and enhancing strategies for ongoing improvement in the field of early childhood education. In addition, forthcoming studies may tackle the issue of ambiguity in preschool early reading acquisition (ERA) by creating innovative technologies like mobile learning that include bilingualism for ERA, particularly designed for preschool educators and young children.

LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations in this review is the strategy to resolve the issues faced by preschool ELT which should be highlighted. However, this limitation opens opportunities for new research in the future, especially in bridging the issues and challenges of preschool teachers in ELT. Regardless of the limitation, this systematic review provides a reminder of the common issues and challenges of practitioners for preschool ELT, which will benefit practitioners, researchers, teacher training institutes and authorities concerned in the relevant field.

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