

Teachers' Efforts to Improve English Language Skills in 5-6 Year Old Children Through the Montessori Method at KIDEA Kindergarten, Kelapa Gading District, North Jakarta

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood is a critical period for language development, including English learning. Preliminary observations at KIDEA Kindergarten, Indonesia, showed that children aged 5–6 years were passive, lacked confidence, and had difficulty naming and describing objects in English. Previous studies have not sufficiently explored Montessori-based play materials for English learning in this context. This study aimed to examine the effect of the Montessori method on children's English language skills. This study employed classroom action research consisting of three cycles involving 15 kindergarten children. Data were collected through observation sheets, interviews, and questionnaires, and analyzed using descriptive percentage techniques. The results showed improvement in English language skills from Cycle I (29.0%) to Cycle II (55.0%) and Cycle III (74.8%). Learning participation also reached 77.4% in Cycle III, while student satisfaction increased from 67% to 87%–93%. The findings indicate that the Montessori method supported children's English development through structured play, repeated vocabulary exposure, and teacher scaffolding. In conclusion, Montessori-based learning improved English skills in this context. The study suggests its potential as an alternative approach in early childhood English instruction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is often referred to as the "golden age" because during this period, all aspects of growth and development occur rapidly and influence one another. Preschool education plays a vital role in stimulating children's development, including the formation of values, attitudes, and basic skills. According to Montessori, children possess great potential that develops during sensitive periods, namely, phases when they are highly interested in and easily acquire specific knowledge and skills.

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Language is a crucial aspect of child development because it influences a child's ability to think, communicate, and interact socially. Early English language learning can be achieved through various engaging methods, such as the use of pictures, songs, stories, and other visual media. Preliminary observations conducted at KIDEA Kindergarten, Kelapa Gading Subdistrict, North Jakarta, indicated that several children aged 5–6 years were still passive during English learning activities, lacked confidence in responding to teachers' questions, and experienced difficulties in naming or describing objects and pictures in English. These conditions suggest that children require learning experiences that are more interactive, meaningful, and suited to their developmental characteristics.

The Montessori method is an educational approach developed by Maria Montessori that places the child at the center of the learning process. This approach emphasizes respect for each child's uniqueness, providing freedom to learn according to their developmental stage, and creating an environment that fosters exploration and independence. In practice, the Montessori method employs various approaches, such as experiments, demonstrations, and synthesis, to help children develop their intellectual, psychomotor, and affective abilities, as well as their creativity, concentration, and independence. One strategy that is often used is the demonstration method, which involves directly showing a process or activity so that children can understand the material more easily through concrete experiences.

In the development of language skills, the Montessori method is considered effective because it involves children's active participation through engaging and meaningful activities. Language proficiency encompasses the ability to use language to express ideas, feelings, and experiences, while linguistic creativity is demonstrated through the ability to ask questions, respond, tell stories, and interact with others [1]. Children's language development also involves receptive and expressive skills, which form the foundation of communication and literacy [2]. Additionally, pre-language skills such as auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and tactile perception serve as a crucial foundation for language development, while activities such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking are effective strategies for enhancing language skills in young children [3], [4].

Children's language development proceeds through several stages, ranging from reflexive vocalization, babbling, lalling, echolalia, to true speech, and is influenced by various biological, cognitive, and environmental factors. According to Lenneberg, language ability is closely related to human anatomy and physiology and possesses universal characteristics. Children's language development is also influenced by motor skills, health, cognitive abilities, social environment, socioeconomic status, gender, bilingualism, and neurological factors [5]. Well-developed language skills support children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, making appropriate stimulation from an early age essential. According to [6], language development encompasses the integrated skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which form the foundation of children's communication and literacy. Simonyi and Gerowe [7] emphasize that opportunities for storytelling and dialogue help enhance children's communication and language expression skills. UNESCO [8] also states that language serves as a means of communication, cognitive development, self-expression, and the foundation for lifelong learning.

English language learning for young children requires an engaging and enjoyable approach that aligns with children's developmental characteristics. Songs, music, games, and various interactive activities can be used to help children understand and practice English naturally. In addition to improving language skills, play-based activities also play a crucial role in developing children's creativity, thinking skills, social skills, and emotional regulation [9]–[11]. Play-based learning allows children to gain meaningful learning experiences, while teachers act as facilitators who help children build knowledge through exploration and social interaction [12]. Teacher scaffolding is particularly important in supporting children's participation, guiding communication, and encouraging them to use English vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

The play process is a crucial stage that helps children develop social and cognitive skills through planned activities aligned with learning objectives. The stages of play generally include the manipulative, symbolic, exploratory, experimental, and recognizable stages. To support language development, particularly English for young children, Montessori developed various Educational Play Materials (EPMs), such as Peabody hand puppets, Cuisenaire blocks, finger puppets, alphabet boxes, puzzles, matching cards, and color lotto. Some games that can be used include puppet theater and telephone games, as they can enhance children's motivation, interest, self-confidence, personality development, and language skills in daily life.

Although previous studies have reported the benefits of Montessori learning for early childhood development, the use of Montessori-based educational play materials specifically to improve English language skills in the context of KIDEA Kindergarten has received limited attention. This gap indicates the need for research that examines how Montessori materials and play-based learning activities can support children's English language development in this particular educational setting.

Based on these considerations, the research question addressed in this study is: "How can the Montessori method improve the English language skills of 5–6-year-old children at KIDEA Kindergarten?" Accordingly, the research hypothesis states that the English language skills of children aged 5–6 years can be improved through the application of the Montessori method at KIDEA Kindergarten, Kelapa Gading Subdistrict, North Jakarta.

2. METHOD

This study has a clear and focused objective: to determine the changes that occur in children after participating in learning to improve English language skills in early childhood through the Montessori method. Formulating research objectives is crucial because accurate objectives will guide the entire research process toward effectively achieving the desired goals [13].

This study was conducted in Class B of Kidea Kindergarten, Kelapa Gading Subdistrict, North Jakarta. The participants consisted of 15 children aged 5–6 years enrolled in Class B during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The children had varying levels of English language proficiency, with several children demonstrating limited vocabulary, low confidence in speaking English, and difficulties in naming objects or pictures in English during the preliminary observation.

The research was conducted from August to December 2025. Preliminary observations and interviews were carried out in August 2025 to identify learning problems and establish baseline conditions. The first cycle was implemented on November 13–14, 2025, the second cycle on November 27–28, 2025, and the third cycle on December 11–12, 2025.

This type of research is classroom action research conducted by teachers in their own classrooms. Wardani explains, classroom action research aims to improve teacher performance so that children's English language skills can be optimally enhanced. The study adopted the Kemmis and McTaggart Classroom Action Research model, which consists of four stages in each cycle: planning, action, observation, and reflection.

The action plan in this study consisted of three cycles, each with two meetings. The stages included planning or preparation for the action, implementing the action, observing and interpreting, and analyzing data and reflecting. Planning included preparing learning materials such as a syllabus, daily activity plan, observation sheets, and an English proficiency test. The action was implemented by explaining the material using flashcards, asking students to imitate the teacher's words, and repeating them back. Observations were conducted simultaneously with the action by observers using observation sheets to assess the quality of the learning process, while reflection aimed to identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as necessary improvements for the next cycle [14].

The design of this research action encompasses all planning, implementation, observation, and reflection activities aimed at determining the success of improving children's English language skills through the Montessori method at Kidea Kindergarten. The action procedure began with interviews and initial observations in August 2025 to identify the children's low and varied English language skills. Each cycle follows a flow of material planning according to the theme, implementation of learning using the Montessori method, observation of student activities, and reflection for improvement in the next cycle, in collaboration with the class teacher as observer.

The criteria for success of the action were determined through qualitative descriptive data analysis of English language skills and children's activities during the learning process. The data were processed using a percentage formula to describe the increase in teacher activity and children's language creativity [15], with the following assessment categories: BB (Belum Berkembang/Not Yet Developed), MB (Mulai Berkembang/Beginning to Develop), BSH (Berkembang Sesuai Harapan/Developing as Expected), and BSB (Berkembang Sangat Baik/Very Well Developed). The percentage score was calculated using the formula: $\text{Percentage} = (\text{Obtained Score} / \text{Maximum Score}) \times 100\%$. The resulting percentages were interpreted using the following criteria: 76%–100% = Good, 56%–75% = Fairly Good, 40%–55% = Poor, and below 40% = Very Poor.

The data collection techniques in this study include conceptual and operational definitions of preschool children's language creativity, which emphasize the willingness to ask questions, answer questions, tell stories, and inform others. The instruments used include observations with assessment sheets to observe students' activities in the aspects of answering questions, communicating fluently, pronouncing words, daring to express opinions, and enjoying Montessori flashcard games. In addition, unstructured interviews

were conducted with the principal, teachers, and parents of students to obtain in-depth information, while structured questionnaires were given to students to determine their attitudes toward the Montessori method. Prior to implementation, the observation instruments were reviewed by early childhood education experts and classroom teachers to ensure content validity. To improve the reliability of observations, the researcher and classroom teacher jointly conducted observations and compared assessment results. Data credibility was strengthened through triangulation of observation, interview, and questionnaire data collected from different sources, including teachers, parents, and students.

The validity of this research data is ensured through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involves selecting and summarizing important information from observations, questionnaires, and interviews to create a more systematic approach. Data presentation is presented in descriptive form to provide an overall picture, while conclusions are drawn by identifying patterns, relationships, and research findings to reach valid conclusions [16]. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the school principal, while informed consent was secured from parents or guardians before children participated in the study. The identities of all participants were kept anonymous, and all learning and assessment activities were designed to be child-friendly, ensuring that children participated comfortably and without coercion.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Classroom Action Research at the kindergarten level began with a planning phase that included the preparation of a Daily Activity Plan, observation sheets, student attendance records, and Montessori learning materials in the form of flashcards, letter blocks, and multimedia resources adapted to the learning theme. The implementation of the Montessori method was carried out through three cycles, with each cycle consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages.

3.1 Cycle I Results

The implementation of cycle I took place in three meetings. During the opening activities, children lined up, prayed before learning, sang a kindergarten song, and participated in attendance activities. The core activity focused on introducing Montessori flashcards. Children sat in a semicircle while the teacher explained the game procedures and invited children to identify and describe pictures shown on the cards. The second and third meetings continued with flashcard and letter-block activities designed to introduce English vocabulary playfully.

The results of the assessment of children's English language skills in cycle I are presented in Table 1.

13
 Table 1. Children's English Language Skills in Cycle I

Rated aspect	BB	MB	BSH	BSB
Children can answer questions from the teacher about the pictures they get on the Montessori flash cards.	53%	47%	-	-
Children can say the names of the pictures and their uses on the Montessori flash cards	67%	33%	-	-
Children can communicate and speak fluently when telling Montessori flash cards.	67%	33%	-	-
Children say words about the pictures they find on Montessori flash cards.	80%	20%	-	-
Children are critical of others in Montessori flash card games	87%	13%	-	-
Average	71%	29%	-	-

Table 1 indicates that most children were still categorized as Belum Berkembang (BB). The highest percentage of BB was found in the aspect of responding critically to peers (87%), while the lowest was in answering teachers' questions (53%). These findings suggest that children were still unfamiliar with the learning activities and had limited confidence in using English vocabulary during classroom interactions. The results of children's activities during the implementation of the Montessori method are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Children's Learning Activities in Cycle I

Rated aspect	BB	MB	BSH	BSB
Child takes Montessori flash cards	47%	33%	20%	-
Children look for pictures on Montessori flash cards	53%	27%	20%	-
Children can find Montessori flash cards according to keywords.	40%	40%	20%	-
Children can work independently to find Montessori flash cards.	67%	13%	20%	-
Children can enjoy Montessori flash card games.	33%	40%	27%	-
Average	48%	31%	21%	-

Table 2 shows that children's participation during Montessori activities remained relatively low. Difficulties were particularly evident in independent learning activities. Although some children enjoyed the flashcard games, many still required guidance from the teacher. This finding indicates that Montessori materials had not yet been fully utilized to support independent exploration. The results of the student questionnaire are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Student Questionnaire Results After Cycle I

No	Question	Yes	No
1	Are you happy with the Montessori method?	67%	33%
2	Do you find it difficult to describe the pictures you have found?	47%	53%
3	Do you feel confident when you tell the class about the pictures you have found?	20%	80%
4	Do you want a new flash card model?	100%	0%
5	Do you want the Montessori method back?	60%	40%

Table 3 reveals that children generally enjoyed the Montessori method, although their confidence in speaking English remained low. Only 20% of children reported feeling confident when presenting their findings. This result is consistent with the classroom observations showing that many children were hesitant to communicate in English.

Reflection on cycle I identified several weaknesses. The teacher had not yet developed strong personal familiarity with individual children, opportunities for questioning were limited, and some children did not fully understand the learning procedures. Consequently, improvements were planned for the next cycle through the use of name tags, increased teacher motivation, and clearer learning instructions.

3.2 Cycle II Results

Cycle II was implemented after revising the learning strategy based on the reflection results from Cycle I. Name tags were introduced to strengthen teacher-child interaction, while teachers provided more encouragement and opportunities for children to communicate during activities. Classroom organization was also improved to support smoother learning interactions. The results of children's English language skills in Cycle II are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Children's English Language Skills in Cycle II

Rated aspect	BB	MB	BSH	BSB
Children can answer questions from the teacher	-	27%	53%	20%
Children can communicate and speak fluently	-	20%	67%	13%
Children say words about pictures	-	33%	40%	27%
Children are critical of others	-	40%	60%	-
Children can name pictures and their uses.	-	20%	80%	20%
Average	-	28%	55%	17%

Table 4 demonstrates a substantial improvement compared with Cycle I. Most children moved from the BB category into the BSH category. The use of Montessori flashcards and letter blocks enabled children to practice vocabulary repeatedly, while teacher guidance helped them communicate more confidently. The average achievement in the BSH category reached 55%, indicating meaningful progress in English language development. The student questionnaire results after Cycle II are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Student Questionnaire Results After Cycle II

No	Question	Yes	No
1	Are you happy with the Montessori method?	73%	27%
2	Are you having trouble...?	33%	67%
3	Do you feel confident...?	73%	27%
4	Do you want a new flash card model?	100%	0%
5	Do you want the Montessori method back?	86%	14%

The questionnaire results indicate a noticeable increase in children's confidence and enjoyment. The proportion of children who felt confident increased considerably compared with Cycle I. This improvement may be attributed to repeated exposure to vocabulary activities, supportive teacher feedback, and more frequent opportunities for communication during play-based learning.

3.3 Cycle III Results

Cycle III represented the final stage of the intervention. The learning activities continued to utilize Montessori flashcards and letter blocks while integrating multimedia resources, including English-language educational videos. Teachers also provided more structured guidance and positive reinforcement to encourage children's participation.

The results showed that children's English language skills reached an average score of 74.8%, which falls within the good category. Children's participation in Montessori learning activities also increased, reaching an average of 77.4%. Student satisfaction remained high, ranging from 87% to 93% across questionnaire items.

Table 6. Summary of Children's English Language Skills Across Three Cycles

Cycle	Average Achievement
Cycle I	29.0%
Cycle II	55.0%
Cycle III	74.8%

Table 6 shows a continuous improvement in English language skills across the three cycles. The increase from Cycle I to Cycle III suggests that repeated practice using Montessori materials contributed positively to children's language development.

Table 7. Summary of Children's Learning Activities Across Three Cycles

Cycle	Average Achievement
Cycle I	21.0%
Cycle II	Improved
Cycle III	77.4%

The improvement in children's participation indicates that repeated engagement with Montessori materials encouraged greater independence, concentration, and involvement during learning activities.

Table 8. Summary of Student Satisfaction Across Three Cycles

Cycle	Satisfaction Level
Cycle I	Moderate (67%)
Cycle II	High (73%–86%)
Cycle III	Very High (87%–93%)

The findings suggest that children responded positively to the Montessori approach and increasingly enjoyed learning English through structured play activities.

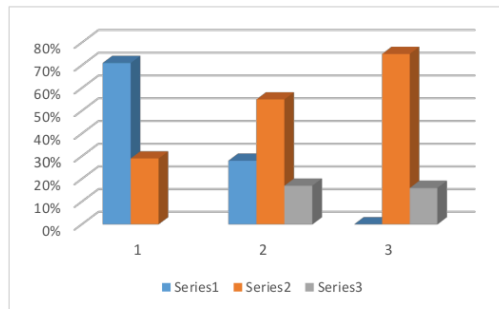


Figure 1. Improvement of Children's English Language Skills Across Three Cycles

Figure 1 illustrates the progressive increase in children's English language skills from Cycle I to Cycle III. The trend demonstrates that each cycle contributed to the improvement of children's language performance.

The findings indicate that the gradual implementation of the Montessori method supported improvements in children's English language skills. During Cycle I, many children remained passive and hesitant to communicate in English. Their limited participation appeared to be associated with unfamiliarity with the learning environment and limited interaction with the teacher. These findings support the argument that social interaction and teacher scaffolding are essential components of children's language development [19].

The improvements observed in Cycle II demonstrate the importance of creating a supportive classroom climate. The introduction of name tags helped teachers address children personally, creating a stronger sense of familiarity and emotional security. As children became more comfortable interacting with the teacher, they demonstrated greater confidence in answering questions, identifying pictures, and participating in discussions. Repeated play-based activities also reduced anxiety because children became increasingly familiar with the learning procedures and expectations.

These findings align with Montessori principles emphasizing independence, active engagement, and prepared learning environments [20], [21]. The results are also consistent with previous studies showing that meaningful interaction with learning materials enhances children's language development and participation [22], [23].

The highest level of achievement occurred during Cycle III. The integration of multimedia resources alongside flashcards and letter blocks provided children with richer language input and additional opportunities to hear and practice English vocabulary. Previous studies have similarly reported that multimodal learning experiences enhance children's engagement and language acquisition [24], [25]. Songs, educational videos, and collaborative activities further strengthened children's confidence and oral communication skills [26].

The continuous improvement observed across cycles highlights the importance of reflective teaching practices. Through systematic reflection, the teacher was able to identify

challenges, modify instructional strategies, and provide learning experiences that better matched children's needs. This finding supports previous research emphasizing reflection as a key component of classroom action research [27].

The Montessori method appeared effective in this context because it matched young children's developmental characteristics. Children learn through direct manipulation of materials, exploration, and meaningful interaction. These experiences supported vocabulary acquisition, communication skills, and self-confidence. Such findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that language development is strengthened through active participation and meaningful communication opportunities [28], [29].

The positive responses reported in the questionnaires further suggest that children enjoyed the learning activities. Positive emotional experiences are important because enjoyment and confidence can increase motivation to participate in future language-learning activities [30].

The findings suggest several practical implications for early childhood teachers. First, structured play activities using Montessori materials can provide meaningful opportunities for vocabulary development. Second, repeated exposure to English vocabulary through flashcards, letter blocks, songs, and multimedia can strengthen language retention and confidence. Third, teacher scaffolding, positive reinforcement, and child-friendly classroom interactions are essential for encouraging active participation. Finally, visual and hands-on learning materials should be integrated into English instruction to accommodate young children's learning characteristics.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The study involved only 15 children from a single kindergarten, which limits the transferability of the findings to other educational settings. The intervention period was relatively short and focused on a specific group of learners. In addition, the Montessori learning materials used were limited primarily to flashcards, letter blocks, and multimedia resources. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as context-specific results rather than generalized conclusions applicable to all early childhood education settings.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the Montessori method contributed to the improvement of children's English language skills in this classroom context. The results show a consistent increase in children's English language achievement from Cycle I (29.0%) to Cycle II (55.0%) and Cycle III (74.8%), accompanied by an improvement in learning participation reaching 77.4% in Cycle III and a positive trend in student satisfaction from moderate (67%) to very high levels (87%–93%). These findings suggest that structured play, repeated exposure to vocabulary, teacher scaffolding, and the use of flashcards, letter blocks, and multimedia supported children's gradual language development and confidence in English learning. The study implies that Montessori-based learning can be considered an alternative approach in early childhood English instruction due to its child-centered and interactive nature. For future research, it is recommended to involve a larger number of participants, include different school contexts, and use comparison groups to strengthen the

generalizability of findings, as well as to explore longer intervention periods and more varied Montessori materials to obtain deeper insights into children's English language development.

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