

Evaluating Phonics Instruction for Preschoolers in Indonesia: Insights and Innovations in Early Literacy Assessment

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Received: December 24, 2022

Accepted: April 18, 2025

Online Published: May 30, 2025

Abstract

Learning assessment is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of instructional approaches. This study examines the assessment of early English reading skills through the phonics method in a bilingual kindergarten in Indonesia, focusing on children aged 5–6 years. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The sole participant in this research is an English teacher instructing the Kindergarten 2 Neverland class. The assessment covers letter-sound recognition, segmentation skills, and blending abilities, which are essential for early literacy development. However, this study is limited by the inclusion of only one informant, providing data from a single perspective. Additionally, the research focuses solely on specific aspects of phonics-based reading assessment, which may not capture the broader dimensions of early literacy acquisition. Despite these limitations, the findings emphasize the importance of assessing early English reading skills through the phonics method, highlighting its role in fostering foundational literacy in young learners. The insights gained from this study contribute to a better understanding of phonics-based assessment in bilingual education settings and underscore the need for continued research on effective literacy instruction for early childhood learners.

Keywords: Assessment, early literacy, preschoolers, phonics instruction

1. Introduction

Assessment is a process of determining the value and success of student learning. Learning assessment is very important because teachers need to know whether or not an applied learning system is effective. Assessment is a systematic process to determine values based on specific criteria through assessment (Boud & Dawson, 2023; Zhang et al., 2021). Assessment is carried out to determine the suitability of the results and objectives. Assessment will benchmark children's abilities (Demirdogen & Korkut, 2021; Junanto & Kusna, 2018). Learning assessment is an action or a process in determining the value of a student's learning success after he has experienced the learning process in a certain period (Sanjaya et al., 2022; Yan & Boud, 2021).

Reading is one aspect of language skills that children need to develop from an early age. According to Rahayu et al. (2024) the ability to read becomes the provision for children treading to the next level of education, namely elementary school. Beginning reading ability is an essential foundation as the initial basis for children's learning and preparation for the next level of education. Literacy skills from an early age are the determinants of success in children's learning activities (Sudiarta & Widana,

2019). Learning English has become an international language that must be studied in formal and informal schools, starting from elementary to tertiary levels. English is one of the international languages people use to communicate between countries of different languages. Therefore, English is a highly recommended language to be mastered by Indonesian citizens. Indonesians who master English will have easy access to interact, communicate, and dig up information from various parts of the world. This ease of access creates a paradigm that makes parents want English learning to be obtained by children from an early age (Abadi et al., 2021).

According to (Bald, 2007), "phonics is the systematic teaching of the sounds conveyed by letters and groups of letters, and includes teaching children to combine and blend these to read or write words." Phonics is a significant component of learning to read that builds on the principles of the alphabet that correspond to letters and their pronunciation (Adams, 1990). The purpose of the phonics method, according to Phajane (2014), the "goal of phonics instruction is to make children understand that there is a systematic and predictable relationship between written letters and spoken sounds. Knowing these relationships will help children recognize familiar words accurately and automatically and decode new words". According to Phajane (2014), the phonics method is to help children understand that there is a systematic and predictable relationship between written letters and spoken sounds. Knowing about these relationships helps children recognize new words they encounter automatically.

Based on the pre-observation that the researcher did, applying the phonics method, one of the learning methods at Cahaya Mentari Kindergarten Pontianak, can help children understand the sound of letters as a step in reading the beginning of English. This can be seen when the teacher shows five pictures of animals: a starfish, shark, dolphin, stingray, and whale. Of the 23 children in group B, 19 could name 4 of the five pictures of the animal, including starfish, shark, dolphin, and whale. Then the teacher asks the children to name and combine the sounds of the letters in the word, for example, the sound of the letter "sh-a-r-k" to form the word shark (ja: RK). Children can name and combine the sounds of the letters independently. In addition, when the teacher shows various letters at random, the child can also pronounce the sounds of the letters alone.

Several studies on the phonics method in reading the beginning of English have been carried out, including (Westhisi, 2019; Rahwati & Windarsih, 2021; Yansyah, 2015). The results of the three studies conclude that the phonics method is effective in reading the beginning of children's English. Children can recognize the sound of letters as the first step in reading the beginning of English. From some of these studies, the researcher did not find any in-depth discussion related to the assessment of learning to read the beginning of English through the phonics method. In contrast, learning assessment is critical because teachers need to know whether or not a learning system is implemented. This encourages researchers to dig deeper into evaluating early English reading learning through the phonics method, especially on aspects assessed in early reading through the phonics method.

Based on the description above, the researcher is interested investigate how teachers assessed their children' ability in sound-letter learning, blending skills, and segmentation skills in phonic class.

2. Literature Review

Assessment

Assessment is a systematic determining value based on specific criteria through assessment (Jihad, 2013). Assessment is carried out to determine the suitability between the results to be achieved and the goals to be achieved. Assessment will be benchmark for children's abilities (Junanto & Kusna, 2018). Assessment of learning is an action or a process in determining the value of student learning success after he has experienced the learning process in a certain period (Sanjaya, 2022).

The purpose of the assessment itself is to find out whether the learning process of students is under the implementation plan of learning that has been implemented, to check student learning outcomes whether there are deficiencies or not in the learning process, to find solutions to shortages that students experience and to keep track of how well students are in learning. applied competencies (Magdalena et al., 2020). Assessment of learning is very important because the teacher must know whether or not an applied learning system is effective.

According to Fitrianti (2018), before evaluating learning outcomes is carried out, the planning must be prepared properly and carefully. Planning assessment of learning outcomes, namely as follows:

- a. Formulate the purpose of the assessment.
- b. Determine the aspects to be assessed
- c. Choose and determine the technique to be used in the implementation of the assessment.
- d. Develop measurement tools that will be used in students' measurement and learning outcomes.
- e. Follow up on the results of the assessment.

Assessment steps are carried out to help the teacher assess of the child's ability to follow the learning process. According to Yus (2015) several steps in conducting an assessment of early childhood include the following:

- a. Formulate/Determine Assessment

The curriculum has competencies (abilities), learning outcomes, and indicators. The teacher chooses which abilities the child wants to have from the activities to be carried out. After determining these abilities the teacher designed the Daily Activity Plan (RKH) program. Based on the RKH, the teacher applies which assessment tool is appropriate to use to find out how far the child is doing the activity and has the abilities set out in the daily performance planning.

- b. Prepare the Assessment Tool

The teacher's second step is to prepare an assessment tool that has been determined to be used in program implementation activities. Teachers can make it themselves and use existing tools (for example, made by other people) that are used under daily performance planning.

- c. Establish Assessment Criteria

After the assessment tool is complete or available the teacher determines the assessment criteria. The assessment criteria are a measure of the success of the child. Benchmark is used to apply the value of the child.

- d. Collect data

The tool that the teacher has made is used to retrieve data related to the abilities that the child wants to assess.

- e. Determine the value

The data obtained is compared with predetermined criteria. For example, using a checklist, the teacher counts how many marks the child has for each ability. The check amount is compared to the criteria. Suppose more or the same means are successful. If below it means the value has not been successful. Instruments are very important in assessing early childhood development, because instruments are tools used to record children's development authentically. Several instruments must be made and developed by teachers to assess children's development. Latif et al. (2013) state that the assessment can be done through:

a. Performance Assessment

Performance assessment is carried out based on students' task in carrying out observable actions, for example praying, singing and exercising.

b. Observation

Observations were made through direct observation of the attitudes and behavior of children. In making observations, guidelines are needed that refer to predetermined indicators.

c. Anecdotal Record

Anecdotal notes are a collection of notes in the form of important events about a child's attitude and behavior in certain situations.

d. Assignment of Assignment

Giving assignments is a way of assessing by providing assignments that students must do within a specific time.

e. Conversation

The conversation is carried out to get information about the child's reasoning or knowledge.

f. Multilevel Scale

Graded scales are also used to conduct assessments in early childhood education. The rating scale contains a list of words regarding students' behavior, students' attitudes and students' abilities. Rating scales can be in the form of numbers, letters, and some are in the form of descriptions.

g. Portfolio

Portfolio is a collection of student assignments arranged systematically. Portfolio assessment is done by comparing the child's work from time to time with himself.

h. Self-assessment

Self-assessment is the process of gathering information to create a picture of one's own condition. Self-assessment in early childhood education can be done because they are already able to assess themselves; able to express what they like, and what is learned verbally. This suggests that self-assessment can be considered and applied to early childhood education.

Phonics

Phajane (2014) states that phonics is a way to decode written letters and spoken sounds. Bald (2007) states that phonics teaches the sounds of letters and groups of letters, and includes teaching children to mix and match them to read or write words. According to Seefeldt & Wasik (2008) the phonics method is a method of learning to read by teaching how letter sounds can be mixed into words. Santrock (2010) states that the phonics method is a reading learning technique that emphasizes

the sound (pronunciation) produced by the letters contained in the word. Tønnessen & Uppstad (2015) state that phonics is an effective and efficient method for early reading instruction.

The purpose of the phonics method, according to Phajane (2014), is to help children understand that there is a systematic and predictable relationship between written letters and spoken sounds. Knowing about these relationships helps children recognize new words they encounter automatically. The phonics approach to reading emphasizes understanding the relationships between letters and sounds in words and using these relationships to analyze and interpret unfamiliar or unfamiliar words. In a phonics reading approach, children are taught how the letters of the alphabet and groups of letters relate to word sounds. This is called code-based or code-heavy learning. The underlying philosophy is that of teaching children to understand the parts of a word based on the sounds found in the word.

In phonics, sound-to-letter correspondence is taught early in the reading curriculum and applied to simple words containing those patterns. Teachers teach children how to make letter sounds and mix sounds together to form words. This is in line with the opinion of (Bald, 2007) who states that, "For reading, learners reconstruct the word by blending the sounds represented by the letters". That is, to read, students reconstruct words by combining the sounds represented by letters. An emphasis on phonetics helps children strategize so they can interpret words they rarely encounter. Context is used to help children understand the meaning of words. Knowing the sound of letters in words helps children understand words, and understanding context helps give meaning to words and sentences.

Tønnessen & Uppstad (2015) suggests that, in theory, reading instruction with phonics emphasizes a bottom-up process approach. Sutarsyah (2015) states that, "in this process, a reader is assumed to decode or translate symbols printed in the text by moving his eyes, recognizing letters, combining them into words, then combining those words to form phrases, clauses, and text sentences". Sutarsyah (2015) states that in all reading processes, there are eight levels where attention can be focused, namely as follows:

- 1) Features, such as circles, lines and curves that form letters;
- 2) Letters;
- 3) Sound, which relates to letters and combinations of letters;
- 4) Words, encoded both visually and phonemically;
- 5) Pieces, or combinations of words into meaningful phrases that give a unit of meaning;
- 6) Idea, statement of meaning at the sentence level;
- 7) Main Idea, which is a differentiator from what is said in the text: the core, which is built from all the ideas in that section;
- 8) The theme, which is concluded, goes beyond the main ideas and generalizes them to a new level of abstraction.

Based on the definitions above, the researcher can conclude that the phonics method is a method of learning to read by emphasizing the sound (pronunciation) of each letter contained in the word and then combining it to read the word. Tønnessen & Uppstad (2015) suggest that phonics emphasizes the importance of children achieving phonemic awareness. Children understand spoken

words as a unit but must learn that the whole is made up of separate sounds. This is the only way for them to learn what each letter represents. Once they learn that, they can break the word down into its component letters and associate the sounds with those letters, meaning that they understand that the word “sun” is made up of three letters that correspond to the three sounds /s/ + /ʌ/ + /n/. Putting those three sounds together produces a whole that fits the word “sun” of spoken language.

Phajane (2014) states that teaching phonics is a more effective way to teach children early reading skills than no phonics instruction. Westhisi (2019) states that, “children who have mastered the concepts of letter sounds, letter symbols, combining letter sounds into a word can be categorized as children who have fulfilled the initial reading requirements of English”. According to Virdyna (2015), the rules for using the phonics method that must be considered are:

- a. A syllable that has one vowel at the beginning, thus forming a vowel-consonant sound arrangement. for example: “an, it, up.”
- b. Words that have three letter sounds consisting of consonants-vowels-consonants. Like: “hat, beet, cup.”
- c. The syllable that ends in “e” can be categorized as a silent “e” or a magic “e” because the letter “e” is not pronounced like in the words “make, rope, bite.”
- d. Pairs of vowels, meaning that if a word has two vowels, the first vowel represents a long sound, for example the long sound “a, i, u, e, and o” while the second vowel is not pronounced, for example: “wait” (/w/ /ei/ /t/), the vowel next to “ai” is pronounced “ei”.
- e. The combination of two or more consonant letters can form a new letter sound called a diagraph consonant. Examples are the start of a ch (/tʃ/), sh (/ʃ/), th (/θ/), and end of a diagram like ch, ng, sh, th.
- f. Syllables, each syllable has one vowel categorized as a closed syllable with only has one short vowel followed by one or more consonants, such as “fast” except for the words “eng, ild, old, olt.” Meanwhile, open syllables have one long vowel at the end of the syllable. For example: “hi, me, bee”, and so on.

(Othman et al., 2012) suggests there are several steps to teach the sound of letters with the phonics method, namely:

- a. Introducing the sound of the letters being taught and mentioning the sound of the letters clearly several times.
- b. Ask students about the sounds they hear and ask them to name these sounds correctly.
- c. Introducing the symbols/letters being taught while saying “this is a sound...”. Don’t use letters.
- d. Repeating the sound of letters while pointing at the letter symbols many times.
- e. Ask the child to name the sound of the letters one by one.

(Mardani, 2022) suggests that there are several steps in implementing the phonics method, namely:

- a. Children are instructed to pronounce letter sounds when spelling.
- b. The child lengthens the sound of a letter when it combines with the sound of another letter.
- c. Teaching begins with the arrangement of letters and then continues to more complex letter patterns.
- d. Children are introduced to digraph sounds (dual consonants) as single sounds. For example, the consonants sh (/ʃ/) and th (/θ/).

e. Children are also introduced to diphthongs (vowel sounds) as a single sound unit. For example, ai, au, oi.

Assessment in Reading with the Phonics Method

Lyon (2003) suggests several aspects that are assessed in reading with the phonics method, including:

a. Assessing Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness becomes the basic ability needed to be a successful reader; therefore, teachers need to ensure that students have acquired phonemic awareness. Using assessment over time allows teachers to mark learners' phonemic awareness changes.

Phonemic awareness involves teaching children to focus on and manipulate the phonemes in syllables and spoken words. Phonemic awareness is a form of phonological awareness that involves understanding that speech can be broken down into small sound units. Children with phonemic awareness can isolate individual sounds in words. For example, in the word *came*, they can pronounce /c/a/m/ as a separate sound

The dynamic assessment of phonemic awareness consists of: for CV (consonant-vocal) words, for example, *to*, *go*, *no*, *do*; for VC (vocal-consonant) words, for example, *up*, *on*, *is*, *if*; and for CVC (consonant-vocal-consonant) words, for example, *leg*, *cat*, *sun*, *ten*. The teacher pronounces each word slowly and asks the child to pronounce each sound. The teacher gives supportive cues when a child cannot divide words correctly. For example, if the child can only say the first sound in a word, the teacher asks the child to name the next sound, or tells the child how many sounds there are in all. If the child cannot pronounce sound, the teacher creates a sound segmentation model and helps the child to imitate the model. A child is considered successful if he responds correctly to one of the instructions. The child's phonemic awareness score indicates the level of independence achieved in performing the segmentation task. Progress toward control of phonemic awareness can be demonstrated over time by scores and descriptions of the child's independence by phonemic segmentation (eg, with models, with cues, without cues).

b. Assessing Letter Knowledge

Letter knowledge assessment assesses the letters the child knows based on his name. Knowledge of letter names has long been a predictor of success in learning to read and write (Adams, 1990). However, it is not actually the letter names that are important in learning to read, an important part of learning how to read and spell in English involves learning how letters form spelling patterns. Knowing the letter names is important in the development of early spelling. Learners who do not know the letter names cannot use the letter names as clues to match letters with sounds to try their own spelling, which is the first stage in spelling development.

c. Assessing Letter-Sound Knowledge

Assessing Letter-Sound Knowledge, namely assessing students' knowledge of the sounds made by letters. This is a simple measure of initial phonics knowledge for reading. This assessment

is most appropriate for novice readers. Schattschneider et al. (in Santrock, 2010) argued that, "phonological awareness, letter name and sound knowledge, and naming speed in kindergarten were linked to reading success in the first and second grade". According to Schattschneider, phonological awareness, knowledge of letter names and letter sounds in kindergarten is related to reading success in grades one and two. Johnston & Watson (2007) suggests several aspects that are assessed in reading with the phonics method, namely as follows:

a. Letter-sound learning

The main and most important aspect of assessing reading using the phonics method is assessing children's knowledge of letter sounds, because this is the main foundation of phonics. For some children, learning this elementary level can be very difficult. To help children learn the sounds of letters, you can teach them mnemonics, such as the characters associated with letters, the distinctive hand movements and sounds, and many activities that form letters. All these activities will help consolidate the letters and their sounds in memory.

b. Assessing blending skills

In mixing for reading, the child looks at a printed word he doesn't know, changes the letters to sounds from left to right, and then combines these sounds to figure out what the word is. An example is when a child sees the word "pat", but cannot immediately recognize it. However, the child knows the sound of the letters for "p", "a", and "t". The child says these sounds from left to right, and then mixes them together to know that the word is "pat".

Assessing children's blending skills is non-word reading (i.e. made-up words) which tests their knowledge of what is being taught in each phase. If the teacher shows the child actual words, they may be words the child already knows without understanding phonetic skills. To assess blending skills, this can be done by asking children to read simple CVC instead of words, such as "kug" or "lan".

c. Assessing segmentation skills

The teacher can assess children's segmentation abilities by saying a word, then asking them to repeat it, and then asking them to tell the sound of the letters from the first to the last. Johnston & Watson, (2007) states that to assess phoneme segmentation, the teacher reads aloud a series of words, asking students to divide each word into its component sounds ("cat," for example, will be divided into sounds: /k/ / a/ /t/). To identify the initial sound and rhyme sound, the teacher reads one word aloud, asks students to identify the first or last sound, or reads three words, asking students to identify words that start or end with a different sound. For example: "What is the first sound in 'map'? and "Which word begins with a different sound: top, touch, stand?".

3. Method

This case study uses a qualitative approach, and the method used in this study is descriptive qualitative. This qualitative research was conducted to find, describe, analyze, and interpret data

related to the assessment of early English reading learning through the phonics method for children aged 5-6 years at a bilingual kindergarten in Pontianak. In qualitative research, the researcher is the main key instrument. Therefore, researchers go directly to the field. The participant of this study is one teacher who teaches English learning in the Kindergarten 2 Neverland class.

Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation studies. The instruments used were observation guidelines, interview guides, and documentation studies. The data analysis used by Miles and Huberman is data collection (data collection), data reduction (data reduction), data display (data display), and data verification/conclusion (conclusion drawing/verification). The technique of checking the validity of the data uses technical triangulation, time triangulation, and member check.

Triangulation techniques used by researchers used different data collection techniques with the same source to obtain data, such as observations, interviews, and documentation. Triangulation of time researchers used to collect data by observing at the research site not only once but repeatedly, namely five times. The first day is on August 8, 2022; the second is on August 9, 2022; the third is on August 11, 2022. The fourth day is on August 15, 2022, and the fifth is on August 16, 2022. With a duration of 1 hour 45 minutes. The researcher conducted interviews to obtain data regarding the assessment of learning to read the beginning of English through the phonics method. The researcher asked for an agreement (member check) with the informant regarding the data obtained; then, a conclusion was drawn.

4. Results and Discussion

Results

Based on the data obtained from the researcher's interview with the Kindergarten 2 class teacher in evaluating early reading learning through the phonics method, it was carried out during the learning process. To assess the knowledge of letter-sound, the teacher uses a flashcard to ask the child the sound of the letters on the flashcard. Then in assessing segmentation skills, the teacher looks at the child's knowledge of a word consisting of any sound and asks for vocabulary in English that begins with the sound of the letters being studied. Then for assessing blending skills, it can be seen from how the child mentions the sounds of the letters one by one so that they can form words.

Assessment of letter-sound learning

The teacher assesses letter-sound knowledge by asking one by one the initial sound of the letters on the blackboard or flashcard that the teacher shows. The teacher writes the letters a, b, c, d, e, f, and g on the blackboard. Then the teacher mentions the sound of each letter while doing a movement representing the sound of the letters. Children also mention the sound of the letters while doing hand movements. After repeating the sounds of the letters a, b, c, d, e, f, and g, the teacher asks the children the sound of the letters. After that, the teacher invites the children to repeat the sound of the letters and the movements that represent them together. After introducing the letter "g," which reads "geh, geh, geh", the teacher introduces the names of words starting with the letter "g", including gorilla, gift, goat, grass, glores and guitar. The teacher invites the children to say the words. "Let's say together, grass",

said the teacher. "Grass", said the child. "Gorilla", said the teacher. "Gorilla," said the child. "Gorilla start with "geh", said the teacher. And so on for the other words.

The teacher repeats learning the sounds of the letters a, b, c, d, e and f. The teacher writes the letters on the blackboard and gives an example to the children how the letters sound, then the child is asked to repeat it. The teacher asks the children one by one to name the sound of the letters. Based on the results of interviews with teachers in group B, a test is carried out to assess sound-letter learning, usually using a flash card to ask the child the sound of the letters on the flash card.

Assessment of assessing blending skills

The teacher assesses the blending skills by asking the children to come forward one by one to blend letters using rubber band media. Based on the results of interviews with teachers in group B, to assess blending skills, it can be seen from how children pronounce the sounds of the letters one by one so that they can form words. The teacher uses colorful rubber bands to teach children to blend. The teacher gives each child a rubber band then the teacher directs the child to put the rubber on the thigh while gently pulling the rubber when mentioning the sounds of the letters. On the blackboard, the teacher has prepared pictures of duck, dad, doll and dog as well as the separate letters that make up the words. The teacher gives another example of how to do blending words to children, the teacher pulls the rubber slowly when mentioning the sound of each letter in the word, then the teacher lengthens the combination of the sounds of the letters, then says the word clearly. Afterward, the teacher asks the children to come forward one by one to blend words.

Based on the observations, the researchers saw that teachers used the same pattern in assessing blending skills. The teacher uses colorful rubber bands to teach children to blend words. The teacher gives each child a rubber band then the teacher directs the child to put the rubber on the thigh while gently pulling the rubber when mentioning the sounds of the letters. On the blackboard, the teacher has written the words go, get and gold with separate letters that make up the words. The teacher gives another example of how to do blending words to children, the teacher pulls the rubber slowly when mentioning the sound of each letter in the word, then the teacher lengthens the combination of the sounds of the letters, then says the word clearly. Afterward, the teacher asked the children to come forward one by one to do the blending words. The teacher gives a stamp to the child who can already do blending words.

Assessment of assessing segmentation skills

The teacher assesses segmentation skills by asking the child the sound of the letters contained in the word and asking what words begin with the sound of the letter being studied. Based on the results of interviews with teachers in group B, that to assess segmentation skills can be seen from the child's knowledge of a word consisting of any sound. Based on the observations, the researchers saw that the teacher introduced the letter "f" symbol using a flashcard and mentioned the sound of the letter "f" while making hand movements like a firefighter holding a hose to put out a fire. Children follow what the

teacher says and does. After that, the teacher introduces the names of objects that begin with the letter "f", including flags, foxes, forks, family, fences, and food. The teacher states the pronunciation of the words clearly and then asks the children to repeat them. After that, the teacher asked the children again one by one about the name of the object that begins with the letter "f". After learning the sound of the letter "f" and the names of objects that begin with the letter "f", the teacher invites the children to color the image of the flag.

The teacher points to the letter "h" on the blackboard and asks "what is the sound?". "H", continued the teacher. "hi..., hello.. start with h", said the teacher. Children also say the sound "h, h, h" and say hi and hello. "Are you ready for the words that start with 'h'?" asked the teacher. "Yes madam," replied the child. Then the teacher shows pictures with the letter "h", including ham, helicopter, harp, heart, half, and hamburger. Then the teacher asks the child to repeat what the teacher said, the teacher says "follow madam one more time, let's say it together again 'hamburger'". "hamburger", replied the child. And so on for other words that start with the letter "h". Then the teacher asks the child again the word that begins with the letter "h". The children answered helicopter, heart, hamburger.

Aspects that are assessed in reading through the phonics method according to Lyon (2003) of which the first is Assessing Phonemic Awareness. Phonemic awareness is a basic skill needed to be successful in reading, therefore teachers need to ensure that students have acquired phonemic awareness. Using assessments over time allows teachers to mark changes in phonemic awareness in learners. Phonemic awareness involves teaching children to focus on and manipulate phonemes in syllables and spoken words. Phonemic awareness is a form of phonological awareness that involves understanding that speech can be broken down into small units of sound. Children with phonemic awareness can isolate individual sounds in words. For example, in came, they can pronounce /c/a/m/ as a separate sound.

The dynamic assessment of phonemic awareness consists of: for CV (consonant-vocal) words for example, to, go, no, do; for the word VC (vocal-consonant) for example, up, on, is, if; and for CVC (consonant-vocal-consonant) words for example, leg, cat, sun, ten. The teacher pronounces each word slowly and asks the child to pronounce each sound. The teacher provides supportive cues when a child cannot divide words correctly. For example, if the child can only pronounce the first sound in a word, the teacher asks the child to name the next sound, or tells the child how many sounds there are in all. If the child cannot pronounce any sound, the teacher makes a sound segmentation model and the child is assisted to imitate the model. A child is successful if he correctly responds to one of the clues. The child's phonemic awareness score shows the level of independence in performing the segmentation task. Progress toward control of phonemic awareness can be demonstrated over time by scores and descriptions of the child's independence by phoneme segmentation (e.g., with models, with clues, without clues).

The second aspect is Assessing Letter Knowledge. Assessment of letter knowledge is to assess the letters that are known to children based on their names. Knowledge of letter names has long been a predictor of success in learning to read and write (Adams, 1990). However, it's not really the letter names that are important in learning to read, an important part of learning how to read and spell in English involves learning how letters form spelling patterns. Knowing letter names is important in early

spelling development. Learners who don't know letter names cannot use letter names as clues to match letters to sounds to try out their own spelling, which is the first stage in spelling development.

The third aspect, Assessing Letter-Sound Knowledge. Assessing Letter-Sound Knowledge is to assess students' knowledge of the sounds made by letters. It is a simple measure of initial phonics knowledge for reading. This assessment is most appropriate for novice readers. Schattschneider (in Santrock, 2010) suggests that, "phonological awareness, letter name and sound knowledge, and naming speed in kindergarten were linked to reading success in the first and second grade". According to Schattschneider, phonological awareness, knowledge of letter names and letter sounds in kindergarten is related to reading success in grades one and two.

Some aspects that are assessed in reading using the phonics method according to (Johnston & Watson, 2007) are the first letter-sound learning. The main and most important aspect in assessing reading using the phonics method is to assess children's knowledge of letter sounds, because this is the main foundation of phonics. For some children, learning this basic level can be very difficult. It can be done to help children learn the sounds of letters by teaching them mnemonics, such as characters associated with letter or hand movements and distinctive sounds as many activities form letters. These activities will help consolidate the letters and their sounds in memory.

The second aspect is assessing blending skills. In blending for reading, the child looks at the printed word he does not know, converts the letters into sounds from left to the right, and then combines these sounds to figure out what the word is. An example is when a child sees the word "pat" but cannot recognize it immediately. However, children know the letter sounds for "p," "a," and "t." The child says these sounds from left to right and then combine them to find out that the word is "pat."

They assessed children's blending skills of non-word reading (i.e., made-up words) that tests their knowledge of what is being taught in each phase. If the teacher shows the actual child words, they may be words the child already knows without understanding phonetic skills. To assess blending skills, for example, by asking children to read simple CVC instead of words, such as "kug" or "lan".

The teacher can assess the child's segmentation ability by how the teacher pronounces a word, then asks the child to repeat it, and then asks them to tell the sound of the letters from the first to the last. Gove & Wetterberg (2011) stated that to assess phoneme segmentation, the teacher reads aloud a series of words, asking students to divide each word into its component sounds ("cat," for example, would be divided into sounds: /k/ /a/ / t/). To identify the initial sound and rhyme sound, the teacher reads one word aloud, asks students to identify the first or last sound, reads three words, and identifies words that begin or end with different sounds. For example: "What is the first sound in 'map'?" Furthermore, "Which word begins with a different sound: top, touch, stand?"

Based on the explanation above, the researcher can conclude that the aspects assessed in reading using the phonics method, according to Lyon & Moore, assess phonemic awareness, assess letter knowledge and assess letter-sound knowledge. Meanwhile, according to Johnston & Watson, the aspects assessed in reading using the phonics method are letter-sound assessment, blending skills, and

segmentation skills. In this study, the researchers used the theory from Johnston & Watson in evaluating the ability to read early English in children aged 5-6 years in bilingual kindergarten in Pontianak.

The teacher assess letter-sound learning by asking the children one by one about the sound of the letters that the teacher shows. The teacher asks the child the sound of the letters by asking about the characters in Letterland. Each character in Letterland represents the sound of each letter. For example, the teacher asks about the sound of the letter "d" and what letter Dippy Duck starts with. The Letterland method helps students learn English as a foreign language more easily (Rochmah et al., 2015). If the child cannot mention the sound of the letter, the teacher repeats it while making a movement that represents the sound of the letter and asks the child to repeat it. For example, if the child cannot say "d," the teacher will repeat the sound "d" while flapping hand movements like duck or duck and ask the child to repeat it. This follows the opinion (Johnston & Watson, 2007) that the leading and most important aspect in assessing reading using the phonics method is to assess children's knowledge of letter sounds because this is the main foundation of phonics. Phonemic awareness and the principles of the alphabet are essential for beginners. Initial progress in learning to read requires the development of the cognitive ability to translate letters and letter patterns into phonological forms (Chapman et al., 2018).

The teacher assesses the blending skills by asking the children to come forward one by one to blend the letters in the words that the teacher has prepared on the blackboard. If the child cannot do the blending, the teacher will mention the sounds of the letters in the word and unite them to form a word, then ask the child to repeat it. This is under the theory (Johnston & Watson, 2007), which states that novice readers must be taught how to combine sounds or blend to read words. The phonics method helps children learn to read by breaking words into the sounds that make them up (Ehri, 2022).

Phonics instruction refers to a method of teaching reading that focuses on sublexical grapheme–phoneme correspondences with little or no reference to other constraints on spelling. Children are taught the most common ways that single letters or groups of letters (graphemes) map onto phonemes (e.g., the single letter grapheme <k> can be pronounced /k/, and the phoneme /k/ can be represented by the graphemes <c>, <k>, <ck>, <ch>, or <que>). Learners are instructed to blend the sounds associated with the letters together to produce approximate pronunciations of words. For example, when taught the sounds for the letters <d>, <o>, <g>, and <f>, the child can sound out the familiar word <dog> and less familiar or unknown words such as <fog> (Bowers & Bowers, 2018).

The teacher assesses segmentation skills by asking the child the sound of each letter in the word that the teacher writes on the blackboard. In addition, the teacher also asks the children what words begin with the letters learned that day. If the child does not mention the sound of a letter or word that begins with the letter being studied, the teacher will repeat the word and the sound of each letter contained in the word. For example, if the child cannot say a word that begins with the sound "f," then the teacher will look for words that are close to the child, such as friends, five, finger, and ask the child to repeat it. This is under the opinion (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011), which states that to assess phoneme segmentation, the teacher reads aloud a series of words, asking students to divide each word into its component sounds.

The assessment that was carried out after the application of the phonics method in an early reading of English by the teacher of group B at Cahaya Mentari Kindergarten, Pontianak, was the teacher asking the children one by one about the sound of the letters that the teacher showed. After

assessing letter-sound knowledge, the teacher continues with the assessment of segmentation skills. The last assessment carried out by the teacher is blending skills.

In evaluating or assessing the ability to read early English through phonics, the teacher does not make a written format in the assessment. The teacher only gives a stamp on the hand of the child who can pronounce the letter sounds correct or do blending; the teacher does not make a written assessment. However, the teacher gives a worksheet to the child. In the worksheet, the teacher asks the children to thicken lowercase and uppercase letters from the sounds of the studied letters. Then the children are asked to color the pictures that begin with the sounds of the letters being studied and to draw a line to the pictures that begin with the symbols of the letters being studied. For example, if you are studying the letter D, the letters "d" and "D" will be bolded by the child. Then there are pictures of cars, dinosaurs, dogs, and dolls, and children are asked to color pictures that begin with the letter D. Then there is the letter D in the middle, then on the left side, pictures of ducks and dolls. On the right side, there are pictures of cars and dinosaurs. Children are asked to draw a line from the letter D to the picture that begins with the sound D. After that. The child will also make crafts related to the letter. For example, when learning the letter F the child will color the image of the flag or flag. A child learns a language by imitating sounds and structures that she hears in the environment (Bardovi-Harlig, 2014).

Based on the results of the researchers' observations that the children's early reading achievement in English is quite good. Children can recognize and pronounce the sounds of the letters being studied. Children can also combine letter sounds with other sounds as a first step in reading the beginning of English. The researcher saw that when the teacher asked the child to do blending words, the child could name each letter sound in the word and combine the sounds so that the child could spell the word. This ability is a positive thing as a child's first step in reading beginning English.

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5. Conclusion

Assessment of learning to read the beginning of English through the phonics method for children aged 5-6 years is carried out by the teacher during the learning process. Early English reading through the phonics method are letter-sound know segmentation skills addressing blending skills. However, some things need not be maximized in the assessment because the needs tools do not make a written assessment. The teacher only uses the stamp stamped on the child's hand after the child successfully answers the teacher's questions and can blend.

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