



The Importance of Age-Appropriate Poetry for Early Childhood Language and Cognitive Development: Teachers' Views on the Poem "Panca Indraku"

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Abstract

This study investigates kindergarten teachers' perspectives on the poem "Panca Indraku" and its suitability for promoting language and cognitive development in children aged 5-6. Using qualitative methods, data were collected through interviews and online questionnaires from seven kindergarten teachers selected through purposive sampling. Based on the Miles and Huberman method, the analysis involved data collection, sorting, display, and conclusion drawing. Results indicated several challenges: limited time allocated for poetry activities, difficulty finding suitable poems, scarcity of early childhood poetry, perceptions of complexity, insufficient emphasis on reading skills, children's lack of confidence, and the complexity of language in existing poems. Nonetheless, "Panca Indraku" was favourably viewed for its simple vocabulary, appropriate structure, repetitive patterns, and alignment with cognitive development. These findings suggest that integrating age-appropriate poetry like "Panca Indraku" into early childhood education can enhance language development, cognitive skills, and imaginative exploration. The study highlights the need for more age-appropriate poetry and a curriculum that supports diverse literary forms. Limitations include a small sample size and subjective teacher perceptions. Future research should include larger samples and quantitative measures to understand poetry's impact on early childhood development comprehensively. It should explore various poetic forms and their effects on child development.

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Introduction

Poetry is an activity that should serve as a means of expression for early childhood, particularly for children aged 5-6 years. At this stage of language development, children should be able to express themselves in various ways, including poetry (Santrock in Pebriana, 2017; Nhan et al., 2022). However, poetry presented in early childhood often leads to problems. This is because parents frequently encounter difficulties selecting reading material for their children, including literary works (Garces-Bacsal, 2022; Bhamani et al., 2020; Dewi et al., 2014). Reading material unsuitable for the child's level of understanding can confuse.

According to Hurlock (2017) and Cendana and Suryana (2022), parents should stimulate early childhood language development with words that are easy for children to understand and avoid complicated vocabulary, as this can confuse children and diminish their motivation in language activities. This also applies to introducing poetry to early childhood; parents and educators should provide poetry that aligns with children's language abilities at that age. Appropriate poetry for children aged 5-6 years offers various benefits, such as enhancing children's memory for vocabulary and knowledge, helping children differentiate word forms and meanings, avoiding spelling errors, encouraging the acquisition of new vocabulary, and promoting its use in communication (Rasulova & Abdullayeva, 2023; Abdullayeva, 2022). Additionally, considering the cognitive suitability of poetry for early childhood is essential. Poetry can transport children into a space of imagination for fantasy and critical thinking (Fitzpatrick & Fitzpatrick, 2020). Pourkalhor and Tavakoli (2017) further explain that poetry can guide early childhood in exploring and viewing things mentally from new and innovative perspectives. Children aged 5-6 years are in the preoperational stage, enabling them to imagine objects even when they are not present (Piaget in Kanwal et al., 2023). However, this is influenced by the children's life experiences and how they record these memories. Therefore, it is essential to create and present poetry for early childhood that is relevant to their real lives. Rasulova and Abdullayeva (2023) state that presenting literary works, including poetry, to children, should aim to capture their attention and avoid using complicated words because the cognitive abilities of early childhood are primarily based on real experiences. Poetry that considers the cognitive abilities of children aged 5-6 years can provide benefits, such as stimulating their curiosity to learn new things, developing their views and knowledge from past experiences, fostering imagination, and awakening critical thinking about the evolving world (Vartiainen & Kumpulainen, 2020; Abdullayeva, 2022).

Although poetry has significant potential to meet early childhood language and cognitive needs, observations indicate that poetry receives little attention in early childhood classrooms in Indonesia. Seven kindergarten teachers from various regions in Indonesia reported that there had been no implementation of poetry in the classroom, even though children are accustomed to performing poetry at certain events outside the classroom. During the first researcher's observations as an undergraduate student majoring in Early Childhood Teacher Education (2017-2021) and a Master of Early Childhood Education (2022-present) at numerous Early Childhood Education institutions, particularly Kindergartens, it was found that poetry is rarely applied in the classroom. This shows that poetry does not receive enough attention in early childhood education, which may influence teachers' views on appreciating suitable and effective poetry for early childhood.

Finland, a country considered a global model in education, faces similar issues. Only half of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) staff reported implementing linguistic practices, such as children's poetry, in early childhood classes (FINNEC'S, 2019). Despite being recognized as a critical factor in developing children's thinking, learning abilities, and broader interactions, poetry practices are lacking in early childhood education.

The limited practice of poetry in early childhood classes is also influenced by the scarcity of poetry publications for early childhood, making it difficult for parents and educators to find appropriate references. Hermawati and Sugito (2022) confirm that children's literature publications are still limited. Moreover, the first researcher, who has worked as a poet since 2019, rarely finds print and online media offering poetry publications for early childhood reading. This motivates the researcher to conduct further research on poetry for early childhood.

This research aims to explore teachers' views regarding the suitability of poetry for the language and cognition of children aged 5-6 years, focusing on analyzing the poem "*Panca Indraku*." The poem "*Panca Indraku*" by Asep, published in Peraga Pendidikan Magazine, was chosen because it is specifically designed to be enjoyed by kindergarten children with the guidance of parents or teachers. By analyzing this poem, it is hoped that teachers can better understand the characteristics of poetry suitable for early childhood language and cognitive abilities. This understanding is crucial for teachers to select appropriate poetry to support the teaching and learning process and enhance appreciation of poetry as an effective educational tool.

Methods

The method applied in this research is qualitative. According to Iraklis (2020), qualitative methods allow researchers to explore respondents' perspectives in depth. This research aims to understand teachers' views on poetry for early childhood, using the poem "*Panca Indraku*" as the research object. Researchers employed a purposive sampling approach to select respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the research focus (Nagara, 2023; Andrade,

2021). These criteria included qualifications in Kindergarten teaching and an undergraduate educational background in PGPAUD (Early et al. Education), ensuring the validity of the data. Seven teachers were selected as respondents to obtain comprehensive data.

Data collection was conducted through interviews and online questionnaires. Interview data provided initial information regarding the application of poetry in kindergarten classes and teachers' views on poetry for early childhood. The questionnaire gathered teachers' perspectives on the language and cognitive use of children aged 5-6 years in responding to the poem "*Panca Indraku*," created explicitly for kindergarten children. Assessment indicators were developed by the researchers, adopting and refining theories from several experts, namely Nurgiyantoro (children's literature and poetry), Hurlock (children's language development), and Vygotsky (children's cognitive development). Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman method (in Onwuegbuzie & Weinbaum, 2016): first, collecting all available information; second, sorting out the most relevant data; third, displaying the data; and fourth, drawing conclusions from the data obtained. Ethical considerations in this research aimed to protect the respondents' identities, ensuring that their names were not disclosed.

Result

The results of this research aimed to determine the extent to which early childhood poetry is within the reach and understanding of kindergarten teachers. This was achieved through unstructured interviews, which gathered an initial overview of the application of poetry in teaching and learning activities and understood teachers' perspectives on early childhood poetry.

Unstructured interviews were conducted with seven kindergarten teachers to obtain qualitative data on their views regarding early childhood poetry. Additionally, the poem "*Panca Indraku*" by Asep was introduced to these teachers, and their feedback was collected using a structured questionnaire with options such as agree, disagree, and other choices.

3.1. Initial Description of the Application of Poetry in Teaching and Learning Activities and Teachers' Views on Early Childhood Poetry

The following are the critical responses from the teachers:

Table 1. Teachers' Responses to the Implementation of Poetry in Early Childhood Education

Teacher	Statement
Teacher 1	"When carrying out poetry activities, it feels like time is limited because the curriculum
	focuses on other activities, such as singing."
Teacher 2	"It is difficult to find poetry that suits a child's level of understanding and interest."
Teacher 3	"Poetry for early childhood is still rare, so teachers have to write it themselves. However,
	we have difficulty writing poetry because not all teachers can."
Teacher 4	"Poetry is often considered too complicated for early childhood. Many teachers argue
	poetry is more suitable for elementary school students and above."
Teacher 5	"The application of poetry rarely occurs in kindergarten classes due to a lack of emphasis
	on reading skills in the implemented curriculum."
Teacher 6	"Our children lack the confidence to appear in front of the class, let alone perform
	poetry."
Teacher 7	"The poetry I often find is usually composed of complicated words, so I do not introduce
	poetry to children."

The research findings indicate that poetry in early childhood education faces significant challenges. Kindergarten teachers feel that time for poetry activities is limited because the curriculum prioritizes other activities, such as singing. Additionally, finding poetry that matches children's understanding and interests is complex, and there is a scarcity of poetry specifically for young children, requiring teachers to write their poems, which not all can do. Many teachers view poetry as too complicated for early childhood, believing it is more suitable for elementary



students. The current curriculum's lack of emphasis on reading skills further limits the application of poetry in kindergarten classes. Children's lack of confidence to perform in front of the class also presents a barrier, and the complexity of language in existing poems discourages teachers from introducing poetry to their students.

3.2. Teachers' Views on the Poetry "Panca Indraku"

The poem "*Panca Indraku*" by Asep was introduced to the seven kindergarten teachers for evaluation. The poem is as follows:

PANCA INDRAKU

By: Asep Aku melihat bulan Dengan mataku Aku mendengar kicau burung Dengan telingaku Aku merasakan manisan Dengan lidahku Aku mencium bunga Dengan hidungku Aku meraba patung Dengan kulit tanganku

The poem "Panca Indraku" by Asep was introduced to the seven kindergarten teachers to evaluate its appropriateness for early childhood education, specifically for children aged 5-6. The teachers well-received the poem's simple language and repetitive structure, as they align with the linguistic capabilities and cognitive development of young children. Each line of the poem highlights one of the five senses, making it relatable and educational for young learners by connecting abstract concepts to concrete experiences. For instance, "Aku melihat bulan dengan mataku" (I see the moon with my eyes) directly teaches children about the sense of sight, while "Aku mencium bunga dengan hidungku" (I smell flowers with my nose) relates to the sense of smell.

This concrete and sensory-based approach aids in young children's cognitive and language development, allowing them to understand better and relate to the world around them through their senses. The teachers' positive feedback on the simplicity of vocabulary, word arrangement, and repetition in the poem underscores its potential effectiveness as a teaching tool. It addresses some of the challenges previously mentioned, such as the scarcity of suitable poetry for early childhood and the difficulty in finding poetry that matches children's comprehension levels.

This poem was reviewed using indicators provided by researchers, based on the results of a questionnaire filled out by the seven teachers with options such as agree, disagree, and other choices. The findings are explained as follows:

3.2.1. Teachers' Views on the Use of Language in the Poetry "Panca Indra" for Children Aged 5-6 Years

3.2.1.1. Simplicity of Vocabulary

All seven teachers agreed that this poem was written using simple vocabulary, including word choice, word structure, and subtle meanings that were easy to understand and applicable to children aged 5-6.

Examples: "Aku melihat bulan," "Dengan mataku"

3.2.1.2. The Arrangement of Words or Sentences in Each Line

The teachers concurred that the poem's structure, consisting of a maximum of six words per line, aligns with the linguistic characteristics of children aged 5-6 years.

3.2.1.3. Voice in Repetition

Six out of seven teachers agreed that the poem excels in language play through repetition patterns of dominant vowel and consonant sounds. One teacher felt the repetition was not dominant enough.

Examples: Repetition of the word "*Aku*" at the beginning of each line creates a vowel sound, and repetition of the word "*Dengan*" in every second line creates vowel and consonant sounds.

3.2.2. Teachers' Views on the Use of Cognitive Elements in the Poetry "Panca Indra" for Children Aged 5-6 Years

3.2.2.1. Education According to the Child's Age

All teachers agreed that this poem can be used in early childhood education because it shows elements of education or learning that align with how children aged 5-6 years view the world.

Example: "*Aku melihat bulan dengan mataku*," which directly conveys the use of the sense of sight to children.

3.2.2.2. Imagination as a Reflection of Real Experiences

The poem reflects real experiences that children aged 5-6 years can relate to through their senses, facilitating new perspectives.

Example: "Aku mencium bunga dengan hidungku" provides a concrete idea of using the sense of smell to perceive the scent of flowers. Additionally, children who are accustomed to the word "menghirup" (to smell something) are introduced to the equivalent vocabulary "mencium" from a new perspective. This also requires teachers to explain vocabulary that is less familiar to children.

3.2.2.3. Problem-Solving Elements

Though the poem does not explicitly address problem-solving, it illustrates how children use their senses to interact with the world.

Example: "*Aku meraba patung dengan kulit tanganku*" demonstrates the use of the sense of touch in understanding the texture of an object.

Feedback from the seven kindergarten teachers indicates their ability to effectively assess and understand the appropriateness of poetry for children aged 5-6 years in terms of language and cognitive use. The poem "*Panca Indraku*" was found to use simple vocabulary and appropriate word order, though there was some disagreement regarding the dominance of repetition patterns. All teachers agreed that the poem provides suitable educational content, stimulates imagination through real experiences, and contains implicit problem-solving elements.

The review results by the seven kindergarten teachers regarding the poem "*Panca Indraku*" demonstrate their ability to effectively evaluate and comprehend the appropriateness of poetry for children aged 5-6 years in terms of language and cognitive use. Although one teacher disagreed about the dominance of repetition patterns, all teachers concurred that the poem uses simple vocabulary and appropriate word order. Additionally, all teachers agreed that the poem offers suitable educational content, fosters imagination through depictions of authentic experiences, and includes implicit problem-solving elements.

Discussion

This study aims to elucidate kindergarten teachers' perspectives on the suitability of the poem "*Panca Indraku*" for the language and cognitive development of children aged 5-6 years. The findings indicate a consensus among teachers regarding the simplicity of vocabulary and appropriate structure of the poem for young children, aligning with the linguistic capabilities of this age group (Cousins, 2017). However, challenges remain in integrating poetry into early



childhood education, mainly due to a lack of suitable material and limited emphasis within the curriculum (Awan & Khalida, 2015; Wahyundari & Handayani, 2021). This highlights the need for more age-appropriate poetry resources (Grossoehme et al., 2022). The literature supports the relevance of early exposure to poetry on early childhood development (Niklas et al., 2016; Sharman et al., 2023).

The results highlight several critical observations. Teachers reported that the vocabulary in "*Panca Indraku*" is simple and accessible, agreeing on its appropriateness for young learners (Niklas et al., 2016; Sharman et al., 2023). Additionally, the poem's structure, featuring a maximum of six words per line, was deemed well-suited to the linguistic characteristics of 5-6-year-old children (Nurgiyantoro, 2021; Nu'man et al., 2022). The use of repetition, though not unanimously agreed upon in terms of dominance, was recognized by most teachers as beneficial for language reinforcement (Schwab & Lew-Williams, 2016; Rasulova & Abdullaeva, 2023). This supports the idea that repetitive language patterns aid in vocabulary acquisition and language structure familiarity.

Compared with previous findings, this study supports the notion that early childhood poetry should employ simple, repetitive language to enhance comprehension and retention (Grossoehme et al., 2022; Norton & Gregson, 2020). This is consistent with the understanding that young children benefit from repetitive language patterns, which aid in vocabulary acquisition and language structure familiarity (Schwab & Lew-Williams, 2016). The limited availability of age-appropriate poetry remains a significant barrier (Wildová & Kropáčková, 2015). Moreover, these findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of simple, accessible language in early childhood educational materials (Awan & Khalida, 2015; Wahyundari & Handayani, 2021). Teachers need resources that are both developmentally appropriate and engaging for young learners.

The research also highlights the educational value of "*Panca Indraku*," particularly its effectiveness in promoting cognitive development through imagination and problem-solving (Piaget, 2018; Vygotsky in Fasting, 2019). Teachers agreed that the poem facilitates a realistic understanding of sensory experiences, essential for cognitive growth in early childhood (Puspita et al., 2022; Peyre et al., 2016). This aligns with the theoretical framework suggesting that cognitive and language development are interlinked and mutually reinforcing (Gardner in Nu'man et al., 2022). The educational aspects highlighted include knowledge of the five senses, illustrating how poems can provide multifaceted learning opportunities. The study thus supports the use of poetry as a versatile educational tool.

The significant finding that "*Panca Indraku*" is suitable for young children's cognitive abilities highlights the importance of contextually appropriate educational materials (Vartiainen & Kumpulainen, 2020; Kozina et al., 2023). The poem's capacity to stimulate critical thinking through sensory exploration underlines its potential as a valuable educational tool (Fischer & Ferrari, 2020). However, caution is warranted in generalizing these findings due to the study's small sample size and specific cultural context (Cousins, 2017; Sharman et al., 2023). Future research should consider more extensive, diverse samples to validate these findings further. This will ensure that the educational benefits of such poems are widely recognized and implemented.

The implications of these findings suggest that incorporating poetry like "*Panca Indraku*" into early childhood curricula can enhance language and cognitive development, fostering critical thinking and imaginative exploration (Liu, 2018; Schwab & Lew-Williams, 2016). The study underscores the need for a broader range of age-appropriate poetry and a curriculum that supports diverse literary forms to enrich early childhood education (Wildová & Kropáčková, 2015; Awan & Khalida, 2015). To address the limitations identified, future research should focus on expanding the repertoire of early childhood poetry and examining its impact on language and cognitive development across different cultural contexts (Puspita et al., 2022; Peyre et al., 2016). Additionally, professional development for teachers on integrating poetry into early

learning settings could further enhance its educational benefits (Arika et al., 2023; Wahyundari & Handayani, 2021).

Future research is recommended to delve deeper into the impact of poetry reading on young children's language and cognitive development. The focus should be on poems specifically crafted to align with children's comprehension level and daily experiences, such as "*Kue seperti Cincin*" and "*Kucingku*" by Nida Nur Fadillah. This research could involve direct observation and measurements of children's vocabulary growth, comprehension, and imaginative abilities after exposure to these poems, aiming to identify concrete benefits and effective strategies for literacy instruction for children aged 5-6 years.

In conclusion, the poem "*Panca Indraku*" is deemed suitable for young children's language and cognitive development, offering educational value through its simplicity and imaginative content. By addressing the challenges of limited poetry resources and curriculum constraints, educators can better leverage poetry's potential to foster early childhood development.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to evaluate kindergarten teachers' perceptions regarding the suitability of the poem "Panca Indraku" for enhancing language and cognitive skills in children aged 5-6 years. The findings revealed several key points: limited time allocation for poetry activities, difficulty finding appropriate poems, scarcity of early childhood poetry, perceptions of complexity, insufficient emphasis on reading skills, children's lack of confidence, and the complexity of language used in poems. Despite these challenges, "Panca Indraku" was favourably viewed by teachers for its simple vocabulary, appropriate structure, repetitive patterns, and cognitive elements aligned with young children's developmental stages. The implications of these findings underscore the significant role that age-appropriate poetry, such as "Panca Indraku," can play in early childhood education. Educators can enhance children's language development, cognitive abilities, and imaginative skills by integrating such poetry into the curriculum. The study suggests that educational content must be carefully curated to align with young learners' linguistic and cognitive characteristics, promoting critical thinking and experiential learning. However, the study also acknowledges its limitations, including the small sample size and the subjective nature of teacher perceptions. Future research should expand the sample size and incorporate quantitative measures to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of poetry on early childhood development. Recommendations for future research include exploring diverse poetic forms and their effects on various aspects of child development and developing strategies to overcome the identified challenges in integrating poetry into early childhood education. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine the long-term benefits of early exposure to poetry on children's language and cognitive growth.

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