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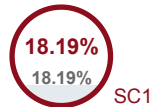
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Enhancing Kindergarteners' English Vocabulary and Pronunciation through Morning Circle Activities

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ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT
 Received: dd/mm/yyyy Reviewed: dd/mm/yyyy Accepted: dd/mm/yyyy Published: dd/mm/yyyy This study investigates the implementation of Morning Circle activities as a strategic approach to enhance English vocabulary and pronunciation among kindergarten students. Grounded in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the concept of scaffolding, the research explores how teacher student interactions within these activities support early language acquisition. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, involving six weeks of classroom observations in a kindergarten that routinely integrates Morning Circle into its English learning practices. Data were collected through detailed field notes focusing on four main components: greeting, singing, counting, and material delivery. The findings demonstrate that each Morning Circle component contributes meaningfully to language development. The greeting session provides structured exposure to basic English expressions with bilingual support. Singing combines vocabulary learning with rhythm and movement, fostering pronunciation practice in an enjoyable context. Counting activities reinforce number vocabulary while encouraging peer interaction. Material delivery focuses on thematic vocabulary, supported by modeling, gestures, and simple explanations to aid comprehension. The teacher's consistent use of scaffolding through modeling, repetition, bilingual cues, and physical demonstration was key in guiding students' engagement and linguistic progress. These findings suggest that Morning Circle, when purposefully designed, serves as an effective and developmentally appropriate framework for introducing foundational English language skills. Rather than a mere routine to begin the day, it

becomes an interactive and intentional learning opportunity. This study provides practical insights for early childhood educators on how to integrate structured language input into daily classroom activities to promote vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation development

Keywords: English for Young Learners, Morning circle activities, English vocabulary, Kindergarten learners

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Introduction

1. Teaching English to young learners has unique challenges and demands patience as well as high commitment, because children need a different approach from teenager or adults (Smith, 2012). Those who are in the age range of 0 - 6 years are included in the category of young learners. Many experts argue that this phase is an important foundation for development, often referred to as the "Golden Age" which can significantly affect the growth of children's learning capacity in the future Arumsari et al., (2017). There is a need for specific teaching strategies when teaching young learners so that they do not lose their attention, as they tend to lose interest quickly when their lessons are not interesting (Wulandari et al., 2020). At the same time, children are curious, which makes them more eager to explore new things, especially when it comes to language. It is important to design programs that stimulate their learning development when teaching English effectively to young learners. Schools play a crucial role in this process, and having skilled and competent teachers is essential, as they are the driving force behind successful classroom teaching (Wulandari et al., 2020). The main factor in educating the character of a student is the teacher, not only in the scope of learning, improving the competence and personal quality of students is the duty of a teacher (Salsabilah et al., 2021). **Teaching English to young learners is different from teaching adult learners. Young learners are more enthusiastic than teenage or adult learners when learning something. This is because young learners are usually more concerned with competing with their peers** in order to get more **attention from the teacher. But young learners lose concentration more quickly and are less motivated when they have complex** assignments from teachers (Fikroni, 2022). **From here we can understand, that young learners must be equipped with strategies or learning methods that are simpler and more fun so that their focus remains consistent when learning, especially in learning foreign languages.**

2. The challenges often encountered when teaching English for Very Young Learners (VYL) are the methods or approaches that the teacher employs with the learners. A Very Young Learner is typically a child aged 5-6 years, and they often start pre-school, which stage before elementary school (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). Unlike higher school levels, the methods used with VYL students focus more on interactive strategies, including diverse activities, social engagement, and a balance of different tasks (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). For advanced students like those in senior high school, their method focuses more on **problem-solving. Utilizing Problem-Based Learning for senior high school students** seeks to motivate them to engage in critical thinking, analyze a situation, and collaborate on finding solutions (Nuarta, 2020). Therefore, the **approach of lower and upper-level students is significantly different from the earlier description. Lower level students are more encouraged** to interact and activities, whereas upper level students are expected to engage in more critical thinking. This will necessitate the teachers to engage lower-level learners with more captivating and varied methods. When teaching VYL, the teachers should establish an appropriate strategy for them, as without a suitable approach or learning technique, students can quickly become disinterested in their studies. Engaging and enjoyable education will help students feel more at ease and receptive to learning (Na'imah, 2022).

3. Morning Circle is one of the strategies that can be used before starting learning, it is **an activity that is carried out at the beginning of the day before starting learning**, Morning Circle activities are activities that prioritize interaction with students and make a circle (Gachiku, 2021). Morning Circle activities have **several elements in it, which are greetings and introductions, joint activities, and creating a pleasant atmosphere before opening the lesson. As for the purpose of Morning Circle, according to Bruce et al., (2006), the main purpose of Morning Circle activities is to create an emotionally comfortable school environment. This activity can also develop social, communication, and academic skills for students. From this explanation, Morning Circle activities can be used for learning or academic purposes such as teaching something to students depending on what the teacher** wants to teach. Utilizing **Morning Circle in English language** education is significantly valuable, as these activities foster an inclusive and supportive classroom environment, allowing students to engage with one another through diverse activities that will indirectly enhance their participation in learning English (Shields-Lysiak et al., 2020). In general, Morning Circle activities serve as an effective method to promote English language acquisition by fostering a nurturing atmosphere for students, enabling them to engage in active and collaborative learning.

4. The use of Morning Circle is identical to the interaction activities between teachers and children, in this case Morning Circle is one of the learning activities that is quite effective in optimizing children's development in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Through activities such as discussing, singing, asking questions, and simple games, the teacher plays an important role in providing scaffolding, which is temporary assistance in the form of directions, examples, or guiding questions to help children achieve tasks that they cannot do independently (Swastika, 2025). Especially in English language learning, the teacher plays an important role in teaching correct pronunciation and introducing new vocabulary during the learning process. Teacher support is gradually minimized as the child's independence in using English increases. Therefore, Morning Circle not only serves as a routine activity, but can also be a strategic tool to improve children's language, cognitive and social skills, through learning experiences based on meaningful social interactions (Ness, 2022). In addition, the use of two languages (English and Indonesian) in learning process shows the teacher's role as a facilitator who provides linguistic scaffolding. By delivering the instruction in English first, then translating it into Indonesian, the teacher helps students to understand the meaning while building confidence in responding. This theory is also supported by Wei, (2018) findings, which state that the use of alternating bilinguals in learning known as "translanguaging" can strengthen children's understanding of concepts and support the development of two languages simultaneously. This approach supports children's holistic development in a supportive learning environment.

5. Morning Circle activities consist of several main patterns: greeting, singing, counting, and material delivery. These patterns are not only to establish a pleasant routine for children, but also to have an important contribution in supporting language, cognitive, social, and emotional development holistically. Greeting, for example, is not just a greeting, but an early form of social interaction that supports language acquisition, as explained in the Interactionist theory developed by Santopolo & Strauss, (1956). At the same time, such routine greetings also provide a familiar and secure environment for young learners to practice language consistently, which is essential for language acquisition, as suggested by Williams (2002). Through this activity, children will learn to understand the meaning of reciprocal communication in the context of social interaction. Meanwhile, singing activities that insert vocabulary in the form of songs will encourage children to remember and recite new words repeatedly, which is in line with the Behavioristic principles proposed by Skinner (1957). In this context, the repeated singing of songs **can be seen as a form of operant conditioning, where the reinforcement of** successfully learning and recalling new words encourages children to repeat these behaviors, strengthening their language acquisition (Cullata, 2019). Counting in Morning Circle not only serves to introduce numbers in English, but also trains cognitive abilities through observation, repetition, and association, as theorized by Piaget. According to Piaget, the counting process helps children to develop concrete operational thinking, where they begin to understand the relationship between numbers, their order, and how numbers remain constant even if the order is changed, which improves their cognitive structure (Pakpahan & Saragih, 2022). Finally, the delivery of the material is the main basis for teachers to provide scaffolding, which is

gradual assistance in the zone of proximal development (ZPD), so that children can absorb new knowledge that they cannot acquire independently. This process involves an interaction between the teacher and the student, where the teacher adjusts the level of assistance based on the child's current ability and gradually reduces the assistance as the child's ability increases. Through such support, students can not only understand new vocabulary or concepts, but also build confidence in applying them, ultimately improving their ability to engage in more complex language tasks (Vygotsky, 1978).

6. **Previous research has also discussed the use of Morning Circle strategies for language learning, according to Roding & Che Mustafa, (2022), the use of Morning Circle can improve their language use and communication.** The findings of this article suggest that Morning Circle activities can improve children's language and communication skills in kindergarten. Their findings do not address **English language learning in Morning Circle activities, but rather analyze students' communication when using Morning Circle. In other words, the article does not address the language that influences the implementation and effectiveness of Morning Circle, which can be an important activity in the context of children's diverse backgrounds. Shields-** Lysiak et al., (2020) **research on the use of Morning Circle discusses how the practice of greeting at Morning Meeting can build a strong and supportive classroom community. The** findings of the article suggest that the **practice of greetings in Morning Circle** contributes to the establishment of **an inclusive and supportive classroom** community, increasing students' sense of connectedness and engagement. **It is important to note that the article discusses inclusive education, and lacks an in-depth understanding of the specific role of Morning Circle in the context of language learning and classroom community development.** Hanum & Maryani (2023) finding show that morning activities in elementary schools contribute to character development. A noticeable **gap in previous articles is the lack of research that specifically addresses the impact of Morning Circle activities,** especially regarding the use of the activity for teaching English. Although in previous studies of teaching strategies in early childhood, few have focused directly on how Morning Circle activities can be used as a tool to teach vocabulary and pronunciation to children.

7. Additionally, early engagement with English via fun and contextual activities can boost children's confidence and involvement in using the language. Morning Circle, a regular classroom practice that integrates songs, greetings, and thematic topics, provides a chance for language exposure via interaction. However, few studies have focused on how Morning Circle supports vocabulary and pronunciation in bilingual preschool settings. This research took place in a bilingual kindergarten where classroom routines incorporate both English and Indonesian. From an initial interview, the teacher indicated that Morning Circle was purposefully utilized to instruct English vocabulary and pronunciation via interactive methods. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the implementation of Morning Circle activities to support the teaching of English vocabulary and pronunciation to kindergarten children. By analyzing the use of these interactive strategies, this study seeks to understand **the use of Morning Circle** to promote language acquisition and to offer practical insights for educators in implementing effective teaching methods for early childhood students. **Hence, the following research questions from the researchers: "How are Morning Circle activities implemented** to enhance English Vocabulary for kindergarten students?"

1. Methods

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method, based on Vygotsky's theory of social development (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning, especially for early childhood. This approach was chosen to gain insight into how the English learning process through Morning Circle activities emphasizes interactive and collaborative learning. Before data gathering, an initial interview took place with the classroom teacher. The teacher clarified that Morning Circle was purposefully employed as a method to present English in an enjoyable and contextual manner. This understanding validated the significance of the research focus and aided in identifying the particular elements to monitor. **Taman Buah Hati Kindergarten was chosen as the research site because it regularly implements the Morning Circle strategy as part of English language learning. This provided a natural context to explore its role in supporting students' vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation development. A total of 23 students aged 5-6 years from three classes participated, in line with the concept of the golden age (Piaget, 2008), which suggests that this is a crucial period for language development. The observation period lasted for 6 weeks to obtain consistent data and minimize bias. Data collection** was done through field notes, which documented the activities and interaction patterns observed during the Morning Circle activities. The main focus is to find out how the teacher's guidance and students' participation conform to the principles of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This includes analyzing the scaffolding provided by the teacher, the collaborative interaction among the students, and the students' responses in terms of vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation clarity. The researchers acted as non-participant observers during the Morning Circle activities, taking detailed field notes to record data relevant to the research questions. The data was **categorized based on the focus of observation to facilitate analysis.**

Data were analyzed using a thematic approach, where the researchers initially read and reread the field notes to identify recurring patterns related to teacher and student interactions during Morning Circle activities. These patterns were then categorized into themes such as scaffolding techniques, language responses from students, and contextual support. The identified themes were then examined in relation to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding theoretical frameworks to explore how interactions in Morning Circle activities support vocabulary and pronunciation learning. Descriptive examples of observations are included to support each theme and ensure that the analysis remains consistent and grounded in the data. To ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative study, and minimize researchers' bias, the analysis process was reviewed and discussed with a senior lecturer in EYL, who served as a peer debriefer. This academic provided feedback on theme development and interpretation. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of observational procedures, while confirmability was further supported by the researchers' reflective journaling during data analysis. These strategies collectively contributed to the rigor and reliability of the findings presented in this study.

1. Result & Discussion

2. Result

Based on the classroom observations, 4 main activity patterns were identified: greeting, singing, counting and material delivery. These activities were implemented by the teacher consistently throughout the observation, the activities served as the main framework used to teach English vocabulary and pronunciation. The table below outlines the interactions that took place during the Morning Circle activity, including concise notes to highlight the type of scaffolding offered by the teacher or the student responses that arose during the observation.

Greeting

The Morning Circle begins with a greeting session. Before starting the lesson, the teacher gathers all students to the school yard. The students gather to join the Morning Circle activity. After all students have gathered, the teacher instructs them to make a circular line while holding hands with the friend next to them. This circle formation becomes an early routine that creates an atmosphere of warmth and togetherness. Then Morning Circle activity begins with a greeting from the teacher using English, then continued with Indonesian.

Table 1. Teacher Student Interaction during Greeting Activity in Morning Circle

Activity	Speaker	Verbal / Non-Verbal Language	Scaffolding Strategy and Student Response
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Teacher greeting Teacher "Good morning students, how are you today?"
 "Selamat pagi anak-anak, bagaimana kabarnya?" Bilingual scaffolding to ensure understanding.
 Student response Students "I'm fine, and you?" Indicates familiarity and understanding of routine English expressions.
 Teacher follow-up Teacher "I'm fine, thank you" Models complete dialogue; provides repetition and pronunciation model

This table 1 illustrates the scaffolding strategies used during the greeting activity. The teacher employs bilingual greetings to facilitate understanding and provides a model of common English expressions. Students' responses show familiarity with the structure, indicating routine-based language acquisition. The repetition of simple dialogues, such as "How are you?" and "I'm fine, thank you," fosters early speaking confidence and pronunciation accuracy.

Singing

After the greeting session, the teacher continues the Morning Circle by inviting students to sing together. Singing activities are a regular part of the routine and serve to engage students in a joyful and interactive way. The songs vary from simple melodies to those involving movement, providing both linguistic input and opportunities for physical expression.

Table 2. Teacher Student Interaction during Singing Activity in Morning Circle

Activity	Speaker	Verbal / Non Verbal Language	Scaffolding Strategy and Student Response
Song modeling	Teacher	"Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Fruit Salad, If you happy and you know it..." (models the melody)	The teacher starts singing with a different song each meeting, then gives examples of clear pronunciation and movements according to the song being performed.
Joint singing	Students	Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Fruit Salad, If you happy and you know it..." (Singing along with the teacher)	Students join confidently after initial modeling.
Instructional support	Teacher	Demonstrates song movements (clapping, pointing)	Physical cues help comprehension of song content.

Table 2 highlights the role of song-based activities in supporting vocabulary and pronunciation. The teacher models lyrics with clear articulation and integrates physical gestures to reinforce meaning. Students actively participate by singing along, indicating increased engagement. The use of repetitive and interactive songs encourages both linguistic and kinesthetic learning, while scaffolding is provided through demonstration and bilingual explanation when necessary.

Counting

Following the singing session, the teacher continues with counting in English. This activity is a regular part of the Morning Circle, where students sit in a circle and count together from one to fifteen. At first, the teacher starts the activity by saying, "One, two, three..." while gesturing for students to join in. The students respond by continuing the sequence one by one.

Table 3. Teacher Student Interaction during Counting Activity in Morning Circle

Activity	Speaker	Verbal / Non Verbal Language	Scaffolding Strategy and Student Response
Counting lead	Teacher	"One, two, three..." (points and invites students)	Teacher initiates with verbal and visual scaffolding.
Counting participation	Students	"One, two, three..." (Continue the sequence up to fifteen)	Mixed levels of fluency observed; peer modeling supports weaker students.
Clarification	Teacher	"Five... itu lima, Six... itu enam"	Bilingual instruction provided to support unfamiliar vocabulary.

This table 3 captures the counting session, where students practice number vocabulary through choral repetition. The teacher initiates the count with verbal cues and gestures, encouraging participation. Peer modeling emerges as a natural form of support among students. When needed, the teacher provides clarification using bilingual translation to bridge understanding, especially for less familiar terms.

Material Delivery

The last is the delivery of material by the teacher in the Morning Circle activity. The delivery of vocabulary material is done repeatedly and gradually. Teachers consistently start by repeating previously taught material before introducing new vocabulary. Pronunciation is modeled clearly, often accompanied by simple explanations or comparisons in Indonesian to aid comprehension.

Table 4. Teacher Student Interaction during Material Delivery in Morning Circle

Activity	Speaker	Verbal / Nonverbal Language	Scaffolding Strategy and Student Response
Vocabulary introduction	Teacher	"father, mother, brother", "Sun, Star, Moon", "Head, Hand, Body"	Repetition of previously learned vocabulary, then giving new vocabulary with different themes.
New material modeling	Teacher	"Sun, kalau dibaca di Indonesia itu tulisannya 'San'" "Head (Pointing Head)"	The teacher provides scaffolding with bilingual shapes and signs, depending on the theme.
Imitation and practice	Students	"sun..." (Repeating after the teacher)	Active involvement supports pronunciation and memory retention.

This table 4 presents the vocabulary instruction component of the Morning Circle. The teacher introduces new thematic words after reviewing previous content, ensuring continuity in learning. Pronunciation modeling and code-switching are used strategically to scaffold understanding. Students engage through imitation and repetition, which supports vocabulary retention and pronunciation development. The multisensory approach, including gestures and contextual cues, enhances language acquisition.

The classroom observations reveal that Morning Circle activities comprising greeting, singing, counting, and material delivery function as a consistent pedagogical framework that integrates language learning with social interaction and developmental support. Each component serves a distinct but complementary role in facilitating vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation development among kindergarten students. The greeting activity fosters routine-based language exposure, allowing children to become familiar with basic English expressions through repetitive and bilingual scaffolding. Singing, on the other hand, engages students both linguistically and physically, creating a joyful learning environment where pronunciation and vocabulary are reinforced through rhythm, melody, and movement. The counting session introduces numerical vocabulary in a collaborative setting,

where teacher modeling and peer interaction contribute to the learning process, particularly for students with varying levels of fluency. Meanwhile, the material delivery phase provides structured exposure to new thematic vocabulary, supported by visual cues, gestures, and comparative language explanations, ensuring that comprehension and pronunciation are effectively scaffolded. Across all activities, the teacher's strategic use of bilingual instruction, repetition, physical modeling, and interactive engagement aligns with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This approach allows students to participate in language tasks they could not perform independently, gradually advancing their competence through guided assistance. The findings affirm that when thoughtfully implemented, Morning Circle routines can be transformed into purposeful language-learning opportunities. More than just classroom rituals, these activities act as dynamic and inclusive platforms where cognitive, linguistic, and emotional development intersect. As such, Morning Circle offers a valuable model for early childhood educators aiming to support foundational English language skills within an engaging and developmentally responsive framework.

Discussion

The classroom observations in this study reveal that Morning Circle activities comprising greeting, singing, counting, and material delivery-serve as more than just daily routines; they function as interactive and intentional platforms for developing kindergarten students' English vocabulary and pronunciation. Each activity is structured to support language development through scaffolding, with the teacher providing models, repetitions, gestures, and bilingual explanations. These pedagogical techniques enable students to engage meaningfully with language, even when they are not yet capable of independent use. As Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests, learners progress most effectively when guided within their developmental range, and this was consistently evident throughout the four Morning Circle activities observed.

3. The findings align with multiple theoretical perspectives outlined in the literature. The use of bilingual scaffolding during greetings supports (Wei, 2018) notion of translanguaging, which strengthens conceptual understanding and dual language development. Singing activities reflect Skinner's behaviorist theory (Cullata, 2019), where repetition and positive reinforcement enhance student engagement and retention. **This discovery aligns with the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, which focuses** on learning via physical actions. As noted by (Astutik et al., 2019), TPR is especially useful in EFL instruction for young learners as it utilizes physical responses to enhance language learning. Counting sessions correspond with **Piaget's theory of cognitive development** (Pakpahan & Saragih, 2022), where **children in the preoperational stage benefit from concrete** and repetitive learning experiences. Furthermore, the material delivery phase demonstrates Vygotsky's scaffolding principles (Vygotsky, 1978), as the teacher adjusted support based on the students' current level and gradually reduced assistance as their confidence grew.

This study emphasizes the practical potential of Morning Circle as a powerful tool for language learning when it is purposefully integrated with linguistic objectives. Rather than being treated as a routine to build social rapport alone, Morning Circle can be redesigned to include structured and meaningful language input. Teachers can model pronunciation, reinforce vocabulary thematically, and use gestures and movement to support memory retention.

These strategies not only develop linguistic competence but also foster social-emotional learning and classroom cohesion, as described by Bruce et al., (2006) and Shields-Lysiak et al., (2020).

4. This study contributes to existing research by focusing specifically on how Morning Circle activities can enhance early English language learning, an area that has received limited attention in prior studies. While earlier works by Roding & Che Mustafa, (2022) and Hanum & Maryani, (2023) explored communication and character development during circle time, this research fills an important gap by analyzing vocabulary and pronunciation development through structured, theory-informed interaction. It also demonstrates that each Morning Circle activity plays a unique yet interconnected role in scaffolding language learning, showing how routine practices can be intentionally repurposed for linguistic outcomes.

5. However, this study has several limitations. The observations were conducted in a single kindergarten over a limited period, which may not reflect broader patterns across diverse school settings. In addition, while interaction patterns and scaffolding were analyzed, this study did not measure students' long-term vocabulary retention or pronunciation accuracy. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs or involve multiple schools to assess how sustained participation in Morning Circle routines influences language proficiency over time. Further investigation might also examine how individual learner differences affect the effectiveness of various scaffolding strategies during Morning Circle.

6. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Morning Circle activities greeting, singing, counting, and material delivery play a pivotal role in supporting the development of English vocabulary and pronunciation among kindergarten students. Through systematic observation and analysis grounded in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, the findings confirm that these daily routines offer meaningful opportunities for language scaffolding, particularly when teachers employ modeling, repetition, bilingual explanation, and gestures to facilitate comprehension and active participation. Each activity contributes uniquely to the language learning process: greetings foster routine-based conversational practice, singing supports memorization and pronunciation through rhythm and movement, counting integrates numerical language with cognitive reinforcement, and material delivery offers focused exposure to thematic vocabulary. Collectively, these activities establish a linguistically rich and emotionally supportive environment that aligns with young learners' developmental needs. The implications of this study suggest that Morning Circle should not be viewed merely as a ritual or transitional period in early childhood education. Instead, when implemented purposefully, it serves as an effective pedagogical space to nurture foundational language skills. Teachers are encouraged to integrate intentional scaffolding strategies within these activities to maximize student engagement and linguistic growth, especially in contexts where English is a foreign language. While, this study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its focus on a single institutional context and by the absence of quantitative measures of student progress. Future research should consider longitudinal studies and cross-institutional comparisons to examine the sustained effects of Morning Circle on language acquisition, as well as explore how different forms of scaffolding affect learners with varying language proficiencies. In conclusion, Morning Circle offers a powerful, practical, and developmentally appropriate framework for introducing English vocabulary and pronunciation in early childhood classrooms. When designed with pedagogical intention, it becomes a vital entry point for nurturing confident and competent early language learners.

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