

IMPROVING THE METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL READINESS FOR LITERACY LEARNING IN SENIOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract

Preparing senior preschool children for literacy learning is not limited to teaching letters, sounds, or elementary writing movements before school entry. Effective readiness develops through the interaction of psychological maturity, oral language competence, phonological awareness, motivation, self-regulation, social communication, fine-motor development, and appropriately organized pedagogical support. This article examines ways of improving the methodology for developing psychological and pedagogical readiness for literacy learning among senior preschool children. The study employs theoretical analysis, comparative synthesis, content analysis, and pedagogical modelling to identify the most effective contemporary approaches to literacy preparation. Particular attention is given to diagnostic assessment, differentiated instruction, phonological and narrative activities, dialogic reading, play-based learning, small-group support, graphomotor preparation, family involvement, and developmentally appropriate digital resources. Based on the analysis, an integrated methodological model consisting of diagnostic, motivational, developmental, interactive, differentiated, and evaluative stages is proposed. The findings indicate that literacy readiness develops more sustainably when psychological prerequisites and pedagogical interventions are coordinated systematically rather than when formal reading and writing are introduced prematurely. The proposed methodology can support preschool educators in creating developmentally appropriate conditions for successful transition to formal literacy instruction.

Keywords: literacy readiness, senior preschool children, psychological readiness, pedagogical readiness, emergent literacy.

Introduction

The transition from preschool education to formal schooling represents a major developmental change in a child's life. At school, children encounter a learning environment that requires more sustained attention, greater behavioral regulation, purposeful communication, compliance with instructions, and increasingly systematic interaction with symbolic systems. Reading and writing gradually become not simply separate academic subjects but fundamental tools through which children gain access to knowledge across the curriculum.

For this reason, preparation for literacy learning should begin before formal schooling. However, the concept of preparation must be interpreted carefully. Literacy readiness does not mean that preschool children should be required to master conventional reading and writing in advance. Rather, it refers to the development of the psychological, linguistic, cognitive, motivational, social, and motor prerequisites that allow a child to enter formal literacy instruction confidently and successfully.

Recent research continues to demonstrate that emergent literacy is multidimensional. Preschool vocabulary, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and rapid naming contribute differently to later reading and spelling outcomes [1]. Consequently, readiness cannot be measured through a single indicator such as alphabet knowledge.

One of the most important components of literacy readiness is phonological awareness. Children need to understand gradually that spoken language can be separated into words, syllables, rhymes, and individual sounds. Meta-analytic evidence confirms that systematic phonemic-awareness instruction can produce meaningful gains, particularly when activities include segmentation and blending and are adapted to children's developmental needs [2].

At the same time, phonological awareness cannot develop effectively without sufficiently rich oral language. Children first need vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension, and narrative experience before they can meaningfully analyze speech. Thus, literacy preparation should integrate language development and sound awareness rather than treating them as unrelated activities.

Oral language becomes especially important in senior preschool age because children increasingly move from situational speech toward more coherent and organized discourse. They learn to retell events, describe pictures, explain causes, express intentions, and participate in extended conversations. Such abilities later provide important foundations for reading comprehension.

Narrative competence is particularly relevant in this respect. A child who understands how stories contain characters, events, problems, causes, and conclusions already possesses a structural framework that can later support written-text comprehension. Storytelling, retelling, picture sequencing, dramatization, and dialogic book reading therefore have an important methodological role in literacy preparation.

Psychological readiness for literacy also depends on executive functions. Reading and writing require children to maintain attention, remember instructions, control impulsive responses, shift between tasks, and coordinate multiple sources of information. Research involving preschool children indicates that working memory, cognitive flexibility, and other executive components are closely associated with pre-literacy and learning-related skills [3].

This relationship suggests that literacy preparation should not consist only of language exercises. Games with changing rules, puzzles, sequencing activities, construction tasks, memory games, and collaborative activities can also contribute indirectly to reading and writing readiness by strengthening cognitive control.

Emotional and motivational readiness represents another key dimension. Children who perceive literacy-related activities as interesting, meaningful, and achievable tend to participate more willingly and persist longer. In contrast, children who repeatedly experience correction, pressure, or failure may begin to avoid literacy activities despite possessing adequate cognitive resources.

Therefore, one methodological principle of preschool literacy preparation should be the preservation of positive learning motivation. Children should encounter reading and writing as tools for communication, discovery, creativity, and play rather than solely as exercises to be evaluated.

Pedagogical research also demonstrates the importance of intervention intensity and organization. A 2024 study of a supplemental small-group early literacy intervention found substantial gains in phonological-awareness and alphabet-related skills among preschool children receiving structured additional support [4]. Such findings highlight the potential value of differentiated small-group instruction for children who demonstrate specific readiness difficulties.

However, differentiation should not be equated with labeling. Its purpose is to ensure that children receive the kind of assistance they actually need. A child with weak sound discrimination requires different support from a child with limited vocabulary, poor fine-motor coordination, low attention, or anxiety about performance.

This creates a methodological need for diagnostic assessment. Effective literacy preparation should begin not with a standardized set of exercises but with an understanding of the child's current developmental profile.

The quality of teacher-child interaction also plays an important role. Research involving preschoolers has shown that the duration of preschool attendance alone is not enough; higher-quality teacher-child interaction is associated with stronger executive-function development [5]. This suggests that the educator's communication style, emotional responsiveness, questioning, scaffolding, and feedback are essential elements of literacy-readiness methodology.

The same principle applies to educational technology. Digital resources may enrich literacy experiences through multimedia stories, interactive sound activities, digital drawing, and educational

applications. A systematic review of educational technology in preschool literacy found that digital tools can support early literacy development, but their effectiveness depends substantially on design features, pedagogical implementation, and adult mediation [6].

Thus, technology should not replace conversation, physical books, drawing, movement, manipulation, and imaginative play. Rather, it should be used selectively when it expands opportunities for interaction, visualization, feedback, or creativity.

Family involvement constitutes another essential part of the methodology. Preschool children spend considerable time outside educational institutions, and literacy-related experiences at home can strengthen or weaken what occurs in the classroom. Shared reading, storytelling, discussion, songs, rhymes, drawing, environmental-print recognition, and positive attitudes toward books contribute to children's emergent literacy.

The methodological challenge is therefore to create continuity between preschool and family environments without turning the home into a formal classroom.

The scientific problem underlying the present study is that literacy preparation is often organized through separate activities: one lesson focuses on sounds, another on vocabulary, another on fine-motor development, and another on reading. Such fragmentation may reduce the developmental coherence of the process.

Improving the methodology requires integration. Psychological resources, pedagogical methods, educational environment, assessment, family support, and children's active participation should function as components of one system.

Accordingly, **the purpose of this study** is to improve the methodology for developing psychological and pedagogical readiness for literacy learning among senior preschool children through the integration of diagnostic assessment, differentiated pedagogical support, play-based and language-rich activities, and continuous developmental monitoring.

Materials and Methods

The study employed a qualitative theoretical and analytical design. Recent empirical research on emergent literacy, phonological awareness, executive functions, early literacy interventions, preschool teacher–child interaction, and educational technology was analyzed and synthesized.

The methodological framework was based on four principles: developmental appropriateness, integration, differentiation, and continuous formative assessment.

The study used theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, content analysis, classification, synthesis, and pedagogical modelling.

The research object was the process of preparing senior preschool children for literacy learning.

The research subject consisted of pedagogical methods and organizational mechanisms for developing psychological and pedagogical literacy readiness.

Results

The analysis demonstrated that the methodological improvement of literacy readiness depends primarily on replacing fragmented preparation with an integrated developmental system.

Five major methodological improvements were identified.

1. From Premature Instruction to Developmental Preparation

Formal literacy instruction should not dominate preschool practice.

Instead of requiring children to decode words mechanically, educators should strengthen the prerequisites that make decoding meaningful and manageable later.

2. From Whole-Group Uniformity to Differentiated Support

Children enter senior preschool groups with substantially different developmental profiles.

Flexible grouping and individualized scaffolding allow educators to address specific difficulties without slowing or accelerating the entire group.

Small-group intervention evidence supports this approach. Structured additional instruction can produce substantial improvement in key early literacy skills for children who need targeted support [4].

3. From Isolated Skills to Integrated Activities

The most effective activities simultaneously support several dimensions.

For example, storytelling develops:

- a) vocabulary;
- b) memory;
- c) sequencing;
- d) communication;
- e) imagination;
- f) emotional understanding.

A phonological game may develop:

- a) sound discrimination;
- b) attention;
- c) inhibitory control;
- d) motivation.

Thus, pedagogical efficiency increases when activities are selected for multiple developmental functions.

4. From Product Assessment to Developmental Monitoring

Rather than asking only whether a child can reproduce the correct answer, educators should monitor how the child approaches the task.

Indicators include:

- a) strategy use;
- b) persistence;
- c) need for prompting;
- d) self-correction;
- e) transfer to unfamiliar tasks.

5. From Preschool-Only Intervention to Family Partnership

Parents should receive simple strategies for supporting literacy naturally:

- a) reading together;
- b) asking open-ended questions;
- c) discussing illustrations;
- d) playing rhyming games;
- e) encouraging drawing and invented writing.

The family role is supportive rather than instructional.

Table 1. Core readiness indicators

Domain	Indicator
Language	Vocabulary and coherent oral expression
Phonological	Rhyme, syllable, and sound awareness
Cognitive	Attention, memory, flexible thinking
Emotional	Confidence and tolerance of mistakes
Motivational	Interest and persistence
Social	Listening, turn-taking, cooperation
Motor	Fine-motor and visual-motor coordination
Emergent literacy	Print awareness and symbolic writing

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that improving literacy-readiness methodology requires a shift from content acceleration toward developmental coordination.

The evidence concerning phonological awareness is especially important. Meta-analytic research confirms that phonemic-awareness instruction can be effective, but the findings do not imply that preschool should become formal primary-school phonics [2]. Instead, systematic sound awareness should be embedded within songs, rhyme, play, and meaningful language.

Similarly, the effectiveness of small-group intervention supports differentiation. Goldstein and colleagues reported strong effects of supplemental early literacy instruction on several preschool phonological and alphabetic outcomes [4]. This suggests that children who need additional support can benefit from focused intervention without requiring the entire curriculum to become more academically intensive.

The quality of interpersonal interaction must also remain central. Gavrilova et al. found stronger executive functioning among children who experienced higher-quality teacher–child interactions over longer periods [5]. Literacy methodology should therefore focus not only on *what* activities are used but also on *how* the teacher communicates during them.

Digital technologies introduce further methodological opportunities but also require restraint. Bautista and colleagues' systematic review indicates that educational technology may enhance preschool early literacy, although effectiveness varies according to implementation and design [6]. This supports a blended approach in which digital resources supplement rather than replace books, speech, movement, play, and physical manipulation.

The proposed model therefore treats technology as optional, whereas high-quality interaction, language exposure, motivation, and differentiation are essential.

An important implication concerns assessment. Readiness should be understood as developmental and changeable. A child who currently demonstrates weak phonological awareness may improve rapidly with appropriate support. Therefore, static labeling such as “not ready” has limited pedagogical value.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that developing psychological and pedagogical readiness for literacy learning among senior preschool children requires a systematic and integrated methodology.

Readiness involves more than knowledge of letters or ability to copy written forms. It includes oral language, phonological awareness, executive functioning, motivation, emotional stability, social communication, perceptual development, and graphomotor readiness.

The improved methodology proposed in this study consists of six interrelated stages: diagnostic identification; motivational preparation; development of psychological prerequisites; interactive literacy experience; differentiated pedagogical support; formative monitoring.

Its main methodological advantage is that pedagogical decisions are based on children's developmental needs rather than on a uniform sequence of exercises.

The study further concludes that play-based language activities, dialogic reading, storytelling, phonological games, fine-motor activities, targeted small-group support, and family involvement provide a more developmentally sustainable foundation for formal literacy learning than premature academic acceleration.

Teacher competence remains a decisive condition. Preschool educators need to be able to observe development, differentiate support, model rich language, facilitate interaction, and interpret children's mistakes as diagnostic information.

Digital resources may supplement this process when they increase meaningful interaction and engagement, but they should not replace direct communication and play.

The methodology ultimately aims to ensure that children enter formal schooling not simply knowing more symbols, but possessing the psychological confidence, linguistic resources, cognitive control, motivation, and developmental flexibility required to become successful readers and writers.

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