

# The ESKAMI Method: A Multisensory Approach to Enhancing Early Reading Skills

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**Abstract**—Early reading competence serves as a critical foundation for literacy development in the early years of schooling. This study explores the effectiveness of the ESKAMI approach—an instructional model encompassing spelling, syllables, words, sentences, and singing—in fostering initial reading proficiency among first-grade learners in Gowa Regency, Indonesia. The ESKAMI framework incorporates phonological and multisensory strategies that synergize cognitive, emotional, and musical dimensions to reinforce literacy acquisition. Employing a one-group pretest/posttest design, the intervention was implemented across six learning sessions involving 21 participants. Assessment procedures were adapted from the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), focusing on five key domains: phonological awareness, letter recognition, letter–sound correspondence, word reading, and oral reading fluency. Data analysis included normality testing, paired-samples t-tests, and effect size estimation using Cohen's *d*. Findings revealed a marked improvement in students' reading performance, with the mean score increasing from 79.76 (SD = 7.98) to 95.62 (SD = 4.50),  $t(20) = 13.59$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , mean difference = 15.86, 95% CI [13.43, 18.29], and a large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 2.97$ ). These outcomes confirm the efficacy of the ESKAMI method in strengthening early literacy through sound-based and rhythm-integrated learning activities. Although constrained by a limited sample size and the absence of a control group, this study contributes valuable empirical insights into the implementation of the ESKAMI model as a promising phonological–affective literacy framework for early primary education in Indonesia.

**Index Terms**—early reading, ESKAMI method, phonological awareness, early literacy, multisensory learning

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language skills are fundamental abilities that enable individuals to communicate effectively, express their ideas, and access information. Among the four language skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing, reading plays a central role, as it forms the foundation for developing critical thinking and learning across disciplines. However, early reading is a complex process involving the recognition of sound–symbol relationships, letter sequences, and word meanings, which collectively build the foundation for advanced literacy (Annika & Johanna, 2025). As a result, reading instruction should begin early, particularly in elementary school, when children start to recognize language symbols and associate them with sounds and meanings.

Despite its importance, many children in Indonesia continue to experience difficulties in acquiring early reading skills (Ain & Ain, 2024; Aryani et al., 2024; Bersky & Alwi, 2024; Meo et al., 2021; Nikmah & Harsiwi, 2024; Soleha et al., 2022). Prior studies have identified two leading causes of these difficulties. First, learners often struggle to distinguish letters with similar shapes and sounds (Clayton et al., 2020; Istiqoma et al., 2023; Miciak & Fletcher, 2020; Nurani et al., 2021). Second, external factors such as inadequate learning environments, curriculum limitations, and the absence of developmentally appropriate instructional methods contribute to poor reading outcomes (Aryani et al., 2024; Bersky & Alwi, 2024; Catts & Petscher, 2022; Fadhillah et al., 2025; Snow, 2010).

These findings highlight a fundamental gap in early reading instruction—namely, the absence of an integrative approach that connects phonological awareness, letter–sound correspondence, and contextual meaning. Effective early reading instruction should go beyond mere letter recognition and emphasize understanding through meaningful and

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engaging contexts (Annika & Johanna, 2025). Consequently, there is a need for a method that integrates phonological, linguistic, and cognitive skills in ways appropriate to children's developmental stages. Approaches that help learners recognize letters, link sounds to written symbols, and strengthen vocabulary are believed to enhance foundational literacy (Ehri, 1987; Langenberg, 2000; Ningtiyas et al., 2022).

The ESKAMI method (spelling–syllables–words–sentences–singing) presents a promising approach. It combines phonetic and musical strategies through five sequential stages—spelling letters, recognizing syllables, forming words, composing sentences, and reinforcing mastery through singing. Singing-based activities make learning enjoyable, strengthen memory, and foster sound–symbol association. As noted by Dussling (2020), spelling and reading develop in parallel, and song-based phonological exercises can accelerate reading fluency. What sets this study apart is its systematic and evidence-based application of the ESKAMI method, operationalized through the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) indicators that comprehensively measure phonological awareness, letter and sound recognition, word reading accuracy, and oral fluency.

Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of phonics, Montessori, and global methods in improving early reading skills (Lestari, 2022; Rikmasari & Savitri, 2019; Saputra et al., 2023). However, most of these approaches pay limited attention to affective and motivational dimensions that influence learners' engagement in reading. The ESKAMI method distinguishes itself by integrating cognitive and emotional aspects through music and movement, enabling children to learn both effectively and joyfully.

Drawing on the above rationale, this study investigates the extent to which the ESKAMI approach contributes to the development of early reading proficiency among first-grade students in Gowa Regency, Indonesia. Specifically, it examines whether the method has a significant impact on early reading performance and promotes equitable literacy outcomes among learners. This study contributes empirical evidence for contextual, enjoyable, and developmentally relevant literacy instruction in early elementary education.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Early Reading Development and Phonological Awareness

According to Ehri (1987), children acquire reading skills through a gradual developmental sequence consisting of four distinct phases: pre-alphabetic, partial alphabetic, full alphabetic, and consolidated alphabetic. At the initial stage, learners begin to grasp the systematic connections between written symbols and their corresponding sounds, where phonemic awareness serves as a crucial foundation for reading acquisition. Similarly, Langenberg (2000) empirically underscores that phonics-based instruction—when implemented in an explicit, structured, and progressive manner—effectively supports young learners in developing word recognition skills and early text comprehension.

This idea aligns with Clay's (1991) emergent literacy theory, which posits that reading does not emerge suddenly but develops continuously from sound and symbol recognition toward meaning construction. Early literacy encompasses the child's entire experience with written language—listening, speaking, symbol recognition, and contextual understanding—therefore integrating linguistic, cognitive, and social dimensions.

The Phonological Processing Theory also highlights phonological awareness as a key determinant of early reading success. Within the ESKAMI framework, the *Spelling* and *Word* stages specifically strengthen phonological processing. Students are trained to identify letters and sounds, blend them into syllables and words, and progressively transition from decoding to fluent reading. Prior research by Kholilah et al. (2023), Islamy (2023), and Gading et al. (2019) supports that systematic practice in spelling and syllables significantly improves children's phonological and decoding skills.

Each stage of the ESKAMI method (spelling–syllables–words–sentences–singing) reflects a multilevel cognitive progression from sound recognition to meaning comprehension. The spelling and syllables stages reinforce phonological awareness; the words and sentences stages develop structural understanding; and the singing stage enhances fluency and memory through rhythmic repetition. This developmental sequence reflects Ehri's (1987) and Wagner and Torgesen's (1987) models, where learners evolve from symbolic recognition to automatic and meaningful reading.

The ESKAMI method draws its theoretical grounding from the simple view of reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Scarborough, 2001), which emphasizes that practical reading ability develops through the combined processes of word recognition and language comprehension. In practice, the early stages of ESKAMI focus on building learners' decoding accuracy through systematic phonological and spelling activities. The later phases build on this foundation by nurturing comprehension and memory through the construction of meaningful sentences and song-based reinforcement.

Finally, the approach aligns with the engagement theory of reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), which stresses the role of motivation and emotional engagement in sustaining literacy development. The inclusion of singing and rhythmic activities makes learning enjoyable and meaningful, transforming reading instruction from purely technical training into a holistic, effective, and socially engaging process.

### B. Multisensory Learning and Emotional Engagement

The multiple intelligences theory proposed by Gardner (2013) asserts that human learning is shaped by the interaction of diverse forms of intelligence rather than a single cognitive ability. These include linguistic, musical, kinesthetic, spatial, and interpersonal intelligence, all of which operate together to support meaningful learning experiences. Within the context of early literacy development, this theory emphasizes the importance of engaging multiple sensory channels—

sight, hearing, and movement—to reinforce the connection between symbols and sounds. In early reading instruction, such as the ESKAMI method, activating these intelligences enables children to process linguistic input holistically, thereby enhancing their ability to recognize patterns, associate sounds with letters, and derive meaning from text.

In early literacy settings, multisensory engagement plays a crucial role in helping children transition from auditory recognition of sounds to visual decoding of written symbols. Activities such as identifying letters, forming syllables, and decoding words require coordination among sensory modalities. When children combine listening, seeing, and physical movement—such as clapping or singing to syllable rhythms—they form stronger neural associations between what they hear, see, and speak. Studies by Nkurunziza (2024), Utami and Musthafa (2023), and Arianto et al. (2023) show that rhythmic and interactive learning experiences increase children's ability to retain phonological information and apply it in decoding unfamiliar words. This integration of sensory experiences supports both linguistic accuracy and memory consolidation.

Dussling's (2020) research reinforces this perspective, demonstrating that rhythm and melody serve as cognitive scaffolds that enhance phonological awareness and memory retention. The structured repetition found in songs provides the brain with predictable patterns that make it easier for children to identify and recall phonemes. Moreover, rhythm and melody stimulate emotional responses that engage multiple brain regions simultaneously, fostering a deeper focus and enjoyment during learning. This finding aligns with neuroscientific evidence suggesting that music activates the left hemisphere for linguistic and logical processing and the right hemisphere for creative and emotional functions—creating an optimal neurological condition for literacy development.

The singing stage of the ESKAMI method operationalizes these principles by merging melody, rhythm, and movement into literacy instruction. Through singing, learners naturally repeat letter and syllable patterns without perceiving the activity as a demanding cognitive task. This repetition, embedded within a pleasurable musical context, strengthens phonological awareness and supports the transfer of linguistic patterns into long-term memory. The rhythmic flow of songs helps students internalize word stress, pronunciation, and intonation, which are vital for reading fluency. In essence, the musical component functions as a mnemonic device that embeds language learning within emotional and sensory experiences.

Additionally, singing activities within ESKAMI contribute to the affective domain of learning by fostering a sense of enjoyment and reducing anxiety associated with reading. Music has been widely recognized as a natural motivator that can transform learning into an emotionally satisfying experience. When children sing together, they experience a sense of community and shared accomplishment, which in turn increases their willingness to participate and take risks in reading aloud. This emotional engagement is particularly beneficial for students who may otherwise struggle with reading tasks, as it builds self-efficacy and positive associations with literacy activities.

The interplay between cognitive and emotional dimensions in ESKAMI illustrates how multisensory learning not only enhances skill acquisition but also motivates and fosters persistence. By stimulating auditory, visual, and kinesthetic pathways simultaneously, the method caters to diverse learning styles and supports students' natural inclinations to explore language through movement and sound. The enjoyment derived from rhythmic reading activities contributes to sustained engagement—a vital component in nurturing early literacy habits. Over time, this positive reinforcement fosters an intrinsic love for reading, turning it from a mechanical task into a meaningful and enjoyable experience.

Ultimately, the integration of music, movement, and language within the ESKAMI method reflects the holistic essence of Gardner's (1983, 2013) theory of multiple intelligences. It recognizes that learning to read is not solely a linguistic process but a multisensory and emotional journey. By uniting cognitive, sensory, and affective elements in a single instructional design, ESKAMI enables young learners to establish a solid foundation for literacy that is both effective and enjoyable. Such an approach has broader implications for early childhood education, suggesting that reading instruction should not only aim at technical proficiency but also at cultivating curiosity, confidence, and lifelong enthusiasm for literacy.

### *C. Sociocultural Scaffolding in Early Literacy*

Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, the ESKAMI framework is theoretically grounded in the idea that learning is a socially mediated process that unfolds through interaction and guided participation within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). From this perspective, teachers assume the role of facilitators who provide contingent and gradually withdrawn support, enabling learners to achieve tasks that would otherwise lie beyond their independent performance.

In the context of ESKAMI, teachers model syllable patterns through songs, then gradually reduce assistance as students gain mastery. This process enhances both linguistic competence and learner confidence. Collaborative learning during group singing also fosters peer support and imitation, consistent with Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, where observation and repetition play key roles in skill acquisition.

Empirical evidence (Syamsudin et al., 2023) suggests that song-based collaborative learning promotes active participation and strengthens social connections, ultimately contributing to literacy gains. Hence, sociocultural interaction and emotional engagement are integral—not supplementary—to the cognitive process of reading development within the ESKAMI approach.

Rooted in Vygotskian sociocultural theory, the ESKAMI method conceptualizes literacy acquisition as a socially mediated endeavor shaped by interaction, language use, and shared cultural practices. Within classroom dynamics, singing,

peer modeling, and teacher scaffolding foster collaborative meaning-making that bridges individual competence and collective engagement, enabling learners to internalize linguistic forms and develop reading autonomy through socially embedded learning experiences.

Moreover, this social dimension situates the ESKAMI approach within the broader context of culturally responsive pedagogy. By incorporating rhythm, local language nuances, and musical expressions familiar to children's cultural environments, the method validates students' linguistic identities while promoting inclusivity in literacy instruction. Such contextualization resonates with current educational paradigms that view literacy as a socially situated practice rather than a purely technical skill. Therefore, ESKAMI not only supports reading fluency and comprehension but also cultivates a learning environment that values cooperation, cultural relevance, and emotional well-being—key components for sustaining literacy engagement in early education.

#### *D. Evidence-Based Literacy Assessment: The EGRA Model*

The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), formulated by RTI International (2015), serves as an empirically validated tool for assessing the fundamental elements of reading in early-grade students. It encompasses five core dimensions—phonological awareness, letter identification, sound–symbol association, word decoding, and oral reading fluency—providing a comprehensive framework for examining learners' literacy progress. Due to its proven reliability and adaptability across various educational contexts, EGRA has been widely applied in assessing literacy outcomes, including within the Indonesian education system. In this study, the EGRA indicators were systematically aligned with the stages of the ESKAMI method to establish a coherent connection between assessment and instruction. Specifically, the *Spelling* stage corresponds to letter recognition and sound association; the *Syllables* and *Words* stages relate to decoding simple linguistic units, while the *Sentences* and *Singing* stages reflect the development of oral reading fluency and intonation.

This integration ensures that learning and assessment operate as an interconnected, reflective, and iterative cycle—aligned with Clay's (1991) emergent literacy theory, which emphasizes that literacy development should be evaluated continuously and contextually within the learner's environment. Building upon this foundation, the K–3 *Literacy Guidance Framework* (Foorman et al., 2016) reinforces the need for holistic and adaptive assessments that encompass phonological awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension as key dimensions of literacy growth. Within the ESKAMI framework, these principles are operationalized through differentiated instruction, allowing teachers to tailor learning experiences to each student's unique developmental trajectory and learning needs. When combined with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as reflected in the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), it enables teachers to identify learners' current levels and provide targeted scaffolding to bridge gaps in understanding. Through this synergy, assessment in the ESKAMI model transcends its traditional evaluative role. It becomes an integral component of the instructional process—one that continuously informs, guides, and reinforces pedagogical decisions to optimize student learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the integration of EGRA within the ESKAMI framework contributes to the advancement of data-informed pedagogy in early literacy education. By using EGRA results as a diagnostic and formative feedback mechanism, teachers can identify specific areas of strength and weakness—such as limited phonological awareness or slow reading fluency—and adjust instructional strategies accordingly. This approach transforms assessment from a summative evaluation into a pedagogical feedback loop, enabling continuous improvement in teaching practices. It also supports the development of evidence-based interventions that are sensitive to students' linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds, particularly in multilingual contexts such as Indonesia. Hence, the EGRA–ESKAMI integration not only validates the method's effectiveness through measurable outcomes but also promotes reflective, responsive, and equitable literacy instruction that aligns with contemporary educational standards.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### *A. Research Design*

The study employed a pre-experimental research framework characterized by a one-group pretest/posttest design. This design was chosen to evaluate the effectiveness of applying the ESKAMI method (spelling, syllables, words, sentences, singing) in enhancing the initial reading skills of elementary school students. Measurements were conducted twice, namely before treatment (pre-test) and after treatment (post-test), with the free variable being the application of the ESKAMI method and the bound variable being the student's initial reading ability. This design was considered appropriate for the context of early classroom learning because it allowed researchers to directly observe changes in learning outcomes that occurred after the method was applied, even without a control group.

#### *B. Population and Samples*

The research population comprises all Grade 1 students at State Elementary School X, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, in the even semester of the 2024/2025 school year. From this population, 21 students were selected as a research sample using purposive sampling techniques. This selection was made based on the results of classroom teachers' observations and basic literacy diagnostic assessments, which showed that the group of students still had difficulty reading at the beginning. The study involved a total of 21 students, comprising 10 males and 11 females, whose ages ranged from

6 to 7 years. All participants have a Bugis–Makassar mother tongue background and use Indonesian as a second language in the school environment. This bilingual condition is a significant context in research, as it can impact the process of acquiring early literacy, particularly in associating language sounds with letter symbols in the Indonesian language. Consequently, the demographic and linguistic characteristics of the participants provide a relevant foundation for examining how the ESKAMI method supports early literacy development in the sociolinguistic context of South Sulawesi.

### C. Research Instruments

The instrument employed in this study was an early reading proficiency test designed with reference to the indicators of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). It covered five core components: phonological awareness, letter-name recognition, letter–sound association, word reading, and oral reading fluency. Each component was rated using a 0–4-point rubric, and the cumulative score represented the learner's overall reading proficiency. The reliability analysis, using Cronbach's Alpha, produced a coefficient of 0.89, indicating a high level of internal consistency. In addition, content validity was established through expert judgment by three specialists in early literacy, who confirmed the alignment of the instrument's indicators with the intended assessment objectives.

The application of the ESKAMI method was conducted in six meetings over a three-week period, with each meeting lasting 70 minutes. Each meeting was designed in the order of stages in the ESKAMI method, starting with spelling, syllables, words, and sentences, and concluding with singing. In the spelling stage, students practiced recognizing letters and sounds through spelling activities that use letter cards, accompanied by pronunciation guidance from the teacher. The syllable stage emphasizes the merging of two letters into sound units such as *ba*, *bi*, and *bo*, which are reinforced through phonics play to build phonological awareness. The word stage involved forming meaningful words from a combination of syllables, aided by images or concrete objects, such as *ba–lu* becoming *balu*, meaning “sell.” Furthermore, at the sentence stage, students learned to arrange two to three words into simple sentences, such as “Mother eats rice,” while also practicing intonation and comprehension. The last stage, singing, integrated musical elements with reading activities; students sang simple songs that contained newly learned words or sentences. Through these singing activities, students strengthened their phonemic memory, improved their pronunciation, and fostered their interest and motivation in reading.

### D. Procedure for Collecting Data

Data obtained through an early reading test was administered both before and after the implementation of the ESKAMI method. The instrument was adapted from the five indicators of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), modified to align with the developmental characteristics of lower elementary school students. To maintain objectivity, the assessment was conducted individually by two evaluators. The five principal components assessed included (1) phonological awareness—the capacity to identify and manipulate sounds within language; (2) letter recognition—the ability to name letters accurately and swiftly; (3) letter–sound correspondence—the skill of associating written symbols with their corresponding sounds; (4) word reading—the ability to decode familiar words with precision; and (5) oral reading fluency—the capacity to read aloud with appropriate speed, rhythm, and intonation. Given that the participants were beginning readers, the reading comprehension component was intentionally excluded from the instrument.

### E. Procedure for Analyzing Data

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the mean, distribution, and category levels of students' early reading proficiency according to Ginanto et al.'s (2024) standards, which include four categories: excellent (88–100), good (75–87), satisfactory (60–74), and poor (<60). A paired-samples *t*-test was then applied to determine the statistical significance of differences between pretest and posttest scores. Given the sample size of fewer than 50 participants, data normality was verified using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The descriptive analysis further identified shifts in performance levels following the ESKAMI intervention based on the same classification framework.

TABLE 1  
CATEGORIES OF STUDENTS' INITIAL READING ABILITY

Category	Value
Excellent	88-100
Good	75-87
Satisfactory	60-74
Poor	< 60

### F. Data Validity and Reliability

To establish data reliability, 20% of the participants were randomly selected for inter-rater reliability testing. The analysis yielded a Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.91, indicating an extreme level of agreement between the two independent assessors. All data analysis was conducted using SPSS software version 25, which included stages such as normality tests, paired *t*-tests, effect size calculations (Cohen's *d*), and determination of standard errors and 95% confidence intervals. If the normality assumption is not satisfied, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test is conducted as a supplementary nonparametric procedure. The analysis adopts a significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

## IV. RESULTS

## A. Descriptive Analysis of Students' Early Reading Ability

The pretest and posttest of students' early reading ability were administered to measure the impact of the ESKAMI method. The descriptive results show a notable upward shift in performance across all statistical indicators after the intervention.

TABLE 2  
DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' INITIAL READING ABILITY

Statistics	Pretest	Posttest
Number of Samples	21	21
Minimum Value	60	85
Maximum Value	90	100
Average	79.76	95.62
Standard Deviation	7.98	4.5
Variants	63.69	20.28

The data in Table 2 demonstrate consistent improvement in students' reading performance following the implementation of the ESKAMI method. The mean score increased by 15.86 points, accompanied by an increase in both minimum and maximum scores, indicating a shift of the entire score distribution toward higher performance levels. Beyond score elevation, the reduction in standard deviation (from 7.98 to 4.50) and variance (from 63.69 to 20.28) signifies greater uniformity in learning outcomes. This pattern reflects not only progress among high-performing students but also the ability of lower-performing learners to catch up, leading to a more equitable achievement of literacy within the group.

These results suggest that the ESKAMI approach—combining phonological sequencing with rhythmic and multisensory learning—supports students' mastery of letter-sound relationships, decoding accuracy, and reading fluency. The more homogeneous score distribution indicates that the method provides structured support that accommodates varying levels of ability, fostering collective improvement rather than isolated gains.

TABLE 3  
CATEGORIES: STUDENTS' INITIAL READING ABILITY

Interval	Category	Pretest		Posttest	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
88-100	Excellent	3	14.29	16	79.19
75-87	Good	15	71.42	4	19.05
60-74	Satisfactory	3	14.29	1	4.76
< 60	Poor	0	0	0	0
Total		21	100	21	100

As shown in Table 3, the distribution of reading ability categories shifted markedly toward the Excellent level after the intervention. Before the application of ESKAMI, most students fell into the Good category (71.42%), while only a few achieved an Excellent performance. Afterward, over three-quarters (76.19%) reached the Excellent category, and none remained in the Poor range. This redistribution highlights a collective enhancement in reading proficiency, particularly in decoding and fluency. The results indicate that the ESKAMI stages—spelling, syllable formation, and rhythmic repetition—helped internalize sound-symbol patterns and improved automaticity in reading.

Overall, the descriptive findings reveal a clear trend of upward mobility and a reduction in learning disparities. The ESKAMI method appears to facilitate structured literacy growth by integrating phonological awareness with affective engagement through song and rhythm, making early reading instruction both practical and inclusive.

## B. Inferential Analysis: Differences in Early Reading Ability Before and After the ESKAMI Method

A normality test was first conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions for parametric analysis.

TABLE 4  
NORMAL TEST RESULTS

Data	Sig	Information
Pretest	0.079	Normal
Posttest	0.097	Normal

The outcomes of the normality test, as displayed in Table 4, reveal significance levels of 0.079 for the pretest and 0.097 for the posttest, both of which exceed the 0.05 criterion. These figures indicate that the distribution of students' reading scores before and after the ESKAMI intervention follows a regular pattern, without irregular deviations or extreme values. In other words, students' performances are distributed evenly across the sample, suggesting that the variations in their reading outcomes reflect natural learning differences rather than data inconsistencies. Establishing data normality at this point is essential, as it confirms that the dataset meets the assumptions required for parametric analysis and ensures the validity and reliability of subsequent statistical procedures. This step enhances the overall credibility of the research findings by demonstrating that the data accurately reflect the students' actual learning progress.

The confirmation of normal distribution provides a reliable statistical basis for implementing the paired-samples t-test, which is used to assess whether there is a meaningful difference in students' reading achievement between the pretest and posttest. Since both sets of data meet the assumption of normality, any observed increase in mean scores can be attributed with confidence to the effects of the ESKAMI learning intervention, rather than to random chance or data distortion. Moreover, the balanced pattern of distribution across both tests suggests that the method benefited all students relatively consistently, rather than only a specific group. This consistency reinforces the interpretation that the improvement in early reading ability stems from the structured, multisensory, and rhythm-based learning design of ESKAMI, which effectively enhances phonological sensitivity, decoding ability, and reading fluency among young learners.

TABLE 5  
PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS

Data	T – Value	Sig
Pretest/Posttest	13.593	0,0001

The results of the t-test show a t-value of 13.593 with a p-value of 0.0001 ( $p < 0.05$ ), as indicated in Table 5, indicating a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. This confirms that students' reading abilities improved substantially after applying the ESKAMI method.

Rather than representing random variation, this significant difference suggests that the structured and multisensory design of ESKAMI effectively strengthened students' decoding, phonological awareness, and oral reading fluency. The large magnitude of difference implies that repeated engagement with rhythmic and linguistic elements reinforced memory and enhanced automaticity in reading.

Taken together, the inferential results substantiate the descriptive findings, demonstrating that the ESKAMI method fosters measurable improvement in early reading performance while promoting balanced progress among learners. Beyond statistical significance, these outcomes underscore the pedagogical value of integrating phonological, affective, and rhythmic components to cultivate foundational literacy competence in early-grade students.

## V. DISCUSSION

The findings revealed a statistically significant enhancement in students' early reading abilities following the implementation of the ESKAMI method. Statistical analysis indicated that the mean score increased from 79.76 on the pretest to 95.62 on the posttest, with a p-value of 0.0001 ( $< 0.05$ ), signifying a highly significant improvement. Furthermore, the decrease in standard deviation—from 7.98 to 4.5—suggested a more uniform distribution of reading proficiency among participants after the intervention. The categorization results demonstrated a notable rise in the proportion of students achieving the Excellent category, from 14.29% to 79.19%. These outcomes, consistent with Clay's (1991) emergent literacy theory and Ehri's (1987) phonological processing, illustrate that literacy skills evolve progressively—from recognizing sounds and letters to comprehending meaning. The ESKAMI method, through its sequential stages of spelling, syllables, words, sentences, and singing, facilitates a contextualized and developmentally aligned progression of reading acquisition in young learners.

The enhancement of early reading skills is also strongly associated with Ehri's (1987) and Wagner and Torgesen's (1987) phonological processing theory. Both frameworks highlight that the development of foundational reading proficiency is contingent upon children's capacity to recognize, discriminate, and manipulate the sound structures of language, commonly referred to as phonological awareness. In the context of the ESKAMI method, the spelling and syllables stages strengthen phonological awareness through systematic practice in recognizing, distinguishing, and combining letter sounds into meaningful units. The upward trend in mean scores, together with the reduced dispersion of learning outcomes, demonstrates a more consistent development of phonological skills among the students. These findings align with the results of research by Kholilah et al. (2023), Islamy (2023), and Gading et al. (2019), which have affirmed the effectiveness of spelling and syllable exercises in fostering the development of early literacy competencies among elementary students.

The stages of words, sentences, and singing in the ESKAMI method form an integrated process that fosters students' reading fluency, language comprehension, and learning motivation. The learning sequence begins with word recognition, where students are trained to identify and pronounce words accurately, laying the essential foundation for fluent reading. As learners progress, they are guided to compose these words into meaningful sentences, a stage that reinforces their understanding of linguistic structure and semantic relationships (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). According to Gough and Tunmer's (1986) model, satisfactory reading proficiency arises from the integration of lexical processing and comprehension of language structures that evolve synergistically rather than separately. Within this framework, the initial phase of the ESKAMI method strengthens students' phonological and lexical awareness, while the subsequent stages deepen comprehension through contextual and semantic construction. Collectively, these interconnected stages form a coherent instructional pathway that develops both decoding skills and meaning-making abilities, ultimately promoting a more comprehensive and holistic growth in reading competence.

The singing element in the ESKAMI method is also a key factor in building students' motivation and confidence. Through singing, children learn to recognize sound patterns and language rhythms in a fun and engaging way, making the learning experience more meaningful and emotional. This is in accordance with the social cognitive theory, proposed

by Bandura (1986), which states that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and meaningful social interaction. Singing together fosters a collaborative atmosphere that encourages student participation and enhances social engagement during the reading process. Research by Arianto et al. (2023), Utami and Musthafa (2023), and Nkurunziza (2024) also supports the notion that the use of songs in reading learning enhances the ability to recognize letter sounds and accelerates the transition from the introductory stage to reading fluency.

Furthermore, the empirical evidence from this study demonstrates that the success of the ESKAMI method extends beyond the cognitive aspect to encompass the integration of linguistic and affective aspects. This approach aligns with the engagement theory of reading, as proposed by Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), which emphasizes that students' intrinsic motivation and active involvement are crucial factors in developing sustainable reading habits. With fun activities such as singing, students not only learn to recognize letters and sounds but also foster interest and a positive attitude towards reading activities.

Integration between theories of early literacy (Clay, 1991), phonological processing (Ehri, 1987; Wagner & Torgesen, 1987), and reading comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Scarborough, 2001), as well as motivational and social-cognitive factors (Bandura, 1986; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), support the comprehensive application of these theories in the ESKAMI method. Through systematic stages, this method successfully integrates sound-based learning, fosters understanding of meaning, and harmoniously strengthens intrinsic motivation.

However, this research acknowledges certain limitations. It was implemented within a single class involving a relatively small sample size and the absence of a control group, thereby restricting the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Social factors and the background of students' mother tongues have also not been explored in depth, despite both having the potential to affect the development of early literacy. The relatively short duration of the study limits the assessment of the long-term effects of the ESKAMI method on advanced literacy ability. Nevertheless, this study makes a paramount theoretical and practical contribution—theoretically reinforcing the linkages between early literacy theory, phonological processing, and social-cognitive, and practically offering a fun, adaptive, and effective approach to reading learning for elementary school students.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research demonstrate that the ESKAMI method (spelling–syllables–words–sentences–singing) plays a pivotal role in enhancing the early reading proficiency of elementary school learners through its structured and multisensory approach, which combines phonological, cognitive, and emotional dimensions. Starting from the recognition of letters and sounds and advancing toward rhythm- and song-based activities, this method enhances decoding accuracy, word recognition, and comprehension while simultaneously building learners' confidence, enthusiasm, and intrinsic drive to read. From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to the formulation of an integrated literacy learning framework that is consistent with key perspectives on early reading development, phonological awareness, and learner engagement. It emphasizes that literacy growth emerges through a gradual, holistic, and developmentally aligned process. Practically, the ESKAMI method provides educators with a flexible, empirically grounded model that supports inclusive literacy instruction by accommodating variations in students' abilities and learning needs. To broaden its scope and sustainability, subsequent studies are encouraged to include larger and more diverse samples, more extended implementation periods, and additional variables—such as learner motivation, creativity, and the integration of digital tools—so that the long-term and multidimensional effects of the ESKAMI approach on literacy acquisition can be explored more comprehensively.

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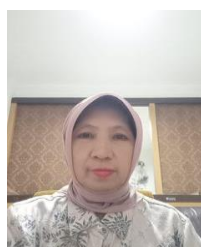
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