

Effectiveness of Phonetic Instructions in improving pronunciation Abilities and Reading Skills at Elementary Level: A Case Study of Primary Private School Students

Aliya Ayub^{*}, Zainab Akram^{**} & Khalid Khurshid^{***}

Abstract

This research study tends to focus upon the widespread significance of phonics instructions at Elementary level of studies, in which learners are, suppose to learn the sounds of English orthography from the beginning of their academic career. The study is grounded on theoretical framework of John Dewey theory of constructivism (1916). In the phonemic instruction, students explicitly learn the one to one relationship that exists between letters and their sounds. This knowledge beneficially helps in improving the prerequisite skills of learner's particularly, the fluent reading abilities and accurate pronunciations capabilities. The present study is co-relational in nature as it tends to compare two teaching methodologies, the phonics instruction and teaching through orthographic representation. The study was conducted on two groups through purposive sampling technique, and the data was collected by applying reading of a certain paragraph from a similar library text on 20 students of grade two from two schools. The study enabled the researcher to explain the problems of inaccurate pronunciations and defected reading skills occurs because of the traditional method of teaching through English orthography, in which learners are not exposed to learn the sounds of English symbols in a words which directly characterized their defected skills. By the comparative analysis of two teaching methodologies, the study found that phonics instructions highly contributes in accurate, unambiguous and particularly fluent reading abilities and effective perfect pronunciation skills.

Keywords: Phonics, pronunciation, reading skills, orthographic representation, elementary level

*English Department, Sardar Bahadur Khan Womens University, Quetta

** Education Department, Sardar Bahadur Khan Womens University, Quetta

*** Associate Professor, Department of Education, BZU, Multan

Introduction

English language occupies an eminent place in Pakistan. The Pakistani learners encountered many hardships in acquiring proficiency in English language, by which they lack the self-esteem to communicate in English language. One of the main reasons that learners cannot communicate properly in the language is less phonemic awareness, the problem is due to long lived tradition of alphabetical technique of teaching to pupil in early stages of their educational career. Adams (1900) opines that phonics awareness is one of the most substantial core and influential factor in segregate normal and disable readers.

Phonic teaching method is used for teaching English sounds that develops phonemic awareness in the learners to enhance their capacity to recognize the sounds that given word present, and to manipulate the phonemes and to distinguish among the phonemes which enhance their reading skill and pronunciation. Feiltelson (1988) argues that before introducing books to pupils with this approach (phonics) they should taught the relationship between letter and its sounds. In studies conducted by Adams & Brucks (1995), Beck & Juel (1995) and Foorman (1995) it is put forward that there is undeniable relationship between acquiring reading achievements and phonics or phonemic awareness and students tend to get low scores in standardized tests. The phenomena of phonic teaching is applied internationally for the pupils at primary level so, that their language skills refine from the beginning.

In Pakistan teaching through phonic technique is used only in some specific educational institutes. This research is conducted to highlight the teaching through phonic technique that help pupil to acquire better proficiency over the reading skills and pronunciation in English language from their primary stages of studies, as competent pronunciation of English results in firm impression on the listener in the society as well as important to get affirmative academic career.

The teaching of orthographic representation becomes the serious cause of inaccurate pronunciation at the professional level. Thus, this research study brings the significance of phonics in improving all skills and pronunciation at junior level of studies can aid learner in gaining proficiency in pronunciation and reading skills.

Thus, the objective of the study was to compare the effectiveness in pronunciation and reading skills through phonic training and alphabet at pre junior level and to highlight how teaching though phonics can help students to pronounce and read words more accurately.

Statement of problem

This study tends to focus on how phonic awareness at junior level of studies can aid learner in gaining proficiency in English language particularly improvement over pronunciation and reading skills rather teaching through the traditional technique of graphemes, this research sets to highlight the benefits from phonic teaching that pupil have throughout their academic career.

Hypothesis

For children effective pronunciation and building up strong reading skills phonic awareness among students is significant than orthographic representations.

Objectives

1. To compare the effectiveness in pronunciation and reading skills that is improved through instructions given from phonic training rather from alphabet technique of training to learners at pre junior level.
2. To identify how the approach of phonics instruction have potential impact in pupils reading skills and pronunciation rather teaching through approach of alphabet teaching.
3. To highlight how teaching of sounds of letters help students to pronounce and read words more accurately.

Literature Review

Phonics instructions is basically a mean of aiding learners to understand the alphabetic phenomena of writing system in English language, and to conceptualize the relationship that exists between phonics instructions, and spelling patterns, speech patterns and those that any word spelling presents. Sue Lloyds (2005) puts that, phonics is sub sequential, standardized or analytical program designed to guide and instill knowledge in children to read, it instruct the teaching of letter-sounds and afterwards it goes to blend letter-sounds collectively to pronounce and read a word. Similarly, Ehri (1984) asserts that the idea of phonemic awareness is censurable in learning to spell and read for pupils.

The efficient and fluent speaker of the language is considered to be the one, who is proficient enough to use language structure accurately, alone with concentrating much more on the content instead more on the form (Hartman &Stork, 1976). Language is considered to be a gift to society. The more individual is exposed to a language the more language learner may learns, thus if a student at their early

stages of academic career is exposed to the phonemic awareness the more efficiently they will acquire proficiency in their reading skills and pronunciations abilities.

Morris (1984) puts forward, the phonic awareness which states that letter sounds is a complete guidance to the pronunciation of words and it has a long history, developing in nineteenth century. Johnston and Watson (2004) declare in their studies that 5-years old children who were acquiring supplementary phonic knowledge proves to be a better, proficient and fluent word readers, they had better word reading, spelling and phonemic awareness.

According to Cassar et al. (2005) the demonstration of poor readers almost of 80 percent are estimated to depict lack of phonological awareness and the poor readers with lack of phonemic awareness and weakness in phonological processing also much probable to be the poorer spellers. According to Shaywitz (1999) the most comprehension and extensive reading program explicitly instructs about the sounds of language by breaking words into smaller units of language.

Adam (1900) holds that the best two early reading predictors of success are alphabet recognition and phonemic awareness. Likewise, Bradley & Bryant (1985) argue that the more pupils are taught the abilities of hearing and recognizing sounds of words, the better they demonstrate over proficient abilities in reading, spelling, and word recognition. Frith (1985) proclaims that in determining the relationship among the print-word and its sounds, the pupil come across many hardships, which tends towards poorer readers and spellers.

Foorman & Swank (1992) assert that students do better on word recognition tests who are taught phonic instructions clearly. It is predominantly recognized that to become one of individual, who can successfully read accurately must have forceful foundational skills in word recognition that tends to provide as the basic steps for good reading skills (Phonic learn to read program: 25, November, 2012).

Researches tend to demonstrate that at early stages, the inadequate word recognition is the cause of poor comprehension (Adams et al., 1996). Lyons (1995), Goswami and Bryant (1990) and Elbro (1990) assert that readers with low awareness of phonics may be slower than pupils with explicit and strong segmentations skills in interpreting the unknown, and unfamiliar words. Stanovich (1992) proclaims that children should be taught phonemic awareness particularly to aid them to sound out words on first glance. Torgeson & Hecht (1996) and Vellutino et al. (1996) focus on

pupil with utmost reading difficulties because of their less phoneme awareness and low abilities to recognize words and low skills of segmenting words.

There has been many studies determining that phonemic awareness is prerequisite or necessarily required in learning to read (Juel Griffith & Gough 1986; Foorman et al., 1997). According to Dolores Durkin (1989) phonics methodology aids and assists pupils to pronounce the unknown words as quickly as possible. According to Adam (1990) the widely respected letter sound instruction helps deciphering written words which are visually unfamiliar.

Richard (1996) asserts that phonics instruction or phonic training is used as a tool for creating good readers when phonics are taught systematically to pupils. There are studies that determine that phonic instructions enhance ability to decode words in early grades that predict almost 80 to 90 percent of reading comprehension abilities in third grade (Juel, 1994). Ehri & Robbins (1992) advocate that the aptness in decoding either strange or new words can be taught to students by phonemic training.

Ehri (1995, 1992) and Goswami (1986, 1988 and 1993) agree that the capability to read out the unknown, unfamiliar print words in pronounceable chunks determines the aptness for segmentation of words into phonemes. Moustafa (1990) clearly advocates that keeping the knowledge of familiar words is more aid full in decoding unfamiliar words and that is instruction of letter/sound knowledge (phonics). At pre junior level the phonemic awareness facilitates of learning to read and write facilitate the development of phonemic awareness (Adam, 1990; Ehri, 1984). Thus, the lack of phonemic knowledge undoubtedly results in problem of reading and for children of kindergarten it is pre required to have the phonic training in order to be the good readers (Champan, 2003).

Clay (1991) noted that to write is a segmentation task that requires corresponding sounds and letter as provided well through phonic instructions. Snow, Burns & Griffin (1998) put that to teach the sound that word produces, strengthen students to spell a word more accurately and this is probably best done through phonemic instruction.

According to Hohn's & Ehri (1983) what student need to expected to do is attach letters and sounds as quickly as possible. Many research advocated that for attaining the success in reading and spelling of alphabetical language phonemic instructions is defined as important and most beneficial merit (Adams 1990; Hu, 2002; Lomax & McGree, 1987; Stanovich; 1994). According to Griffith & Olson (1992) phonemic instructions aid pupils to acquire the principle of alphabet to write

and read. Yopp (1992) in addition, the phonic training also provides basis of distinguishing the disabilities in reading (Yopp, 1988).

The Reading Panel(2004) assess that the particular skills that phonics tends to refine in a sequential manner undoubtedly produces influential benefits for pupils through grade six. Undoubtedly fluency seems to characterized children successful academic career (Cooper & Kiger, 2006). As English language comprises on a writing systems of alphabets thereby giving importance to phonics in process of learning to read where students must learn the sound of each alphabet (Ehri, 1994).

There are numerous researchers advocating the evidence of the phonemic awareness as the strongest and necessary predictor of success in reading (Juel,1988; Torgesen, 2004). Ashley and Bishop (1996) put forward the basis of phonics and explained that theory of phonics develops profound relationship between words or letters in phonics. Hall et al.(1995) assert that phonics meant learner or children to figure out the phenomena on which our alphabetic language works.

According Adam (1990) there are many aspects of reading such as, identification of words, and accuracy, and fluency in oral reading, and silent reading, comprehension and especially fluency and all these factors are well accomplished instruction in phonics. Impotency in phonics and impotency in identification of words leads readers towards being less fluent and in slower reading habits. The various methods of readings and the beneficial outcomes remains the matter of debate and concern among the professionals for introducing children hoe learn to read and phonics seems to be the best approach (Soler & Openshaw, 2006).

Griffith and Klesius (1990) assert that the poor readers got less phonemic awareness in their 1st grade and remained unaware till their grade 4th the phenomena besides being their poor readers they proved to be a bad spellers too. Their initial slow growth in spelling sound knowledge and that knowledge never reached in average which results as poor reading abilities (Griffith & Klesius 1990).Thus, the poor spellers are those who are not an appropriate and good readers(Robert & Meiring 2006).A prerequisite component of recording speech of individual in print is to work upon how the uttered words and heard and then recorded by letters (Clay 1991).The insight that phonemic awareness gives spoken word is apprehend as a unit of sound which is represented by the letters of English alphabet (Snow Burns & Griffins 1998).

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The quantitative approach of research is used for investigation. As it collects data from comparison of two different modes of alphabet training (graphemes) and phonemic method of teaching (sounds of English letters) and comparing conclusions are based on reasons (rationale).

The population, using purposive sampling technique of the study consists students of grade 2 from two private schools. The Zeb public model school applies the graphemes and Lahore grammar school applies phonemic teaching techniques. The selected sample for this presented study comprises of twenty learners, making five groups. Each group has two members from both school. The sitting was done in one day.

The data is collected by applying reading of a certain paragraph from a similar library text available in both the schools. The researcher asked learners to read out the sentence in a paragraph and the pronunciations of those words, took notes and recorded the pronounced sounds of letters in a particular given word.

Data Analysis

The given passage was taken from the story book entitled as, *Snow white and seven little dwarfs* (see appendix). For analysis of data researcher relied upon making two distinct groups applying the distinct teaching methodologies, each group sample learners given with the same paragraph consisting on different words. Pronunciation of each student is deeply observed and the exact pronunciation of words by the learners from each group is recorded. The pronunciation of words from both the sample groups' students is analyzed comparatively thereby results and finding will be suggested out keeping the skills proficiency in mind.

For the collection of purposed research topic five groups were created, each comprises of 4 members in each group, with two who have acquire phonemic knowledge in their primary grades. They have learnt the phonic knowledge since their initial grades whereas, other two members of each group have learnt through orthography of English they were the learners who never had a knowledge of sounds of English symbols.

For the proposed of data collection list of such paragraph were chosen which predominantly represents the non-existing relationship between sound and word. The

chosen paragraph words were a kind of words that aids researcher to acquire better apprehension on the researcher proposed topic.

Words in a paragraph were chosen that are pronounced best if learners have the knowledge of sounds of English orthography. As the two different schools with different teaching methodologies for example phonics knowledge and other relied upon teaching through orthography representation, were the selected population for topic under investigation.

Students Groups	Number of mistakes by LGS students	Number of mistakes by ZEB public students	Mispronounced words by LGS students	Mispronounced words by ZEB public students	RATIO
Group 1 (4 students)	5	13	Bashful, Grumpy, nervously, gestured, Exclaimed.	Carved, Sneezzy, Dopey Grumpy, Bashful Dwarfs cottage sneak intruder quietly. Cleaned. Spoonful, poisons	5:13
Group 2 (4 students)	4	6	Whole grumpy and chimney	Sneak spoonful grumpy dopey dwarfs, investigate	4:6
Group 3 (4 students)	9	13	Cleaned. Cottage Carved, investigate cried nervously quietly gestured Doc	Carved, Sneezzy, Dopey Grumpy, Bashful Dwarfs cottage sneak , worked intruder, investigate, exclaimed, upstairs	9:13
Group 4 (4 students)	3	7	Reluctantly, Grumpy Poison	Reluctantly intruder gestured chimney cried realized dwarfs	3:7
Group 5 (4 students)	5	12	Whole quietly gestured investigate Carved reluctantly	Carved, Sneezzy Gestured, investigate, exclaimed, upstairs, Bashful, Dwarfs Cleaned, Cottage, Reluctantly, Chimney,	5:12

Discussions

Richards and Platt & Platt (1992) put forward that accurate pronunciation of word is only possible when the knowledge of sounds of letters is injected in pupils they became able to pronounce the accurate word. Words in a paragraph were chosen that are pronounced best if learners have the knowledge of sounds of English orthography which undoubtedly signifies the importance of injecting phonemic awareness among students for good effective pronunciation abilities, and strong reading abilities.

Whereas there is no direct relationship between the sound and letter in English orthography which became a predominant reasons of causing problems in reading out of words. As the researcher aims at letting people be aware of the importance and significance of phonic sound knowledge and its contribution in potent pronunciation and reading abilities. When learners get this knowledge at their primary level of studies it will not only lead them towards strong proficient and fluent reading skills as well as it aids them in their correct pronunciation.

This researcher aims to bring out improvement in teaching methodologies, which help students in fluent, and accurate pronunciation especially in a country like Pakistan where English is speakers secondary language because of this factor they encounter difficulties in specific areas of language. Such as the sample population specially had problems with the letters sounds of the "D, W, S R, C, G" but the phonics teaching let students read a work relatable right somehow they have tried to build up the relationship between word and sound whereas peers from Zeb public school didn't even try to speak a sound because they don't have knowledge of relating the letters with its sounds, so they couldn't make sense out of it, rather it leads them to discouragements towards reading process.

References

- Adams, M. J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Adams, M. J., & Bruck, M. (1995). *Resolving the "Great debate."* American Educator, 19 (2), 7, 10-20.
- Adams, M. J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Adams, M. J., Treiman, R., & Pressley, M. (1998). *Reading, writing, and literacy*. In *Handbook of Child Psychology 4*, edited by I. E. Sigel and K. A. Renninger, 275–355. New York: Wiley.
- Allington, R. L., & Cunningham, P. M. (1996). *Schools that work: Where all children read and write*. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers.
- Ayres, L. R. (1993). *The efficacy of three training conditions on phonological awareness of kindergarten children and the longitudinal effect of each on later reading acquisition*. Rochester, MI: Oakland University. Unpublished doctoral dissertation.
- Ayres, L. R. (In press). Phonological awareness training of kindergarten children: *Three treatments and their effects*. In Weaver (in press).
- Ball, E., & Blachman, B. (1991). Does phoneme awareness training in kindergarten make a difference in early word recognition and developmental spelling? *Reading Research Quarterly*, 26, 49-66.
- Beck, I. L., & Juel, C. (1995). *The role of decoding in learning to read*. *American Educator*, 19 (2), 8, 21-25, 39-42.
- Boder, E. (1973). Developmental dyslexia: A diagnostic approach based on three atypical reading-spelling patterns. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*, 15, 663-687.
- Bond, G. L., & Dykstra, R. (1967). The cooperative research program in first-grade reading instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 2, 5-142.
- Cunningham, P. M. (1998). The multisyllabic-word dilemma: Helping students build meaning, spell, and read "big" words. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 14, 189–218
- Cunningham, P. (1995). *Phonics they use: Words for reading and writing*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York, NY: MacMillan & Co.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Boston: D. C. Heath.

- Dewey, J. (1938). *Art as experience*. New York: MacMillan.
- Ehri, L. C. (1995). Phases of development in reading words. *Journal of Research in Reading, 18*, 116-125.
- Ehri, L. C., & Robbins, C. (1992). Beginners need some decoding skill to read words by analogy. *Reading Research Quarterly, 27*, 13-26.
- Ehri, L. C. (1994). Development of the ability to read words: Update. In R. Ruddell, M. Ruddell, & H. Singer (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (4th ed., pp. 323-358). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Goswami, U. (1986). Children's use of analogy to read: A developmental study. *Journal of Experimental Psychology, 42*, 73-83.
- Goswami, U., & Bryant, P. (1990). *Phonological skills and learning to read*. Hove, East Sussex: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Goswami, U. (1988). Orthographic analogies and reading development. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 40*, 239-268.
- Goswami, U. (1993). Toward an interactive analogy model of reading development: Decoding vowel graphemes in beginning reading. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 56*, 443-475.
- Moustafa, M. (1990). *An interactive/cognitive model of the acquisition of a graphophonemic system by young children*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.
- Richards, J., & John Platt. (1992). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Essex: Longman
- Stanovich, K. E. (1992). Speculations on the causes and consequences of individual differences in early reading acquisition. In P. B. Gough, L. C. Ehri, & R. Treiman (Eds.), *Reading acquisition* (pp. 307-342). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum
- Lloyds, S. (2005). *The phonics handbook: A handbook for teaching reading, writing and spelling (jolly phonics)*. Jolly Learning Ltd. U.K.
- Yopp, H. (1992). Developing phonemic awareness in young children. *The Reading Teacher, 45*, 696-703.

Wagner, R. K., & Torgeson, J. K. (1987). The nature of phonological processing and its causal role in the acquisition of reading skills. *Psychological Bulletin*, *101*, 192-212.