

Assessing Reading Fluency of Yemeni Secondary Schools Students by implementing phonics instruction

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the fluency of reading English of Yemeni grade 10 students through implementing the phonics instruction method as an effective tool. In this experimental study the target group has been selected from 4 Yemeni government schools in the governorate of Hodeidah . The study was conducted on 100 students, 25 from each school. A reading text was selected from the course book. The phonics screening check was prepared and it contained words from the text (real words) and pseudo-words. To determine the effectiveness of the phonics method a quantitative approach was used and test (1) was conducted before the experiment and test (2) after the experiment . The results indicated that the phonics instruction method was quite effective in enhancing reading fluency of Yemeni learners. The analysis was based on t- test which indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the Pre-test and the Post-test in the knowledge of the sounds.The test (2) or post-test results also showed that the reading fluency of the students who received phonics instruction

has improved. So implementing phonics at Yemeni Secondary schools and maybe earlier at the primary stage will be productive and very effective for improving reading fluency as well as spelling accuracy of the learners of English.

It is highly recommended from the education instructors and experts in the ministry of education in Yemen to include phonics instruction in the syllabus design of learning English at schools because this basic understanding of phonics can significantly aid in further language development of the Yemeni learners of English if they desire to continue studying English.

تقييم طلاقة القراءة لدى طلاب المدارس الثانوية اليمنية من خلال تطبيق تعليم الصوتيات

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الخلاصة

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى تقييم طلاقة القراءة لطلاب الصف العاشر في المدارس اليمنية وذلك من خلال تطبيق تعليم الصوتيات كأداة فعالة، في هذه الدراسة التجريبية تم اختيار عينة الدراسة من اربع مدارس يمنية حكومية في مركز محافظة الحديدة، اثنان للبنين واثنان للبنات وهذا العدد من المدارس يمثل ٥٠٪ (ALM) من المدارس الثانوية في مدينة الحديدة. وقد أجريت الدراسة على ١٠٠ طالب وطالبة وذلك باختيار ٢٥ طالب من كل مدرسة اختيار عشوائيا. لتطبيق الدراسة تم اختيار درس للقراءة من الكتاب المدرسي كما تم اعداد كشف للصوتيات والذي كان يحتوي على كلمات مأخوذة من القطعة المختارة للقراءة متضمنا كلمات من القطعة التي تم اختيارها أي كلمات صحيحة وكلمات زائفة ومن ثم بعض الجمل التي تضمنتها القطعة. وقد تم استخدام طريقة تدريس الصوتيات لمعرفة مدى فعالية هذه الطريقة في تنمية مهارة القراءة لدى الطلاب باستخدام الاختبار القبلي والاختبار البعدي، تم تقييم الطلاب في قدرتهم على قراءة الأصوات والرسومات التي تم تدريسها لتحديد ما اذا كانت طريقة تعليم الصوتيات اكثر فاعلية في مساعدة الطلاب في قدرتهم على فك تشفير الكلمات من نظام المدخل المتكامل whole language approach المستخدم في مدارسنا اليمنية. تم تحليل النتائج باستخدام المقاييس المتكررة ANOVA وقد أظهرت النتائج فروق ذات دلالة معنوية بين الاختبار الأول والاختبار الثاني أي ان هناك فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين هذين الاختبارين لصالح الاختبار الثاني في معرفة الأصوات. كما اظهر الاختبار الثاني أيضا ان طلاقة القراءة لدى الطلاب الذين تلقوا

تعليم الصوتيات قد تحسنت. لذا توصي الباحثة صناع القرار والخبراء في وزارة التربية والتعليم اليمنية بتضمين تعليم الصوتيات في برنامج تدريب المعلمين حيث اظهر فاعلية عالية في تحسين طلاقة القراءة وكذلك دقة الاملاء. كما تقترح اجراء دراسات مماثلة في هذا الميدان لندرة الدراسات في هذا الميدان.

Introduction

English language literacy requires cracking the alphabetic code because there is a mismatch between sounds and letters in English. By this we mean that learners of English need to distinguish between phonemes and graphemes [2], [3]. Phonics instruction teaches children the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language. It teaches children to use these relationships to read and write words [5]. There is good evidence in many research works which support the efficacy of teaching phonics as a mean of teaching reading [6], [9], [11]. The central component of the phonics system is to teach the correspondences between letters or group of letters and their pronunciation [1]. On the other hand, in the whole language teaching programs less time is focused on repetition learning. Their main focus is on vocabulary and the emphasis on meaning of new words.

Therefore students are not trained to sound out words as they can do in the systematic phonics instruction approach. In fact the whole language approach of teaching is widely spread in most Arab countries in general and in Yemen in particular where the classroom approach to teaching English is still heavily influenced by grammar-translation method. In the Yemeni context teachers adopt the meaning-based approach in their teaching of English. As a result students' ability to pronounce words and read sentences accurately is totally neglected. In our schools students reach the secondary level without being able to decode words. Whereas through phonics instruction we will be able to develop the learner's awareness of phonemes and how to manipulate phonemes in forming words and as a result their ability of spelling words in English will improve. The

purpose of this experimental study is to assess reading fluency of Yemeni grade 10 secondary schools students by implementing a phonics instruction method in teaching a selected text from the ENGLISH COURSE for secondary stage in YEMEN. In order to determine the effectiveness of the Phonics instruction on reading fluency of grade 10 students a quantitative approach was used to. One hundred students received phonics instruction for four weeks. The results were analyzed using t- test.

The selection of grade 10 students was purposely made because this stage marks a transition period from elementary to secondary stage. Also the students got some exposure to English throughout the previous three years in the elementary stage following the whole language approach.

Literature Review

Over the past years, educators have disagreed about how reading instruction should start. Some experts have advocated starting with a systematic phonics approach while others for a whole word or whole language approach, where the main focus is on vocabulary with an emphasis on the meaning of new words and the theme of the text .

Therefore, students are not getting any training in sounding out words they can do in the systematic phonics approach. Students can also be asked by their teachers to write paragraphs, essays and short stories, but most of their spelling is completely incorrect because of the mismatch between sounds and letters in English language. Besides Phonics Instruction method focuses on early teaching of sound- letter correspondences and utilizing them in reading and spelling words [8].

The National strategy for Primary Schools in England has advocated phonics as an effective approach to gain literacy among young learners during their early education. Thus, teaching phonics has become an important element of teaching reading to students and many researches were conducted in this area. For example, systematic phonics instruction was more effective than any other reading strategy [5]. Many other

researches were conducted and proved that phonics is an important part of teaching reading, this led to an increase of the phonics instruction in the classroom [4], [10], [7]. Also the recent reports point to the lower percentage of reading [9]. There is also some evidence that there is a quite a big number of readers at risk so how do we help these students become successful in their reading as this skill carries over to success in life?

In the EFL settings the findings of many professionals in Asian countries like Japan, China, Thailand, and Malaysia indicate that one of the ways to raise young learners' English language competency could be through phonics could These findings have been strongly reflected in the education system in these countries. For example the Malaysian Ministry (2011) have strongly recommended the importance of teaching phonics at a younger age.

In countries such as France, Germany, Spain, and Portugal to name only a few, have also considered phonics for study in their own native languages. Many instructors encourage the aural comprehension. This aural proficiency may be fine-tuned by way of early phonics instruction at a young age.

This study attempts to help the Yemeni students to be fluent readers of English by implementing phonics instruction in their English lesson classroom and from the experience of the countries mentioned above it can be noticed that the benefits of those students have affected the curriculum in these countries positively, so why not to give an opportunity to our learners to elevate their English language competency. Also to provide a better training program to our teachers as we are in the era of digitalizing education.

Research Aims

- 1) The aim of this study is to examine how can the implementation of phonics instruction improve reading fluency of Yemeni Secondary Schools Students.
- 2) To point out if there is an indicative difference between the performance of the boys and the girls in test (1) and test (2).

3) To compare and find out who is performing better the boys or the girls?

Methodology

In this experimental study the pre-test and post-test design or test (1) and test (2) was used to study the academic outcomes of implementing phonics instruction in the lesson chosen from the course book of Crescent English for grade 10. A phonics screening check list was prepared and it included words from the text and pseudo words to assess students' ability to decode words before and after receiving phonics instruction. T- test was used to analyze the pre- and post- test results.

Participants

One hundred students participated in this study from four schools 25 students from each school the overall number was 50 boys and 50 girls.

The participants were grade 10 students from four schools in Hodeidah, a Province in Yemen and they were selected randomly.

Materials

In this research the Start- up Phonics kit was selected because it provides direct explicit teaching of letter-sound relationship in a clearly defined sequence, but some modification was made to match the objectives of the present study. Also the Phonics Song was played regularly to attract the students' attention and to make them distinguish between alphabets and their sounds.

First the letter sounds were introduced then blended sounds to form words and pseudo words. The words were selected from the selected text of the course book. After that words were kept in sentences and the students were asked to read the sentences which were taken from the same text. In the first week of the experiment the pre-test or test (1) was administrated, the researcher, the subject teacher, and two more teachers helped in conducting each session. After ending the implementation of

the phonics instruction on the selected lesson from the pupil's book the post test was conducted.

In order to analyze the data obtained from the pre-test and post-test the T- test was used to determine whether the implementation of phonics instruction was a significant way to enhance reading fluency of the Yemeni secondary school learners.

Data Analysis

After the experimental study was conducted the scores of the First Test and Second Test were analyzed to find out if there is an indicative difference in the performance of the students.

Table(1) The pre-test post- test scores of the four schools

Groups	Pre-test	Post-test	The difference between pre and post tests	No.students
School (1) boys	9.76	17.76	8	25
School (2) boys	9.88	14.72	4.84	25
School (3) girls	12.04	18.20	6.16	25
School (4) girls	10.84	17.24	6.4	25

In table (1) It is evidently visible that using phonics instruction has a statistical significant. There's a considerable improvement in the learners' reading fluency. And this answers the first question of the study. Also it can be clearly noticed from the difference between the performance of the students in the pre test and the post that school (1) boys comes first in benefiting from the phonics instruction method followed by school (3) girls then school (4) girls and finally school (2) boys.

Table (2) The total scores of all students

Participants	Pre-test	Post-test	No.students
Girls	22.88	35.44	50
boys	19.64	32.84	50

As it can be noticed in table (2) that the overall score of the girls is higher than the total score of the boys the second test

(post-test). So the performance of both the girls and the boys after receiving phonics instruction is high and this answers the second and third questions of the study.

Table (3) The calculated and tabulated t-value of all groups

Groups	Calculated t-value	Tabulated t-value	Level of significance	Degree of freedom
School (1) boys	10.57	2.06	.05	25
School (2) boys	7.91	2.06	.05	25
School (3) girls	8.67	2.06	.05	25
School (4) girls	9.06	2.06	.05	25

Table (3) shows the calculated and tabulated t-value of all groups which indicates a statistical significance of using phonics instruction method.

The level of significance is indicated in the table and this can also be considered as an answer to the first question of the study.

Table (4) the sum of all scores, the mean, the square of the sums of all scores, the tabulated & calculated t- values, df and level of significance of all students

Scores	Sum of all scores	Mean	Square of sums of all scores	Tabulated t- value	Calculated t- value	df	Level of significant
Girls' scores	1400	28	706	2.01	8.695	48	.05
Boy's scores	1000	20	348				

Table (4) displays the sum of all scores obtained by the participants and it can be noticed that the girls' score is higher than the boys' score. So girls performance is better than the boys and this answers the third question of the study.

Results

The results obtained from this study show that all students have achieved remarkable development in reading fluency after implementing the phonics instruction method. This is clearly

noticed in the difference between the pre test and and post test scores of the boys and the the girls.

These scores greatly increased in the Letter Recognition, in the blended sound words pseudo words, and reading sentences worksheets. . That is to say that implementing phonics instruction in the lessons of grade 10 students classroom has been very effective and successful in improving reading fluency of Yemeni Secondary schools students.

Discussion And Conclusion

This experimental study was conducted to assess reading fluency of Yemeni Secondary Schools students by implementing phonics instruction. The results obtained from this study demonstrated that implementing phonics instruction method was statistically more effective in assessing reading fluency of the students who participated in this study.

In other words, the phonics intervention would be said to have resulted in some improvement in the reading skill of the students within this short period of training. Therefore teaching phonics systematically in Yemeni classrooms may bridge the gap and lead to future reading success. Also integrating phonics instruction within the current ‘English course for Yemen’, the course designed by the Ministry of Education will enhance reading fluency among Yemeni students. The results also suggest that phonics instruction method may be a better approach which fulfills the learning needs of students who are not achieving success using traditional reading methods of teaching. This research was limited to secondary school students, perhaps more research could be conducted to determine whether or not the phonics instruction method is more successful at Yemeni elementary classes as this is the appropriate age to start learning English through phonics instruction . It is hoped that the Yemeni Ministry of Education will implement phonics instruction in the teaching programs as we are living in the era of digitalizing education and e-learning has become part of the education system all over the world. Many classes are now conducted on the internet where students

can access their learning materials online, at any place and any time. Students can benefit from free online phonics lessons to develop and strengthen their reading skill. Teachers as well can update their teaching methods to match with the needs of distance learning with the help of modern technology. As computer literacy has become very essential tool in the hands of teachers to improve and develop their teaching methods with modern education system.

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