International Journal of Inclusive and Sustainable Education
ISSN: 2833 - 5414
Volume 04 Number 03 (2025)
Impact Factor: 9.31
SJIF (2023): 3.656

www.inter-publishing.com

Article

Phonetics and Language Development of Preschoolers in 21st Century Education

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Abstract: English holds a distinctive status among other subjects. It can be characterised as both a fundamental topic and a significant professional subject. The synthetic phonics, a technique that correlates sounds. This research examines the phonetics and linguistic development of preschoolers within contemporary educational frameworks of the 21st century. The study assessed the speaking proficiency of preschoolers instructed using phonics compared to those educated through conventional methods in early childhood centres, examining the extent of phoneme awareness as it relates to communication skills and its impact on language development. It also analysed the differences in speaking abilities between preschoolers taught with analytic phonics and those receiving conventional instruction in the Rivers East Senatorial Districts. The literature indicates that the synthetic phonics method has been effectively employed in teaching English literacy to second language (L2) students. The study's findings indicated that the experimental group instructed with the synthetic phonics method exhibited superior performance. It was recommended that educators receive training in the synthetic phonics method, a contemporary approach to facilitating early reading and writing skills in children.

Keywords: Phonetics, Language Development, Preschoolers, 21st Century Education

Citation: Akatuga S. Phonetics and Language Development of Preschoolers in 21st Century Education. International Journal of Inclusive and Sustainable Education 2025, 4(3), 174-184.

Received: 31th May 2025
Revised: 15th Jun 2025
Accepted: 25th Jun 2025
Published: 07th Jul 2025

1. Introduction

Through the use of shared sound and meaning components and social norms, language is a complex and symbolic system that allows people to express their ideas, feelings, and desires. The foundations of language are established between the ages of two and six, and language development is a significant component of this integrated learning and development process that begins at birth. Receptive language development is followed by productive language development. Both the productive (speaking and writing) and receptive (listening and reading) abilities are involved in language learning [1]. It goes without saying that learning the receptive skills should come first. In addition to learning new vocabulary and the English language's grammatical structure, children will gain the ability to utilise language to convey meaning via play.

The majority of kids still lack the necessary language abilities, which has been an issue over the years. Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are some of these language skills [2]. The degree to which kids play and interact with others is one of the elements that affect how well they develop these linguistic abilities. Activities have been proposed to help children develop their vocabulary and verbally communicate their thoughts and feelings in everyday situations. Phonetics is one such activity that is fundamental to preschool instruction [3].

Communication skills are the abilities you use when giving and receiving various kinds of information. Phonetics is a branch of linguistics that studies how humans produce and perceive sounds. In the case of sign languages, the equivalent aspect of sign phonetics deals with two aspects of human speech: production, which has to do with how humans make sound, and perception, which is how speech is understood[4].

Language development in humans begins early in life; infants begin without knowing a language, but by ten (10) months, they are able to distinguish speech sounds and babble. Communication skills include listening, speaking, observing, and emphasising[5]. Children also learn the foundation for spelling in the same way that they talk and use language. Bayetto asserts that the earliest learning occurs in utero[6]. Basic listening skills, the development of a vocabulary of several thousand words, the capacity to mimic and construct simple sentence structures, and the use of language to communicate needs, react to others, comment on experiences, and comprehend what others intend are all prerequisites for phonological awareness [7].

Speech has an important role in every culture and community. It is the primary way that humans communicate with one another that sets us apart from other animals. Since speaking is a reflection of cognitive development and an indicator of the development of fine motor skills, preschoolers have an inherent ability to understand the rules of the language used in their surroundings. This makes language development and communication skills crucial [8],[9], [10]. Conversely, one of the finest ways to promote language development and communication abilities is through reading. When an infant hears words and sees pictures, they are more able to comprehend the connection between the two. This establishes the groundwork for speech, which usually starts at nine months and gets stronger as the kid gets older.

Speech, or phonetics, as language. According to Bradfield et al., "there is significant individual variation in the development of speech, with babies cooing as early as one month old and typically beginning at about six months of age." Around 12 or 13 months of age is when children often say their first words [11]. While some kids start using words at 8 months, others don't start until 18 months. Over time, children may comprehend and produce an almost limitless number of meaningful sentences by learning the rules for arranging words into grammatical sentence patterns.

Colonialism, which battled against the usage of the colonial maskers' language, prevented the majority of African languages from developing. Preschoolers' level of linguistic envelopment is greatly influenced by the instructional technique a teacher uses during the teaching-learning process. By enhancing students' phonetic awareness—the capacity to hear, recognise, and work with phonemics—phonetics is a method of teaching English reading and writing. By reading out (blending) the sound spelling patterns of new written words, phonics aims to help novices decode them [12]. Phonics has been utilised extensively in early education and literacy instruction across the English-speaking globe since the 21st century.

The most crucial time for a child's language development is during their early years. Children learn to speak through their relationships with their parents, siblings, and other carers. Children's language development is crucial because it serves as a window into the outside world and their surroundings. Understanding is necessary for reading to have significance. Therefore, it is crucial that every reading exercise that kids are exposed to makes sense in print [13]. Children will only understand written words if they are accustomed to hearing them spoken. The key to reading proficiency for second language learners is the reader's ability to recognise words. Nigerian preschoolers struggle with vocabulary and word recognition since they are second language learners. There is also ample evidence that many kids read at a frustrated level, particularly those in preschool. The majority of preschool-aged youngsters still struggle with the fundamentals of reading, according to observations. One key obstacle in children's language development is the

inability to express oneself in speech or to use the correct or accurate pronunciation of words that allow for eloquent and fluent speaking [14].

Preschoolers' communication skills are often impacted by inadequate foundations in the language of instruction, which leads to poor language development. Poor teaching practices, when carers frequently concentrate more on what is taught than the students, are one of the many factors that have been linked to this insufficiency. Therefore, it is essential to use an instructional approach that will accommodate the children's age and developmental demands. The phonics style of education is one of these teaching strategies for improving language development [15]. A true tool in the early childhood education classroom is the use of phonics as an efficient method to help young students understand speaking and reading. Therefore, this study looked at how preschoolers' language development in 21st-century schooling is impacted by phonetics and communication abilities.

2. Materials and Methods

Conceptual framework

Phonics Instructional Method

Phonics is a pedagogical approach to reading instruction that emphasises the links between letters and their corresponding sounds. It is mostly utilised in the initial phases of reading acquisition, emphasising the predictable correlation between graphemes (the letters and spellings in written language) and phonemes (the sounds that correspond to the letters in spoken language). Phajane elucidated that phonics is a method for deciphering written letters and spoken sounds. It is a strategy for instructing reading and writing in the English language by enhancing learners' phonemic awareness, the capacity to perceive sounds. Phonics has two categories: analytical phonics and synthetic phonics.

Phonics instruction involves teaching children letter-sound correspondences, enabling them to deconstruct full written words into individual letters and their corresponding sounds (analytic phonics) or to articulate and blend sounds to read the word (synthetic phonics). Children are initially instructed in regular words that adhere to straightforward letter-sound correspondences, followed by the introduction of increasingly intricate letter-sound correspondences and words with irregular spellings. A crucial aspect of phonics in reading is its provision of a self-teaching mechanism, enabling children to autonomously acquire new vocabulary after mastering letter-sound correspondences.

Pruisner asserts that the ideas underpinning phonics education differ. Tyler, Hughes, Beverley, and Hastings assert that some advocate for the explicit and isolated instruction of phonics skills, whilst Goswani and Bryant contend that others support the implicit teaching of phonics through literature. Noltemeyer, Joseph, and Kunesh assert that some advocate for a middle-ground strategy.

McGeown and Medford propose that educators should contemplate language training methodologies throughout the assessment of early language acquisition and developmental skills. They assert that educators can formulate testable predictions regarding the skills children will utilise during decoding, contingent upon the language training approach employed. This methodology necessitates that educators refrain from presuming any prior knowledge or learning in children and that they provide direct instruction and comprehensive explanations for all concepts.

The synthetic approach to phonics training may also be referred to as explicit phonics instruction, componential phonics instruction, systematic phonics instruction, or classical phonics instruction. These phrases denote the phonics approach that emphasises particular abilities and sounds. Synthetic phonics teaching imparts discrete grapheme-phoneme associations to assist pupils in applying explicit principles while amalgamating individual sounds into words. The principles imparted in solitary phonics education assist

readers in deciphering complex words. This method primarily focusses on the enhancement of phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding skills.

Synthetic Phonics

This technique of teaching reading and spelling employs a systematic approach to decoding and encoding, focussing on the sequential instruction of the various sounds of the 44 phonemes in the English language and their corresponding letters. Once learners acquire certain phonemes, they can apply this knowledge to read words through decoding or to write words through encoding, as they can construct and deconstruct words. Explicit synthetic phonics encoding facilitates early decoding, enabling youngsters to process all letters and sounds within words.

This method instructs children on utilising their understanding of the alphabetic code to decipher unfamiliar words, so creating an orthographic memory for those words. Synthetic phonics is a method for teaching reading that involves pronouncing phonemes (sounds) linked to specific graphemes (letters) in isolation and subsequently blending them together (synthesising). For instance, students are instructed to deconstruct a monosyllabic word like "cat" into its three constituent letters, articulate a phoneme for each letter sequentially, and amalgamate the phonemes to create a word.

A substantial body of research indicates that synthetic phonics is the superior method and surpasses analytical phonics. Primarily, it fosters phonemic awareness, a crucial element for acquiring reading and writing skills. Importantly, synthetic phonics equips children with the capacity to independently read novel words; without this skill, they would struggle to decode sufficient text to derive meaning and achieve comprehension. Shara. Consequently, this methodology can be seen as a remedy for the acquisition of analytical phonics, equipping youngsters with the techniques to independently address reading challenges. Moreover, notwithstanding the stance of analytical phonics proponents, evidence indicates that comprehension is superior in children who have been educated by synthetic methods compared to analytical ones. The ideas of analytic phonics markedly differ from those of synthetic phonics; the primary tenet of synthetic phonics is that it should be taught rapidly and initially, enabling children to acquire independent reading skills at an early stage. It is crucial that phonemes are not instructed using the entire word method, ensuring that phonetic decoding and blending for reading remain paramount in children's cognition. Synthetic phonics should ideally be taught before to children's introduction to books or reading. It entails instructing letter sounds swiftly, prioritising those that combine to form the highest quantity of words. These phonetic sounds are instructed in all positions within the word from the outset. This was the rudimentary approach of deciphering new words via phonetic articulation and amalgamation of the component words. Direct synthetic phonics. Instruction promotes early decoding skills, enabling infants to comprehend the letters and sounds within words. The method instructs children on utilising their understanding of alphabetic code to decipher unfamiliar words, so creating an orthographic memory for those words.

Simultaneously, spelling may be instructed through the segmentation of words, so reinforcing the phonetic correspondences; however, a synthetic phonics program may not encompass this approach. Children are instructed in all letter sounds rapidly, followed by the instruction of consonant and vowel digraphs. Children can be introduced to reading through a method that emphasises phonemic awareness and employs the strategies of phonetic decoding and blending. It is essential to understand that, as words are decoded in this manner, children are simultaneously instructed in reading and writing for language proficiency. During the instruction of synthetic phonics, it is crucial that carers refrain from developing reading skills that contradict this approach, such as inferring words from letters, context, or initial letter signals. Irregular words, which cannot be instructed through basic sound correspondences, are taught independently; however, emphasis is

consistently placed on the letters of irregular words that adhere to regular letter-sound correspondences.

Phonics emphasises the significance of phonemic awareness and the technique of articulating and merging sounds. Instruction in letter-sound correspondences at an early stage mitigates the disparity between children who enter school with a robust understanding of the alphabet, often acquired from parents or older siblings, and those who are significantly disadvantaged due to minimal or no prior knowledge of the alphabet. From the outset of their education, children engage in literacy activities within the classroom (e.g., large letters, shared resources, and words and letters displayed on the classroom wall). Those children who possessed prior advantages have received earlier instruction on the alphabetic principle. This enables individuals to gain far more from these literacy experiences, which would otherwise exert greater influence than those possessing superior understanding of the alphabet.

Torgerson et al. have provided a measured assessment of the effectiveness of synthetic phonics. Their review examined many randomised controlled trials (RCTs) conducted in the United Kingdom and other English-speaking nations, comparing different methodologies for teaching reading in relation to advancements in reading accuracy and comprehension. The included papers were randomised controlled trials (RCTs) that examined phonics training in English to facilitate a valid comparison between the efficacy of systematic phonics and alternative reading instruction methods. The study demonstrated that students instructed in systematic phonics exhibited greater reading accuracy compared to those taught through alternative techniques. The participants were primarily children whose first language was English.

Analytic Phonics

Johnston argued that analytical phonics pertains to the instruction of reading where the phonemes linked to specific graphemes are not articulated in isolation. Analytical phonics prioritises the initial phoneme. Retnomurti assert that analytic phonics commences with children evaluating sounds within words, wherever they deconstruct words. For instance, the word "run" is initially taught, followed by the articulation of its three phonemes: r, u, n. Subsequently, the children articulate each sound and combine three sounds together. This guideline is effective for small words but poses challenges for longer ones and promotes guessing as a primary reading method.

The analytical phonics strategy, commonly known as the entire word approach, compels youngsters to recognise words quickly, without necessitating sound segmentation or decoding. This is sometimes termed 'sight reading' or 'rote reading' of words from flashcards.

Morris elucidated that in 1954, Daniel and Diack spearheaded the phonic revolt, signifying the inception of analytical phonics, which was endorsed by the Bullock Committee, as analytical phonics promotes the understanding of sound-word relationships within the framework of whole word recognition. A series of experiments conducted by Daniel and Diack examined the efficacy of the phonic word strategy compared to mixed words in baby schools. Word recognition and reading comprehension assessments are utilised with two intelligence evaluations, based on the exam data. It is observed that in word pronunciation, students instructed using the phonics technique demonstrated significantly greater performance compared to those taught by applied methods, for both regular and irregular terms. The more closely the teaching method adhered to the phonics approach, the greater the children's scores in word recognition

Moreover, youngsters instructed using the phonics approach outperformed those taught through mixed methods in both comprehension and word identification, demonstrating the phonics method's superiority across all intellect levels. While there is endorsement for this strategy, it may largely be refuted, particularly when evaluating its application with second language learners.

Holmes contends that learners can proficiently recognise words visually through an analytical conversion process facilitated by sustained practice in reading at both the contextual and lexical levels. He posits that this method aligns with the verbal efficiency theory, which asserts that proficient instantaneous word recognition is crucial for an adept learner, as it minimises energy expended on decoding and permits greater allocation towards higher-order cognitive processes and linguistic tasks. This includes the extensive vocabulary in the English language that learners must memorise before the advantages of energy conservation become viable, suggesting that this approach may be inappropriate for second language learners. Chall and Adams emphasise the necessity of a structured approach to phonics instruction.

Our observations reveal that, alongside instructing look-and-say sight words, which allow learners to retrieve knowledge from lexical memory, all 12 classrooms use a systematic and gradual phonics program over the initial three years of education. In the methodical and analytical approach employed in the study, focus is given on the beginning phoneme for the majority of primary children; the 26 initial phonemes have been introduced, culminating in the word-building component of the program.

This strategy may promote accidental reading, as the activity's execution could facilitate the child's engagement through a visual medium. The resource-based strategy employed suggests a sequential horizontal alignment of letters from left to right, which does not facilitate the practice of the articulation process essential for merging individual phonemes into a single word. The systematic phonics program can be perceived as a structured written activity for the kid, while the oral reading experience is a verbal, lexical task that may involve pictorial cues and deducing the word after identifying the technique component.

Phonics Rules

The primary phonics rule asserts that every syllable in a word must have a vowel. The vowels are a, e, i, o, u, and y, with y serving as a consonant when it occurs at the beginning of a word.

When "c" is followed by "e, i, or y," it generally generates the soft phoneme of 'j.' Outstanding gemstone.

A consonant digraph has two or more consonants combined to represent a singular phoneme. The basic consonant digraphs are: wh (what), sh (shout), kn (know), th (that), ch (watch), ph (laugh), tch (watch), gh (laugh), ng (ring).

A syllable ends with a consonant and contains a single short vowel. Examples are tap, bed, want, lock, and bag.

When a syllable ends with a silent 'e', the previous vowel is articulated as long, as illustrated in the examples: take, gene, bite, hope, fuse.

In a syllable containing two contiguous vowels, the first vowel is typically elongated, whilst the second vowel is commonly unvoiced; for example, "stain."

A syllable that ends with a lone vowel is typically by. Illustration: ba/ker, be/come. Bi-section, progressing, future, self.

3. Results and Discussion

Language Development

Effective communication is undoubtedly the foremost skill that individuals must cultivate to participate socially and economically in the future. Moyles contends that children's linguistic expression mirrors their learning through play, and that verbalising their activities augments their understanding of experiences. [16], [17], [18]. Children's linguistic usage demonstrates their ability to engage with several spoken language genres, including description, personal reaction, recount, narrative, process, report, explanation, exposition, and discussion.

Language is regarded as the cornerstone for the establishment of literacy. Bayetto contends that language consists of two components: expressive language and receptive language. Expressive language involves verbal and non-verbal communication to transmit meaning, whereas receptive language refers to the capacity to listen and comprehend information communicated by others. Hill asserts that language provides a synthetic, phonological, and semantic foundation for the enhancement of speaking, writing, and reading skills. The acquisition and enhancement of skills begin in early life, prior to children's focus on print-related ideas such as decoding and the correlation of sounds and symbols. The phonological process is categorised into three types: assimilation, substitution, and syllable structure. Phonological awareness involves the ability to cognitively evaluate the structure of words, identifying them as sequences of phonemes and/or syllables.

Bayetto asserts that vocabulary (semantics) includes both expressive and receptive language. Receptive vocabulary entails the comparison of an external representation of a word with its internal equivalent, whereas expressive vocabulary encompasses the additional process of articulating the phonological representation of the word. Salmela contends that linguistic proficiency includes the ability to identify different meanings of words (homonyms), interpret figurative expressions, notice subtle distinctions, and comprehend diverse relationships among words (synonyms, analogies, antonyms). Grammar (syntax) involves understanding the prescribed structure of language and the rules that permit different combinations of words and phrases to construct sentences, as well as the way in which sentences are integrated to produce paragraphs.

Communication Skills and Language

Key communication abilities in language include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Communication and language development are crucial as speaking serves as an indicator of motor skill development and reflects cognitive growth. The individual will cultivate and comprehend sounds and language. Speech, language, and communication abilities are essential to the whole development of young children. Clear speech articulation, auditory processing, comprehension of others, expression of ideas, and interpersonal interaction are essential foundational elements for a child's development. Research indicates that effective communication, language proficiency, and literacy in early childhood are most strongly correlated with academic outcomes. Phonetic speech communication underlies numerous aspects of children's language development.

Establishing a robust basis for further domains of learning, including:

a. Reading all texts to facilitate access to the entire program.
b. Fostering communication proficiency
c. Encouraging holistic and behavioural growth
d. Assisting children in comprehending their surrounding environment.

Communication and language constitute one of the three primary domains in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and encompass providing children with opportunities to:

a. Engage in a diverse linguistic environment.
b. Enhance their abilities and skills in self-expression.
c. Participate in speaking and listening across various contexts.

Lev Vygotsky's social interaction theory encompasses nurture arguments, asserting that children are impacted by their surroundings and the linguistic information they receive from their parents. While the ideas of Skinner, Chomsky, and Piaget are complex and consistent within their respective frameworks, they do not adequately consider that children may experience language in isolation. The child is a budding linguist, examining language through general adult expressions encountered. The interaction theory posits that language exists for communication and can be acquired early through interactions

with adults and older children. It emphasises the significance of the environment and culture in which language acquisition occurs during early childhood development, as social interaction initially equips the child with the tools to comprehend their behaviour and conceptualise the surrounding world.

Children can ultimately employ their internal dialogue to regulate their behaviour, akin to how their parents' speech formerly guided them. Infants acquire speech at a slower pace, heightened intonation, elevated frequency, repetition, simplistic syntax, and rudimentary vocabulary. This specialised communication employed by carers with young children to enhance phonetic distinctions and accurate pronunciation is referred to as 'child-directed speech.' Lev Vygotsky formulated the concept of 'private speech,' wherein children articulate their thoughts in a self-regulatory manner, initially internally. He also introduced the notion of the zone of proximal development, which pertains to tasks that a child cannot accomplish independently but can achieve with adult assistance. The attention and time a mother dedicates to discussing subjects that the kid is already engaged with is strongly correlated with early vocabulary size. In the initial phases of a child's life, this is typically achieved through motherese, a form of speech that may facilitate children's advancement in language development. The parents often create structured scenarios, such as bathing or dressing, in which the infant quickly recognises and anticipates the terms of interaction. The parents' verbal expressions during activities are ritualised and anticipated as the kid progressively assumes a more active role, ultimately taking control of both the caretaker's movements and the ritualised language.

The carer offers intelligible contexts for the child's language acquisition. Another prominent researcher in interaction theory, Bruner, developed and refined the theory over several years, introducing the concept of the Language Acquisition Support System (LASS). This term pertains to the immediate adult environment while also encompassing the broader cultural context into which the child is born. Adults modify their behaviour towards children to provide a safe environment.

In early childhood development, social interaction is the primary mechanism via which a kid comprehends their own actions and contemplates the surrounding world. Children can ultimately employ their internal dialogue to regulate their behaviour, akin to how their parents' comments once influenced their actions. Infants acquire speech through a gradual process characterised by a slower tempo, accentuated intonation, elevated pitch, repetition, simplistic syntax, and rudimentary vocabulary.

Putri and Zaitun undertook a study to evaluate the effect of synthetic phonics on the improvement of students' reading aloud skills. This study was conducted at State Junior High School 3 Babelan, Bekasi, Indonesia. This study utilised a quantitative methodology using a true experimental design with a single group pre-test and post-test. The research population consists of all 8th grade students, with a sample extracted from two 8th grade classes: one classified as experimental and the other as control, totalling 72 participants. A pre-test and post-test were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of synthetic phonics. The outcomes of both assessments from the two classes were juxtaposed. The findings revealed that the lowest score in the experimental class was 71, whereas the highest was 89. The control group achieved a minimum score of 62 and a maximum score of 75. The difference in the highest scores between the experimental and control classes is 14, signifying that the experimental class got 14 extra points. This study suggests that synthetic phonics is advantageous for improving children's reading aloud abilities and advocates for its ongoing application for this objective. The study is relevant to the current research as it investigated the effects of synthetic phonics, a variable under analysis in the present inquiry.

A study conducted by Farokhbakht sought to investigate the effects of employing a synthetic multimodal phonics method (particularly Jolly Phonics) on the literacy development and reading motivation of Iranian young learners of English as a Foreign

Language. The aim was to ascertain whether a significant gender disparity existed in the effects of this multisensory method on enhancing literacy outcomes and early reading motivation in boys and girls. This study involved 100 English novices (50 males and 50 females) aged 10 to 12. In this study involving 50 boys, 25 were randomly assigned to the experimental group, which received the JP programme as the intervention, while the remaining 25 were assigned to the control group. Of the 50 female volunteers, 25 were randomly assigned to the experimental group (JP group), while the other 25 were designated to the control group. The control group students were instructed in fundamental English literacy skills via conventional rote phonics, while the experimental group was educated in English literacy, encompassing letter-sound recognition and word-level reading and writing, through a synthetic multisensory phonics program known as Jolly Phonics. Subsequent to a one-month English course, all participants completed a reading and spelling evaluation. They also administered a 4-point scale Early Reading Motivation Questionnaire (ERMQ). A blend of descriptive and inferential statistics was utilised to evaluate the students' results obtained from the tests and the questionnaire. The results demonstrated that the experimental group (Jolly Phonics) surpassed the control group in reading and spelling evaluations and exhibited heightened excitement for early English reading skills. Furthermore, it was revealed that the JP instruction had no significant effect on the literacy outcomes of male and female students. Nonetheless, the findings demonstrated that multimodal phonics had a more significant positive impact on males' reading motivation than on girls'.

Sumbler and Willows performed a trial of Jolly Phonics including 281 kindergarten children from eight suburban primary schools in Toronto. One hundred fifty-one children were assigned to ten experimental (Jolly Phonics) groups, whereas 131 students were randomised to ten control groups. The experimental group comprised 31% ESL individuals, while the control group consisted of 18% ESL individuals. The post-test results at the end of senior kindergarten revealed that the Jolly Phonics pupils had a substantial advantage across all measures. Their mean score on the WRAT-3 reading assessment was 107.5, while the control group averaged 101.3. The WRAT-3 Spelling examination produced a score differential of 104.8 compared to 98.1. The data were analysed to determine the results for children identified as "at-risk" due to low pre-test scores in letter-naming. Post-test scores revealed that between 25% and 66% (depending on the metric) of at-risk learners in Jolly Phonics attained satisfactory performance levels; conversely, "...the distribution of control at-risk children demonstrated negligible change."

4. Conclusion

Preschoolers acquire knowledge more rapidly and excel in skill mastery when suitable instructional approaches are employed. The implementation of the phonics reading technique alongside other instructional methods will significantly enhance the language skill development of preschool children, especially in word recognition. Consequently, preschoolers instructed in word recognition by phonics reading strategies performed markedly better than their counterparts who were not taught using phonics. Female preschoolers instructed in word recognition through phonics reading strategies performed markedly better than their male peers.

Following the study's conclusion, the subsequent recommendations were proposed:

a. Pre-school educators in the Rivers East Senatorial District should implement the phonics reading technique for teaching word recognition.
b. Government should engage qualified English language teachers to instruct toddlers in reading at early childhood education institutes.
c. Curriculum developers should advocate for the implementation of phonics reading strategies to enhance word recognition among preschoolers in early childhood education facilities.

d. Ministries of Education and relevant government organisations should provide workshops and seminars to train carers in the optimal application of phonics reading strategies for instructing preschoolers.

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