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Utilization of Jolly Phonics in Teaching Reading Skills in English Language among Pre-Primary School Pupils in Ika Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

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Abstract
The paper sought to determine the effects of teaching English language using synthetic multisensory phonics (Jolly Phonics) among Pre-Primary School pupils in Ika Local Government Area. A quasi-experimental research design of pre-test and post-test non-equivalent control group was used for the study. The population for the study consisted of one thousand six hundred and three (1603) pre-primary school pupils in public primary schools in the study area. A simple random sampling technique was used to select eight (8) public primary schools in the study area. Purposively, eight intact classes from the selected school were used for the selection, giving a total number of 87 for experimental group while 73 was for the control group. An English Reading Achievement Test (ERAT) was used to obtain data from the respondents. To ensure the content appropriateness, the instrument ERAT was subjected to face and content validation by experts in English Department and, Test and Measurement in the Department of Educational Foundation, College of Education, Afaha Nsit. To test for internal stability of the instrument, a trial test was carried out on 30 respondents who were not part of the study but were drawn from the population under study. A reliability coefficient of .79 was obtained signifying that the instrument was reliable. The instrument was administered to the subjects (pupils) as pre-test and post-test as achievement test. Data obtained from research questions were answered using means and standard deviations while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). When the p value is less than 0.05 (P0.05) level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted. Findings revealed that effective utilization of jolly phonics enhance pupils' identification of sound in word and blending of sounds ability in Reading. It was recommended that Jolly Phonics instructional strategy should be incorporated into the curriculum of the teacher training programmes especially that of pre-primary schools.

Keyword: reading skills, Utilization, Jolly phonics, reading skills, pre-primary school.

Introduction

Reading skills dictate performances in other disciplines. One's ability to read well will determine one's performance and achievement in any academic endeavour. A good reader will automatically become a good writer as a result of vast experiences gained on formation of words, phrases, sentences and even expression of ideas. The goal of reading instruction at the primary school level is that each child should be functionally literate and be able to communicate

effectively. Functional literacy means that individuals can read with understanding and be able to apply knowledge gained to solve life's problems. According to Omojuwa (2005) functional literacy does not only stop at learning, but ensures reading for survival even when a child's academic endeavour terminates at the primary school level.

The primary school is the point at which proper foundation should be established for the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Children at the pre-primary level spend time on recognition of objects within and around their environment. At the early primary school stage, the child is not only expected to recognize these objects but should be able to read the names of the objects at home, classroom. Etc. Similarly, an average primary four pupil is expected to read simple written sentences using the language of instruction. This means that children who began primary one at the age of six years should read simple sentences between the ages of nine to ten years. However, some could read earlier then that because of differences in the children's reading ability (Etuk, 2005).Meanwhile the teacher uses different method to teach English literacy including expository, Expository teaching is a teaching strategy where the teacher presents students with the subject matter rules and provides examples that illustrate the rules. Examples include pictorial relationships, application of the rules, context through historical information, and prerequisite information. Expository teaching strategy is basically direct instruction. A teacher is in the front of the room lecturing and students are taking notes. Students are being told (expository learning), what they need to know. However, expository instruction goes beyond just presenting students with the facts. It involves presenting clear and concise information in a purposeful way that allows students to easily make connections from one concept to the next. The structure of an expository lesson helps students to stay focused on the topic at hand. Often times, when students are discovering information on their own, they can get distracted and confused by unnecessary information and have difficulty determining what's important. This is why expository instruction is one of the most common instructional strategies. Most educators believe students learn new concepts and ideas better if all of the information they need to know is laid out before them. (Bunyamin & Phang (2012)

Phonics refers to the relationship between phonemes (smallest unit's oral language) and graphemes (units of written language that represent phonemes) in reading and writing and a system of teaching reading that builds on the alphabetic principle (Zimmerman, 2008). It can also be referring sounds (phonemes). The aim of phonics instruction is to enable kindergarten pre-specified array of letter-sound correspondences, and practice in applying this knowledge to reading and writing activities (Campbell 2014). This instruction can be implemented in several formats ranging from direct, systematic teaching supported by reading material (e.g., worksheets, planned activities) to more indirect approaches where symbol-sound units are taught through the analysis of compete words. Although several types of phonies programs exist, evidence points to the greatest benefits of systematic sequential phonics approaches (Nishanimut, 2013). One of the programs that follow a systematic sequential phonics approach is jolly phonies. It is a program developed to aid the introduction of phoneme-grapheme correspondences in a specified order. Letter-sound relationships are introduced through short stories where emphasis is placed on

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eliciting the appropriate sound coupled with an accompanying physical action. The program includes various activates to practice and consolidate the letter(s)/sound connections (Callahan and Zee, 2010).

Jolly Phonics is a brand name for synthetic phonics instruction developed by Jolly Learning Ltd, UK. Like many other phonics approaches, Jolly Phonics systematically teaches reading and writing by linking letters with the sound they make commonly in the English spelling system. It outlines 42 letter sounds that are arranged in order of complexity with most commonly occurring alphabet sounds first, followed by digraphs which require a combination of two alphabets and finally, the remaining single-letter alphabet sounds. The key skills that are expected as children progress through the letter sounds are the ability to pronounce it correctly (learning the letter sound), writing it (formation), combining it to read new words (blending) and listening for it in words to aid spelling (segmenting). The learning of letter sounds is followed by teaching the tricky words such as „I", „come" „because" which do not normally follow the letter and sound correspondence. Similarly, Jolly Phonics developed songs, stories and actions on each letter sound that make their learning easy and enjoyable.
The following are the 42 letter sounds in Jolly Phonics order:

1. s, a, t, i, p, n
2. c k, e, h, r, m, d
3. g, o, u, l, f, b
4. ai, j, oa, ie, ee, or
5. z, w, ng, v, oo, oo
6. y, x, ch, sh, th, th
7. qu, ou, oi, ue, er, ar

Jolly Phonics is a fun and child-centred approach to teaching literacy which has actions for each of the 42 letter sounds of English and teaches five key skills for reading and writing by using a synthetic multisensory approach. These five skills include learning the letter sounds which consist of the alphabet sounds as well as diagraphs (e.g. sh, ai, etc.), learning letter formation, blending, segmenting and tricky words that have irregular spellings and children learn them separately in this method (Umezinwa & Udogu (2018).

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Literature Review

Johnston and Watson (2005) conducted a longitudinal research study on the beneficial effects of synthetic phonics instruction on literacy attainments of primary school children over 7 years in Clackmannanshire, Scotland. Around 300 children in primary 1 were divided into 3 groups. One group was taught through the synthetic phonics (Jolly Phonics programme), one by the analytic phonics method, and one by an analytic phonics programme plus rhyme and phonemic awareness training. In order to make sure that the improvements in children's literacy learning were maintained, the progress of all these children was followed from primary 1 to primary 7 while their performance in spelling, word reading, and reading comprehension were permanently assessed. It was discovered that at the end of primary 7, the Jolly Phonics (JP) group was 3 years 6 months ahead of their chronological age in word reading, 1 year 8 months ahead in spelling and 3years 5 months ahead in reading comprehension.

Ekpo et al., 2007 sought to investigate the relative effects of Jolly Phonics on enhancing primary one pupil's reading skills. The participants of the study consisted of 168 primary-one pupils from 5 schools in 3 senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria. Two intact classes in each school were selected to form the experimental and control groups. The experimental groups received the Jolly phonics programme as the treatment. The experimental group gained from 3-29 months reading age (5.3 to 5.7) in the Burt Reading Test. Accordingly, the results revealed that Jolly Phonics (JP) was effective in enhancing children's reading skills. Dixon, Schhagen and Seedhouse (2011) studied the impact of Jolly Phonics intervention on children's English literacy skills in low-income schools in India. This study used a quasi experimental design in which over 500 pupils in 20 schools participated in the 6-month programme. While the control group continued with their ordinary English lessons, the experimental group which consisted of over half of the participants experienced lessons organized around the Jolly Phonics (JP) materials. The pupils' scores in reading and spelling tests demonstrated that the intervention groups (JP groups) had significantly improved compared to the control group.

Eshiet (2012) inquired into the possible effects of Jolly phonics on improving the reading skills of Nigerian children. Eshiet adopted Jolly phonics as the intervention in a case study design with mixed method approach. The quantitative data was collected through standardized reading and spelling tests while the qualitative data was obtained from focus group discussion of teachers. The findings demonstrated that the jolly phonics (JP) method let to the improving of pupils' reading achievement as well as an increase in teachers' interest in teaching English.

Statement of the Problem

Literacy is paramount for meeting the needs of an individual who has the ability to read and write. VanDeWeghe (2011) argued that literacy involves the development of skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and visual representation. Unfortunately, it has been observed that pupils enter the formal education system using the language spoken in the home. The pupils' in general especially pre-primary school pupils in particular have a serious

problem in phonics identification, phonemic awareness skills and words reading especially the untaught ones. They lacked phonological awareness, which debilitates the use of letters, letter sounds, and the combination of letters to form words. As such they lack the ability to read or write well by the time, they leave primary school, they lacked basic literacy skills of comprehension, letter recognition, letter sounds, and oral communication, and this has been attributed to the use of poor instructional strategies by teachers in teaching reading in English Language. This therefore necessitated the need to conduct an exploratory study in order to determine whether the real problem exists.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the effect of synthetic multi-sensory approach (jolly phonics) in teaching reading skills in English Language among pre-primary school pupils in Ika Local Government Area.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the effect of identification of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonics technique (experimental group) and those taught English language using expository method (control group)?
2. determine the effect of teaching blending of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonics technique (experimental) and those taught English language using the expository method (control group)?

Research Questions

1. What are the mean achievement scores of pupils taught identification of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonics technique (experimental group) and those taught English language using expository method in the (control group)?
2. What are the mean achievement scores of pupils taught blending of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonics technique (experimental) and those taught in English language using the expository method?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. **Null Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught identification of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonic technique and expository method.
2. **Null Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught blending of letter sounds in English using jolly phonic technique and expository method.

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Methodology

A quasi-experimental research design of pre-test and post-test non-equivalent control group was used for the study. The population for the study consisted of one thousand six hundred and three (1603) pre-primary school pupils in public primary schools in the study area. A simple random sampling technique was used to select eight (8) public primary schools in the study area. Purposively, eight intact classes from the selected school were used for the selection, giving a total number of 87 for experimental group while 73 was for the control group. Instrument for treatment of experimental group was English language course instructed into 5 weeks lesson plans using Jolly Phonic technique while the treatment for the control group was English language course also instructed into 5 weeks lesson plan using expository method. An English Reading Achievement Test (ERAT) was used to obtain data from the respondents. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section ”A” was designed to collect the respondent’s bio-data and section “B” contains 20 items seeking to determine the role of jolly phonics on pupils’ identification of letter sounds and the blending of letter sounds ability. To ensure the content appropriateness of the investigation, the instrument was face and content validated by three experts, two from the English Department and one from Test and measurement in the Department of Educational Foundation, College of Education, Afaha Nsit. To test for internal stability of the instrument, a trial test was carried out on 30 respondents who were not part of the study but were drawn from the population under study. A reliability coefficient of .79 was obtained signifying that the instrument was reliable. The instrument was administered to the subjects (pupils) as pre-test and post-test as achievement test. Data obtained from research questions were answered using means and standard deviations while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). When the p value is less than 0.05 (P0.05) level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Results

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in identification of letter sounds when taught English langue using jolly phonic technique and expository method.

Research Question:1 What are the mean achievement scores of pupils taught identification of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonics technique (experimental group) and those taught English language using expository method in the (control group)?

Table 1: mean difference of achievement scores of pupils taught identification of letter sounds in English language for the experimental group and control group

Variables	N	Pretest		Posttest		Mean gain	Main difference
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Experimental group	87	38.70	5.96	58.13	10.40	19.43	14.91

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Control group	73	39.28	6.13	43.80	6.96	4.52
Total	160					

Data analysis in Table 1 indicated that the mean score of students taught identification of letter sounds English language using jolly phonics technique, (experimental =19.43) is greater than the mean score of students taught English language using expository method in the (control group = 4.52). The mean difference between the experimental and control groups is 14.91. This indicated that the achievement of pupils taught identification of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonics technique was better than mean score of students taught English language using expository teaching method.

Research Question 2: What are the mean achievement scores of pupils taught blending of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonics technique (experimental) and those taught in English language using the expository method?

Table 2: Mean difference of achievement scores of pupils taught blending of letter sounds in English language for the experimental group and control group

Variables	**N**	**Pretest**		**Posttest**		**Mean gain**	**Main difference**
		$\bar{X}$	**SD**	$\bar{X}$	**SD**		
Experimental group	87	45.19	5.73	55.62	4.58	10.43	3.47
Control group	73	39.24	6.76	46.20	4.89	6.96	
Total	160						

Data analysis in Table 2 indicated that the mean score of students taught blending of letter sounds English language using jolly phonics technique, (experimental =10.43) is greater than the mean score of students taught English language using expository method in the (control group = 6.69). The mean difference between the experimental and control groups is 3.47. This indicated that the achievement of pupils taught blending of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonics technique was better than mean score of students taught English language using expository teaching method.

Testing of the Null Hypothesis

1. **Null** Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught identification of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonic technique and expository method.
   Table 3: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of pupils' academic scores of pupils taught identification of letter sounds in English language for the experimental group and control group.

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Variables	Type 111 sum of square	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Remark
Model	236.103	2	12.426	88.944	.000	
Intercept	29.036	1	4.839	34.638	.000	
Explained	.013	1	.013	.094	.760	
Main effect	2.184	1	.437	3.12	.013	sig
Error	10.897	155	.140			
Total	247.000	160				

The summary of data analysis in Table 3.resented the observed F- value as 3.12. This value was compared with its significant value of .013 at .05 alpha level. Since the significant value of .013 is less than the alpha level of .05, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught identification of letter sounds in English using jolly phonic technique and expository method is rejected. This showed that jolly phonic technique is statistically significant and enhances pupil's academic achievement of identification of letter sounds in English language.

2. **Null Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught blending of letter sounds in English using jolly phonic technique and expository method.

Table 4: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of pupils' academic scores of pupils taught blending of letter sounds in English language for the experimental group and control group.

Variables	Type 111 sum of square	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Remark
Model	236.920	2	7.466	60.063	.000	
Intercept	17.834	1	1.372	11.036	.000	
Explained	.024	1	.024	.194	.661	
Main effect	1.515	1	.126	1.01	.028	sig
Error	8.080	155	.124			
Total	247.000	160				

The summary of data analysis in Table 4.resented the observed F- value as 1.01.This value was compared with its significant value of .028 at .05 alpha level. Since the significant value of .028 is less than the alpha level of .05, the null hypothesis which stated that There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught blending of letter

sounds in English using jolly phonic technique and expository method is rejected. This showed that jolly phonic technique is statistically significant and enhances pupil's academic achievement of blending of letter sounds in English language.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1 showed that the achievement of pupils taught identification of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonics technique was better than mean score of students taught English language using expository teaching method. Also, the corresponding null hypothesis 1 indicated that there is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of pupils taught identification of letter sounds in English using jolly phonic technique and expository method. The result of this finding shows that the synthetic multi-sensory strategy found in jolly phonics sounds is the main skill for writing and also a good way of attaining excellence in identification of sounds in words. This result is in congruent with the work of Dixon, Schhagen and Seedhouse (2011) who asserted that the pupils' scores in reading and spelling tests demonstrated that the intervention groups, Jolly Phonic groups had significantly improved compared to the control group. This finding is in agreement with that of Kolawole. Adepoju and Adelore (2000) who ascertained that the ability to read intelligently, write clearly, correctly and coherently is the foundation upon which all the rest of children's academic education is indisputably laid. The findings is also in accordance with the works of Eshiet (2012) who asserted that the jolly phonics Jolly Phonic method lead to the improvement of pupils' reading achievement as well as an increase in teachers' interest in teaching English

Research Question 2 showed that the achievement of pupils taught blending of letter sounds in English language using jolly phonics technique was better than mean score of students taught English language using expository teaching method. Also, the corresponding null hypothesis 2, indicated that there is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of pupils taught blending of letter sounds in English using jolly phonic technique and expository method. The result of this finding shows that the synthetic multi-sensory strategy found in jolly phonics must have been the potent that causes the differences in the academic achievement of the pupils. This implies that jolly phonics synthetic instructional strategy is a better teaching strategy for facilitating pupils blending of letter sounds when compared with the expository method. The findings conformed to that of Ekpo (2008) who asserted that phonics skills for blending is to look at the letters, say the sound and hear the word, and the ability to blend letter sound fluently is the essential skill for reading. In the same vein Udoh (2001) highlighted that the important thing is not only the number of spelling a child can recognize but the number of sounds he can pi together to form a word. Moreso, the finding is quite consistent with the views of Sue and Sara (2008) and Hiskes (2008) who asserted that blending of letter sounds promote fluency for reading and establishing smooth, strong left-to-right-eye tracking skills which helps to prevent or correct reversals. This result points to the fact when a new method that can tricker the higher cognitive order is introduced in teaching among pupil's academic achievement is enhanced.

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Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of this study the following conclusion were drawn. Jolly phonics instructional strategy has been found to be effective in facilitating the identification of letter sounds in words for writing ability and blending of letter sounds for reading ability. Thus, teacher should be encouraged to implement it in the classroom.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Jolly phonics instructional strategy should be incorporated into the curriculum of the teacher training programmes especially in the programme of teachers undertaking training to teach in nursery and primary schools.
2. Jolly phonics instruction strategy should be incorporated into the school time table of pupils for effective implementation.
3. Primary school teachers teaching reading in pre-primary classes should adopt jolly phonics instructional strategy for effective teaching so as to achieve maximum objectives of the lesson.
4. Teachers need to adopt the jolly phonics method in their approach to teaching reading and this should be done at an early stage. Once the foundation is built at an early stage, the child will become a successful reader.
5. The traditional class method should be discouraged through the provision of reading materials and objects that stimulate the children's interest in reading.
6. Methods such as memorization and forceful drills on reading should be discouraged.
7. Individual differences in children's reading ability should be identified and addressed through variation of reading methods as was provided for in the experimental group through jolly phonics.

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