

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE PHONICS METHOD FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD READING SKILLS

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Abstract:

Teaching foreign languages especially reading for early childhood is more challenging and applying an interesting method is needed to improve their ability. Teachers must have known some of easy and fun methods for early childhood so that the learning process can run well. One method that can be used is the phonics method. Phonics is a method for teaching reading and writing of the English language by developing the letters of the alphabet and their sounds first for their phonemic awareness and an understanding of the links between these sounds and how to use the letters of the alphabet to represent them. A child learning phonics will see a "p" and know that the sound is "puh." This skill will prove incredibly useful when the child is sounding out unknown words and syllables. The strength of this method is the students are easy to make connections between words and sounds. Besides, they can quickly recognise familiar words and to easily sound out new words they encounter. This research uses descriptive qualitative method. This paper examines the concept of the phonics teaching method and its effectiveness to develop the reading skill for early childhood.

Keywords:

Phonics, reading, sound, method, early childhood



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INTRODUCTION

Referring to Wikipedia, language (from Sanskrit *ब्रह्म*, bhāṣā) is the ability possessed by humans to communicate with other humans using signs, such as words and gestures. There are so many languages in the world, according to estimates there are about 6,000 - 7,000 total languages in the world. But estimates depend on any changes that can occur between languages and dialects. Language introduction to children should be done as early as possible. According to the Indonesian Pediatrician Association (IDAI), at the age of 1 year, children already understand 70 words. When they enter the age range of 12-18, they are usually able to say 3-6 words with meaning to point to the limbs or pictures mentioned by other people. At the age of 18 months, children's vocabulary reaches 5-50 words and they can already say most of the wishes through words. One way to develop children's language skills is by reading. According to (Kholid AH and Lilis S., 1997:140) reading is presenting or sounding a series of symbols of written material that he sees from letters to words, then into phrases, sentences, and so on. Cochrane Efal as quoted by Brewer explained that there are at least five stages of children's reading development.

First, the magical stage or fantasy stage. At this stage, children will make books as a fun toy medium. Children use books to play with their friends, see, turn the pages of books, also carry their favorite books here and there.

Second, the stage of self-concept or the stage of formation of self-concept. At this stage, the child has begun to engage in reading activities by reading books and understanding pictures based on the experience gained. From here the child will also use language that is not following the writing in the book.

Third, the bridging reading stage or the stage of reading pictures. At this stage children begin to grow awareness of writing in books and find words they have encountered before, children also begin to recognize the letters of the alphabet.

Fourth, the reading stage or reading recognition stage. At this stage, children begin to be interested in reading, can remember writing in a certain context, try to recognize signs in the environment, and read various signs, for example, billboards, milk boxes, traffic signs, and others.

Fifth, the independent reader stage or fluent reading stage. At this stage, the child can read writing fluently without the assistance of the closest person. Even children are also able to understand and think critically about the results of the experiences found.

The phonic method according to the KBBI 2000:740 is an orderly method used to carry out work so that it is achieved as expected. The phonic method is referred to as the oral method and is related to the Direct Method of movement. In teaching this method begins with listening exercises, then followed by practice pronouncing sounds first, then pronunciation of words, short sentences, then longer sentences, subject matter written in phonetic notation. This sound method is based on phonemic science which studies the way sounds are produced. Phonics according to KBBI 2000:310 is a method of teaching reading by using simple phonetic concepts. The word phonetics itself is a linguistic field about the pronunciation of speech sounds. According to Sadjah and Sukarja 1995:152, the creator of this method is Alexander Melvin Bell, father of Graham Bell, with the term 22 Visible Speech Method, which is a symbol of sound or sound produced by a speech instrument.

The phoneme method or the sound method is interpreted from the Speech Sound Method, which teaches a sequence not alphabetically but teaches the sound of language sounds. So that what is taught is not, a, b, c, d, ..., but the articulation of language sounds. The phonic method according to Abudarrahan 2003:215-word recognition through the process of listening to sounds. Children are invited to recognize the sounds of letters, then synthesize the letters into syllables and words. To introduce various letters that are marked with the first letters with the names of objects that are known to the child. For example the letter "a" in the picture of an apple, the letter "b" in the picture of a book, and so on. This method is easy, a research method that is studied using a set of linguistics, pedagogy, and psychology.

One of the benefits of the phonics method in reading English is that it can introduce children to the alphabet and various sounds. English has 26 letters of the alphabet, 21 vowels, and 22 consonants. We can teach lowercase letters of the alphabet and various types of letters in English. We can also ask the child to string some combinations of consonants and vowels to form a vocabulary in English. By using this phonics method, children can memorize letters and various sounds in English. This method is also fun and easy to do. Children will see the shape of the sounds and letters of the alphabet in the form of flashcards so that young children will easily remember them. In addition, we can invite them to play games in English, so the children will not feel bored

METHOD

This research was conducted in the form of library research. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Data obtained from secondary sources such as from previous research relevant to the topic of this research. Related resources were collected and studied to compare the findings, opinions and statements of different experts for the teaching of phonics and phonemic awareness for the development of reading in kindergarten.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reading

Reading is a process of understanding words and combining the meaning of words in sentences and reading structures or cognitive processes to find various information contained in the text writing. This means that reading is a thinking process for understand the content of the text read. While Susanto (2012:83) states that reading is "As an activity to study or examine the content of the writing, both orally and internally to obtain information or understanding of something contained in the text." Reading is considered by language test constructors, textbook writers and even more so by many teachers as a consists of various skills and components. According to Harmer (2007:99) reading is useful for language acquisition, which provides information about what they read and what they get in reading activities. Reading can also be defined as a person's ability to recognize a visual form; associating form with sound and/or meaning acquired in the cover and on the part of the experience, understand and interpret its meaning. it can be concluded that reading is the process of changing the shape of a symbol/sign/writing into a sound form meaning. In the process of reading, the reader gets information about message or information that has been conveyed. The essence of reading for young children early stage is the stage of reading recognition, reading recognition, or written symbols to children gradually and completely so that children will have readiness to enter education level even higher.

Reading Process

One theory suggests that reading development starts from the level of the phoneme and is built up from that, which represents the so-called phonological, sub-lexical route. In contrast, another theory suggests that initial reading ability relies on long-term memory of the visual appearance of words as whole symbols, the so-called visual, lexical, logographic route (see Table 1). These two theories representing the Phonics versus the Whole Word or 'Look and Say' teaching approaches have led to what is termed the 'reading wars' among theorists and practitioners (Meadows, 2006; Wyse & Jones, 2008).

There are many controversies about children's early literacy development regarding time, role and focus the right sequence on the microprocess in instruction literacy. For this reason, the experts set the learning model into a recommended sequence for teaching focus and target achievement. Chall (1983/1996) described six qualitatively distinct phases for L1 reading development, presented as strictly chronologically sequenced and 'natural' stages of development. However, learners can go through them at different paces (faster or slower). Chall's first three stages relevant to young children are displayed in Table 1 with hypothesised approximate ages.

STAGE	AGE	FEATURES
0 Pre-reading	Birth to 6	Accumulation of knowledge about letters, words, books, signs. Guessing, predicting, 'pretend' reading. Phonological awareness.
1 Decoding	6-7	Learning of sound-to-letter relations, identifying words. Reading of short, simple and predictable texts. Understanding connected text. Discovery (flash of insight) of what reading is for: meaning.
2 Confirmation and Fluency	7-8	Recognition of words of increasingly complex elements using semantic And syntactic information and context. Reading more complex texts with more complex plots. Fluency through practice: wide extensive reading of different texts and/or repeated readings of the same texts. Reading aloud becomes more fluent and expressive, indicating comprehension of what is read.

Table 1. Chall's (1983/1996:9) stages of reading development

Another influential model, developed by Ehri, proposed four stages of reading development, as seen in table 2.

STAGE	AGE	FEATURES
Pre-Alphabetic	Pre age-5	Reading is top-down, limited to using environmental and contextual cues, meaning-based, and relies on long-term memory of the visual appearance of words as whole symbols (the visual / lexical / logographic route)
Partial Alphabetic	5-6	Readers start recognizing the correspondences between graphemes and phonemes, but the insight is not fully developed, may begin to detect letters in words, match some letters to their sounds (b, d, f, j), identify initial and final sounds in words, but have difficulty with medial sounds in words, still heavy reliance on context, mistake similarly spelled words
Full Alphabetic	6-7	Letter-sound knowledge develops, strategy for sounding out common words, building of sight word vocabularies, readers have a good knowledge of the probabilities and contingencies that allow accurate and automatic reading
Consolidated Alphabetic	7-8	After more exposure to print, readers use their extensive knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences, as well as onsets (p-, sp-, spl-), rime (-ip, -op, -ash), affixal morphemes (-tion, -ness, pre-) and syllables (at, in, ten), to apply a strategy based on reasoning by analogy to known spelling patterns

Table 2. Ehri's (1995, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2017) stages of reading development

What is Phonics ?

Phonics is a teaching method that helps children learn and can use the principles of decoding written letters and spoken sounds. Phonics instruction does this by teaching children to decode words by sound - showing them how to make connections between the

letters of written text (graphemes, or letter symbols) and the sounds of spoken language. One of the main difficulties that children can experience when learning to read is understanding phonetics. Failure to understand that printed symbols represent the sound of spoken words makes it impossible to become a fluent reader. Children who cannot relate letters to their sounds will have difficulty reading because they cannot understand the relationship between letters and sounds. For children to learn the phonics approach, they need books that are phonically written using common words that are interesting for small children. Each word must be voiced by the child to achieve the highest level of results. Phonics instruction is essential for teaching children how to read properly and has been tested.

Phonics Method

This phonics method is a method that has been around since the 80's. Lundberg, Forst, and Petersen (1988 in Lyster, Lervag, & Hulme, 2016) have used the phonics method in PAUD environment in recognizing letter sounds for early childhood. In addition, Bradley and Bryant (1983 in Lyster, Lervag, & Hulme, 2016) using phonic elements in learning activities in sound recognition activities the letter, for example is a child playing related to syllables, combining letter sounds, and matching words which have the same initial sound. The concept of the phonic method as a strategy to teach reading to beginners has been found to be very useful in the process. The phonic method has several has been defined. Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2013) explains that the phonic method is a method for teaching English reading and writing by developing students' phonemic awareness – the ability to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes – to teach correspondence between these sounds and the spelling pattern (grapheme) they represent. Students later develop into sounds or letters into syllables, while syllables are used to form phrases and phrases to form sentences.

Phonics has several elements where the correspondence between letters and sound is presented in a number of different ways. If the letters have the form similarly, sounds come in different units such as syllables, onsets and rhymes and phonemes. Each syllable consists of onset, rhyme and/or a combination both. Onset is any consonant that comes before a vowel in syllables. For example, in the word "star" /st/ is the beginning (onset). On the other hand, rhyme is any vowel and consonant(s) following onset. In "star" /ar/ is that rhyme. Phonemes are small units of sound that make up a word. While "star" consists of only one syllable, it contains four phonemes different: /s/ /t/ /a/ /r/ (www.k12reader.com).

This phonics method has its own advantages and can be taught with a language structure that is adapted to linguistic rules that refer to the development of the child's language, can be adapted to the stages of child brain development, is meaningful and contextual, and can encourage children to write proportionally.

The role of Phonics Method in Developing Early Reading Skills

From the phonic details, we can try to relate the role of phonics in reading. In this explanation, we can see that phonics and phonemic awareness (understanding that words are made up of small segments of sound) are closely connected. Phonics is very dependent on the reader's awareness of phonemes. The use of the phonic method is intended to introduce the sound of letters as well as symbols of the alphabet to children. Then, the

child is able to combine and separate the sounds of a word. Not only that, this activity can also introduce and enrich children's vocabulary at the same time.

The phonic method used in learning to read the beginning of the language English for early childhood, non-speakers original, can be an alternative method learning. Beginning reading lessons English through the phonics method for children early childhood in language tutoring institutions English ICR has several stages, namely letter sound recognition, symbol recognition letters, and combining letter sounds. There are four important aspects of this activity are namely knowledge, intellectual abilities, motor skills, and attitudes (Reiser & Dick, 1996). In learning to read beginning of English through the phonic method, children are able to understand the concept of letter sounds studied. Phonics concepts to learn by children includes the sounds of the initial, middle, and end. In addition to the phonic concepts that must be mastered by children, other learning concepts that must be mastered is the recognition of letter symbols. The teacher asks the child to name the sound of each letter while looking at the board letters in each meeting, the goal is that children understand not only the sound of the letters but recognize letter symbols visually. Other than that, the teacher stimulates the child to complete work independently and train children to develop critical thinking skills through several learning activities, such as bold letter symbols and match pictures in the student worksheets.

The purpose of teaching phonics is to help students determine the sound of unrecognized written words quickly. When students find new words in the texts, they can use phonic elements to codify and understand the words. There are several ways to apply phonics to reading. Synthetic phonics build words from the ground up. In this approach the reader associate letters with the appropriate phoneme or sound unit and then mixed together to create a word. For example, if students encounter the word "apple" and don't recognize it, it will sound out every time segments of the word (/a//p//l/) and then blend these sounds together to say the whole word. Analytical phonics, on the other hand, does top-down approach. A word is identified as a whole unit and then the voicemail connection is parsed out. This approach is very helps when students come to words that can't be heard coming out (such as "caught" and "light") and reinforcement of similar words. Phonic analogy uses familiar parts of words to find words new. When applying the phonic analogy there is the word "stun" a student can see that the second half of the word is the same as other familiar words like "sun" and "fun". Then, he can apply the knowledge of this phoneme to easily codify the word

Advantages of Phonic Method in early chillhood reading skills

There are many advantages to using a phonics method.

1. Sound/Symbol Recognition is Stronger

A child who learns reading through phonics will have excellent "phonemic awareness," which means that he will be able to associate letter symbols with their appropriate sound, even when letters can make more than one sound. For example, a child who learns phonics will be able to see a "p" and know that the sound is "puh." This skill will prove incredibly useful when the child is sounding out unknown words and syllables.

2. Sounding Out Unfamiliar Words is Easier

A child who has strong phonemic awareness can put sounds together to make syllables. For example, if a child knows, through learning phonics, that "ch" can say "chuh," or "shhh," depending on the word, he will know to try out both when sounding out an unfamiliar word.

3. Knowing Spelling Patterns Makes Reading Multi-Syllabic Words Easier

Because spelling is based on sound/symbol awareness for the majority of the English language, teaching reading through phonics will develop strong spellers. A phonetic learner who is spelling a multi-syllabic word such as "conversation," will know that there is a prefix, "con," a suffix, "tion," and four syllables, each starting with a consonant and ending with a consonant. A whole-language learner would have to memorize what the word says and would not understand how to break the word apart to read or spell it.

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5. Students Learn Syllable Structure

A student who learn phonics will become familiar with syllable structure. She will know that a closed syllable will end in a consonant and have a short vowel, while an open syllable will end in a vowel that makes a long sound. She will know that when two vowels are together in a word, the first one makes a long sound while the other stays silent.

Phonics has additional benefits that go beyond reading and writing. It may also help to develop general thinking skills. In the 1970s the United States Department of Education conducted a huge educational experiment known as Project Follow Through. One finding of the study was that students trained to analyze words through a phonics-based program demonstrated superior critical thinking skills. Of course, all children are individuals with their own learning styles. Because all children are unique, phonics may not be the best teaching method for all. It should therefore be part of a complete, well-rounded reading program that encourages visual learners to recognise whole words by sight, and that incorporates opportunities for extensive reading and creative writing.

CONCLUSION

The phonics method is a teaching that refers to the ability to recognize letters, sound which connect the two. Children can easily understand how to form letters into a word, as well as help children's development of text recognition skills that can support children to learn to read and write. Children who are taught to read through the phonic method tend to be better at spelling, because in the phonic method children are used to breaking a word into the smallest phonic units.

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