

# Influence Of Phonics Techniques In Teaching Reading.

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## Abstract

*The research paper is on influence of phonics techniques in teaching reading. Phonics is a techniques in reading in which learners are taught how to read through recognition of letters and their sounds. English language letters do with letter sounds, and learners have to acquire the needed skills for optimal performance in communication. Imperatively, phonics involve matching the sounds of spoken English with individual letters or groups. The techniques to help the learners to blend sounds with letters in English language. The paper therefore, highlights the following areas; the meaning of phonics, reading, stages and components of reading, importance of reading, English language in Nigeria, curriculum and its aims, historical development of phonics activities among others. Recommendations and conclusion of this paper were drawn based on the ideas presented and discussed herein.*

**Keywords:** Influence, phonics, techniques and reading

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## I. Introduction

Reading is one form of communication that must be developed in children right from their early years. It is an activity that every child engages in, from the day the child commences the educational career at the preprimary level then through the long years at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. Alyousef (2022), simply defined reading as a process of obtaining information from a text. It is a complex process that involves interaction or negotiation between the reader and the text, leading to fluency or automaticity. Vacca and Vacca (2021), also see reading as a conversation, a give and take exchange between the reader and the text. In this context, reading is a meaning searching and meaning getting activity that involves the reader and the text leading to success both in and out of school. In this context, reading can be defined as the ability of the reader to get meaning from the author's message in the text. The chambers dictionary 10<sup>th</sup> edition sees impact as the blow of a body in motion impinging on another body; the impulse resulting from collision, the impulse resulting from a new idea or theory; strong effects, influence, the effect of an advertisement, promotion, phonics has to do with the science of sound, or of spoken sounds; the phonic method. Techniques. is a skilled procedure or method; a knack or trick of doing something, proficiency, refinement, in artistic performance. To oxford advanced learner's dictionary, techniques is a particular way of doing something, especially one in which you have to learn special skills.

The influence of phonic techniques stands on the powerful effect on the method of teaching one to read based on sounds that letter represent or stands for. In English -speaking countries, it is commonly used in teaching beginning reading in the mother tongue (L<sub>1</sub>). There, children are taught to recognize the relationship between letters and sounds. They are taught the sounds which the letters of the alphabet represent, and then try to build up the sound of a new or unfamiliar word by saying it one sound at a time (Richards, 2020: 274). In the elementary grades in these countries phonics is taught as a means, the end is that young children will gradually begin to read books on their own.

However, phonics is not a core topic in the second language (L<sub>2</sub>) teaching methodology. It has no place in the major methodology texts. Indeed, where phonics is advocated in L<sub>2</sub> teaching contexts, it is usually for teaching, immigrant adult ESL (English as a second language) learners to read. Phonics is promoted for a range of benefits for young learners, including correct pronunciation, the ability to sound out new words, competence in reading aloud and hence increased interest in reading books in English, ability to discriminate between speech sounds, enhanced reading ability, better spelling, and general listening and speaking improvement (Curriculum Development Council 2018, 166-171). The primary goal of phonics instruction is that young learners will be able to work out the pronunciation.

The concept of phonics comes from cognovits learning theory, which argues that, "as a prerequisite for the restructuring of the learner's mental representation of the language, some degree of conscious awareness is necessary for raising aims at helping learners uncover gaps in their knowledge". (Thornbury, 2022, 41).

Awareness raising has been applied in pronunciation teaching and can be used to build awareness of specific aspects of English pronunciation (word stress, sentence stress, sounds, intonation, weak forms (Laroy, 2019). This paper argues for an awareness raising approach to teaching phonics in L2 contexts. This approach aims to increase learners' general (sensitivity to sound spelling correspondence or letter combinations in word).

Similarly, Paulson (2023), for examples, explains phonological awareness as a more encompassing term referring to an awareness of larger spoken units such as syllables and rhyming words. Tasks such as tapping out the number of phonemes included in single words, identifying separate words in a spoken sentence, and deleting initial or final phonemes of a word demonstrated logical awareness. Since phonics is concerned with specific sound spelling matches in a language, it is phonemic awareness that has a more direct impact on the success of phonics instruction (Asmore, 2022). Holm and Dodd (2022), examine the relationship between first and second literacy by identifying the skills and processes developed in the first language that were transferred to the second language.

### **Phonics**

Phonics is a strategy for teaching children how to read and write. It helps children hear, identify and use different sounds that distinguish one word from another in the English language. Written language can be compared to a code, so knowing the sounds of individual letters and how those letters sound when they're combined will help children decode words as they read. Understanding phonics will also help children know which letters to use when they are writing words.

Phonics is a method for teaching, reading and writing of the English language by developing learners phonemic awareness the ability to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes in order to teach the correspondence between these sounds and the spelling patterns (graphemes) that represent them (Borowsky, 2023). The goal of phonics is to ensure beginning readers to decode new written words by sounding them out, or, in phonics terms, blending the sound - spelling patterns. Since, it focuses on the spoken and written units within words, phonics is a sub-lexical approach and as a result, is often contrasted with whole language, a with the view of word-level up philosophy for teaching reading. This is in line with the view of Howatt and Dakin (2019), listening which is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying, involves understanding speakers accents or pronunciation, grammars and vocabulary, and comprehension of meaning.

Thereupon, Onuigbo (2019), in his own contribution states that "the senior secondary school certificate examinations include test in spoken English and to be able to pass these tests, the students should have a good knowledge of the sound system of English". The scholar opines that:

*The most common means by which human beings communicate with one another is language which, primarily exists in a spoken form. Any other representation of language such as writing is of secondary importance because most human communication is done orally. A person can only claim to know a language if he can speak the language*

One of the problems in teaching oral English according to Nwachukwu (2023) is that some students-teachers of English sent on teaching practice to teach do not speak correct English not to talk imparting good knowledge of English to students they are teaching. This is a sorry sight. Look at the issue of NYSC corps members posted to teach English, some of them graduated in Drama, mass communication, linguistic, language arts without the good knowledge of English, yet they were selected to teach English in some of our secondary schools especially in private schools in the country today.

Phonics involves matching the sounds of spoken English with individual letters or groups of letters. For example, the sound k can be spelled as c, k, ck or ch. Teaching children to blend the sounds of letters together helps them decode unfamiliar or unknown words by sounding them out. For example, when a child is taught the sounds for the letters l, p, a and s, they can start to build up the words: "tap", "taps", "pat", "pats" and "sat".

### **Reading**

Reading is one of the communication skills. It is the third in the row among the four communication skills. Reading is a very imperative skill for effective education and communication. Knowledge is acquired through reading. Kane (2021:17), therefore defines reading as a meaning structure process in which the readers must actively construct meaning and work towards fitting new information into the knowledge they already have.

Vacca and Vacca, (2020) also sees reading as an interactive process. It is seen as a conversation, a give and take exchange between the reader and the text.

In support of the view, Walker (2022) sees reading as an active problem solving process that involves guessing or predicting what the author and about story events. He claims that since reading involves recalling an individual's life experiences and trying to understand what is written, it is more than just receiving meaning in a literal sense. Supporting the above view, Hill (2023) opines that reading is the most useful skill that students need to understand a text because it gives them immediate feedback about a text. Kane (2021), sees reading, as interpreting written language and translating into words and sentences which conveys thoughts and ideas. Burkey (2020), is of the idea that reading is the process. of getting meaning from and the bringing of meaning into printed words in the text. The implication is that readers should bring their backgrounds, experiences as well as emotions into play, during reading. On his part, Rubin (2023) defines reading as a process in which information from the text and the knowledge possessed by the reader act together to produce meaning.

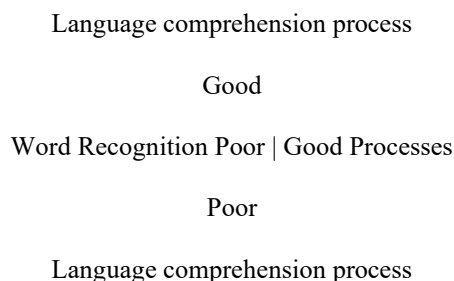
### **Stages and Components of Reading**

It is important to note that, Joel (2022), identifies three broad stages that young children move through as they learn to read, namely Emergent, Beginning and Fluent reading stages. At the emergent reading stage, they show great interest in reading, develop book handling skills, can Identify most of the letters of the alphabet, know some letter sounds, read 20 familiar high frequency words, can use predictable patterns in text to re-read familiar books and makes text to self-connections. Children become emergent readers in the nursery and kindergarten but those whose parents have read to them daily and provide them a variety of literacy experience do learn how to read before coming to school (Temple, 2023).

At the beginning stage, the emphasis is on interactive and guided activities and accordingly Tompkins list the things a child can do at this stage as: Identifying the letter names and sound, match spoken words to written words, recognize 20-100 high frequency words, applying the knowledge of the cueing systems to decode words, corrects self while reading. Reads orally and slowly word by word, points to words while reading, makes reasonable predictions and making text to self and text to word connections. Most children in primary one and two are beginning readers and with teachers instructions in reading strategies and skills and if given daily opportunities to read, they move through this stage to reach the fluent stage (Tompkins, 2022: 45)

At the fluent reading stage, the child recognizes most words automatically, read with expression, read independently, uses a variety of strategies effectively, applies knowledge of strong structure and genre when reading and thinks inferentially, makes connections when reading (Walter, 2021). The Independent Review on the teaching of early reading presents a simple view of reading and sees skilled reading as the development of a set of processes by which words in print are recognized and understood and the development of language comprehension processes by which text as well as spoken language are understood and interpreted (Rose Report, 2018).

### **The Simple View of Reading**



The above table shows the four patterns of performance that reflects relative in children's balance of word recognition and language comprehension. The report states that the teachers must recognize the four patterns and identifies children's particular learning needs and then use it to guide further reading.

### **Importance of Reading**

The importance of reading cannot be overemphasized. The goal of reading according to Omojuwa (2005) especially at the primary school level, is that each child should be functionally literate, being able to communicate effectively even when the child's academic pursuit terminates at the secondary school level. Just as the Pivotal Teacher Training Manual (2000), states that reading is one of the means by which a human person can widen his perspective and become more enlightened. Reading not only enhances the language use by children but also 2021 improves critical and analytical thinking. As Cullingham (2021) points out, when we tell stories and encourage

our students to tell and re-tell the one we have told them, we provide and solve problems. He sees good stories as important elements of literature that provides a framework for remembering and making events memorable.

In the same vein, Norton in Amadi-Ali (2020), maintains that children should read to increase imaginative ability, widen their expressive ability, discover things unknown, get a thorough learning of a particular topic and knowledge, build positive attitude about books and reading, gains a sense of well-being, develops language, stimulate thinking and develop socially, sharpen reasoning, gain reading skills and develop real readers and writers.

Furthermore, reading according to Darko - Ampem (2022) helps the reader acquire knowledge, draw out and foster qualities such as imagination and self-understanding and contribute to the child's mental growth by stimulating the senses of touch, sight and hearing. Reading is also important for young children up for because a strong foundation in reading early in childhood will set students success as they get older. It is vital to learning because you understand the world around you much better. This is because the more informed one is, the better life decisions one will be able to make in life thereby making one's whole life a little better (James, 2021). Reading therefore helps one think and gets brain active. According to Eyre (2020), what we have today is information technology driven by computers whose mode of transmission is words.

To him, without the fundamental understanding of those words, a person will have difficulty functioning let alone succeeding. It is therefore very important that every child and adult learns to read because with the advent of internet, more and more reading is required on a daily basis. According to Ranweiler (2019), reading is important for many reasons. While some reasons are very practical, others are less tangible and not so obvious. He said that when people teach children to read at an early age and to improve their reading, they are preparing them to become productive adults in the future because not only is reading a required skill to complete school and then university but also a required skill in adulthood. The ability to read and learn new things throughout one's life keeps one's brain young and healthy. Furthermore, with the ability to read comes the ability to understand and comprehend new subject matter that one is not previously exposed to in reading exercise.

### **English Language in Nigeria**

*Of the entire heritage left behind in Nigeria by the British at the end of colonial administration probably, none is more important than the English languages. It is now the languages of government business and commerce education, mass media, literature and much internal (as well as external communication) (62). Place of English languages on secondary school curriculum*

The advent of English language in Nigeria dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century when sports and trading posts were established on the African coastal (Odumuha, 2022). English Merchants had arrived at the coasted areas like Warri, Calabar and Brass to compete with the Portuguese, being the nearest Europeans to African coast in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in search of commerce. The need for communication resulted in the birth of combination of languages and Portuguese too, pidgin developed from attempts by Portuguese to speak "Sabir" and already pidginize for and English language. Another factor is early commercial contact. The first English people to come to Nigeria were traders who came after the Portuguese in quest of anything to boost of their economy and this eventually led to the trans-atlantics slave Trade which was in triangular formal. Africans mostly Nigerians were extracted from their root to work there plantation field in the nest world (American) where the goods were the missionary impact is another factor with the abolition of slave trade those Nigerians who has been slave were repatriated to Sierra Leone. The retirees served as assistant to the missionaries in their evangelical activities which bishop Crowder was one between 1920s till date, series of development had taking place in Nigeria which had informed the indigenization of the language, the climax of which is summarized (Adedimeji (2022).

The curriculum development council (2019), sees English languages as a core subject in the three. years senior secondary curriculum and highlight how it articulates with the junior secondary curriculum post secondary education and future career path way the rational for studying English languages as a core subject at the senior secondary level is presented below-

### **Curriculum Aims**

The overall aims of the English languages curriculum are:

1. To provide every learner of English with further opportunities for extending their knowledge and experiences of the cultures of other people as well as opportunities for personal and intellectual development, further their study pleasure and work in the English medium.
2. To enable every learner to prepare for the changing socio-economic demands resulting from advance information technology (IT) demands which include the interpretation use and production of treats for pleasure study work in the English medium.
3. The English language curriculum at the senior secondary level specifically aims at enabling learners to broaden and deepen the language competencies they have developed through basic education (Primary, 1 - SS3) so that they will be able to use English with increasing proficiency for personal and international development, effective social interaction, further study, Historical Development of phonics technique vocational training, work and pleasure.

### **Historical Development of Phonics Techniques**

The term phonics during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 1970s was used as a synonym of phonetics. The use of the term in reference to the methods of teaching is dated to phonics derives from the Roman text the doctrine of littera which states that a letter (littera) consists of sound (potest as), a written symbol (figura) and a name (nomen) (Jeremy, 2021). This relation between word /sound and form is the form is the backbone of traditional phonics. Because of the complexity of written English were Hana century of debate has occurred over, whether English phonics should or should not be used in teaching beginning reading. The use of phonics in American education dates at least to the work of favell lee mortimer, whose works using phonics includes the early flashcard set reading disentangled (1834) and test reading without tears (2007). Despite the work of 19th-century proponents such as Rebecca Smith pollards, some American educators, prominently Horace man argued that phonics should not be taught at all. This led to the commonly used look says" approach encountered in the Dick and Jane readers popular in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Beginning in the 1950s, however, inspired by a landmark study Harry on the criticism of the absence of phonics instruction and that led to phonic resurfaced as a method of teaching reading. In the 1980s, the "whole language" approach to reading further polarized the debate in the United States (James, 2021).

### **Influence of Phonics techniques in teaching reading**

The phonics techniques of teaching gives the child the ability to work out words for himself by learning the individual letter sounds and groups of sounds (syllables) and encourage the child to "blend" these sounds to form words for example, c \_ ca \_ cat. This idea of blending sounds to make up words can be particularly useful when teaching children how to read. (Eyre, 2020).

Advocates of this theory believe that children should learn the sounds of a t) then they can letter and how to blend with the other sound (for example c-a-t) then they can tackle new words independently. Nwachukwu (2023) explains that this method focuses on the relationship between phonics (speech sounds) and graphemes (letter symbols) used in written language. Resnick (2019) concludes that sounding out words is the only solution to identifying new words. He went further to stress that it could be used with large number of children who have difficulty leaving to read.

The alphabetic principle and theories of beginning reading by Thomas (2023) states that letters systematically map into phonemes supporting this view, Share (2023) believe that in the beginning to read the child needs explicitly taught phonological recoding "sounding out" that used taught sounds for letter, to enable at reading unfamiliar words. These theories also claim that phonemic awareness is involved in the acquisition of such phonological reading procedures. Phonemic awareness is children's basic understanding that speech is composed of sense of individual sounds and it provides the foundation for breaking the code; (Yopp, 2021) when children can choose a duck as animal whose name begins with /d/ from a collection of toy animals, identify "duck" and "luck" as rhyming words in a song or blend the sounds /d/, /u/ and /k/ to produce "duck" they are phonemically aware. Developing phonemic awareness enables children to use sound - symbol correspondence to read and spell words. Phonemic awareness is not sounding out words for reading nor is it spelling words to write words, rather it is the foundation for phonics. (Tompkins 2022.95)

For further clarification, Resnick (2019), maintains that phonics method of reading teach children the sound values of letters and letter clusters, which must be done by matching pictures and objects with letters. For example, introducing the picture of an apple, elephant etc. to them, these key pictures carry a phonic clue which provides information about the beginning letter sounds and its name. James (2021), explains that phonic method of teaching reading tends to be synthetic process in that it initially concentrates on parts of words and their sounds which are later combined into whole words. Advocates of this theory believe that children should learn the sounds of letters and how to blend with the other sound (for example c-a-t) then they can tackle new words independently. Adedimeji (2022), explains that this theory focuses on the relationship between phonics (speech sounds) and graphemes (letter symbols) used in written language. Resnick (2019), concludes that sounding out words is the

only solution to identifying new words. He went further to stress that it could be used with large number of children who have difficulty learning to read. From the foregoing, one finds the alphabetic principle of instruction a strong base for the use of jolly phonics in teaching school pupils word recognition.

Similarly, on the same view, Tompkins (2022), further stated that there is no consensus among researchers about the best way to teach phonics, but most agree that teachers should use direct and indirect instruction. Children should be involved in real reading and writing activities as they learn phonics. This therefore means that phonics instruction should be tied to reading and writing. Teacher's emphasis should be that children can decode words fluently when reading and spell words conveniently when writing.

Amadi-Ali (2020), states that phonics instruction is concerned with the teaching of the association of sounds (phonemes) with letters (graphemes) in order to give pupils a tool for recognition of words which they cannot read. She went on to say that when pupils know the sounds which letters represent they are able to pronounce unknown words. If the words are in their unspoken vocabulary they will recognize the words as soon as they are able to pronounce it. Amadi- Ali (2020) identifies the following as principles for phonics instruction: Do not introduce pupils to phonics instruction until they can understand and speak English fluently and then decide on your approach to phonics - analytic phonic, synthetic phonic or a combination. Analytic phonic is the use of whole words to demonstrate letter sounds while synthetic phonic is the use of sounds in isolation that are blended together /b/ /a/ /t/ = /bat/. There after decide on the sequence of sounds to be taught. It is generally preferred to start with consonants sound because most English words start with a consonants, teach c and g last as they have more than one sound. Then, let pupils have success with one sound before teaching a new one. The teacher can then demonstrate the application of sound letter relationship to recognize an unfamiliar word in context. For example guide the pupils to identify a word they can't read like this; Step one: What word make sense in this sentence? Step two: What word start with this letter sound? Step three: Guess.

### **Role of phonics in reading instruction**

The International Reading Association (2007) adapted the following as the roles phonics play in reading instruction: Phonics instruction serves one purpose to help readers figure out as quickly as possible the pronunciation of unknown words. It also sees it as the most widely respected value of letter sounds instructions and that it provides students with a means of deciphering written words that are visually unfamiliar. Phonics is also a tool needed by all readers and writers in alphabetically written language and early systematic, explicit phonics instruction is an essential part but one of a balanced comprehensive reading program. Furthermore, phonics and other word identification skills are tools that children need for information, for enjoyment and for developing insights. Thus the intensity of phonics instruction must be adjusted to the individual needs of the children by a well prepared teacher. When phonics instruction is linked to children's genuine effort to read and write, they are motivated to learn.

Therefore, phonics inculcates early reading habit in children and sensitizing the children as early as possible in the areas of phonetics and phonology thereby making it easier for them to listen, speak, read and write independently given their age. Promotes self confidence in the children through synthesized reading It teaches the children to read and write through systematic phonics programmed vis a vis the 42 letter sounds and not just the 26 letters of the alphabet. It teaches the teachers the fundamental early systematic phonic skills. It is fun and child centered approach to teaching the sounds of the alphabet of the letters in a play way method

### **Phonic Activities**

On the phonic activities, Hann (2021), gives a brief description of some activities that can be used in teaching phonics as follows:

**a. A phonic table:** Collect together a group of objects connected to a sound you have introduced. Label the objects individually and put a label of the letter you are introducing over the table. This can be done for an initial sound for example,, Bb" box, book, basket, ball, bowl, etc or end of a word.

**b. Missing letters:** the missing letter card is probably the simplest way to check if a child has remembered and understood a letter

--- at

--- up

--- ar

--- or

**c. Words sums:** Give all the letters of the alphabet number

a b c d e g h I j k .....

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 .....

Then give each child "sums" to work out e.g 297, 217, 6554, 254. They can find the words once they understand the game get them to work out sums for each other?

**Picture crossword:** The teacher draws a set of squares and gives the children set of small pictures the size of the squares. A letter is given at the beginning of each row of the cross word and the child tries to fill up the squares with the correct picture.

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## **II. Recommendations**

Based on the issues discussed in this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. The school authorities, supervisors and curriculum planners should make sure that specific periods are allotted for the teaching and learning of phonics techniques in schools at all levels where phonics is needed for successful development of learners.
2. Qualified teachers of English language should be employed by government to teach phonic techniques in schools where necessary.
3. There should be a provision of reading materials such as textbooks in phonics in all concerned schools in Nigeria .
4. Teachers should try as much as possible to draw the interest of their students to phonics techniques in learning through improvisation of teaching aids and encouragement.

## **III. Conclusion**

There is no doubt that proper teaching foundation improves learners reading abilities. Students learn faster and master skills better when appropriate teaching techniques are used for instructions. The adoption of the phonics techniques in conjunction with other teaching techniques will greatly improve the students' academic performance in secondary schools at all levels. Thus student taught using phonics techniques to achieve significantly higher than those who were not taught using phonics. Male student taught using phonics techniques achieved significantly higher than their female counterparts. Also, phonics technique teaching reading favoured students in the urban areas than students in the rural areas.

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