



The Effectiveness of the Phonics Method in Improving English Reading Proficiency in Kindergarten Students

Rr Retno Dwi Susanti

Universitas Satu Nusa Lampung, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author. E-mail: retnodsusanti90@gmail.com

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Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji seberapa efektif pendidikan berbasis fonik dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca bahasa Inggris anak-anak di taman kanak-kanak. Ini dilakukan dalam konteks bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Teknik pengejaan alfabet konvensional seringkali gagal dalam memenuhi kebutuhan perkembangan anak – anak usia dini. Fonik, sebagai pendekatan metodis dalam pembelajaran membaca usia dini, menekankan hubungan antara bunyi dan huruf dan diakui lebih terstruktur. Studi ini melibatkan 40 siswa dari institusi bilingual di Indonesia dan menggunakan pendekatan metode kuantitatif, kuasi eksperimen design. Peserta dibagi menjadi dua kelompok: kelompok eksperimen menerima fonik terstruktur selama enam minggu, sementara kelompok kontrol melanjutkan dengan metode pengajaran membaca berbasis alfabet tradisional. Data dikumpulkan melalui dua tes, yaitu pre-test dan post-test, yang menilai pengenalan huruf, kesadaran fonemik, akurasi membaca kata, dan dekoding kata. Hasil membaca kelompok eksperimen meningkat secara signifikan ($M = 87,6$) dibandingkan dengan kelompok kontrol ($M = 70,05$), dan ada bukti signifikansi statistik menggunakan uji t-tes pada nilai $p < 0,05$. Data kualitatif dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, catatan lapangan, dan rekaman video kelas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa anak – anak kelompok fonik menunjukkan keterlibatan, kesenangan, dan motivasi yang lebih besar. Para siswa menunjukkan reaksi emosional yang positif dalam kegiatan fonik, termasuk bernyanyi, permainan, dan penguatan dari guru yang memfasilitasi perkembangan kognitif mereka dan pertumbuhan sosial emosional. Penelitian tersebut menunjukkan bahwa fonik yang didasarkan instruksi efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca bahasa Inggris awal, mendorong keterlibatan siswa dan kesejahteraan emosional.

Kata Kunci: kesadaran fonemik, membaca bahasa Inggris; pembelajaran berbasis fonik,

Abstract

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of phonics-based instruction in improving young children's English reading skills at the kindergarten level. It is conducted within the context of English as a foreign language. Conventional alphabet-based spelling techniques often fail to meet the developmental needs of early childhood learners. Phonics, as a methodological approach to early reading instruction, emphasizes the relationship between sounds and letters and is recognized as a more structured approach. This study involved 40 students from a bilingual institution in Indonesia and employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design. Participants were divided into two groups: the experimental group received structured phonics instruction for six weeks, while the control group continued with traditional alphabet-based reading instruction. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests measuring letter recognition, phonemic awareness, word reading accuracy, and word decoding. The results showed that the experimental group achieved significantly higher reading scores ($M = 87.6$) compared to the control group ($M = 70.05$), with statistical significance confirmed through a t-test ($p < 0.05$). Qualitative data were also collected through interviews, field notes, and classroom video recordings. The findings indicate that children in the phonics group demonstrated greater engagement, enjoyment, and motivation. Students also showed



positive emotional responses during phonics activities, such as singing, games, and teacher reinforcement, which supported their cognitive development and socio-emotional growth. This study concludes that phonics-based instruction is effective in improving early English reading skills, while also enhancing student engagement and emotional well-being.

Keywords: *English reading proficiency, phonemic awareness, phonics-based instruction*

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Introduction

Literacy development is recognized as a crucial aspect of early academic growth in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. English, as a global language, plays a vital role in education, communication, and the acquisition of knowledge. As a result, many countries where English is not the primary language have added English literacy lessons to their early childhood education programs, especially at the kindergarten level. However, the effectiveness of such programs largely depends on the instructional approaches employed. English language skills are becoming increasingly important in early education, especially in areas where English is not the primary language. Reading is one of the most essential core skills for future school success. In this regard, literacy development serves as a foundation for early academic achievement. English reading comprehension has evolved from a specialized skill into a fundamental requirement for participation in the 21st century. Effective reading learning from an early age can contribute to literacy development (Udju et al., 2022)

English is essential for school, learning, and communication as it is widely used globally (Rao, P. S., 2019). Because of this, several nations where English is not the main language have added reading and writing skills to early childhood education programs, especially for school-aged children. This shows that more individuals believe that teaching kids a second language early on will enhance their brains and prepare them for a globalised workplace. However, the rapid expansion of English language programs has also revealed challenges related to ineffective instructional practices. The success of such programs largely depends on the teaching methods employed. In

many places, learning by heart or using the alphabet to spell is a big part of the school program. These methods might help students recognise letters in the short term, but they do not always give them the basic reading and language skills they need to read and write on their own. The problem is that traditional ways of teaching reading, such as the alphabetic spelling method, do not always meet the needs of young students' cognitive and developmental growth (Sweller, J. 1994). Many cognitive scientists, researchers, policymakers, and literacy experts argue that phonics, a technique that focuses on the connection between sounds and the letters that correspond to them, can help children learn to read more effectively in the early stages. According to Shenoy et al. (2024), phonics-based instruction is positively associated with early English literacy outcomes among kindergarten students. Indriani et al., (2025) said that the phonics method is effective in improving children's early literacy. The phonics approach can improve children's reading skills in a fun and interactive way (Kurniawan Siagian et al., 2024). Reading instruction remains one of the most widely debated topics in early literacy education. Traditional methods, such as the whole-word approach, rely on children memorizing words by seeing them and guessing their meanings based on what they observe. In contrast, phonics-based instruction teaches the systematic relationship between letters and sounds. The whole-word approach assumes that reading develops naturally through exposure, similar to spoken language acquisition. This approach sees reading as a natural thing to do, just like talking. Studies show that the "guess-and-memorize" method does not work for many students, especially those who are learning English as a second language (ESL). Therefore,

selecting appropriate reading instruction methods is critical in early childhood education.

The traditional "reading wars" refers to a long-standing and often heated debate among educators, researchers, and policymakers over the best way to teach children how to read, have pitted instruction based on entire words versus instruction based on phonics. Children are better able to comprehend the relationship between letters and sounds when they get instruction that is based on phonics. A strong emphasis is placed on the alphabetic notion, which asserts that spoken sounds and written letters adhere to a predetermined pattern. Not only do children learn to memorise words, but they also learn how to figure out what the meaning of unknown words is by detecting the links between them. Phonics is a method that is considered to be more systematic in its approach to teaching young children how to read and write. It helps the brain develop by breaking reading down into logical chunks that may be understood. Nazario-Laude (2023) emphasizes that implementing phonics instruction can improve learners' reading performance. Before a child can master phonics, they must develop phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is a foundational skill that students must develop before learning to read. This skill involves the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds—phonemes—in spoken words. Developing this skill helps students learn to read and reduces reading problems later on. For instance, a child with strong phonemic awareness can recognize that the word "cat" is composed of three distinct sounds: /k/, /æ/, and /t/.

Intervention studies have shown that focusing on phonemic awareness can significantly improve the skills of at-risk kindergarteners in segmenting phonemes, knowing how letters sound, and writing. When children understand that words are made of sounds, and those sounds are represented by letters, the process of reading becomes a logical puzzle rather than an intimidating mystery. Cuccia (2023) highlights that transferring knowledge from phonemic awareness and phonics instruction to subsequent reading and writing activities is crucial. According to (Balauag, 2022), phonics video instruction is used to improve the sounding of letters.

Developing this skill helps students learn to read and reduces reading problems later on

(National Reading Panel, 2000). Implemented a phonemic awareness intervention that they hoped would improve the skills of at-risk kindergarteners in segmenting phonemes, knowing how letters sound, and writing (Keesey et al., 2015). Despite this, phonics teaching is still not always employed in schools, especially in English as a foreign language (EFL) class. In places like Indonesia, English is taught as a second language, and kindergarten early literacy programs often follow traditional models that lack significant phonemic instruction.

This difference highlights a gap between research and practice, underscoring the importance of studies tailored to specific language settings to demonstrate the benefits of phonics. This study arose from a critical review of how English is currently taught to young children and the need to provide real-world evidence to support the choices made by teachers. This study looks at how teaching phonics helps Indonesian EFL kindergarteners read better. The study looks at the practical and educational benefits of comparing groups that were taught phonics and those that were taught the alphabet. This study fills in a major gap in the research by looking at how teaching phonics improves letter memory, phonemic awareness, word reading accuracy, and word decoding. (Lane et al., 2025), phonics instruction reading connected text and decoding as an evidence-based practice for students in kindergarten and first grade. The results should be used to guide both academic research and everyday teaching. Phonics should be a standard part of early English reading programs, especially in homes where English is not the main language. The goal of this study is to determine the effectiveness of phonics-based teaching in enhancing the reading skills of Indonesian EFL kindergarten students. A study done in Mumbai found that phonics training can help kids learn to read and write better at a young age. Letter recognition, word creation, and phoneme sound recognition were some of the areas where children who received phonics training for just a year or two outperformed their non-instructed peers (Shenoy, Iyer, dan Zahedi 2024).

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of phonics-based teaching in enhancing the reading skills of Indonesian EFL kindergarten students. These programs work best when they are part of a well-rounded curriculum that covers the five important areas

that study has shown are necessary: phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Buckingham et al., 2019). Structured synthetic phonics programs have become very popular as very good phonics programs (Castles et al., 2018). Unlike prior research, which often focuses on native English-speaking populations, this study examines how structured phonics can be adapted and applied to non-native learners in early education. There is some evidence to suggest that a child's early reading abilities are related to how well they are able to talk about and control their feelings with others. Music, games, and homework are all fun things that kids can do while learning phonics. This can also help them feel good about themselves. By participating in these activities, they will be able to strengthen their social and emotional abilities as well as acquire new terms. A study done at a primary school in Thailand showed that using phonics could help first-grade students make big leaps in their early reading and writing skills (Ngamkiatkhajorn & Kanoksilapatham, 2018). The research fills an essential gap in the literature by addressing the following research question: To what extent does phonics instruction improve the early English reading skills—specifically letter recognition, phonemic awareness, word reading accuracy, and word decoding—of kindergarten students in an EFL environment? The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on early literacy intervention in an EFL context using structured phonics—a method typically explored within English-speaking countries. While the existing body of literature affirms the effectiveness of phonics, limited attention has been given to its application in multilingual, resource-constrained environments. This study not only measures the effectiveness of phonics in improving reading outcomes but also explores student engagement and instructional feasibility

bility within a localized kindergarten setting.

By integrating research on early reading with real-world classroom implementation, this study bridges the divide between theory and practice. The outcomes are expected to inform both academic study and everyday teaching, making a case for phonics as a foundational strategy in early English literacy curricula—particularly in environments where English is not the primary language spoken at home.

Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of equipping young learners with essential reading skills that are not only developmentally appropriate but also linguistically responsive. The Jolly Phonics method helped kids in a mixed school in Bali, Indonesia, read and write better (Ariati et al., 2018). So, it is not a surprise that phonics is also becoming more popular in Indonesia, studies that were done by (Rahmah & Pandjaitan, 2018), (Retnomurti et al., 2019), (Sudiarta, 2017), and (Wahyuni et al., 2016) phonics has been used as an alternative way to teach early reading skills at different stages of schools in Indonesia. (Sanden et al., 2022) said phonics is an important part of reading instruction.

Ultimately, it reaffirms the transformative potential of phonics as a tool for educational equity and language empowerment from the earliest stages of schooling. This study aims to investigate whether a structured phonics-based reading program can effectively improve English reading skills among kindergarten students. By comparing a group taught using phonics with a group taught using conventional alphabet spelling methods, the study aims to evaluate the practical benefits and pedagogical implications of phonics.

The researcher formulated the hypotheses as follows:

Ho: There is no relationship between phonics method in improving English Reading Skills among kindergarten students.

Ha: There is a relationship between the phonics method and improving English Reading Skills among kindergarten students.

Method

This study employed a quantitative, quasi-experimental design involving 40 kindergarten students from two classes. Twenty students in the experimental group received phonics-based instruction over six weeks, while the control group of twenty students continued with the school's regular English reading curriculum or the traditional method (alphabet spelling). Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to assess alphabet recognition, phonemic awareness, word reading accuracy, and word decoding. The phonics instruction consisted of daily 30-minute sessions that included songs, phoneme segmentation games, flashcards, and letter-sound matching activities. Students are busy, and excited when they do

things like play card games, sing, and dance (Alisa Hildayanti et al., 2023). Test scores were analyzed using paired sample t-tests and independent sample t-tests to evaluate within-group and between-group differences. Qualitative observations, field notes, recording videos, and interviews, thereby offering a holistic view of how children interact with phonics-based instruction.

Purpose of the Interview: Understanding children's perceptions of phonics-based instruction. To find out if children find it easier to read after using phonics-based instruction. Identifying what makes children enjoy learning phonics.

1.1. Research Procedure:

Sample Selection: Choose a sample of students who will participate in the research. **Group Dividing:** The sample is divided into two groups: the experimental group (which employs the phonics method) and the control group (which does not use the phonics method but instead employs alphabet lettering). **Pre-Test:** Administer a pre-test to assess the students' initial reading abilities in both categories. **Intervention:** Implement the phonics method for the experimental group and employ alphabetic orthography for the control group. **Posttest:** conduct a posttest to measure the final reading ability of students in both groups. **Data Collection:** Collect pre-test and posttest data from both groups.

1.2. Analyzing the Data

In analyzing the data, the researcher has taken three steps. First, the researcher distributed a letter sound matching activity, using songs, phoneme segmentation games, and flashcard activities, to students divided into two groups: the first group using the phonics method and the second group using the alphabet spelling method. Second, the researcher conducts interviews with the students, using five questions about phonics-based instruction. The researcher analyzed the data by considering each question in a list of interviews. Third, the researcher analyzed the data by using the SPSS Independent T-Test. (Setiyadi, 2006) states that the Independent T-test evaluates paired observations from two datasets to ascertain the presence of differences.

Results

The research was conducted in a multilingual institution with 40 kindergarten pupils. The average outcomes of each student's phonics-based teaching examination prior to and subsequent to the assessment were as follows:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Group Statistics					
	Kelompok	N	Mean	Std.	Std.
				Deviasi	Error
		Mean			
Hasil Belajar	Kelompok A	20	70.050	5.6426	1.2617
	Kelompok B	20	87.600	5.8616	1.3107

Based on the output table statistics, the known amount of learning outcome data for group A is twenty students from kindergarten. Meanwhile, while group B has twenty students as well, the mean of group A is 70.050, and group B is 87.600. The results of this research indicate that there are differences in learning outcomes after using phonics-based instruction and the traditional method (alphabet spelling method) between Group A and Group B.

Table 2. Independent Sample Test

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Hasil Belajar	Equal variances assumed	.017	.897	9.647	38	.000	-175.500	18.193	212.330	138.670
	Equal variances not assumed			9.647	37.945	.000	-175.500	18.193	212.332	138.668

Based on the output above, the known score significance is $0.897 > 0.05$, so it means that the variance of group A and group B is the same. Based on the significance level of 0.05, it was assumed that $0.000 < 0.05$, so in this decision-making, an independent T-Test was Used. The conclusion from the independent sample T-Test is that the null hypothesis (HO) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (HA) is accepted. Thus, there is a significant (absolute) difference between the average learning outcome of students in group A and group B.

What it means to teach phonics to young children within the framework of EFL literacy The goal of this research question is to find out how much teaching phonics improves kindergarten students' early English reading skills in an EFL setting. The main things that the study looks at are four things that can be measured: phonemic awareness, letter recognition, word reading accuracy, and word decoding.

1. A Full Review of the ABCs of Letter Recognition: Phonics helps kids learn how letters sound and look, which is the first thing they need to know to understand how to read. This can be done with the help of letter recognition. Phonemic awareness means being able to pick out and change individual sounds in spoken language. If English isn't their first language, students need to be able to tell the difference between sounds when they are

learning English as a second language. According to (Mahmoud Ghoneim & Abdelsalam Elghotmy, 2015), multisensory phonics program was effective in developing kindergarten pre-service teacher's EFL reading accuracy and phonemic awareness. By teaching students the relationship between letters and sounds, phonics helps students read words more accurately by reducing the amount of "guessing" that they do and ensuring that they are able to read words correctly based on phonetic rules. Decoding words means putting sounds together in a very specific way so that you can read them. When students master decoding, they can read on their own, no matter what language they come across.

2. Why learning English as a second language is important in some situations People who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL) often do not have many chances to use their English skills outside of school. Providing a logical framework for a language that, to a person who is not a native speaker, may otherwise appear unpredictable is one of the reasons why phonics is such an important intervention.

3. The one-of-a-kind contribution The fact that this study places such an emphasis on early literacy intervention is the distinctive contribution that it makes. This study highlights the fact that introducing phonics at the

kindergarten level can significantly accelerate the development of foundational reading skills. This is in contrast to the majority of English as a foreign language (EFL) program, which place an emphasis on oral communication first. When it comes to improving the literacy outcomes of English as a Foreign Language kindergarten students, phonics instruction is a highly effective tool. This intervention helps young students become better prepared for long-term academic success in the English language by putting an emphasis on the mechanics of reading, which include recognition, awareness, accuracy, and decoding comprehension. (Agüero & Francioni, 2023) said that sintentic phonics was beneficial and, as a result, the students showed a significant increase in accuracy when decoding. (Putra, 2023) said that phonics instruction improved pronunciation accuracy and the decoding of the vowel digraph <ai>.

Discussion

The interview data indicated that the majority of children exhibited enthusiasm and pleasure when participating in phonics exercises. When asked, "What do you appreciate about learning to read?" numerous individuals replied with expressions such as "I enjoy singing the letter sounds!" and "It is enjoyable to form words with the letters." The enjoyment was evident in the video recordings, showcasing children smiling, clapping, or bouncing during phonics songs or games. The Phonics Explorer tool was observed to function effectively as an engaging smartboard-based game that helps preschoolers (around five years old) understand phonemes and the relationship between letters and sounds (Binti Abdul Karim, n.d.) This approach also supports kinesthetic learning by encouraging children to use physical movement during learning activities. The field notes corroborated that this enthusiasm was both articulated and manifested in their physical demeanor. Children engaged attentively during phonics activities, participated actively in sound-matching exercises, and frequently raised their hands enthusiastically when prompted to identify letter sounds. These behaviors indicate a significant degree of intrinsic motivation. The majority responded favorably when asked, "Do you enjoy learning letter sounds?" frequently showcasing their knowledge instantly. Some responded with illustrations such as "B

articulates /b/ as in ball!" or "S resembles a snake, sss!" This suggests that the children not only relish learning phonics but also assimilate the sounds in significant manners. Video recordings demonstrated that youngsters could recognize and utilize letter sounds instantaneously during classroom activities. For example, in a matching game, one child was observed stating, "This is C! C for a cat!" before matching it to an image. Teaching phonics is clear and organized, and the goal is to help students learn the alphabet by showing them how letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes) are related (Ngamkiatkhajorn & Kanoksilapatham, 2018). The field notes documented analogous phenomena, including children endeavoring to phonetically spell basic words during free play, exemplified by writing "HAT" after articulating each sound aloud. The direct teaching of the connections between letters and the sounds they represent to improve early reading and writing skills, especially in understanding and recognizing words (Vadasy & Sanders, 2021). A critical inquiry posed was, "Do you perceive reading as more facile now?" The majority of youngsters responded affirmatively, with remarks such as "Yes, I can read my books now!" or "I can independently sound out words." As (Javier_Garcia_Cruz, n.d.) according to the source, children who employ Jolly Phonics will have acquired the ability to accurately and fluently decode the majority of words within two to three years. These statements indicate an increasing sense of self-efficacy in reading. The video recordings documented instances of autonomous decoding, wherein infants attempted to decode new words by segmenting them into phonemes. Field notes also emphasized children displaying pride upon completing activities, exemplified by one child saying, "I did it! I read it!" This feeling of achievement suggests that phonics training is facilitating both cognitive development and emotional growth. (Curby et al., 2015) showed that a child's ability to express and control their emotions, as well as their knowledge of emotions, were linked to their early reading and writing skills. The kindergarteners could read words correctly.

The concluding interview question—"What brings you joy in learning phonics?"—provoked replies such as "I enjoy when the teacher applauds me" or "I appreciate reading to my mother." It gives kids the chance to use

their phonics and word identification skills (Mitchell et al., 2019). These reactions indicate that positive reinforcement and social acknowledgment are essential elements in children's emotional engagement. In both recordings and field observations, children showed the most satisfaction during interactive activities, especially those that incorporated music, dance, or phonics-based storytelling. The field notes documented a session in which a children began dancing after successfully combining sounds into a word, underscoring the emotional expression associated with cognitive accomplishment. The results from interviews, field notes, and video recordings indicate that phonics-based instruction promotes enthusiastic engagement, robust sound recognition, increased reading confidence, read word accuracy, and emotional fulfillment among kindergarten students. These findings support the notion that phonics not only establishes fundamental literacy skills but also positively impacts the social-emotional development of young learners. Additionally, a study conducted by (de Oviedo, n.d.) shows that the approach has socio-emotional advantages, as evidenced by the increased self-esteem and motivation of students who participate in Jolly Phonics activities.

This study stands out in a number of important respects, including its location, methodology, focus on education, and practical ramifications. The initial research on phonics instruction was primarily conducted in English-speaking countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The study's setting, on the other hand, was an Indonesian bilingual school where the average English skill level is poor. Take Indonesia as an example: EFL students encounter a whole different set of obstacles compared to students in nations where English is the native language. By looking at the effects of pronunciation in a setting with limited resources and multiple languages, this study fills a gap in our understanding. Learning grammar, in general, helps train your eyes to see details that might otherwise pass you by. Contrary to most previous research, which mainly focused on numerical data and standardized test performance, this study employed a mixed-methods strategy. Qualitative data was also a part of the study; it came from things like student interviews, video recordings of fieldwork, and observations made in the classroom. Also, using statistical

approaches, reading comprehension was examined before and after the exam. Combining these many ways of teaching may help us understand children's academic achievement, motivations, and emotional engagement with phonics-based learning better. In contrast to the majority of phonics studies, this one concentrated on a premeditated six-week intervention rather than a course of study or a year-long program. Games, music, phoneme segmentation exercises, flashcards, and more were all a part of the 30-minute daily intervention sessions. This can be done by starting with letter sounds and then moving on to letter symbols. Reading and fun learning materials like storybooks, picture cards, songs, and hand puppets can also help (Danita & Wirman, 2023). This updated and shortened version shows how phonics may be implemented into preschool programs quickly and at little cost. Children learn very clearly through phonics how letters represent sounds in a word. This makes their reading and writing skills much better (Campbell, 2020). In contrast to other research, this one looks at how phonics education affects kindergarteners' emotions and behavior. The emotional and social effects of reading activities on children have received less attention in previous research than their cognitive advantages. Instructor observations, video recordings, and student interviews all pointed to positive attitudes and actions displayed by the study's phonics students. Students who learn phonics are more likely to want to read, read more for fun, and feel better about their intellectual self-esteem. (McArthur & Castles, 2017).

There are several things that could affect how students react to grammar lessons. These factors include the students' first language, how much money their families make, and how easy it is for them to acquire quality learning materials. Researchers could further explore the following areas: to device solutions to these challenges, both now and in the future, scholars must employ innovative thinking. For the purpose of conducting research, scientists ought to make use of larger samples that are more representative of the general population in terms of location, socioeconomic class, and English proficiency. Because of this, the findings will have more practical application. This is particularly significant while acquiring English as a foreign language (EFL), such as in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study investigated the efficacy of phonics-based instruction in enhancing English reading abilities—specifically, letter recognition, phonemic awareness, word reading accuracy, and word decoding—in an Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context among kindergarten students. The research employed a quasi-experimental design with 40 kindergarten students, who were evenly divided into an experimental group (phonics method) and a control group (alphabet spelling method). The experimental group demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in reading outcomes, as evidenced by a quantitative analysis conducted using an independent sample t-test. The average posttest score of students receiving phonics training was significantly higher (87.6) than that of those instructed by traditional methods (70.05). The statistical significance ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) indicates that the phonics strategy positively influenced early English reading proficiency.

Qualitative insights derived from interviews, field notes, and video recordings corroborated these quantitative findings. Students exhibited elevated levels of engagement, motivation, and enjoyment during phonics-oriented learning activities. They showed active engagement, increased motivation, and enhanced confidence in identifying letter sounds and decoding basic words. Statements like "I enjoy singing the letter sounds" and "I am now able to read my books" underscore both cognitive and emotional growth fostered by phonics teaching. Furthermore, pupils demonstrated emotional fulfillment and pride in their reading accomplishments, especially when acknowledged or commended by teachers and parents. This highlights the significance of positive reinforcement and interactive pedagogy in promoting literacy advancement and social-emotional development.

This study concludes that systematic phonics education is markedly more effective than conventional alphabet spelling methods in improving early English reading skills. In addition to measurable reading outcomes, phonics enhances student engagement, establishes a foundation in fundamental literacy, and fosters emotional well-being. The results indicate that incorporating phonics into

early childhood English courses in EFL contexts, such as Indonesia, provides significant pedagogical benefits. Consequently, educators and policymakers are encouraged to integrate phonics-based instruction as a fundamental component of early literacy programs to promote linguistic equity and support young learners in their educational endeavors.

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