

Full Length Research Paper

The efficacy of jolly phonics instructional strategy on the writing ability of junior primary pupils' in Uyo senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

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This study investigated the efficacy of Jolly Phonics Instructional Strategy on the writing ability of junior primary pupils' in Uyo Senatorial District. In this study two variables were considered which constitute the basic skills of Jolly Phonics Instructional Strategy. The two variables considered were blending of letter sounds (for reading) and identification of letter sounds in words (for writing). Sample sizes of 169 pupils obtained from four public primary schools in Uyo Senatorial District were used. Non-randomized pre-test- post-test control group research design was used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was Children Reading Activity Test (CRAT). The analysis of Covariance was used to analyse the data. The results obtained from the study at 0.05 level significance showed that blending of letter sounds (for reading) and identification of letter sounds in words (for writing) had significant effects on the writing ability of junior primary pupils in Uyo Senatorial District. Recommendations were made.

Keywords: Jolly Phonics, Junior primary, Efficacy, Uyo Senatorial District.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to read intelligently and write clearly, correctly and coherently is the foundation upon which all the rest of children's academic education is indisputably laid (Kolawole, Adepoju and Adelere, 2000). In the same vein, the National Policy on Education (FGN 2004) declared that, it is expected of primary school products (pupils) to have a command of everyday English sufficiently good to enable him/her to read, write a simple, sensible and well constructed sentence and to write clear grammatical English. Consequently, the importance of constructive writing cannot be overlooked in our primary schools.

Ekpo (2008) stressed that, in jolly phonics hearing the sound in words is one of the main skills needed for writing. Children are taught initially to listen carefully and identify a given sound in words which will help them to indicate or specify the place or position of that sound in

the given word. Teachers are expected to start with simple three – letter words such as cat, hat, met, peg and so on. For instance, is there an 's' in 'sun'... 'sat'... 'mouse'? "If there is, where does it come – the beginning, middle or end?"

Sue and Sara (2009) emphasized that a good idea in the teaching of identification of letter sound for writing in jolly phonics is to say a word and tap out the sounds. Three taps means three sounds. Say each sound as you tap. This could take care of digraphs. The word fish, for example, has four letters but only three sounds, f-i-sh.

They articulated that such games as add a sound and take away a sound are instructional aids for identification of letter sound in words. For instance:

- i. Add a sound: what do I get if I add a p to the beginning of ink?

Answer: pink

- ii. Take away a sound: what do I get if I take away p from pink?

Answer: ink

They further added that, flash cards and letter board would enhance the learning of identification of letter sounds in words, and regular word building with letter board shows the children in a practical way how regular words are built up. In the same vein dictating letters, words or sentences are important for developing writing skills.

Ekpo (2008) said that in the identification of sound in words for writing, the teacher writes the letters on the board as the children say them. Then, the children look at the word, say the sounds and blend them to read the word. Hence, this gives a good understanding of how reading and writing work. Frequent practice helps to improve or develop this skill. Ekpo, further said that once the children can hear the sound in words and know one way of writing each sound, they can write independently. Initially, they will not spell accurately but their work can be read; accurate spelling develops gradually from reading books, knowing the alternative vowel sounds and following a spelling scheme.

Jolly phonics instructional strategy helps the users to decide as many words as possible. The important thing is not only the number of spelling a child can recognize but the number of sounds he can put together to form a word (Udoh, 1991). Similarly Cooper, Warncke and Shipman, (1988) affirm that blending involves accurate articulation of letter sounds or combination of letters in a word. Nonetheless, for the effective articulation of these letter sounds a good knowledge of the letter sounds represented by the English alphabet is inevitable.

Ekpo, (2008) stressed that phonics skill for blending is to look at the letters, say the sounds and hear the word. Hence, being able to blend letter sounds fluently is the essential skill for reading and should always be the first strategy for working out unknown words. In agreement, Sue and Sara (2008) articulated that blending is the process of saying the individual sound in a word and then running them together to make a word. For instance, sound out d-o-g thereby making dog. It is a technique every child will need to learn and improve on with practice.

Hiskes (2008) said that blending exercise establishes smooth, strong left-to-right eye tracking skills and help prevent correct reversals. Hence, hands-on-manipulative game really makes a big difference in developing blending skills.

Sue and Sara (2008) explained that blending involves sequential steps. Firstly, blending skill begins with words that have single letter sounds which in jolly phonics are s, a, t, l, p, c/k, e, h, r, m, d, g, o, u, l, f, b, through which simple two/three letter words that use these letter sounds can be blended, such as: sat, at, tip, net, cat and so on.

Secondly, when blending words that have two letters with the same sound, such as duck, mill, rabbit, fell, miss; it is necessary to say the sound once. For instance, d-u-ck, r-a-bb-i-t, m-i-ll. Similarly, words with consonant blend at the beginning tend to be more difficult for children to hear after the word has been spoken (that is, they hear only single sound in consonant blend). It is helpful if the blend is put together at the beginning, example, flag – fl-a-g instead of f-l-a-g. Finally, when sounding out the blend in words with digraphs, children should be encouraged to say the two sounds as one unit; for instance, rain – r-ai-n not r-a-i-n, this will lead to greater fluency when reading.

They suggested that when teaching blending in the classroom, initially, the children would blend words by calling out the sounds aloud, but gradually, they should be encouraged to blend silently in their head (brain). This will promote fluency for reading.

Purpose of the study

The main objective of this study is to:

- i. Find out the extent jolly phonics instructional strategy can improve pupils identification of sounds in words (for writing) ability.
- ii. Find out the extent jolly phonics instructional strategy can improve pupils blending of letter sounds ability.

Statement of problems

The poor performance of pupils in Nigerian Primary Schools has been attributed to the use of poor instructional strategies by teachers. Instructional strategies play a crucial role in pupils writing ability. Thus, the researcher therefore realized that there was need to introduce a new instructional strategy (Jolly Phonics Instructional Strategy) which makes writing a fun. Hence, this study aimed at improving the writing ability of primary one pupil in Uyo Senatorial District.

Research Hypotheses

In order to address the problem of this study, the following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in identification of letter sounds in words (for writing) ability of pupils exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy and those in the control group.
2. There is no significant difference in blending of sounds (for reading) ability of pupils exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy and those in the control group.

Table 1. Difference in identification of sounds in words (for writing) ability

Source of variance	SS	df	ms	F _{cal}	F _{cri}
Between group	134.71	1	134.71	20.95*	3.92
Within group	1073.81	167	6.43		
Total	1208.52	168			

N = 169 *significant $p < 0.05$

Table 2. Difference in blending of sounds (for reading) ability

Source of variance	SS	df	ms	F _{cal}	F _{cri}
Between group	149.63	1	149.63	15.41*	3.92
Written group	1621.57	167	9.71		
Total	1771.2	168			

N = 169 *significant $p < 0.05$

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for the study was principally experimental. The approach was adopted because of its relevance to the study. The non-randomized pretest-posttest control group design was used for the study. This design was used because it involves classroom experiment where experimental and control groups were naturally assembled groups of intact classes. This choice was necessary because the essence of this experimental study is to establish the cause and effect of events (Onwioduokit, 2000).

The sample size that was used for this study consisted (169) primary one pupils (85 males and 84 females). This sample size was selected through simple random sampling technique. In this process every member of the population had an equal choice of being selected. Simple random sampling by balloting was used in the selection of four Local Government Areas from Uyo Senatorial District. Four public primary schools were further selected from the four Local Government Areas.

Four intact primary one classes were also selected from the four schools (that is, one primary one class from each school), these gave the total sample size of 169 pupils.

The data used for this research were collected by the use of the researcher's designed instrument known as Children Reading Activity Test (CRAT). The children reading activity test consist of 20 items in all. Ten questions were used to test each of the two basic skills of jolly phonics instructional strategy namely; blending of sounds (for reading) and identification of letter sounds in words (for writing)

RESULTS

Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference in ide-

ntification of sounds in words (for writing) ability of pupils exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy and those in the control group.

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypothesis and summary of data shown in Table 1.

The null hypothesis was rejected since the obtained F of 20.95 was greater than the critical F of 3.92 at df of 1, 167 and at 0.05 level of significant. Thus there was significant difference in pupils reading ability in identification of sounds in words (for writing) when exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy.

Hypothesis two : There is no significant difference in blending of sounds (for reading) ability of pupils exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy and those in the control group.

Analysis of covariance ((ANCOVA) was used to test the hypothesis and summary of data shown in Table 2.

The null hypothesis was rejected since the obtained F of 15.41 was greater than the critical F of 3.92 at df of 1, 167 and at 0.05 level of significant. Therefore there was significant difference in pupils reading ability in blending sounds (for reading) when exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy.

DISCUSSION

Hypothesis one stated that, there is no significant difference in identification of sounds in words (for writing) ability of pupils exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy and those in the control group. The result of the study shown in Table 2 indicated that there was significant difference in pupils reading ability in identification of sounds in words (for writing) when exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy. When all identification of sounds in words (for writing) scores were subjected to analysis of Covariance, the obtained f-value (20.95) was greater than the critical f-value (3.92) at df of

1, 67 and at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the results of these findings it was observed that the identification of sound (for writing) ability of pupils exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy was higher than that of the control group. This then, indicated the effectiveness of jolly phonics instructional strategy in enhancing the identification of sound in word (for writing) ability of pupils. This finding is in agreement with that of Kolawole, Adepoju and Adelore (2000). They stated 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. In the same vein, the National policy on Education (FGN. 2004) rightly pointed out that, it is expected of primary school products (pupils) to have a command of everyday English sufficiently good to enable them to read a simple sentence as well as construct letters, and sentences in clear grammatical English,. Consequently, the importance of constructive writing cannot be overlooked in our primary schools.

The result of this finding is in accordance with the words of Ekpo (2008) and Sue and Sara (2009). They reported that in jolly phonics, hearing the sounds in words is one of the main skill needed for writing and a good way of attaining excellence in identification of sounds in words (for writing), is to say a word and tap out the sound- three taps means three sounds. They further added that flashcards and letter boards would enhance the learning of identification of letter sounds in words (for writing) which then enhance fluency in reading.

Hypothesis two stated that there is no significant difference in blending of letter sounds (for reading) ability of pupils exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy and those in the control group. The result of this finding proved that there is significant difference in pupils blending of letter sounds ability when exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy as shown in Table 1. When all the blending of letter sounds scores were subjected to analysis of Covariance, the obtained f-value (15.41) was greater than the critical f-value (3.92) at df 1,167 and at 0.05 level of significance, this result points to the fact that there was significant difference in the blending of letter sound ability of pupils exposed to jolly phonics instructional strategy. This was a submission that the jolly phonics synthetic instructional strategy is a better teaching strategy for facilitating pupils blending of letter sounds ability when compared with the conventional method. The findings conformed with that of Ekpo (2008) who said 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 (1991) highlighted that the important thing is not only the number of spelling a child can recognize but the number of sounds he can put together to form a word.

Moreso, the finding is quite consistent with the views of these authors, Sue and Sara (2008) and Hiskes (2008)

who mooted that blending of letter sounds promote fluency for reading and establishes smooth, strong left-to-right-eye tracking skills which helps to prevent or correct reversals. Furthermore, Copper, Waracke and Shipman (1988) supported that for the effective articulation of these letter sounds a good knowledge of the letter sounds represented by the English alphabet is needed.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings of this study the following conclusions 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.

RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the findings of this study, the researcher therefore makes the following recommendations.

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 instructional strategy should be incorporated into the school time table of primary one pupils for effective implementation.
3. Primary school teachers teaching reading in primary one and two should adopt jolly phonics instructional strategy for effective teaching so as to achieve maximum objectives of the lesson.

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