

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF PHONEMIC AWARENESS IN EARLY READING DEVELOPMENT AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Shahneela Yousaf¹, Ainee Munir², Choudhry Shahid^{*3}

¹Lecturer Department of English University of Sialkot

²Scholar BS English, Superior University Lahore

^{*3}Professor of English Institute of Southern Punjab, Sialkot

¹shahneelayousaf328@gmail.com; ²ainee.munir001@gmail.com; ^{*3}shahidmahmood@isp.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: *

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to determine the relationship between phonemic awareness and early reading in the context of ELLs and the instructional practices they require. Phonemic awareness is therefore the initial and essential component that can help learners in reading, word decoding, and fluency. To conduct the current study, purposive sampling was used and targeted a group of eight primary English language teachers with at least five years' experience in an urban district of Sialkot, Pakistan. This study used a qualitative research method. The data was gathered through interviews with teachers, observations in classrooms, assessments of the teachers' implementation, and outcome assessments of students' phonemic awareness. Thus, the study is based on the psycholinguistic theory of reading and the theory of cross-linguistic interference, with a special focus on phoneme sensitivity as a prerequisite to reading and its applicability. Research evidences corroborate the notion that phonemic awareness is highly significant for the growth of the ELLs in the reading acquisition process along with the other technical teaching and learning processes, which include the inclusion of activities daily in the classroom, using the multisensory approaches, and differentiation that is based on the needs of the students. Several challenges such as restricted use of language and the learners' various needs are notable concerning instruction. Alphabetic phonemic awareness can be regarded as essential to developing sound reading skills; therefore, improving educators' professional qualifications and cooperation will be helpful. According to the study, it is recommended that phonemic awareness should be an essential component of teaching early literacy instruction for ELLs. The results highlight the importance of evidence-based, aimed practices and supporting programs for teachers and specialists working to enhance phonemic awareness instructions among ELLs and promote their reading and language development.

Keywords: Phonemic Awareness, Reading Development, Early Literacy Instruction, Teaching Practices, Multisensory Approaches, Cross-Linguistic Transfer, Psycholinguistic Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

There are different languages used in Pakistan and knowledge of phonemics is one of the significant factors in learning an additional language; especially for children who are most often learning English as a second or foreign language. Education in schools: English is a subject taught in schools but also a language used as a medium of teaching in most

schools, especially in urban areas. Hence, phonemic awareness, which is the understanding of separating words into sounds becomes very valuable for learning reading as well as for language development in the Pakistani educational context as stated by Rahman (2004). This need is further supplemented by the fact that there is a presence of multilingualism

in Pakistan and hence there is a need to bring phonemic awareness to those who are less privileged. It is a concomitant fact that many children come from homes where languages such as Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, or Balochi are used and these languages, unlike English have different phonological systems (Mansoor, 2004). For instance, intonation, and some of the English phonemes like the “th” in “think” or in “this” is not adopted in some local languages. This can pose difficulties for the learners as they struggle to learn these sounds of English and also how to decode and encode them which is part of phonemic awareness as postulated by Shamim (2008).

Many studies conducted prove that phonemic awareness is the best predictor of reading in alphabetic scripts, of which English is inclusive (National Reading Panel, 2000). Thus, the ability to impart phonemic awareness to Pakistani learners is of paramount importance for mastering the language and reading English texts. This is even more important considering that English is an international language and is used commonly and crucial in academics and other careers in Pakistan (Rassool, 2007). However, previous studies bring out that in the earlier years of learning, Pakistani schools focused much on the bookish meanings and barriers like memorization, syllabus, and grammar rather than encouraging the skills and earliest of reading like phonemic consciousness (Shamim & Tribble, 2005). This approach may not help the learners to better cope with the phonological demands of English, resulting in poor Reading and Comprehension. To meet this need, CALL has prompted a burgeoning interest in integrating Phonemic awareness activities into the English language lesson in Pakistan. Sound innovations like rhyming, segmenting, and blending serve as a way of enhancing learners’ phonological awareness of English and thereby enhancing the learners’ language development (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). Education is a cornerstone that acts as a basis for learning throughout one’s academic career and beyond, and one of the core elements comprised of is reading. Phonemic awareness is an essential part of early reading development and is a critical factor in helping a child grasp the sounds of written words and the basis of reading. Phonemic awareness means the capacity to identify and work with individual sounds

as well as skills that are unique to spoken word formation (Adams, 1990; National Reading Panel, 2000). This is especially critical for ELLs because they are grappling with a dual process of learning to read in a medium where the phonemic structure of the language they are learning may differ significantly from the language they speak at home (August and Shanahan, 2006).

Numerous empirical studies operating in the school context have emphasized that phonemic awareness is a valid predictor of further reading abilities and is crucial for the development of skills connected with reading algorithms (Ehri et al., 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Nevertheless, in the process of early education, ELLs may experience specific difficulties concerning phonemic awareness due to differences in phonological systems in the mother tongue and the language of instructional practices (Lindsey et al., 2003). Consequently, studying the importance of phonemic awareness in the early reading process of ELL students could greatly improve instructional practices, leading to enhanced literacy achievements for ELLs. Reading development can be described as a complicated process that requires the facilitation of some aspects of cognition as well as language skills. This involves phonemic awareness already named, which is the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds most commonly termed phonemes in words (National Reading Panel, 2000). Phonemic awareness is crucial in the development of the ability to decode, which is a process that helps children link written words with speech (Ehri, 1998). Phonemic awareness is widely researched to be significantly related to reading skills and has gained a lot of attention in the literature. To sum up, effective Phonemic awareness has been identified as a great predictor of reading performance not only in alphabetic but in non-alphabetic script as well (Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Goswami & Bryant, 1990). Phonemic awareness is very vital when it comes to reading, and children who possess adequate knowledge in phonemic awareness have a higher tendency to be good and proficient readers as they will be in a position to decode words and complexity their vocabularies (Adams, 1990; Snow & Blix, et al, 1998).

Moreover, the development of phonemic awareness is a critical factor that may cause ELLs to experience

difficulty since phonological systems differ from English and their first language. For instance, some of the phonemes used in the English language may not be present in the first language of the learner, thus they may find it hard to process and use such phonemes qualitatively and quantitatively (Lindsey et al., 2003). Also, as Lesaux and Siegel (2003) also pointed out, even if phonemic awareness is developed early in the ELLs, limited exposure to the target language will hinder the development further. Nevertheless, the development of phonemic awareness in ELLs can be a daunting task, but it is crucial in enhancing their reading abilities. Phonemic awareness has been specified to have an impact on reading abilities in this group of students so instructional approaches that incorporate phonemic awareness have been proven effective in increasing literal and inferential comprehension (Vaughn et al., 2006). Specific focus in these practices, as well as giving ELL students frequent chances to practice, are effective methods for educators to intervene and support the growth of the young students' phonemic awareness towards reading. Therefore, the development of phonemic awareness is a crucial requirement for languages required for education in the context of Pakistan's languages as well as the English language that plays a significant post-colonial role in the region. Teachers can thus effectively train the client's phonemic awareness, which in return will contribute towards the fundamentals of reading and language development, a key to one's success in academic and career endeavors.

2. Literature Review

It is commonly defined as the capacity to identify and work on the phonemes in the words, which is seen as crucial for the early reading skills. Research evidence has also confirmed a positive significant relationship between phonemic awareness and reading and this makes it significant to predict and explain decoding processes and literacy (National Reading Panel, 2000; Adams, 1990). The topic I have chosen relates to phonemic awareness skills and their connection to reading abilities, as numerous studies have demonstrated that children who had substantial phonemic awareness skills achieved higher results in reading. For example, Bradley and Bryant (1983)

asserted as the presage of further reading, preschoolers' phonemic and rhyme awareness and segmentation flawlessly. In the same way, the meta-analysis conducted by the National Reading Panel in 2000 stated that phonemic awareness instruction yields positive effects on student achievement concerning general reading goals or goals of word recognition, spelling, and reading comprehension.

The positive effect of phonemic awareness on reading outcomes is also supported by the phonological processing theory, which states that phonemic processing is the primary tools that enable word reading (Wagner & Torgesen, 1987). This theory holds that phonemic awareness enables the association of sound with symbols and this is central practice in learning to read alphabetic scripts. While there is a considerable amount of research on the relevance of phonemic awareness, data claiming that the significance of this factor may be inexorable depending on the type of language and written system involved. For instance, research has indicated that phonemic awareness is strongly correlated with reading ability, especially in alphabetic script writing systems characterized by a shallow alphabetic principle compared to detailed writing systems as is the case with English (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005). Consequently, phonemic awareness has a definite relationship with reading skills and the reading development of students and can also be seen as influencing vocabulary and fluency. Ehri (1998) erklärte daraufhin, dass sich phonemischer Bewusstsein, aufgrund der sein Aufbau hilft, Verbindungen zwischen gesprochenen und geschriebenen Worten dauerhaft herstellen, helfen kann um ein reicheres Wortschatz und flüssigeres Vorlesen zu erlangen. In general, the results of current studies indicate that phonemic awareness is an essential factor in the initial stage of reading development and stress the enhancement of the practice in this domain for later literacy progress. Phonemic awareness is an integral part of phonemic knowledge necessary for reading, and it is a major factor in reading for the ELL population. To discuss the findings of the present research, it is necessary to consider prior findings evaluating the evolution of phonemic awareness in ELLs and its effects on their reading proficiency.

Here is an overview of some key studies in the area of phonemic awareness among English Language

Learners (ELLs): Here is an overview of some key studies in the area of phonemic awareness among English Language Learners (ELLs): Lindsey, Manis, and Bailey (2003) have worked with Spanish-speaking ELLs in the United States, their research identified that phonemic awareness in Spanish and English dictated the ability in English reading. It focuses on the aspect of phonemic awareness and its carry-over from L1 to L2. Similarly, Dickinson, McCabe, Clark Chiarelli & Wolf (2004) looked at the correlation between language, literacy, and phonological ability in ELLs enrolled in preschool. They concluded that phonological awareness, in addition to vocabulary knowledge, should be the key medium for later reading achievements. Lesaux and Siegel (2003) focused on the process of acquiring literacy skills by ESL learners in their study. Their studies also revealed that Phonemic awareness was a significant component in the process of learning to read for ELL as it was for Monolingual English speakers. To understand this area of study, Gottardo (2002) carried out a study on phonemic awareness and phonological processing ability among ELLs' reading development. In the present study, Phonemic awareness was therefore identified to have a strong positive correlation with word reading and reading comprehension skills in English and first language learners. August & Shanahan (2006) synthesizing multiple studies concluded that phonemic awareness instruction can be helpful for ELLs and could be effective for the development of their reading abilities. In one study by Vaughn et al, (2006) the researchers targeted first-grade ELLs who had difficulties in reading and provided an English intervention with phonemic awareness instruction. The effectiveness of the Phonological Short-Recent program was established as students demonstrated significantly greater gains in phonemic awareness and word reading in the control group.

These studies as a whole suggest that phonemic awareness is no less a feature of ELLs' reading development and that more focused training in this area is, correspondingly, all the more likely to boost ELLs' reading proficiencies. Despite the rich resource literature available on the way phonemic awareness is developmentally constructed and the level to which it plays into early, struggling, and at-risk readers, there is still knowledge about its gaps, especially for and with ELLs. This study aims to

address the following gaps in the literature: This study aims to address the following gaps in the literature: Limited Research on Specific Language Backgrounds: A major portion of the studies conducted so far concerning ELLs and phonemic awareness has been carried out in the USA with the help of Spanish learners (Lindsey et al., 2003; Vaughn et al., 2006). More investigations should establish how phonemic awareness enhances ELLs with diverse first-language learning environments, especially in the condition that English is a foreign language.

Based on the above literature review the following are key areas:

i. Cross-Linguistic Transfer: Although some common studies assess the carry-over of phonemic awareness from L1 to English (Dickinson et al., 2004), there is a dearth of research that has focused on the relationship of phonemic awareness in L1 to English reading comprehension in different contexts.

ii. Instructional Strategies: August and Shanahan argue that there are currently gaps in knowledge surrounding the strategies that are most effective in teaching phonemic awareness to ELLs of all levels of English language proficiency. It therefore seeks to understand and determine the particular instructional practices that can effectively facilitate phonemic awareness in this population.

iii. Longitudinal Studies: It is also the case that many of the studies looking at the relationship between phonemic awareness/phonics and ELL learners are cross-sectional, which means that they reflect only one temporal point for such a relationship (Lesaux & Siegel, 2003). More longitudinal research should be conducted to determine the changes in the PA and how they reflect on word decoding and reading accomplishment over time.

iv. Cultural and Contextual Factors: There is little investigation that can speak to how the original learning and the subsequent development of phonemic awareness and reading skills are shaped by cultural and contextual factors operating in the classrooms of ELL students (Gottardo, 2002). This research proposes to establish how the above factors affect the development of phonemic awareness and reading, within the Pakistani context.

In light of these shortcomings, it is hoped that the present study will fill some of these gaps with an

emphasis on ELLs and provide instructional and assessment strategies that help enhance phonemic awareness development among this student population and promote better literacy skills.

3. Theoretical Framework for the Study

Upon critically examining the literature for theoretical underpinnings on phonemic awareness of ELLs in Pakistan, the present study is underpinned by the Psycholinguistic Theory of Reading and the Theory of Cross-Linguistic Transfer.

i. Psycholinguistic Theory of Reading: In the psycholinguistically-oriented approach to reading, introduced by Goodman (1967), and developed further by Smith (1971), the primary focus is made upon the language and thought abilities utilized for reading. Phonemic awareness is not the general perception of reading activities and comprehension, but rather a complex process where several language and motor abilities unite and work in unison. According to the theory, meaning is coaxed out of the text by prior knowledge, language skills, and strategies that the reader employs to understand what he or she reads. By illuminating the role of phonemic awareness as one of the linguistic skills that underlie the process of reading, this theoretical framework helps guide the study.

ii. Theory of Cross-Linguistic Transfer: The aforementioned Cross-Linguistic Interaction, as postulated by Cummins (1979, 2001) maintains that knowledge and skills developed in the first language may be easily transported to the second language. Mostly, this theory holds promise for the ELLs, as it proposes that everyone who has phonemic awareness in the first language would have better reading in the second language. The theory of cross-linguistic transfer is used in the study by postulating how the phonemic awareness of ELLs from Pakistan could interfere with the reading of English and their first language.

iii. Combining the Theoretical Perspectives: The psycholinguistic theory of reading has been chosen as the main theoretical framework for this study because it offers insights into the processes occurring when people read and how these processes differ across languages. It recognizes the interactions between learning mechanisms and the interface assets and liabilities of ELLs during their reading development. Thus, this study plans to provide a deeper insight into how phonemic awareness can

help or hinder the abilities of ELLs, and by doing so, aid in the process of designing an instructional package that will prove successful in the context of Pakistani school children.

First, phonemic awareness may also be defined as the individual's ability to identify and manipulate phonemes within spoken content, the relationship between phonemic awareness, reading development, and language-learning theories is in the fact that phonemic awareness enables the reader to identify and manipulate letters in written material. As suggested by current phonemic awareness, reading development, and language learning theories, all these components are mutually interrelated and essential for explaining how people develop the necessary skills for reading, with emphasis on the second-language acquisition process. Phonics is the identification of the individual speech sounds or phonemes in the English language and the ability to link them to written symbols. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), phonemic awareness has the longest-lasting effect on the process of reading and is a positive predictor of first and second-language learners' performance (Adams, 1990). It is critical in the process of deciphering, also referred to as the process of turning words on a printed page into spoken terms. Phonemic awareness enables the learners to comprehend openness, which is an elementary basis of reading and spelling, where letters represent sounds of the whole spoken word (Ehri, 1998).

There are theoretical frameworks in language learning that can give meaning and understanding to the learning processes known as the Input Hypothesis, by Krashen (1982), and the Interaction Hypothesis by Long (1996). The Input Hypothesis lays a central focus on comprehensible input by putting forth that the learner acquires input slightly beyond language mastery. The Interaction Hypothesis also gives prominence to communication as well as the interaction in the language acquisition process and underlines the viewpoint that negotiation for meaning affects the language learning process positively. It will be seen in the following sections that the relationship between phonemic awareness and reading development or language acquisition theories requires the integration of linguistic knowledge and cognitive processing. Phonemic awareness is one of the linguistic abilities that is

essential for learning the alphabetic principle and recognition of words, which are the two fundamental factors in the process of reading evolution. This work also called theories like the Input Hypothesis and Interaction Hypothesis explains how language exposure and interaction help the development of Phonemic awareness and other linguistic abilities. In the case of the ELL, this relationship is a surge mount since it offers valuable insights regarding effective instruction for these students. ELLs need English phonemic awareness for reading and this is due to their input in English and their interactions in the language Social interactions shaped the ELLs' phonemic awareness in the English language, whether positive, based on the amount of English input that they were exposed to. Eligible and appropriate strategies instruction that allows ELLs access to meaningful comprehensible input to interact meaningfully with will also contribute to facilitating their phonemic awareness and, extension, reading skills.

4. Statement of the Problem

Statement of the Research Problem provides a background to the study and explains the research problem. The following background forms the basis of this research study. English as a Second Language/Foreign Language in the Context of Pakistan: In the Pakistani scenario, language acquisition poses some special challenges especially when the language in question is English being used as a Second/Foreign Language. English occupies a very important place in the framework of education systems in Pakistan as this language is used as a means of instruction in many schools and as a curriculum subject. English reading skills in the context of Pakistani schools, especially in lower classes, are influenced by several factors. First, students have limited exposure to the English language. Second, the Pakistani educational curriculum does not emphasize phonemic awareness as a crucial aspect of language teaching and learning (Mansoor, 2004; Rahman, 2004). Phonemic awareness refers to understanding the sound structure of a language and the manipulation of individual sounds in words. This is an important factor in early reading. (National Reading Panel, 2000). However in the context of the Pakistani educational system, Boin Public (2008) and Shamim (2008) reveal that by one and large affixes much

more emphasis is laid on the mechanical way of writing on the one hand and rote learning on the other hand while phonemic consciousness receives meager consideration. With these gaps in language instruction, one may have trouble decoding words, reading fluency, and reading comprehension in English (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). More specifically, the study seeks to address the following research question: In what ways does phonemic awareness facilitate the early reading development of ELL in Pakistan? First, it seeks to find out how Phonemic awareness helps the learners in reading skills in this particular situation, second, the difficulties that the learners face when developing phonemic awareness and third; the ways, that can be used by the educators in supporting this area of language acquisition. Answering these questions is valuable in enhancing the quality of the English language pedagogy in Pakistan as well as helping the learners acquire the basic reading competencies pertinent to academic achievement.

5. Aim of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of phonemic awareness on the early reading of ELLs. This study was designed to describe the relationship between phonemic awareness and reading abilities in ELLs and the findings could be used to develop appropriate teaching methods that would help enhance the reading achievement of ELLs.

6. Research Questions

The study will address the following research questions: The study will address the following research questions:

1. What is the Importance of phonemic awareness in the reading during the early stages of learning for ELLs?
2. What are the challenges in developing desired level of phonemic awareness that ELLs should acquire during the early ages of their learning for reading?
3. What are the possible ways according to the ELTs to integrate the phonemic awareness in their instructions?

Phonemic awareness refers to the sensitivity of a student toward the sound system in the language they use to read and write, especially when listening and speaking the language in their classroom. ELL or English Language Learners are children and students who have another language as their first language,

and for them to become proficient in the English language, it may take some time to allow them to learn the language and most importantly the sounds when listening and speaking the language.

7. Methodology

This particular study utilizes a qualitative research method to examine phonemic awareness as a factor for ELL early Readers. This approach also permits me to disentangle and analyze the teaching practices, issues, and results of phonemic awareness for teaching in the Pakistani context. Twenty-five age-matched volunteers were selected for this study through a purposive sampling technique out of which eight participants are English language teachers who are currently serving in the primary level in urban schools in the Sialkot District. These teachers have a minimum of 5YP with 5 years of teaching experience. The criteria for participants' selection

8. Analysis of the Teachers Responses

Teacher A:

"In my opinion, phonemic awareness is the key skill for ELLs because it directly affects English pronunciation and their ability to process sounds accurately."

"One of the major issues is that students do not read and listen to English at home, besides learning at school, which is a problem because the child's phonemic development doesn't occur in English media."

"I teach and practice phonemic awareness through daily incorporation of phonemic awareness activities, say 5 minutes into each lesson, involving practices such as word rhyming or even segmenting an individual word into the sounds contained therein."

Teacher B:

"From my observations, students that display better phonemic awareness also learn to read faster because phonemic awareness acts as the fundamental learning block in the learning process."

"I struggle in teaching phonemic awareness; some children can swiftly learn, while others require more one-on-one attention."

"I incorporate many things such as charts, other uploads on the blackboard, die-cut letters and

are developed to substantiate that the participants are experienced and familiar with English as a foreign language instruction and with phonemic awareness as an instructional concept. The instruments for data collection consist of assessment methods, thirteen open-ended interviews, and class observations. The findings are hence made using thematic analysis. This strategy involves the process of data spotting, data searching and comparing, and data presenting aiming to identify certain patterns or recurring themes in the data collected. Based on the opinions and experiences of English language teachers from Pakistan and taking into account the understanding of dispensation of phonemic awareness in the process of early reading development among ELLs, the following qualitative analysis gives a complete perception. One of the goal of this paper is to examine the teacher's responses to various research questions within the classroom environment.

sounds, and sound boxes that make the students associate a sound with a letter or a word, to make words easier to teach."

Teacher C:

"Phonemic awareness is beneficial but phoneme and phonics training is only a part of the whole process. It has to be used with other features of school literacy curriculum such as reading, vocabulary, etc."

"There are few readily available commercial materials for teaching phonemic awareness to ELLs. Many of the resources developed for other children have to be borrowed or adapted to fit the structure of instruction required by ELLs and this takes time"

"There are techniques and strategies I use in teaching phonemic awareness, for instance, phonemic awareness during storytelling and reading purposes, as well as a teaching aid to the students, I focus on the identification of the initial sounds of words in a story read by me in the class."

Teacher D:

"As for me, I realized that ELLs who have difficulties with phonemic awareness are also those who have considerable difficulties with reading. It is an important component that requires additional evidence in the curriculum."

“The interaction of students’ L1 oral reading fluency affects their ability to learn phonemic awareness in learners’ L2. It is difficult to meet the needs of all learners within classroom practice.”

“For phonemic awareness skills, I use songs and chants I have composed in a way that puts much focus on phonemic awareness skills. ELLs like music and this makes it easy for me to engage them.”

Teacher E:

“Phonemic awareness is very crucial since it aids learning disabled young ELLs in transforming their first language to English and is fundamental for phonemic readers.”

“Phonemic awareness activities often present difficulty in keeping students interested. Ideas that can be used in accommodating student interests in Phonemic awareness are very limited for ELLs.”

“I explain the lessons in a form that favors students with difficulties in reading. To students who have difficulties in phonemic awareness, I offer extra lessons in small groups or individual lessons that target areas of difficulty.”

Teacher F:

“Yes, I believe that learning phonemic awareness is vital to reading, but it can be somewhat demanding if required to teach the students effectively. We as educators require resources and professional development to enroll ELLs in this skill.”

“Phonemic awareness can be accurately measured in ELLs, although, at the same time it can be challenging to do it because, in an attempt to differentiate between a student who has a problem with phoneme identification and a student who struggles in understanding English, it will be challenging.”

This organization ensures all the related responses from all the teachers involved are grouped separately, hence covering the part of their sentiments concerning the significance, difficulties, and implementation of phonemic awareness for ELLs.

9. Thematic Analysis of the Teacher's Responses

The thematic analysis in the study on phonemic awareness in early reading among ELL students in the context of early reading development. First of all, the data obtained from the semi-structured

“I incorporate with other teachers and specialists to come up with correlated lessons that will enable me to teach affixes alongside other language activities like phonics, spelling, reading, and writing.”

Teacher G:

“In my mind, phonemic awareness is an indicator of later reading ability According to my practice, children with the above skill are the best readers in their classes.”

“Implementing phonemic awareness alongside and as part of literacy learning without a flood of information presented to the students is a task. One has to be very careful.”

“The idea here is to charge technology; for instance, using educational apps or online games to support phonemic awareness. This is helpful when teaching ELLs since they’ll find the activity engaging enough to do.”

Teacher H:

“While phonemic awareness is important, I think that a systematic, tro-ut approach to teaching literacy is necessary phonemic awareness cannot dominate our instruction at the expense of other phonemic factors necessary for teaching, including the systematic, in-tro-ut approach. ”

“Currently, there is a deficit of professional development programs that instruct teachers of ELLs in the instruction of phonemic awareness. Such a deficit means that much professional development needs to be offered to teachers. ”

“Explaining one’s teaching approach, I state that I give students a chance to practice phonemic awareness skills when writing, for instance, we engage in activities such as, ‘wave of sound’ before a child writes the word down.”

interviews, classroom observations, as well as some assessments were analyzed to obtain insights into the content of the material. This was done to come up with initial codes that would help in the development of codes that would be important in developing features such as Phonemic awareness instruction and its effect on reading development. These were then mapped out into possible themes, ‘Effective teaching practices’ and ‘Challenges in instruction’. The names of the themes are clearly defined and finalized to a greater extent from the codes obtained after careful examination to give a precise representation of the

data. BSUARGICE/3675 Finally, the thematic analysis was written up, in a format whereby each phase of analysis gives a clear description of every theme defining each, decrypting quotes from this study concerning the answered research question and current scholarly productions. This process enabled the identification of major ideas concerning the

implementation and importance of phonemic awareness within the context of ELLs' reading. In the light of the research questions posed in the study, it offers a summary of the responses of the teachers and the grouping of the codes produced into sub-themes and major themes.

Table 1: Summary of the codes and the themes

Research Question	Initial Codes	Sub-Themes	Main Themes
1. Importance of Phonemic Awareness	Crucial for decoding, Bridging language gap, Predictor of reading success, Foundational skill	Importance in reading development, Role in language acquisition	Significance of Phonemic Awareness
2. Challenges in Developing Phonemic Awareness	Limited exposure, Diverse needs, Lack of resources, Language proficiency, Student engagement, Assessment difficulties, Integration into the curriculum, Lack of training	External challenges, Instructional challenges, Assessment, and differentiation	Challenges in Phonemic Awareness Instruction
3. Integration of Phonemic Awareness Instruction	Daily routines, Visual aids, Storytelling, Music, Differentiation, Collaboration, Technology, Writing Activities	Instructional strategies, Use of resources, Differentiation and adaptation, Integration with other skills	Teaching Practices for Phonemic Awareness

The above table presents the data gathered from the teacher responses and have drawn the codes and themes from the responses of the teachers. The above table is a picture of the results based on the identified research questions and key areas. The following table

outlines an assessment of the teachers' responses and key observations related to the research questions and the topic of phonemic awareness in early reading development among English Language Learners (ELLs).

Table 2: Summary of the teachers' observations

Teacher	Assessment of Phonemic Awareness Instruction	Key Observations
Teacher A	Recognizes the crucial role of phonemic awareness in decoding and bridging language gaps.	Strong emphasis on the foundational importance of phonemic awareness for ELLs.
Teacher B	Highlights the predictive nature of phonemic awareness for reading success.	Focuses on the importance of phonemic awareness in overall literacy development.
Teacher C	Integrates phonemic awareness with other literacy skills.	Balances phonemic awareness instruction with other aspects of literacy.
Teacher D	Observes a correlation between phonemic awareness struggles and reading difficulties.	Stresses the need for more curriculum focus on phonemic awareness.
Teacher E	Emphasizes the importance of phonemic awareness for ELLs in bridging language gaps.	Highlights the need for phonemic awareness in supporting ELLs' reading success.

Teacher F	Identifies challenges in teaching phonemic awareness effectively.	Points out the need for more resources and training for teachers.
Teacher G	Views phonemic awareness as a predictor of future reading success.	Suggests a focus on early development of phonemic awareness for long-term benefits.
Teacher H	Advocates for a balanced approach to literacy instruction.	Emphasizes the importance of not solely focusing on phonemic awareness to the detriment of other skills.

Exploring the Role of Phonemic Awareness in ELLs' Reading Development: Teachers' perception about childmind does offer some important advice as a result of the insights from the teachers who responded to this study. This paper examines the numerous and significant contributions of phonemic awareness for ELL students' beginning reading process and uses their teachers' feedback, recommendations, and observations in classrooms. The investigation reveals a structured pattern of themes that align with the study's aim: The investigation reveals a structured pattern of themes that align with the study's aim:

Teachers' Raw Data Responses from Questionnaires, General Class Questionnaires, and Field Observations to Validate Literature Review Findings and Theoretical Framework Predictions have been thoroughly integrated to findings. The responses given by the teachers as well as the general observation made from the class work support the literature review and the theoretical framework formulated earlier in the paper and highlight the importance of phonemic awareness in developing early reading amongst ELLs.

Table 3: Summary of the key areas of the study

No.	Theme	Description	Literature Support
1	Significance of Phonemic Awareness in Reading Development	Teachers' responses and class observations highlight the crucial role of phonemic awareness in reading development, emphasizing its foundational importance for decoding and reading fluency.	National Reading Panel, 2000; Adams, 1990
2	Challenges in Phonemic Awareness Instruction	Teachers report challenges such as limited language exposure, diverse learner needs, and resource constraints, which often lead to variations in instructional quality and student outcomes.	August & Shanahan, 2006; Lindsey et al., 2003
3	Teaching Practices for Phonemic Awareness	Integration of phonemic awareness into daily routines and the use of multisensory approaches are effective teaching practices that enhance student engagement and learning, as confirmed by observations.	Vaughn et al., 2006; Dickinson et al., 2004
4	Implications for Reading Development	The importance of phonemic awareness for future reading success is supported by teachers' beliefs and observations of students' progress, highlighting its predictive value for literacy achievement.	Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Ehri, 1998
5	Assessment Challenges and Professional Development Needs	Teachers face difficulties in assessing phonemic awareness and express a need for more training, echoing the literature's call for additional resources and professional development in this area.	Lesaux & Siegel, 2003; Gottardo, 2002

6	Collaboration and Integration	The emphasis on collaboration and integration of phonemic awareness with other literacy skills is supported by theories advocating for a holistic approach to literacy instruction.	Cummins, 2001 (Cross-Linguistic Transfer); Goodman, 1967 (Psycholinguistic Theory of Reading)
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Therefore, the tables above summarizes the key areas of the study, with literature support, highlighting the importance of phonemic awareness in reading for ELLs. Consequently, the results of the survey of teachers and personal observations of classes in the College support the hypothesis, outlined in the literature review based on theoretical considerations. It further supports the concept of phonemic awareness as an essential component for early reading of ELLs, and the inadequate strategies, materials, and training to overcome effectively the difficulties faced when teaching this skill. The table below arranges the findings of the teachers' interview in response to the research questions and

compares them with the hypotheses deduced from the literature review and theoretical framework employed in the present study regarding phonemic awareness in the development of reading among ELL students and the key themes emerging from the study. Overall, the anticipated expectation of the teachers seems to presuppose what was postulated in the review of related literature discussed in the theoretical framework used in the current study. The above-outlined congruence emphasizes the importance of phonemic awareness in early reading development for ELLs and a call for efficiency and access to the means employed to combat the difficulties inherent in the process.

Table 4: Summary of the main findings of the Study

Theme	Teachers' Responses	Predictions from Literature	Comparison
Significance of Phonemic Awareness in Reading Development	Recognize phonemic awareness as foundational for decoding and reading fluency.	Identifies phonemic awareness as a crucial skill for reading development (National Reading Panel, 2000; Adams, 1990).	Aligns with the literature, confirming the significance of phonemic awareness.
Challenges in Phonemic Awareness Instruction	Challenges include limited language exposure, diverse learner needs, and resource constraints.	Acknowledges difficulties in teaching phonemic awareness to ELLs (August & Shanahan, 2006; Lindsey et al., 2003).	Reflects the challenges predicted in the literature, highlighting the need for targeted support.
Teaching Practices for Phonemic Awareness	Practices include integration into daily routines, the use of multisensory approaches, and differentiation.	Supported by research suggesting effective strategies for teaching phonemic awareness to ELLs (Vaughn et al., 2006; Dickinson et al., 2004).	In line with recommended practices, indicating the application of effective instructional strategies.
Implications for Reading Development	Belief in the importance of phonemic awareness for future reading success.	Reflects studies showing the predictive value of phonemic awareness for literacy achievement (Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Ehri, 1998).	Corresponds with the literature, reinforcing the long-term impact of phonemic awareness.

Assessment Challenges and Professional Development Needs	Difficulties in assessing phonemic awareness and the need for more training.	Echoes the call for improved assessment tools and professional development (Lesaux & Siegel, 2003; Gottardo, 2002).	Highlights ongoing challenges in assessment and training, as predicted in the literature.
Collaboration and Integration	Emphasis on collaboration and integration with other literacy skills.	Aligns with the theory of cross-linguistic transfer (Cummins, 2001) and the psycholinguistic theory of reading (Goodman, 1967), advocating for a holistic approach.	Consistent with the theoretical framework, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive literacy instruction.

10. Discussion and Comparison

Based on the responses from teachers and the literature review, the potential outcomes regarding the impact of phonemic awareness on reading development among English Language Learners (ELLs) is highlighted in this part of the study.

ELTs underscore phonemic awareness to help students understand words to read with decent fluency. In a compilation of research and studies, the relationship between phonemic awareness and decoding skills has been established (Ehri 1998; National Reading Panel 2000). Therefore, it is seen that when phonemic awareness is improved then it results in improvement of decoding skills, which in turn helps the ELLs to decode the words more efficiently and accurately. To their observation, instructors find that learners who comprehend the sounds of spoken words are faster at reading than their peers are. Phonemic awareness is an important means of reading comprehension as it enables readers to better recognize words from text and process them at a more fluent rate (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Thus, the phonemic awareness that ELLs receive will lead to beneficial effects on reading fluency and therefore achieve higher levels of reading proficiency. It is acknowledged that phonemic awareness is one of the major ways that teachers encourage the growth of a large number of words. Phonemic awareness aids in the creation of a sound/letter connection by contributing to word identification and enhancement of vocabulary (Ehri, 1998). Thus, these assessments and interactions might result in greater vocabulary learning for ELLs who have solid phonemic awareness, further enhancing their language development. Teachers in their interviews noted that phonemic awareness

should form the initial basis of a learner's approach to text. Significantly, accomplishments learned that phoneme awareness helps in comprehending reading by the effective recognition and processing of words (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Hence, phonemic awareness positively affects early reading and comprehension resulting in increased grades and the overall ability of ELLs to comprehend texts.

Phonemic awareness is also observed to enhance ELLs' ability to cope with the requirements of reading and writing within two languages as well as transfer abilities of the first language to the second language. Phonemic awareness supports the transference of phonological knowledge from the first language, which will help improve review in the second language (Cummins, 2001). Therefore learning phonemes in their first language will benefit the ELLs with an easy transition and integration into the English language since the gap between the two languages will be narrowed. The potential consequences of possession concerning the effects of Phoneme awareness on resulting reading levels in ELLs include; Bringing the aspect of decoding which leads to improved reading practices, an increase in vocabulary within the reading process, and comprehension hence translating to better comprehension in reading, and finally bridging language gaps. The favorable findings of the survey empirically mirror the impressions of the teachers and contribute significantly to the literature review. The findings of the study on the impact of phonemic awareness on reading development among English Language Learners (ELLs) can be interpreted in the context of existing literature as follows:

i. This among other reasons made phonemic awareness an essential component of early reading

among the ELLs since it acts as a strong foundation for reading instruction. This finding supports the earlier studies that stressed the importance of phonemic awareness in word identification and reading for all students and ELLs in particular (National Reading Panel, 2000; Adams, 1990). It highlights the impact of instructional phonemic awareness implemented early enough to promote the reading of materials among ELLs.

ii. Teachers dealing with ELLs have trouble in improving phonemic awareness because of the restricted Lexical competence, the student's heterogeneity, and limited resources. These difficulties conform to what is being espoused in the literature regarding the tutorship of phonemic awareness with ELL students (August & Shanahan, 2006; Lindsey et al., 2003). Overall, the outcomes point towards the importance of students' access to help, guided instruction, and essential resources to meet these needs.

iii. Some of the best practices when it comes to teaching phonemic awareness are as follows; first, phonemic awareness should be implanted daily, second, the teacher to inform the students the sounds should be taught using multimodal techniques, and, last but not least, phonemic awareness should be taught according to the needs of the students. This finding affirms prior study empirical evidence that found that the strategies of I & DI are useful in facilitating the acquisition of phonemic awareness in ELLs (Vaughn et al., 2006; Dickinson et al., 2004). It stresses the need for students to have fun while practicing phonemic awareness and do so by designing activities that will be interesting and suitable for use in class.

The ability in English as a phonemic awareness is a determinant of successful reading in ELLs. It even supports what Bradley and Bryant (1983), and Ehri (1998) have established that phonemic awareness is a precursor of reading level. This validates the assertion that one important factor in enhancing the reading progress of ELLs is phonemic awareness. English Teachers should invest in phonemic awareness instruction and invest time in common planning time to improve teaching practice. This is consistent with the literature, emphasizing that more teacher training and cooperation can help enhance literacy instruction for ELLs (Lesaux & Siegel, 2003; Gottardo, 2002). It posits that the enhancement of the

teacher practice through professional development and cooperative working can help achieve improvement in phonemic awareness instruction. In sum, the postulated outcomes of the research indicate the potential of phonemic awareness to aid young ELLs in learning to read. It underlines the need for well-executed teaching skills to address the issue and assist teachers in the quest to improve reading levels for ELL students.

The findings of this study on Phonemic Awareness and the effects it has on reading skills under ELL have several applications in classroom practice and policy matters among teachers as well as various educational administrators. NRP (2000) has indicated that phonemic awareness should also be a primary literacy component for ELLs, making it important for policymakers to provide a curriculum that emphasizes this element in student learning. It entails offering strategies and tools that can be used when the teacher is conducting instruction in phonemic awareness. To effectively teach phonemic awareness, educators require extensive training, particularly on strategies applicable to facilitate learning for ELL students as identified by August & Shanahan (2006). School administrators should ensure that funds for continuing professional development are provided to enhance teachers' skills and trends. In this case, Vaughn et al. (2006) noted that there is a need for schools to acquire the right tools and resources required in the teaching of phonemic awareness to ELL students and this should include bilingual and culturally appropriate content. To sum up, the following guidelines for assessments of phonemic awareness in ELLs are recommended by Lesaux and Siegel (2003) Among the potential types of assessments and tests teachers should use in the education process some important questions and aspects should be taken into account: Various such assessments should be encouraged by policymakers and executed to the best of their potential and possibility. According to Dickinson et al. (2004), teachers should use both content and process. Font celebrations should be conducted systematically and should include the use of multisensory and other technology techniques.

According to Gottardo (2002), there is a need for schools to enhance multi-disciplinary cooperation among teachers, specialists, and families to nurture the phonemic awareness of ELLs. Thus, it is

recommended that efforts should be made to foster programs that increase the spirit of cooperation and embrace the community. All of these implications support the specific and nuanced call for a multifaceted approach to the instruction of phonemic awareness of ELLs that includes curriculum selection and development, teacher training and preparation, resource provisioning, assessment, pedagogy, and professional learning communities. Lastly, the suggestion that phonemic awareness instruction is a crucial component of ELLs in learning to read and write underlines the practical significance of the research. Despite the challenges these students present, their reading can be improved through the provision of early intervention and education to eradicate these barriers.

11. Conclusion

Several valuable findings can be derived from the study on phonemic awareness and its connection to early reading data for English Language Learner students. Special emphasis is also on phonemic awareness, which is considered one of the fundamental reasons for decoding and reading speed. Nonetheless, teachers face a litany of challenges in teaching this skill to ELLs; for instance, language depravity, learner heterogeneity, and scant resources. These challenges must be met to ensure children learn objectives whether it is to teach letter or shape recognition, the following strategies can be adopted; Incorporating into daily programs Integrating multisensory systems Approaching programs through differentiation. The study also highlights the importance of phonemic awareness being taught throughout the curriculum concerning reading performance; further stressing that professional development is crucial for effective collaboration in designing and implementing learning experiences in areas such as phonemic awareness. The research is not without limitations: The samples collected in a study are rather small, and this can restrict the generalization of the exercise across various contexts of education. Thus, reliance on self-provided information may lead to bias; moreover, cross-sectional analysis does not allow for studying developmental processes. On one hand, there is no control group, which raises questions of proper control and inability to accurately determine the causality of effects; on the other, the study is context-

bound, which might hinder the generalization of the findings. Specific areas for future research include using a long-term follow-up design, recruiting a more gender and ethnic-diverse sample, and using experimental or quasi-experimental designs involving control groups. Establishing a research study that focuses on a small sample but captures the participants' experiences in more detail could yield a better understanding of teaching phonemic awareness to ELLs, possible challenges, and approaches. In one way, some cross-cultural studies have implications for the ability of language or culture to support literacy learning. Thus, implementing these findings, future research will be able to contribute to the elaboration of the roles considered within the framework of phonemic awareness for reading development as well as provide an evidential base for an improved methodology for learning support of ELLs.

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