

Synthetic Phonics: A Glimpse on its Effectiveness in Teaching Young Learners to Read in English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

Developing reading skills from an early age of schooling seems to be of paramount importance for acquiring proper literacy. As reading proves to be a complex skill to learn, the spotlight has been put on different approaches that teach young learners to read, especially in English-speaking countries. One of these approaches is *Synthetic Phonics*, which seems to be the most beneficial program in reading instruction. However, little research has been carried out in terms of its effectiveness to teach to read in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This paper examines the benefits of implementing synthetic phonics on teaching learners of EFL to read. The main purpose of this investigation is to assess the effectiveness of this approach in teaching EFL learners to read in English, improving reading skills such as fluency and accuracy. For this purpose, 11 students attending Year 1 in a non-denominational co-ed bilingual school in the city of Hurlingham participated in this qualitative study. This group of students took part in a screening check to identify the sounds that were not being correctly decoded. Six remedial sessions were carried out in order to work on these specific sounds and students were tested again. Findings indicate that synthetic phonics was beneficial and, as a result, the students showed a significant increase in accuracy when decoding. The conclusion reached supports the implementation of this programme in EFL reading instruction.

Keywords: reading skills, EFL young learners, Synthetic Phonics, accuracy, fluency