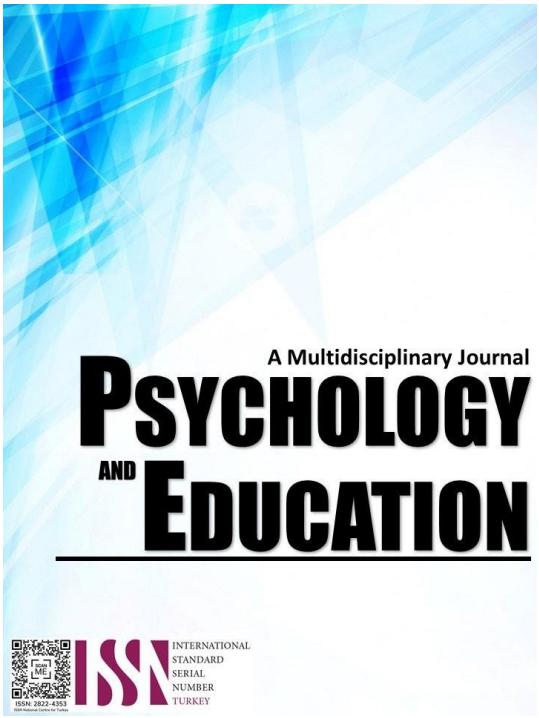
PHONIC APPROACH IN TEACHING READING: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY



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Research Article

Phonic Approach in Teaching Reading: An Experimental Study

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Abstract

This thesis explores the effectiveness of the phonic approach in teaching reading to students. The study focuses on helping nonreaders in their reading proficiency. Ten seventh graders from Union National High School-Mt. Diwata Annex were the subjects in the study. Pretest was administered before implementing the reading intervention and administered posttest after the experiment. Pretest and Posttest were implemented through oral reading test using the passage from the Phil-IR Manual. After, results were compared to determine the achievements and improvement of the students. Students' competency level improved dramatically following the experiment, according to the data. There was a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores. These results imply that the phonic approach is an effective method for raising students' reading skills. Therefore, the study offers recommendations to language teachers on how to create teaching strategies that will improve their students' reading abilities. And this suggests that when teaching reading, teachers should think about including the phonic approach into their lessons. Additionally, this study adds to the expanding corpus of data on the efficacy of the phonic approach in reading instruction. All things considered, this study offers insightful information on how well the phonic approach works to help students improve their reading abilities.

Keywords: *phonic approach, reading, experimental research, pretest, posttest, quasi-experimental*

Introduction

Reading is the cornerstone of knowledge acquisition and comprehension of the outside world; it is frequently considered the most crucial ability that one should acquire. It provides access to a multitude of knowledge, concepts, and viewpoints that extend one's perspective and influence their way of thinking. Jose and Raja (2011) mentioned that reading brings happiness and wisdom. It opens up the uncharted. Indeed, it is a skill that opens a world of knowledge and imagination. It is not only a source of information, but also a form of entertainment and personal growth. When we read, we engage with different ideas, cultures, and perspectives, expanding our horizons and broadening our understanding of the world around us. Developing a love of reading is crucial for success in all spheres of life as well as for intellectual and psychological growth. However, there are many individuals who struggle with reading and become nonreaders.

Furthermore, like in other developing contexts where the EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) has been used, the identification of nonreaders (children who score zero or close to zero on reading tasks), is common in South Africa. For example, Menendez and Ardington (2018) reported that in a sample of almost 10 000 isiXhosa- and isiZulu-speaking children in Grades 2 - 4, 24% could not read any words in their first language (L1). Unfavorable socio-economic and complex sociolinguistic factors (poverty, overcrowded schools, limited resources and inadequate L1 instruction) contribute to this situation (Hunt, 2007; Pretorius & Currin,2010) (as cited in Schaefer & Wilsenach, 2023). This problem can have a significant impact on their academic performance and overall well-being. Academically, these individuals struggle to grasp written assignments, which leads to poor academic performance and limits their educational opportunities.

In the Philippines, according to a World Bank (WB) survey published in July 2022, nine out of ten Filipino children aged ten had difficulty reading simple texts (as cited in Guiam, 2022). In the 2018 PISA, out of 79 participating countries and economies, the Philippines came in last in the reading category. Furthermore, according to Cristobal (2015)1.2 million Filipinos between the ages of five and fifteen are not enrolled in school and have poor reading levels. Additionally, kindergarten pupils in remote parts of Mindanao consistently do poorly on reading assessments (Balinas et al. 2017, as cited in Gatcho & Gutierrez, 2018). Luz's (2007) assertion that the Philippines is “a nation of non-readers” may become a significant issue if these numbers keep rising in the years to come (as cited in Gatcho & Gutierrez, 2018).

In Union National High School-Mt.Diwata Annex, there were some non-reader students in the previous school years who struggled with their academics. Those students prefer to excuse their selves out of the classroom than listen to the discussion or participate in the activities as they were unable to identify and comprehend the words. As the new school year unfolds, new grade 7 students have come to the institution. Upon enrollment, 10 out of 80 Grade 7 students were classified as non-readers. The students found it challenging to even read the CV/VC/CVC words and understand simple instructions and as per the Phil-IRI Manual, such students can be classified as non-readers. Thus, this study was proposed to test the effectiveness of the Phonic Approach in teaching reading to non-readers.

Research Questions

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of Phonic Approach in Teaching Reading to nonreaders of Union National High School-Mt.Diwata Annex. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the reading level of competence of the students in the pretest scores?
2. What is the reading level of competence of the students in the posttest scores?
3. Is there a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of students?

Literature Review

Articles and studies that are thought to be relevant to the research conducted are presented in this area of the study. For an order presentation, themes are created.

Phonics. Phonics is for students to learn how letters and letter combinations represent sounds in order to write and read. It is an essential component of early literacy education because it gives students the tools they need to recognize and decode words. This approach to learning to read encourages children to decode words by sounds rather than by recognizing whole words (Bald,2007) (as cited in Phajane, 2014). Children who learn phonics are able to acquire strong core reading abilities, which are necessary for success in all facets of life and academics.

Phonics plays a pivotal role in instruction (Fernández-Molina, et.al., 2023). It is a fundamental component of early literacy education that plays a crucial role in developing strong foundational reading and writing skills. By teaching students how to decode and recognize the sounds represented by letters, phonics instruction equips them with the tools they need to become confident and proficient readers and writers.

Phonic Approach. The ability to use these sounds to read words, one must be able to link sounds (phonemes) with letter names (graphemes) (Sarwono, 2013) (as cited in Paris, 2019). Children who are struggling to learn to read as well as beginners in the elementary grades are the target audience for phonics education. It's critical to understand that the objectives of phonics training are to give students certain essential knowledge and abilities and to make sure they understand how to use this information in their writing and reading. Many teaching philosophies have been employed in the explicit and methodical teaching of phonics. These comprise synthetic, analytical, embedding, analogy, onset-rime, synthetic-spelling, and phonics through spelling (Mulenga, 2017). Even though the study's focus was not on various phonics, the researcher anticipated that non-readers would be lacking in these areas.

Understanding the connection between fluency and reading comprehension is essential. If students cannot separate and combine phonemes, they will have trouble understanding words (Cotter, 2012). Students must read fluently and with exceptional word recognition in order to infer meaning from what they read. The amount of time students with reading difficulties spend decoding words typically compromises reading comprehension, which is the ultimate goal of reading.

Teachers should modify their lesson plans and use the best teaching techniques in light of the difficulties involved in teaching reading. A collection of methods known as the phonics approach is designed to assist beginner readers with combining the sounds in spelling patterns, or "sounding out," new written words. The Phonics Approach is without a doubt the most widely used and well-liked approach to teaching reading and writing in the English language. For students to read properly, they must be taught the alphabetic concept. It is based on the notion that students learn the names and sounds of the alphabet first. It makes sense to use this to teach children who are already familiar with the letters additional information about the sound (Paris, 2019).

It is imperative to explicitly instruct students that every letter has a name and makes a sound. Several phonics systems begin with teaching students the letter names and sounds they make. Students can learn the sounds and letters with the help of the phonics technique. It began with going over key components that influence how students learn to read, and it subsequently concentrated more on word recognition and the role of phonics. Students can reconstruct words by combining letters and learning about sounds with the aid of the phonics approach. Since understanding the alphabetic notion is necessary for successful reading, as stated by Paris (2019).

It is crucial that students comprehend the relationship between letters and sounds because of this. Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds of spoken language) and graphemes (the letters and spellings that presents those sounds in written language) (Sarwono, 2013, as cited in Paris, 2019). This suggests that the way students study has an impact on their reading comprehension of the relationship between letters and sounds. By using this approach, students will be able to read English words with more fluency. In addition, phonics approach gives some advantages to the learners, especially for children learning to read at the early age. It will allow students to learn the regular pattern of words including the rules of letters pronunciation, it is allowing for easier reading (Paris,2019).

The phonics technique is a very effective way to help students become more proficient readers. Numerous studies demonstrate that students who get systematic phonics education learn to read more quickly and more proficiently than kids who do not(Sohn,2020). The phonics strategy teaches students how to decipher written language's secret code and convert it into spoken language they are familiar with. The ability to discern between spoken sounds, or phonological awareness, is the first step toward this process of "decoding." Students, who frequently start preschool, can utilize phonological awareness to explain that the sounds at the beginning of the words "big" and "pig" are different (Sohn, 2020).

The phonics strategy has a major benefit for nonreaders in that it helps with vocabulary development. Research has demonstrated that teaching nonreaders phonics helps them increase their vocabulary in addition to teaching them how to read specific words. Sohn (2020)

discovered that nonreaders who received phonics training developed a more extensive vocabulary than nonreaders who received instruction using alternative approaches. This implies that teaching nonreaders phonics aids in their development of a deeper comprehension of language and its structures. Moreover, according to Bald (2007, as cited in Paris,2019) phonics is the methodical instruction of the sounds that letters and groups of letters express. It also teaches students how to blend and combine these sounds to read and write words. This method pushes students to use the grapheme to decode written letters based on sound. Additionally, learners benefit from the phonics technique in a few ways, particularly for young children starting to read. It will make reading easier for students by teaching them the regular pattern of words, including the rules for pronouncing letters.

Also, the phonics approach's adaptability to meet the unique requirements of nonreaders is one of its strengths. In this approach, students are taught to identify and blend the individual sounds in words, then combine them to form whole words. Through constant exposure to the different phonemes and graphemes, students develop automaticity and efficiency in decoding and reading words. According to Sayeski (2016), phoneme-grapheme mapping instruction is an important aspect of beginning reading instruction. Since every student has different learning needs, phonics training can be customized to meet those needs. Teachers can utilize diagnostic tests to pinpoint the precise areas where nonreaders have difficulty and then implement focused phonics instruction to address those issues. This tailored strategy guarantees that nonreaders get the assistance they require to become competent readers.

Reading. One of the most important life skills for both personal development and academic performance is reading. It fosters the growth of the brain, hones critical thinking abilities, expands vocabulary, and fosters empathy and a knowledge of many viewpoints. By identifying the arrangement and structure of the written or printed personalities, reading is an essential tool for understanding how a text, book, etc. is to be interpreted. Reading, then, involves a complicated interaction between the reader, the text, and the reading goals, which are influenced by the reader's background knowledge and experiences, the reader's proficiency with language in both reading and writing, and the reader's culturally and socially placed language community(Hanum, 2017). As stated by Roberts and Wanzek (2012, as cited in Al Jaffall, 2014), reading is one of the most important and critical educational skills since it affects practically every academic subject.

Additionally, research has demonstrated a strong correlation between reading comprehension and creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, concept organization, and research (Al Jaffall, 2014). It also allows every student to consider, write on, or debate what they have already read. To be effective, reading—which is the process of deriving meaning from texts and symbols—must be approached as a fluid, strategic, motivation-based, lifelong endeavor. Five fundamental reading concepts are comprised of the talents required in this process (Akyol, 2015) (as cited in Gedik & Akyol,2022). It is also the process of generating meaning in a welcoming environment by means of a productive dialogue between the author and the audience (Akyol, 2015; Razon, 1982) (as cited in Gedik & Akyol,2022). Several studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of reading on a variety of facets of people's life. For example, a 2011 study by Mol and Bus discovered that reading fiction improves social skills and empathy. Ebrahimi, Khoshsima, and Behtash (2018) found that individuals who read regularly had stronger emotional intelligence than people who do not.

The ability to read is one of the most essential skills a child must acquire to succeed academically and function effectively in society. It is possible to determine one's knowledge in a variety of subjects by reading. Since mathematics, science, social studies, and other topics are only written texts without comprehension, it is safe to argue that reading is the foundation for studying these subjects (Davis et al., 2016). The letters will remain letters unless they are read and understood. Our ability to learn, develop, and prosper in a society that is always changing would be constrained if we could not read.

Reading is a means of communicating in writing through the structure of texts. It is the most effective approach to learn about science and technology, among other facets of life. People can learn a variety of things via reading. Reading plays a crucial function and is now a daily requirement for everyone who want to obtain the necessary knowledge. For those learning English as a second language, reading comprehension is a prerequisite. For the majority of students, this is the most crucial ability to acquire in order to succeed in any academic area where reading in English is essential, not just when studying English. Students who have improved their reading abilities will advance and grow more in all other subject areas (Ismail et al., 2017).

In addition, only cognitive skill is required for academic reading, which is more complex than any other academic fulfillment. It is one of the language skills taught in primary school which aims to help students comprehend the reading's meaning and provide them with the ability to comprehend it accurately and thoroughly. Students must thus learn to read. They therefore find learning easier because of their reading skills. A person with proficient reading and writing abilities may comprehend a variety of information types that are accurately written (Saonah, 2018)(as cited in Rohimah,2021). Reading comprehension and content are two more information-gathering skills that come with reading. Reading comprehension is a critical skill that every learner should possess (Pratiwi, 2020, as cited in Rohimah,2021).

Reading comprehension requires a sophisticated cognitive process that is involved in reading. It encompasses the relationship that the reader has with the text, in which the reader's interpretations are shaped by attitudes, experiences, and past knowledge. Reading is a cognitive process decoding symbols for meaning (Zakime, 2017, as cited in Delfi,Diah,& Jismulatif,2019). Readers must employ a range of reading methods to aid in decoding and comprehension, reading is a skill that requires constant practice, development, and refining.

Further, according to Hlalethwa (2013), reading comprehension is integrally linked to students' academic success and ingrained in daily life socioeconomic functioning of humans. It requires a variety of strategic processes and underlying cognitive skills (e.g., goal-setting, goal-changing, comprehension monitoring), the ability to quickly and efficiently recognize words, the development and application of a large recognition vocabulary, the processing of sentences to improve comprehension, the interpretation of meaning in relation to prior knowledge, the interpretation and evaluation of texts in line with reader goals and purposes, and the ability to fluently process texts over an extended period of time.

Reading is a complicated activity that is influenced by a wide range of variables, including deficiencies in mental processes and physiological and psychological aspects. Aaccording to Hlalethwa (2013), reading can be seen as a multipurpose phenomenon that is based on multidisciplinary expertise. Reading improves comprehension of syntax and gives the reader access to a wealth of new information, enabling them to make connections between words in each phrase (Huttig & Pickering, 2019, as cited in Mkhize,2022). However, in the digital age, where endless sources of information and distraction abound, the act of reading books may seem outdated to some. Thus, this part highlights how reading contributes to cognitive development, promotes empathy and emotional intelligence, enhances linguistic skills, supports mental health, fosters creativity and imagination, cultivates critical thinking, and encourages personal growth.

Cognitive Development. One of the primary benefits of reading is its positive impact on cognitive development and according to Nelson and Luciana (2008, as cited in Carson et al., 2015) that one of the most important aspects of early childhood development is cognitive development. Therefore, reading enhances memory, attention span, and concentration, particularly in children and adolescents. A study from national university stated that reading has numerous health benefits for the brain, including enhanced memory, stress reduction, and attention. People that read are not only gaining new information and broadening their knowledge, but they are also mentally stimulating themselves.

Empathy and Emotional Intelligence. Reading fiction plays a significant role in developing empathy and emotional intelligence. According to studies, reading narratives allows individuals to step into different characters' shoes, leading to increased understanding, compassion, and empathy towards others (Kidd & Castano, 2013). Consequently, readers are better equipped to navigate complex social interactions and cultivate meaningful relationships, contributing to their emotional intelligence development.

Linguistic Skills. Extensive reading is linked to enhanced linguistic skills, including vocabulary acquisition, linguistic sensitivity, and fluency (Ateek, 2021). Readers encounter a wide range of words, phrases, and expressions, expanding their vocabulary and allowing for more nuanced communication. There is no denying the importance of vocabulary in the process of learning a language (Afshari & Tavakoli, 2016, as cited in Al Qunayeer, 2021). Furthermore, vocabulary knowledge is a major prerequisite and causal factor in reading comprehension because the reader must know the actual words in the text to be able to comprehend it (Tavanpour and Biria, 2017) (as cited in Al Qunayeer,2021). Additionally, reading for linguistic skill is a valuable and enjoyable way to develop language proficiency and enhance overall communication abilities.

Mental Health. Reading has proven therapeutic benefits for mental health. Just as reading can increase our emotional awareness of others, diving into the experiences of characters in books may also enable readers to see themselves more clearly. A clearer view of oneself can, in turn, help someone to behave and think in healthier ways and to avoid damaging beliefs (Wagstaff,2020). Studies have shown that reading can reduce stress levels and alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression (Billington et al.,2013; Dowrick et al., 2012, as cited in Yulia et al.,2021). Escaping into a fictional world through literature provides a temporary respite from daily pressures, allowing one to relax and unwind. Furthermore, reading self-help books or memoirs can provide valuable insights and strategies for coping with mental health challenges, offering individuals a sense of hope and a path towards healing.

Creativity and Imagination. One of the finest methods to develop imagination is by reading. We are better able to increase and broaden our knowledge the more we read. We are able to grasp new concepts and remain receptive to new ideas. By allowing the words to depict a certain image while the reader conjures up the image in their head, reading fosters imagination (Akinchina,2021). Moreover, exposure to different genres, styles, and perspectives exposes readers to varying ways of thinking, fostering new ideas and innovative thinking (Peck, 2016). By expanding their imaginative capacities, individuals gain the ability to approach problem-solving, innovation, and personal expression from fresh and unique angles.

Critical Thinking. Reading literature not only entertains but also challenges readers to think critically. Through various reading procedures including interpretation, inference and examining ideologies embedded in texts, readers can develop critical thinking (Kohzadi, Azizmohammadi, & Samadi, 2014). This helps improve analytical and evaluative thinking, as well as the ability to distinguish between fact and opinion. Furthermore, being exposed to different literary genres and styles broadens one's overall perspectives, enabling critical evaluation of a variety of texts.

Personal Growth. The act of reading books has a significant influence on one's personal development. World knowledge of learners increases via reading, and imagination of learners develops as well. Extensive reading enhances personal growth. Reading materials provide learners with information about culture. When learners have sufficient information about culture, their understanding of people develop, and learners become mature (Goctu, 2016). Reading biographies and autobiographies also offers glimpses into the experiences and wisdom of extraordinary individuals, providing valuable insights for personal growth and life choices.

From cognitive development to fostering creativity and critical thinking, it is evident that reading is far more than a leisure activity; it is a transformative tool that nourishes the mind, heart, and soul. As individuals, communities, and societies seek personal and intellectual growth, the importance of promoting and cherishing the act of reading remains undeniably relevant in the contemporary world.

Non-Readers. According to Carmine, Silbert, and Kameenui, students who are classified as non-readers are those who can recognize between 50 and 100 words by sight but lack a basic decoding method. According to Martin and Pappas, people who are non-readers are not proficient readers. According to Torgesen, for a child to be a fluent reader, they must be able to: (1) recognize the majority of the words in a passage "by sight"; (2) pronounce words correctly five to ten times before they become "sight words"; and (3) make accurate initial guesses when they come across new words. If a child cannot do any of these things, their "sight word vocabulary" will not grow and they will never become fluent readers (as cited in Ferolino, 2023).

Words cannot be rapidly and effectively recognized by non-readers. They were unable to show a high level of word recognition. Their fluency skills are weak. They read poorly in terms of phrasing, intonation, pitch, and expression. Furthermore, some words and letters, such as those in one's own name, classroom labels, signs, and other environmental print, are unrecognizable to non-readers (Mather & Goldstein, 2001, as cited in Eyorcadas).

Therefore, educators play a key role in teaching children to read; therefore, it is important to consider how they view the impact of reading difficulties on young people (Claessen et al., 2020). Students with reading disabilities will need to receive a lot of one-on-one teaching. Strategies for reading comprehension, strategies for developing meaning using language cues and conventions (phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development), awareness of sentence structures, awareness of text structures and organizational patterns, and the pragmatics of text and reading fluency are among the essential components of reading instruction.

Challenges of Non-Readers. A primary obstacle encountered by non-readers is their inadequate vocabulary and language proficiency. Mpofu and Mavambe (2023) stated that vocabulary is essential to reading comprehension. Prior to beginning the main reading process, it is important to comprehend the context-specific meanings of uncommon vocabulary and complicated sentence patterns. One of the most important ways that people can increase their knowledge and comprehension of the world is by reading. Non-readers could find it challenging to build a strong vocabulary and to communicate oneself clearly without reading activities. This may make it more difficult for them to interact with people, which could have an effect on their success in school.

In addition, non-readers could struggle with their ability to think critically and solve problems. Caga and Soya (2019), said teaching reading comprehension imparts a variety of methods and tools that satisfy the needs of the students. Reading helps with comprehension as well as analysis and interpretation of difficult concepts. Non-readers may find it challenging to think critically and to navigate the complexities of today's environment if they do not engage in reading activities. This may reduce their capacity for personal development and impair their ability to make well-informed judgments.

Lack of empathy and ability to take perspective is another issue that non-readers deal with. Empathy enables to recognize the goodness and positive aspects in those around them (Keskin, 2014) and reading helps people to put themselves in other people's shoes and view the world from other angles. Non-readers could find it difficult to comprehend the feelings and experiences of others if they do not participate in reading activities. This may impede their capacity to empathize with others and make it challenging for them to establish deep connections.

Non-readers may also experience difficulties with their mental health and general wellbeing. Hilhorst (2018) stated that depression is more common among nonreaders. Thus, the act of reading can provide non-readers with a significant means of solace and relaxation that they might not be getting elsewhere. Their inability to read may be exacerbated by feelings of loneliness and isolation brought on by this lack of mental stimulation.

According to Johnston's (2010, as cited in Eyorcadas) study, students with extremely low reading proficiency face significant academic challenges that, as they get older and enter middle and high school, can turn into social problems. They frequently form tough shells that make them resistant to reading after years of failure and labeling. They make up for it with keen hearing and seeing abilities, usually attempting to stay under the radar. They might act antisocially if they feel forlorn and powerless.

Furthermore, Stanovich (2014) explains the negative spiral experienced by pupils who first struggle with word recognition and alphabetic coding. Because of these obstacles, individuals are unable to read for meaning and find reading to be progressively less enjoyable. They have more bad reading experiences and practice less. They either avoid reading altogether or just put up with it without participating in what is being read. Personal aspect consequences start to relate to school, and the educational process is affected(as cited in Eyorcadas).

Factors Affecting Non-Readers. People who have difficulty reading or who do not conduct reading activities are considered non-readers. Numerous things, such learning difficulties, restricted access to books, or just a lack of interest in reading, may be the cause of this.

Lack of exposure to reading materials is one of the key contributing causes. A person is less likely to get interested in reading if they do not have access to books, magazines, or newspapers. Giambra and Grodsky (1989, as cited in Sousa,et. al., 2013) said that the

student's interest in reading material will help them mind wander. Allison and Hirsch(2020) highlights the importance of incorporating engaging reading materials into school curricula. She argues that by utilizing contemporary literature and incorporating multimedia elements, educators can capture the interest of nonreaders and motivate them to explore the world of reading. Reading helps students to imagine and be informed.

However, not everyone has access to books but as we are in the 21st century, most of the reading materials can be found online. According to Machete and Dela Pena (2019), the introduction of technology and other reading aids may be utilized to improve the students' comprehension, reading habits, and reading skills. Nevertheless, some students may lack access to reading materials both online and offline due to socioeconomic factors which may make reading impossible because people from lower-income families do not have the money to buy either gadgets or reading materials. The education sector also holds responsibility for addressing nonreading habits.

Moreover, early literacy skills are the abilities, knowledge, and perspectives on writing and reading that emerge prior to formal education (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, as cited in Purpura et al., 2011). Thus, the lack of literacy skills can be another factor that influence people who are not readers. A person may completely avoid reading out of irritation or embarrassment if they have trouble reading and comprehending because of a learning disability or another problem. Their inability to read can become a vicious cycle as a result, which would only serve to confirm their status as non-readers.

In addition, another factor affecting non-readers is a lack of positive role models that value reading. A student may not recognize the benefit of improving their reading abilities if they are raised in a home where reading is not valued or encouraged. This may result in a lifelong distaste in reading that persists into adulthood. A study shows that the success of reading and literacy culture in children is influenced by the family environment that shapes it. The more positive stimulations and influences given to children, such as vocabulary introduction and support for reading, the faster children can understand the writing they read and this can encourage the success of a literacy culture in the family (Julianto & Umami, 2023). When parents actively participate in reading and provide access to books, children are more likely to develop a love for reading that continues into adulthood.

Cultural background is very important to a person. It plays a significant role in molding the success of students (Epcacan et al., 2010). However, it can also affect the reading skill of a student. Reading may not be valued or considered essential in some cultures, which causes people to place more importance on other pursuits. Similar to this, some people may put reading on the back burner due to pressure from society to succeed in other areas, including sports or academics.

Additionally, a person's reading skill might also be influenced by environmental factors. A person may find it challenging to concentrate when reading if they live in a noisy or distracting environment. Fernandes et al. (2019) stated better learning outcomes are achieved in environments that are more. Conversely, someone could be less likely to read if they do not have a cozy or well-lit reading area.

Children's reading difficulties can also be caused by errors in word and letter recognition, mispronunciation, location changes, word recognition failure, and hurrying through reading. Students find it difficult to read when they exhibit behaviors like sobbing, refusing to read, or attempting to resist parents or teachers (Rohimah, 2021). Low reading proficiency is reflected in other areas of learning for students. This indicates that low student learning outcomes in other areas are linked to reading learning issues. Additional factors that impact students' reading difficulties include mispronouncing words, rushing when reading, changing places, and making mistakes in word recognition.

Phonology/ Phonological Awareness. Phonology in linguistics is the study of speech sounds in language. It is concerned with a language's phonemes, or the smallest units of sound that can be used to differentiate meaning, and the rules that govern how these sounds are combined to form words. Ehri (2000) stated adequate knowledge of phonological awareness is recognized as a critical element for reading (as cited in Hayward, 2014) because phonology dictates the sounds that are used and how they are mixed, it is essential to understanding and using language. On the other hand, phonological awareness describes the capacity to identify and work with the sounds in spoken language. It aids in understanding how sounds relate to letters and words, making it a crucial building block for reading and writing abilities.

Since phonological awareness enables people to comprehend the relationship between sounds and letters, it is an essential skill for learning to read and write. People who lack phonological awareness could find it difficult to understand words or identify spelling patterns. Studies have indicated that for both generally developing and at-risk readers, phonological awareness (PA) is widely acknowledged as a strong predictor and underlying precursor to early reading success (Al Otaiba, Kosanovich, & Torgesen, 2012; Blachman et al., 2000; Goswami, 2001; Pressley, 2006)(as cited in Carson, 2012) and that skilled readers are more likely to possess good phonological awareness abilities. Explicit teaching and practice, such as phonics instruction and phonological awareness exercises, can help improve phonological awareness.

Phonological awareness, or the capacity to identify and work with bigger units of sound, such syllables and rhymes, is another crucial component of phonology. Phonologically aware children, for instance, may recognize that the words "cat" and "bat" rhyme or that the word "butterfly" has three syllables. This ability is essential for improving fluency in both reading and writing. Rasinski (2014) stated that fluency is very important as it connects word recognition and reading comprehension. It enables people to identify word patterns and structures. Since phonological awareness encompasses an understanding of the greater structure of words and sounds, it is a more

comprehensive concept than phonemic awareness.

Phonemic awareness, or the capacity to identify and work with specific phonemes in words, is one facet of phonology. Kikuchi and Hall (2019) also stated that it's the ability to identify the phoneme's sequence inside a word. A student who is phonemically aware, for instance, may tell that the word "cat" is composed of the sounds /k/, /a/, and /t/. This ability enables people to decode and encode words by matching sounds to letters, which is essential for learning to read and write. Phonological awareness necessitates phonemic awareness, which is the comprehension of the constituent sounds that comprise words.

Phonemic Awareness. An important ability that is vital to a child's early literacy development is phonemic awareness. It describes the capacity to identify and work with certain sounds in spoken language. Children with phonemic awareness are better able to recognize and manipulate the sounds in words, which is a prerequisite for learning phonics and decoding. Knowing that spoken words are constructed from sound units that are combined during articulation is known as phonemic awareness (Cunningham et al., 2010) (as cited in Mkhize,2022). This ability helps children recognize the connection between letters and sounds, which is crucial for learning to read and write. According to Tindall and Nisbet (2010, as cited in Mkhize,2022), phonological awareness encompasses joint sounds in words, syllables, rhyming words, and onset-rimes. It is a general term for hearing spoken language. Consequently, the ability to hear and pronounce words is known as phonemic awareness.

The fact that phonemic awareness is a reliable indicator of future reading performance is one of the key reasons it is significant. Students who know nothing about letters or sounds when they first join kindergarten find it difficult to acquire early reading skills and frequently lag behind their classmates in doing so (Al-Bataineh et al., 2013). It is indicated that children who possess strong phonemic awareness skills in kindergarten demonstrate better reading comprehension and accuracy in later years. Also, children that acquire this talent at a young age will be better able to understand written text, spell words correctly, decode words, identify blends, syllables, and rhymes—all of which are essential elements of early literacy.

Moreover, phonemic awareness is necessary for spelling as well as reading. Students are more adept at correctly spelling words when they have a firm grasp of the sounds that make up words. One of the most important skills that students can have is to spell phonetically, which is the ability to break words down into separate sounds. According to Puranik and Al Otaiba (2012), it is crucial that students learn to spell throughout their first few years of formal education. Because phonemic awareness allows children to hear word sounds and match them to letters they see on the page, it also helps them identify and correct spelling mistakes.

Students who received phonemic awareness instruction in early grades maintained higher reading comprehension abilities throughout their school years. This emphasizes the importance of early intervention in developing phonemic awareness skills. Thus, phonemic awareness is an essential tool used in classrooms to enhance the reading abilities of children (Al-Bataineh et al., 2013).

Methodology

Research Design

This study is a quantitative study employing a quasi-experimental study because it sought to experiment on the effectiveness of the Phonic Approach in teaching reading to nonreaders. The researcher was interested in this design for it would show direct result in the progress of the students because utilizing an experimental study keeps one set of variables fixed while measuring the other set of variables as the experiment's subject. The principal advantage of experimental design is that it provided the opportunity to identify cause-and-effect relationships (Anilkumar,2014). It was an empirical study in which studies exploited and controlled one or more independent variables and observed the dependent variable (Munir, 2016, as cited in Faliyanti & Tanjung, 2020).

Participants

The subjects in this study were the 10 nonreader students from the Grade 7 of Union National High School-Mt.Diwata Annex for School Year 2023-2024. These students were unable to identify the words, unable to utter them, and cannot comprehend well. They were identified during the conduct of the Phil.IRI Oral Reading Test (Pre-Test).

Instruments

The students were tasked to read a passage entitled "Dark Chocolate" from the Phil-IRI manual as an oral reading pretest. After the pretest was conducted, using the Summary of Miscues in the said manual, students were then identified as nonreaders. Therefore, the researcher went from the basic and taught the phonics to the learners using the Phonics Guide by Pagi. After 6 sessions using Phonic Approach, the posttest was conducted. With the same instruments as the pretest, oral reading posttest was then successfully done by the students.

Validation of the Research Instruments

The research instruments for pretest, sessions (Phonic guide), and posttest were presented to the researcher's validators for remarks and recommendations. After, validators commented that the instruments were standardized. Thus, the researcher proceeded to use the instruments as they were reliable.

Procedure

The researcher followed research procedures in collecting data. Below are the following. The researcher asked permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao de Oro, Ma'am Cristy C. Epe to conduct the study. A letter was also given to the District Coordinating Principal of Monkayo East District as well as to the Teacher In-Charge of the school where the study was conducted.

The researcher conducted a Phil.Iri Oral Reading Test (Pre-Test) to Grade 7 students of Union National High School-Mt.Diwata Annex which is done annually. Then the researcher identified nonreaders from the test. In addition, the researcher asked for the participants' permission to be part of the study through presenting an information sheet and a letter of consent requesting their approval to participate. It was clarified that they could opt out of the study and that the study would not contain their name and face.

Moreover, "Dark Chocolate" and "Summary of Miscues" were the instruments that were used in the study and both were from the Phil-Iri Manual which was published last 2018 that serves as a guide in identifying the struggles of the students in reading. Aside from the Oral Reading Test and the summary of Miscues from the Phil-Iri Manual, the researcher also used the Phonemes Guide which was adapted from the published research of Pagi.

Data Analysis

The results of the Phil.IRI Oral Reading Tests were reviewed after data collection to determine whether any progress has been made from earlier assessments. The researcher analyzed the data to see if the Phonic approach has a significant impact on the reading skill of the nonreader students. A student's progress to a higher tier is shown by the percentages of words and questions properly answered based on test results.

The data gathered from 10 nonreader Grade 7 students in this study was subjected to the following statistical treatment:

Mean. This was used to determine the level of competence of the students according to their pretest and posttest result.

Paired T-Test. It is a statistical test that is used to compare the means of two groups. It is often used in hypothesis testing to determine whether a process or treatment actually has an effect on the population of interest, or whether two groups are different from one another (Bevans,2023). But, in this research, the researcher used the Paired T-Test because the group came from a single population and just measuring the before and after an experimental treatment.

Results and Discussion

The outcomes of the acquired data and the ensuing analysis are provided in this chapter in the order that the problems were presented. Additionally, data that was used to calculate and interpret the results was provided.

Competency level of the Oral Reading Pretest Scores

Table 1 shows the results of the competency level of the pretest scores of the students.

Table 1. *Competency Level of the Oral Reading Pretest Scores*

Subjects	Mispronunciation (Maling Bigkas)	Omission (Pagkakaltas)	Substitution (Pagpapalit)	Insertion (Pagsasingit)	Repetition (Pag-uulit)	Transposition (Pagpapalit ng lugar)	Reversal (Paglilipat)	Total Miscues (Kabuuan)	Number of Words in the Passage	Oral Reading Score	Reading Level (Antas ng Pagbasa)
1								152	152	0	Non-reader
2								152	152	0	Non-reader
3								152	152	0	Non-reader
4								152	152	0	Non-reader
5								152	152	0	Non-reader
6								152	152	0	Non-reader
7								152	152	0	Non-reader
8								152	152	0	Non-reader
9								152	152	0	Non-reader
10								152	152	0	Non-reader

The table above shows the level of competency of the students before the conduct of the study. As the scores were 0, students were labeled as non-readers based on the Phil-IRI Manual. The Oral reading scores were calculated by the number of words in the passage

read minus the number of miscues divided by the number of words in the passage multiplied by 100. The researcher interpreted the reasons as to why these students are still nonreaders. One of the reasons is the lack of guidance from parents or guardians due to their busy schedule. Prioritizing work to put food on the table rather than giving a little attention to their children's academes. Another reason is the lack of interest in reading and having a short span of attention. Instead of focusing to improve their reading skill, they prefer playing outside with friends. Therefore, the researcher selected these students to help them read.

Competency level of the Oral Reading Posttest Scores

Table 2 shows the results of the competency level of the posttest scores of the students.

Table 2. *Competency Level of the Oral Reading Posttest Scores*

Subjects	Mispronunciation (Maling Bigkas)	Omission (Pagkakaltas)	Substitution (Pagpapalit)	Insertion (Pagsisingit)	Repetition (Pag-uulit)	Transposition (Pagpapalit ng lugar)	Reversal (Paglilipat)	Total Miscues (Kabuuan)	Number of Words in the Passage	Oral Reading Score	Reading Level (Antas ng Pagbasa)
1	21	5	13	0	11	1	21	72	152	52.63%	Frustration
2	34	4	13	0	11	1	6	69	152	54.60%	Frustration
3	47	3	8	6	21	0	0	85	152	44.07%	Frustration
4	13	3	7	0	42	5	0	70	152	53.94%	Frustration
5	9	4	15	0	21	11	7	67	152	55.92%	Frustration
6	25	5	9	0	21	4	7	71	152	53.28%	Frustration
7	21	11	6	0	11	1	8	58	152	61.84%	Frustration
8	17	3	7	0	9	2	8	46	152	69.73%	Frustration
9	25	4	8	0	15	6	11	69	152	54.60%	Frustration
10	23	3	5	1	15	0	7	54	152	65.13%	Frustration

Table 2 shows the level of competence of the students after conducting the Phonic Approach. The experiment was done for 6 sessions for each subject and in that short period, the reading level of the students went higher. From nonreaders, the students took a step forward and reached the frustration level. This proved that Phonic Approach in teaching reading is effective.

Significant difference between the mean scores of the pretest and posttest scores of the students

Table 3 shows the results of the paired t-test used to compare the scores of the pretest and posttest.

Table 3. *Comparison of the Pretest and Posttest Scores*

Variables	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
Pretest	0.00	0.00
Posttest	56.4	7.35

	Mean	*p-value*	*t-value*	*Decision*
Pretest	0.00	0.00	-24.261	Significant
Posttest	56.4			

Paired t- test was conducted to test the significant difference between the oral reading pretest and posttest scores of the students who have undergone the experiment. From the mean 0.00 in the pretest, the effectiveness of the approach was clearly visible through the mean of the posttest which is 56.4. Further, the P-Value is 0.000 less than 0.05, indicating that the approach is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and there was a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores.

Competency level of the Pretest Scores. In the pretest scores of the students, everyone got 0 in the oral reading. This suggests that the teacher must use a useful strategy to improve the reading skill of the students. According to Kadir (2014), teachers must work to make reading a meaningful process for students and take the time to get to know their individual reading motivations. Indeed, it is the teacher's responsibility to understand the students' needs. By learning the desires of the students, teachers can be able to look for the best strategies to address those needs.

Reading is yet the best skill a person must have. Wallace (2003, as cited in Kadir, et al.,2014) states that there are three personal reasons for reading: we read to survive (reading for survival), we read to learn (reading for learning), and we read for pleasure (reading for pleasure). Thus, to survive, to learn and to please oneself, one of the best strategies to start teaching reading is the Phonic Approach.

Paris (2018) said phonic approach is probably the best known and widely used approach to teach reading and writing in English language. This approach encourages learners to decode written letters by sound based on the grapheme. It will allow students to learn the regular pattern of words including the rules of letters pronunciation, it is allowing for easier reading.

Competency level of the Posttest Scores. Based on the result of the posttest of oral reading, students' scores went higher after implementing the strategy. This implies that Phonic Approach used by the researcher as an intervention has a great impact on the performance of the students. Pearson (2004) (as cited in Bowers, 2020) said systematic phonics is claimed to be more effective. Also, Ehri (2020) stated that this approach gives you the fundamental knowledge that initiates the process of students becoming alphabetic readers and facilitates their progression through the stages. Undeniably, as can be attested by the results of the posttest, the phonic approach helps students to recognize patterns that can be applied to a wide range of words and is very effective in helping students become fluent readers and confident communicators.

Differences between the competency level of the Pretest and Posttest Scores. The level of competence of the students before and after the experiment testified to completely reject the null hypothesis as there was a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores of the learners. Phonic approach was an effective method for students to identify and read the words. Strong reading skills are essential for students' learning, and phonics instruction seems to be a foundational piece of literacy instruction, as highlighted by the NRP (NICHD, 2000, as cited in Gonzales, 2019). The ability to read is the most important skill a person must have to survive and after the experiment using the Phonic approach, the posttest scores showed that the learners can survive in this challenging world.

Conclusions

The reading competency level of the students was significantly different. Therefore, the interference of using Phonic Approach in teaching reading as intervention in developing reading literacy was effective as proven in the results of the oral reading tests.

Based on the conclusions derived from the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby presented: English language teachers must give more attention to the students who have difficulty in reading and implement the phonic approach as soon as possible. The process of reading instruction should be between teachers and learners to give privacy and to provide an environment where they can be free and make mistakes without any judgment. Phonics instruction should be part of every literacy teacher's repertoire. Therefore, collaborative instruction from all the language teachers must be supported by the school community. The School Administrators should encourage, support, and strictly implement reading programs. Future researchers are advised to adopt the Phonic Approach as a reading intervention because it has a significant effect on students' accomplishment levels.

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