

ผลของการสอนแบบโฟนิกส์ต่อความสามารถในการอ่านคำศัพท์ของนักเรียนชั้น ประถมศึกษาที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ

Effect of Phonics Instruction on Thai EFL Primary Students' Word Reading Ability

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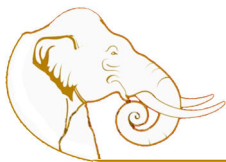
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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาวิจัยเรื่อง ผลของการสอนแบบโฟนิกส์ต่อความสามารถในการอ่านคำศัพท์ของนักเรียนชั้นประถมศึกษาที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1. เพื่อตรวจสอบผลกระทบของการสอนโฟนิกส์ต่อความสามารถในการอ่านคำศัพท์ของผู้เรียน ที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ 2. เพื่อสำรวจการรับรู้ของผู้เรียน EFL กลุ่มตัวอย่างผ่านการสุ่มตามความสะดวก เพื่อศึกษาความคิดเห็นของนักเรียนที่มีต่อการจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบโฟนิกส์ การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยแบบผสมวิธี โดยเครื่องมือที่ใช้เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล ได้แก่ ข้อสอบวัดความรู้ความสัมพัทธ์เสียงและตัวอักษร (LSR) และข้อสอบอ่านออกเสียงคำศัพท์ (WRT) โดยใช้สถิติ t-test ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณผ่านโปรแกรมซอฟต์แวร์ SPSS อีกทั้งยังใช้วิธีการสนทนากลุ่มในการเก็บข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพและวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพผ่านการวิเคราะห์แก่นสาระผลการวิจัยพบว่า

การอ่านคำเป็นสิ่งที่จำเป็นสำหรับการพัฒนาคำศัพท์และเชื่อมโยงกับการรับรู้และการเข้าใจ การศึกษาผลกระทบของการสอนแบบโฟนิกส์ต่อนักเรียนชั้นประถมศึกษาจำนวน 13 คน ในประเทศไทยที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ โดยใช้โปรแกรมซอฟต์แวร์ SPSS ในการประเมินผลก่อนเรียนและหลังเรียนจากข้อสอบ LSRT และข้อสอบ WRT ซึ่งได้ผลว่าคะแนนสอบหลังเรียนนั้นสูงกว่าคะแนนสอบก่อนเรียนอย่างมีนัยยะสำคัญ นอกจากนี้การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพที่เก็บข้อมูลผ่านวิธีการสนทนากลุ่มยังทำให้ทราบถึงความคิดเห็นของผู้เรียนต่อการสอนแบบโฟนิกส์ที่ไม่เพียงแต่ช่วยเพิ่มความมั่นใจและทักษะการอ่านคำแต่ยังรวมไปถึงการรับรู้ข้อปรับปรุงของการสอนแบบโฟนิกส์ ซึ่งบ่งชี้ถึงความสำคัญของความหลากหลายในวิธีการสอนเพื่อเสริมสร้างการมีส่วนร่วมและประสิทธิภาพของกระบวนการเรียนการสอน

คำสำคัญ การสอนแบบโฟนิกส์; ความสามารถ; การอ่านคำศัพท์ของนักเรียน; ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ



Abstract

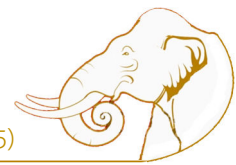
The research study on the effect of phonics teaching on vocabulary reading ability of primary school students learning English as a foreign language aimed to 1. Examine the effect of phonics teaching on vocabulary reading ability of learners learning English a foreign language 2. The perception of EFL learners through convenience sampling to study the students on phonics teaching a mixed-method research instruments used to collect data were Sound-Letter Relation Test (LSR) and the Word Pronunciation Test (WRT) t-test used to analyze quantitative data using the SPSS software progra In addition, focus group discussion was used to collect qualitative data and analyzed qualitative data through thematic analysis The research results found that

Reading words is essential for vocabulary development and is linked to perception and comprehension, linking recognition and understanding Study of the impact of phonics teaching 13 primary school EFL learners in Thailand. Using SPSS, pre- and post-test scores from the LSRT and WRT were analyzed, revealing that posttest scores were significantly higher than pretest scores. In addition, the analysis of qualitative data collected through focus group discussions revealed learners' opinions on phonics instruction not only in terms of increasing confidence and word reading skills, but also their perceptions of improvements in phonics instruction, indicating the importance of diversity in teaching methods to enhance participation and effectiveness of the teaching process.

Keywords: Teaching phonics; Ability; Reading Students' of vocabulary; English as a foreign language.

Introduction

The importance of vocabulary development for reading comprehension is widely recognized in academic literature (Nation, 2022; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021). While incidental learning is valuable, deliberate teaching methods have proven effective (Bubchaiya & Sukying, 2022; Elgort & Nation, 2010; Hulstijn, 2003; Nation, 2007; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021; Yowaboot & Sukying, 2022). Understanding this relationship is crucial, especially for learners engaging with complex texts, where the acquisition of new vocabulary is essential (Nation, 2022; Ehri, 2014). Strategies encouraging learners to pronounce unfamiliar words aloud during reading contribute to vocabulary expansion by activating spelling-sound mappings (Nation, 2022), supporting reading skills and comprehension. For L2 learners, a robust vocabulary is integral to language proficiency (Nation, 2022; Schmitt, 2008; Sukying, 2023). However, challenges such as learning disabilities and limited exposure to English hinder vocabulary acquisition (Sukying, 2021;

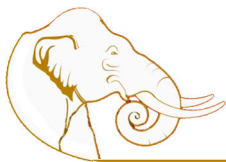


Yunus et al, 2016). Educators can address these challenges through various instructional methods, including word lists and reading activities, which reinforce and retain vocabulary

Research suggests deliberate vocabulary teaching methods, such as word analysis and word cards, benefit L2 learners. This approach is effective for young learners as well. Nation's noticing hypothesis underscores conscious awareness in L2 vocabulary acquisition, supporting focus-on-form instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Long, 1996; Matwangsang & Sukying, 2023; Methapisittikul & Sukying, 2023; Tomita & Spada, 2013). However, a balanced approach to vocabulary teaching is crucial to prevent hindering holistic language skill development (Nation, 2022). Phonics instruction, emphasizing grapheme-phoneme relationships, benefits EFL beginners, enhancing decoding and spelling skills, leading to improved reading proficiency (Adams, 1994; Lane & Pullen, 2004; Shenoy et al., 2022; Wichayut & Sitthitikul, 2019). Effective across languages and for second language learners, phonics instruction improves phonological decoding and vocabulary acquisition (Li & Woore, 2021). Early phonics interventions benefit pre-reading kindergarteners at risk for dyslexia, emphasizing the importance of timely instruction in mitigating reading difficulties (Vanden Bempt et al., 2021). While phonics instruction's efficacy in vocabulary acquisition is established, further research is needed to explore its impact on Thai EFL primary school learners' word reading ability. The study aimed to investigate the relationship between phonics instruction and vocabulary acquisition among Thai EFL primary school learners. Specifically, it examined phonics instruction's effect on their word reading ability and their perceptions of its impact. Focused on grades four to six at a rural elementary school near Surin City, Thailand, the research combined quantitative assessments of word reading abilities with qualitative exploration of learners' perceptions of phonics instruction.

This study addressed a notable gap in the literature by investigating the impact of phonics instruction on young EFL learners in a primary school context and the perception of the learners. By elucidating the effects of phonics instruction on word reading ability and vocabulary acquisition, the research aimed to provide valuable insights for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. Understanding the efficacy of phonics instruction in enhancing reading skills and vocabulary acquisition can inform instructional practices and interventions tailored to the needs of EFL learners, ultimately contributing to more effective language education strategies. Therefore, the researcher formulated two research questions to guide this study:

1. To examine the effect of phonics instruction on Thai EFL primary school learners' word reading ability are intricately connected within linguistic systems (Nation, 2022). Mastery of vocabulary entails understanding systematic sound-spelling correspondences in both written and spoken forms, essential for reading acquisition. Vocabulary form knowledge encompasses spoken and written forms, along with word parts



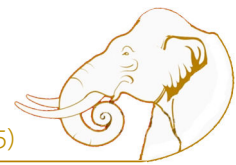
(Nation, 2022). Proficiency in pronunciation and stress placement is vital for spoken form knowledge, while spelling proficiency relies on phonological structure representation and reading strategies. Word meaning consists of form and meaning connection, concepts and referents, and associations (Nation, 2022). Understanding these aspects is crucial for vocabulary comprehension and semantic relationships among words. Word use involves grammatical functions, collocations, and constraints on use (Nation, 2022). Grammatical knowledge and vocabulary choice influence correct usage and sentence construction. Cultural and linguistic contexts shape word usage, highlighting the importance of considering these factors to avoid misuse.

The Role of Word Knowledge in Word Reading

Word knowledge, essential for proficient word reading, encompasses receptive and productive spoken forms (Ehri, 2022). Orthographic features, such as letter-sound relationships, contribute to accurate reading (Ehri, 2022). Vocabulary knowledge predicts decoding and comprehension (Xie, Cai, & Yeung, 2022) and correlates strongly with early reading skills (Dickinson, Nesbitt, & Hofer, 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2022). Incidental learning, occurring unintentionally during various activities, benefits advanced learners (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001). Deliberate vocabulary teaching methods, supported by research, improve vocabulary acquisition (Bubchaiya & Sukying, 2022; Elgort & Nation, 2010; Hulstijn, 2003; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021; Yowaboot & Sukying, 2022). Schmidt's noticing hypothesis emphasizes conscious awareness in language learning (Schmidt, 1990, 2010). Deliberate vocabulary learning surpasses incidental learning due to its focused approach and efficient retention rates, making it preferred for second language learners (Hulstijn, 2003; Nation & Meara, 2013). Research underscores the link between word knowledge and reading ability (Ehri, 2022; Xie, Cai, & Yeung, 2022; Zhang & Zhang, 2022). Vocabulary breadth and depth significantly impact reading comprehension (Al Qunayeer, 2021; Röthlisberger, Zangger, & Juska-Bacher, 2023), emphasizing vocabulary's role in overall language skills (Furqanul, Feisal, & Burhan Eko, 2020; Kang, 2020).

Concept of Phonics

Phonics, the study of letter-sound relationships, enhances decoding and spelling skills, crucial for proficient reading. Explicit phonics instruction supports overall language proficiency and literacy development, rooted in the alphabetic principle and phonological awareness (Byrne, 1998; Foorman et al., 2003). Effective instruction combines alphabetic principles with learners' phonological awareness, emphasizing segmenting and blending sounds (Foorman et al., 2003). Phonological awareness, defined by Anthony and Francis (2005), involves recognizing, manipulating, and discriminating language sounds, essential for reading and writing. Recent research suggests it's influenced by genetics, intelligence, and language experiences, aiding in early identification of reading difficulties (Anthony & Francis,



2005). Phonological awareness training improves phoneme awareness, reading, and spelling, particularly with letter instruction (Anthony & Francis, 2005).

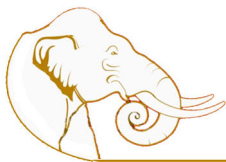
Approach to Phonics Instruction

Phonics instruction encompasses teaching learners about phoneme and grapheme relationships, with two main approaches: synthetic and analytic phonics (Johnston & Watson, 2007). Analytic phonics, popular in the UK, initially focuses on sight recognition before teaching letter sounds, emphasizing word families based on shared initial sounds (Johnston & Watson, 2007). Conversely, synthetic phonics emphasizes blending letter sounds from the outset, aiding in the pronunciation of unfamiliar words (Johnston & Watson, 2007). Analytic phonics in the UK typically delays sounding and blending for reading, with an extended period dedicated to teaching initial sounds (Johnston & Watson, 2007). On the other hand, synthetic phonics starts sounding and blending shortly after school begins, with a focus on combining letter sounds (Johnston & Watson, 2007). Explicit phonics instruction involves directly teaching letter-sound correspondences, while implicit instruction integrates sound-letter relationships within whole words (Johnston & Watson, 2007).

Related Study

The correlation between word knowledge and reading comprehension is well-established, especially among second language (L2) learners (Masrai, 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2022; Xie, Cai, & Yeung, 2022; Al Qunayeer, 2021). Studies consistently highlight the vital role of vocabulary breadth and depth in influencing L2 reading comprehension across various contexts (Masrai, 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2022; Xie, Cai, & Yeung, 2022; Al Qunayeer, 2021). Moreover, beyond comprehension, word knowledge correlates with other reading abilities such as scanning skills and reading fluency (Furqanul, Feisal, & Burhan Eko, 2020; Röthlisberger, Zangger, & Juska-Bacher, 2023; Kang, 2020). Early language skills and morphological awareness also play crucial roles in reading ability (Dickinson, Nesbitt, & Hofer, 2019; Xie, Cai, & Yeung, 2022).

Phonics instruction is fundamental for developing early reading skills and enhancing literacy proficiency, benefiting students across diverse educational settings (Shenoy et al., 2022; Wichayut & Sitthitikul, 2019; Li & Woore, 2021). Digital-based phonics programs offer additional avenues for literacy skill development, with positive outcomes reported (Shenoy et al., 2022; Li & Woore, 2021). Perceptions of phonics instruction among educators and students are generally positive, emphasizing its importance for English Language Learners (ELLs) and as a word-attack skill (Shenoy et al., 2022; Li & Woore, 2021). Tailored approaches and differentiated instruction are highlighted as key factors in optimizing phonics instruction (Shenoy et al., 2022; Li & Woore, 2021). Overall, research underscores the critical role of phonics instruction in early reading skill development and



literacy proficiency, emphasizing the need for informed decision-making to support student success (Shenoy et al., 2022; Li & Woore, 2021).

Method

Participants and Setting

The research in a rural elementary school near Surin City, Thailand, focused on evaluating the efficacy of English language instruction for students in grades four through six, within an English as a foreign language (EFL) context. Thirteen students, aged 9 to 12, were selected from three intact classes for the study, which emphasized rote memorization and mimicry as primary learning strategies due to resource limitations. Prior to participation, all students received comprehensive briefings on research objectives and procedures, with parental consent obtained to ensure adherence to ethical research practices and respect for participant rights.

2. To explore Thai EFL primary school learners' perception of phonics instruction to improve word reading ability The Letter-Sound Recognition Task (LSRT) serves as a diagnostic tool to assess students' understanding of spoken word forms. It includes 22 items where students identify words from audio tracks. To ensure fairness, audio transmission occurs through a centrally placed wireless speaker. Words are selected from common Thai textbooks (Smile 4, Smile 5 and Smile 6), aligning with phonics guidelines and the General Service List's first 1000 words. Participants were asked to choose the word they hear in each item. Participants earn one point for choosing correct answers. The LSRT undergoes validation by experts and pilot testing to refine its format and content, ensuring reliability.

Word Reading Task (WRT)

The Word Reading Task (WRT) assesses students' word reading proficiency, aligning with Nation's (2022) principles of vocabulary knowledge. It evaluates phoneme-grapheme relationships and blending skills through the reading of 22 words aloud. These words are carefully selected from Smile series textbooks and the first 1000 words in the General Service List (GSL). Administered individually three days post-treatment. Scoring involves awarding two points for correct pronunciation, one point for slight errors, and none for unreadable or completely incorrect pronunciations. Each participant has one minute to read each word. The task's design draws inspiration from the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE) by Torgesen et al. (1999). Prior to implementation, validation procedures, including expert evaluation and pilot testing, refine the task's format and content, ensuring its reliability and effectiveness in measuring students' word reading proficiency.

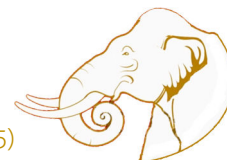


Table 1 illustrates the scoring criteria of the Word reading task

Instruction: Read each word you drawn (คำชี้แจง: ให้นักเรียนอ่านออกเสียงคำที่จับสลากได้)

The target word	The sound pronounced	Score
hat	/hæt/	2
hat	/hæd/	1
hat	/hid/	0

Focus group

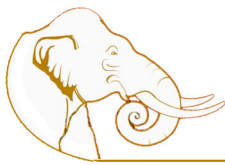
The focus group discussion explored participants' attitudes toward phonics instruction. Prior to the discussion, participants were categorized into "low" and "high" groups based on their performance in the Word Reading Task (WRT). Structured around four questions to guide the discussion, the discussion assessed changes in word reading abilities post-treatment, evaluated improvement levels, identified any negative experiences, and highlighted specific benefits of phonics instruction. To ensure accessibility, questions were translated into participants' first language. Pencils and paper were provided for documentation, and responses were recorded using a camera phone. Participants followed speaking protocols, one speaker at a time. This streamlined approach aimed to capture participants' viewpoints on the efficacy, benefits, and limitations of phonics instruction in enhancing word reading capabilities.

Results

The effect of phonics instruction on Thai EFL primary students' word reading ability

This section presents an analysis of the word reading test scores of Thai primary school students using SPSS 29.0 software. Receptive knowledge was assessed with the Letter and Sound Recognition Test (LSRT), while productive knowledge was measured through the Word Reading Test (WRT). Descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and standard deviations, were utilized.

On the LSRT pretest, students scored an average of 14 (63.64%), with a standard deviation of 5.97. In the posttest, the mean score increased to 17 (77.27%), with a standard deviation of 4.46. The paired *t*-test value for LSRT is 5.52, indicating a significant improvement. Regarding the WRT, students averaged 5.08 (11.54%) on the pretest, with a standard deviation of 7.57. In the posttest, the mean score rose to 8.92 (20.28%), with a standard deviation of 9.22. The paired *t*-test value for WRT is 6.58, also indicating a significant improvement. These findings suggest that Thai primary school students excel more in receptive knowledge tests compared to productive knowledge tests in word reading, indicating a higher cognitive processing demand for the productive knowledge test.

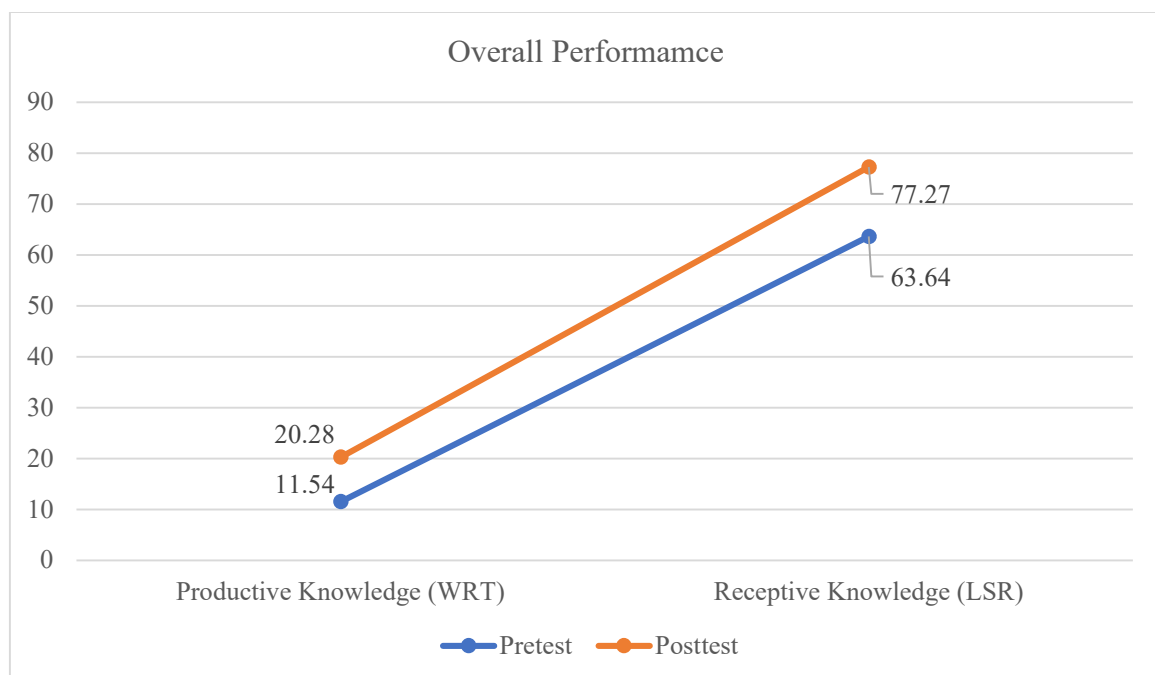
**Table 2** Summary of students' performance on receptive and productive written form knowledge

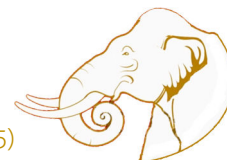
Tests	Pretest			Posttest			t-value	d
	\bar{x}	%	S.D.	\bar{x}	%	S.D.		
Letter Sound Recognition test (LSR)	14	63.64	5.97	17	77.27	4.66	5.52*	0.56
Word Reading Test (WRT)	5.08	11.54	7.57	8.92	20.28	9.22	6.58*	1.83

Notes: *Significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$), $N = 13$

The results of the dependent-samples t-test revealed significant differences between the pretest and posttest scores for both the Letter and Sound Recognition Test (LSRT) and the Word Reading Test (WRT). Specifically, the LSRT showed a moderate effect size ($t = 5.52$; $p < 0.05$, $d = 0.56$), while the WRT demonstrated a large effect size ($t = 6.58$; $p < 0.05$, $d = 1.83$).

These findings indicate that the phonics instruction intervention had a statistically significant impact on improving students' word reading abilities, as evidenced by the significant differences in scores between the pretest and posttest. Additionally, the effect sizes suggest that the intervention had a more substantial effect on the WRT compared to the LSRT. These results are visually depicted in Figure 1 for clearer interpretation.

**Figure 1** Summary of pre and posttest score mean percentage of overall performance



Participants' perceptions of phonics instruction

This section provides an overview of the findings regarding participants' perceptions of phonics instruction and its impact on word reading. The data were derived from qualitative analysis of responses from thirteen participants in focus group interviews, categorized into low and high proficiency groups based on word reading performance. Thematic content analysis revealed three main themes: learning environment, benefits of phonics instruction, and challenges. Subthemes included positive and negative aspects of the learning environment, mental benefits and word reading skill improvements from phonics, and challenges such as engagement and limitations. See Table 3 for a detailed breakdown of themes and subthemes.

Table 3 The salient themes for qualitative data analysis

Themes	Sub-themes	Salient characteristics
learning atmosphere	positive	fun, easy, enjoyable, exciting
	negative	boring
benefits of the instruction	mental benefit	confident, feel better toward English subject, calm, proud, feel good about themselves
	word reading ability	can read new words, useful, helpful
instruction's challenge	engagement	boring, redundant
	limitation	take longer time to read words, doesn't help with longer words, doesn't help with meaning learning

Learning Atmosphere

Students' perceptions of engagement in learning activities were explored, revealing two distinct subthemes: "positive" and "negative." The "positive" subtheme reflected eight participants' optimistic attitudes towards phonics instruction, finding it straightforward and enjoyable. Conversely, the "negative" subtheme, expressed by four individuals, likened phonics to experiences from early education, citing boredom due to repetitive exercises.

Example excerpt of a participants under the subtheme positive

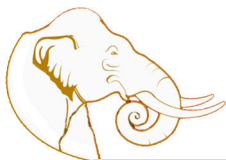
"I love this way of learning new words. I don't have to remember what the new word sounds like, and I can just read it out after blending the sounds. It is a lot easier to read new words through this technique." -H1

Example excerpt of a participants under the subtheme negative

"I think it's somewhat boring. It feels like something for grade 1 students." -L2

Benefits of the Instruction

Benefits of the Instruction: Participants perceived advantages of phonics training over traditional methods, identifying "mental advantage" and "word reading proficiency" as subthemes. Six participants reported enhanced confidence and improved attitudes, while eleven noted improved word reading ability and comprehension.



Example excerpt of a participants under the subtheme mental benefits

“I think it helps me read words better. Like, I no longer have to wait to ask the teacher how to read new words. I can be in my house and see a new word and just be able to read it, and that makes me feel good about myself.” -H4

Example excerpt of a participants under the subtheme word reading ability

“I think this technique is beneficial for us. It helps us read more complex words more easily.” -L8

Instruction's Challenge

The theme of challenges in instruction examines students' perceptions of the obstacles encountered during the intervention. Subthemes include "engagement" and "limitation." Five participants expressed boredom due to the repetitive nature of alphabet learning, while four noted limitations in the effectiveness of the instruction, particularly with extended reading durations and vocabulary comprehension.

Example excerpt of a participants under the subtheme engagement

“I like the teaching, but learning the same alphabet repeatedly is somewhat redundant for some people.” -H5

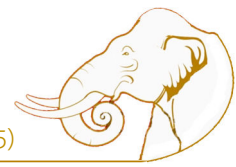
Example excerpt of a participants under the subtheme limitation

“I know that it helped because I can read simple words now, but I think it's still hard for me to read longer words.”

Discussion and Conclusion

The enhancement of the word reading ability

This study investigates the impact of phonics instruction on improving English word reading skills among Thai primary school students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Phonics instruction, known for its effectiveness, targets the relationship between sounds and letters, addressing a fundamental aspect of English reading, crucial for Thai learners due to language differences (Masrai, 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2022; Dandee & Pornwiriyaakit, 2022). To assess the effectiveness of phonics instruction, researchers utilized tailored assessments—The Letter and Sound Recognition Test (LSRT) and the Word Reading Test (WRT)—establishing a benchmark for evaluating phonics instruction (Masrai, 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2022; Dandee & Pornwiriyaakit, 2022). Results demonstrated significant improvements in word reading skills among primary school students, emphasizing phonics instruction's multifaceted impact on vocabulary acquisition and language proficiency (Masrai, 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2022; Dandee & Pornwiriyaakit, 2022). Moreover, qualitative analysis revealed students' positive perceptions of phonics instruction, noting its role in enhancing word reading ability, confidence, and self-esteem, though some challenges were acknowledged, including engagement and limitations (Masrai, 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2022; Dandee & Pornwiriyaakit, 2022). This study adds to existing literature, reinforcing the



importance of phonics instruction in language acquisition, highlighting its universal applicability across diverse educational settings and learner populations (Masrai, 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2022; Dandee & Pornwiriyaakit, 2022).

Conclusion

This study examines the impact of phonics instruction on improving English word reading skills among Thai primary school students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Statistical analysis reveals significant improvements in word reading ability post-phonics instruction, echoing prior research. The systematic approach, particularly using the Jolly Phonics method, proves effective across different age groups and educational levels, highlighting its importance in primary education. Qualitative analysis reveals mixed student perceptions, with some finding phonics engaging and beneficial, while others perceive it as repetitive. Despite challenges, students report increased confidence and self-esteem, underscoring the importance of addressing individual learning needs and preferences. This research underscores the value of phonics instruction in literacy and language development, suggesting the need for instructional enhancements to ensure a comprehensive educational experience for all students.

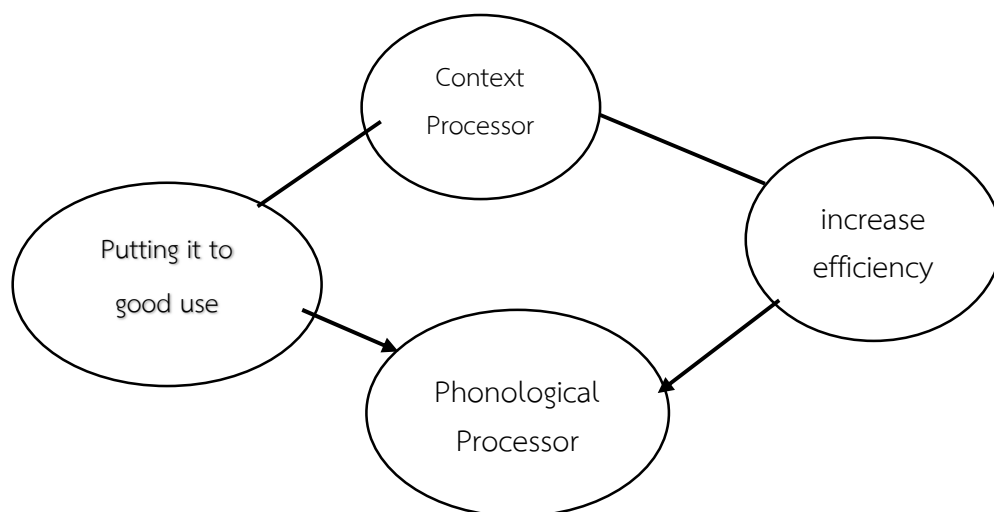
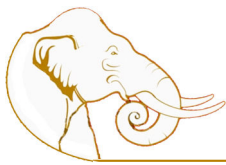


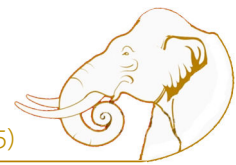
Image chart Effect of Phonics Instruction on Thai EFL Primary Students' Word Reading Ability.

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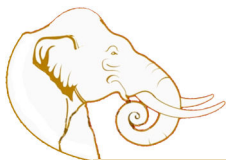
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