



**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
OF SANTIAGO DE GUAYAQUIL
FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
SCHOOL OF PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN
LANGUAGES-ENGLISH**

TITLE OF PAPER

**Development of reading skills through phonemic awareness
in 5th grade EFL students in Daule.**

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**SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR
OBTAINING THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN EFL PEDAGOGY**

PROJECT ADVISOR

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GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR

21th of February of 2025



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We certify that this research project was presented by **Espinel Alvarado, Fernando Nahin** as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **Bachelor's Degree in EFL Pedagogy**.

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- <https://doi.org/10.3389/ijpsy.2020.00751>

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To every word of encouragement, every bit of help from my classmates, every question my teachers answered, and every student who reminded me how fantastic this job is. Thanks for giving me reasons to keep going and making me want to do my best every day.

Fernando Nahin Espinel Alvarado

DEDICATION

My family, pet, and friends always cheered me up when I doubted I had chosen the right path. In the end, the path doesn't matter as much as the fact that they were there; they are here, and I know they always will be one way or another.

Fernando Nahin Espinel Alvarado



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ABSTRACT

Phonemic awareness is crucial in reading instruction because it allows students to recognize and manipulate sounds, facilitating word decoding and text comprehension. This research focused on evaluating the development of phonemic awareness to improve the reading skills of 5th-grade EFL students at the *Unidad Educativa Bilingüe Torremar*. A descriptive methodology was used with a mixed approach (quantitative and qualitative) through a test for the students and an in-depth interview with the teacher. The participants who made up this research were ten male students from level A with an A2 English proficiency level. The main findings obtained were that students demonstrated a moderate level of phonemic awareness with a score ranging from 5.5 to 10, the development of phonemic awareness directly affects students' reading skills, and teaching strategies to improve reading skills through phonemic awareness include reading aloud, use of audio materials, among others.

Keywords: Phonemic awareness, Reading skills, Reading fluency, Reading comprehension, teaching strategies, EFL.

RESUMEN

La conciencia fonémica es una habilidad crucial en la instrucción de la lectura porque permite a los estudiantes reconocer y manipular sonidos, facilitando la decodificación de palabras y la comprensión de textos. Esta investigación se centró en la evaluación del desarrollo de la conciencia fonémica para mejorar las habilidades lectoras de los estudiantes de EFL de 5to grado en la Unidad Educativa Bilingüe Torremar. Se utilizó una metodología descriptiva con un enfoque mixto (cuantitativo y cualitativo) a través de un examen para los estudiantes y una entrevista en profundidad con el docente. Los participantes que conformaron esta investigación fueron diez estudiantes varones de nivel A con un nivel de competencia en inglés A2. Los principales hallazgos obtenidos fueron que los estudiantes demostraron un nivel moderado de conciencia fonémica con un puntaje que oscila entre 5.5 y 10, el desarrollo de la conciencia fonémica afecta directamente las habilidades lectoras de los estudiantes, y las estrategias de enseñanza para mejorar las habilidades lectoras a través de la conciencia fonémica incluyen la lectura en voz alta, uso de materiales de audio, entre otros.

Palabras Claves: Conciencia fonémica, Habilidades lectoras, Fluidez lectora, Comprensión lectora, Estrategias de enseñanza, Inglés como Lengua Extranjera.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Teaching phonemic awareness contributes to students' word reading and their ability to spell and read for months and years after training has ended. Various studies confirm the importance of teaching phonemic awareness from early childhood, as it allows students to identify and manipulate sounds, which is essential for developing reading skills and contributes to developing other EFL skills (Brady, 2020).

Phonemic awareness contributes to early reading development and supports the development of comprehension and general linguistic competence. It facilitates the learning of new words and enhances students' abilities to recognize sounds and interpret meaning in language (Nkurunziza, 2024).

Problem Statement

The four primary language skills—writing, reading, speaking, and listening—must be addressed in teaching and learning English. Although these skills are independent, they are interconnected by an inseparable bond and are equally important. They must be integrated effectively for successful teaching (Valdivieso & Argudo, 2022). Otherwise, inadequate skill practice can lead to significant challenges in EFL learning and future language proficiency.

In 5th grade at *Unidad Educativa Bilingüe Torremar*, students struggle with reading, one of the primary EFL skills. For instance, after taking a reading test, the students' overall reading average was 7, which reveals their deficiencies in this fundamental English language acquisition skill. In addition, it was shown that when taking another test, the students poorly interpreted the teacher's instructions, causing them to obtain grades between 6 and 7 and no outstanding grades. Reading limitations hinder English language acquisition, primarily when students focus on reading comprehension.

A prior interview with the institution's teachers revealed that students had inconsistent reading habits in 4th grade, primarily due to limited time spent reinforcing learning and providing adequate feedback. Teachers also mentioned that parents were concerned because their children struggled with reading, writing, and pronunciation. These issues stemmed from a lack of classroom and home practice. It is worth noting that one of the most significant difficulties when reading in EFL classes is the lack of phonemic awareness.

Irregular English practice negatively affects EFL learners' ability to develop their skills effectively, emphasizing the importance of greater exposure to the language for improved acquisition (Kilag et al., 2024). Mastering a new language like English is not solely based on academic efforts but is a dynamic process that requires constant practice. One of the main problems that students often face is a lack of practice (Kim, 2023).

Various studies indicate that students become more competent in all language skills if they practice reading. Despite its importance, many students have both reading and reading comprehension habits, either because reading habits have not been encouraged or due to ineffective teaching. Notably, acquiring the English language successfully in the future is unlikely without appropriate reading skills and strategies (Zulfiqar et al., 2022).

Phonemic awareness predicts reading comprehension and is a fundamental component for developing students' reading skills. Poor student performance is associated with low phonemic awareness, caused by inconsistency in reading practice, limiting the development and strengthening of phonemic awareness. Therefore, for meaningful learning to occur, regular practice and practical instruction in phonemic awareness are essential (Listyarini et al., 2022; Zahira & Andreani, 2023).

The General Basic Secondary Education Curriculum is relevant to this study because it establishes the foundations from a comprehensive perspective to develop students' reading skills and EFL comprehension. Likewise, it emphasizes that phonological and cognitive strategies must be used, essential

for word decoding. Also, the curriculum seeks to promote pronunciation and listening practices, which are necessary components of phonemic awareness and facilitate better reading comprehension and fluent reading by students. Consequently, the curriculum highlights phonemic awareness as a crucial teaching strategy for developing EFL learners' reading skills.

For this reason, this research aims to evaluate how 5th-grade EFL students develop phonemic awareness to improve their reading skills. Reading is fundamental to mastering all English language skills and implicitly supports the development of the other skills.

Relevance of the Problem

Phonemic awareness is fundamental in developing reading skills and understanding how letters relate to sounds, especially for EFL students. It enables word decoding, an essential aspect of early reading; it contributes to spelling, allowing students to identify specific sounds and relate them to the correct letters; and the more word encoding students practice, the more fluent reading and reading comprehension they will have (Liang & Fryer, 2024).

Learning phonemic skills allows beginning readers to organize and encode the alphabet for reading and spelling. Phonemic awareness is the final stage of phonological awareness because it reflects organizational skills at the most fundamental level of phonology, making it a crucial predictor of spelling and reading.

In this context, without consistent practice to reinforce students' learning skills, it will be more difficult for them to develop their reading abilities. As a result, they may carry these deficiencies throughout their academic journey, leading to poor academic performance and deficits in their knowledge of a second language. If one of the skills is not acquired correctly, it will limit the ability to master the rest. For this reason, it is crucial to conduct this study so that the results obtained can propose effective strategies that allow a solution to the

problem where phonemic instruction and the regular reading practice of students are improved.

Scope and Limitations

This research will be conducted from October 2024 to January 2025, focusing on 5th-grade EFL students at the *Unidad Educativa Bilingüe Torremar* and how they learn phonemic awareness at school to develop their reading skills. The limitations of this research are time and access to primary information, which will depend on the availability of the teachers.

Information Gap

How do 5th-grade EFL students learn phonemic awareness for reading skills development?

Research Questions

- What are the main theories and concepts related to phonemic awareness and reading skills?
- What is the level of phonemic awareness of students in terms of reading skills?
- How does developing phonemic awareness affect students' reading skills?
- What teaching strategies are most effective in promoting phonemic awareness and thus improving the reading skills of 5th-grade students?

○ **Main Objective**

To assess the development of phonemic awareness for reading skills in 5th-grade EFL learners.

Specific Objectives

- To establish the main theories and concepts related to phonemic awareness and reading skills.
- To assess students' level of phonemic awareness in reading skills.
- To determine the impact of phonemic awareness development on students' reading skills.
- To explore teaching strategies that promote phonemic awareness to improve 5th graders' reading skills.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Phonemic awareness is crucial for developing reading skills, especially for 5th-grade children who are beginning to create the foundations for reading. The most relevant theories related to the subject of study, the Theory of Cognitive Development, the Sociocultural Theory, and the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, have been considered to support this research.

Theory of Cognitive Development (Piaget)

Piaget's theory states that children go through different stages in their cognitive development, each characterized by unique ways of thinking and reasoning. The stages of cognitive development are sequential and universal, meaning that each child goes through them in the same order but at a different pace (Pakpahan & Saragih, 2022).

It is important to note that this theory states that children move from one phase to another when they reach the appropriate level of maturity and because they have been exposed to relevant experiences. In addition, the transitions between phases are not abrupt; instead, a transition occurs slowly as it merges with the next phase (Sanghvi, 2020). According to Malik & Marwaha (2024), these phases are:

- *Sensorimotor*: This phase spans from birth to about 2 years of age and occurs when children have mastered two phenomena: object permanence and causality. Children rely on their sensory and motor skills to manipulate and learn about their surroundings during this stage. As the frontal lobe matures and memory develops, children gain the ability to imagine situations without the need for them to experience any physical effects. This development represents the development of thought, allowing them to plan and anticipate their actions.
- *Preoperational*: This phase covers ages 2 to 7 and is where children begin to use mental representations such as language and symbolic thinking. During this phase, children participate in pretend and imitation

games. This stage is characterized by egocentrism, manifested as the inability of children to understand that others have emotions, feelings, and perspectives different from their own. Therefore, children perceive the world based on a self-centered perspective, considering that everything that happens to them is related to them. Egocentrism limits their ability to understand others and understand that they may see the world differently.

- *Concrete operations:* This phase extends from 7 to 11 years of age and is characterized by using logical operations to solve problems, including inductive reasoning and conservation. Children in this phase develop the ability to understand and analyze information.
- *Formal operations:* This phase begins around age 12 and continues into adulthood, where adolescents can use logical operations with the ability to make abstractions. Likewise, adolescents can formulate hypotheses and understand theories and ideas such as love and justice.

Piaget's theory is essential because children between 5 and 7 years old are between the preoperational and concrete operations phases. These developing capacities are more complex when carrying out mental operations. In this case, phonemic awareness is aligned with this theory because it allows children to develop analytical and synthetic capacities, which are crucial for breaking down words and understanding the relationship between their sounds.

Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky)

Vygotsky's theory postulates that the social environment profoundly influences the congenital development of people since individuals cannot develop mentally in isolation. According to Vygotsky, higher cognitive functions (abstract thinking, language, and problem-solving) are not innate or arise spontaneously. On the contrary, they are obtained through social interaction. These functions are acquired through the mediation of others (parents, peers, or teachers), who act as guides or models in learning (Alkhudiry, 2022).

This theory is considered one of the most influential in learning and has significantly influenced language teaching. According to the article, children perform better when they receive help from someone with more knowledge than when they work independently. This is called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which occurs in an interactive activity where a novice and an expert work together to achieve an expected result, and the expert transmits his or her experience to the novice (Sarmiento et al., 2022).

Vygotsky's theory is fundamental to this study because it emphasizes social and cultural interaction for cognitive development and the Zone of Proximal Development that improves performance in various activities. In this context, phonemic awareness is developed since children in the classroom improve their skills for identifying and manipulating sounds through collaborative activities with their peers. In addition, teacher guidance is essential as a learning mediator to help students in their zone of proximal development, thus facilitating their progress in understanding the relationship between words and sounds and their reading skills.

Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner)

Gardner's theory on multiple intelligences states that intelligence should not be conceived as a single, general ability but rather as a diverse set of skills independent of each other and manifested in different areas. Based on this theory, each person has a unique combination of intelligence, and their potential in each area differs from one person to another (Julita, 2024). These intelligences described by Gardner, which were initially seven and later included another, are (Morgan, 2021):

- *Spatial*: Ability to perceive the world in 3 dimensions, create mental images, and visualize objects and spaces.
- *Logical-mathematical*: Strong skills for the manipulation of numbers, with above-average abilities due to their knowledge of causal systems.

- *Interpersonal*: Ability to understand others, whether their moods, desires, intentions, or feelings.
- *Musical*: Ability to transform, perceive, and express musical forms.
- *Intrapersonal*: Ability to recognize internal aspects, that is, identify and interpret their feelings, emotions, etc.
- *Naturalistic*: Ability to recognize, use, and classify elements of the environment, whether artificial or natural.
- *Corporal-kinesthetic*: Ability to use their body parts to show their movement skills, solve problems, or create something.
- *Linguistic*: Strong linguistic abilities to understand others and express thoughts using their native and even different languages.

Gardner's theory serves as the basis for this research. Although theoretical knowledge is mainly related to linguistic intelligence, it also involves other intelligences, such as sound recognition, to identify patterns of phonemes and words. Phonemic awareness can be connected with different types of intelligence to encourage children's motivation and recognize the different ways of learning through phonemic awareness activities that Sean matches with his intelligence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research topic is Phonemic Awareness and Reading Skills Development in 5th Grade EFL Students in Daule, so it is necessary to delve deeper into the study's variables. The information obtained will serve as a basis for developing this research. The key topics to be addressed will be the teaching of English, phonemic awareness, reading skills, models of the reading process, reading comprehension and fluency, and reading strategies.

Sources for this literature review were selected based on their relevance to the study's focus, using keywords related to phonemic awareness and reading skills. To meet academic requirements, it was also essential to consider that the sources were in English and between 2020 and 2024. This allowed a selection of coherent sources that contribute to and support the research.

Teaching English

Globally, the demand for the English language has grown significantly over the years, as it is the most widely used foreign language globally and the most commonly used language for international relations and business (Mulatu & Regassa, 2021). English plays a pivotal role in global communication and is taught in numerous countries worldwide, as it is fundamental in various fields such as politics- communication, and culture. Effective English instruction's four skills must be considered: listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Astiantih et al., 2022).

In a globalized world, teaching English has become crucial for communication, job opportunities, and access to knowledge. Teaching English not only focuses on vocabulary or grammar but also involves developing skills so that people can correctly use the language. Because of this, it is important that students develop their skills from a very young age and become competent in mastering the English language (Andayani, 2022).

Phonemic awareness

Reading success is based on the development of phonemic awareness, which allows the identification and segmentation of phonemes in words. This ability helps encode and combine sounds to form new words. As phonemic awareness is strengthened, syllabic awareness improves, contributing to greater reading fluency (Listyarini et al., 2022).

Phonemic awareness refers to recognizing and manipulating sounds in spoken language and understanding their relationship to written symbols. In recent years, it has gained relevance because, together with phonological awareness, it is considered to lay the foundation for developing and acquiring reading skills (Milankov et al., 2021). Furthermore, awareness is regarded as a very important predictor of success in learning to read, significantly improving the reading skills of students with reading difficulties (Kwame, 2024).

Furthermore, phonemic awareness is the ability to analyze the sounds that makeup words. It is crucial for acquiring reading skills and is considered one of the strongest predictors of success in both writing and reading. Phonemic awareness contributes to understanding phonemes and their corresponding letters. Training this awareness dramatically improves spelling and reading performance (Sucena et al., 2021).

Likewise, phonemic awareness is the skill that enables children to consciously recognize and manipulate phonemes, which are the slightest sounds in spoken language. Phonemic awareness is a fundamental component of phonological awareness because it allows for identifying and manipulating phonemes. It thus plays a critical role in learning to read because it encourages children to connect their spoken language with written language. To develop practical reading skills, children must learn to manipulate the 44 phonemes of English instead of just knowing how each of the 26 letters of the alphabet sounds. Teaching phonemic awareness includes deleting sounds, sound inversion, combining phonemes in forming words, sound substitution, and segmenting words into phonemes (Andorka, 2021).

Since most words are formed from phonemes, phoneme blending allows students to form words and syllables. However, this does not imply that every word originates from two or more phonemes. Phonemic awareness is part of phonological awareness, allowing students to understand that similar words do not mean the same thing. One aspect that contributes to students efficiently segmenting and manipulating phonemes in words is understanding each word and its phoneme in isolation. For this reason, identifying phonemes in isolation is essential for improving word comprehension. In addition, it is beneficial for reading acquisition (Listyarini et al., 2022).

Based on these quotes, phonemic awareness is essential to developing students' reading skills, as it allows them to identify, segment, and manipulate phonemes in spoken words. Research highlights that adequate phonemic awareness development becomes a key predictor of reading success in the early stages of student learning. They need to learn English as a second language. Thus, a solid foundation is built through practical activities that enable students to decode words and develop later reading comprehension skills.

Reading skill

Reading involves constructing meaning for conciseness from textbooks, including information from the text, the reader's prior knowledge, and the context of the reading. Reading is not only a pleasurable activity and a source of information, but it is also a means to expand and consolidate knowledge of the language, allowing knowledge and understanding of foreign cultures to be developed. To efficiently teach reading, students must become autonomous readers. To do this, teachers must shift children's perceptions of the reading activity to get their attention and motivate them to read (Al Aziz & Yusanti, 2020).

In the same sense, reading refers to understanding and interpreting written texts; it is the basis of learning and is one of the most essential skills. Although achieving perfection in reading is a great challenge and requires specific

reading skills, it remains a lifelong ability necessary for academic, personal, and professional life. Despite its importance, reading is a great challenge for many students and represents one of the most difficult subjects to learn in schools (Octova, 2022).

An important aspect is that reading is a fundamental skill in linguistics, and academic failure or success depends mainly on the ability of students to read and understand texts according to the subjects they are taught. One of the main barriers to effective reading acquisition is ineffective teaching practice. This can be due to various factors, such as the use of methods that are not appropriate to the needs of students, lack of training in teaching, and lack of teaching resources. If teachers do not use teaching strategies that promote reading learning, students may have problems developing key skills such as phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, and fluency (Mulatu & Regassa, 2021).

Furthermore, reading is a step-by-step process to promote higher-order skills. Some elements of reading are comprehension, text analysis, decoding the message, and integrating ideas in the text. Students perform well with a strong foundation in prior knowledge and vocabulary. Furthermore, reading instruction contains five elements: word recognition, phonemic and phonics awareness, reading comprehension, and language. All of these elements allow readers to reach an acceptable level. Reading improved with techniques such as scanning (stopping the reader until finding the information to answer a specific question) and skimming (catching the main idea concerning the text) (Chamba & Ramirez, 2021).

Reading also depends on the simultaneous interaction of lower- and higher-order cognitive skills, which must be performed automatically, efficiently, and effortlessly. However, linguistic and non-linguistic factors also affect the reading process. The relationship between reading comprehension, motivation, and reading quantity varies depending on the students' social and cultural context (Savaşçı & Akyel, 2022).

Teaching reading skills involves implementing different strategies to help students develop their mastery. Essential to this process are strategies such as prediction, which consists of anticipating the content before proceeding with the reading. Likewise, the visualization strategy helps readers imagine the context and thus enrich their vocabulary. Questioning the text while reading is also essential because it allows for reflection and a deeper understanding of the text. Making inferences or taking notes facilitates the organization and interpretation of information. Finally, the strategy of summarizing what has been read helps to consolidate knowledge and ensure that there is a clear understanding of what is being read. Teachers need to identify the particular problems each student may have and use an educational approach that encourages appropriate strategies, as mentioned earlier (Mainar & Karthiga, 2023).

Children's mastery of reading skills determines their success in the teaching-learning process. To effectively teach early reading, teachers must understand its basic concepts: the thought process, the acquisition of skills, the association of reading with sound, comprehension, visual activity, anticipation of meaning, and information processing (Hutabarat & Zaidi, 2021).

According to the authors, reading is an essential skill for students in academics and personal and professional settings, allowing them to consolidate the acquisition of the English language. In addition to being the basis for learning, it is one of the most essential skills for mastering the language. To reach an excellent level, students must develop elements such as reading comprehension, phonemic awareness, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and word recognition. Although it is of great importance for some students, learning to read efficiently is a challenge. Therefore, institutions and teachers must promote the learning of reading through pedagogical techniques and motivate and encourage students to want to learn because reading is a skill that will serve them for life.

Models of the reading process

Within the reading process, there are three models: these are (Octova, 2022):

- *Bottom-up model:* This model decodes the smallest linguistic units, such as phonemes, graphemes, and words, before meaning is constructed. Readers must analyze each word in isolation to understand texts. However, this model makes retaining overall meaning and establishing relationships between words challenging since comprehension depends only on decoding individual units.
- *Top-down model:* Readers generally do not read each word in a text but instead focus on predicting the following words. This model operates on the principle that readers first understand the text as a whole and then use this information to understand the specific parts that make up a text.
- *Interactive model:* This model suggests that reading comprehension results from the constant interaction between the bottom-up and top-down models. In this model, readers not only focus on words and phonemes but also use their prior knowledge, the context of the text, and their expectations for interpreting and understanding the reading material. Therefore, the information is processed reciprocally and simultaneously. At the same time, readers decipher linguistic units and recognize words. They also infer, predict, and adjust according to their expectations about reading the text. This model provides a more dynamic and valuable understanding because the reading process is not linear; instead, it adapts continuously between deciphering words and interpreting the text globally.

As the author states, the reading process has three main models. First, the bottom-up model focuses on decoding the smallest units of language to build meaning progressively. Second, there is the top-down model, which prioritizes understanding the text in a general way before understanding the specific details. Third is the interactive model, which integrates elements of the previous models for a comprehensive understanding of the text. These models

highlight how readers process information from different perspectives to understand the texts effectively.

Reading comprehension

According to Mendoza et al. (2020), since the 20th century, reading comprehension has become increasingly necessary for most professions and education. Reading comprehension has become a critical skill, making it a key tool in all disciplines due to its contribution to developing professional skills. It is one of the four skills developed when learning a second language. It requires at least one hour of reading practice to meet the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) standards. Comprehension is constructing meaning from the text, making its instruction in the classroom essential for English language acquisition. Therefore, it should be taught both in and outside the classroom.

According to Capodieci et al. (2020), reading comprehension is the cognitive ability to interpret, reflect on, and understand the meaning of what is read. It is essential for children's development and favors their academic performance and adulthood. This cognitive ability combines linguistic skills such as grammar and vocabulary with cognitive skills such as working memory, metacognitive strategies, and comprehension skills such as generating inferences.

In line with Piñero & Cañedo (2024), reading comprehension is considered a crucial skill in the teaching process because it allows students to identify words, understand them, and reflect on the text. For readers to have a deep understanding, they must develop fluent word identification and thus not concentrate excessively on decoding, but rather on the text's interpretation and meaning. Reading comprehension is essential for students' academic success, allowing them to acquire new knowledge, actively participate in society, and improve their performance

According to Astiantih et al. (2022), reading comprehension is the ability to understand the ideas conveyed in texts, allowing readers to grasp the author's intended meaning successfully. It is a complex process that involves multiple components, including prior knowledge, reading strategies, interest in the topic, and the characteristics of the text itself.

Reading comprehension allows students to process and understand texts and establish connections between their prior knowledge and the content being taught. This implies an active interaction between the text and the reader since the reader uses his or her previous learning and experiences to interpret what he or she reads more meaningfully and profoundly. Some activities that improve reading comprehension are progressive reading, timed reading, and repeated reading. These activities not only help improve reading comprehension but also enhance readers' analytical and critical capacity, an essential aspect for effectively interpreting texts in different contexts (Chamba & Ramirez, 2021).

Reading comprehension depends on reading all or most of the words in a text. While word reading is necessary, it is insufficient for complete understanding. Developing basic word reading skills such as phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, print awareness, and word recognition is essential for enhancing reading comprehension. Additionally, knowledge and skills related to reading and word comprehension are crucial in improving overall reading competence (Duke et al., 2021).

The authors highlighted the importance of reading comprehension in teaching due to its necessity in both the educational and professional fields. Reading comprehension integrates cognitive and linguistic skills essential for acquiring English as a second language. Reading comprehension is a complex process, so it is vital to teach children a key function, such as phonemic awareness, which contributes to developing this skill and facilitates the process.

Reading fluency

Over the past twenty years, reading fluency has been recognized as a critical factor in reading success. Reading fluency, spelling, sight word reading, and pseudoword reading are significant predictors of reading performance, with reading fluency being the strongest predictor. Reading fluency is a key skill for students to learn to read. Fluency is primarily developed through oral reading. Therefore, readers need to practice (Rupley et al., 2020).

Reading fluency is the ability to read with prosody - automaticity and accuracy, contributing significantly to word decoding and reading comprehension. Reading with prosody, which involves reading with the correct intonation and rhythm, helps improve expressiveness in reading and facilitates understanding texts, as it allows better capture of the message's structure, nuances, and implicit emotions. Meanwhile, automaticity, which is the ability to recognize words without effort quickly, allows readers to devote their cognitive attention to more complex aspects, such as identifying relationships between concepts, integrating ideas, and inferring implicit meanings. Finally, reading accurately, correctly pronouncing, and reading words provide a solid foundation for a more profound understanding. These aspects of reading fluency play a fundamental role in readers' ability to understand texts (Duke et al., 2021) effectively.

Moreover, reading fluency is considered to be the ability to read unconsciously and automatically, and it involves a balance between speed, accuracy, and prosody. For students who are just beginning to read, developing reading fluency is an essential step towards reading comprehension because it facilitates the processing and understanding of texts. Reading fluency helps students become more confident and comfortable when reading, enhancing their ability to analyze and comprehend texts more efficiently. Without appropriate reading fluency, students spend much of their energy decoding words, limiting their ability to fully understand the meaning of texts (Jungjohann et al., 2023).

Reading comprehension and reading fluency are closely related. When students understand texts, they can read naturally and expressively, understanding the meaning of what they read. Reading comprehension allows students to read more effectively without constantly pausing to decipher sentences or words, enhancing fluency. Reading fluency is about reading speed, understanding, and connecting the content of texts meaningfully (Gómez & Rivadeneira, 2022).

Students develop reading fluency through repeated practice with short texts appropriate to their level of comprehension. These texts should be relevant - repetitive, and guided by their interests so that they become familiar with the vocabulary and structure. A fundamental element in assessing reading fluency is the ability to read with expression since this reflects the understanding of the content, intonation, and rhythm. In contrast, students who do not understand texts or read monotonously do not reflect reading fluency. Lack of reading comprehension prevents students from adequately interpreting the message of the texts, and, as a result, they are unable to read with the expression characteristic of fluent readers (Gómez & Rivadeneira, 2022).

According to the authors, reading fluency is crucial for developing reading skills and is the strongest predictor of reading performance. Reading fluency aids in word decoding and reading comprehension, both of which are essential for student learning. Reading comprehension is vital for achieving reading fluency; without proper understanding, reading fluency is hindered, impacting English language learning and the development of reading skills. Therefore, it is imperative to enhance reading comprehension and fluency, as they are interrelated, ensuring that students have meaningful learning experiences in acquiring English as a second language.

Reading strategies

In the academic field, reading strategies are essential to help students in their different reading activities. These represent how readers understand texts and their actions when they do not understand them. To improve reading skills,

students must constantly practice and use specific strategies that allow them to obtain the expected results. The skills that students demonstrate will depend on how they use the strategy to understand what the authors seek to convey through the texts. Reading strategies are used before, during, and after reading (Istiqomah et al., 2023). A significant challenge in text comprehension is using inappropriate strategies, making the application of effective reading strategies essential. Reading strategies are crucial in the learning process. These are classified into six groups (Andi, 2023):

- *Cognitive strategies*: Allow students to practice their structural and phonological skills in natural environments, allowing them to manipulate linguistic material through processes such as synthesis, reasoning, schematization, reorganization, and note-taking.
- *Metacognitive strategies*: These strategies refer to the reflective and conscious management within the learning process, enabling students to recognize their strengths, needs, and preferences, which are often influenced by their learning styles. Using these strategies, students take an active role in their learning, allowing them to make the appropriate decisions about how to carry out reading activities. These strategies facilitate the regularization of their learning process and a greater awareness of their cognitive processes. This contributes to students having a better understanding of the texts they read.
- *Memory-related strategies*: Involve storing relevant information in memory so that when students need specific information, they can access it through this strategy. These strategies are commonly used to memorize vocabulary and the general learning structure, but only in the early stages.
- *Compensatory strategies*: These strategies enable students to compensate for the limited knowledge they may have to understand unfamiliar words and contribute to vocabulary expansion.

- *Affective strategies:* These help students to effectively manage their emotions, motivations, values, and behaviors promoting a supportive mindset for understanding texts.
- *Social strategies:* These strategies encourage students to collaborate in groups and engage with the target language and culture. These are important because they allow students to get involved in the learning process.

A key factor for students to improve their reading skills is the strategies that students use in different reading activities. These strategies can be cognitive - metacognitive - memorization - compensatory - affective, and social. They help students understand, interpret, and retain information from texts. In addition, they are used in a combined manner, depending on the needs of each reader, the objectives, the text to be read, and the performance of each reader. For this reason, students must constantly practice reading using reading strategies, thus improving their reading skills and understanding of the texts they read.

METHODOLOGY

This research aims to describe the development of phonemic awareness for reading in 5th-grade students at the *Unidad Educativa Bilingüe Torremar*. Therefore, the primary methodology employed in this study is descriptive and aimed at evaluating the impact of phonemic awareness strategies on students' reading skills. Consequently, it is necessary to describe the effect of the phonemic awareness strategy on the development of reading skills and how this strategy contributes to students' meaningful learning. The purpose of this research is to propose strategies that enhance phonemic awareness to improve students' reading skills.

Liamputtong (2023) states that this methodology allows for describing the characteristics of a population, phenomenon, or situation, but the variables are not manipulated, nor are causal relationships established. Its purpose is to present the problem, fact, or context being studied. In Thomas's (2021) perspective, descriptive methodology is characterized by accurately documenting existing situations, allowing decisions to be made based on the evidence obtained through research. This aspect is crucial for the current study, as it facilitates the development of specific strategies to improve phonemic awareness, thereby promoting students' reading skills.

This research uses a mixed method, combining qualitative and quantitative data and using quantitative and qualitative instruments to collect information. This method will determine students' level of phonemic awareness in reading skills. Additionally, it will capture teachers' perceptions regarding students' current performance, the influence of phonemic awareness on reading skills, and the potential for improving reading through enhanced phonemic awareness.

The research approach will be mixed. As Creswell and Creswell (2022) state, a mixed approach is a methodological design that combines quantitative and qualitative methods, taking advantage of each's advantages and benefits and thus offering a much more detailed understanding of the phenomenon under

study. Consequently, quantitative and qualitative data will be collected and analyzed, with the findings from each approach integrated to offer a more complete and complementary view of the results.

Participants

This study involves 10 Ecuadorian male students from Level A at the *Unidad Educativa Bilingüe Torremar* in Daule. All participants come from middle to high socioeconomic backgrounds, speak Spanish as their native language, and have an English proficiency level of A2.

Data collection

It is essential to clarify that the literature review addresses the first research question, 'What are the main theories and concepts related to phonemic awareness and reading skills?' Therefore, data collection will focus on the other research questions, avoiding redundancies and ensuring that relevant data for the study are collected.

Several tools were used to address the research questions.

To answer the second question, "What is the level of phonemic awareness of students in reading skills?" a test was administered to assess students' phonemic awareness about their reading abilities. The test consisted of six questions aligned with the educational unit's evaluation criteria and based on the *Cambridge Primary Path 2 textbook*. Student performance was measured using a three-level scale: Level 1 (low "0-4 points"), Level 2 (medium "5-7 points"), and Level 3 (high "8-10 points"), with a total score of 10.

To answer the third and fourth questions, "What is the current performance of students, how does phonemic awareness influence reading skills, and how can reading be improved through phonemic awareness?" a structured interview with 13 open-ended questions was conducted with the students' English teacher. The teacher's insights, perceptions, and ideas help identify the most

effective strategies to enhance phonemic awareness and improve the reading skills of fifth-grade students.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher submitted a formal letter requesting authorization to conduct the research with the participants. After receiving approval, a date was scheduled to administer student assessments and coordinate the teacher interview. The research was conducted in person at the educational institution, specifically in the classroom.

Ethical consideration

To collect the data, the rights of the participants were protected through specific ethical considerations that are detailed below:

- Consent was sought from the educational unit for the test to be carried out. In addition, children were informed about the test in clear, age-appropriate language, ensuring that they understood the process and their rights, including that the test would not affect their grades.
- Additionally, the students were informed that their participation was voluntary and without any repercussions in the case of not wanting to be part of the test so that they could freely decide whether or not they wanted to participate.
- In addition, the confidentiality of the information was guaranteed, as no identifying information was included in the data set. All data would be stored securely and used only for research purposes.
- The participants were also informed that they could abandon the test at any time without repercussions.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study employed a diagnostic test for students and an in-depth interview with the teacher. The test provided quantitative data about the students' level of phonemic awareness in accordance with their reading skills. Meanwhile, the teacher interview yielded qualitative insights about the impact of the development of phonemic awareness on reading skills, as well as teaching strategies to promote phonemic awareness and improve students' reading skills. Data analysis is essential to answer the research questions posed in this work, allowing the identification of patterns, relationships and trends in the data.

Quantitative Data Analysis

▪ *Test Results Summary*

Table 1 presents the overall result of the test applied to the students, indicating an average score of 7.33, corresponding to a moderate level of phonemic awareness. Figure 1 shows the percentage by level of phonemic awareness, showing that 70% of students fall within the average range and students with a high level represent 30%.

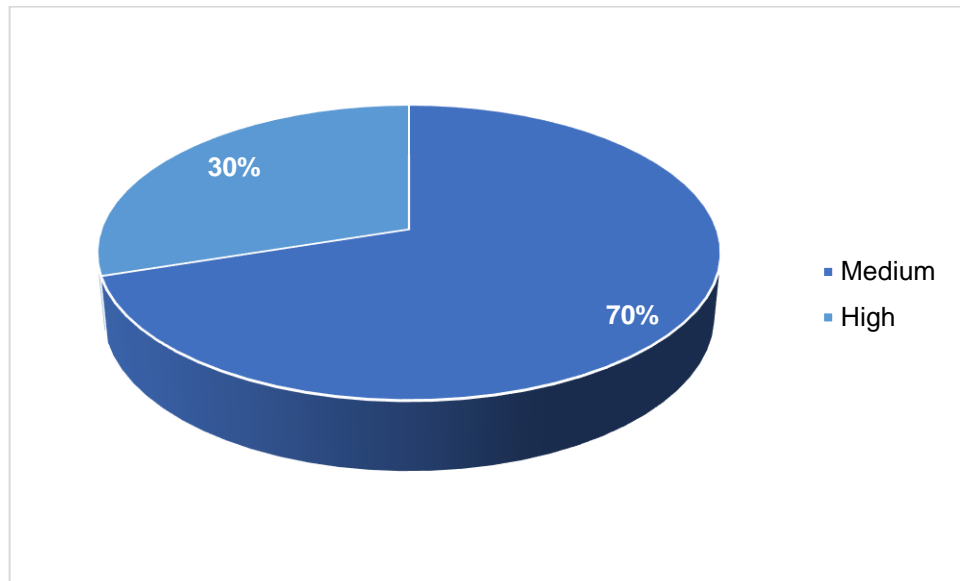
Table 1

Overall results of the phonemic awareness test

Student	Score (Out of 10)	Performance Level
1	6,25	Medium
2	7,5	Medium
3	5,75	Medium
4	10	High
5	6	Medium
6	7,5	Medium
7	5,5	Medium
8	9,25	High
9	7	Medium
10	8,5	High
Total	73,25	
Average	7,33	

Figure 1

Percentage of students in each level



▪ ***Interpretation of Results***

The phonemic awareness test results showed that the lowest score was 5.5, and the highest was 10. Notably, none of the students demonstrated a low level of phonemic awareness, indicating that all participants possessed at least moderate proficiency. Most students fell within the medium range, suggesting that their phonemic awareness is not yet fully developed. Although they can perform essential identification and segmentation tasks, they experience difficulties with reading fluency and comprehension.

We anticipated a more significant number of students with a high level of phonemic awareness. However, the results indicate that many students must develop their phonemic awareness to reach a higher level. Given that no student scored below the medium level, the educational institution and the teacher have provided a solid foundation in phonemic awareness. Nonetheless, teaching strategies should be reinforced.

Qualitative Data Analysis

▪ *Teacher Interview Summary*

Phonemic awareness and its impact on reading fluency: The teacher emphasized that students who have developed phonemic awareness adequately show significant improvements in accuracy and reading speed. This development enhances their ability to read aloud and strengthens their comprehension of texts, enabling them to read with greater fluency and understanding.

Vocabulary difficulties and their impact on reading comprehension: The teacher highlighted that students face challenges in understanding texts due to a limited vocabulary. This constraint hinders their reading ability and affects their comprehension of the provided materials. As a result, students struggle to retain and apply the information they have read, further impacting their learning.

Impact of the family environment on learning English: The teacher noted that students lack exposure to English in their family environment. The absence of English practice at home makes it challenging for them to thoroughly understand lessons conducted in English.

Strategies to improve phonemic awareness and reading skills: The teacher recommended several strategies to enhance phonemic awareness and reading skills, including phonological activities, reading aloud in pairs, using audio materials such as recorded texts and songs, and practicing word repetition. These activities will assist students in better associating sounds with words, improving pronunciation and reading comprehension. Additionally, the teacher suggested incorporating vocabulary tailored to the students' level, allowing them to use it in sentences or phrases. This approach will help students connect new vocabulary with prior knowledge, strengthening their reading skills.

- ***Interpretation of Results***

The teacher's responses offer valuable insights into the limitations and factors affecting students' reading skills. According to the teacher, phonemic awareness is crucial in enhancing reading accuracy and fluency. Furthermore, a limited vocabulary negatively impacts both text comprehension and word decoding. The teacher also emphasized that the family environment significantly influences students' English learning, as a lack of exposure to the language at home hinders their progress in the classroom.

The overall average score from the test reinforces the teacher's observation that many students have not fully developed phonemic awareness. Most students achieved an average level, indicating that areas still need attention and improvement of attention and improvement, particularly in reading fluency and comprehension. These aspects are closely linked to phonemic awareness and vocabulary enhancement development.

Similarly, the results align with the teacher's perspective on the impact of the family environment on learning. Students who achieved a high level of phonemic awareness likely had greater exposure to the language outside of class. In contrast, students with an average level may have faced limitations.

Finally, the findings demonstrate the importance of phonemic awareness in improving students' reading skills in the educational unit. Still, there are factors such as limited vocabulary and lack of exposure to English at home that negatively impact learning. This may be a reflection of the level obtained by the students, where the majority of students demonstrated an average level. The results also provide relevant information on the areas that require attention to improve reading skills, which require attention so that students can improve their academic performance.

CONCLUSION

Theories on phonemic awareness highlight its importance in reading development, as it facilitates the decoding and comprehension of texts. Evidence supports that its explicit teaching, combined with structured strategies, improves fluency and learning of the writing system. These findings reinforce the need to apply pedagogical approaches based on these principles to optimize students' reading development.

The test results indicate that students have a moderate level of phonemic awareness in their reading skills. Although most show basic competence in tasks such as phonemic identification and segmentation, they still have reading fluency and comprehension difficulties. All students demonstrated at least moderate competence, suggesting that the educational foundation provided has been adequate. However, many still require further development in phonemic awareness to improve their reading skills significantly. Teaching strategies need to be reinforced to advance towards higher levels of phonemic awareness.

The development of phonemic awareness directly impacts students' reading skills, especially reading accuracy, speed, and comprehension. Students who have adequately developed their phonemic awareness show improvements in reading fluency and in their ability to comprehend texts. However, difficulties with limited vocabulary and lack of exposure to English in the home environment negatively affect reading comprehension and word decoding. These factors, combined with the moderate level of phonemic awareness observed in most students, suggest that although phonemic awareness is crucial for reading progress, there are still barriers that need to be addressed, such as vocabulary and context outside the classroom. This highlights the need for strategies that improve phonemic awareness and strengthen vocabulary and language exposure outside the school environment.

The most effective strategies to promote phonemic awareness and improve students' reading skills are phonological activities, reading aloud and with a partner, use of audio materials (recorded texts and songs), and word

repetition. These activities help students associate sounds with words, improving their pronunciation and reading fluency. In addition, incorporating vocabulary appropriate to students' proficiency level strengthens reading comprehension and facilitates the connection of new words with prior knowledge. These strategies are essential for developing phonemic awareness and, therefore, improving reading skills in fifth-grade students, underscoring the importance of personalizing activities to students' needs and levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers must implement interactive tasks at home, such as phonics games or rhyming exercises, to reinforce phonemic awareness. Additionally, encouraging educational apps in English, like Phonics Genius or Endless Alphabet, would be beneficial, as they allow students to practice sounds and words in a fun and accessible manner. Teachers must organize reading-aloud sessions with family members, selecting books appropriate to the student's level to work on pronunciation and intonation practically. Furthermore, promoting watching English series or films with subtitles is recommended, asking students to identify specific words or sounds will allow them to improve their listening comprehension and vocabulary.

To facilitate comprehension and retention, it is essential to integrate everyday vocabulary teaching activities, such as creating lists of new words that students will encounter in their reading and associating them with images or actions. In addition, it is helpful to design role-play activities where students use the new vocabulary in everyday situations, such as shopping in a store or making a reservation at a restaurant, which will allow them to apply what they have learned in practical contexts. It is also suggested that exercises be carried out in which students use new words in their sentences and repeat them in different contexts, thus promoting their retention and mastery of the vocabulary.

Teachers must be trained in strategies to strengthen phonemic awareness, such as segmenting and blending sounds, and apply them in reading activities that encourage ongoing practice. In addition, it is crucial to promote the use of visual and auditory teaching materials, such as phoneme cards and audio recordings, to complement traditional lessons and make learning more dynamic. This will allow students to strengthen their ability to recognize and manipulate sounds effectively.

For future research, a longitudinal design is recommended to assess the impact of phonemic awareness on reading skills over an extended period, such as a semester or a school year, to observe significant improvements in reading

and learning retention. In addition, it would be beneficial to include the evaluation of the effect of teaching interventions, especially in terms of the frequency and quality of feedback on pronunciation and vocabulary use, which would contribute to understanding how these factors influence the development of reading skills. This approach would provide valuable information to adjust and refine the pedagogical strategies implemented in the classroom.

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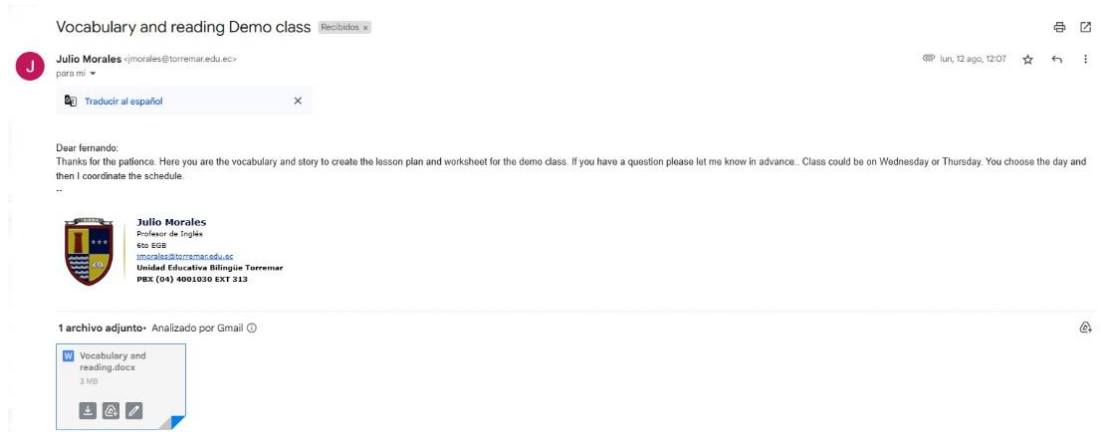
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APPENDICES



Appendix A Demo class confirmation email

Lesson Plan.

Front Sheet

Name: Fernando Espinel	TP number: 01	Lesson length: 40m	Level: 5 th Grade	Date: August, Thursday 15 th , 2024
Main aim/s: By the end of the lesson, students will understand and comprehend the correct usage of vocabulary words.	Subsidiary Aim/s: By the end of this lesson learners will be able to use functional language for talking about adjectives.	Materials: Whiteboard. Smartboard. Anthologies book. Worksheet. Pencil Eraser		

Procedure Sheet

Timing and Interaction	Stage Name & Aims	Procedure
2' T-S S-T S-T	Lead in: To engage the students in the context of the lesson.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Greet the students and initiate a brief class discussion. o Show the main picture and ask students to discuss, what they think about the photo o Elicit a few responses and ask them what the arguments were about.
10' T-S S-T T-S S-T	Voc. Introduction To introduce the TL in the context of vocabulary words that are implicit in the reading.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Show the pictures of the vocabulary words and elicit some response of the correct name word of the picture. o After eliciting the words, drill the pronunciation 3 times in group and 3 times in pair (without sowing the word) o After pronouncing, show the ss the word and the picture and pronounce it once with the whole group. o - Repeat the process with each word.
3' T-S S-T T-S	Pre-Reading Introduction of the reading.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Show the picture and the title of the reading o Elicit some answer and discuss what the reading is going to be about. o
10' T-S S-T T-S	Reading To practice accurate use of the TL.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Instruct task – Now, You have to open your anthologies book on page xx, and you are going to read The Bremen town singer in silence and individually. To finish your reading you will have 10 minutes. o ICQs: Are you going to work alone or in groups? (Individually) – How much time will you work? (10 mins) o Are you going to read or speak(read) o Monitor, support as necessary and make notes for feedback o End the activity.
8m T-S S-T T-S	Post reading- Freer practice. To indicate the end of the task, and work on a class activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Get Ss attention. o Show Ss PowerPoint presentation with the individual class activity. o Instruct task- Explain to students that they are going to select the correct answer in each question and respond to a question in a full form. You have to work individually and you will have 8 minutes to finish your task o ICCQs: o Are you going to work alone or in groups? (Individual) – How much time will you work? (8 mins) o Hand in the document to the Ss. o Monitor, support as necessary and make notes for feedback
4' T-S S-T T-S	Feedback. To provide the correct answers and clarify some doubts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Get Ss attention o Use the previous activities development and elicit correction – display the correct answer and clarification on the whiteboard if necessary.

Appendix A Lesson plan



STUDENT: _____

TEACHER: Fernando Espinel

SUBJECT: English

DATE: _____

TIME: 8 min.

TASK: Class Activity

SKILLS: Reading & Writing

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS: Read the instructions below carefully before starting to work.

- Read and understand the question.
- Circle the correct answer
- Use the pages of the book

GRADE		
Grade	Class	List number
5		

1.- Circle the correct answer. (2pts. each)

- **Which animals were mentioned in the story?**
 - a) Donkey, dog, cat, mice and a hen.
 - b) Donkey, dog, cat, mice and a rooster.
 - c) Donkey, cats, a rat and a rooster.

- **Why does the master of the donkey do not want him anymore?**
 - d) Because the donkey is old and weak.
 - e) Because the master want to be a singer, not a farm guy.
 - f) Because the donkey usually escapes from the farm.

- **What were the three men counting?**
 - g) The three men were counting the animals around the house.
 - h) The three men were counting the gold coins.
 - i) The three men were counting the windows of the house.

- **Where do The Bremen Town Singers are living now?**
 - j) In the farm of Donkey's master.
 - k) In the house with the three men.
 - l) In the nice and warm house.

2. Answer the question (2pts)

Why do you think the three men got scared when they heard the animals?



FAH-PINE-015-2024
Guayaquil, 20 de noviembre del 2024


Mgs. Juan Carlos Herrera
Rector
Unidad Educativa Bilingüe Torremar
En su despacho.

Reciba un cordial saludo. Por el presente solicito a usted muy comedidamente, salvo su mejor criterio, se permita al señor Fernando Nahin Espinel Alvarado con CI# 0932305212, estudiante del 8vo ciclo de la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros – inglés, de la Facultad de Artes y Humanidades de la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil, realizar observaciones áulicas que le permita recolectar información para elaborar su Trabajo de Integración Curricular (Proyecto de titulación) denominado *Phonemic Awareness and Reading Skills Development*.

El señor Espinel estaría realizando dicha actividad en la clase de inglés que reciben los estudiantes, durante los meses de noviembre y diciembre 2024 y enero 2025.

De antemano agradezco la atención brindada.

Atentamente,


Ledo Stanley González Ubilla, M.Ed.
Director
Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros – inglés
stanley.gonzalez@cu.ucsg.edu.ec



Firma de la autoridad representante de la institución.

Appendix D Certificate of authorization



I. Listen carefully to each word and identify the sounds of the initial and final letters of each word (1,5 points).

1. Sharp	Beginning	<input type="text"/>	Ending	<input type="text"/>
2. Bicycle	Beginning	<input type="text"/>	Ending	<input type="text"/>
3. Tomato	Beginning	<input type="text"/>	Ending	<input type="text"/>
4. Airplane	Beginning	<input type="text"/>	Ending	<input type="text"/>
5. Church	Beginning	<input type="text"/>	Ending	<input type="text"/>
6. Graden	Beginning	<input type="text"/>	Ending	<input type="text"/>

II. Read each sentence carefully and underline those words that contain the following sounds: /t/, /s/, and /r/ (1 points).

- The snake sheds its skin to grow and renew itself.
- Timothy received a letter from his grandmother at Christmas.
- Roberto went on a trip with his parents to New York in the fall.
- The cheetah is the fastest animal in the world.

III. Read the following story and answer the questions (1,5 points).

Suddenly, the boy heard a neighbor scream. On the way home, the boy heard the cry of a baby.
 She was an old woman. He ran to her house. The baby's mother looked worried.
 "Are you okay?" he asked. The boy asked, "Is the baby okay?"
 "I can't light this fire!" he cried. "I don't have any food for him," he said.
 "The wood is wet and I need to cook!" "Here, take my food."
 "Take my stick. It's dry." "Thank you! You are very kind," said the mother.
 The old woman took the stick. She gave the food to her baby and he stopped crying.
 He quickly lit the fire with the stick and cooked a delicious meal. "I don't have much to give you, boy. But please take this pot."
 "You are a very kind boy. Take this food."

- Who did the child hear screaming?

- What did the old woman scream?

- What did the child give to the old woman?

Appendix E Phonemic awareness test (part 1)

4. What did the boy hear on his way home?

5. What did the child give to the baby's mother?

6. What did the baby's mother give to the child?

IV. Replace one sound in each word and create a new Word (1,5 points).

1. Start with /m/:
2. Power with /t/:
3. Green with /s/:
4. Tree with /f/:
5. Night with /r/:
6. Test with /b/:

V. Read the following words carefully and count the number of syllables in each Word (1,5 points).

1. Elephant:
2. Together:
3. Wonderfull:
4. Beginning:
5. Amazing:
6. Dinosaur:

VI. Classify the following words: snake, chair, shine, chocolate, shadow, single, smile, shake, chicken, shoes, church, and sheep. According to these sounds (/sh/, /s/, /ch/). Write each word in the corresponding column (3 points).

/sh/	/s/	/ch/

Appendix F Phonemic awareness test (part 2)



Name: Kevin Altamirano Morán

Age:

Years of experience: 11 years of experience in all primary and secondary levels

1. What methods do you use when teaching reading skills to students?

Mainly phonetics, as well as assigned readings, peer review, working with peers who have reading assignments.

2. Do students have problems with their reading skills? What are these problems?

Yes, the main problem is the limited vocabulary, affecting reading ability and text comprehension.

3. How important is teaching phonemic awareness to students in order for them to acquire reading skills?

It is relevant because phonemic awareness helps students not only know the pronunciation of words, but also the meaning of the words, which will allow them to use them at the time of conversation.

4. What activities do you use to teach phonemic awareness to students?

Repetition, reading aloud, reading with peers and sharing opinions.

5. In your experience, how does phonemic awareness affect English language learning?

Depending on the students' knowledge of the English language, if it is limited they obviously do not perform well, therefore the reading must be according to the students' level.

6. Have you seen any differences in reading progress in students who have adequately developed phonemic awareness compared to those who have not?

In the case of students who have developed phonemic awareness, not only did their reading level and pace improve, but it also allowed for a greater understanding of the questions or the assigned reading, allowing for easier and more fluid reading. In comparison, students who have not developed phonemic awareness, who have a limited vocabulary and are unable to understand the texts.

Appendix G Interview (part 1)

7. What aspects do you consider to be more difficult to develop in students who have reading difficulties?

The most difficult aspects to develop are word segmentation, phoneme manipulation and discrimination of sounds from similar phonemes.

8. What resources or materials do you consider to be most effective for teaching phonemic awareness and reading skills?

Audios, songs, and readings with an audio track that allows you to know what the story is telling, or what the story is trying to convey.

9. Have you been provided with training in teaching phonemic awareness and reading skills at your school? If not, do you think it would be helpful? Explain your answer.

Yes, in fact they have provided us with support material to work on questions that are open and closed.

10. What would you improve to strengthen the development of students' reading skills?

Work on more vocabulary by listing, depending on the level they are working on according to the reading, so that they can apply it in sentences and can build phrases using the vocabulary they are learning at that time.

11. How do you assess students' reading skills?

Through the use of the word, if the terminology is understood by the student, if he can apply it in a sentence or phrase, and if he understands what the text is about.

12. Do you think that the social and family environment influences the development of students' reading skills? Why?

Yes, because at home they do not have exposure to English in most cases, which makes it difficult for them to understand the language in class, since the classes taught are entirely in English.

13. What recommendations would you give to other teachers to improve students' phonemic awareness and reading skills?

Phonological activities, as well as reading aloud, use of audio materials (recorded texts, songs), repetition of words and incorporation of vocabulary appropriate to the students' level.

Appendix H Interview (part 1)

Unit 5B Ready to Read: Fiction

1 Key Words 4 Listen, look, and repeat.



weak



meet



sick



slow



dangerous



loud

Reading Strategy: Identifying the Theme

The theme is the main subject or topic of a text.

1 Read the text and mark ✓ the theme.

Jessica's Guitar

Gemma and Jessica are neighbors. They always go to the park, but they never play together. Gemma can't hear. She is deaf. Gemma wants to talk to Jessica, but she is nervous. One day, Jessica plays

her guitar in the park. Gemma sits next to her and puts her hands on the guitar. She feels the vibrations from the guitar. Gemma smiles and Jessica smiles, too. Since then, they are good friends.



- It's easy to play an instrument. You can make friends through music.

5.14 The Bremen Town Singers

By the Grimm Brothers, Adapted by Joep van der Werff

Donkey is so sad. He is old and **weak**. His master doesn't want him anymore. "Hee-haw!" he says. "I'm tired. I'm old. I can't pull this cart anymore. But ... *I can be a singer. Mi-mi-re-re-do. I can go to Bremen; yes, to Bremen I will go.*"

So Donkey starts walking, singing his song.



Soon he **meets** Dog. Dog is sad, too. He says, "Ruff, ruff! I'm old and **sick**. I can't work with the sheep anymore."

"Hee-haw," Donkey sings. "You can be a singer and to Bremen you should go. Come along with me!"

"Ruff, ruff. I want to be a singer!" says Dog. And they start walking, singing their song.



Think

Why are the donkey and the dog sad?



Soon they meet Cat. Cat is sad, too. He says, "Meow! I'm old. I'm **slow**. I can't catch mice anymore."

"Ruff, ruff! Come along!" says Dog, "**You can be a singer. You can go with us to Bremen. Mi-mi-re-re-do.**" And they start walking, singing their song.

Then, Rooster appears.

Rooster says, "**Wait! Can I be a singer, too? Cock-a-doodle-doo!**"

"Sure," say the animal friends. "**To Bremen we go, to Bremen we go!**"



Think

Why do the animals want to be singers?

5.15 The Bremen Town Singers

The singers walk and sing for a long time. They are very tired, hungry, and thirsty. They need to stop and rest for a while.

Suddenly, Cat sees a small cottage in the distance. "Look! A nice, warm house! Maybe we can rest there," he says.

"Whose house is it?" asks Rooster.

"I don't know," says Donkey. "Let's take a look."

"There's food on the table. I can see a warm fire. There are three men and there is a big trunk with gold coins, too. The men are counting the gold coins. I guess the house is theirs," says Cat.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo," Rooster says. "Maybe we can sing for them. Then they can let us in."

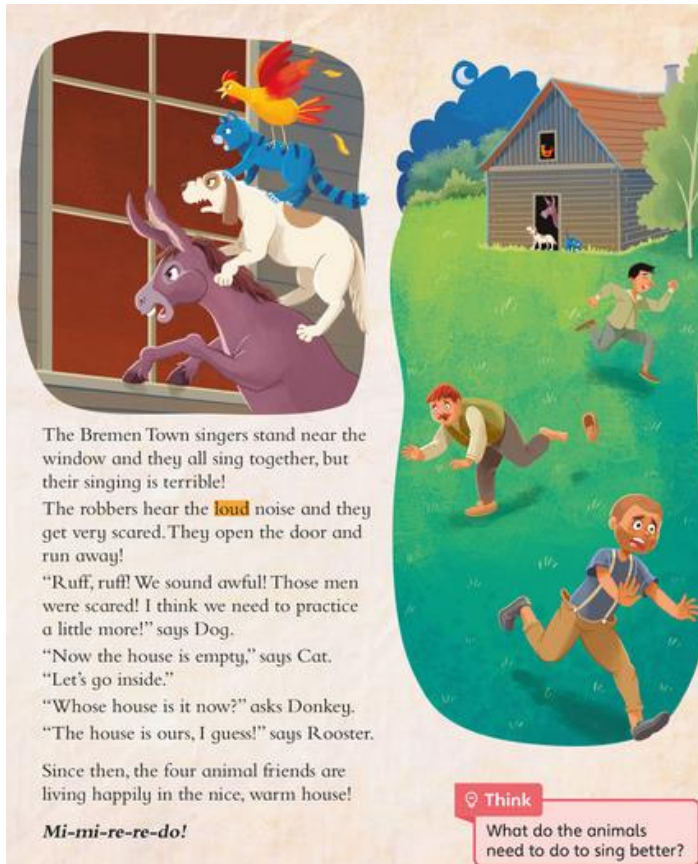
Then, Donkey says, "I recognize these men. Their picture was in the newspaper. They are robbers. They're **dangerous!**"

Think

Is it a good idea for the animals to sing to the men in the house?



Appendix J Material provided by the teacher (part 2)



The Bremen Town singers stand near the window and they all sing together, but their singing is terrible!

The robbers hear the **loud** noise and they get very scared. They open the door and run away!

"Ruff, ruff! We sound awful! Those men were scared! I think we need to practice a little more!" says Dog.

"Now the house is empty," says Cat.

"Let's go inside."

"Whose house is it now?" asks Donkey.

"The house is ours, I guess!" says Rooster.

Since then, the four animal friends are living happily in the nice, warm house!

Mi-mi-re-re-do!

Think

What do the animals need to do to sing better?

Appendix K Material provided by the teacher (part 3)



DECLARACIÓN Y AUTORIZACIÓN

Yo, **Espinel Alvarado, Fernando Nahin** con C.C: # **0932305212** autor del trabajo de titulación: **Development of reading skills through phonemic awareness in 5th grade EFL students in Daule** previo a la obtención del título de **Licenciado en Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros - Inglés** en la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil.

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Guayaquil, **21 de febrero de 2025**

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Espinel Alvarado, Fernando Nahin

0932305212



REPOSITORIO NACIONAL EN CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA

FICHA DE REGISTRO DE TESIS/TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

TÍTULO Y SUBTÍTULO:	Development of reading skills through phonemic awareness in 5th grade EFL students in Daule.		
AUTOR	Espinel Alvarado, Fernando Nahin		
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INSTITUCIÓN:	Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil		
FACULTAD:	Facultad de Artes y Humanidades		
CARRERA:	Pedagogía de Lenguas Nacionales Y Extranjeras - Inglés		
TITULO OBTENIDO:	Licenciado en Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros - Inglés		
FECHA DE PUBLICACIÓN:	21 de febrero de 2025	No. DE PÁGINAS:	48 p.
ÁREAS TEMÁTICAS:	Programmed teaching, Verbal learning, Bilingual education, Basic education.		
PALABRAS CLAVES/ KEYWORDS:	Keywords: Phonemic awareness, Reading skills, Reading fluency, Reading comprehension, Strategies, EFL.		
RESUMEN/ABSTRACT (150-250 palabras):			
Phonemic awareness is a crucial skill in reading instruction because it allows students to recognize and manipulate sounds, facilitating word decoding and text comprehension. This research focused on the evaluation of the development of phonemic awareness to improve the reading skills of 5th grade EFL students at the Unidad Educativa Bilingüe Torremar. A descriptive methodology was used with a mixed approach (quantitative and qualitative) through a test for the students and an in-depth interview with the teacher. The participants who made up this research were ten male students from level A With an A2 English proficiency level. The main findings obtained were that students demonstrated a moderate level of phonemic awareness with a scores ranging from 5.5 to 10, the development of phonemic awareness directly affects students' reading skills, and teaching strategies to improve reading skills through phonemic awareness include reading aloud, use of audio materials, among others.			
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