
The Effectiveness of Jolly Phonics in Teaching a 4 Year Old Indonesian Child to Read English Text

Evi Faustina

Masitha Achmad Syukri

English Department, Universitas Airlangga

Abstract

This study aims at knowing the effectiveness of Jolly Phonics (JP) in teaching a 4 year old Indonesian child to read English text. To see the effectiveness of JP, the writer used the Early Reading Screening Instrument (ERSI) to measure the participant's reading ability. The participant was pre-tested using ERSI test that includes: the alphabet knowledge task, concept of word task, phoneme awareness task, and word recognition task, prior to the 20 weeks of JP intervention and was post-tested once the JP intervention was finished. The results revealed that the participant improved the scores of the concept of word task, phoneme awareness task, and word recognition task, and attained the same score for the alphabet knowledge task. JP is effective to teach reading regular words by sounding and blending. Unfortunately, JP is unsuccessful to teach reading irregular words.

Keywords: grapheme, irregular word, Jolly Phonics, letter sounds, phoneme, regular word

Introduction

Reading ability is required to be trained to children in their young ages. It is a pre-requisite for their next education (McGuinness, 2005). This paper concerns on the teaching reading English for the initial readers. English which uses alphabetic writing system has inconsistency in the correspondences of grapheme and phoneme (Goswami, 2007). For example, the phoneme /k/ can be represented by the graphemes <c>, <k>, <ck>, <ch>, and <q> like in these words <cat>, <kitten>, <duck>, <school>, and <queen> respectively (Hepplewhite, 2006). Phonics, particularly synthetic phonics approach, is considered as an effective approach for teaching reading English (Rose, 2006; Johnston & Watson, 2007). Some methods for teaching reading through synthetic phonics approach emerged. One of the methods is Jolly Phonics (JP).

Many studies have shown that JP is considered effective to teach reading for initial readers. However, the previous studies had concerned on contrasting JP to the other reading methods (Ruhaena, 2008; Callinan & Zee, 2010). This present study concentrates more to find out the effectiveness of JP to teach reading English for initial readers.

The teaching of JP includes 5 teaching points. Those are learning the letter sounds, learning letter formation, blending, identifying sounds in words, and tricky words (Lloyd, 1998). JP is aimed to get the learners master all the letter sounds and know the correspondence of graphemes and phonemes so that they can use the knowledge to sound out and blend letters in words. Lloyd stated two predictors of reading success: "knowing the letters is the best predictor of success in learning to read.", and "both blending skills and phonological awareness are strong predictors of reading success" (Lloyd, 1998, p.3).

JP provides the teaching of 42 letter sounds through multi-sensory method that involves all of the body parts to remember the letter sounds that makes the participant to enjoy the teaching and learning process (Lloyd, 1998). The 42 letter sounds are grouped in meticulous order (Fry, 2004; Jenigan, 2008). Thus, the letter sounds should be taught in a fixed order.

Week	Graphemes	Phonemes representation of the graphemes respectively
1	s, a, t, i, p, and n	/s/, /æ/, /t/, /i/, /p/, and /n/
2	c/k, e, h, r, m, and d	/k/, /e/, /h/, /r/, /m/, and /d/
3	g, o, u, l, f, and b	/g/, /v/, /ʌ/, /l/, /f/, and /b/
4	ai, j, oa, ie, ee, and or	/eɪ/, /dʒ/, /əʊ/, /aɪ/, /i:/, and /ɔ:/
5	z, w, ng, v, oo, and oo	/z/, /w/, /ŋ/, /v/, /ʊ/, and /u:/
6	y, x, ch, sh, th, and th	/j/, /k/ and /s/, /tʃ/, /ʃ/, /ð/, and /θ/
7	qu, ou, oi, ue, er, and ar	/k/ and /w/, /aʊ/, /ɔɪ/, /j/ and /u:/, /ɜ:/ and /r/, and /ɑ:/

Table 1. The list of letter sounds taught in Jolly Phonics

Method of The Study

The participant of this study is a 4 year old kindergarten student of The Apple Tree School Surabaya. To know the effectiveness of JP, the participant was pre-tested using the Early Reading Screening Instrument (ERSI) prior to the 20 weeks of JP intervention and was post-tested once the intervention was finished. In this fashion, the effectiveness of JP could be seen from the improvement of the tasks scoring. The ERSI test includes 4 tasks of assessment. Those are the alphabet knowledge task, concept of word task, phoneme awareness task, and word recognition task (Morris, 1998).

JP intervention lasted for 20 weeks including 7 weeks for teaching the 42 letter sounds and the rest of the weeks for teaching some main alternative spellings, consonant blends, and tricky words. In the JP intervention, the participant was taught 2 letter sounds and 1 tricky word in each meeting. It was given 3 times in a week; those are every Tuesday at 2 pm – 3 pm, Friday at 2 pm – 3 pm, and Saturday at 8 am – 9 am. On Tuesdays and Saturdays, the intervention took place in the participant's house while on Fridays in the participant's grandmother house. The ERSI test was given prior and after the intervention.

Result

On December 23, 2012, the participant was pre-tested. Table 2 below shows the participant's pre-test result. It can be noticed that the participant gained perfect score for the alphabet knowledge task and lowest score for the concept of word task.

After the 20 weeks of JP intervention was given, on May 18, 2013, the participant was post-tested. Table 3 shows the post-test result. It can be noticed that the scores improved, except for the alphabet knowledge task that resulted the same score.

No	Types of Task				Derived Score
1	Alphabet Knowledge	Upper case (26)	Lower case (26)	Production (26)	
		26	26	26	10
2	Concept of Word	Pointing (8)	Word Identification (8)		
		0	1		0.6
3	Phoneme Awareness	Phoneme Awareness (42)			
		16			3.8
4	Word Recognition	Word Recognition (10)			
		1			1
	Total ERSI				15.4

No	Types of Task				Derived Score
1	Alphabet Knowledge	Upper case (26)	Lower case (26)	Production (26)	
		26	26	26	10
2	Concept of Word	Pointing (8)	Word Identification (8)		
		8	7		9.4
3	Phoneme Awareness	Phoneme Awareness (42)			
		34			8.1
4	Word Recognition	Word Recognition (10)			
		9			9
	Total ERSI				36.5

Table 2. ERSI pre-test result

From Table 2 and Table 3, it can be computed the results in a percentage computation as follows:

Types of Tasks	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Difference
Alphabet Knowledge	100%	100%	0%
Concept of Word	6.25%	93.75%	87.5%
Phoneme Awareness	38.09%	80.95%	42.86%
Word Recognition	10%	90%	80%

Table 4. The ERSI Pre-test and Post-test Scores Difference in Percentage Computation

Discussion

Alphabet Knowledge

In both of the pre-test and post-test results (see Table 2 and Table 3) the participant obtained perfect score for the alphabet knowledge task. Therefore, it provided a good start for the participant to learn initial English reading. Since English uses alphabetic writing system and the alphabet letters are the building block of the writing system, the teaching of the alphabet letters is considered important (Perfetti and Marron, 1998). Therefore, the teaching of grapheme and phoneme correspondences in phonics approach is considered important (Johnston and Watson, 2007).

The teaching of the alphabet covers the teaching of naming, writing, and sounding the alphabet letters. JP is an effective method for teaching how to sound out the alphabet letters as it applies a multi-sensory method that helps the participant to enjoy the learning process. Moreover, it is a very effective method as the participant could involve all of the body parts to remember the letter sounds (Lloyd, 1998). Eventually, the acquiring of the alphabet knowledge brings the participant to be able to sound out the alphabet letters and blend the sounds to decode words.

Concept of Word

Table 4 shows that the participant improved 87.5% for the concept of word task. Comparing the improvement of the concept of word task to the other two ERSI tasks (without considering the alphabet knowledge task as the participant gained perfect scores in both of ERSI pre-test and post-test), the improvement on the concept of word task is considered as the highest improvement. The concept of word task includes finger-point reading subtask and word identification subtask that refer to the participant's ability to read or point to a word in a sentence after the sentence was read to him. This sort of task deals with the participant's memory to remember the words that have been read to

the participant and the ability to read or point to the words. As the participant could do this activity, the participant will be able to learn new words or identify new words through identifying the beginning consonants in the words (Morris, 1998).

Table 2 and Table 3 show that the participant improved significantly for the finger-point reading subtask. It proves that JP is effective to teach finger-point reading to the participant. With blending ability that is taught in JP, the participant was taught to point to the printed words as he attempted to decode a printed word. For example, in the second meeting of the intervention, the participant learnt how to sound out the letters <s>, <a>, <t>, and <i>. When the participant tried to decode the word <sit>, he pointed to the word and started to sound out the letters one by one, and then blended the sounds to decode the word. This sort of teaching point informs the participant that reading includes the activity to sound out the letters in a word and blend the sounds to decode the word. Besides, the participant learnt that reading is started from the right to the left.

For the word identification subtask, the participant gained 1 out of 8 and 7 out of 8 for the pre-test and post-test scores respectively (see Table 2 and Table 3). It shows that JP is effective to teach identifying sounds in words and blending. The participant was taught the letter sounds and how to blend the sounds to decode words. During JP intervention, the participant was taught to read regular words through sounding and blending. A deep discussion concerning on the results of word identification subtask is needed to provide clear information of the words that the participant could identify (see Table 5)

Word Identification Subtask	Pre-test		Post-test	
<i>Related Sentence task</i>				
Katie is <u>walking</u> in the <u>rain</u> . 1 2	0	1	1	1
<u>She</u> sees a <u>big</u> dog. 1 2	0	0	1	1
The <u>dog</u> shakes <u>water</u> on Katie. 1 2	0	0	1	1
<i>Related Book Reading task</i>				
My home is <u>here</u> , said the bird. 1	0		0	
My home <u>is</u> here, said the frog. 1	0		1	
	No correct (words) 1/ 8		No correct (words) 7/ 8	

Table 5. The ERSI Pre-test and Post-test Results in Word Identification Subtask

In the pre-test result, the participant could only identify the word <rain> (see Table 5). According to Ehri (2005), the participant was in the partial alphabetic stage, that is, the stage where the participant has the knowledge of alphabet but he was not yet able to sound out, blend and decode the words. The participant could use the knowledge of alphabet that he owned to remember how to read a word by forming partial connections in memory. The participant remembered reading the word <rain> by connecting the graphemes <r> and <n> and their phonemes in the word <rain>. Besides, he was correct to read the word <rain> as he connected the word to the picture appeared in the story. In the partial alphabetic stage, the participant may have read the word <rain> correctly in a time, but not on the next time. As in fact, on the second chance to read the word <rain>, the participant misread the word as <rainy>.

In the post-test result, the participant was able to read some regular words. The participant was able to read the words <rain>, <big>, <dog>, and <is> as those words are decodable (see Table 5). The participant is no longer in the partial alphabetic stage, but he moves to the full alphabetic stage as he acquires decoding skills and knows the correspondences of grapheme and phoneme (Ehri, 2005)

JP provides the teaching of the letter sounds and how to blend those sounds to decode words. Yet, English has numerous words that are not decodable. Moreover, to read the irregular words is not by sounding and blending. The participant's experience to read words by sounding and blending creates the model to read irregular words with the same way (Cameron, 2001). The participant attempted to read irregular words through decoding. Thus, the participant failed in identifying the word <here> in the story. The participant read the word <here> as <bird>. It is because there is a picture of birds in the text. Therefore, at first the participant identified the word as <bird>, and then the participant did correction and sounded out the word <here> as /har/. The participant attempted to read the word <here> by sounding and blending. In fact, the word <here> is considered as irregular words and to read the irregular words is not by sounding and blending.

Phoneme Awareness

Table 4 shows that the participant improved 42.86% for phoneme awareness task. The phoneme awareness task improvement is not really high compared to the concept of word task and word recognition task. Though the participant gained lower improvement for phoneme awareness task, it does not mean that JP is not effective to teach identifying sounds in words. Therefore, a deep discussion should be presented. The discussion toward the phoneme awareness task is based on the phoneme awareness that the participant possesses. Table 6 below shows the ERSI pre-test and post-test results for the phoneme awareness task.

The Spelling words	Phonetic symbols	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Participant's spelling	Score	Participant's spelling	Score
back	/bæk/	bc	2	bag	2
feet	/fi:t/	fo	1	fet	3
step	/step/	sop	2	sep	3
junk	/dʒʌŋk/	jam	1	jung	3
picking	/pɪkɪŋ/	to	0	pekng	4
mail	/meɪl/	mo	1	mail	3
side	/saɪd/	sop	1	sid	3
chin	/tʃɪn/	jam	1	chn	2
dress	/dres/	das	3	dars	2
peeked	/pɪkɪd/	pa	1	pek	3
lamp	/læmp/	lan	2	lam	3
road	/rəʊd/	ran	1	rod	3

Table 6. The pre-test and post-test results in the phoneme awareness task

The scoring system is based on the correct phoneme that the participant could identify. Initially the participant only possessed 91.6% (11 out of 12), 25% (3 out of 12), and 16.67% (2 out of 12) for beginning, ending, and middle phoneme awareness respectively. In the post-test result, he possessed 100% for beginning phoneme awareness and 66.7% for ending and middle phoneme awareness. It shows that the participant improved the possession of phoneme awareness. Furthermore, as the participant fully possesses the phoneme awareness, the participant could be able to read and spell words better (Morris, 1998).

Word Recognition

The participant improved 80% for word recognition task (see Table 4). For further information (see Table 7), in the pre-test result of the word recognition task, the participant could only read the word <the> because he possesses minimal word recognition (Morris, 1998). Besides, it is also because the participant was familiar to the word. According to Ehri (2005), the participant was in the partial

alphabetic stage as he knew the knowledge of alphabet, but he was not able to sound out, blend, and decode the words.

In the post-test result the participant could read all the regular words such as <is>, <cat>, <and>, <pin>, <lap>, <met>, <job>, and <nut>, but he failed to read the irregular word <me> (see Table 7). It can be said that the participant was in the full alphabetic stage as he acquires decoding ability and knows the correspondences of grapheme and phoneme (Ehri, 2005). The nature of English writing system that full of inconsistency makes the participant faced difficulty in learning to read English (Cameron, 2001). The participant read the word <me> as /me/. Instead, he read it as /mɪ/. This result occurred by the fact that the participant attempted to implement the decoding ability to read the irregular word <me>. The participant sounded out the grapheme <m> as /m/ and <e> as /e/ like in the word <hen>. The participant's experience to read words by sounding and blending creates the model to read irregular words with the same way (Cameron, 2001).

The list of words	The participant response	
	Pre-test	Post-test
is	/tʊ/	/ɪs/
me	/m/	/me/
cat	/kæɪn/	/kæt/
and	/mæɪn/	/ænd/
the	/ðə/	/ðə/
pin	/ɪn/	/pɪn/
lap	/l/	/læp/
met	/mæɪn/	/met/
job	/dʒæɪm/	/dʒɒb/
nut	/nəʊz/	/nʌt/
Score	1	9

Table 7. The pre-test and post-test scores for word recognition task

Conclusion

JP is effective to teach the correspondences of grapheme and phoneme through multi-sensory method that helps the participant to remember the letter sounds with ease. Besides, JP also emphasizes to train blending ability. Thus, the participant is able to read words by sounding and blending. Unfortunately, JP is unsuccessful to teach reading irregular words. Even though JP provides the teaching of irregular words, it is considered not effective. It is because the teaching of the irregular words is through remembering. In addition, reading involves recognizing printed words through word recognition and decoding ability. To read the regular words, the participant could use sounding and blending ability. Yet, to read irregular words, the participant could not use sounding and blending ability. In short, it can be concluded that JP is effective to teach reading regular words by sounding and blending. Unfortunately, JP is ineffectively applied in teaching reading irregular words.

References

- Callinan, C., & Zee, E. V. (2010). A comparative study of two methods of synthetic phonics instruction for learning how to read: Jolly Phonics and THRASS. *The Psychology of Education Review*, 34, 24-31.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching Language to Young Learners*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ehri, L. C. (2005). Development of Sight Word Reading: Phases and Findings. In M. Snowling & C. Hulme (Ed), *The Science of Reading: A Handbook* (pp. 135-154). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Fry, E. (2004). A Large Phoneme – Grapheme Frequency Count Revised: Phonics. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 36, 85-98.

- Goswami, U. (2007). Learning to read across languages: the role of phonics and synthetic phonics. In K. Gooch & A. Lambirth (Eds.), *Understanding phonics and the teaching of reading: Critical perspectives* (pp. 124-143). New York: Open University Press.
- Hepplewhite, D. (2006). *The English Alphabetic Code*. Retrieved 24 December, 2012, from <http://www.rrf.org.uk/pdf/DH%20Alph%20Code%20with%20teaching%20points%20PLAIN%20A4x7-1%20final%20version.pdf>
- Jernigan, R. W. (2008). A Photographic View of Cumulative Distribution Functions. *Journal of Statistics Education*, 16 (1).
- Johnston, R., & Watson, J. (2007). *Teaching Synthetic Phonics*. Southernhay East: Learning Matters Ltd.
- Lloyd, S. (1998). *The Phonics Handbook* (3rd ed.). Chigwell: Jolly Learning Ltd.
- McGuinness, D. (2005). *Language development and learning to read: The scientific study of how language development affects reading skill*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Morris, D. (1998). Assessing Printed Word Knowledge in Beginning Readers: The Early Reading Screening Instrument (ERSI). *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, 26 (2) 30-38.
- Perfetti, C.A., & Marron, M.A. (1998). Learning to read: Literacy acquisition by children and adults. In D.A Wagner (Ed). *Advances in adult literacy research and development*. Hampton Press.
- Purewal, S. (2008). *Synthetic Phonics and the Literacy Development of Second Language Young Learners*. Unpublished dissertation, The University of Leeds.
- Rose, J. (2006). *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading*. Nottingham: DfES Publications.
- Ruhaena, L. (2008). *Pengaruh Metode Pembelajaran Jolly Phonics Terhadap Kemampuan Baca-Tulis Permulaan Bahasa Indonesia dan Bahasa Inggris Pada Anak Prasekolah*. Unpublished dissertation, Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- Stainthorp, R., & Hughes, D. (1999). *Learning from children who read at an early age*. London: Routledge.