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A STEP-BY-STEP DIDACTIC SYSTEM FOR TEACHING ENGLISH WORDS BASED ON JOLLY PHONICS

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23064493

Abstract: This article examines Jolly Phonics as a step-by-step didactic system for teaching English words and developing early literacy skills. It focuses on the five core skills of the approach: learning letter sounds, letter formation, blending for reading, identifying sounds in words for writing, and learning tricky words. The article also considers the role of multisensory activities as supportive techniques within systematic phonics instruction. The analysis shows that the gradual development of letter–sound correspondence, blending, segmenting, and decoding can help young learners read unfamiliar English words more independently. The article further discusses the adaptation of Jolly Phonics to the Uzbek EFL context, taking into account learners' age, linguistic background, and the differences between Uzbek and English sound–spelling systems.

Keywords: Jolly Phonics, phonics, synthetic phonics, decoding, phonological awareness, letter–sound correspondence, blending, segmenting, literacy.

Introduction

As English continues to be widely learned as a foreign language, increasing attention is being given to the development of effective approaches to early English literacy. Within this process, phonics occupies an important position because it provides learners with systematic knowledge of the relationship between written symbols and speech sounds. Establishing clear connections between letters and sounds at an early stage can facilitate the development of reading and spelling skills and provide learners with a foundation for further literacy development.

Boyadzhyan (2012) argues that phonics should be systematically incorporated into literacy instruction. A systematic approach enables learners to develop an understanding of letter–sound relationships in an organized sequence rather than learning individual words only through memorization. Such an approach is particularly relevant for young learners because it allows them to use previously acquired sound knowledge when encountering unfamiliar written words.

One of the approaches developed within systematic phonics instruction is synthetic phonics. Feitelson (1988) describes synthetic phonics as an approach in which children learn letter sounds in a specified sequence and subsequently combine those sounds to construct and read words. In this process, learners are encouraged to identify individual sounds and synthesize them into a complete word. Johnston and Watson (2005) similarly emphasize that synthetic phonics enables children to sound out the individual components of a word and blend them independently rather than relying entirely on teacher assistance.

An important feature of synthetic phonics is therefore the movement from individual letter–sound knowledge to blending and independent word reading. Instead of memorizing every new word as a whole, learners can apply their knowledge of sound–symbol relationships to decode words that they have not previously encountered.

However, synthetic phonics has also been discussed from different perspectives. One concern is that children may develop the ability to decode and synthesize words without necessarily understanding their meanings. The House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (2005) noted

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this issue in its discussion of early reading instruction. At the same time, vocabulary development and reading comprehension can be developed alongside decoding, meaning that decoding should be regarded as one component of literacy development rather than as a complete literacy program by itself.

Synthetic Phonics and Jolly Phonics. Among the approaches associated with synthetic phonics, Jolly Phonics has attracted considerable attention in early literacy education. Foxcroft and Chapple (2007) describe synthetic phonics as an approach that involves teaching individual letter sounds and subsequently blending these sounds to construct words. Jolly Phonics applies this principle through a structured sequence of activities designed for young and beginning learners.

According to Lloyd (2010), Jolly Phonics develops five major skills that contribute to children's early reading and writing development. These skills include learning letter sounds, learning letter formation, blending sounds for reading, identifying sounds in words for writing, and learning tricky words. The sequence creates a progression from basic sound awareness and letter knowledge toward independent reading and writing.

The Five Skills as a Step-by-Step Didactic System. The first skill is learning the letter sounds. At this stage, learners focus primarily on the sounds represented by letters rather than simply memorizing letter names. Each sound is associated with a particular written symbol or combination of symbols. In Jolly Phonics, sounds can be reinforced through stories, pictures, songs and physical actions, which provide children with several opportunities to associate a sound with its corresponding written form.

The second skill is learning letter formation. Learners are taught how to produce letters correctly by following an appropriate direction and sequence of movements. Linking the physical formation of a letter with its corresponding sound helps establish a connection between visual, auditory and motor aspects of early literacy. Learners may practise forming letters in the air, with their fingers or in writing activities before progressing to more controlled written production.

The third skill is blending for reading. Once learners have acquired a sufficient number of letter–sound correspondences, they begin to combine individual sounds to produce complete words. For example, the sounds represented by s–a–t can be blended to form the word sat. This process is particularly important for decoding because learners can apply it when reading unfamiliar words instead of depending exclusively on memorized vocabulary.

The fourth skill is identifying sounds in words for writing. In this activity, learners listen to a word, identify its constituent sounds and select the letters that represent those sounds. For example, after hearing the word dog, a learner identifies the sounds /d/, /o/ and /g/ and represents them with the corresponding letters. This activity establishes a reciprocal relationship between phonological awareness and written language, as learners move from sounds to written symbols.

The fifth skill is learning tricky words. Tricky words are words that cannot always be decoded completely through the regular phonics patterns already introduced. Some of their spelling–sound relationships do not follow the patterns that learners have previously learned. Therefore, these words require additional attention and repeated exposure. Learning such words helps learners recognize them more efficiently during continuous reading.

Thus, the five skills form a progressive system in which learners move from sound recognition and letter formation to blending, sound identification for writing and the recognition of irregular words. The skills can be reinforced through games, visual resources, stories, songs, physical activities, word-building tasks and other classroom practices.

Multisensory Elements in Jolly Phonics. Another characteristic associated with Jolly Phonics is the use of multiple modes of learning. Fakhrokhbat and Nejadansari (2015) report that Jolly Phonics incorporates a multisensory approach in which information can be presented through visual, auditory

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and kinaesthetic channels. Such activities may be particularly appropriate for young learners because they provide opportunities to interact with language through more than one mode.

The integration of sound, visual symbols and physical movement can help learners establish stronger associations between phonemes and graphemes. For example, a learner may hear a sound, observe its written representation, perform an associated action and subsequently use the sound while blending a word. In this way, the activities support the gradual transition from isolated phoneme awareness to word-level reading.

Nevertheless, multisensory activities should be regarded as supporting techniques within the broader Jolly Phonics system rather than as the central definition of the approach. The fundamental instructional sequence remains the systematic development of letter–sound knowledge, blending, segmenting and the application of these skills in reading and writing.

Evidence from Previous Studies. Ariati, Padmadewi and Suarnajaya (2018), indicates positive changes among learners participating in Jolly Phonics instruction. In a comparison reported from a study conducted in Hyderabad, India, the mean pupil in the learning group demonstrated a 57% improvement, whereas the corresponding improvement in the control group was 34%. Such findings provide an indication of the potential contribution of systematic phonics instruction to early literacy development, although results from one educational context should not automatically be generalized to all EFL settings.

Ekpo et al. (2007) similarly examined the use of Jolly Phonics in relation to pupils' reading development. Their discussion highlights the importance of the way phonics is implemented in the classroom. Effective instruction, an appropriate learning environment and well-presented instructional materials can influence the extent to which learners benefit from a phonics-based approach. Consequently, the effectiveness of Jolly Phonics should be considered not only in terms of the program itself but also in relation to teacher preparation, instructional planning, learning materials and the characteristics of the learners.

Conclusion

The analysis of the reviewed literature demonstrates that Jolly Phonics can be conceptualized as a systematic approach to early English literacy in which learners gradually progress from individual sound–symbol relationships to word-level reading and writing. Its five major skills—learning letter sounds, learning letter formation, blending for reading, identifying sounds in words for writing, and learning tricky words—provide a structured sequence for developing foundational literacy abilities.

School learners of English as a foreign language, such a sequence may be particularly useful because it enables learners to apply previously acquired phonics knowledge when encountering unfamiliar words. Instead of relying exclusively on memorization, learners are gradually encouraged to analyze, blend and represent sounds independently.

Therefore, the step-by-step didactic system based on Jolly Phonics can serve as a methodological framework for organizing English word instruction . Its adaptation to the Uzbek EFL context requires consideration of learners' age, linguistic background, learning needs, classroom conditions and the specific differences between Uzbek and English sound–spelling systems. Further empirical research is needed to determine how effectively the Jolly Phonics sequence can support English word decoding and early literacy development among Uzbek school learners.

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