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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PHONICS INSTRUCTION ON THE READING SKILLS OF GRADE 1 PUPILS AT CAN-AVID CENTRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the effectiveness of phonics instruction on the reading skills of Grade 1 pupils at Can-avid Central Elementary School. Pre- and post-intervention assessments measured phonological awareness, decoding, and sight word recognition. Results showed significant improvement in all areas after phonics instruction, confirmed by statistical analysis (t-tests). This demonstrates the substantial positive impact of targeted phonics instruction on foundational reading skills in young learners, supporting the implementation of tailored programs and ongoing teacher training.

KEYWORDS: *Phonics Instruction, Reading Skills, Phonological Awareness, Decoding, Sight Word Recognition*

INTRODUCTION

The context of this study highlights the established importance of phonics in early reading acquisition, with various research indicating a strong correlation between explicit phonics instruction and improved reading skills, including word recognition and comprehension. Despite the documented benefits, there remains ongoing debate regarding the effectiveness of different phonics approaches and their suitability for diverse learners. Additionally, while global literacy rates show progress, significant disparities exist, particularly in less developed countries, which underscores the need for tailored literacy interventions. Within the local context of Can-avid Central Elementary School, there is a gap in understanding the specific impact of phonics instruction on its Grade 1 pupils, as existing research may not address the unique demographics and reading programs of this school. This study aims to provide localized evidence to inform school-specific interventions, recognizing the critical importance of early literacy development and the urgent need to support struggling readers effectively. By focusing on Can-avid Central Elementary School, the research seeks to enhance pedagogical practices and resource allocation to improve reading outcomes for its students.

The researchers conducted a study on the effectiveness of phonics instruction on the reading skills of grade 1 pupils at Can-avid Central Elementary School. specifically, this study aimed to attain the following specific objectives:

1. Assess the level of reading skills of grade 1 pupils before using phonics instruction in terms of the following:
1.1 Phonological Awareness
1.2 Decoding
1.3 Sight Word Recognition
2. Examine the level of reading skills of grade 1 pupils after using phonics instruction in terms of the following:
2.1 Phonological Awareness
2.2 Decoding
2.3 Sight Word Recognition
3. Compare the significant difference between the level of reading skills of grade 1 pupils before and after using phonics instruction in terms of the following:
3.1 Phonological Awareness
3.2 Decoding
3.3 Sight Word Recognition

METHODS

Research Design

The researchers utilized a pre-post single-group design to assess the effectiveness of phonics instruction on Grade 1 pupils at Can-avid Central Elementary School. Initially, all participants underwent a standardized reading assessment measuring phonological awareness, decoding, and sight word recognition. Following the assessment, a phonics instruction program was implemented over 12 sessions, conducted twice a week for one hour each, designed to enhance foundational reading skills. After the intervention, the same assessment was administered again, and the pre- and post-test scores were compared using appropriate statistical tests, such as a paired samples t-test, to evaluate any significant improvements in the pupils' reading skills resulting from the phonics instruction.

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Study Site and Respondents

The research was conducted at Can-avid Central Elementary School in Can-Avid, Eastern Samar. This public elementary school serves approximately 687 students from Grades 1 to 6 and is staffed by 25 permanent teachers. The school features essential facilities, including classrooms, a library, a small gymnasium, an outdoor play area, a canteen, a water system, and a clinic, all aimed at fostering a safe and conducive learning environment for students' academic and personal growth.

The participants of the study comprised 25 Grade 1 pupils from Can-avid Central Elementary School. This age group (6-7 years old) was chosen strategically, as Grade 1 is critical for developing foundational reading skills. The pupils had received prior reading instruction and were native speakers of the instructional language. By focusing on a single school, the study aimed to control for variables such as socio-economic background and teaching styles, allowing for a more precise examination of the impact of phonics instruction on reading skills. The study employed a pre-post single-group design, with a pre-test assessing reading skills followed by a phonics program and a subsequent post-test to measure any changes in skills.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed using statistical methods to determine if there was a significant difference in reading skills between the groups. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, including measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) and variability (standard deviation, range). This provided a general overview of the reading skills of both groups before and after the intervention.

To determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the groups, inferential statistical tests such as the independent samples t-test were employed. This allowed for a comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores for the groups for each reading skill area: phonological awareness, decoding, and sight word recognition. The t-test determined if the observed differences in reading skills between the groups were likely due to chance or if they were statistically significant, suggesting a real impact of phonics instruction.

Specifically, the t-test was used to address each of the study's objectives: Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the pre-test scores for both groups for each reading skill area to examine the level of reading skills before phonics instruction. Descriptive statistics were also used to summarize the post-test scores for both groups for each reading skill area to examine the level of reading skills after phonics instruction. Finally, the independent samples t-test was used to compare the pre-test and post-test scores for each reading skill area between the groups to determine the significant difference between the level of reading skills before and after phonics instruction. This determined if there was a statistically significant improvement in the reading skills of the experimental group compared to the control group. By using these statistical methods, the researchers were able to analyze the data collected and determine if phonics instruction had a significant impact on the reading skills of Grade 1 pupils at Can-avid Central Elementary School.

RESULTS

Reading Skills of Grade 1 Pupils Before Using Phonics Instruction

Items	Mean Score	Interpretation
Phonological Awareness	10.4	Good
Decoding	7.8	Fair
Sight Word Recognition	6.0	Fair
Aggregate Mean Score	**8.07**	**Fair**

Reading Skills of Grade 1 Pupils After Using Phonics Instruction

Items	Mean Score	Interpretation
Phonological Awareness	18.0	Excellent
Decoding	17.0	Very Good
Sight Word Recognition	15.0	Very Good
Aggregate Mean Score	16.67	**Very Good**

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Table 3. Significant Difference Between the Level of Reading Skills of Grade 1 Pupils Before and After Using Phonics Instruction

Items	Critical Value	Computed t-Value	Interpretation
Phonological Awareness	1.96	7.5	Significant Difference ($p<0.05$)
Decoding	1.96	6.2	Significant Difference ($p<0.05$)
Sight Word Recognition	1.96	5.1	Significant Difference ($p<0.05$)

DISCUSSION

Reading Skills of Grade 1 Pupils Before Using Phonics Instruction

Reading skills of Grade 1 pupils before the implementation of phonics instruction, reveal concerning mean scores in Phonological Awareness (10.4), Decoding (7.8), and Sight Word Recognition (6.0), all of which are significantly below average. The aggregate mean score of 8.07 out of 20 indicates a substantial struggle with foundational reading skills. The low score in phonological awareness suggests difficulties in recognizing and manipulating sounds within words, which can hinder decoding abilities and impede fluency and vocabulary development. The decoding score reinforces the challenges these students face in sounding out words, resulting in a frustrating and laborious reading process that may affect comprehension. The particularly low score in sight word recognition highlights limited fluency with common words, causing students to focus on individual words rather than the overall meaning of the text. These findings underscore the urgent need for early intervention and targeted phonics instruction to enhance these students' reading skills, as effective support is crucial for preventing further academic struggles and fostering confident, successful readers.

Reading Skills of Grade 1 Pupils After Using Phonics Instruction

The findings indicate that there is a significant improvement in the reading skills of Grade 1 pupils after receiving phonics instruction, with mean scores rising to 18.0 in Phonological Awareness, 17.0 in Decoding, and 15.0 in Sight Word Recognition. The overall aggregate mean score increased to 16.67, indicating a Very Good performance level. This improvement reflects the effectiveness of the phonics program in addressing the foundational reading challenges encountered by the pupils. The substantial gain in Phonological Awareness suggests enhanced abilities to recognize and manipulate sounds within words, which likely contributed to the improved decoding skills and increased fluency in sounding out words. Additionally, the rise in Sight Word Recognition indicates that students are now able to recognize common words more quickly and automatically, allowing them to concentrate on comprehending the text rather than decoding each word. The overall positive shift from struggling readers to demonstrating a solid foundation in reading underscores the crucial role of targeted and systematic phonics instruction in fostering literacy success among young learners.

Significant Difference Between the Level of Reading Skills of Grade 1 Pupils Before and After Using Phonics Instruction

The statistical evidence highlights the transformative impact of phonics instruction on the reading skills of Grade 1 pupils. The computed t-values for Phonological Awareness, Decoding, and Sight Word Recognition significantly exceed the critical value of 1.96 at a 0.05 significance level, indicating that the improvements observed after the phonics instruction are statistically significant. This substantial difference in t-values before and after the intervention supports the conclusion that phonics instruction is crucial in enhancing the reading capabilities of young learners. The notably higher t-values suggest that the progress in these reading areas is a direct result of the structured phonics instruction rather than random chance.

These findings underscore the effectiveness of targeted phonics programs in fostering meaningful advancements in reading proficiency among Grade 1 students. The significant improvement in reading skills following phonics instruction not only validates this teaching approach but also highlights the importance of early intervention in developing foundational literacy skills. Such results advocate for the continued implementation of evidence-based phonics programs, empowering young learners with essential reading skills. This statistical validation serves as a compelling argument for incorporating phonics instruction into early education curricula, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to cultivate strong reading abilities from the beginning of their educational journey.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study on the effectiveness of phonics instruction on the reading skills of Grade 1 pupils at Can-avid Central Elementary School, the conclusions can be summarized as follows:

1. The initial assessment of Grade 1 pupils' reading skills highlighted significant challenges before the implementation of phonics instruction. With fair mean scores in phonological awareness, decoding, and sight word recognition, it underscored the critical need for targeted intervention to address foundational literacy skills

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effectively.

2. Following the phonics instruction, there was a remarkable improvement in the reading skills of Grade 1 pupils. The substantial increase in mean scores to very good levels in phonological awareness, decoding, and sight word recognition indicated a significant enhancement in their reading capabilities. This highlighted the effectiveness of phonics instruction in overcoming initial reading difficulties and equipping students with essential literacy skills for future success.
3. The statistical analysis provided robust evidence of the positive impact of phonics instruction on Grade 1 pupils' reading skills. The computed t-values significantly surpassing the critical value at a 0.05 significance level confirmed a substantial improvement in reading skills post-instruction. This statistical validation emphasized the pivotal role of targeted and systematic phonics instruction in enhancing reading proficiency among young learners, underlining the importance of early intervention and evidence-based instructional strategies for building strong foundational literacy skills.

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