

**Research Article**

## **THE EFFECTS OF PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS TO IMPROVING READING DISABILITY IN THE SCHOOL SETTING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

One of the language disorders, which are commonly evidenced among the beginner student, is reading disorder, and sometimes takes its place to dyslexia, a difficulty learning to read, often due to neurological deficit, according to its dictionary definition. And as reading skill has got an essential rule in most language teaching situation, this research seeks to find some strategies, by which teachers as a tutor can overcome the reading problem of the student at school in the beginning stage. Also as reading is one of the important factors in learning setting, this paper can be helpful to some extent to improve the reading skill among the beginner students.

**Keywords:** *Phonological Awareness, Improve, Reading Disability, School Setting*

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is better to be familiar with the process of reading and how it can be defined as an important skill, so there appears a question in our mind that, weather there is any connection between reading skill and the other ones. Such answer was answered by Betsy Parting in his book *language disorder across the lifespan*. He found out that “reading has phonetic, semantic, and syntactic and a memory component, all of which must be integrated if a person is to be a successful reader” (2007). So, the auditory and visual ability of a child should be under investigation as Betsy (2004) observed that: “Auditory, an emphasis should be placed on phonics, phonetics, and linguistic information. The child must be able to decode letters to form an accurate phonological image of each word, and then retrieve the definition of each word from memory. He or she must then combine syntactic and semantic information from the definition in to proper representation of a sentence. Finally, the child must combine the representation of individual sentences to comprehend the passage”.

The recoveries represents that the basic source of reading disorder among the beginner student is phonological awareness, it means that a normal child especially from the beginning should identify each word phonologically, by decoding letters and making a phonological image of such letter (Betsy, 2004). There is a strong evidence to suggest that phonological factors are of considerable importance in reading (Ellis and Large, 1981; Stanovich, 1991; Rack, 1994; Wilson and Fredrickson, 1995). Children with decoding problems have troubles in reading skill because they unable to generalize from one word to another. This means that every word they read is unique, and it shows that there is a difficulty in learning and applying phonological rules in reading. It therefore emphasizes the importance of teaching sound phonemes and also shows that the child has an awareness of the sound letter correspondence (Gavin, 2003). Learning words by sight can enable some children to reach a certain standard in reading but prevents them from understanding new words and extending their vocabulary. If children have a phonological awareness difficulty they are more likely to guess the word from the first letter cue and not the first *sound* (Gavin, 2003). It is important therefore that beginning readers receive some structured training in the grapheme phoneme correspondence. So, investigating causes of reading disorder in the beginners can be a suitable device in order to find some solutions for overcoming such impairment. In the next part, it is better to introduce the areas within which the beginners have got problem.

### **Problem Areas for Readers in Trouble**

It would be suggested to students the factors of causing reading disorder in beginner students extrinsic and intrinsic factors.

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By extrinsic factors, our attention drives to how outside environmental factor causes such impairment in a child as well as lack of exposure to the printed word, lack of instruction and lack of opportunity to practice reading skill, also cultural diversity can be included in this category (Vinson, 2007).

Intrinsic factors are also those ones which have got an inherited basis. According to Betsy (2007), genetic and hereditary factors as well as neurological bases are involved in this category, as a result, dyslexia is a subdivision of this head and researches show that phonological awareness is “ at the heart of dyslexia, so it should be tested as part of reading battery” ( Betsy, 2007). Turgescent ( 1999) defines phonemic awareness as “ a more or less explicit understanding that words are exposed of sound smaller than a syllable, as well as knowledge, or awareness, of the distinctive feature of individual phonemes themselves” (p. 129). It is embedded in the more general construct of phonological awareness (Vinson, 2007), also it is necessary to assess the student’s knowledge of sound letter correspondence, and therefore the methodology part of this study would address suitable treatments at school, by which reading disorder based on phonological awareness among early students can be discovered .

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Method

Treatment Methods for Students with Reading Disabilities

There are several phonological awareness training programs available for the students in order to help them in phonological processing and word recognition as well, the table below in *language disorders across the lifespan* shows how such program progressed in a school setting.

**Table 1: A phonological awareness training program**

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1. Program levels
    - a. Level I. increasing word awareness: dividing sentences into words
    - b. Level II. Increasing syllable awareness: dividing words into syllables
    - c. Level III. Increasing sound awareness: dividing syllables into sounds
  2. Level sections
    - a. Level I. Listening activities for increasing word awareness
    - b. Level I. Deliberate manipulation of words in sentences
    - c. Level II. Listening activities for increasing syllable awareness
    - d. Level II. Deliberate manipulation of syllables in words
    - e. Level III. Listening activities for increasing sound awareness
    - f. Level III. Deliberate manipulation of sounds in syllables
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Source: *Development Reading Disabilities: A Language-Based Treatment Approach* (p. 154) by C. L. Goldsworthy. Copyright 1996 by Singular Publishing Group, Inc.

The purpose of all such programs is in long-term instruction in phonemic decoding for reading, spelling, and rapid recognition. As was mentioned, all the steps provide a condition by which the awareness of a child from word, syllable and sound would be increased and it can be the first step to teach rapid and automatic word recognition and as a result improve reading among the beginners.

There are also activities which help the students at the class to improve their reading disorder by promoting phonological awareness among them. Such activities will be introduced in the next table;

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**Table 2: Phonological awareness**

1. Read aloud to the child on a regular basis.
2. Encourage story-telling and “reading” wordless book.
3. Sing songs.
4. Have the child answer questions about what has been read.
5. Pose a question to the child prior to reading the story and then have the child listen for information needed to answer the question.
6. Use puns, idioms, and riddles to enhance manipulating sounds and words.
7. Teach the child to discriminate pitch, volume, and rhythms of auditory information.
8. Point to words and letters as you read to the child.
9. As you read to the child, omit words and have him or her guess what the word should be.
10. Provide the child with word cards that can be arranged to formulate a sentence.

Source: compiled from information in *developmental reading disabilities: A language-based Treatment Approach* (pp. 127-170) by C.L Goldsworthy. Copyright 1996 by Singular Publishing Group. Inc.

**Participants**

The participants of the study were the teachers, teaching primary level students. For such investigation, one of the primary school in the city of Kerman had studied. In fact, the study’s participants were 15 teachers, required to response to the questionnaire given to them. In such questionnaire, they were asked to answer each item with regard to the degree by which each of the questions would effect on student’s reading recovery.

**Material**

To measure the participant’s reading ability, essential materials used in such a study were those under the control of teachers, as it was asked them to fill their questionnaire and reply to the efficiency of each methods which were related to the improvement the student’s reading, from non-effective to high effective level, so according to the study’s questionnaire, we had ten methods related to those methods mentioned in table 2-2. According to that table, the reason for reading disorder among primary students was phonological awareness, by attending to those methods, the most essential material was reading books which are recently provided for primary students from the first to fifth grade, also story and word cards for making sentences could be in the use of the teachers.

**Table 3: Means and standard deviation of 10 methods**

The number of the methods	method 1	method 2	method 3	method 4	method 5	method 6	method 7	method 8	method 9	method 10
Valid	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.6667	2.2000	1.9333	2.6667	2.0000	2.4000	2.5333	2.2667	2.5333	2.6000
Std. Deviation	.48795	.67612	.79881	.72375	.84515	.50709	.74322	.70373	.51640	.63246

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### **Procedure**

In our study, 15 teachers of the first to fifth grade of primary school, were asked to perform the methods required them according to questionnaire and record the result from non-effective to high-effective level. The lesson which should be focused on was reading improvement books, which nowadays are in use of every primary school. The teachers of the study were introduced by ten methods prepared for the student's reading improvement and also were asked to perform them and record the effectiveness of each methods included in the questionnaire.

These ten methods offered the teachers some techniques to improve reading skill based on phonological awareness and the degree of their effectiveness should be choose in order to check how effective each methods could be. The result of the study was based on the counting of the degree of the effectiveness of such methods in improving the reading skill.

### **Data Analysis**

For the purpose of the study the practices, which were embedded in the methods introduced in table 2, were asked to be performed by 15 teachers, and the results were recorded in the questionnaire given to them, the number of methods were ten and the answers were leveled from high effective to non-effective level. The table below is included recorded result, including the mean and standard variation of each method, counted by calculating the frequencies of the received answers for each method according to the questionnaire.

### **Conclusion**

Referring to the results, phonological awareness as an important cause for reading disability should be practiced among the beginners in order to make their awareness about sound-word relationship higher, and as a result, such practices during prescribed methods represented that the more the awareness power of the students about the phonological part of words would be higher, the less they have problem during reading, especially at an elementary level in primary school.

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