

Phonological Awareness On Preschool Students' Writing Ability

Erna Juliana Aruan
ernaaruan.ea@gmail.com

Abstract

Phonological awareness is the area of oral language that relates to the ability to think about the sounds in a word. It is an understanding of the structure of spoken language that it is made up of words consist of syllables, rhymes and sounds. This ability is important for using sound-letter knowledge effectively in writing and reading as well. This research conducted the assessment of preschool students ability in writing the dictated words through their phonological awareness not by memorizing the letters. There were 19 students assessed in this research. 2 out of 19 were failed to improve in the vowel sound of *oo* and *oa*. 17 out of 19 were success to be improving after giving phonological awareness.

Keyword: phonological awareness, syllables, rhymes, sounds

1. Introduction

Since a student's level of phonological awareness at the end of Kindergarten is one of the strongest predictors of future reading success, the writer felt that needed to develop phonological awareness method to support their reading skills through word dictation tasks.

Phonological awarness is one of the most important predictors of reading in normally developing children (Rack, Hulme, Snowling & Wightman: 1994). In the present study, the writer was interested to investigate the phonological awareness in word dictation to improve reading and writing skills in preschool students.

Goswami and Bryant (1990) argued that during the preschool and early school years, children progress through three levels of phonological awareness: from awareness of syllables to awareness of onsets and rimes and finally to phoneme awareness. Gombert proposed different segments that phonological awareness could be separated into two types: epilinguistic awareness and metalinguistic awareness. Epilinguistic awareness consists of a global sensitivity to similarities between speech sounds, and metalinguistic awareness consists of a conscious awareness of phonological segment within words, normally phonemes.

English uses an alphabetic writing system in which the letters, singly and in combination, represent single speech sounds. People who can take apart words into sounds, recognize their identity, and put them together again have the foundation skill for using the alphabetic principle (Liberman, Shankweiler & Liberman, 1989; Troia, 2004). Without phoneme awareness, students maybe mystified by the print system and how it represents the spoken word.

Students who lack phoneme awareness may not even know what is meant by the term sound. They can usually hear well but they have little or no idea what letters represent. If asked to give the first sound in the word dog, they would not be able to identify /d/ in the words dog, dish, and mad and to separate the phoneme from others before the can understand what the letter d represents in those words.

This study examined three main questions:

1. Does the phonological awareness help to improve preschool students' writing ability?
2. What is the dominant difficulty in blending the phonological sounds?
3. What is the easiest phonological sound done by the students?

Phonological awareness is the area of oral language that relates to the ability to think about sounds in a word (the word's phonological structure) rather than just the meaning of the word. It is an understanding of the structure of spoken language-that is made up of words, and words consist of syllables, rhymes and sounds. Fitzpatrick summarizes by saying that phonological awareness is the ability to listen inside a words.

Vihman (1996) proposed that to look for the role of implicit learning is at the earliest stages of wordlearning, when both speech perception and vocal production are beginning to be shaped by the ambient language, but the arbitrary form-meaning associations that underlie referential word learning have not yet begun to be established. At this stage the infant begins to use just a few familiar words or phrases in familiar contexts.

Phoneme awareness facilitates growth in printed word recognition. Some researchers have proposed that learning letters may alter the nature of a child's phonological representations for instance, Treiman and Bourassa (2000) suggested that learning letter-sound correspondences helps to develop phoneme-based phoological representations. A similar point was raised by Byrne and Liberman (1999), who pointed out that learning letters may help children to focus on the sounds, rather than the meanings, of words.

Longitudinal studies also suggest that the learning of letters plays a crucial role in the development of phonemic awareness. Wagner et. al. (1994) conducted a longitudinal study in an effort to examine the reciprocal influences of phonological processing abilities, decoding and letter knowledge. According to their fidings, phonological processing abilities influenced the later development of reading and letter-name knowledge, but there was no evidence that reading development influenced the development of phonological processing abilities.

We know that many children first demonstrate phonological awareness as preschoolers. They begin to recognize words as separate entities. They also become aware of how groups of sounds (syllables or rhymes) operate in words in spoken language e.g. *Matt* and *pat* rhyme. They develop an awareness of individual sounds and can attend to and manipulate them in a word. These indiidual sounds of a language are known as phonemes.

Phonological awareness refers to an understanding of the sound structure of language-that is, that language is made up of words, syllables, rhymes, and sounds (phonemes). By the end of kindergarten, given sufficient instruction, practice, and exposure to many literacy activities, students should be able to: sound level (isolate the beginning or ending sounds in words, segment and blend sounds in a word with three sounds), syllable level (segment and blend words of at least three syllables), word level

(recognize how many words are in a sentence), rhyme level (understand the concept of rhyming, recognize and generate rhyming words).

Words can be divided into onsets and rhymes. The onset refers to any sounds before the vowel. The rime is any sounds from the vowel to the end of the word, and it is the part we usually think about as the word family.

For example:

	Onset	Rhyme
man	m	an
swing	sw	ing
twinkle	tw	inkle

Assessment

The assessment of phonological awareness needs to focus on the students' ability to play with the parts of words in the ways of: segmenting, blending, deleting and substituting. This wordplay occurs at different levels of complexity: sounds, words, syllables, rhymes (phonemes)

Sound Awareness

Some children may enter kindergarten with an awareness that words start with the same sound, even though they may not know which letter goes with that sound. Segmenting and blending individual sounds within words is the most difficult level of phonological awareness and has a strong correlation to learning to read (Adams et al., Snow et. al.).

When asking students to isolate, segment, or blend sounds, it is important to note the: consonant sounds are easier than vowel sounds, single-consonant sounds are easier than sound cluster or blends (e.g., *pin* is easier than *spin*), certain consonant sounds (e.g. f,v,s,z,th,sh,m,n,r,l,w) are easier than others (e.g., p, b, t, d, k, g, ch, j). Initially, many students may segment at the onset boundary (e.g., m-an) rather than sound by sound (e.g. m-a-n).

By the end of kindergarten, given sufficient instruction and practice and exposure to many literacy activities, students should be able to: isolate the beginning or ending sounds in words, blend three sounds to make a word, segment the sounds in a word with three sounds, change a sound in a word to make a new word in familiar games and songs.

Word Awareness

Understanding the concept of a word develops from students' exposure to print classroom activities that help them to recognize how words-especially the function words that are more abstract-exist as separate entities.

The difficulty may be in isolating words in sentences orally, especially if the words have more than one syllable. They may focus on all the syllables in the sentence rather than the words and consider function words to be part of the concrete words. For example, students may think that "the star" is one word.

It also starts to show up in writing, with spaces between words, even when the words consist of any random string of letters. They may still not be using spaces between words in writing at the end of kindergarten.

Syllable Awareness

Most preschoolers have a sense of syllableness even if they do not know what a syllable is. They can recognize how many beats or syllables there are in a word. This is the easiest level of segmenting word parts. One would expect most kindergarten students to be able to segment and blend two- and three-syllable words, but they may have more difficulty with longer words with four to five syllables.

With practice, they should be able to distinguish the syllables in three-syllable words before the end of kindergarten. If students cannot hear the beats or syllables in words, it is important to practice segmenting and blending at this level.

Rhyme Awareness

Being able to rhyme orally requires the ability to understand the concept of rhyme and to be able to: *segment* (e.g. *m-an*: to know where to segment in the word), *delete* (e.g. *-an*: to know that you have to take one sound away), *substitute* (e.g. *c-an*: to know how to add a new sound at the beginning), *blend* (e.g. *can*: to know how to blend the segments together).

As indicated above, segmenting, deleting, substituting and blending are the key components of phonological awareness. A student who cannot recognize or generate rhyme is certainly at risk for developing the skills he or she needs to be successful in using familiar word parts for reading and writing. The development of all aspects of phonological awareness (understanding how words can be segmented and blended into syllables, rhymes and sounds) will support the flexible use of sound knowledge as one component of the reading and writing process.

2. Method Design

The design of method used in this research is qualitative research methods. The technique that is used is observation and assessment kept in a archive (data content). Additionally, the research had been conducted for three months from July to September 2017.

The subjects of this research are the 19 Kindergarten 2 students in the age of 4-5 years old. They had learnt Phonics subject since Nursery class but they had never been assessed to do dictation to improve their writing skills.

3.Data Results

Data of blending sound before phonological awareness

From this study it can be seen the students' weakness in blending sound dictation. There were 14 words assessed *zoo, moon, choose, food, toad, coat, boat, float, soap, brain, bee, dog, cow, corn.*

Table 1. The students' weaknesses in blending sound dictation before phonological awareness

Student	Word
1	<i>choose, float, bee, cow, corn</i>
2	<i>food, soap, coat, float, dog, corn, coat</i>
3	<i>choose, float, soap, coat</i>
4	<i>coat, boat, cow, corn, coat</i>
5	<i>choose, boat, float, dog, cow, corn, coat</i>
6	<i>zoo, moon, choose, food, toad, coat, boat, float, soap, brain, bee, dog, cow, corn.</i>
7	<i>coat, corn</i>
8	<i>choose, coat, coin, coat</i>
9	<i>toad, coat, boat, float, food, dog, coat</i>
10	<i>dog, corn, coat</i>
11	<i>choose, coat, float, soap, coat</i>
12	<i>choose, food, bee, cow, corn</i>
13	<i>choose, boat, float, bee, cow, corn, coat</i>
14	<i>food, dog, cat</i>
15	<i>zoo, moon, choose, brain, food, soap, bee, dog, cow, corn, coat</i>
16	<i>moon, food, bee, cow, corn</i>
17	<i>chose, coat, soap, bee</i>
18	<i>dog, cow, corn, coat</i>
19	<i>coat, float, brain, soap, dog,</i>

Data of blending sound after phonological awareness

After 2 weeks of phonological awareness, it can be seen the improvement of words dictated in the data below. There were 5 vowel sounds assessed *ee, ea, oo, oa, ai*.

Table 2. The students' weakness in blending sound dictation after phonological awareness

Student	Word
1	<i>Paint</i>
2	-
3	-
4	<i>Boat</i>
5	<i>Boat</i>
6	<i>room, coach, boat</i>
7	-
8	-
9	<i>stool, paint</i>
10	-
11	-
12	-
13	<i>Coach</i>
14	<i>cool, coach, boat</i>
15	-
16	-
17	-
18	<i>Paint</i>
19	<i>cool, coach, boat</i>

Discussion

After observing the data before and after phonological awareness, the study came to discuss the dictation of vowel sound *oo*, *oa* and *ee* since these sounds were assessed two times.

Table 3. The analysis of before and after phonological awareness

student	Vowel sound					
	Oo		oa		ee	
	before	After	before	after	before	after
1	1	-	2	-	-	-
2	1	-	3	1	-	-
3	1	-	3	-	-	-
4	-	-	2	1	-	-
5	1	-	3	1	-	-
6	4	1	5	2	1	-
7	-	-	2	-	-	-
8	1	-	3	-	-	-
9	1	1	4	-	-	-
10	-	-	1	-	-	-
11	1	-	3	-	-	-
12	2	-	-	-	1	-
13	1	-	3	1	1	-
14	1	1	1	2	-	-
15	4	-	1	-	1	-
16	3	-	1	-	-	-

17	1	-	2	-	1	-
18	-	-	1	-	-	-
19	-	1	3	2	-	-

Of the overall data taken, 2 out of 19 students resulted decreasing improvement in the vowel sound *oo* and *oa*. 17 out of 19 students resulted improvement ability in doing dictation. They recognized the sounds of the letters uttered and they were able to write the words.

4. Conclusion

From the results and discussion, we can conclude that phonological awareness is needed to improve students' ability in blending words and to improve their writing and reading skills. They may be at many different stages in writing at the beginning and throughout the kindergarten year. It is very important to support students' use of invented spelling in kindergarten because to explore the language through this process is integral to develop the segmenting of every single sound and be aware of how sound is patterned in English words. From the result shown the research problems can be answered that the most difficult phonological sound are the blending of vowel sounds *oo* (*food, choose, spoon*) and *oa* (*boat, coat, road. etc*). And the easiest is the blending of vowel sound *ee* such as in *bee, tree, three*.

REFERENCES

- Goswami, U., & Bryant, P.E. (1990). *Phonological skills and learning to read*. Hove, East Sussex, England, Psychology Press.
- Rack, J., Hulme., Snowling, M. J., & Wightman, J. (1994). The role of phonology in young children learning to read words: The direct mapping hypothesis. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 57, 42-71
- Wagner, R. K., Torgesen, J.K., & Rashotte, C. A. (1994). Development of reading-related phonological processing abilities: New evidence of bidirectional causality from a latent variable longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology*. 30, 73-87
- Vihman, M. (1996). *Phonological development*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.