

## EFFECT OF JOLLY PHONICS ON PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS ACHIEVEMENT ON READING AND SPELLING SKILLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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### Abstract

This study sought to find out the effect of teaching synthetic multisensory phonics (i.e. Jolly Phonics) on pupils achievement in Anambra State of Nigeria. To this end, 100 primary school pupils from 5 primary schools in the state aged between 7 to 10 participated in this study. The participants were randomly assigned to either experimental or control classes. While the pupils in the control group were taught Basic English literacy skills through the rote traditional phonics, the learners in the experimental group were taught English literacy via a synthetic multisensory phonics approach named Jolly Phonics. After a one-month English course, all the participants took a reading and a spelling test. A set of descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze pupils' scores obtained from these tests. The results demonstrated that the experimental (Jolly Phonics) group had a better performance on the reading and spelling tests. This result shows that there is need for teaching jolly phonic in Anambra State Primary schools in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Phonics, multisensory approach, synthetic phonics, jolly phonics (JP), literacy.

### INTRODUCTION

The primary school is the point at which proper foundation should be established for the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Children at the pre-primary level, spend time on recognition of objects within and around their environment. At the early primary school stage, the child is not only expected to recognize these objects but should be able to read the names of the objects at home, classroom, etc. Similarly, an average primary four pupil is expected to read simple written sentences using the language of instruction. This means that children who began primary one at the age of six years should read simple sentences between the ages of nine to ten years. However, some could read earlier than that because of differences in the children's reading ability (Etuk, 2005).

Reading skills dictate performances in other disciplines. One's ability to read well will determine ones performance and achievement in any academic endeavour. A good reader will automatically become a good writer as a result of vast experiences gained on formation of words, phrases, sentences and even expression of ideas (Ekpo, Udosen, Afangideh, Ekukinam & Ikorok 2007). The goal of reading instruction at the primary school level is that each child should be functionally literate and be able to communicate effectively. Functional literacy means that individuals can read with understanding and be able to apply knowledge gained to solve life's problems. Omojuwa (2005) sums this up by saying that functional literacy does

not only stop at learning, but ensures reading for survival even when a child's academic endeavour terminates at the primary school level.

Jolly Phonics is a brand name for synthetic phonics instruction developed by Jolly Learning Ltd, UK. Like many other phonics approaches, Jolly Phonics systematically teaches reading and writing by linking letters with the sound they make commonly in the English spelling system. It outlines 42 letter sounds that are arranged in order of complexity with most commonly occurring alphabet sounds first, followed by digraphs which require a combination of two alphabets and finally, the remaining single-letter alphabet sounds.

The key skills that are expected as children progress through the letter sounds are the ability to pronounce it correctly (learning the letter sound), writing it (formation), combining it to read new words (blending) and listening for it in words to aid spelling (segmenting). The learning of letter sounds is followed by teaching the tricky words such as „I“, „come“ „because“ which do not normally follow the letter and sound correspondence. Similarly, Jolly Phonics developed songs, stories and actions on each letter sound that make their learning easy and enjoyable. The following are the 42 letter sounds in Jolly Phonics order:

- 1 . s, a, t, i, p, n
- 2 . c k, e, h, r, m, d
- 3 . g, o, u, l, f, b
- 4 . ai, j, oa, ie, ee, or
- 5 . z, w, ng, v, oo, oo
- 6 . y, x, ch, sh, th, th
- 7 . qu, ou, oi, ue, er, ar

Jolly Phonics is a fun and child-centred approach to teaching literacy which has actions for each of the 42 letter sounds of English and teaches five key skills for reading and writing by using a *synthetic multisensory* approach. These five skills include (i) learning the letter sounds which consist of the alphabet sounds as well as digraphs (e.g. sh, ai, etc.), (ii) learning letter formation, (iii) blending, (iv) segmenting, and (v) tricky words that have irregular spellings and children learn them separately in this method (“Teaching Literacy with Jolly Phonics”, December 2014).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Some of the most recent research studies conducted on the successfulness of the Jolly Phonics method are presented below:

Stuart (1999) conducted a study with 112 five-year-old children, 96 of whom were English second language learners. The participants were assigned to either the experimental group

(Jolly Phonics intervention) or the control group which used a whole-language approach based on use of big books, Holdaway's (1979). Prior to the 12-week intervention, all the children were pretested on measures of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and spoken and written language. Right after the intervention and again one year later, they were all post-tested on all these measures. The results showed that the Jolly Phonics programme contributed a lot to children's acquisition of phoneme awareness and phonics knowledge as well as their ability to apply this knowledge in reading and writing.

Johnston and Watson (2005) conducted a longitudinal research study on the beneficial effects of synthetic phonics instruction on literacy attainments of primary school children over 7 years in Clackmannanshire, Scotland. Around 300 children in primary 1 were divided into 3 groups. One group was taught through the synthetic phonics (Jolly Phonics programme), one by the analytic phonics method, and one by an analytic phonics programme plus rhyme and phonemic awareness training. In order to make sure that the improvements in children's literacy learning were maintained, the progress of all these children was followed from primary 1 to primary 7 while their performance in spelling, word reading, and reading comprehension were permanently assessed. It was discovered that at the end of primary 7, the Jolly Phonics (JP) group was 3 years 6 months ahead of their chronological age in word reading, 1 year 8 months ahead in spelling and 3 years 5 months ahead in reading comprehension.

Ekpo et al., 2007 sought to investigate the relative effects of Jolly Phonics on enhancing primary one pupil's reading skills. The participants of the study consisted of 168 primary-one pupils from 5 schools in 3 senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria. Two intact classes in each school were selected to form the experimental and control groups. The experimental groups received the Jolly phonics programme as the treatment. The experimental group gained from 3-29 months reading age (5.3 to 5.7) in the Burt Reading Test. Accordingly, the results revealed that Jolly Phonics (JP) was effective in enhancing children's reading skills.

Dixon, Schhagen and Seedhouse (2011) studied the impact of Jolly Phonics intervention on children's English literacy skills in low-income schools in India. This study used a quasi-experimental design in which over 500 pupils in 20 schools participated in the 6-month programme. While the control group continued with their ordinary English lessons, the experimental group which consisted of over half of the participants experienced lessons organized around the Jolly Phonics (JP) materials. The pupils' scores in reading and spelling tests demonstrated that the intervention groups (JP groups) had significantly improved compared to the control group.

Eshiet (2012) inquired into the possible effects of Jolly phonics on improving the reading skills of Nigerian children. Eshiet adopted Jolly phonics as the intervention in a case study design with mixed method approach. The quantitative data was collected through standardized reading and spelling tests while the qualitative data was obtained from focus group discussion of teachers. The findings demonstrated that the jolly phonics (JP) method led to the improving of pupils' reading achievement as well as an increase in teachers' interest in teaching English.

Shepherd (2013) investigated the effect of Jolly Phonics programme on increasing basic literacy skills of Nigerian primary school pupils in Cross River State, Nigeria. Almost 300 children, across 6 schools participated in this 8-month study. At each school, one class

received daily lessons using the jolly phonics (JP) method and one control class continued with the traditional method which mostly consisted of rote learning and memorization. Using the Early Grade Reading Assessment tools, a pretest/posttest comparison was conducted which tested a number of basic literacy skills in English. The results demonstrated that the children in jolly phonics (JP) groups performed at a much higher level on literacy assessments than those who received their normal literacy instruction.

### **Statement of Problems**

Jolly phonic i.e. a synthetic multisensory approach of teaching phonic in primary schools in Anambra state is becoming a norm of the day. Most teachers use this teaching approach without ascertaining the need of the teaching approach.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of teaching jolly phonics in reading and spelling skills on primary pupils achievement in Anambra state schools. Specifically, the study was:

1. To find out the effect of teaching jolly phonics in pupils reading skills in Anambra state primary schools.
2. To find out the effect of teaching jolly phonics on pupils spelling skills in Anambra state primary schools.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were posed by the researchers to guide the study;

1. What are the mean achievement scores of pupils taught reading skills with jolly phonics (experimental group) and those taught without the jolly phonics in the expository method (control group)?
2. What are the mean achievement scores of pupils taught spelling skills with jolly phonics and those taught without jolly phonics in the expository method?

## **METHODOLOGY**

A quasi-experimental research design of pre-test and post-test non-equivalent control group was used for the study. The population for the study consisted of all the one thousand and fifty-three (1053) public primary schools in Anambra State. The sample of the study consisted of one hundred (100) participants ranging from 7-10 years of primary two pupils drawn from a population of one hundred and forty-five thousand, three hundred and fifty (145,350) primary two pupils in the state through random sampling technique.

The research instruments used for this study were the word reading test and the spelling test. The word reading test contained 42-item spelling test. The word reading and spelling tests were administered to the subjects (pupils) as pre-test and post-test in achievement test.

The instruments were adopted for use as it was developed by universal learning solutions (ULS).

Data obtained from research questions were answered using means and standard deviations while the research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). When the p value is less than 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ) level of significance, it is regarded as been significant i.e. the null hypothesis of no significant different is rejected.

But when the p value is greater than 0.05 ( $P > 0.05$ ) level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the study are presented according to the research questions and hypotheses in the following tables:

**Research Question One:** What are the mean achievement scores of pupils taught reading skills with jolly phonics and those taught without the jolly phonics in the expository method (control group)?

Answer to this research question is presented in Table 1

**Table 1:** Means and Standard deviations of Experimental and Control Groups in reading test in English Language

Achievement tests	Group respondent	Mean	SD	N
Pre-test	Experimental group	4.68	1.24	50
	Control group	3.85	0.95	50
	<b>Mean difference</b>	0.83	—	—
Post-test	Experimental group	12.53	4.64	50
	Control group	8.72	2.84	50
	<b>Mean difference</b>	3.81	—	—

Table 1 reveals that at pre-test, means for both experimental and control groups are 4.68 and 3.85 with the standard deviations of 1.24 and 0.95 respectively. The mean difference of both groups is 0.83. This means that the pupils in experimental and control groups have similar achievement (negligible difference) in both groups before the commencement of the experiment.

At the post-test, mean achievement for experimental and control groups are 12.52 and 8.72 with standard deviations of 4.64 and 2.84 respectively. The mean difference is 3.81 indicating a higher achievement. This means that the pupils in the experimental group performed significantly than those in the control group.

### Research Question two

What are the mean achievement scores of pupils taught spelling skills with jolly phonics and those taught without jolly phonics in the expository method?

Answer to this research question is presented in table 2

**Table 2:** Mean and standard deviations of experimental and control groups in spelling test in English language

Achievement tests	Group respondent	Mean	SD	N
Pre-test	Experimental group	5.12	1.13	50
	Control group	3.86	1.04	50
	<b>Mean difference</b>	1.26	—	—
Post-test	Experimental group	15.53	3.12	50
	Control group	9.15	2.56	50
	<b>Mean difference</b>	6.38	—	—

Table 2 shows that the pre-test means achievement of pupils in spelling test for both experimental and control groups are 5.12 and 3.86 with standard deviations of 1.13 and 1.04 respectively. The mean difference is 1.26. At the post test, the mean achievement of pupils in spelling test for both experimental and control groups are 15.53 and 9.15 with standard deviations of 3.12 and 2.56 respectively. The mean difference is 6.38. This shows that the experimental group scored higher compared with control group in the post-test.

### Research Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught reading skills with jolly phonics and those taught without jolly phonics.

**Table 3:** ANCOVA Results for Experimental and Control Groups in the Reading Test on English Language

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	f	P value	Decision
Corrected Model	22.145	2	131.140	14.101	0.000	
Intercept	1.002	1	2.014	1.243	0.124	
Method	26.142	1	13.223	3.564	0.008	s
Error	64.014	96	0.058			
Total	143.714	100				
Corrected total	92.366	99				

Table 3 shows that the f-computed value for method (3.564) is significant at 0.008 level, which is less than 0.05 level set for this study. Hence, the researchers reject the null hypothesis. This means that method is a significant factor in this study.

**Research Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught spelling skills with Jolly phonics and those taught without Jolly phonics.

**Table 4:** ANCOVA Results for Experimental and control groups on the spelling test in English Language

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	f	P value	Decision
Corrected Model	23.423	2	142.152	16.120	0.000	
Intercept	0.984	1	4.342	2.144	0.134	
Method	27.342	1	16.128	3.852	0.002	S
Error	68.248	96	0.214			
Total	151.243	100				
Corrected total	95.472	99				

Table 4 shows that the f-computed value for method (3.852) is significant at 0.002 level which is less than 0.05 probability level set for this study. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught spelling skills with jolly phonics and those taught without jolly phonics.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results for research hypotheses one and two reveal that there is a significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught reading and spelling skills with jolly phonics and those taught without jolly phonics. Hence, pupils taught reading and spelling skills with jolly phonics achieved significantly higher than those taught without jolly phonics. This means that the use of jolly phonics in primary school teaching and learning is a success and should be encouraged. According to Ekpo *et al* (2007), jolly phonics enhances primary two pupils reading skills, Ekpo *et al* (2007) emphasized that jolly phonics was effective in enhancing children's reading skills.

Furthermore, Eshiet (2012) demonstrated that the jolly phonics method led to the improving of pupils' reading achievement as well as an increase in teachers' interest in teaching English. This above stresses that jolly phonics enhances interest in both pupils and teachers. Pupils and teachers' interest sustain the level of knowledge in English Language.

## CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that the use of jolly phonics in teaching primary English language enhances pupils' achievement. Reading and spelling skills with jolly phonics promote understanding of the English language. Therefore teachers are encouraged to make use of jolly phonics in their various classes for easy understanding of English language.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made following the findings of the study;

1. The state government, state ministry of education or its agent should arrange training or workshops for all primary school teachers on the use of jolly phonics in English language.

2. Professional Associations such as English Language Association of Nigeria (ELAN) should arrange for workshops during their annual conference on the use of Jolly phonics in teaching primary school children.
3. Curriculum planners should include and emphasize the use of jolly phonics in the scheme of work for primary schools.
4. Primary school head teachers should organize workshops for teachers in their respective schools on the use of jolly phonics as every teacher teaches English in his/her class.

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