

The importance of phonological awareness as a natural approach in children's reading process from Manuela Cañizares School

La importancia de la conciencia fonológica como enfoque natural en el proceso lector de los niños del Colegio Manuela Cañizares

Noemi Margarita Morales Pilatuña, Juan Pablo Contreras Parra

ABSTRACT

The present study examines the significant impact of phonological awareness on the reading acquisition of children aged 10 to 12, with a specific focus on those acquiring English as a second language in Ecuador. The report highlights the pressing need for educational reforms considering the nation's difficulties in achieving mastery in the English language. The study used a mixed-methods methodology, using questionnaires and observations to examine the complexities of phonological awareness as a naturalistic approach and its influence on reading ability. The results of the study indicate that a considerable percentage of pupils have difficulties in reading English words, highlighting the need to implement efficient teaching approaches. This research paper presents a survey on a phonological awareness intervention, showing its capacity to improve both phonological awareness abilities and reading ability. Furthermore, the study reveals a deficiency in the use of natural approach techniques and pronunciation tactics, underscoring prospects for pedagogical improvement. The study's larger ramifications beyond the realm of education, prompting scientists in interconnected fields to contemplate the crucial significance of phonological awareness in the process of language learning. Although this study provides interesting insights, it is important to acknowledge several limitations. One drawback is the narrow scope of the examined linguistic aspects, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, there may be limits on the sample size, which might impact the overall validity and representativeness of the results. Subsequent investigations may be conducted to overcome these constraints and delve into the enduring effects of interventions, therefore offering full insights to educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in language acquisition and teaching. In general, this study highlights the importance of phonological awareness in resolving challenges with reading, facilitating successful language training, and contributing to wider conversations on language acquisition approaches.

Keywords: Phonological awareness; natural approach; reading process; english as a foreign language; language education methods.

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RESUMEN

El presente estudio examina el impacto significativo de la conciencia fonológica en la adquisición de la lectura de niños de 10 a 12 años, con especial atención a los que adquieren el inglés como segunda lengua en Ecuador. El informe pone de relieve la acuciante necesidad de reformas educativas teniendo en cuenta las dificultades del país para alcanzar el dominio de la lengua inglesa. El estudio empleó una metodología de métodos mixtos, utilizando cuestionarios y observaciones para examinar las complejidades de la conciencia fonológica como enfoque naturalista y su influencia en la capacidad lectora. Los resultados del estudio indican que un porcentaje considerable de alumnos tiene dificultades para leer palabras en inglés, lo que pone de relieve la necesidad de aplicar enfoques didácticos eficaces. Este trabajo de investigación presenta un estudio sobre una intervención de conciencia fonológica, mostrando su capacidad para mejorar tanto las habilidades de conciencia fonológica como la capacidad lectora. Además, el estudio revela una deficiencia en el uso de técnicas de aproximación natural y tácticas de pronunciación, lo que subraya las perspectivas de mejora pedagógica. Las ramificaciones más amplias del estudio van más allá del ámbito de la educación, incitando a científicos de campos interconectados a contemplar la importancia crucial de la conciencia fonológica en el proceso de aprendizaje de idiomas. Aunque este estudio aporta datos interesantes, es importante reconocer varias limitaciones. Uno de los inconvenientes es el reducido alcance de los aspectos lingüísticos examinados, que puede restringir la generalizabilidad de los resultados. Además, el tamaño de la muestra puede ser limitado, lo que podría afectar a la validez y representatividad generales de los resultados. Podrían llevarse a cabo investigaciones posteriores para superar estas limitaciones y profundizar en los efectos duraderos de las intervenciones, ofreciendo así una visión completa a educadores, responsables políticos e investigadores interesados en la adquisición y la enseñanza de idiomas. En general, este estudio pone de relieve la importancia de la conciencia fonológica para resolver los problemas de la lectura, facilitar el éxito de la formación lingüística y contribuir a un debate más amplio sobre los enfoques de la adquisición del lenguaje.

Palabras claves: Conciencia fonológica; enfoque natural; proceso de lectura; inglés como lengua extranjera; métodos de enseñanza de idiomas.

Introduction

The development of phonological awareness is a crucial aspect of children's acquisition of reading skills, playing a significant influence in molding their educational progress (Wang, 2017). Numerous studies have repeatedly demonstrated that children with a solid phonological awareness foundation exhibit a notable advantage in acquiring reading skills. According to Wang (2017), research indicates that offering specialized instruction in phonological awareness beyond the early stages of education can provide notable improvements in reading proficiency. This study acknowledges the significant significance of phonological awareness. It undertakes an extensive investigation to elucidate its value and identify successful instructional approaches for teaching English reading skills to little children with Spanish as their first language other than English.

The study's worldwide significance becomes apparent when considering the present difficulties encountered by Ecuador in achieving proficiency in a second language, which positions it at a relatively low position in the global rankings of South American countries (EPI, 2022). The placement of Ecuador on the EPI 2022 ranking highlights the urgent need for educational changes, specifically in English language competency, to enhance the country's position in the global arena.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the obstacles encountered by Ecuador in the realm of English language instruction. By investigating the intricacies of phonological awareness and its impact on the development of reading proficiency, this research aims to provide valuable insights.

Readers must comprehend the study's historical and spatial context to appreciate the research's importance fully. Significantly, educators frequently encounter difficulties in the earliest stages of teaching English reading to young learners, resulting in obstacles related to pronunciation and understanding (Setyarini et al., 2021; Amri et al., 2021). The incongruity between the phonetic representations and orthographic symbols of English letters is a substantial obstacle for individuals acquiring the language. The scenario above highlights the crucial nature of cultivating phonological awareness in children's reading development. The development of phonological awareness, which encompasses identifying and manipulating linguistic sounds such as phonemes, syllables, and rhymes, is recognized as a pivotal factor in the initial phases of acquiring reading skills (Shavaki et al., 2021).

Expanding upon the basis above, the present study follows Chomsky's theory of language acquisition, which asserts that individuals possess an inherent capacity to acquire language (Kuhl, 2014). The inherent ability of individuals encompasses the recognition and comprehension of the auditory patterns and arrangements inherent in language, which is the fundamental basis of phonological awareness. The Natural Approach is an instructional approach to second language learning that focuses on exposing learners to comprehensible input and allowing them to develop language skills naturally through meaningful interactions and exposure to language. Krashen and Terrell originally developed the Natural Approach in the 1970s as a method for language teaching (Shi & Ariza, 2018). The natural approach to reading, which mirrors the biological process of language acquisition, emphasizes the vital function of language exposure in facilitating individuals' seamless acquisition of language abilities.

Given the contextual background, the primary aim of this study is to tackle the many objectives delineated in the executive summary. This study sheds light on the importance of phonological awareness tactics in promoting reading abilities by thoroughly analyzing the experiences and perspectives of EFL children. Utilizing a mixed-method methodology encompassing focus groups, observations, and surveys, this study fully comprehends the intricate relationship between phonological awareness and English reading proficiency among fifth—, sixth—, and seventh-grade students attending Manuela Cañizares School.

In conclusion, this introductory section establishes the foundation for a comprehensive examination of phonological awareness, highlighting its pivotal significance in tackling the obstacles encountered by Ecuador in English language instruction. The introduction of the research article creates a solid basis for the objectives and approaches that will be discussed in later sections by exploring the historical and philosophical underpinnings of the issue.

Methodology

This study will employ a mixed-methods approach, including qualitative and quantitative methods. A mixed-methods approach involves using qualitative and quantitative research methods in the same research inquiry Halcomb, E. J., & Hickman, L. (2015). This approach can provide rich insights into various phenomena of interest that cannot be fully understood using only one method. Researchers can use mixed methods to develop meta-inferences (i.e., substantive theory) and assess the quality of meta-inferences (i.e., validation of mixed methods research). The quantitative aspect of the study will involve administering survey tests to measure students' phonological awareness skills and English reading proficiency this section presents a detailed technique used to investigate the study issues about phonological awareness and its influence on the reading competency of children. The methodology has been developed to comprehensively comprehend the study's preparatory measures, data-gathering methodologies, and the subsequent analysis of the acquired data.

The primary objective of this research study is to examine the difficulties encountered by pupils while reading English and to investigate the importance of phonological awareness in promoting fluent reading. Children's challenges while acquiring reading skills in the English language have significant implications for their academic advancement and general linguistic abilities (Istiqomah et al., 2023; Vaughn et al., 2019). According to Rokhman et al. (2020), a deficiency in phoneme awareness contributes to pupils' difficulties in comprehending the phonetic components of words, which is a crucial skill in reading (Holten, 2004). This study aims to address the existing research gap on the use and efficacy of phonological awareness within the educational framework of Ecuador. Specifically, it examines the possible deficiency in teachers' understanding and training. The primary objective of this study project is to provide practical recommendations for educators and deepen the understanding of the significance of phonological awareness in the development of English reading skills.

This research examines the relationship between phonological awareness and reading, focusing on its potential consequences for students' scholastic achievements. The idea for addressing the academic effect is rooted in the potential benefits that students who encounter difficulties in reading English might get from customized treatments that specifically address aspects such as pronunciation, comprehension, and rhythm (Ehri, 1987; Abdulameer et al., 2021). The research acknowledges the developmental nature of phonological awareness and its significance in enhancing reading abilities, providing practical implications for educators and policymakers in education.

The present study employs a mixed-methods design, using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to thoroughly comprehend the research inquiries (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). The quantitative component of the study involves the administration of survey tests that assess students' phonological awareness and competency in English reading. Simultaneously, the qualitative component utilizes questionnaires to collect data about the efficacy of phonological awareness in promoting reading proficiency.

A structured questionnaire is used as a principal instrument for gathering primary data, specifically emphasizing demographics, linguistic backgrounds, and reading habits. Furthermore, data gathering is enhanced by including phonological awareness and reading assessments, as well as observations conducted in relevant environments such as educational classes. Likert scale answer categories serve as a guiding framework for the assessment process.

The study population comprises 10-12-year-old kids enrolled in English language courses at Manuela Cañizares. The research is aimed at a population of children whose mother tongue is not English but who already have some linguistic competence in the foreign language, given that their exposure to this second language in the classroom is at least 3 hours of classes per week and they have not received specific instruction in the development of phonological awareness, based on English teaching methods, but they are learning to read and write in their mother tongue. A random process is used to select a sample that accurately represents the population of interest. A complete understanding may be facilitated using mixed methodologies, including surveys and observations. Quantitative data analysis encompasses several statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.

The findings of the research suggest that the implementation of a phonological awareness intervention program has a positive impact on the reading proficiency of the specific group under investigation. Incorporating phonological awareness skills into reading and spelling objectives substantially enhances the reading proficiencies of those involved.

The study's sample size was 137, based on a 95% confidence level, a 50% likelihood of success, a 5% tolerable margin of error, and a limited population size of 145. This measure guarantees the study's robustness and dependability.

Procedure

Step 1

To support the present investigation, certain documents were supported, such as the certificate of permission for the preparation of the research project in my school to the highest authority after the principal approved the permission continued to the research project.

Step 2

The pilot survey was conducted with my peers from master programs who were not part of the study, and so was the English teacher of the study. The test was administered on paper. The first pilot was conducted, who found some questions repetitive and commented on the long time required to complete the questionnaire. Input from this group indicated further changes were needed to help the pronunciation of their reading time, so the English versions of the questions were removed from the test, leaving only the Spanish translation to get the best understanding for the students.

Overall, the surveys seem to be well-structured and concise. However, there are a few suggestions for improvement: Clarify the language and instructions: Some of the questions and instructions in the student survey could be worded more clearly, especially for students who may not be familiar with certain terms.

The language should be simple and concise, avoiding technical jargon where possible. After this feedback, a pilot survey was conducted among the students. In this case, the pilot survey was applied to 5% of the total population, 137 students. The result was 8 (eight) students who were considered for the

The pilot survey results are taken randomly using a relevant program of your choice. The validity of the data collection instruments of the present investigation was carried out through the criteria of education experts with fourth-level degrees in research and foreign languages.

Step 3

The technique applied in the present research topic was the survey, which facilitated obtaining the desired results. At the same time, the instrument used was the questionnaire, facilitating the rapidity of obtaining results. The questionnaire had closed questions according to each indicator, which offered the student all the possible alternatives, or at least all those that best responded to the desired situation. This type of questionnaire, in addition to the question, established the response categories and in turn, a qualitative-quantitative assessment where there was a scale of:

Always

almost always

occasionally

rarely

never

Pilot Survey Report to the students

The table corresponding to the time monitoring of the pilot test is shown below, as shown below, there was no problem during the application of the pilot test.

Survey	Time	Observations
Respondent 1	4'min	None
Respondent 2	4min	None
Respondent 3	5'min	None
Respondent 4	4'min	None
Respondent 5	4'min	None
Respondent 6	4'min	None
Respondent 7	4'min	None
Respondent 8	4'min	None

Analyze the quantitative and qualitative findings to address the research questions. Compare the data to relevant literature and discuss the implications and significance of the results. coding for the key themes and comparing the pre- and post-data.

Step 4

Then, applied the entire population using a Google form survey, which facilitated obtaining the desired results and analyzing the data.

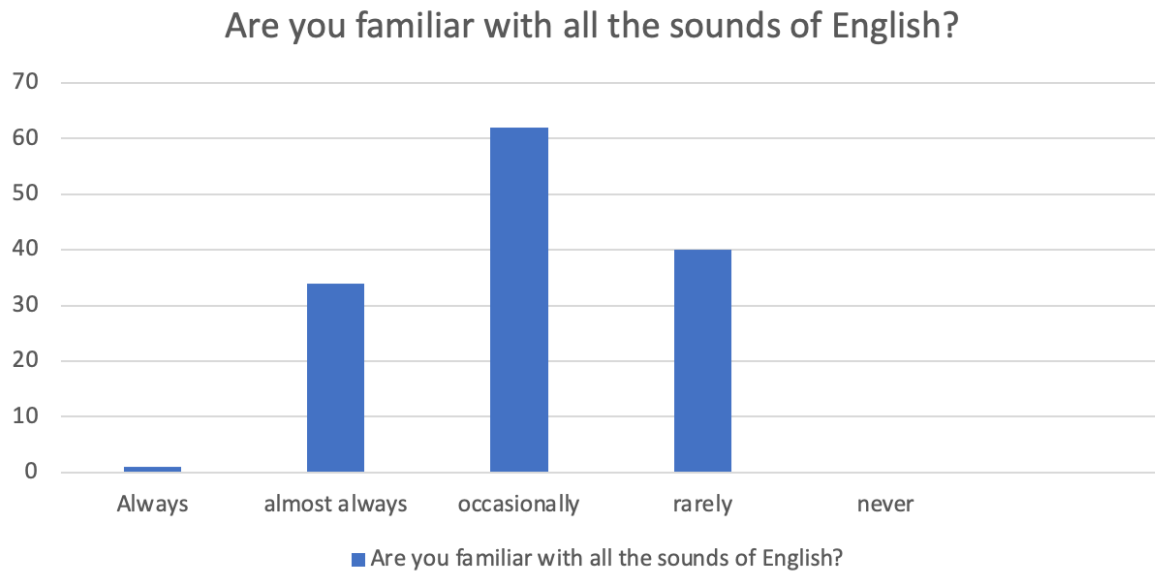
In summary, this research technique utilizes a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to thoroughly investigate the correlation between phonological awareness and skill in reading English. The meticulous selection of tools, strategies for data collection, and analysis methods significantly enhance the study's validity and dependability. The results of this study have the potential to make a substantial contribution to the current body of research. They provide valuable insights and recommendations that may be used by educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. Ultimately, these findings aim to tackle students' difficulties while reading English.

Results

The research results show the most important scientific contributions regarding phonological awareness. As previously stated, the main objectives were formulated in a bifurcated manner with the intention of delineating certain factors that contribute to the development of phonological awareness in second-language learners of English.

To comprehend the mechanisms involved in the development of reading skills in students. Following the development of the intervention survey, 134 participants were included in this research study. The data collected from each participant was analyzed individually, focusing on comparing the results obtained from the assessments within each child. Graphical analyses were employed to visually represent the scores obtained and evaluate the interventions' effectiveness. Figures 1 to 10 displays the descriptive and demographic characteristics of the participants.

Figure 1. Familiarity with English Sounds.

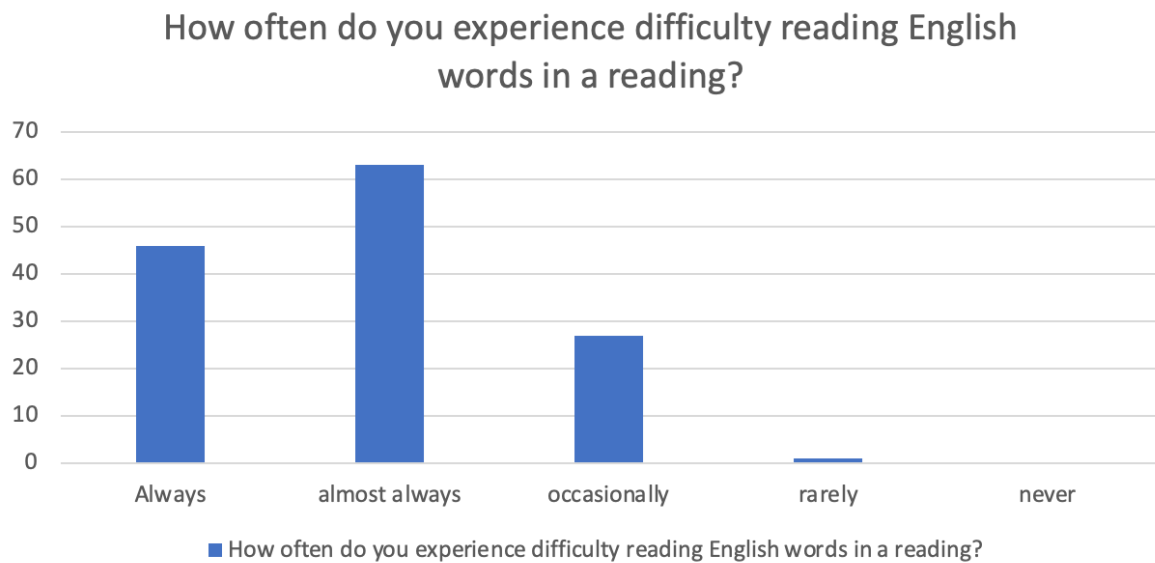


Source: Morales, 2023.

Of the 137 students, 1% always reported being familiar with all English sounds, while 34% almost always, 60% occasionally, and 40% rarely felt acquainted with English sounds. This observation implies a range of levels of familiarity among the pupils.

Challenges in Reading Comprehension:

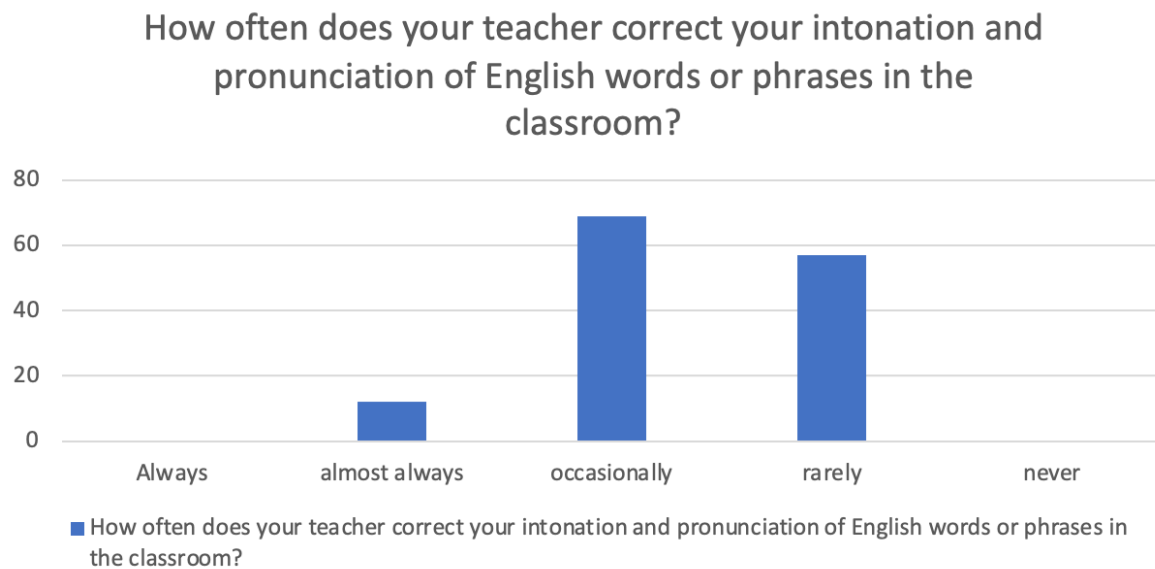
Figure 2. Reading Difficulties.



Source: Morales, 2023.

In terms of experiencing difficulties while reading English words, 35% always, 79% almost always, 23% occasionally, and 1% rarely faced challenges among the 137 students. It is evident that a considerable proportion of learners have difficulties in reading English.

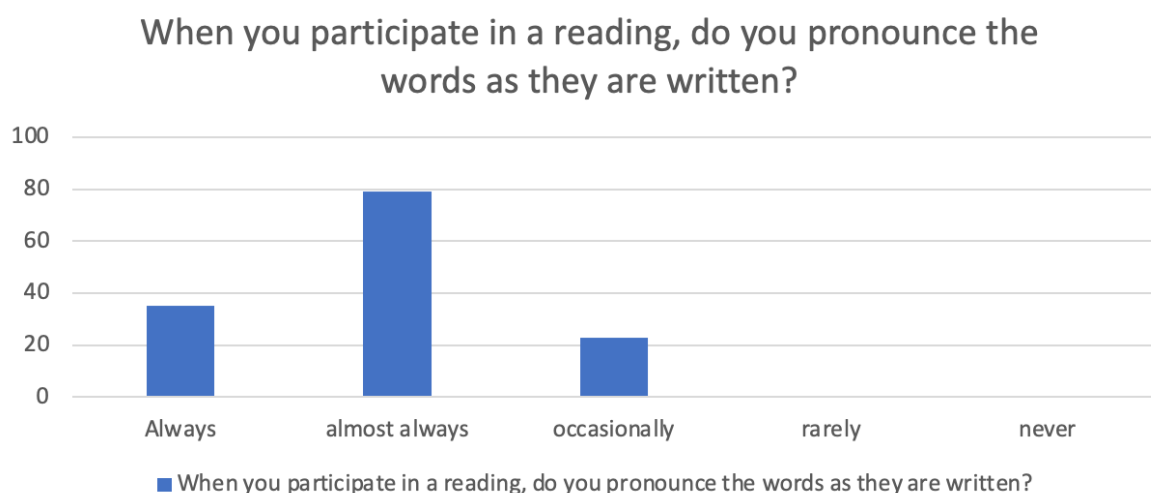
Figure 3. Teacher Corrections on Intonation and Pronunciation.



Source: Morales, 2023.

Regarding teacher correction of intonation and pronunciation, 12% of the 137 students reported it happening almost always, 69% occasionally, and 57% rarely experienced such corrections. This point of view highlights a possible avenue for enhancing the provision of consistent feedback.

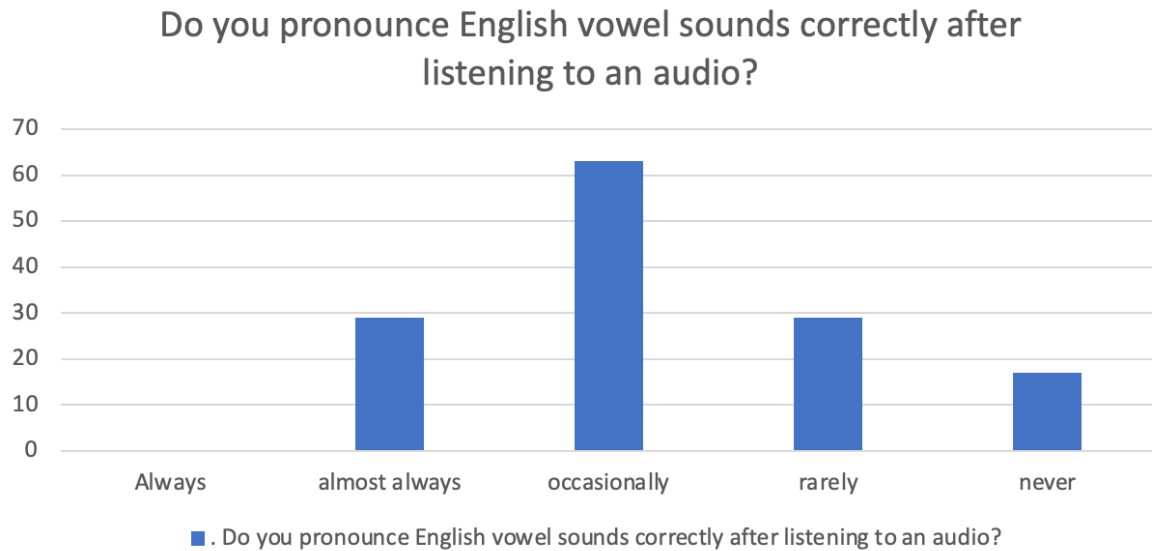
Figure 4. Pronunciation Matching Spelling.



Source: Morales, 2023.

When participating in reading, 35% of the 137 students always pronounced words as they were spelled in English, while 79% almost always and 23% occasionally followed this practice. This finding suggests a favorable trajectory in the learner’s pronunciation patterns.

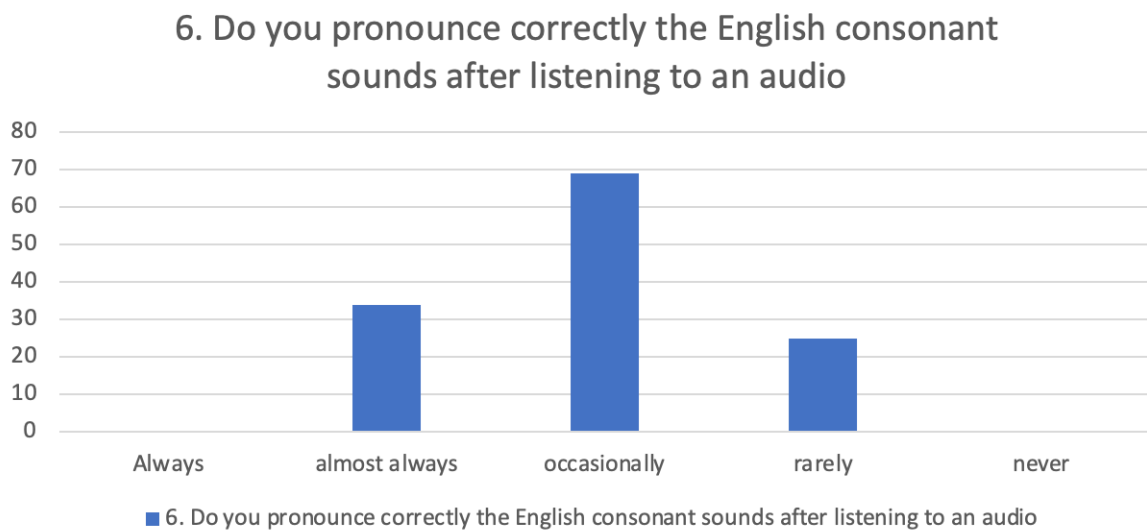
Figure 5. Correction of Vowel Sounds.



Source: Morales, 2023.

In the context of correcting vowel sounds after listening to the audio, 29% reported almost always receiving corrections from the teacher, 63% occasionally, 29% rarely, and 17 students never. This finding indicates that students often get feedback on their pronunciation, with a lesser proportion (29% for vowels, 34% for consonants) consistently obtaining adjustments.

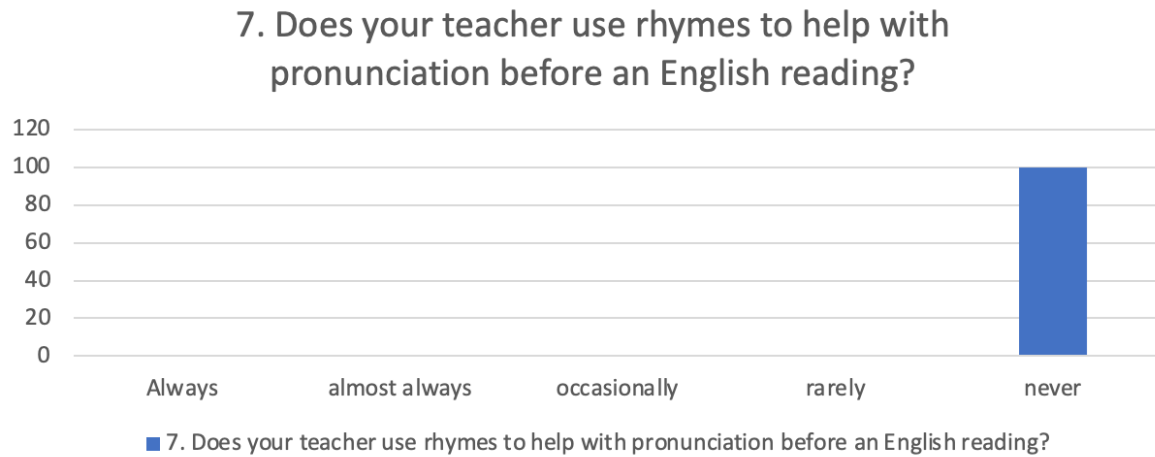
Figure 6. Correction of Consonant Sounds.



Source: Morales, 2023.

For the correction of consonant sounds after listening to audio, 34% reported almost always receiving corrections, 69% occasionally, and 25% rarely experienced such corrections among the 137 students.

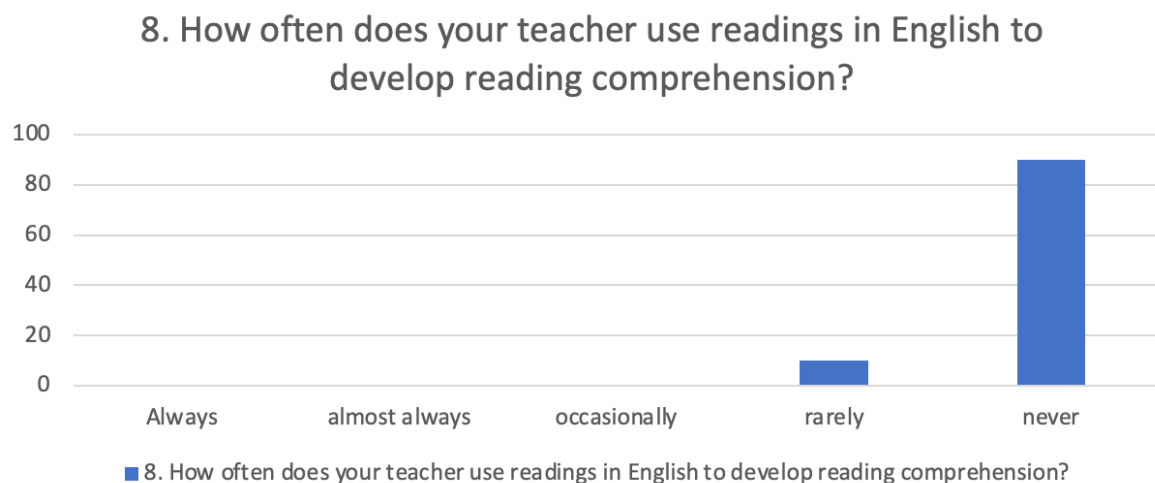
Figure 7. Use of Teacher's Rhymes.



Source: Morales, 2023.

Concerning using teacher's rhymes to aid in pronunciation before English readings, 100% of the 137 students reported never utilizing this strategy. This observation suggests an exciting opportunity for further investigation or enhancement in integrating these tactics within the pedagogical framework.

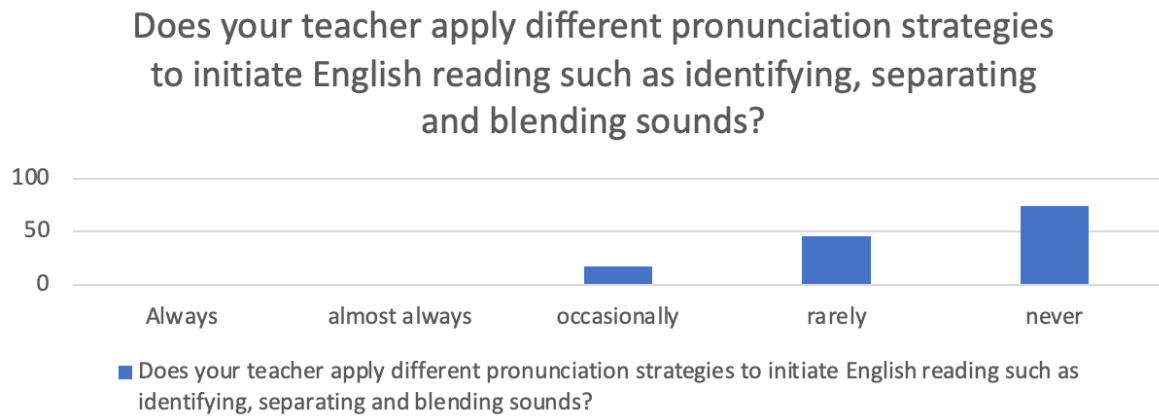
Figure 8. Teacher's Use of English Readings for Comprehension.



Source: Morales, 2023.

When it comes to the teacher’s use of English readings to develop reading comprehension, 90% of the 137 students never experienced this practice, while 10% rarely did. This observation indicates a possible deficiency in the integration of English reading materials to enhance comprehension within the instructional approach.

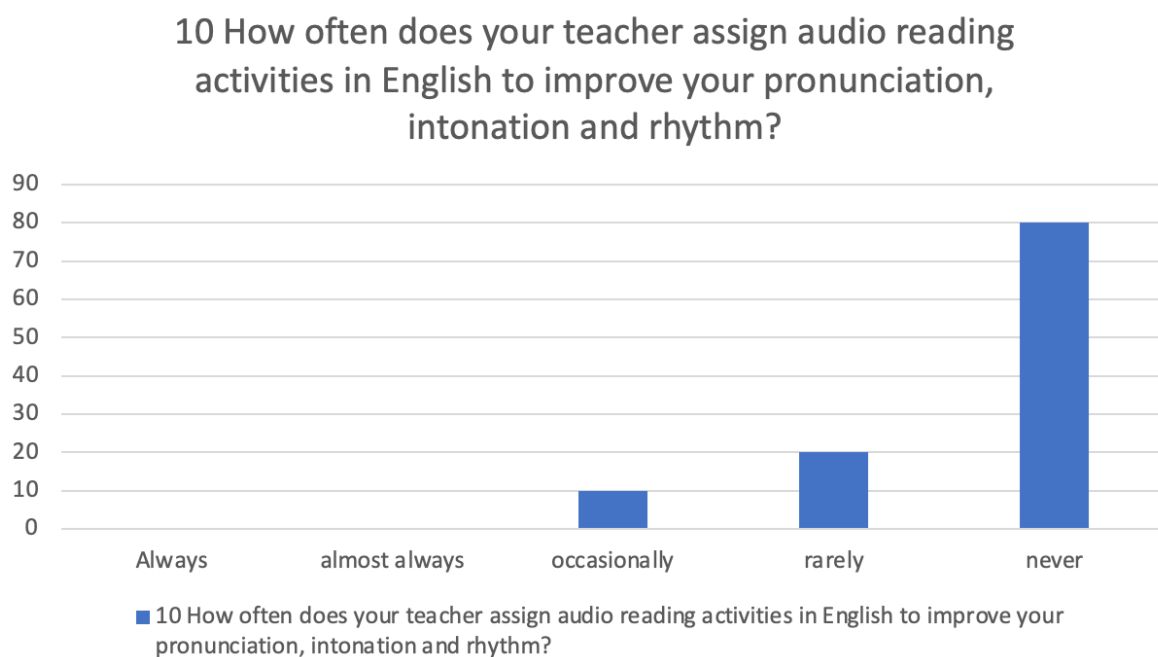
Figure 9. Application of Pronunciation Strategies.



Source: Morales, 2023.

In terms of the teacher applying different pronunciation strategies such as sound identification, syllable separation, and sound blending, 90% of the 137 students reported never encountering such activities. The result suggests a promising prospect for incorporating and assimilating these tactics into pedagogical approaches.

Figure 10. Assigning Activities with English Audio for Pronunciation Improvement.



Source: Morales, 2023.

Regarding the frequency of teachers assigning activities with English audio to improve pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, 80% of the 137 students never received such assignments, 20% rarely, and 10% occasionally. The findings provide significant insights for improving pedagogical approaches to effectively cater to students' requirements and augment their proficiency in the English language. This suggests a possible avenue for progress in the integration of audio-based exercises aimed at enhancing pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm skills. In conclusion, the research indicates that there are both positive aspects and areas that might be improved in the teaching methodology, techniques for pronunciation, and the integration of audio-based exercises for the purpose of improving pronunciation skills. The findings provide significant contributions to the improvement of pedagogical approaches to effectively cater to students' requirements and augment their proficiency in the English language.

Discussion

This article aims to analyze the scientific contributions that explain the development of phonological awareness in the reading process of children from 10 to 12 years old. Being the author, the most relevant since his research contributions have been produced chronologically, linked to phonological development. This research indicates that implementing a phonological awareness skills intervention survey can potentially enhance the development and acquisition of both phonological awareness skills and reading proficiency in children. To conduct data analysis, we undertook the task of transcribing the manual lists used in the direct surveys into a digital file using Microsoft Office Excel. This digital format enables us to effectively evaluate and report the outcomes of our study. The results obtained from our investigation. The data acquired will be delineated in the subsequent sections, providing a comprehensive analysis of students' language learning experiences by presenting precise statistical data on reading difficulties, the correspondence between pronunciation and spelling, the correction of vowel and consonant sounds, and the implementation of natural methods for pronunciation. Incorporating limitations, such as the delimited range of certain language features and potential constraints in sample size, exemplifies a methodical and impartial approach to doing research. The implications outlined for educators, namely regarding integrating phonological awareness into language instruction and using consistent corrective procedures and approaches, provide significant perspectives for instructors aiming to enhance students' language competency. Additionally, the research suggests potential implications beyond the domain of education, encouraging scholars in related disciplines to consider the importance of phonological awareness in the language acquisition process. Promoting a comprehensive comprehension among the general population of the need to incorporate diverse methodologies, such as rhymes, identification, segmentation, and audio-based reading exercises, into language acquisition curricula might provide favorable results. The research study offers valuable contributions in terms of insights and recommendations for educators, researchers, and the broader community. The contributions underscore the study's relevance and possible impact on augmenting language acquisition outcomes.

Conclusion

The research investigation highlights the pivotal importance of phonological awareness in the progression of reading skills among children between the ages of 10 and 12. It emphasizes the substantial impact of phonological awareness on the learning of the English language. The aforementioned result underscores the fundamental significance of phonological awareness abilities in facilitating successful reading.

The findings of this research suggest that the implementation of a phonological awareness intervention survey has potential in improving the development and acquisition of phonological awareness abilities and reading competence in children. The aforementioned finding has practical consequences for instructors who are in search of effective solutions to tackle reading challenges.

The significance of natural approach methods is emphasized in the essay, as it promotes the integration of techniques that mimic the biological process of language learning. These approaches aim to aid the smooth development of language skills. This finding provides support for the notion that the exposure of learners to understandable material and meaningful interactions facilitates the organic development of language proficiency.

The research underscores the need of adopting a holistic approach to language training, with a particular emphasis on the integration of phonological awareness within the instructional framework. The aforementioned conclusion offers valuable information that may assist instructors in enhancing their pedagogical methods, hence facilitating a comprehensive language learning experience.

The study situates the results within the obstacles encountered by Ecuador in the realm of English reading instruction, specifically highlighting the country's comparatively poor standing in international assessments. This finding highlights the pressing need for educational reforms aimed at improving English language proficiency.

The findings indicate areas in which teaching approaches might be enhanced, such as strategies for improving pronunciation and the use of audio-based activities to enhance pronouncing skills. The aforementioned result implies that there are practical chances to improve instructional techniques in order to better meet the demands of students and boost their language ability.

The restricted use of pronunciation strategies: The research paper highlights a significant deficiency in the use of pronouncing techniques, including the recognition of sounds, segmentation of syllables, and integration of sounds. This result highlights a particular domain in which instructors might concentrate their efforts to integrate efficacious tactics aimed at improving students' pronunciation abilities.

Potential Implications Extending Beyond the Realm of Education: The research study posits possible ramifications that extend beyond the domain of education, so urging scientists in adjacent fields to contemplate the significance of phonological awareness in the process of acquiring language. The aforementioned result expands the study's applicability and underscores its potential influence in other academic domains.

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Statement

Conflict of interest

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