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## The impact of structured literacy approach to develop phonemic awareness and reading competence in second grade students from elementary school

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### ABSTRACT

The following research portrays information related to the topic: The impact of Structured Literacy Approach in Second Graders from in elementary school. The research identifies some teaching techniques that can be useful to train young learners in elementary school to develop phonemic and reading competence. Some characteristics of the method called Direct Instruction Reading, which is one example of the Structured Literacy Approach, were used as teaching techniques to shape a step by step a set of activities closely linked to what is requested in MEP's scope and sequences for second grade. Regarding data collection, surveys, an interview, and observations were primarily the main instruments to gather information. Finally, conclusions will show a set of statements linking how the implementation of phonics foster literacy competence as well as motivation.

**Key words:** direct instruction reading: orientation that, identifies major skills, selects, and modifies commercial programs that best teach those skills...and presents lessons each day in the most efficient manner possible.

Graphemes: Symbols or small units of a writing system.

Decoding: Translating printed words into a representation like oral language.

Segmenting: Students break down words into sounds of graphemes.

Accuracy: Correctly identifying letters or words.

Fluency: Reading smoothly, quickly, and with expression.

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## El impacto del enfoque de alfabetización estructurada para desarrollar la conciencia fonémica y la competencia lectora en estudiantes de segundo grado de primaria

### RESUMEN

La siguiente investigación retrata información relacionada con el tema: El impacto del enfoque de alfabetización estructurada en estudiantes de segundo grado de la escuela primaria. La investigación identifica algunas técnicas de enseñanza que pueden ser útiles para capacitar a los jóvenes estudiantes de la escuela primaria para desarrollar la competencia fonológica y lectora. Algunas características del método denominado Lectura de Instrucción Directa, que es un ejemplo del Enfoque de Alfabetización Estructurada, se utilizaron como técnicas didácticas para conformar paso a paso un conjunto de actividades estrechamente vinculadas a lo solicitado en el ámbito y secuencias del MEP para la segunda. calificación. En cuanto a la recolección de datos, las encuesta, la entrevista y las observaciones fueron principalmente los principales instrumentos para recopilar información. Finalmente, las conclusiones mostrarán un conjunto de afirmaciones que vinculan cómo la implementación de la fonética fomenta la competencia lectora y la motivación.

**Palabras clave:** lectura de instrucción directa: orientación que identifica las principales habilidades, selecciona y modifica los programas comerciales que mejor enseñan esas habilidades... y presenta lecciones cada día de la manera más eficiente posible.

Grafemas: Símbolos o pequeñas unidades de un sistema de escritura.

Decodificación: Traducir palabras impresas en una representación como el lenguaje oral.

Segmentación: los estudiantes descomponen palabras en sonidos de grafemas.

Precisión: Identificar correctamente letras o palabras.

Fluidez: Lectura fluida, rápida y con expresión.

## INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education introduced the new and latest study programs for English teaching and determined that reading, as a skill, should be taught early on in primary through phonemic awareness. This new methodology looks forward to preparing students to decode and blend sounds as part of the early stages of the development of reading competencies. Still, there are some students who have great difficulty reading longer words by the time they are in third grade. For some researchers, this is the time in which many parents find their children are dyslexic but at the same time, some other students do not have this learning difficulty but just need a more structured and intentional approach that help them to overcome the difficulty to read and comprehend what they read as soon as possible, here is where the Structured Literacy Approach have proved successful in other countries and schools.

There are times in which elementary school English teachers notice their students are not able to read accurately and fluently English. Lacking the ability or having some difficulty to decode and blend graphemes by the time students are in third grade is a big problem. "According to research, third graders who are not reading at grade level are among the most vulnerable to drop out of school later." (Weyer, M. Casares, J. 2019) This puts emphasis on the importance of early education which develops skills that allow students to read independently. The Ministry of Education quotes Armbruster and Osborne who in 2001 stated that the developing phonemic awareness help children to be successful when they learn to read. The development of phonemic competence according to the national curriculum is then strongly linked to helping students to develop reading competence. As a result, English teachers may expect to have a set of procedures and techniques that help them take students from recognizing graphemes and phonemes to decode and blend sounds as well as improving their vocabulary based on MEP's curriculum. Certainly, the national English curriculum proposes some techniques in I cycle such as repeating, matching, and singing in first grade and imitating and recognizing phonemes in second grade. Nevertheless, there are no further exercises or sequenced techniques that can be used by educators in order to efficiently help students to decode and blend thus making students keep having difficulty reading words with an accurate pronunciation.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research was to examine the characteristics of the Structure Literacy approach and its application in the teaching of Reading in English language in second grade since the Ministry of Public Education determined that reading should be taught early on in primary through phonemic awareness.

Nevertheless, some students have great difficulty reading longer words by the time they are in second grade. This is a crucial time in the cognitive development of a child in which literacy is being acquired and it important to address any difficulty on time. For this purpose, the Structured Literacy Approach has proven successful. It guides teachers to carry out mediation practices that help students to overcome their difficulty to read and comprehend what they read as soon as possible.

Leonardo Garnier, Minister of Education between 2006 and 2014, identifies three main causes of the phenomenon: exclusion, due to equity and access problems; expulsion, due to a problem of failure in the learning processes; repulsion, due to low relevance and attractiveness. (Pérez , 2018)

According to Leonardo Garnier, failure in the learning process is one of the motives why students drop out school, he also stated that low relevance provokes this. Alison Mitchell, PH. D quoting Hernández in 2011 states that research has shown that there is a strong relationship between school completion and reading performance as early as third grade. The same author states that during a longitudinal study between 1979 and 1989 those students who were not reading proficiently by third time were almost four times more likely to leave school without earning a diploma. There seems to be a strong relationship between developing reading literacy and succeeding in other skills and subjects. It is important to recognize that reading is a skill that complements other skills. For instance, when a person wants to book a flight, they need to read the options and select the ones that correspond. The same happens in the classroom, when a student needs to summarize information, answer a test, listen to an audio an follow instruction, as well as performing on a speaking task reading may be involved and being a good reader might make a difference in the achievement of the task.

It is extremely important to help young learners in the process to become literate in the English language. Getting appropriate training and resources in this matter since is important to provide students with good opportunities. Not relying on the processes

carried out by the homeroom teacher is another milestone. Usually, the homeroom teacher is the one who carries out major literacy processes in the students although in Spanish and this is not beneficial for English learners. Many pupils who struggle with their reading tasks, find it difficult to see the difference among sounds of both language and to produce sounds of letters as well as syllables later on. Consequently, students on higher levels may not convey meaning from a text which result in a low performance and achievement in the students' daily work. The application of the Structure Literacy Approach would be useful as it will provide English teachers with adequate instructional practices that involve phonemic awareness and phonics which are already part of MEP's English curriculum.

### **General Objective**

- To identify the impact of Structured Literacy Approach in the process of reading in second graders from elementary school

### **Specific Objectives**

- To identify some characteristics of the Direct Instruction Reading and some strategies used in the English learning process
- To use the key components of the structured literacy approach in the development of certain reading competencies established in the study program of second grade.

### **Literature Review**

The Structured Literacy approach is a way of organizing the processes in which literacy components are introduced in a systematic, explicit, previously diagnosed, and continuously assessed way. This approach is not a method itself but a set of principles that dictates what a different way of teaching looks like. That is why there are some methods that follow the specifications of Structured Literacy and have a scientific backup. One of these methods is the Direct Method Reading which is described as "carefully articulated lessons in which cognitive skills are broken down into small units, sequenced deliberately, and taught explicitly." (Carnine, D, Silber,J, Kame'enui.S, Tarve.S, n.d)

This methodology was created by Carnine and Silbert.E, in the late 70's and their book still sell thousands of dollars due to its seven editions. It has 3 major elements which are organization of instruction or time learners get involved in literacy activity, program design which is the format or planning, and the presentation techniques also known as the way teachers carry out their program. According to the authors the program, design

should be carefully constructed and contains the introductory and the discrimination stage. The presentation technique involves among others signaling as the technique that allow students know when a response should be displayed and monitoring as the moment in which educators receive a response and decide whether it is correct as well as what can be done to improve the results. The Direct Method Reading involves the first stage of literacy training which is called Reading Instruction. As a result, this is the primary process a beginner and struggling reader needs to go through and it is developed through a process that starts with decoding and moves to comprehension.

### **The Teaching of Reading and Literacy in Costa Rica**

Reading is one of the most important skills in the process to become literate in English. Unfortunately, this ability has somewhat been overseen by the Costa Rican educational system and only in the last 5 years have been introduced in younger ages by English teachers due to the changes in the English curriculum. To become literate, a person needs to go through certain processes which include life's experiences at home, exposure to the language, and the systematic mediation processes that a professional in English teaching carry out inside the classroom, just to name a few. Many professionals from different departments and teachers in the Ministry of Public Education of Costa Rica have invested time in the creation of new study programs. Many of them have produced resources focused reading and phonemic awareness that are expected to be useful to as many educators as possible around the country. Furthermore, it is not possible to perceive a relationship between the competences that are targeted each week and the final products of each year as well as how the first 3 years of the I cycle help children to become good readers.

To clarify, Cambridge dictionary (2021) defines reading as "the skill or activity of getting information from written words." According to Oxford dictionary (2021) to read is "to look and to understand the meaning of written or printed words or symbols." Back in 1999, the American Federation of Teachers, with no specific author specified, claimed in his article Teaching Reading is Rocket Science that "Reading is the fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends." (p.5) Based on the previous definitions and statements reading is much more than just another way to communicate information. Reading involves identifying graphemes and phonemes in order to grasp meaning and its functionality lies in the capacity of a reader to discern data from written material.

Silvia Montoya, in his report for UNESCO (2018) suggests that literacy involves the capacity to carry out different processes with written information in different scenarios. Students need to be able to “identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute.” (p.2) Literacy is achievable through scaffolded proceedings that will take students from simpler tasks to ones that are more complex. These proceedings can be learned through tasks, which will resemble real life situations especially when students are achieving higher levels of understanding and comprehension. There are competencies that will be a prerequisite to other abilities, this is part of the learning process any kid should go through in order to become a knowledgeable reader and a literate person. According to Moreira (2016), “the process of applying reading strategies starts with using the simplest...to using the most complex ones.” (p.276)

Montoya points out at according to the European Literacy Policy Network literacy is “the ability to read and write at a level whereby individuals effectively understand and use written communication in all media.” Moreira also argues that it is more difficult for a student to carry out tasks that include reading in English language because it involves “a higher level of complexity.” (p.276) According to her, second language readers would need to rely on the same mental processes they undergo when reading information in their mother tongue such as accounting for previous knowledge or background understanding this of course makes it more difficult to read in a foreign language.

MEP syllabus (2005) and MEP study program (2016) have incorporated reading in their curriculum. In both documents, teachers can test this skill as part of their assessment either formative or summative. The most important difference lies in the fact that, until 2015 students started to work on reading tasks until they reached fourth grade. Starting in 2005 reading was “introduced gradually in II Cycle. It [had] to be understood as a secondary skill, used to reinforce oral skills.” (MEP, 2005, p.21) The article English acquisition of reading and writing skills on learners at fourth grade at Jesus school, Calderon and Rodriguez admit that students were involved in reading tasks little by little and before that all that mattered in first cycle was “the integration of oral and aural skills.” (p.14)

Even though the 2005 syllabus proposed writing and reading for II cycle, some of the tasks that were advised by authorities involved a higher order of difficulty such as “guessing, predicting, and answering questions” (p.21) Consequently, the study program did not

provided teachers with objectives and contents that belonged to lower level of difficulty and lacked an scaffolded process that allowed students to learn basic Reading skills. Decoding, fluent reading, and vocabulary knowledge were part of the learning process and many students who had never read in English or had some difficulties reading even in Spanish suddenly had to know all this. Secondly, it determined that reading purpose was to reinforce oral skills. It does not seem to match with previous definitions and importance of reading stated 2 paragraphs previous.

On the other hand, the new study program establishes that competences related to the learning of reading must be part of the teacher's mediation strategies in all the six years that primary school lasts. Indeed, important experts have pointed out at the importance of involving children in reading activities in early ages. Reading fluently and having the capacity to understand written material is linked to success in older ages when choosing a career as well as not dropping out high school. In order to meet these new findings and as a response to previous diagnostics and surveys applied to teachers, advisors, and academics the Ministry of Public Education approve the new study programs in 2016. In fact, this is explained in the sixth report of *Estado de la Educación*, which states that MEP applied some instruments to teachers, students, and advisors among others involved in the ministry between 2014 and 2015 in order to identify their opinions about the 2005 study programs. The outcomes propelled the launch of the new curriculum even more because some of the results were limited vocabulary teaching and lack of integration of linguistic skills. *Estado de la Educación* determined that there are some main differences between the 2005 syllabus and the 2016 curriculum. One of the most important ones is that in the new study program the four skills or linguistic components incorporate since the very beginning of the curriculum as early as first grade. They are also gradually developed and assessed with indicators that specify the level of achievement through assessment criteria. There are major changes such as the incorporation of Phonemic Awareness under the acronym R.PA. which stands for Reading Phonemic Awareness. In the Template Elements Box, phonology is included and defined as "learners' ability to hear, identify, and manipulate sounds in spoken words or sentences to progressively decode and interpret texts. (p.40) El Estado de la Educación agree on the idea that "the linguistic component is related to the knowledge of phonology." (p.170)

The 2016 curriculum is more specific about what a student in primary school is expected to achieve when working on reading tasks. Here is where this document points out at the work that has to be done in Phonemic awareness development, which already started in preschool. In primary, some procedures that are proposed are “phoneme isolation, phoneme identity, rhyming, and segmentation.” (p.44) Snow and Mathews, in their article Reading and Language in the Early Ages, explain that literacy involves identifying the sound that make up words. As a result, when children are able to carry out phoneme identification exercises successfully they will also recognize those same phonemes in other words or phrases which at the end will make them able to read all by themselves. This is what they call early literacy. Of course, this is process that needs years to master it; according to the 2016 study program, “students will continue developing sound and word identification skills to progressively decode phrases, sentences, and short readings.” (p.44)

### **The Structured Literacy Approach**

Many methodologies and approaches have been developed in past decades and some of these have been very popular in a specific time. Young learners arrive to schools around the country every year and these places need to help them develop certain skills that are meaningful and decisive in older years. Consequently, parents at home have sometimes targeted these skills with activities that encourage their kids to use new words, look for accurate pronunciation, and spend time reading books. These activities are usually used to allow these kids to be more knowledgeable of the language “success in mastering literacy is greatly enhanced for some children by particular experiences and opportunities during early childhood.” (Snow, 2017, p.3) This is not the case for every student and many of them will need to start getting that from educational centers.

To clarify, reading is one skill that represents the capacity of a student to get information from symbols that are part of his culture and to get the gist of a text along with secondary ideas. These are just some of the tasks that a student is expected to carry out along the path in elementary school “good readers develop familiarity and automaticity with symbols used in their writing system and how those symbols represent sounds.” (Snow, 2017, p.2) English teachers know that this is also an important part of the English curriculum in Costa Rica and it is necessary to know how to carry out tasks that develop reading and phonemic competence in young learners. Clear and well-designed activities

will help students learn and will allow teachers to use their time in the classroom efficiently.

The teaching of English contrasts with the Spanish language teaching since the last is better taught with the syllable approach “standard approaches include practice in segmenting short words into onsets and rimes e.g. d-og, l-og, c-og, f-og” Sometimes, teachers recognize what those competencies are but the path that must be followed to achieve success is not something they understand. The Structured Literacy Approach is one attractive option for teachers. It includes not a single method, but many scientifically proven methods. The International Dyslexia Association (2019) points out at some of these approaches: Wilson Reading System (1988) Orton-Gillingham method (2014), and Direct Instruction by Carnine, Silbert, Kame’enui and Tarver. (2009). For this research, Direct Instruction seems to be the best option due to its structured, scaffolded nature which matches well with MEP’s policies towards planning. In general, this method uses some of the techniques presented in the English study program such as sound identification and repetition. On the other hand, there are new techniques that can be part of the teaching practices carried out in class with no much difficulty.

In addition to what has been exposed, it is important to say that researchers have not identified one structured literacy method more successful than the rest, but they insist that it is much better to use one of these techniques, especially with at-risk students, than any traditional literacy approach. The Structured Literacy Approach organizes the process in which literacy components (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary” (IDA, 2019, p.11) are introduced. Spear-Swerling (2018) points out at phonemes, letter-sound relationship, syllable patterns, and decodable texts as part of the literacy elements, too. This approach is linked to activities and task that include adequate instructional contexts and the appropriate materials.

Every mediation process within a structured approach must be explicit, systematic, and assessed as well as monitored. As stated by the International Dyslexia Association (2019) systematic means, “there is a planned sequence of instruction, with important prerequisite skills taught before more advanced skills”(p.2). The same Association (2019) defines explicit as “teacher clearly explains and models key skills, with well-chosen examples.”(p.2) Louise Spear-Swerling (2018) adds that in explicit teaching “important skills and concepts are taught clearly and directly by the teacher. (p.2). Spear-Swerling

(2018) also defines assessment as “clear, prompt, constructive feedback to students’ errors.” (2018, p.3), in order to help educators track their students’ progress in order to make decisions on time. Spear-Swerling (2018) mentions “if the goal is to help students with decoding weaknesses...feedback focused on phonetic characteristics of words would be most helpful. (p.8)

One of the most important requirements is not to propitiate “incidental learning opportunities” (IDA, 2019, p.2) It is key to a successful operation in the classroom to be deliberate and willful in the selected activities. This way students may understand what the teacher is modeling as well as what they need to produce. One example of these tasks is decoding. The International Dyslexia Association in their guide: Educator Training Initiatives: Brief Structure Literacy an introductory guide (2019) insist that lucky literacy instruction will make use of strongly explicit and systematic activities to help students develop basic skills such as decoding.

Hence, the work carried out in class should follow all the previously mentioned features to apply any of the methods included in structured literacy. Teachers need to know they can work with smaller groups in a more personal instruction in order to help students at-risk “high degree of teacher-student interaction with considerable time spent in direct teaching” (Spear-Swerling, 2018, p.2) will help pupils develop frequent responses and teacher’s prompt feedback. Cumulative practice is also important because students will add new tasks little by little and it is necessary that educators address those prerequisite skills to strengthen children’s abilities.

English learners really benefit from the application of a Structured Literacy Approach. They are at-risk students because of the poor background they usually have in their second language. According to International Dyslexia Association children with dyslexia as children with experimental factors who have “limited experience with English or limited home exposure to literacy” (p.8) can be poor readers and fall behind from the rest of the students easily. Even though Costa Rica sees English as tool for personal development and social mobility that develops along elementary and high school, many students do not seem to comprehend a written text by the time they go to college, or they have a hard time uttering words when reading or speaking with the correct pronunciation. Therefore, this is something that English teachers can work on in early grades with the help of the Structured Literacy Approach.

Making students aware of sounds and letters as well as helping them to decode texts and understanding words or small phrases, can make a difference at the end of the educational process. A little change in the dynamics and methodologies can trigger some new results. It is true that many students learn to read without teachers applying a systematic, explicit, monitored methodology. Nevertheless, English learners need more exposure and additional interventions to help them in future tasks and to get more and better opportunities, “if struggling readers can be motivated to read independently...this can be a powerful mechanism for further reading growth.” (Spear – Swerling, 2018, p.9) By introducing English learners to develop phonemic and reading competence teachers will allow children to develop greater comprehension and to become people who will enjoy reading otherwise, they may dislike it “if there are too many words in a text that a student cannot decode, reading will be frustrating.” (Spear-Swerling, 2018, p.9)

### **Direct Instruction Reading**

As it was mentioned before, the Structured Literacy Approach is a process which includes several methods that follow certain specifications. Any method that fits under the Structured Literacy Approach established features is highly explicit and systematic in the teaching of literacy. In effect, one of them is the Direct Instruction Reading. According to the authors Carnine Silbert, Kame’enui, and Tarver this is “an approach to teaching”, it is also skills-oriented, teacher-directed, and uses “carefully articulated lessons in which cognitive skills are broken down into small units, sequenced deliberately, and taught explicitly.” (Carnine et al., 2004)

Explicitly, the first edition of their book Direct Instruction Reading was published in 1979. In this publication they describe in detail the foundations of this method and how to apply it from beginners to advanced levels. The same book has been published six times in the last decades. New editions also add updated recommendations of the National Panel of Reading. This method has proven successful in the United States and many teachers point it out as a must have. The study called Follow Through was developed along 10 years. This investigation aimed to assess the efficacy of some of the major approaches in teaching in low-income primary students “Direct approaches were compared with a language-experience approach, Piaget’s stages of learning, child development theory...only students in a direct instruction approach consistently outperformed control students on basic cognitive, and effective measures.” (Carnine et al., 1979, p.6)

The Direct Instruction Reading provides teachers with procedures and orientations that advocates for the teaching of major skills. The most concise definition of direct instruction is as follows: “it is an orientation that, identifies major skills, selects and modifies commercial programs that best teach those skills...and presents lessons each day in the most efficient manner possible.” (Carnine et al, 1979, p.11) This methodology is intended to disintegrate big tasks in order to teach the smallest units of phonemic and reading competences. When teachers apply this approach, they are making it easy for kids to learn to read by introducing them to essential abilities that will allow them to become independent readers at some point. “a student cannot succeed in assignments that assume skills he or she does not have.” (Carnine et al., 1979, p.8)

On the other hand, those students who do not develop phonemic competence and just read by memorizing and guessing words, will have greater difficulty in higher study levels. “In this approach just the skills which are deemed critical are taught before actual reading begins. Included are letter-sound correspondence, auditory pre-skills, and sounding out.” (Carnine et al., 1979, p.9) Auditory pre-skills and oral language abilities of phonological processing are necessary to develop literacy along school years, but it all starts with baby steps called pre-skills. Children in the United States are introduced to these pre-skills in kindergarten, this makes them able to be trained on new skills when they start first grade. Differently, Costa Rica’s English curriculum introduce pupils to these reading and phonetic pre-skills when they start first grade. Carnine et al, (1979), suggests that it is much important and safest to “teach essential reading skills”(p.9) in younger ages to make them able to handle basic reading skills that will allow them to perform in more complex reading tasks successfully.

### **Research Approach**

This is Qualitative Research Approach as stated by Barrantes (2011) “It is interested in the discovery of knowledge. It deals with data in a qualitative way.” (P.65) The application of interviews directed to the students and to the teachers as well as observation sheets are parts of the materials that will be used in this research. The nature of this research is defined as descriptive; it wants to point out characteristics of the Structured Literacy Approach and the Direct Instruction Reading as the specific methodology that follows the features of the previously mentioned approach. Barrantes (2011) points out that “the

main objective of the descriptive research is the phenomena description. It used observation, cross-sectional studies, and studies of development.” (p. 64)

### **Participants**

The population chosen to develop this research are second graders from Nueva Laboratorio Emma Gamboa Elementary School, and Neftalí Villalobos Gutiérrez school. The first institution has 26 students in second grade and the second school has 26 students in second grade. Both school groups use technological devices in the classroom and students receive 5 English lessons per week. Also, eleven teachers from elementary school that work with second grade for the Ministry of Education were taken into account.

### **Research Techniques and Instruments**

For this research, a survey was used to find more information regarding the teachers' background knowledge of teaching phonemics and reading competence. In addition, an observation sheet was implemented to corroborate reading and phonemic competence of second grade students. Furthermore, the interaction and participation of the students of second grade when identifying phonemes as well as developing other techniques that demonstrate their ability to identify sound and to read was assessed through observation and a questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Survey: Teachers' Background of Phonemics and Reading Competence**

Based on the survey, majority of teachers stated they use the national English curriculum to teach phonemic awareness. When asked regarding the abilities that MEP's curriculum develops in second grade, most teachers agreed on the fact that the curriculum helps students to decode, while leaving blending and reading comprehension as secondary skills. Also, in terms of including phonemic awareness goals in their lesson plans, a vast majority claimed they included these goals in their lesson plans. Regarding the frequency teachers taught phonemic awareness weekly, most responded that activities related to the topic were done at least once a week, as they considered the activities to be very useful. Based on this, it can be inferred that the curriculum provides educators with information and ideas about how to work phonemic awareness in class.

In addition, when interviewed about the didactic sequence, the interview showed that teachers developed different activities such as introductory stages, independent and

guided practice, as well as student demonstrations in their lesson plans. Nonetheless, it was deduced that most teachers did not know about the didactic process that is necessary to follow to teach phonemic awareness according to this research which in fact, is very similar to MEP's didactic sequence.

Furthermore, teachers also believed that there were clear connections between phonemic awareness and the development of reading competence. However, when asked about the different techniques that could be used in the classroom, many stated that they knew some techniques. Also, some examples of reading and phonemic abilities teachers expressed the second-grade students can develop in class are imitating sounds, discriminating sounds, segmenting, sounding out, fluency, oral reading, and accuracy. Based on teachers' response, all these abilities can be developed with the appropriate activities and teachers' guide in the classroom. In fact, most of the teachers agreed that MEP's proposal for phonemic awareness enables students to develop reading competence; however, most teachers do not necessarily know how to link them.

### **Classroom Observation**

Next conclusions and significance will be determined based on the data shown on the graphics from the observation of second grade students based on the rubric of annex #3.

**Observation 1.** *Number of students who did not identify the sound of the following phonemes.*

According to observation 1. three students from group A and two students from group B mispronounced the sound /m/ incorrectly for a total of 5 students. Ten students mispronounced sound /e/, one student from group B produced sound /s/ wrongly. Thirty students mispronounced /a/, four sound /t/, and twelve sound /o/. Eighteen mispronounced /g/, eleven /b/, one /n/, and sixteen /h/. Twenty pronounced sound /r/ incorrectly, seven /d/, six /p/, twenty-three /u/. and five /f/ sound. Twenty-seven mispronounced /i/, fifteen /c/, nineteen /j/, and six sound /k/. To end, twenty-three mispronounced /w/, thirty /y/, nine /x/, twenty-six/z/, and twenty-nine sound /qu/. It can be inferred that students had a bigger difficulty to pronounce sounds /a/, /y/, /u/, /i/, /h/, /z/, /qu/, /r/ while phonemes /s/, /n/, /f/, and /t/ were easier.

**Observation 2,** *Number of students who had difficulties pronouncing words correctly.*

The following words were pronounced incorrectly by these number of scholars according to observation 2. "Pen" was not correctly read by one student. The words "pencil" and

“sit” were not pronounced correctly by seven students. Words “on” and “big” were mispronounced by two children. “Red”, “long” as well as “rest” were incorrectly pronounced by five of them. Also, “dog” was mispronounced by four kids and “bat” by six students. Fifteen kids did not read the word “kitchen” correctly. Twenty pupils mispronounced “under”, “fifteen”, “horse” and “hand”. Twenty-six did not pronounce “sung” and “mud” correctly, and thirty mispronounced “bug”. It can be inferred that learners had greater difficulty to decode and blend “bug”, “mud”, “sung”, “horse” and “hand”, as well as “under” and “kitchen”.

**Observation 3** *Number of students who use either one of the following reading technique. Sounding out, whole word reading, or both.*

Based on what was observed, eleven students sounded out words, twenty-one students whole word read the words, and ten used both techniques. It can be inferred that most students have developed their competence to a point in which they can whole word read with accuracy. Nevertheless, a similar number of students are in an early stage of phonemic competence requires practice in order to advance to whole word reading.

## CONCLUSIONS

*Some significant conclusions that should be considered are.*

- Teachers do not know that decoding leads to blending. Educators do not know that students can even develop reading competence that leads them to comprehend written information.
- Most of the public education teachers that completed the survey, expressed they use the national English curriculum and include phonemic awareness competence’s exercises in their teaching at least once a week as a requirement from MEP.
- Most educators know about several techniques that are useful to teach phonemic awareness in the classroom; however, there are many techniques that have not been applied yet.
- Pedagogues who helped in this research demonstrated knowledge about the didactic process that is necessary to follow to provide students with a scaffolded learning experience. Although these steps are important, some teachers seem to give more attention to some moments rather than others.

- It seems like educators know about several techniques that can be used to train students reading competence there are many that they have not explored nor implemented yet.
- Imitating sounds and whole word reading are the most used strategies in second graders.
- It does not seem like all teachers are sure about role of MEP's methodological proposal in the development of reading competence. There are still some educators who feel like they need more techniques and time to do so.
- It is very important to notice that most pedagogues point out the fact that their students' ability to decode and blend is not good and that they have difficulties reading. They also identify low achievement among their kids.

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