



TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN EARLY YEARS

Pilot Study

Abstract

Teaching reading in English needs intensive trainings, skills and knowledge for teacher to be able to support students to improve their reading skills in early grades

Teaching of English in Early Years through Synthetic Phonics
approach

Jolly Phonics Research project

Early teaching of English through synthetic phonics approach using Jolly phonics (UK) program



Early Teaching of English through Synthetic Phonics Approach Using Jolly Phonics Program

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Lahore School Locations



Karachi School Locations



Executive Summary

The present study aimed to investigate impact of using Jolly Phonics as a fast track strategy for teaching English in low cost schools of AFAQ, PEF, ITA Lahore and Karachi, Pakistan. Phonics Club Private limited and Research Society for Synthetic Phonics in Collaboration with Jolly Learning UK Phonics introduced Jolly Phonics Program in 6 schools of AFAQ, PEF and ITA Karachi whereas 9 schools of ITA Lahore. Selected teachers and school administrators were given 3 days training before initiation of the study. Experimental method between group research designs was used in this study. The sample consisted of 108 students of ages between 6-13 years from AFAQ, 299 students from PEF, 270 students of ages between 4-10 years from ITA Karachi and 209 students from ITA Lahore. Two groups (Control and experimental) were formed in each school. Experimental group was taught Jolly Phonics Course where as control group was taught regular English learning course. Burt Reading test was used for pre and post assessment of reading level of class prep, K.G and 1 students. Results were analyzed using SPSS (version 18).Results showed significant changes in test scores of students. Results indicated significant changes in Pre and post test results. Students who were taught through Jolly phonics course have attained higher reading age and complexity level than students who were taught regular course following whole word approach. In the light of success of this pilot organization should concentrate efforts to support teachers and community in improving English teaching and learning using synthetic phonics approach and Jolly phonics course material across Pakistan.



Preamble

This publication helps educators create differentiated reading instruction experiences for their students by showing the comparison of two learning groups of students.

This is the first ever trial project of Pakistan using Jolly Phonics program as synthetic phonics approach. Reading specialists, reading coaches, and teachers will find this document useful in lesson planning, as it contains crosswalks that map the relationships between whole word and synthetic phonics approach.

Through this project we would be able to analyze reasons of unsuccessful reading and writing practices used in early years for teaching English language. Researchers would be able to highlight /identify key factors involved in teaching of English language in low cost schools of Pakistan with little or minimum resources and teachers with no prior knowledge of the program.

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1. Introduction

Teaching through phonics, synthetic or analytic has been a subject of debate for many years in the world, however in recent years educationists have noticed a growing interest in synthetic phonics approach after a declaration of including synthetic phonics approach in UK government policy. Now it is easier for policy makers to choose leading synthetic phonics program providers for their bilingual students or get a blended progression for their English language learners. However in Pakistan there is still not any clear instruction or evidence for teaching of English language through synthetic phonics approach.

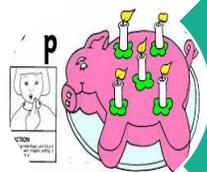
This project was initiated to demonstrate that effective language instruction through synthetic phonics approach using Jolly Phonics Program can further lead towards accelerated reading and writing and solve common issues faced by classroom teachers while teaching reading and writing



Principles of Synthetic Phonics Approach



Putting the alphabetic code knowledge taught to date and the three core skills to immediate use with cumulative, decodable words, sentences and texts.



A focus on teaching the three core skills of blending for reading, segmenting for spelling and hand writing.



The explicit and systematic teaching of the alphabetic code (the letter/s- sound correspondence).

Scope of Synthetic Phonics Approach

Synthetic Phonics approach is a mode of teaching reading that emphasizes on letter-sound associations and relationships. During synthetic phonics approach children are trained to understand letter-sound correspondences and how to practice them to blend, decode and encode words for their reading and writing.

Some significant reading researchers have discussed the teaching and training of phonics rigorously and critically in early 1980s and 1990s (Chall, 1983; Adams, 1990; Stahl, 1992). While others promoted the teaching of phonics in the media that in order to learn to read, all that children need is synthetic phonics approach.

Purpose of using synthetic phonics approach in Pakistan is to bring revolutionary change in teaching methodology. Synthetic phonics approach develops oral reading, builds accuracy and fluency, both of which contribute to improved reading comprehension. It is also the most practical way to monitor a student's progress. It gives a student an opportunity to practice applying Phonics Knowledge and word recognition skills in context.

Need Assessment Analysis for English language learners in Pakistan:

Since needs analysis serves as an important initial step in curriculum design for further development of teaching materials, learning activities, tests, program evaluation strategies, and so forth, there is an impressive amount of research on needs analysis in the language teaching field.

The overall findings of existing studies indicate that adequate and appropriate teacher training is key to success in language education. However, very little research is found regarding teacher training; even less is found in the context of teaching through synthetic phonics approach in Pakistan.

Responding to the English instructional course for teaching English at the school level, the teachers' needs should therefore be investigated. The primary purpose of this exploratory study was to identify what school teachers, who are not trained to teach English by synthetic Phonics Jolly Phonics approach, need to learn in order to be able to teach English to young learners. Need assessment analysis was as follows: teachers were unaware of 44 sounds made from 26 letters that are essential for teaching of reading and writing teachers were not having any prior knowledge of blending and segmenting skills for teaching of English reading and writing. It was difficult for the teachers to teach irregular words logically .teachers were unaware of specific vowels spelling rules associated with long n short vowel sounds. A greater difficulty was found in understanding alternative spellings of different sounds for example ai/ alternative spellings of a "/ai/ as in rain, /ai/ as in day, /ai/ as in cake.

After attending 3 days training workshop most of the teachers reported satisfactorily knowledge of the above mentioned concepts, were well aware of the use of Jolly phonics resource kit and showed high motivation to start teaching by this new method of teaching English.

According to Annual Status Education Report (ASER, 2013), 50 % of class 5 students cannot read class 2 book. Students with reading difficulties would eventually read less and this leads to drop out of students. Multi-grade approach of teaching and poor literacy rate is one of the major challenges in education sector in Pakistan. Pakistan stands 113th amongst 120 countries on the Education Development Index. All this for a country which has a total of 5.1 million out of school children, the second highest in the world; 1 in 12 of the out of school children in the world are in Pakistan (Shaukat, 2012). Pakistan's economic and social factors contribute a major role for this poor literacy ratio and one of the significant factors is ineffective reading instructions and assessment methods in schools. English reading is almost neglected in pre-service and in-service trainings. Teachers are sent into classes without providing them knowledge, skills and information to meet the needs of students in reading skill. Research in this field of knowledge is rarely held in Pakistan (Naz & Malik, 2014). In this scenario, early English teaching using Jolly Phonics needs to be explored to develop research based reading instruction and assessment methodologies in multi-grade system.

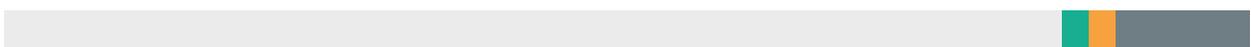
Pakistan, the 6th most populous country of the world, has 2 million percent of children who are out of school and have a low literacy rate even for those students who are attending schools. In spite of continued efforts of government as well as private sector, Pakistan is way behind in achieving the millennium development goals in most of the sectors including education. The quality and skills of teaching also need meticulous efforts to bring in positive change in improving the quality of teaching. Teaching of reading and writing directly effects a child's progress in all other areas.

It was assessed during need assessment analysis that an effective language instruction is the need of the hour in Early Years and we can develop independent reading and writing skills in students through training, monitoring and implementation of a leading synthetic phonics program provider. It was later concluded that we can achieve this target with a few days training, an effective program and careful implementation.

1.1 Overview of Jolly Phonics program

Jolly Phonics is a systematic synthetic phonics program designed to teach children to read and write. Children learn the 42 letter sounds of the English language, rather than the alphabet. They are then taken through the stages of blending and segmenting words to develop reading and writing skills.

The Jolly Phonics programme has now been used for over 20 years and has been endorsed for use in all schools in countries such as the Gambia and Trinidad and Tobago and recommended by the government in other countries, such as the UK and Nigeria. It is also used in government schools of



some countries as diverse as Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Nepal, India, Mexico, Seychelles, Philippines and Fiji.

With Jolly Phonics the pupils are first taught the letter sounds through actions (so the sounds of the letters, not their names). They are then taught how to ‘blend’ those sounds together to read words (so c-a-t makes ‘cat’). In this way the spoken word ‘cat’ is made, or synthesized (hence known as ‘synthetic’ phonics). It enables children to read out new words for themselves. It also enhances their ability to write words by segmenting the word into its sounds, and then writing the letters for those sounds. Pupils are then taught “tricky words” that do not follow the sound system. The letter sounds are taught alongside culturally appropriate stories, songs, and actions that make learning the sounds both memorable and fun.

1.2 Overview of context

The synthetic phonics approach using the Jolly Phonics programme was piloted in 33 randomly selected schools under AFAQ, PEF, ITA Karachi and Lahore in Lahore and Karachi. From each of these schools one section of class 1 or KG was selected as experimental group and the other as control group.

Baseline survey was conducted in the schools listed above in October, 2015 onwards. The teacher and head teacher of experimental group from each of these schools received 3 days training of the synthetic phonics using the Jolly Phonics programme, side by side, from an expert Jolly Phonics trainer. Each school was given a Jolly Phonics Starter Kit (see Appendix A for details of kit), with each teacher and head teacher was given copy of the Jolly Phonics Teacher Book. Each student of these classes was also provided with the Jolly Phonics Pupil Books 1 Schools were also given checklists, yearly planning and guidelines too. The teachers of these classes taught students using the Jolly Phonics programme.. Members of research team for Synthetic Phonics (who had training in evaluation, assessment and monitoring) undertook a monitoring visit to each of the pilot schools. During these monitoring visit they observed teacher teaching Jolly Phonics course & recorded the findings objectively and gave feedback, provided support to these teachers and identified issues that needed to be addressed. During March 2016, the members of RSSP team visited the respective schools for their final assessment after completion of the Jolly Phonics course in all schools.



The aim of this project was to conduct the Jolly Phonics programme in the teaching of English reading in public and private sectors primary schools in Pakistan and assess its impact on early grade reading outcomes

Determine if the synthetic phonics approach of teaching English, and specially the Jolly Phonics programme, leads to faster progress in the pupils' reading ability in English than those pupils not taught using the programme.

Determine whether the Jolly Phonics programme is effective for all student groups (gender, ECD experience and language spoken at home).

1.4 The Rationale of Study

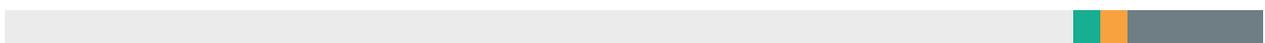
Teaching reading in English needs intensive trainings, skills and knowledge for teacher to be able to support students to improve their reading skills in early grades. Students come in school with their local language; medium of instruction is Urdu and these shifts from local language to foreign language pose difficulties for students to improve their early reading. Besides this, English is taught as a subject not as a language. Teachers need to be competent to teach reading for such a big population of students in schools. The objective of this study is to impart reading skills using synthetic phonic approach in students using Jolly Phonics in government schools of Lahore.

1.5 Research Question

To what extent does Jolly Phonics strategy enhance pupils reading skills?

1.6 Hypotheses

- (1) There is no significant difference in the posttest mean scores of pupil's reading ability in the experimental and control groups.
- (2) There is no significant difference in the posttest mean scores of pupil's reading ability in the experimental group by school location



Baseline Survey tools

1. Burt reading test
2. Teacher's observation form
3. Demographics Sheet (gender, location, language spoken at home, ownership of household property, parent's education)

2. Methodology

To provide a comparison of the progress in reading English at the schools using the Jolly Phonics programme, 23 control groups sections were selected for the pilot. These control groups were not exposed to the Jolly Phonics programme as their teachers did not attend training and instead followed the existing methods used in teaching reading and writing. Each control and experimental group was selected from the same school to match the demographics, so there were 24 experimental and 23 control groups from 33 schools in total. In each of these experimental and control groups, a literacy assessment was undertaken at the beginning (baseline) and end (end-line, which was taken after teachers have taught Jolly Phonics programme to their experimental group) with randomly selected pupils.

Sample

	AFAQ Schools	PEF Schools	ITA Lahore Schools	ITA Karachi Schools
Total Number of Teachers	22	19	30	19
Total Number of Students	108	299	342	270
Total Number of Learning group	6	6	6	6
Total Number of Controlled group	6	6	6	6
Total Number of Girls	118	149	163	155
Total Number of boys	128	150	179	115

3. Consideration of other influencing factors

4.1 Factors contributing to success of the pilot

There were a number of factors that contributed to the success of this pilot and the improvements in the pupils' literacy outcomes. These factors included:

- **Detailed initial training in Jolly Phonics:** A comprehensive, 3 days training in the beginning by an expert Jolly Phonic Trained Person was arranged that helped teachers learn the methodology and pedagogy. It is strongly recommended for other programs.
- **Regular teaching of Jolly Phonics:** Jolly Phonics program was practiced almost daily in the classrooms and it put very positive effect over the children's learning and improved language skills. It is recommended to practice and conduct lessons every day or at least

three days a week. In this pilot, the majority of the teachers did teach the programme most days which allowed the pupils to make good progress in their reading and writing ability.

- **Evaluations of the program in schools:** Evaluation and Monitoring was conducted on monthly basis to take follow up of the program being implemented and practiced, and more to find out where the teachers and children need assistance and to facilitate them.

4.2 Challenges experienced in the pilot

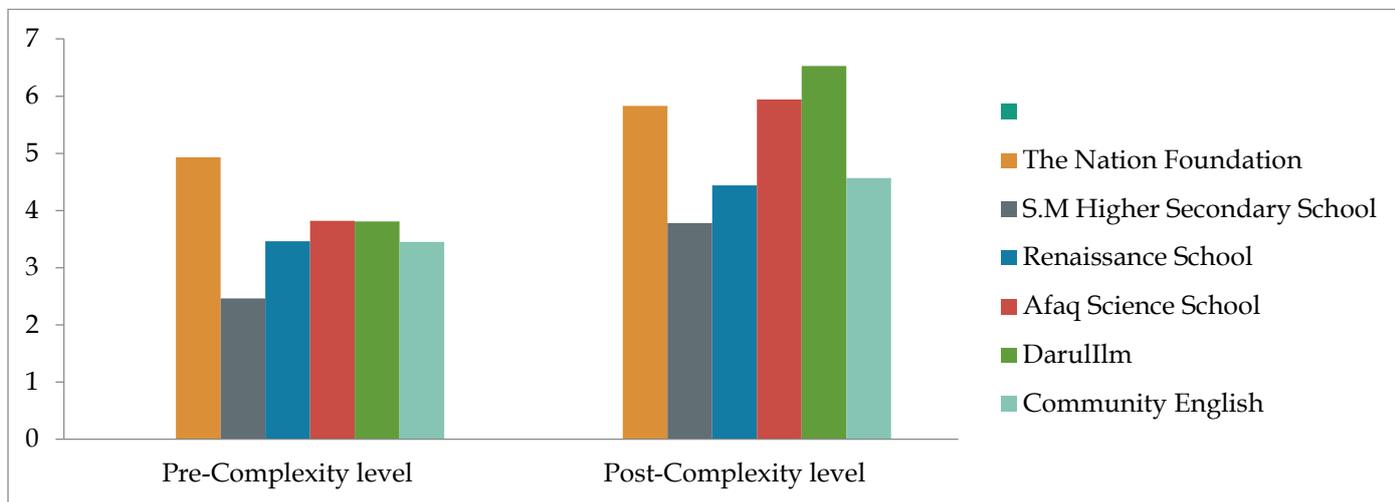
Despite this pilot showing impressive improvements in the pupils' ability to read and write when taught using the Jolly Phonics programme, there were a number of challenges faced in the pilot. These challenges included:

- **Overcrowded classrooms and large class sizes:** The large of number of children in one class was a big challenge, as to provide the opportunity to all and to meet the needs of each individual in the focused group.
- **Lack of Basic & Essential Teaching & Learning Resources:** The schools lacked basic and essential resources like tables, chairs, stationary, writing boards, electricity and space to do activities and learn.
- **Low capacity and proficiency of English Language of Teachers:** The teachers' Proficiency of English Language was not satisfactory to understand all concepts and rules , and vocabulary was a challenge, it is recommended to plan a language class for teachers as well and embed in this program simultaneously so that teachers and children both learn and improve too.
- **Sustainability of Regular Follow up activity:** A great effort was made by the members of research team of synthetic phonics to monitor the implementation of the programme and provide on-going support to the teachers. However due to this pilot having limited funding and capacity, this support and follow-up after the initial training could be made more effective and controlled by regular visits and sticking to the plan week wise visits, and provide in-time facilitation and addressing the issues arising immediately faced by teachers, schools or children, that would have encouraged teachers and had got them put more efforts.

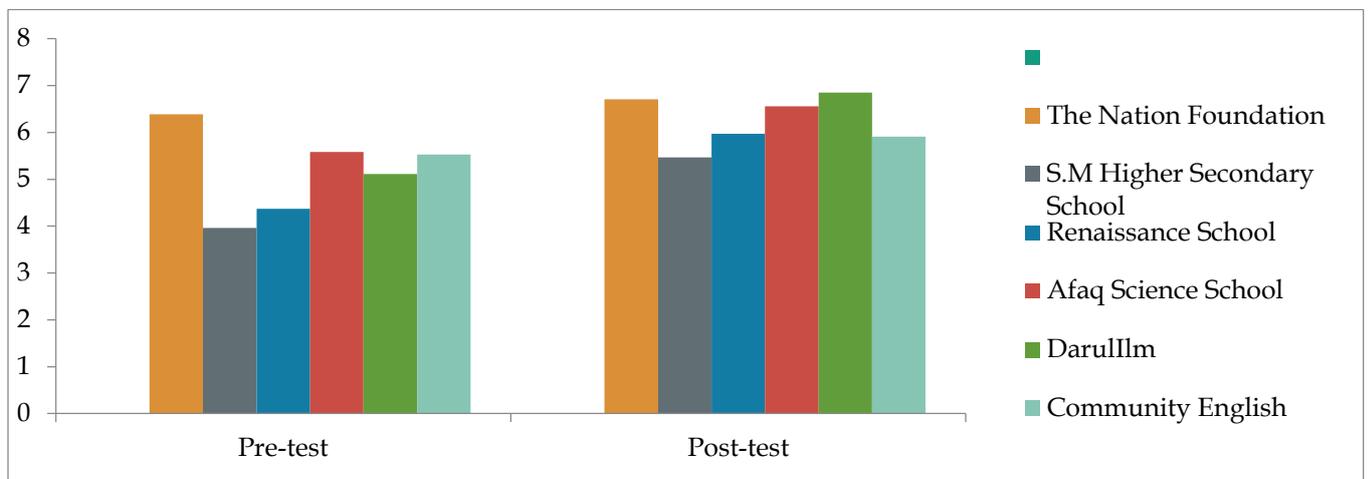
4. Results

4.1.1 AFAQ Schools

Pre and post complexity levels of AFAQ schools.

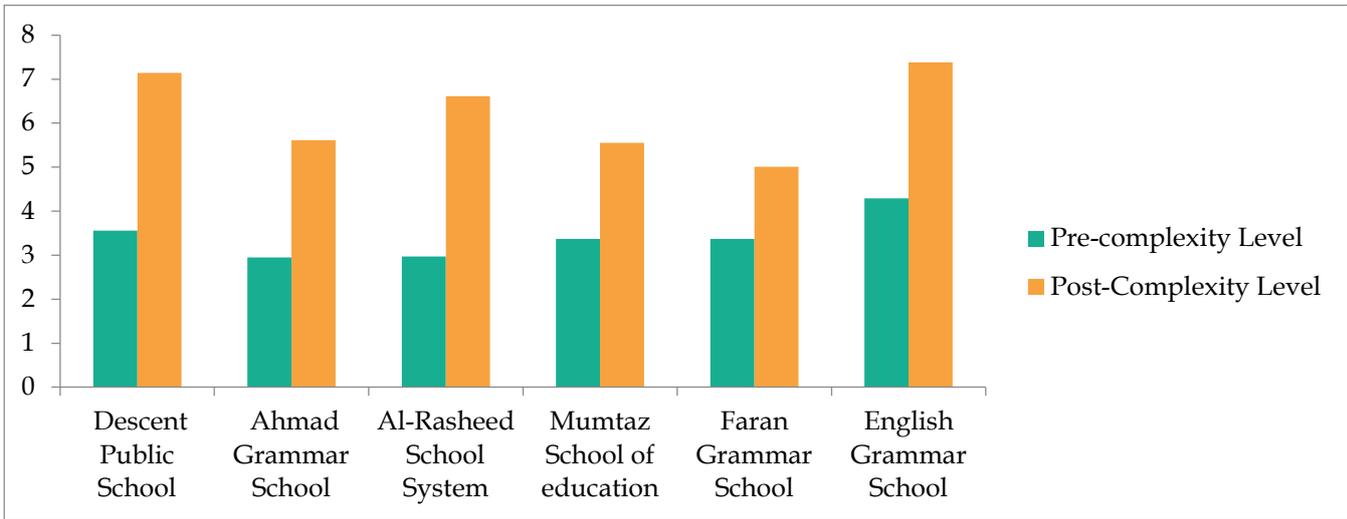


Reading age of AFAQ schools.

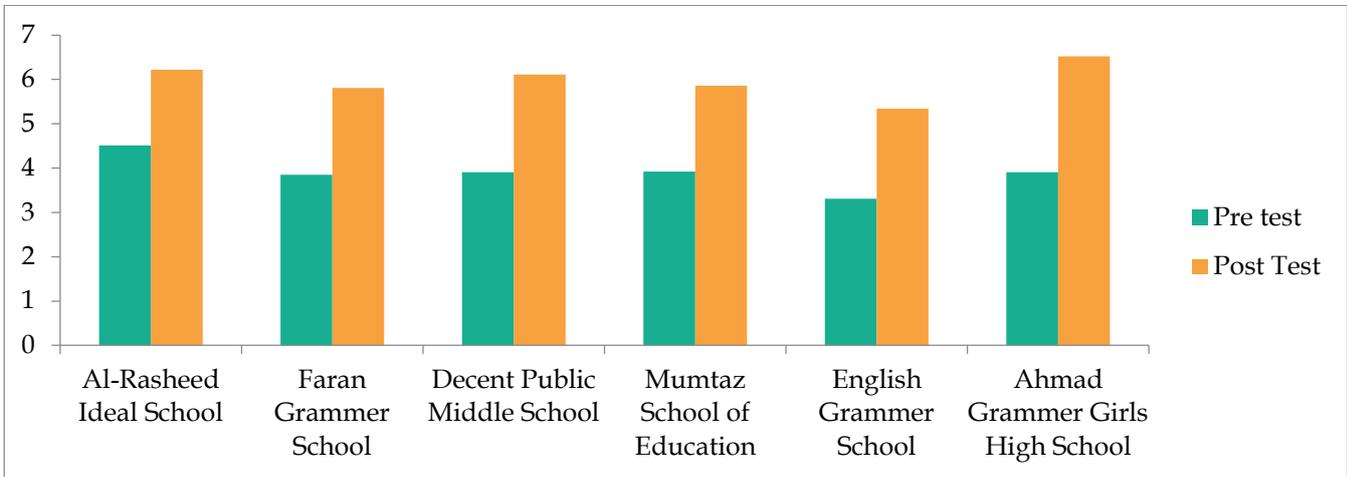


4.1.2 PEF Schools

Pre and post complexity level of PEF schools

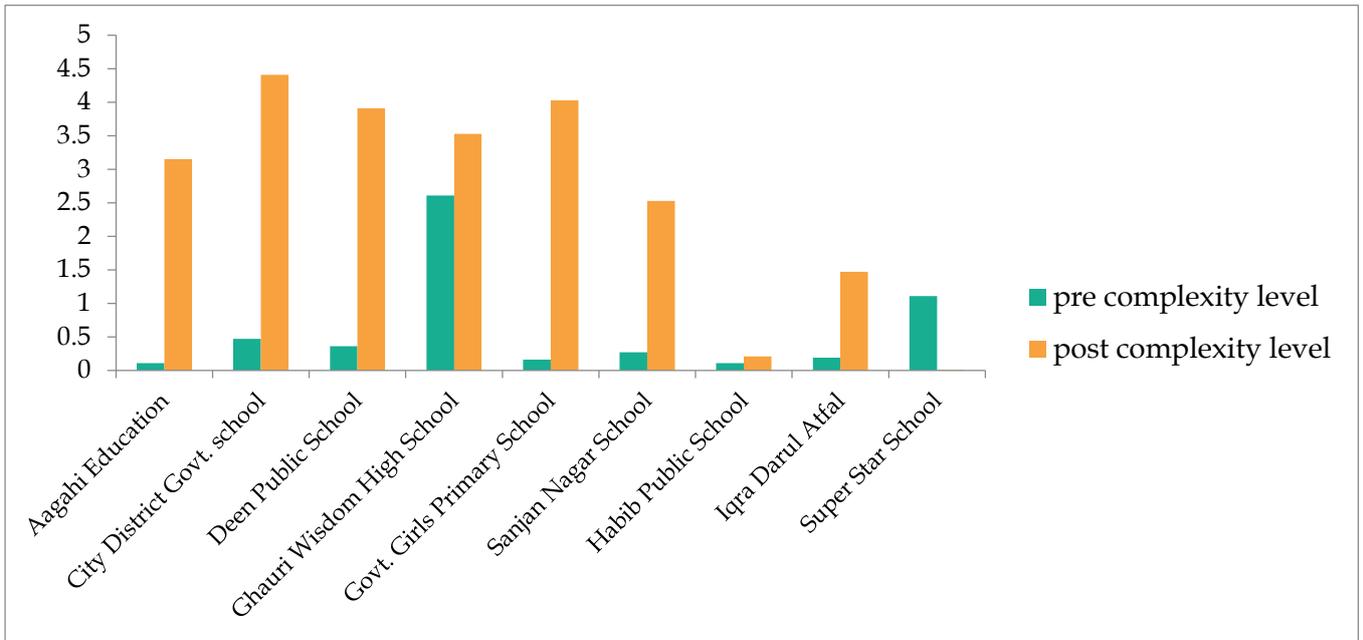


Reading age of PEF schools

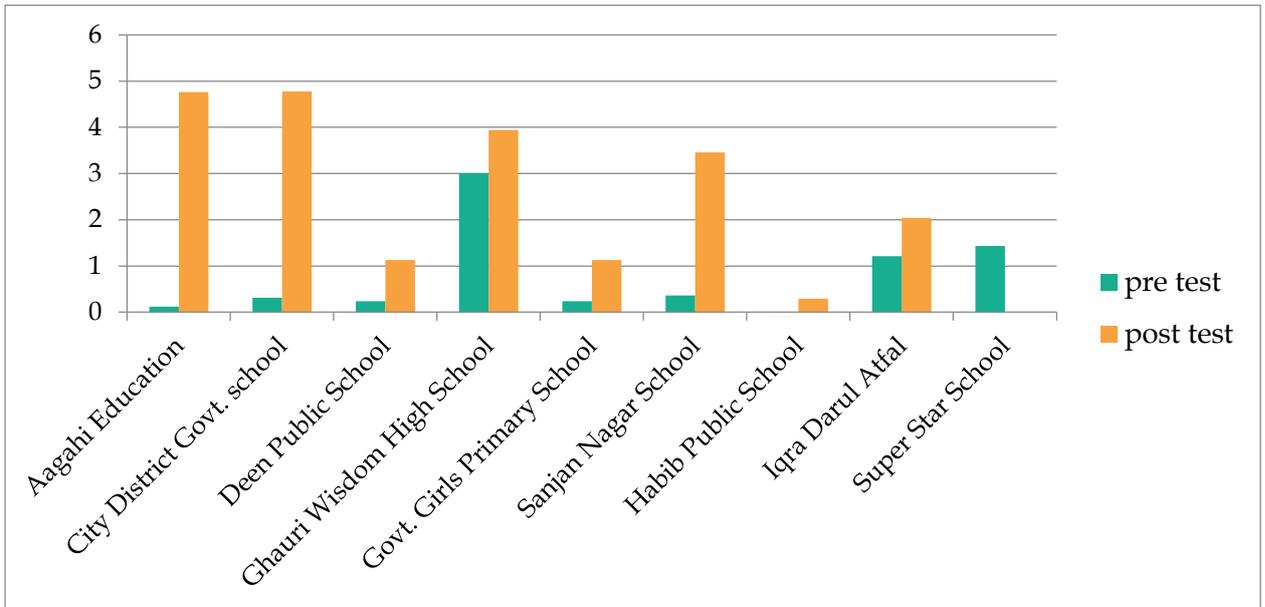


4.1.3 ITA Lahore Schools

Pre and post complexity levels of ITA Lahore schools

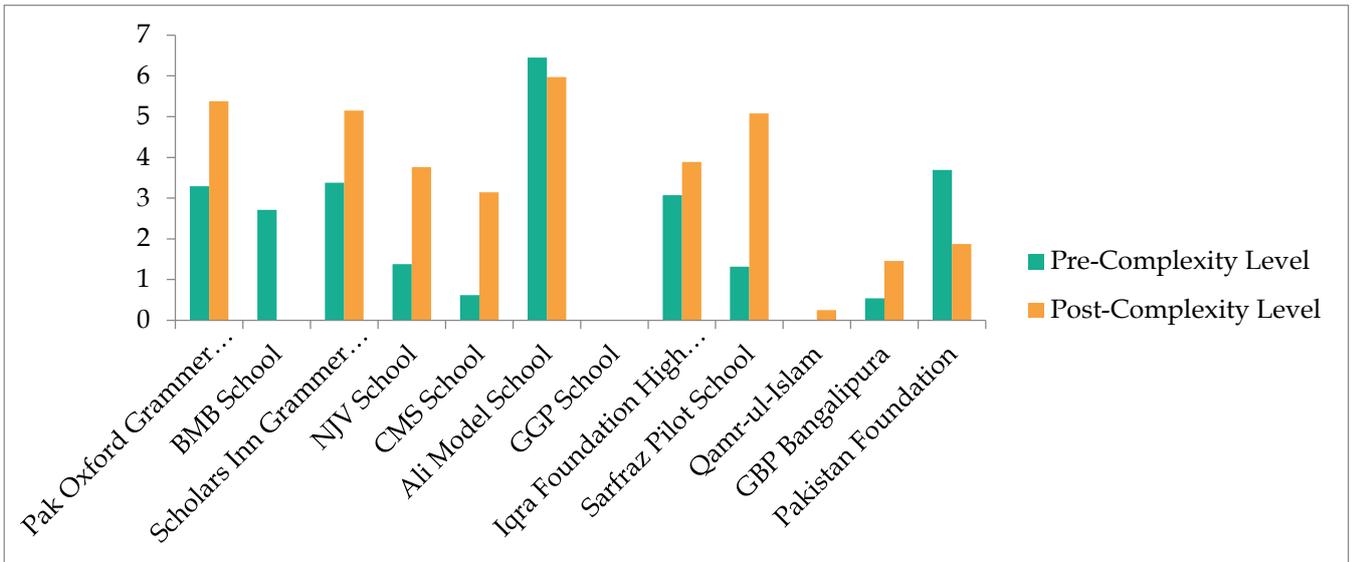


Pre and post reading age of all schools

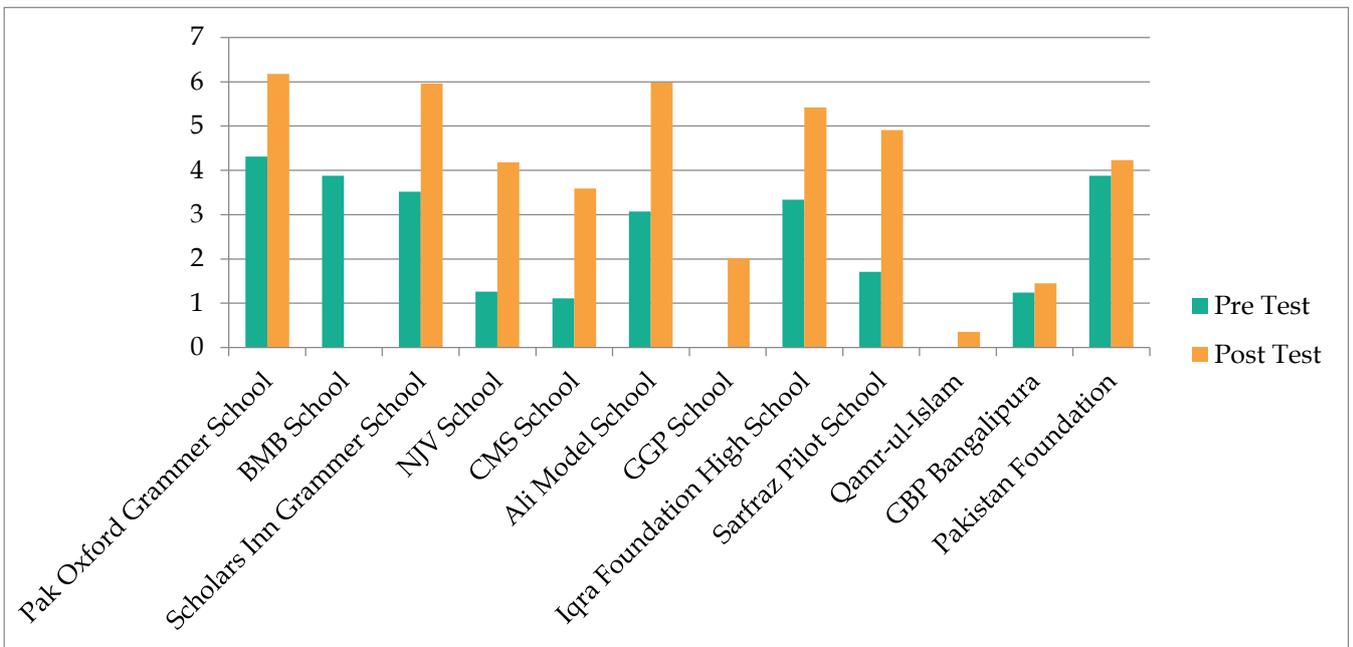


4.1.4 ITA Karachi

Pre and post complexity level



Reading age of ITA Karachi schools



5. Discussion and Conclusion

As results demonstrates that the experimental school sections outperformed the control school sections significantly on all the five literacy skills assessed, suggesting that the Jolly Phonics method provides a more effective way of teaching these key skills than existing methods being used. The results of experimental group are compared to pupils not taught using the synthetic phonics approach made average or no improvement in their reading age over the same period. Such a significant improvement in reading age demonstrates the impact of Synthetic Phonics approach in Pakistan. Jolly Phonics teaching has improved not just reading skills but has also enhanced letter sound knowledge. Results of our research can also be supported with previous researches proving synthetic phonics approach as strong research based approach imparting reading skills efficiently.

An alternative route was to experiment with the use of synthetic phonics. Synthetic phonics is a method by which children learn letter sounds in a specified order which can then be blended together to form words (Feitelson, 1988). The children are able to sound out each letter and synthesize these sounds together in order to pronounce the words for themselves without the assistance of the teacher (Johnston & Watson, 2005). Phonics instruction enables students to write word. As students acquire phonemic segmentation skill, knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences, and familiarity with common spelling patterns, and as they practice reading and writing words, they become better able to remember correct spellings (Griffith, 1991). In sum, phonics instruction is thought to contribute in helping students learn to read because it teaches them phonemic awareness and use of letter-sound relations to read and spell words (Linnea & Ehri, 2003).

The aim of this project was to pilot the Jolly Phonics programme in the teaching of reading and writing of English in primary schools in Lahore, Pakistan and assess its impact on early grade reading outcomes. Through this evaluation it can be concluded that the synthetic phonics approach of teaching reading and writing of English, and specifically the Jolly Phonics programme, leads to greater progress in the pupils' reading and writing ability in English than those pupils not taught using the programme. This evaluation has also shown that the Jolly Phonics programme is effective for all student groups.

Limitations

As demographics were self-reported due to which social desirability factor could have influence response of the participants. That creates threat to reliability of the study.

4. Recommendations

- 1-To increase English reading proficiency of grade 1 student it is recommended that teachers teaching English should be trained well for English language teaching
- 2-It is also recommended that parents should also be engaged in English learning process .Teachers should call parents once a month and should tell them how they can increase reading ability of their kids.
- 3- Teachers evaluation and class room observations would help in increasing English reading ability of kids.
- 4- Teachers should be given jolly Phonics refresher courses to keep quality of English language teaching maintained.
- 5-Structured class room observations should be made by the AFAQ administration, Jolly phonics trainers, Member of RSSP (Research society for synthetic Phonics) to improve quality of teaching English language.
- 6- Jolly phonics program should be introduced at the nursery level i.e. the beginning of the educational journey so that a child could learn more comprehensively the language.
- 7- Class room teaching should be very interactive. Teachers should use multisensory approach that could involve more than one sense at the time of learning so that a child could learn and remember more.

8- It is suggested that class rooms should be equipped with technology. For example using multimedia and speakers would make learning more interesting, interactive and playful for kids which would ensure improved grades.

9- The progression of concepts is important in teaching of reading and writing. By progression it means progressing from sounds to words with special focus on teaching of irregular words.

10- Globally schools are teaching 40 + sounds instead of teaching 26 regular alphabets. To meet global needs schools in Pakistan need to include 44 sounds in their early year curriculums. A child cannot read without having knowledge of 44 sounds made from 26 letters of English language.

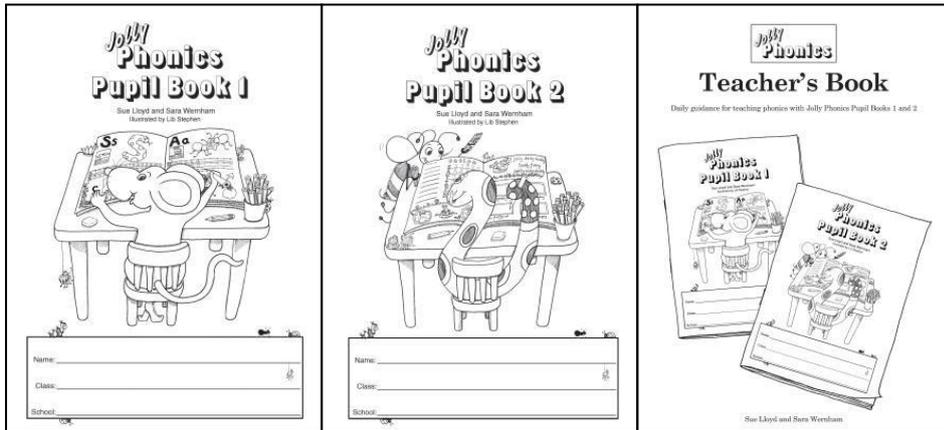
11-Vowels are important and teaching them with sounds help kids in blending and forming new words.

5. Future Implications

This pilot study has demonstrated the effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics programme in improving reading outcomes of Primary 1 children in Lahore, Pakistan. After the effectiveness of this programme the parents of control group students requested the school administration to offer their children the same programme so that their children will also be able to meet the growing demand of English in education. Therefore the heads of the respective schools have decided to offer this programme to their whole school, so that their all students will be able to read English efficiently. By implementing this proven programme of teaching reading alongside a robust programme of ongoing mentoring and monitoring of the teachers would significantly increase literacy rates across Pakistan.

Future researches should be directed to compare students from different socioeconomic backgrounds and their English learning ability via synthetic phonics, Variables like personality of teachers, teacher attitude, and difference in teaching styles on students English Learning through Synthetic Phonics approach should be considered for further investigation.

- 4 copies Jolly Phonics Teacher’s Book, black-and-white



- Jolly Phonics Extra kits



Terminologies Cracked

Blending

Identify the graphemes from left to right of the printed words, sounds and blend them to hear the whole word.

The blending process is decoding.

Segmenting

Identify the sounds from the beginning to end of the spoken word .Write down a grapheme for each identified sound to spell the word.

The segmenting process is encoding.

Phoneme

The smallest identifiable sounds of speech.

Grapheme

Letter or letter groups that are code for the focus sounds.

Tricky Words

They are common words with unusual spellings. Tricky words are those words which cannot be sounded out correctly using the Jolly Phonics sounds. E.g. one, once, off, who ,are etc.

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