



Universidad de Concepción
Dirección de Postgrado
Facultad de Educación
Magíster en Innovación de la Enseñanza, Aprendizaje y Evaluación del Inglés

The use of guided phonological-based instruction to foster EFL kindergarten learners' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds

Tesis para optar al grado de Magíster en Innovación de la Enseñanza, Aprendizaje y Evaluación del Inglés

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Concepción – Chile

2022

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge everyone who played an important part not only during this learning process, but also through all the academic struggles, accomplishments and personal and professional growth.

To my family and parents, who have always believed in me and have encouraged me to overcome every obstacle I have encountered.

To my colleagues at school, who have always supported me, gave me a word of advice and guided me during my years of teaching practice.

A would like to thank my professor and thesis advisor Dr. Claudio Díaz Larenas, who has enlightened me with new perspectives and ideas, guided my work at all times and encouraged me to take advantage of new learning opportunities and experiences. I truly appreciate your understanding and words of wisdom.

I am especially grateful for my little students, who are the main inspiration of this action research study. Their kindness, cheerfulness and motivation made me realized that becoming a teacher was the right choice.

Lastly, and most importantly, to my daughter. I hope I can make you proud.

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List of acronyms

L2: Second Language
EFL: English as a Foreign Language
PA: Phonemic Awareness

Abstract

This action research aims at exploring the use of a guided phonological-based instruction to promote EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds. The purpose of this study is exploratory, as there is very little research on the area. The participants were a class of 22 kindergarten students from a private school in Concepción and the intervention consisted of five teaching sessions based on six fricative sounds presented in minimal pairs by implementing specific phonological based strategies. Quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to collect and analyze the data, which was gathered through a pre and post intervention test, an analytic rubric, observation, checklists, self-assessment and a semi-structured interview. Findings showed that the implemented strategies and multisensory activities enhanced the participants' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds, in terms of identification and pronunciation of sounds (1) in isolation and (2) in words as beginning sounds, (3) sound and image association and (4) sound and letter association. This last phonemic awareness feature was the most achieved by the participants, who also showed a positive perception towards the intervention. As a conclusion, the use of guided Phonological-based instruction was a positive contribution on the participants' ability to identify and produce beginning fricative sounds.

Keywords: *very young learners; phonemic awareness; phonological based instruction; kindergarten; beginning sounds; emergent literacy.*

Resumen

Esta investigación-acción busca explorar el uso de la instrucción fonológica guiada para promover la conciencia fonémica de sonidos fricativos iniciales en estudiantes de nivel preescolar kínder. Este estudio es de carácter exploratorio, ya que existen pocas investigaciones en el área. Los participantes fueron 25 estudiantes de nivel preescolar kínder, pertenecientes a un establecimiento educacional particular privado en Concepción, y la intervención consistió en cinco sesiones basadas en seis sonidos fricativos presentados en la forma de pares mínimos mediante el uso de estrategias fonológicas específicas. Los datos fueron obtenidos a través de la aplicación de un prueba previa y posterior a la intervención, una rúbrica analítica, observación, *checklists*, autoevaluación y una entrevista semiestructurada, para luego ser analizados mediante el uso de técnicas cuantitativas y cualitativas, específicamente estadística descriptiva y análisis temático.

Los resultados mostraron que las estrategias implementadas y actividades mutisensoriales mejoraron la conciencia fonémica de sonidos fricativos iniciales en los participantes, en términos de identificación y pronunciación de (1) sonidos aislados y (2) en palabras como sonidos iniciales, (3) asociación de imagen y sonido y (4) asociación de sonido y letras. Este último aspecto fue el que obtuvo mejores resultados por parte de los participantes, quienes también mostraron una percepción positiva en cuanto a la intervención. En conclusión, el uso de instrucción fonológica guiada contribuyó positivamente en la habilidad de los participantes de identificar y producir sonidos fricativos iniciales.

Palabras clave: *Educación temprana; conciencia fonémica; instrucción fonológica; kínder; sonidos iniciales, alfabetización emergente*

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background information

Description of the context

Through the years, EFL instruction from early age has been adopted by many countries and school systems, aiming to improve the learning of the foreign language. Considering the characteristics of very young learners (3/5 years old) and their cognitive development, kindergarten students are in the process of developing emergent literacy or pre-reading skills in their mother tongue, which addresses the knowledge, skills and dispositions that precede learning of how to read and write in primary school, such as phonological and phonemic awareness, letter and sound recognition, decoding, among others (Kennedy et al., 2012). Referring to the literature addressing literacy in both L1 and L2, it has been supported that children are able to transfer literacy skills successfully between the two languages (Dlugosz, 2000). Referring to Ehri (2005) and his Phase Theory of Automatic Word Reading, at this level and age, learners are in the transition from pre-alphabetic to partial alphabetic phases, where they should be able to form alphabetic associations and use letter-sound relationship, so that they can form connections between spelling and pronunciation of simple and similar words.

1.2. Problem identification

Nevertheless, in the Chilean EFL context, there is a general lack of proper instruction and knowledge for teachers regarding not only systematic and consistent strategies to promote these pre-reading skills, but also to work with preschool levels. Moreover, the Ministry of Education does not clearly address the development of these specific skills.

In the context of a private non-bilingual school in Concepción, I have witnessed how some of my students have been able to develop some of these pre-reading skills in the foreign language incidentally, as they are being developed in their mother tongue at the same time. These include sounds and letter recognition, rhymes, among others. Nonetheless, we have not been able to apply clear and guided EFL early literacy strategies consistently over time.

In order to address this issue, it is essential to include systematic and diverse early literacy strategies and activities, that are also suitable for their age and learning characteristics, such as letter and sound recognition, blending and segmentation of sounds, among others, so that these skills can be intentionally enhanced and prepare students for reading. Since phonological-based instruction involves four different developmental levels, this action research will focus on phonemic awareness of specific sounds that I have found to be particularly challenging for my students, in terms of identification and production, these are the fricative beginning sounds /f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/ and the digraph /sh/.

Henceforth, the research question attempted to be answered is how does the integration of phonological-based instruction can benefit EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds?

1.3. Aims

General objective:

- To explore the use of guided Phonological-Based instruction to promote EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds.

Specific objectives:

- SO1: To describe students' ability to produce and identify beginning fricative (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /sh/, /h/) sounds as a result of the intervention.
- SO2: To identify students' perceptions towards the use of the phonological based instruction.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 EFL settings: The younger the better?

The statement that a very young age is ideal for learning a second language has been debated for several decades. Ozfidan et al, (2019) provide a full literature-based approach on age factors in second language acquisition (SLA), addressing mainly the common assumptions regarding age, such as young learners becoming more skillful than older learners, less frustrated when not reaching learning outcomes or acquiring a native like pronunciation. These assumptions are the foundation of common statements such as “kids soak up languages like sponges” (Lightbown, 2008, p.5). The same study points out that learners do not differ only by age but also by their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Yet, despite learners’ age, experience or cognitive abilities, they all benefit from real interactions with the physical world and people (Zhang, 2009).

Regardless of being generally mentioned together, SLA differs from English as a foreign language (EFL). Muñoz (2006) points out the substantial differences between the two concepts. While in SLA the language is embedded in a large context of exposure and immersion and used on a daily basis, in an EFL context the language is decontextualized and used only within instructional settings, with little possibility of interaction with the target language community, that means outside the classroom. In an EFL context, the age factor is still new and the findings are not conclusive yet. Nonetheless, over the years, EFL has been adopted by many countries and school systems, based on the theory that there is relatively greater potential for faster and better learning of the English language when it is introduced at the nursery school.

Referring to EFL age related studies, the quality and amount of exposure seem to affect the age of instruction. In Spain, the BAF project (Muñoz, 2006a) compared different kinds of learners (younger and older children, adolescents and older learners) after the same amount of instructed exposure and the findings were that older learners had a faster rate of learning than the younger ones. These findings were interpreted by Muñoz as an indication that cognitive maturity of older learners helped them learn the foreign language and, additionally, that age is not as defining when the language input is not enough.

Therefore, as Muñoz (2008) states, the characteristics of the teaching and learning context must be considered as a crucial factor for success. Thus, it is not the same to be exposed to the foreign language in a natural setting than in an instructed one. Moreover, there are more factors to be considered, such as the instruction period, significant exposure to the target language within and outside the classroom, learners’ motivation, learning strategies, interaction opportunities, among others.

2.2 The Critical Period Hypothesis (CHP)

The literature over the years has supported the existence of a critical period for first and second language acquisition in which young learners might have an advantage over older learners. Nevertheless, it is of great importance to mention that most of the literature referring to this hypothesis of language acquisition is largely based on research of first and second language acquisition and not foreign language learning.

CHP is based on the structure of brain and neurological changes, and it was first introduced by Penfield & Roberts (1959). It is defined by Scovel (1988, p. 2) as the following:

In brief, the critical period hypothesis is the notion that language is the best learned during the early years of the childhood, and that after about the first dozen years of life, everyone faces certain constraints in the ability to pick up a new language.

In terms of pronunciation, authors such as Shakouri & Saligheh (2012) support age having a great impact on phonology, and Zhang (2009) and Muñoz et al. (2010) believe that children demonstrate better performance in pronunciation than adults do. Moreover, supporters of CHP state that native-like pronunciation is unobtainable after someone has reached the age of puberty and that early language acquisition is necessary to reach native like proficiency (Spinner & Gass, 2019).

2.3 Teaching very young learners

Teaching a foreign language to very young learners is a very demanding process due to the specific instruction, strategies and actions required (Nikolov & Djigunović, 2006). Generally, preschool learners start nursery school at the age of 4-5 years old. At these ages, they are naturally active, enthusiastic, curious, and tend to learn about the world by exploring it and they need to be involved in hands-on experiences for effective learning. In this context, the use of concrete materials and a range of activities are necessary to maintain very young learners' attention and interest. Referring to Asher (1977), the use of Total Physical Response (TPR) is an excellent way to introduce language related activities through physical movement. Additionally, fine motor activities, such as drawing, coloring, cutting and pasting might contribute to better engage with their learning process. Very young learners greatly benefit from an authentic target language environment, sensorimotor activities and colorful instructional materials (Ozfidan et al, 2019). The use of songs, games and storytelling help involving learners' imagination and creativity into the classroom activities.

Considering that young learners tend to be easily distracted, their attention span is shorter. Additionally, children are in the process to develop conceptual and language knowledge (Alexiou, 2015). It is advisable that each task focuses on a different skill while using individual, pair work, group work or whole class activities alternately. According to Shin and Crandall (2014), children learn a language through social interaction and need appropriate scaffolding, therefore, it is important to integrate activities in which the learners have the opportunity to learn not only by the teacher-student interaction, but also from each other.

2.3.1. Materials and multisensory activities

Materials include authentic items or realia, picture books, flashcards, puppets or finger puppets, board games and projects. In terms of tasks, the use of preschool teachers' techniques, such as story sequencing, visual perception and reasoning tasks might facilitate the foreign language process and cognitive practices (Alexiou, 2005). At this age, the main focus is on the development of oracy, vocabulary and speaking skills; hence, literacy development usually comes later. According to Andrews (2017), the crucial point at this age is implicit vocabulary growth.

In the same line, explicit grammar instruction should not be applied as young children have not matured cognitively to comprehend such concepts and metalanguage (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010; Shin & Crandall, 2014).

Thus, as mentioned before, even though children have certain advantages over older learners, their potential learning goals may diminish in a formal and lack of stimulation learning environment.

Additionally, the use of visual stimuli, gestures and/or body language are expected to assist understanding. In this context, a multisensory learning approach emerges as a useful tool when teaching young learners, since it provides more ways of understanding and recalling new information. This approach focuses mainly on the incorporation of visual, auditory and kinesthetic-tactile elements to activate different parts of the brain simultaneously, enhancing the learning process, particularly for young learners, learners with sensory integration challenges and people with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia (Schneider, 1999).

2.4 CEFR update: the new Pre-A1 level

Over the years, The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR, 2020) has been an essential tool to promote positive educational aims and communicative outcomes at all levels, since it states the levels of language proficiency expected from learners (A1 to C2). For this reason, it has been used as a clear guideline to foreign language curriculum design not only in Europe, but also in many different countries all over the world. In the CEFR document in 2001, there were some descriptors related to limited linguistic and cognitive demands, therefore they were considered as belonging below A1 level. However, in the new CEFR document (Council of Europe, 2018 – 2020), the introduction of Pre-A1 as a new proficiency level has finally appeared. Although the descriptors are not available in all the activities, they appear in many scales. This update promotes a rather neglected proficiency level, which addresses the acknowledgement of multidimensional benefits of introducing languages at an early age, even at the pre-primary level.

In the newly added Pre-A1 level, the descriptors emphasize the important role of photographs, illustrations, signs, body language and gestures, since they help understanding. Addressing the current literature in early language education, children actively try to understand and elicit meaning based on limited resources or previous knowledge (Moon, 2000). The addition of these new descriptors allows educational systems and educators to better profile learning strategies and methodologies, as well as more information of what a Pre-A1 learner is expected to know (Alexiou & Milton, 2020). Ultimately, although these new descriptors are largely general, they definitely help educators, materials developers and syllabus designers dealing with the teaching of very young learners (Alexiou et al, 2021).

2.5 Emergent literacy development

When referring to very young learners, it is crucial to consider not only their characteristics and interests, but also their cognitive development. At this point (3-5 years old), early or emergent arises as a significant concept. According to The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA, 2009, p. 54):

Emergent literacy is concerned with children developing a growing understanding of print and language as a foundation for reading and writing. Through play and hands-on experience children see and interact with print as they build an awareness of its functions and conventions.

Also known as pre-reading skills, they address an indicative of a shift from a readiness perspective in literacy to a developmental perspective. Emergent reading skills are also defined as the knowledge, skills and dispositions that precede the learning of how to read and write in primary levels, such as phonological and phonemic awareness, letter and sound recognition, decoding, among others (Kennedy et al., 2012). In this context, and according

to Rokhman et al. (2020), phoneme identification skill contributes to the blending and segmentation skill, since phonemic awareness provides both decoding and encoding skills, supporting this emergent reading skill. Although some EFL programs delay literacy instruction for young learners and only focus on oral language development, studies have shown that other approaches can be taken and that literacy development begins with an examination of the mutual development and reinforcement of oral language ability and code-related skills (Linebarger, 2001; Mendelsohn, 2002).

Referring to these pre-reading skills in the context of the EFL classroom, little evidence has been found, since more research is still needed in this area (Huo et al, 2017). Nevertheless, and referring to Dlugosz, (2000), children might be able to transfer literacy skills successfully and bidirectionally between their L1 and L2, especially when they are exposed to a significant number of hours in the foreign language and with proper and guided instruction. Although EFL teachers usually have limited time in class, sometimes only 3-5 hours a week, they should incorporate literacy instruction and not just oral skills development for young learners, especially because learning to read is also proven to assist in oral language development. As Dlugosz (2000) states, "...including the teaching of reading in language programs will benefit all young beginners, including preschoolers i.e., children who have not yet been taught to read in their native tongue" (p. 285).

Moreover, this early literacy instruction should also be meaningful. Children learn language through meaningful and significant exposure and practice rather than through explicit instruction only focused on isolated parts of language (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2006; Shin and Crandall, 2014). Although literacy instruction requires bottom-up processing skills that focus on decoding texts, making meaning from print also requires top-down processing skills, such as using background knowledge and realistic contexts. Therefore, teachers should try to promote the use these bottom-up skills in conjunction with top-down reading strategies. This will strengthen their ability to make sense of printed text and make the class more engaging and motivating for children.

Regarding approaches that may support the progression of these emergent reading skills, Papp (2020), states that a phonological based instruction in the early years and primary EFL classroom may be beneficial for the development of reading and writing skills of young learners. Likewise, the author suggests that phonics instruction can improve decoding, spelling, text comprehension and reading accuracy among emergent readers in their first language (L1), and is particularly beneficial for struggling readers and children whose first language is not English.

2.6 Phonological-based instruction

In this context, Phonological-Based instruction has become a trend in EFL classes (Hamilton, 2007). Phonological awareness (PA) is perceived as one of the key foundations for the development of emergent reading skills and, according to Phillips (2008), this ability is not supposed to be developed naturally or by intuition, but rather may require explicit teaching and practice opportunities. It is considered as an umbrella term that includes four developmental levels: word awareness, syllable awareness, onset-rime awareness and phonemic awareness (Adler, 2001). These levels or phonological skills come from most basic to advanced:

a) *Word awareness* refers to tracking the words in sentences. Gillion (2004) points out that his semantic language skill is much less directly predictive of reading proficiency than the following skills, therefore might be less important to teach directly

b) *Syllable awareness* refers to counting, tapping, blending, or segmenting a word into syllables (Lieberman, Shankweiler, & Liberman, 1989; Lundberg, 1988).

c) *Onset-rime awareness* refers to the ability to produce a rhyming word and depends on understanding that rhyming words have the same rime. Recognizing a rhyme is much easier than producing a rhyme (Adams, 1990; Goswami & Mead, 1992).

d) *Phonemic awareness* refers to the most sophisticated level of phonological awareness, also known as phoneme level. Children with strong phonemic awareness are able to manipulate individual phonemes, the smallest sound units of spoken language. Phonemic awareness skills include the ability to detect, segment, and blend phonemes and to manipulate their position in words (Adams, 1990; Lenchner et al., 1990).

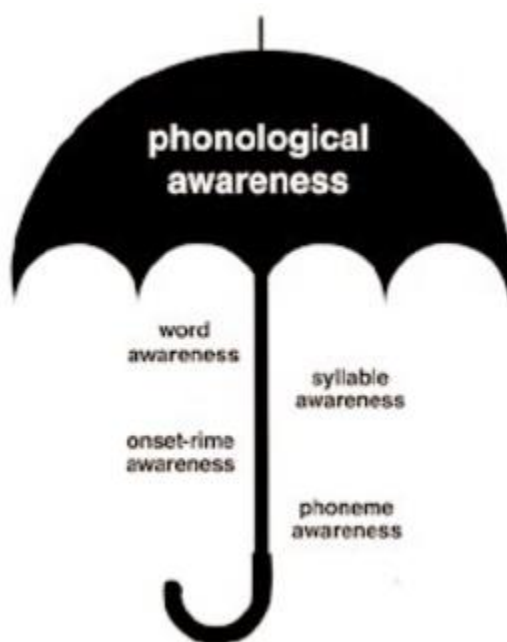


Figure 1: Phonological awareness can be illustrated as an umbrella term that comprises four levels. Phonemic awareness is an understanding of the sound structure of language at the phoneme level.

Extracted from: Preventing Reading Failure: Phonological Awareness Assessment and Instruction - Scientific Figure on ResearchGate. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Phonological-awareness-can-be-illustrated-as-an-umbrella-term-that-comprises-four-levels_fig1_342825165 [accessed 12 Dec, 2022]

The National Institute for Literacy (1998) refers to phonemic awareness as the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. As students begin to develop their early literacy skills, they learn the relationship between a phoneme (sound) and grapheme (the letter(s) that represent the sound) in written language. Furthermore, and referring to an experimental study carried out with Chinese young learners, it was found out that phoneme awareness played a very important role in accuracy level of word-level reading and spelling (Bing et al., 2013). Moreover, as Zhao et al. (2017) state that metalinguistic skills have an impact on literacy acquisition. Since phonemic awareness strengthens the prediction by segmenting the word, the listener will be able to

recognize the exact word being heard. Afterwards, when it comes to literacy and vocabulary acquisition, this growing ability of manipulating phonemes enables learners to form and create new words, therefore their vocabulary knowledge will increase.

Rokhman et al. (2020) refer to the ability to identify English phonemes as a proven skill that supports EFL learners on their productive and receptive skills, since the ability to comprehend an English word comes firstly from the ability to identify that word. Then, EFL can be associated with the use of phoneme-based instruction on its teaching process. In this context, difficulties are expected to occur for the non-native learner, mainly when there are important differences between the phoneme systems of both, the first language and the foreign one (Collins & Mees, 2013). Moreover, having a low level of phonemic awareness can result in language learning difficulties for many learners, especially in reading and spelling (Berg & Stegelman, 2003).

Nonetheless, and regarding the knowledge, beliefs, practices and awareness in phonological awareness, a research study carried out with EFL in-service teachers indicated that most EFL teachers lack the basics in reading instructions (most teachers tend to fail to recognize the differences between phonics and phonemic awareness). This also indicates a shortage in teachers' repertoire of the knowledge, skills and strategies (Ibrahim et al., 2019).

Following the same line of perceptions of EFL teachers of the knowledge of phonological awareness levels at emerging readers' stage, there is evidence from a Jordanian case study of misinterpretation regarding the concepts of phonological awareness and phonemic awareness among EFL teachers (Alhumsi, et al., 2020), who inaccurately use both concepts interchangeably. As known, phonological awareness can be defined as an explicit ability to manipulate and segment speech into smaller discrete sound units (Kibby, 2009), whereas phonemic awareness is related to the most complicated level of phonological awareness (Lane, Pullen, Eisele & Jordan, 2002). In this line, Walsh (2009) points out that phonemic awareness refers to the smallest units of speech and spoken language, and, therefore, is considered one area of literacy that falls under the phonological category. Lastly, this indicates that young learners can conceptualize sound units and identify them in words, being able to derive or generate new linguistic units. According to the Jordanian authors, and due to the misinterpretation of both concepts, it should be noted that this could negatively affect the development of their reading skill in future.

Lastly, Lane et al, (2001) present a practical overview of phonological awareness development and its relationship to beginning reading, including a series of findings of recent research and an explanation of the development of phonological skills. They also present and suggest methods for formal and informal assessment of children's phonological awareness and provide strategies for classroom-based instruction in phonological skills with emergent readers.

2.7 Influence of phonics in very young learners' pronunciation

According to Underhill (2005, p. 49), the pronunciation of a word consists "of a flow of sound rather than a sequence of fixed sounds", thus it is related to the way words are pronounced in a language. It is divided in two levels: segmental and supra-segmental. The segmental level refers to the phonemes. According to Kelly (2000, p. 1) phonemes are "the different sounds within a language". and are divided in consonants sounds and vowels sounds. As stated before, it has been discussed that young learners can reach better pronunciation than adults nevertheless, pronunciation might be affected by other factors as well, such as the

amount of exposure, the learners' phonetic ability, their attitude and motivation, among others (Kenworthy 1987, p. 4). In this context, Cameron (2005) highlights that teachers should benefit from young learners' motivation and willingness to speak, since generally they are less afraid of making mistakes.

According to Doty et al. (2015, p. 503), phonics instruction teaches learners "the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language". Although there is not consensus whether phonemic awareness can lead to a better literacy development, institutions such as The National Institute for Literacy (1998) support this statement.

Term	Definition	Example
Auditory discrimination	The ability to hear likenesses and differences in phonemes and words.	Say these sounds /t/ /p/. Are they the same or different?
Phonetics	The study of speech sounds that occur in languages including the way these sounds are articulated.	The first sound in 'pie' is a bilabial- it is made with the two lips.
Phonics	A way of teaching reading and spelling that stresses symbol-sound relationships (in alphabetic orthographies).	The symbol <i>m</i> is used to represent the italicised sounds in the following words: <i>ham, jump, my</i> .
Phoneme	The smallest unit of speech sounds that makes a difference in communication.	'soap' consists of 3 phonemes: /s/, /oa/, /p/.
Phonemic awareness	The awareness that spoken language consists of a sequence of phonemes.	How many sounds in the spoken word <i>dog</i> ? Say all the sounds you hear.

Figure 2: Terms used in the literature relating to word - identification.

In this context, phonics instruction promotes the increase of learners' awareness allowing them to perceive the sounds in association with letters, integrating phonemic awareness. In EFL, it might allow learners' awareness of sounds differentiation in the foreign language, as well as promoting learners' pronunciation skills and confidence.

2.8 The phase theory of automatic word reading

In several theories dated from the eighties and nineties, the term "stage" is used to describe the developmental process of word reading skill. To mention a few, Gough & Hillinger, 1980; Gough, Juel, & Griffith, 1992, distinguished two ways to read words: cue reading and cipher reading. Nowadays, cue reading would be considered as an immature form of sight word reading, whereas cipher reading would be related with the decoding skill. Moreover, Chall (1983) differentiates the process of reading acquisition into five stages from birth through adulthood (those including decoding and fluency stages). In 1985, Frith noted that the transition between a visual and an alphabetic stage depends on awareness of the relationships between sounds and letters, which means processing letters and sounds. In contrast, Stuart & Coltheart (1988) support the use of phonological processes to read successfully. As it can be noticed, in general, there is substantial agreement among these theories in the periods that precede the use of different concepts. According to Ehri (2005),

the term stage denotes a rigid view of the process, since it implies the idea of requirements to be within a specific stage and move to the next one. Therefore, she refers to “phases” rather than “stages”. In this context, Ehri (2005) developed a phase theory, which has been used as a framework to explain how word reading changes during initial stages to become fluent and automatic. Regarding this theory, the author states four phases for the development of automatic sight word reading: pre-alphabetic, partial alphabetic- full alphabetic and consolidated alphabetic. Whereas connections during the first phase are linked to the meanings of words, connections in subsequent phases are grounded in pronunciation.

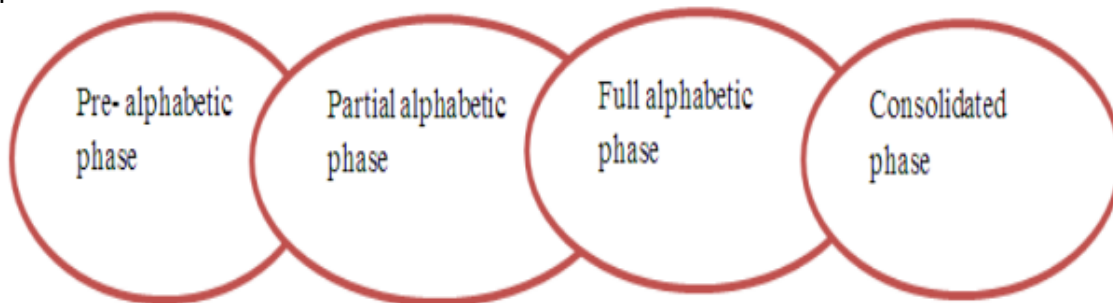


Figure 3: Ehri's (1995, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2017) stages of reading development.

Pre-Alphabetic: a child in this phase has little or no alphabetic knowledge and, instead, uses other cues to figure out words. It has been stated that children's memory for words is very limited during this early phase (Mason, 1980), so that the cues are visual features, such as words appearing in their everyday environments (the names of restaurants, brands of candy, their own or friends' names printed on cubbies at school, among others). Nevertheless, at this stage, children's learning of new words depends on how meaningful they are (Ehri & Wilce, 1987b).

Partial Alphabetic: the partial alphabetic phase emerges when beginners acquire letter knowledge and can use it to remember how to read words by forming partial connections between spelling and pronunciations in memory. Children demonstrate emerging use of grapheme, phoneme, or letter-sound connections. This is known as phonetic cue reading, but usually, the connections are incomplete or unreliable. Therefore, this phase requires not only knowing the names or sounds of letters but also being able to detect some constituent sounds (phonemic awareness).

Full Alphabetic: this phase emerges when beginners acquire the decoding skill and grapho-phonemic knowledge that is used to bond spellings fully to their pronunciations in memory. The reader attends to every letter in every word. Words are accessed through phonological recoding, or converting graphemes into phonological representations, or put more simply, converting letters into sounds and words.

Consolidated Alphabetic: this phase replaces the full alphabetic phase when the predominant type of connection for retaining sight words in memory is graphosyllabic. Readers begin to use chunks to decode, rather than individual phonemes. Phonograms, or multi-letter patterns, such as consonant blends, digraphs, and vowel teams, are consolidated in memory and recognized instantly, as are common word families, affixes, and other common letter patterns.

As Ehri (1998) states, these developmental theories of word reading carry implications for instruction that enable teachers and curriculum designers to guide their work and, therefore, to enhance teachers' practices regarding early literacy development.

Based on this theory, and for the purposes of the specific context of the intervention, this action research will be centered on the transition from **pre alphabetic to partial alphabetic phases**, in which learners are able to form alphabetic associations and use letter-sound relationship, so that they can form connections between spelling and pronunciation of simple and similar words (Ehri, 2005). Since the connections at this stage are only partial, the strategies and activities that will be presented will focus on explicit fricative beginning sounds training, that means on the production and identification of these particular sounds (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /h/), which tend to be more confusing for the participants.

More recently, Boyer & Ehri (2011) conducted a research study based on phonemic segmentation instruction to word reading and spelling in beginners. The participants were 60 English-speaking preschool learners who did not have previous knowledge or experience on reading. The participants were divided in three different groups: one group was exposed to specific instruction on letters and pictures of articulation gestures (LPA), the second group was exposed to letters only (LO) instruction. A control group received no treatment. Both trained groups outperformed controls on phoneme segmentation, spelling, word reading, and nonword repetition posttests. The results indicate that LPA training activated the articulatory features of phonemes in words as children practiced reading them so that grapheme-phoneme connections were better secured in memory. Results also suggested that phoneme segmentation training with letters improved phonological short-term memory.

2.9 Empirical studies

2.9.1 Correlation between English phoneme identification and word processing

As stated before, few studies have been found related to phonological instruction in EFL settings. Nevertheless, a research study conducted by Rokhman et al, (2020) with Indonesian EFL learners deepen in the correlation between English phoneme identification skill and word processing. Based on a quantitative approach, the participants were 100 students of 3rd semester in an English Language Education Program of a state-owned university in Indonesia. In order to obtain the data, the participants were asked to take a Phonemic Awareness test adopted from Heggerty and Van Hekken (2003). This test measures five phonemic skills, which are: a) initial sound identification skill; b) medial sound identification skill; c) final sound identification skill; d) blending skill: focusing on the blending phoneme into words; e) segmentation skill: focusing on the segmenting words into phonemes.

The findings suggested that awareness to identify phoneme by initial, medial, and final sound correlates to the blending and segmenting skills which influence the comprehension of word. Therefore, the more the students are able to identify phoneme based on its sound, the more the students will be able to blend and segment phoneme. Since the ability to identify English phonemes is proven to be a skill that supports EFL learners on their productive and receptive skills, then being able to identify phonemes will assist on recognizing and processing English words appropriately. Consequently, English language teaching can be associated with the use of phoneme-based instruction on its teaching process.

2.9.2 Problematic phonemes for EFL students

When learning English, Spanish speaking learners might face a challenging task in mastering pronunciation due to differences in both languages such as sound-to-letter correspondence, particular English phonemes, a variety of new isolated sounds and combinations and the difference in manner and articulation, since some sounds are inexistent in Spanish. In a recent research study, Uribe-Enciso et al, (2019), by using contrastive analysis, refer particularly to the confusion between short and long vowels and the interchange of fricative and affricate phonemes, that tend to be among the most problematic features of the English language for the Spanish learners. In this context, the phonemic inventory of each language shares some sounds, as /f/, /s/. However, some others, as z/, /s/, /v/, /θ/ are either different in manner or inexistent. As EFL teachers we must be aware of these singularities and how to instruct students in these English articulatory movements.

In the same study, the authors refer to the factors affecting pronunciation learning, mainly L1 interference, age, exposure and phonetic ability.

2.9.3 Pronunciation improvement in EFL young learners through phonics instruction

In 2016, an action research study conducted by Beltrán et al, (2016) addressed the use of Phonics Instruction to improve pronunciation of four sounds introduced in minimal pairs: /θ/, /ð/, /l/ and /l:/ in young learners in a private school in Bogotá. The participants were 13 students aged 10 to 12 years old from fifth grade. In this research, the impact of Phonics Instruction was analyzed in the students' pronunciation. To perform this analysis, Phonics Instruction was implemented in five stages based on Lloyd (2007). The five stages were the following: a) learning the letter sounds; b) learning letter formation; c) reading (blending); identifying the sounds in words; d) tricky words.

The researchers applied the stages of Phonics Instruction focusing on making visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile activities with sets of 20 and 40 words containing the specific sounds in initial, medial and final position of the words. A mixed method was carried out to analyze collected data, including the use of pre and post intervention tests and recordings. This analysis was made using randomly 6 chosen students. The results showed that the students had a breakthrough and Phonics Instruction contributed in their pronunciation achieving to identify differences and similarities in word pronunciation based on the minimal pairs. Additionally, evidence concluded that the activities used in the implementation of Phonics Instruction were enjoyable and comprehensible, especially with the use of tactile activities, which allowed students to associate the pronunciation and the form of the symbols. The authors also conclude that Phonics Instruction is not only for native speakers, but it could be implemented in EFL students, and it can help to improve anyone skill.

2.9.4 Phonological awareness training in Chinese EFL learners

One more research study addresses English PA training program, aiming to investigate the long-term effect of the training on young English learners' subsequent literacy acquisition in China (Bing et al, 2013). The longitudinal study followed 80 first grade students from two intact classes of a primary school in Guangzhou, P. R. China. Among them, 44 children in the treatment group received 10 weeks' PA training, while the rest 36 children in the control group did not. Tests were conducted on all participants at two time points – 6 months and 12 months after the training respectively. Both tests examined participants' early English reading and spelling. Additionally, the second test investigated the participants' reading comprehension and PA as well. The study stated two major findings: first, that there is long-term training effect on participants' literacy acquisition. The treatment group performed better on every literacy sub-skill test than the control group in tests conducted 6 months and

12 months after the training, showing significantly better performance on early English reading and spelling than the control group. Secondly, PA is closely related with English literacy skills, and the initial phoneme deletion is likely the most powerful predictor of children's early English reading and spelling.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

3.1 Research design

The following research will be presented in the form of action research (AR). As Burns (2013) explains, AR relates to teachers taking actions, usually through a systematic intervention process to investigate a classroom issue in order to better understand or enhance an aspect of their teaching or learning. For this purpose, cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting are implemented to collect evidence to support understanding or improvements. In this context, the identified problem has been a regular issue in my years of teaching this particular preschool level, so that I can consider it as a general phenomenon that needs further research, in order to obtain a better understanding and possible improvements of my own teaching practices.

The purpose of this research is exploratory, as there is very little research on the area. Most of the related studies found were focused on the development of pre-reading skills in the first language or in an ESL context, therefore, I was not able to find supporting literature for my specific context, since there are questions that have not previously been studied in depth.

Regarding the intellectual puzzle, this action research is focused on the integration of specific pre-reading skills (phonological-based instruction to promote phonemic awareness) in kindergarten students, therefore, it is addressing the developmental type, since it aims to identify the development of phonemic awareness through and as a result of the intervention process, as well as the students' perceptions through the process.

3.2 Description of the participants

The participants in this action research are a class of 22 EFL kindergarten students from a non-bilingual private school in Concepción. Their ages are between five and six years old. There are 11 girls and 11 boys. Regarding their EFL experience, most of them have been exposed to English as a subject for 1-2 years (nursery school and pre-k). Nonetheless, there are about 5 new students who have not been exposed to English before. This year, and after almost two years with online lessons, they are back to in-person classes. They have 5 hours of English per week, that means one hour a day. Although the school plan is not bilingual, it gives particular importance to the EFL development by designing and following its own English program. This program is based on the guideline and objectives provided by the Ministry of Education, but adding particular methodologies besides the different textbooks (Happy Charms, Go-Getters and Beyond series), self-learning centers, extra program and teachers per class, in order to better enhance the development of the four skills, so that students achieve the B2 level (CEFR) when graduated.

Regarding the selection of the sampling, it is non-probabilistic and by convenience. Non probabilistic sampling is often associated with qualitative research and tends to focus on small samples which are intended to examine a real-life phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Moreover, Taherdoost (2016) defines the convenience sampling technique as selecting participants because they are often readily and easily available. Additionally, this sampling technique tends to be favored as it is inexpensive (Ackoff, 1953) and often helps to overcome many of the limitations associated with research. Therefore, the sampling has been chosen by convenience, as I am currently teaching this class and I see the students one pedagogical hour every day. Additionally, permissions or legal consents were signed by the parents.

3.3 Research question and objectives

Research question

The research question attempted to be answered is how does the integration of a Phonological-Based instruction benefit EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds?

General Objective:

To explore the use of guided Phonological-Based instruction to promote EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds.

Specific Objectives:

SO1: To describe students' ability to produce and identify beginning fricative (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /sh/, /h/) sounds as a result of the intervention.

SO2: To identify students' perceptions towards the use of the phonological based instruction.

3.4 Research problem

Considering the characteristics of the English teaching context in our country, the Ministry of Education (2019) states EFL as the main teaching and learning practice. It also suggests the convenience of starting this process with very young learners and avoiding the use of the first language in the classroom. Referring to the English policies for Kindergarten (NT12) students proposed, the Ministry states the importance of games and exploration at this age, as well as young learners' characteristics and cognitive development. In terms of approaches, the Ministry emphasizes the benefits of the Natural Approach, Content-Based Instruction, Task-Based Language Teaching, Cooperative Language Learning, Total Physical Response, (TPR) and Whole Language, which had been integrated to the English learning objectives. Referring to the skills, the Ministry suggest a holistic approach, by developing the progression of the four skills. Regarding the reading skills, one of the learning objectives (OA 06) refers to the comprehension and identification of beginning sounds in vocabulary words. Additionally, the association of words to their initial sounds is also mentioned (OA 09). Finally, and regarding the speaking skills, one of the learning objectives focuses on the identification and familiarization of English sounds (OA 03).

Nevertheless, these English policies do not directly address the pre-reading skills or a phonological-based approach. Moreover, in the Chilean EFL context, there is a general lack of proper instruction and knowledge for teachers regarding not only systematic and consistent strategies to promote these pre-reading skills, but also to work with preschool levels.

In the context of a private non-bilingual school in Concepción, I have witnessed how some of my students have been able to develop some of these pre-reading skills in the foreign language incidentally, as they are being developed in their mother tongue at the same time. These include sounds and letter recognition, rhymes, among others. Nonetheless, we have not been able to apply clear and guided EFL early literacy strategies consistently over time.

In order to address this issue, it is essential to include systematic and diverse early literacy strategies and activities, that also are suitable for their age and learning characteristics, such as letter and sound recognition, blending and segmentation of sounds, among others, so that these skills can be intentionally enhanced and can prepare students for reading. Since Phonological-based Instruction involves four different developmental levels, this action research will focus on phonemic awareness of specific sounds that I have found to be particularly challenging for my students, in terms of identification and production, which are the fricative beginning sounds /f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, / sh /.

3.5 Stages of the action research

This action research consisted in five consecutive teaching lessons related to specific strategies and activities to implement the phonological-based instruction of specific fricative beginning sounds (SO1). The first and sixth lesson aimed at applying the pre and post intervention tests (SO1) and the last session aimed at interviewing the participants to gather data regarding their perception towards the use of the phonological-based instruction (SO2). All the sessions were carried out by following the PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) lesson structure. The teacher presents the target language and then gives students the opportunity to practice moving from tight teacher control towards greater learner freedom.

There was a total of eight sessions considering the pre- and post-intervention tests and the interview. All sessions lasted 45 minutes. The stages will be summarized below.

Session	Session's objective
May 26 th	SO1 Participants answered the pre-intervention test.
Session 1 May 31 st	SO1 Minimal pairs /f/ and /v/. Students were able to produce the sounds /f/, /v/ based of their graphemes, and discriminate the different sounds after being exposed to specific instruction on articulation and phonics pictures.
Session 2 June 1 st	SO1 Minimal pairs /s/, /z/. Students were able to produce the sounds /s/, /z/ based of their graphemes, and discriminate the different sounds after being exposed to specific instruction on articulation and phonics pictures.
Session 3 June 2 nd	SO1 Minimal pairs /h/, / sh/. Students were able to produce the sounds /h, / sh/ based of their graphemes, and classify sight words by the beginning sounds after being exposed to specific instruction on articulation and phonics pictures.
Session 4 June 6 th	SO1 Tactile letters. Students were able to associate the beginning graphemes and sounds /f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, / sh / with vocabulary pictures, reproduce and produce the graphemes after being exposed to specific instruction on tactile letters with concrete materials, being able to remember the shape of each letter and mention the corresponding phoneme.
Session 5 June 7 th	SO1 Phoneme deletion and phonics hopscotch. Students demonstrated the ability to discriminate, identify, associate and produce specific beginning fricative sounds (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, / sh / graphemes and sounds, after being exposed to beginning sound recognition instruction and playing phonics hopscotch.
June 14 th	SO1 Participants answered the post-intervention test.
June 21 st	SO2 Participants are interviewed.

Table 1: stages of the intervention

In the first session, the purpose of the project was explained, and the pre-intervention test was carried out. During the second session, the first minimal pairs /F/ and /V/ were presented by using a video song, articulation instruction and related vocabulary words (beginning sounds). Then, in groups, students received sets vocabulary images related to the graphemes (F-V). Additionally, one distractor was included, and they had to identify the odd one out. The same class structure was used in the third session but presenting the /S/ and /Z/ minimal pairs.

In the fourth session, the minimal pairs /H/ and /SH/ were presented in the same way as the two previous lessons. Nevertheless, the production stage of identifying the odd one out was replaced by classifying vocabulary images with those specific beginning sounds. All groups received set of images and pasted them under the correct grapheme.

The fifth session consisted in the review of all six sounds but focused on their graphemes. By using the tactile letters strategy, students had the opportunity to practice, and finger trace the six letters with different materials, including rice, sugar and sand. After that, and provided with kraft paper, they were ready to finger paint the letters mentioned in a specific order by the teacher. They used different paint colors and were motivated to lay on the floor during the activity and the teacher guided them when needed.

In the sixth session, all the six sounds and graphemes were reviewed by focusing on the identification of beginning sounds. The phoneme deletion strategy was used through wordwall games, specifically designed by the teacher-researcher. After that, the students played a phonics version of a regular hopscotch game, jumping on different letter sections and, once they landed, they had to mention the letter, the sound and give an example word, before being allowed to move.

In the seventh session the post-intervention test was carried out and the students drew themselves in the classroom while recognizing and producing the sounds. They verbally described their drawing to the teacher. Finally, in the eighth session, the selected students were shown their drawings and interviewed by the teacher-researcher.

3.6 Data collection techniques

The use of mixed methods (MMR) will be present in this action research study, which will combine elements of quantitative and qualitative research to analyze and compare the findings to gain a better understanding of the studied phenomenon, as well as to expand and strengthen the conclusions. Combining the two types of data allows you to benefit from both the detailed, contextualized insights of qualitative data and the valid insights of quantitative data. Johnson et al. (2007) cited in Schoonenboom & Johnson (2017, p. 108) state that:

Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.

The data collection techniques were used throughout this action research are the following:

3.6.1 Quantitative instruments

3.6.2 Pre – post intervention tests and analytic rubric

Initially, a pre-intervention test had been carried out to evaluate students' initial ability to produce and identify fricative beginning sounds (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /ʃ/). Then, after the intervention, a post-intervention test was applied in order to re-evaluate students' ability to produce and identify the same fricative beginning sounds, now as a result of the intervention (SO1). The same activities were applied, but with similar images and in a different order of letters presented. In each test students were asked to look and say specific fricative sounds, identify and mention specific vocabulary images related to the fricative beginning sounds, associate them with the corresponding grapheme and, finally point the sound or grapheme as they listened to them.

In this context, rubrics emerge as a tool for objective and consistent evaluation, providing students with a clear guideline for their progress. Since the aim is to analyze the students' language performance into different components, both tests were assessed with an analytic rubric. This instrument has been chosen considering the feature description of performance expected for each outcome (Davis, 2016). This rubric was constructed for the purpose of this study, and it observed four main criteria: isolation sounds pronunciation, words sound pronunciation, sound/image association and sound/letter association. Referring to the use of rubrics with kindergarten students, Wiggins (1993) suggests that teachers should ask what would an expert performance look like. By showing an exemplary work, students will obtain clarification regarding the standard required for their own work. Moreover, The California Kindergarten Association (2005) states the importance of using a friendly language and icons, so expectations are comprehensible to a young learner. Consequently, the analytic rubric was shared in advance with the students, explaining and providing examples of what the main goal was and the different levels of performance (See Appendix 1).

3.6.3 Qualitative instruments

To obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon studied and considering the general and specific objectives of this action research, the use of diverse data collection techniques that derive from different phases or participants of the intervention is necessary to triangulate the obtained data and further analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

3.6.4 Observation checklists

Referring to very young learners' assessment, McKay (2006) claims that one of the main purposes of assessment is to provide evidence of student progress and achievement. In this context of EFL classroom and considering the age of students and their cognitive development, some other ways of assessment emerge, such as observation, portfolios, project work, among others. For the purposes of this research study, observation checklists arose as a valuable alternative to observe young learners in the classroom in a non-intrusive and very flexible way, not only when working alone, but also in groups or pairs. Observation checklists can be created or found in coursebooks (Pinter, 2006). Moreover, it is important to mention that very young learners' assessment should be carried out in a non-threatening, enjoyable environment and in a manner that does not cause them anxiety.

In the context of this action research study, each session was assessed by using an observation checklist. The first two teaching sessions were assessed with a similar checklist, but changing the minimal pairs, focusing on different sound discrimination (identifying the odd one) and the identification and production of the target sounds, in isolation and as initial sound in words. For the third teaching session, the discrimination criterion was replaced by the classification of sounds. The fourth teaching session checklist focused on tactile letters

sound association and production. Since all teaching lessons were conducted in groups, group checklists were used (See Appendix 2.2).

3.6.5 Self-assessment

The learning aspects of self-assessment in ESL and EFL have gained substantial attention in several educational settings (Butler, et al., 2010). Children can be encouraged to take an active role in their learning and take responsibility for it and assess themselves as part of a learner-centered approach. Brown et al., (1998, p.662) point out that "performance assessments are relatively difficult to produce and relatively time-consuming to administer.... Reliability may be problematic because of rater inconsistencies, limited number of observations, [and] subjectivity in the scoring process". Additionally, students may find it difficult to assess their own progress at first.

Nevertheless, although self-assessment may seem inappropriate at first, it can yield accurate judgments of students' linguistic abilities, weaknesses and strengths, and improvement (McNamara et al., 1995). The learning aspects of self-assessment provide students with opportunities to evaluate their own performance as well as receiving feedback based on their performance, so that they can become more aware of their own learning process (Butler, et al., 2010).

A self-assessment form was used along the five teaching sessions. It included six statements grouped in three dimensions: class performance, phoneme / grapheme identification and production. The language used was simple and it was presented in the form of smiley faces measurement scale. (See Appendix 2.3).

3.6.6. Observation

Additionally, and to obtain detailed qualitative information regarding the implementation of the specific phonological-based strategies (SO1), each session will be observed and registered by the teacher -researcher in the form of observation notes, so that the classroom events are described. Referring to Burns (2010), collecting data through observation is becoming aware or self-conscious to see and notice things that we were not able to notice before. To Burns, observation should be focused, objective, reflective, documented, evaluated, and re-evaluated. After each session, an observation sheet was completed by the teacher-researcher focusing on three dimensions: focus of observation, learning objective of each activity and teacher's comments, including what went well and what could have gone better (See Appendix 2.1).

3.6.7. Interview

Finally, a draw-and-tell technique was selected as interview strategy, in which researchers interview young children while they are drawing (Driessnack, 2006, cited in Lin, 2016). Thus, this strategy has been selected and used to support the participants' insights towards the interview questions and enhance the student – teacher interaction, as it promotes taking advantage of drawings to adequately express themselves.

Based on the participants' drawings, a semi structured group interview was conducted with some of the students to deepen on their perceptions towards the use of the phonological based instruction (SO2). As Burgers (1984) states, interviews are considered conversations with a purpose. The use of a semi structured interview allowed more flexibility, especially considering the participants' age. Referring to Lewis (2014), the use of group interviews with children involves many advantages, since they might be less intimidated by talking in a group than when talking individually, especially when they are not familiar with the interviewer. In

educational settings, group interviews are considered practical since they allow children to feel more comfortable to ask for clarification or to express uncertainty.

Therefore, interview consisted in eight questions, grouped in two main dimensions: the use of the phonological based instruction and the students' perception of the methodology (See Appendix 2.4). The same interview was conducted in three different instances with three different groups, based on their scores in the post-intervention tests. The first one included the four students who obtained the highest scores, the second one included the four students who obtained the lowest scores and the last one, with four students who obtained average scores.

It should be mentioned that the interview sub-sampling is purposive, since the participants will directly be selected by the researcher based on their scores. As Maxwell (1996) states, purposive or judgmental sampling is a strategy in which particular settings, persons or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that cannot be obtained from other choices.

Lastly, since the teacher - researcher had created the pre and post intervention tests, the analytic rubric, checklists, self-assessment form and the interview, all instruments were validated by experts.

3.7. Data analysis techniques

In this action research, quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were applied since the teacher - researcher has decided to use mixed methods to collect and analyze data to address the use of a guided Phonological-Based instruction to promote EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds.

Addressing the SO1, the quantitative data analysis will show the pre and post intervention tests results (as analytic rubrics) in a numerical form to gain a concise numerical picture of the issue (Burns, 2010). Consequently, descriptive statistics will be used to present quantitative descriptions in a comprehensible form and measures of central tendency will be used to analyze the tests results, focusing on the mean, which is the average of the scores. According to Marshall and Jonker (2010), descriptive statistics are easy to process, summarize and interpret the data. Therefore, the Wilcoxon test will be used to determine if the statistic differences between the two tests are significant and relevant.

Regarding the qualitative data addressing the SO2 related to the participants Roller and Lavrakas (2015, p.232), qualitative content analysis is "the systematic reduction of content, analyzed with special attention to the context in which it was created, to identify themes and extract meaningful interpretations of the data". Therefore, when analyzing the interview results, supported by the observation data, categories and subcategories will be defined to identify different features, themes, and the possible relationships between them.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Throughout this chapter, the data gathered from the intervention will be presented in accordance with the research question and specific objectives. The research question attempted to be answered is how does the integration of a Phonological-Based instruction benefit EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds?

4.1 Quantitative findings – SO1

Referring to specific objective 1, which is to identify participants' ability to produce and identify beginning fricative (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /ʃ/) sounds because of the intervention, and based on each of the quantitative instruments and techniques, these are the findings:

4.1.1. Pre and post intervention tests

To achieve the first specific objective, a pre- and post-intervention test was implemented. These pre- and post-intervention tests consisted of four different items related to the isolated six sounds identification and pronunciation, the pronunciation of vocabulary words with those sounds as beginning sounds, the association of the same vocabulary words with their corresponding initial grapheme (sound / image association) and the identification of the six graphemes in isolation (sound / letter association).

These tests were assessed by using an analytic rubric which consisted of four phoneme awareness features as main criteria: sounds pronunciation, words pronunciation, image association and letter association; and four levels of performance: excellent, very good, can do better, needs improvement, each of them scoring 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. In total, the global score is sixteen. Regarding the participants, it is important to mention that only the twenty-two participants who attended all the sessions are considered.

4.1.2 Pre – intervention test scores

Referring to the pre – intervention test, the minimum score was 4 and the maximum was 11. One participant obtained the lowest score and two participants obtained the highest. Regarding the mode or most frequent scores, 27.2% of the participants obtained 9 points. The median score equals 7.5, therefore it can be stated that 50% of the participants were below the median score and 50% above it. The detailed descriptive analysis is the following:

Value	Frequency	Frequency %
4	1	4.55
5	1	4.55
6	4	18.18
7	5	22.73
8	3	13.64
9	6	27.27
11	2	9.09

Table 2. Frequency values

Minimum	min = 4
Maximum	max = 11
Range	R = 7
Size	n = 22
Sum	sum = 168
Mean	$\bar{x} = 7,63636364$
Median	$\bar{x} = 7.5$
Mode	mode = 9
Standard Deviation	s = 1.7874018

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

Focusing on the four specific criteria assessed by the analytic rubrics, the pre – intervention tests scores can be analyzed as follows:

Referring to the first criterion: *sounds pronunciation*, Table 1 shows that none of the participants were able to achieve the highest level of performance, which means saying all the letter sounds with no mispronunciations. Three participants were able to say between 5 and 4 sounds correctly; twelve participants were able to say between 3 and 2 sounds correctly and seven participants were only able to say 1 or none of the sounds correctly.

For the second criterion, *words pronunciation*, none of the participants were able to achieve the highest level of performance. Only one participant was able to say between 5 and 4 words correctly, seventeen participants were able to say between 3 and 2 words correctly and four participants were only able to say 1 or none of the words correctly.

For the third criterion, *sound, and image association*, none of the participants were able to achieve the highest level of performance. Only one participant was able to associate correctly between 5 and 4 images to the corresponding beginning sound; twelve participants were able to associate between 3 and 2 words and nine participants were only able to associate 1 or none of images to the corresponding beginning sound.

Lastly, for the fourth criterion, *sound, and letter association*, two participants obtained the highest level of performance, so that they were able to associate correctly the six sounds to their corresponding letters or graphemes. Seven participants were able to associate between 5 and 4 sounds to their corresponding letters; eleven participants were able to associate between 3 and 2 sounds to their corresponding letters and two participants were only able to associate 1 or none of the sounds.

Pre-intervention criteria	Participants for Excellent	Participants for Very good	Participants for Can do better	Participants for Needs improvement
Sounds pronunciation	0	3	12	7
Word's pronunciation	0	1	17	4
Sound / image association	0	1	12	9
Sound / letter association	2	7	11	2

Table 4. Pre-intervention test scores by criterion

4.1.3 Post – intervention tests' scores

Referring to the post – intervention test, the minimum score was 6 and the maximum was 16. One participant obtained the lowest score and six participants obtained the highest. Regarding the mode or most frequent scores, 27.27% of the participants obtained 16 points. The median score equals 13, therefore, it can be stated that 55% of the participants were above the median score and 45% below that score. The detailed descriptive analysis are the following:

Value	Frequency	Frequency %
6	1	4.55
7	1	4.55
9	2	9.09
10	5	22.73
11	1	4.55
13	3	13.64
15	3	13.64
16	6	27.27

Table 5. Frequency values

Minimum	min = 6
Maximum	max = 16
Range	R = 10
Size	n = 22
Sum	sum = 272
Mean	$\bar{x} = 12.3636364$
Median	$\bar{x} = 13$
Mode	mode = 16
Standard Deviation	s = 3.25935218

Table 6. Descriptive statistics

Focusing on the four specific criteria assessed by the analytic rubrics, the post – intervention tests scores can be analyzed as follows:

Referring to the first criterion: *sounds pronunciation*, Table 4 shows that eight participants were able to achieve the highest level of performance, which means saying all the letter sounds with no mispronunciations. Ten participants were able to say between 5 and 4 sounds correctly and four participants were able to say between 3 and 2 sounds correctly. For the second criterion, *words pronunciation*, twelve participants were able to achieve the highest level of performance. Ten participants were able to say between 5 and 4 words correctly and four participants were able to say between 3 and 2 words correctly.

For the third criterion, *sound, and image association*, eight participants were able to achieve the highest level of performance. Three participants were able to associate correctly between 5 and 4 images to the corresponding beginning sound; four participants were able to associate between 3 and 2 words and seven participants were only able to associate 1 or none of images to the corresponding beginning sound.

Lastly, for the fourth criterion, *sound, and letter association*, thirteen participants obtained the highest level of performance, so that they were able to associate correctly the six sounds to their corresponding letters or graphemes. Two participants were able to associate between 5 and 4 sounds to their corresponding letters and eleven participants were able to associate between 3 and 2 sounds to their corresponding letters.

Post-intervention criteria	Participants for Excellent	Participants for Very good	Participants for Can do better	Participants for Needs improvement
Sounds pronunciation	8	10	4	0
Word's pronunciation	12	7	3	0
Sound / image association	8	3	4	7

Sound / letter association	13	2	6	0
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Table 7. Post-intervention tests score by criterion

4.1.4 Analysis and comparison by criterion

4.1.5 Sounds pronunciation

Figure 4 shows the performance levels compared between the pre- and post-intervention tests. The pre-intervention test showed that none of the participants were able to achieve the highest level of performance, whereas in the post-intervention test, eight participants achieved that level. In the same line, in the pre-intervention test, seven participants obtained the lowest level, while in the post intervention test none of the participants were in that level.

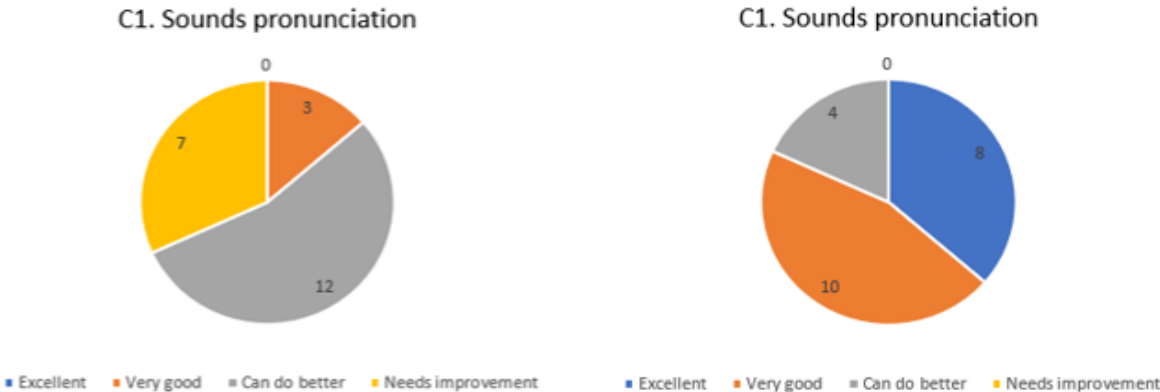


Figure 4. Criterion 1 comparison for pre and post intervention test

When analyzed by participant, participants 1 and 6 considerably increased their levels of performance. Additionally, participant 5 did not vary his performance level and none of the participants obtained lower scores than in the pre-intervention test.

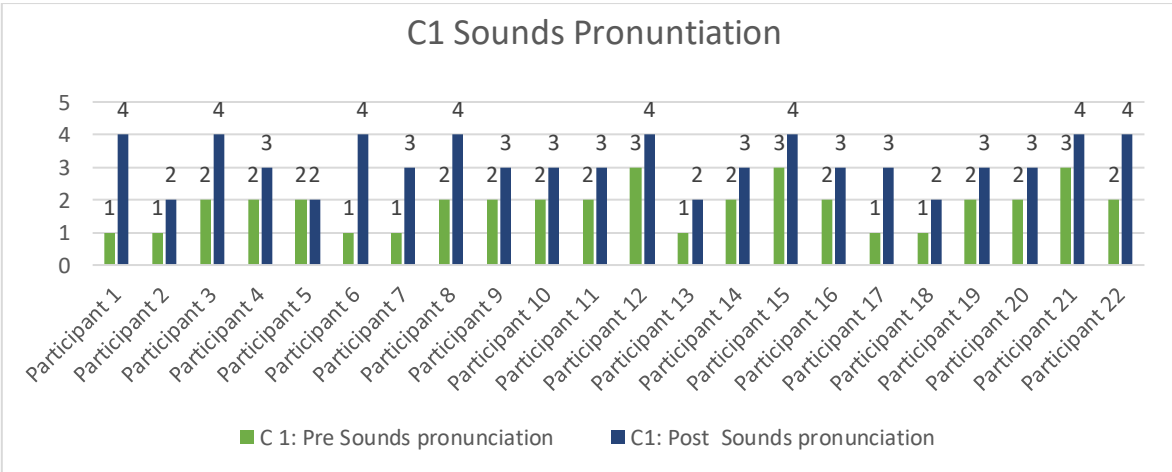


Figure 5. Criterion 1: sounds pronunciation bar comparison by participants

4.1.6 Words pronunciation

Figure 6 shows the performance levels compared between the pre- and post-intervention tests. The pre-intervention test showed that none of the participants were able to achieve the highest level of performance, whereas in the post-intervention test, twelve participants achieved that level. In the same line, in the pre-intervention test, four participants obtained the lowest level, while in the post intervention test none of the participants were in that level.



Figure 6. Criterion 2 comparison by pre and post test

A more specific analysis can be done when reviewing the participants with highest levels of performance. The twelve participants who obtained the highest levels in the post intervention test, only achieved the level 2 (can do better) in the pre-intervention test. Therefore, they increased from 3-2 words pronounced correctly to none mispronunciations at all. Additionally, participants 9, 13 and 17 did not vary their performance levels and none of the participants obtained lower scores than in the pre-intervention test.

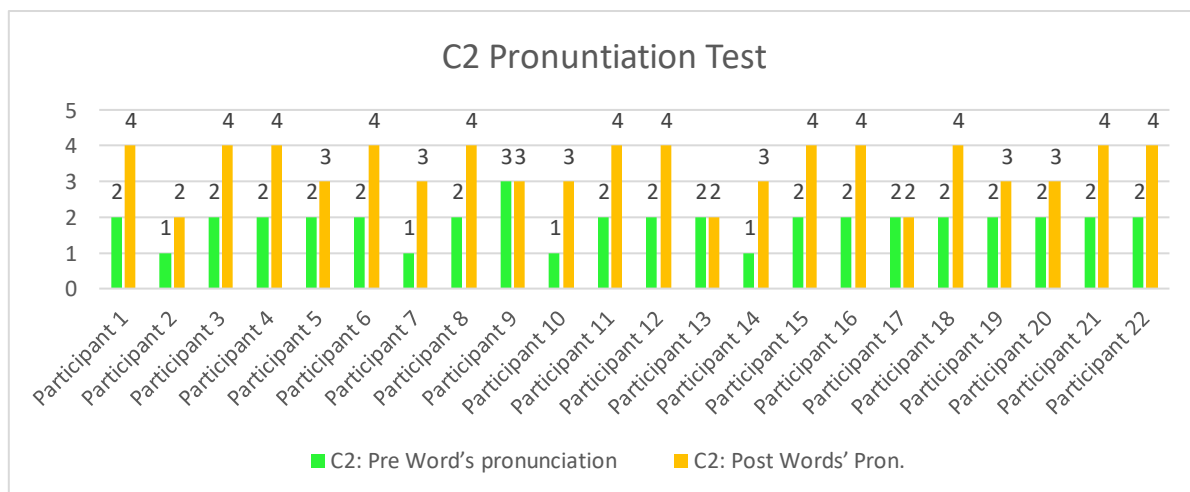


Figure 7. Criterion 2: words pronunciation bar comparison by participants

4.1.7 Sound / image association

Figure 8 shows the performance levels compared between the pre- and post-intervention tests. The pre-intervention test showed that none of the participants were able to achieve the highest level of performance, whereas in the post-intervention test, eight participants achieved that level. In the same line, in the pre-intervention test, nine participants obtained the lowest level, while in the post intervention test seven participants were in that level.

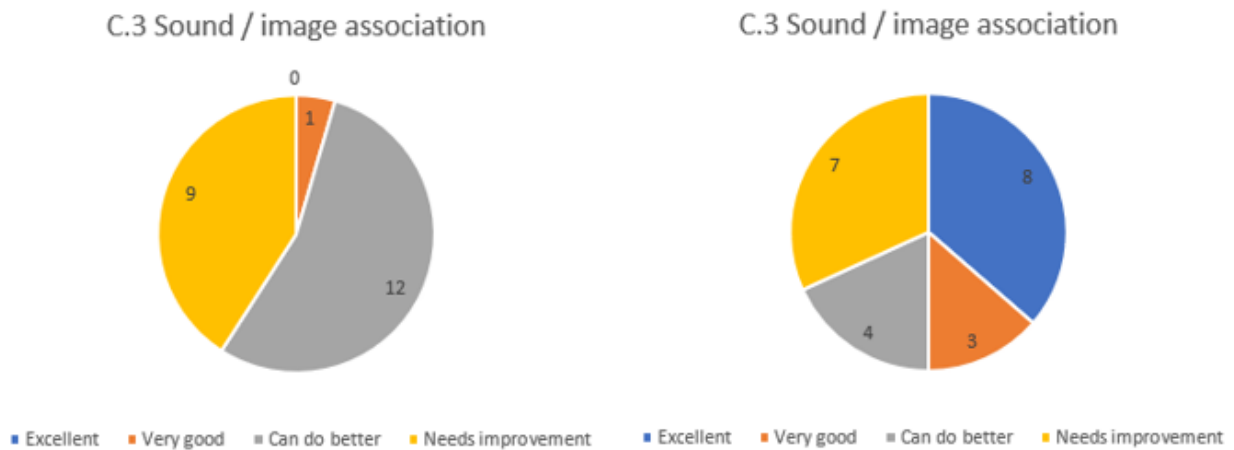


Figure 8. Criterion 3 comparison by pre and post test

As shown in Figure 9, although it is evident that the highest level of performance was achieved in criterion 3, it also seemed to be the most difficult for the participants, since this is the only criterion in which the lowest level of performance was obtained. Participants 5, 7, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19 and 20 did not vary their performance levels and two participants (participants 2 and 9) obtained lower scores than in the pre-intervention test.

Nevertheless, participants 1 and 15 were able to increase their performance levels from the lowest to the highest.

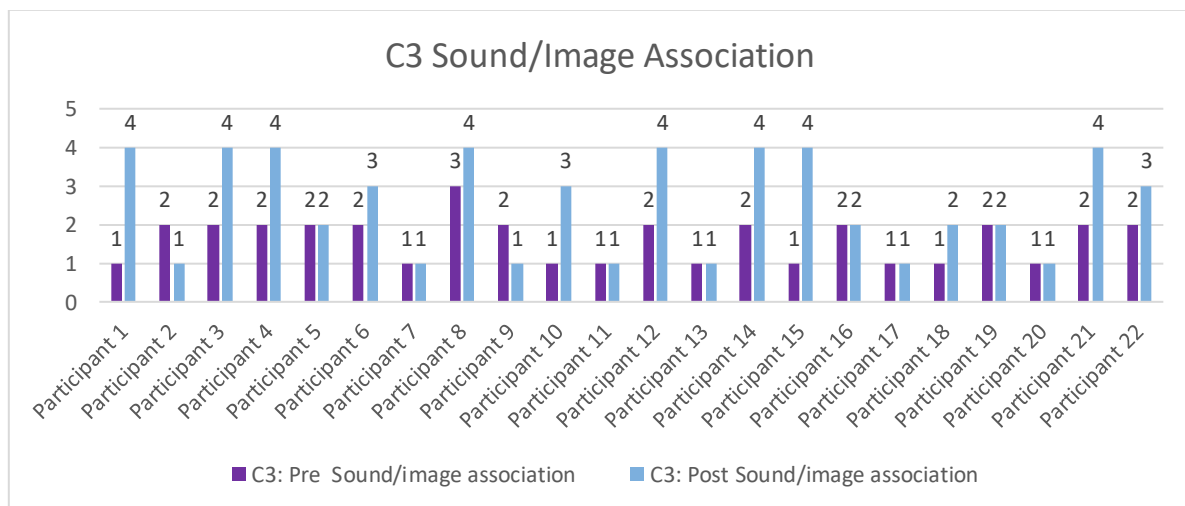


Figure 9. Criterion 3: sound / image association bar comparison by participants

4.1.8 Sound / letter association

Figure 10 shows the performance levels compared between the pre- and post-intervention tests. The pre-intervention test showed that two participants were able to achieve the highest level of performance, whereas in the post-intervention test, thirteen participants achieved that level. In the same line, in the pre-intervention test, two participants obtained the lowest level, while in the post intervention test none of the participants were in that level.



Figure 10. Criterion 4 comparison by pre and post test

As shown in Figure 11, criterion four is the most achieved criterion among the four mentioned.

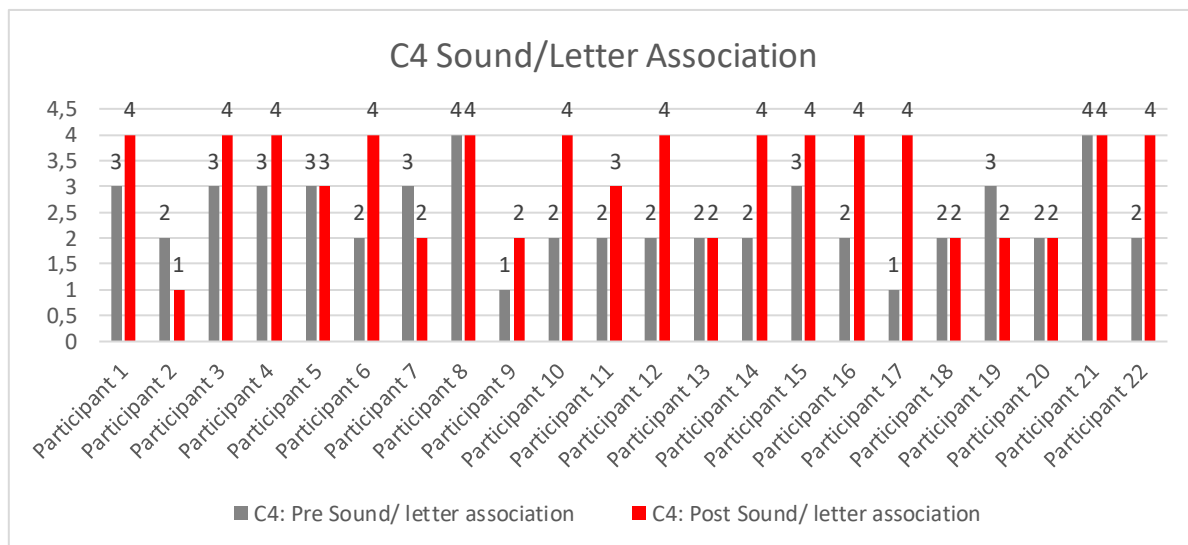


Figure 11. Criteria 4: sound / letter association bar comparison by participants

The two participants who obtained the only highest scores in the pre-intervention test (participants 8 and 21) maintained their scores. Participants 5, 13, 18 and 20 also did not vary their performance level. Participant 17 was able to increase his level from the lowest to the highest. Nevertheless, participant 9 decreased his performance in one level (from 2 to 1).

Therefore, based on all the data exposed, it can be stated that 95,4% of the participants increased their global scores while 4,54% of the participants maintained their scores. Although almost all the participants obtained better scores in the post-intervention test, for the purposes of statistical analysis, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test has been used to test whether or not there is a significant difference between the two tests means.

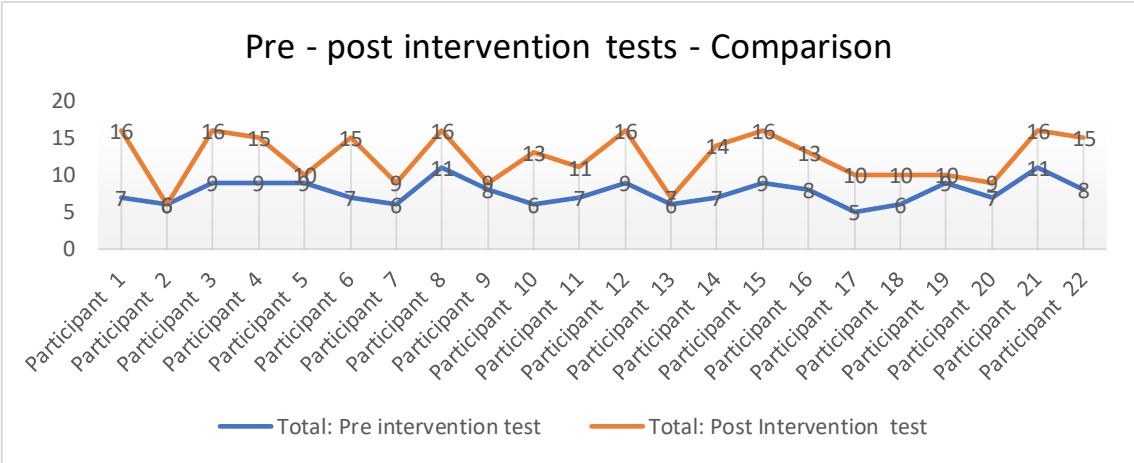


Figure 12. Bar chart showing pre- and post-intervention scores comparison

4.1.9 Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied to assess whether the phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds improvement made by the participants and shown in Figure 9 had been statistically significant or not. Although there were twenty-two total number of score pairs compared, $n = 21$, since there is one pair that had an observed difference of 0 and was not included in the calculation.

In this context, based on the global scores of pre and post intervention tests for the twenty-two participants, the test statistic value W obtained = 0. The critical value that corresponds to the significance level chosen (alpha level 0.05) and $n = 21$ is **58**. According to Corder et al (2014), when the critical value equals or exceeds the obtained value W , the null hypothesis is rejected. Consequently, the test statistic W is less than the value found in the critical values table (See Appendix 3), then the post intervention test can be regarded as statistically significant.

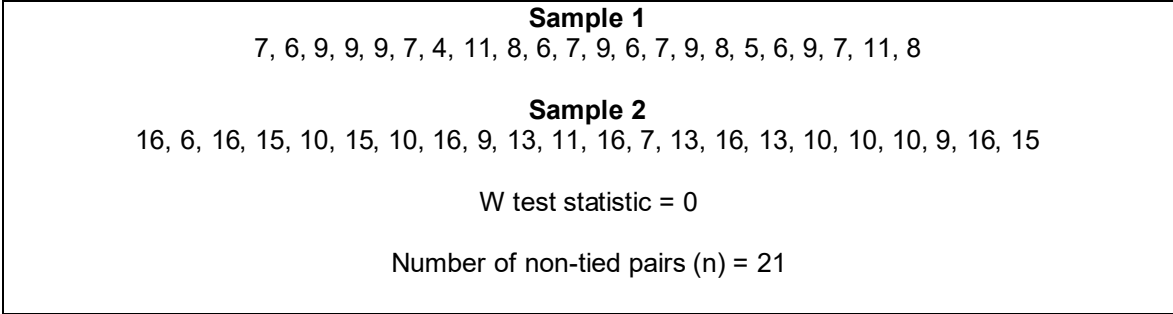


Figure 13. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

Note. Calculated at <https://www.statology.org/wilcoxon-signed-rank-test-calculator/>

21	37	42	51	58	67
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Figure 14. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test critical values result

Henceforth, based on the exposed data and referring to the research question mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it can be stated that Phonological-Based instruction benefits EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds, in terms of: (1) pronunciation of sounds in isolation and in words as beginning sounds, (2) sound and image association and (3) sound and letter association. This last phonemic awareness feature was the most achieved by the participants.

4.2 Sessions' performance

In terms of qualitative data and addressing the SO1, the strategies used in four of the five sessions were assessed by a group checklist. It is important to mention that these checklists were designed by groups because of practical issues, since classroom organization is based on seating and working in groups. Nevertheless, all the participants were assessed individually.

4.2.1 Session 1: Minimal pairs /f/ and /v/.

After being exposed to a specific video containing both sounds, the review of vocabulary words with those specific beginning sounds and sound articulation; the participants were asked to complete a sound discrimination activity. For this, they were given two sets of eight images containing the visual representation of the reviewed vocabulary words. Each set was related to a specific sound and, additionally, each set included an extra image they did not need (the odd one).

- Vocabulary words /f/ sound: fox, feet, fish, flower, family, frog.
- Different sound words: rabbit, turtle.
- Vocabulary words /v/ sound: vampire, violin, volcano, vegetables, van, volleyball.
- Different sound words: pencil, apple.

Figure 15 shows that 82% of the participants were able to identify the different sounds. After that, the participants were asked to paste the same sets of images under the corresponding letter / grapheme, based on their beginning sound. This last activity was assessed by using a checklist which considered the sound discrimination, target sounds identification (/f/ and /v/) and target sounds production (/f/, /v/).

All percentages of achievement are shown in Figure 15. It is significant that the production of sounds was more accomplished than the identification, being production of /f/ sound in isolation and as beginning sound fully accomplished by 100% of the participants. The isolated production of target sound /v/ was also fully accomplished. Nevertheless, the identification of phoneme /v/ as beginning sound in vocabulary words was the less accomplished item.

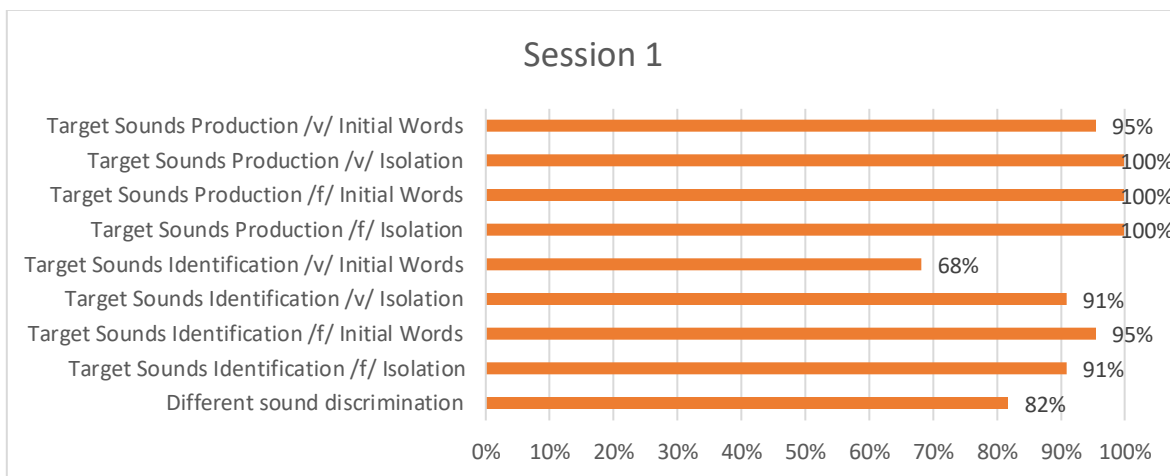


Figure 15. Session 1 percentages of achievement

Regarding this session, students seemed motivated to be part of the project. They were familiar with some of the vocabulary words, but some others were new (foot, van). As shown, the sound /f/ was the easiest to assimilate. The vocabulary word “van” was the most difficult for them to remember, possibly because they are used to use “car” instead to refer to similar means of transportation. The vocabulary word “foot” was also difficult.

4.2.2 Session 2: Minimal pairs /s/ and /z/.

The session followed the same structure as the first one.

After being exposed to a specific video containing both sounds, the review of vocabulary words with those specific beginning sounds and sound articulation; the participants were asked to complete a sound discrimination activity. For this, they were given two sets of eight images containing the visual representation of the reviewed vocabulary words. Each set was related to a specific sound and, additionally, each set included an extra image they did not need (the odd one).

- Vocabulary words /s/ sound: sunny, star, sock, spider, sandwich, soup.
- Different word sound: pig, elephant.
- Vocabulary words /z/ sound: zombie, zoo, zebra, zipper, zero.
- Different word sound: pizza, robot.

Figure 16 shows that 77% of the participants were able to identify the different sounds. After that, the participants were asked to paste the same sets of images under the corresponding letter / grapheme, based on their beginning sound. This last activity was assessed by using a checklist which considered the sound discrimination, target sounds identification (/s/ and /z/) and target sounds production (/s/, /z/).

All percentages of achievement are shown in Figure 16. The production of the target sound /s/ in isolation was accomplished by 100% of the participants. In the same line, the identification of the sound /s/ in isolation and as beginning sound of vocabulary words was fully accomplished by 100% of the participants. Nevertheless, the identification of phoneme /z/ as beginning sound in vocabulary words was the less accomplished item.

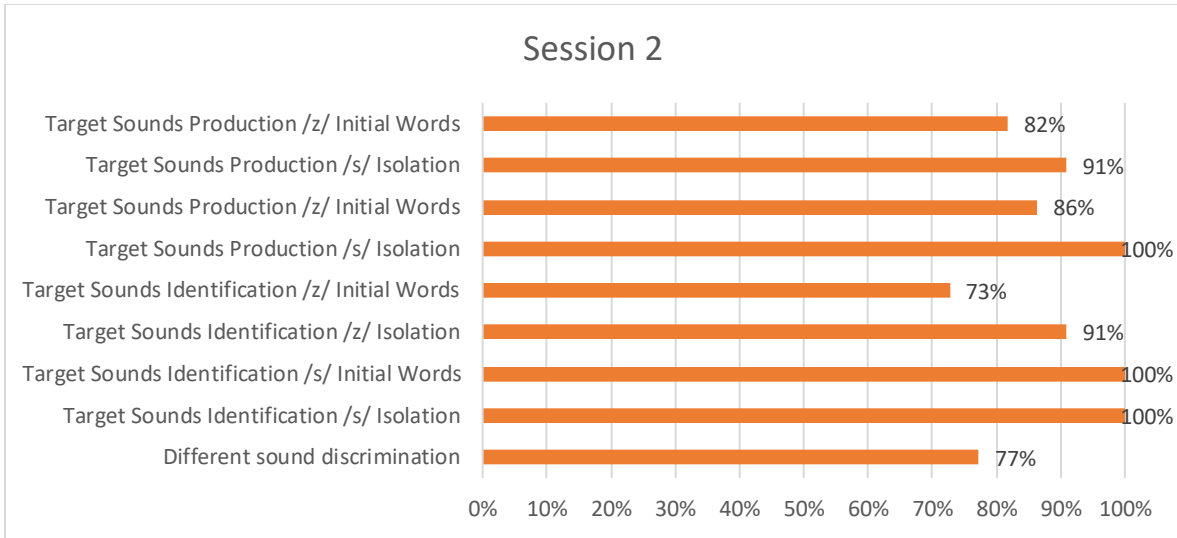


Figure 16. Session 2 percentages of achievement

4.2.3 Session 3: Minimal pairs /sh/ and /h/.

The session followed the same structure as the first one.

After being exposed to a specific video containing both sounds, the review of vocabulary words with those specific beginning sounds and sound articulation; the participants were asked to classify vocabulary words images by their beginning sound. For this, they were given two sets of eight images containing the visual representation of the reviewed vocabulary words. Additionally, all the images contained the written form.

- Vocabulary words /sh/ sound: shorts, sheep, shell, ship, shark, shoes.
- Vocabulary words /h/ sound: house, hamburger, hat, horse, house, happy, helicopter.

Figure 13 shows that 86% of the participants were able to classify all the sounds correctly. After that, the participants were asked to paste the same sets of images under the corresponding letter / grapheme, based on their beginning sound. This last activity was assessed by using a checklist which considered the classification of sounds, target sounds identification (/sh/ and /h/) in isolation and as beginning sound of vocabulary words and target sounds production in isolation and as beginning sounds of vocabulary words (/sh/, /h/).

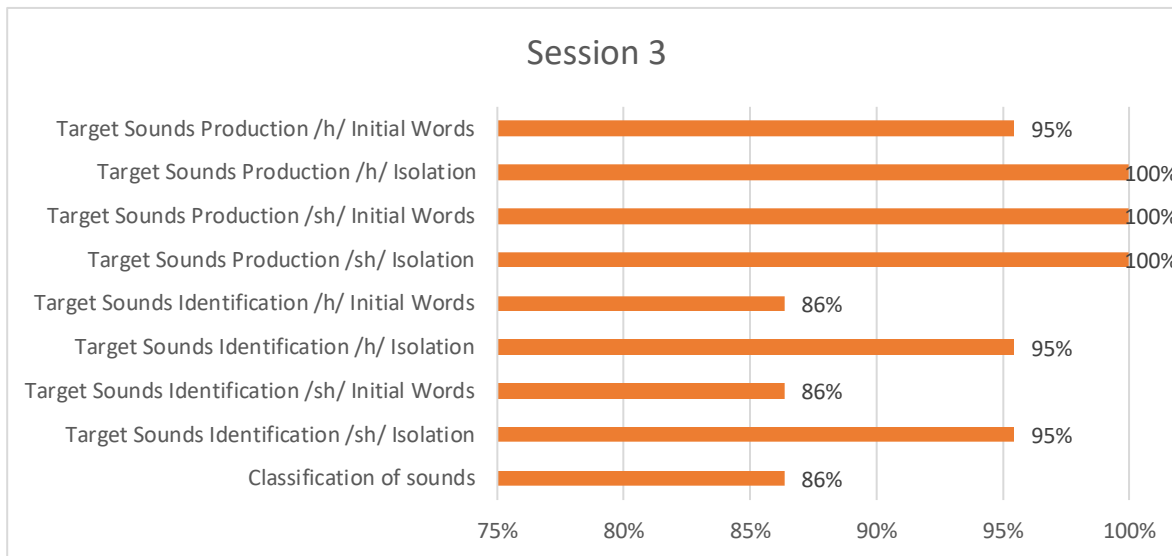


Figure 17. Session 3 percentages of achievement

All percentages of achievement are also shown in Figure 17. The production of the target sounds /h/ and /sh/ in isolation was accomplished by 100% of the participants. In the same line, the production of the target sound /sh/ in isolation was also accomplished by 100% of the participants. The identification of phoneme /h/ and /sh/ as beginning sound in vocabulary words was the less accomplished item.

4.2.4 Session 4: Tactile letters: finger tracing and finger painting

The session followed a different structure from the previous ones. By using a wordwall game, the participants practiced the six sounds in isolation and then as beginning sounds of all the vocabulary words previously reviewed. After practicing tracing the letters (graphemes), using different materials: sand, sugar and salt, the participants were asked to finger paint the letters they heard. As the teacher-researcher mentioned each sound, the participants drew the letters by painting them with their fingers on a kraft paper.

That last activity was assessed by using a checklist which considered the tactile letters sound association /f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /sh/, /h/ and the tactile letters production /f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /sh/, /h/.

All percentages of achievement are shown in Figure 18. The production of graphemes h, v, f, and sh was accomplished by 100% of the participants. The production of graphemes s and z was accomplished by 95% of the participants and the production of grapheme /sh/ was accomplished by 91% of the participants.

In terms of sound association, the sounds /s/ and /sh/ were accomplished by 100% of the participants. The sounds /h/, /v/ and /f/ were accomplished by 95% of the participants and the sound /z/ was accomplished by 86% of the participants, being the lowest score.

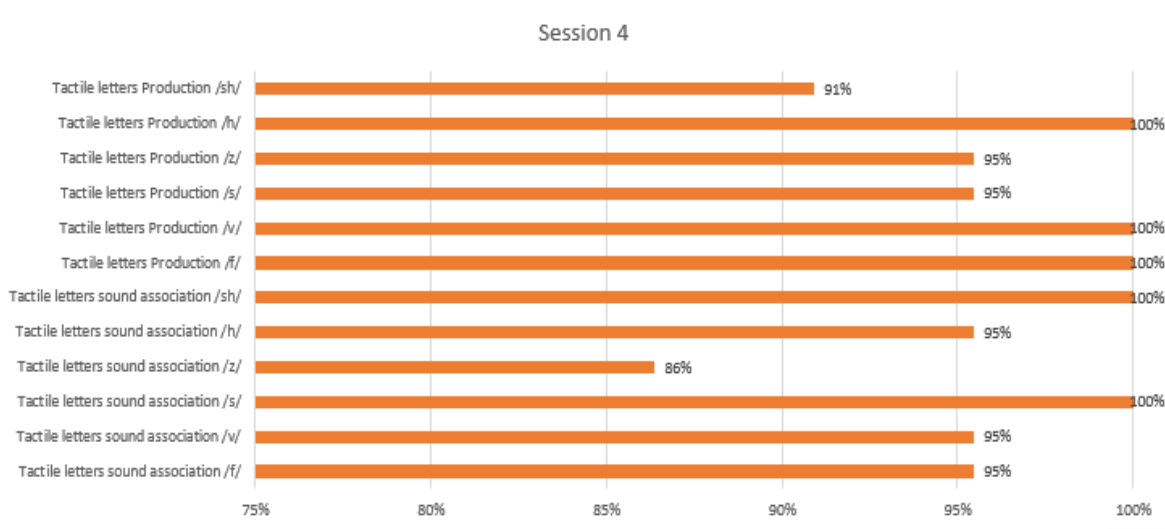


Figure 18. Session 4 percentages of achievement

Additionally, in session 4, the participants completed a self-evaluation form. It is important to mention that after each session, the participants were asked to complete a self-assessment form that consisted of six statements and referring to three particular dimensions: performance, identification and production. The first session was intended to train the students in self-assessment, since they had little experience with this kind of format. By the second and third sessions, the participants were able to complete some of the statements. Nevertheless, there were still some misunderstandings regarding the statements and how to self-evaluate, therefore, most of the participants completed the form by coloring all the faces, without noting the difference among them. Henceforth, less than a half of the group were able to complete all the statements. Although for sessions four and five all students were able to complete the forms, there were still some answers left in blank (No Answer). For the purposes of instruments validity, only self-assessment forms 4 and 5 will be used and analyzed.

The self-assessment statements were organized as follows:

Statement	Dimension
1. Seguí las instrucciones de la Miss.	Class performance
2. Realicé todas las actividades.	
3. Puedo reconocer los sonidos aprendidos.	Identification
4. Puedo reconocer las letras aprendidas.	
5. Puedo decir los sonidos aprendidos.	Production
6. Puedo decir palabras con esos sonidos.	

Table 8. Self-assessment organization and dimensions

The self-assessment statements and participants' answers were the following:

Statement	Excited face: Excellent	Happy face: Very Good	Confused face: Can do better	Sad face: Needs improvement	N/A No answer
1. Seguí las instrucciones de la Miss.	19	3	0	0	0
2. Realicé todas las actividades.	22	0	0	0	0
3. Puedo reconocer los sonidos aprendidos.	13	6	0	0	3
4. Puedo reconocer las letras aprendidas.	13	4	2	1	2
5. Puedo decir los sonidos aprendidos.	17	3	0	0	2
6. Puedo decir palabras con esos sonidos.	11	6	2	0	3

Table 9. Session 4. Self-assessment statements and answers

Regarding the first dimension, class performance, as seen in Figure 19, 100% of the participants stated that they did all the requested activities during the session and 86% of the participants stated that they followed the teacher-researcher instructions. In this context, according to the participants, class performance was the dimension with highest levels of achievement awareness. The two statements within the identification dimension obtained both 59% of participants' achievement awareness. Referring to the production dimension, 77% of participants stated that they were able to say all sounds correctly and 50% stated that could mention words with the target sounds as beginning sounds. Finally, it is important to mention in statements 3, 4, 5, and 6, there were participants who did not provide an answer (Table 9).

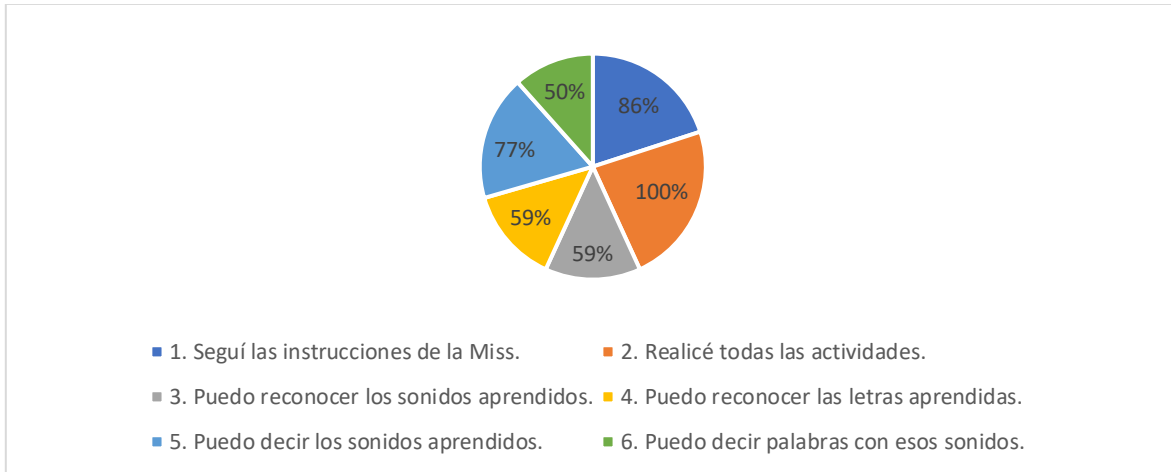


Figure 19. Session 4 self-assessment

4.2.5 Session 5: Phoneme deletion and phonics hopscotch

The session followed a similar structure from the previous one. By using a wordwall game, the participants practiced the six sounds in isolation and then as beginning sounds of all the vocabulary words previously reviewed. After that, they were exposed to phoneme deletion instruction and finally, phonics hopscotch, in which the six sounds graphemes flashcards were set on the floor, as a regular hopscotch game. The participants were asked to listen to a specific target sound and jump on the corresponding letter / grapheme. Moreover, they were asked to provide an example of a vocabulary word containing that target sound as beginning sound.

That last activity was assessed by using the same self-assessment form which considered the very same six statements.

Statement	Excited face: Excellent	Happy face: Very Good	Confused face: Can do better	Sad face: Needs improvement	N/A No answer
1. Seguí las instrucciones de la Miss.	17	5	0	0	0
2. Realicé todas las actividades.	19	2	1	0	0
3. Puedo reconocer los sonidos aprendidos.	18	2	0	0	2
4. Puedo reconocer las letras aprendidas.	14	5	1	0	2
5. Puedo decir los sonidos aprendidos.	17	2	2	0	1

6. Puedo decir palabras con esos sonidos.	13	4	3	0	2
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Table 10. Session 5. Self-assessment statements and answers

Regarding the first dimension, class performance, as seen in Figure 20, 86% of the participants stated that they did all the requested activities during the session and 77% of the participants stated that they followed the teacher-researcher instructions. In this context, according to the participants, class performance was again the dimension with highest level of achievement awareness. Referring to the identification dimension, 82% of the participants stated that they were able to identify all the target sounds, and 64% claimed that they could identify the target letters (/graphemes). Referring to the production dimension, 77% of participants stated that they were able to say all sounds correctly and 59% stated that could mention words with the target sounds as beginning sounds. Finally, it is important to mention in statements 3, 4, 5, and 6, there were participants who did not provide an answer (Table 11).

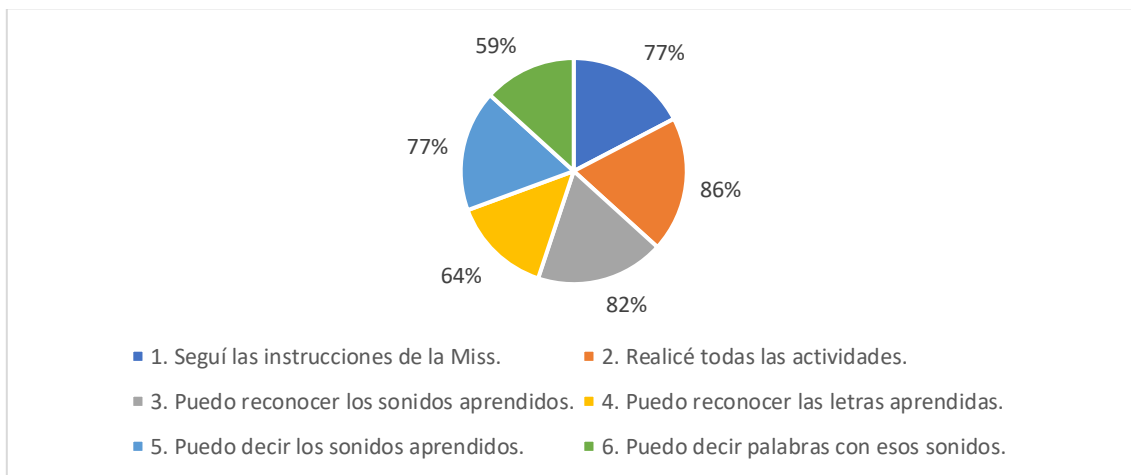


Figure 20. Session 5 self-assessment

Theme	Sub theme	Frequency	Example
Activities	1.- The activities were fun and enjoyable	31	“La que más me gustó fue la de trabajar pintando con los deditos”
			“Me gustó la de la ruleta y la de escribir con los dedos en el arroz y el azúcar”
			Fueron muy entretenidas y novedosas”
			“A mí me encantaron todas las actividades!”
			“No me gustó mucho la de la pintura porque me manché mucho”.
	1.1. Difficulty of activities	20	“No me costó ninguna” “Me gustan los desafíos”
			“Me costó la de pegar las imágenes con las letras”
			“Me costó la de pintar con los dedos porque me manché mucho y no me gusta”
Materials	2. The materials were original	26	No había trabajado antes con el arroz y el azúcar”
			“El juego de la ruleta estaba muy divertido, no lo conocía”
Teacher’s guideline and support	3. Teacher’s support is helpful	11	“La Miss nos guiaba y nos ayudaba”.
			“Si, nos ayudabas cuando no entendíamos”. “Te acercabas y nos veías”
Group work	4. Group work is meaningful for students	10	“Se siente bien trabajar con mis compañeros”
			“En la de pegar las letras, a veces nos ayudamos”.
			Me gustó porque a veces no sabía y preguntaba”.
Classroom environment	5. Games in the classroom	11	“Me gustó jugar en la sala”
			“Había mucho ruido”.

Table 11. Thematic analysis

As exposed in table 11, most of the students agreed on how they enjoyed the activities, the innovative materials, and the achievable level of difficulty. In this context, a considerable number of participants mentioned that they enjoyed challenges and activities with a certain level of difficulty, since they feel a higher level of achievement once they finish. It should be

mentioned that the answers did not vary from the three interviewed groups. Nevertheless, the group with the lowest scores mentioned some struggles with some of the activities, such as the difficulty to identify the sounds, the letters, and their own motor skills, particularly in activities such as tracing and jumping. Regarding group work, most of the students mentioned it was helpful, particularly when they needed help with a specific activity. Referring to classroom environment, most of the students mentioned that, although it became noisy, they enjoyed the opportunity of playing in the classroom. Moreover, it is worth to notice some themes that were not originally considered in the interview, but that were mentioned by the students, such as their interest and liking for the English class and the importance given to the English learning by the families, since some of the students have a private tutor at home to reinforce the language.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

5.1 Examining the results

In this chapter, the data from this research will be discussed according to each specific objective. The limitations and implications for further investigations are provided as well.

5.1.1. SO1: To describe students' ability to produce and identify beginning fricative (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /sh/, /h/) sounds as a result of the intervention.

The first specific objective aimed at assessing the effectiveness of integrating a Phonological-Based instruction to benefit EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds, by using a pre and post intervention test. Four dimensions arose from this first objective, these are sound pronunciation, word pronunciation, sound and letter association and sound and image association. The findings showed that there was an improvement in all of them, as 95,4% of the participants increased their global scores while 4,54% of the participants maintained their scores. The analysis of the results for each dimension are explained below.

Concerning **sound pronunciation**, previous studies agree on the difficulties EFL learners might find when dealing with sounds which are inexistent in their first language (Ehrlich and Avery, 2013). In this context, it can be concluded that the specific instruction on articulation of sounds and the presentation of these by minimal pairs supported the participants to improve their ability to identify and produce the letter sounds in isolation. This statement is supported by Hayes-Harb (2007), who claims that the use of minimal pairs has been proven to be an effective strategy to increase children's phonological awareness, especially in contrasting phonemes and, therefore, improve their pronunciation.

Referring to **word pronunciation**, it can be claimed that the selection and practice of vocabulary words supported this improvement, since many of the selected words were already known by the students or easy to relate to the Spanish translation, such as *vampire*, *shorts*, *violin*, *zebra*, *helicopter*, *zombie*, among others.

The **sound and letter association** dimension seemed to be the most difficult for the participants, since this is the only criterion in which the lowest level of performance was obtained. Additionally, two participants obtained lower scores than in the pre-intervention test. These results might be explained considering the slight difference of sounds articulation compared to the Spanish phonemic system and the fact that the participants are in the process to develop phonemic awareness in their own language. Nevertheless, since Spanish and English are both alphabetic languages, the process of learning how to read and acquiring pre-reading skills is essentially similar.

In this context, the participants who obtained the highest scores in this dimension are the ones who are more advanced in their development of pre-reading skills in their own language. A correlation then might be established when transferring pre-reading skills. A study conducted in 2002 by August et al., focused on understanding the transfer of skills from Spanish to English in young learners within a bilingual context. According to their findings and referring to phonemic awareness, there is a significant relationship between Spanish and English performance. Thus, the effect of Spanish letter identification and Spanish word reading on English letter identification and English word reading emerged only for students who had received formal instruction in Spanish reading.

Finally, the **sound and image association dimension** was the most achieved criterion among the four mentioned. These results might not be surprising if we consider the benefits

of visual support, such as pictures or labels, to enhance vocabulary learning (Moore & Calvert, 2000 cited in Phillips 2016). Therefore, the findings can be summarized as the following:

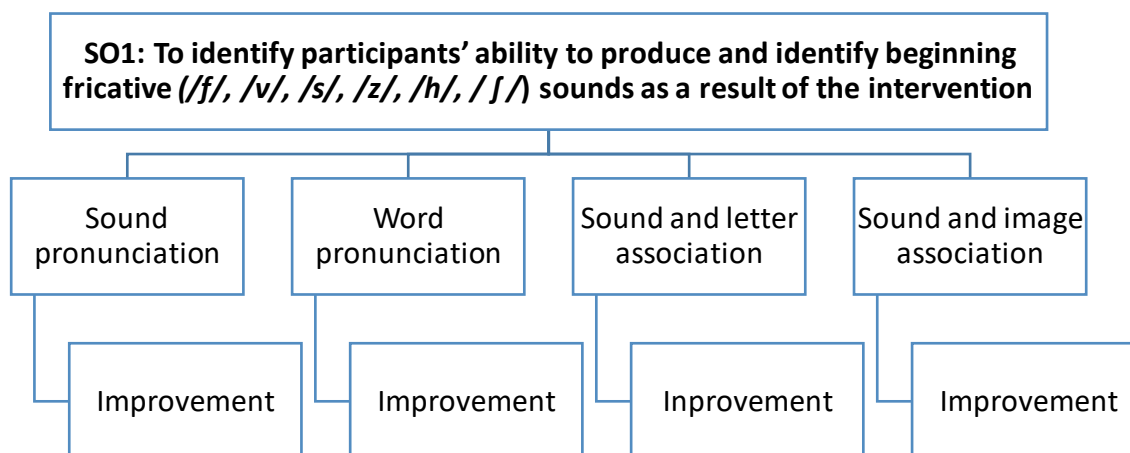


Figure 22. Specific objective 1: results

Moreover, the qualitative data provided by the observation checklists and self-assessment support the statement of improvement. Referring to the students' performance by the end of the sessions, the results show that there were some variations between the identification and production of sounds. In this context, the production of phonemes /f/, /v/, /s/ /h/ was the most accomplished by the students, with 100% of achievement. The production of phonemes /s/ and /z/ was highly accomplished, obtaining 95% of achievement, and the production of the digraph /sh/ was accomplished by 91% of the participants.

In terms of sound association, the phonemes /s/ and /sh/ were accomplished by 100% of the participants. The phonemes /h/, /v/ and /f/ were accomplished by 95% of the participants and the phoneme /z/ was accomplished by 86% of the participants, being the lowest score. This might be explained considering that the phoneme /z/ in English differs from the phoneme /z/ in Spanish.

Regarding similar studies and referring to the selection of sounds, it has been stated earlier that this selection was not random. The minimal pairs chosen correspond to sounds whose grapheme form is known by the participants, since those graphemes exist in the Spanish alphabet. Nonetheless, the characteristics of the phoneme as well as their articulation might differ significantly. In this context, the use of specific articulation instruction and exaggeration for letter sounds was found to be a useful way to enhance young learners' phonological awareness according to their age, which means in a fun way that implies laughter, fun and experimentation (Yopp & Yopp, 2009).

5.1.2 SO2: To identify students' perceptions towards the use of the phonological based instruction.

Regarding the participants' perceptions, a semi-structured interview was applied to a purposive sampling of twelve students: the four highest results, the four lowest results and the four average results.

Based on the participants' responses, six major themes emerged: activities, materials, teacher's guideline and support, group work and classroom environment.

According to the participants' comments, most of them agreed on how they enjoyed the activities, the achievable level of difficulty and the innovative materials. The variety of activities, mixing technology in the form of wordwall games and videos with concrete materials and multisensory activities allowed the participants to better identify and acquire the specific sounds, not only in isolation, but as beginning sounds of different vocabulary words. Moreover, the self-assessment instrument provided information regarding the participants' perception towards their own performance. Most of them stated that they understood the instructions and were able to complete the required tasks. According to Phipps (2011), teaching phonics through explicit play based activities, such as using picture books, rhymes and dramatic play, support the learning of letter sounds, since they add fun and make sounds easier to remember for the learners.

Figure 23 shows a summary of the participants' conclusions regarding the main emerging five topics during the interview.

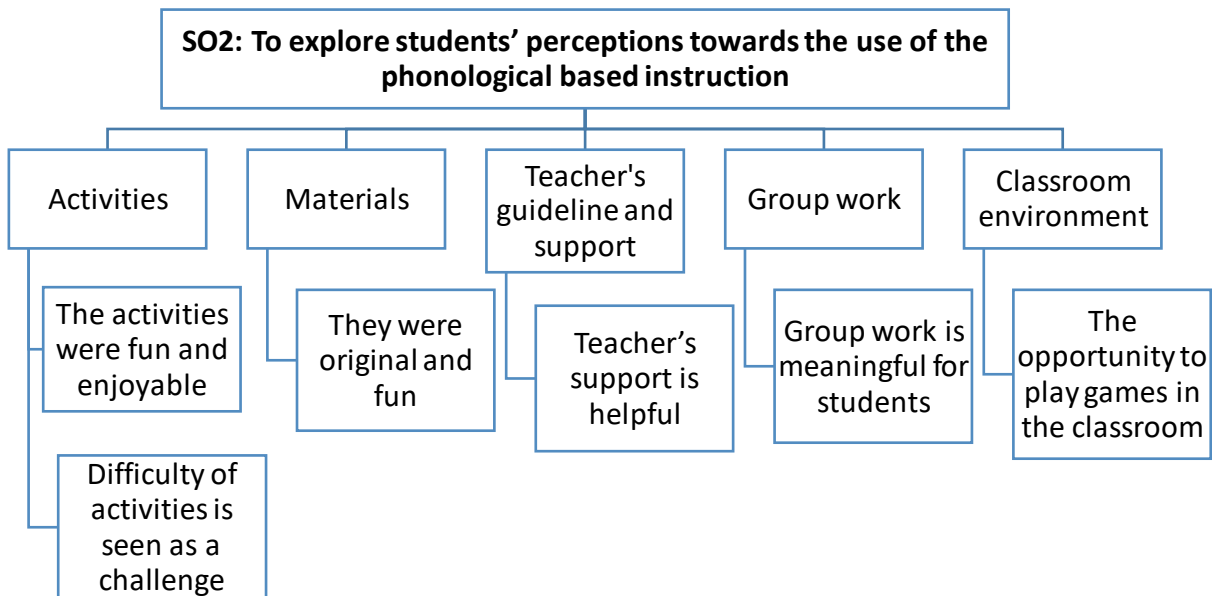


Figure 23. Specific objective 2: results

5.2 Interpretation of the results

The results support the main research question since the integration of a Phonological-based instruction benefited EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds. In line with these results, it is important to mention that there is much evidence regarding the effectiveness of Phonological-based instruction or phonological awareness (PA) and phonics instruction in English speaking countries or in bilingual

contexts (Thorius and Sullivan, 2013; Stephens, 2014; Richards-Tutor et al., 2015), nevertheless its effectiveness in EFL settings is still being investigated.

Moreover, these results build on the evidence of Huo & Wang (2017), who presented a study reviewing fifteen experimental and quasi-experimental studies published between 2000 and 2016, on the topic of the effectiveness of phonological-based instruction in the EFL context in primary levels. Even though Phonological-based instruction was found to be effective among primary school EFL students, particularly on reading underlying skills, such as phonemic awareness and non-word reading, the median value of the effect size was moderate. The process of learning how to read in English in an EFL context is particularly challenging for our students, considering the limitations of oral and written exposure to the language.

Referring to Phonological-Based instruction in EFL contexts, Shen, (2003, cited in Huo & Wang, 2017) highlights the need of explicit instruction of English literacy foundations, such as phonemic awareness, since it is not acquired spontaneously. In this context, the use of multisensory strategies, which involve visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic activities, benefits the learning process by providing a self-exploratory element, stimulating many cognitive processes (Gorjian, 2012).

Additionally, and based on the findings and methodology of similar studies, this action research study provides new insights into the relationship between the use of specific phonological instruction with struggling readers who have trouble learning how to read and EFL learners. Costenaro et al (2014) presented a new teaching material focusing on the use of PA to enhance Italian young EFL learners suffering from dyslexia. The authors focused on selected sounds particularly challenging not only for these students, but also for the whole class and that were inexistent in the Italian phonetic system, as well as different in articulation. The authors implemented a Sound Pathway with the /h/ sound alone, plus other seven pathways including a sound pair, such as /θ/ and /f/, /p/ and /b/, /k/ and /tʃ/, or /æ/ and /ʌ/. /f/ and /th/ and their corresponding graphemes. Each pathway is divided in five stages, which are presenting, identifying, and reproducing the sounds, matching sounds and letters and ending with multisensory activities.

These stages are corresponding to the ones designed and implemented in this action research and have been proven to fulfill a playful methodology and a multi-sensorial stimulation, which are strongly suggested when teaching very young learners (Schneider, Crombie 2003; Nijakowska 2010).

5.3 Limitations

The methodological choices were constrained by some factors worth mentioning. Firstly, the generalizability of the results is limited by the size of the sample, since it was limited to a specific group of learners belonging to a specific educational context. Secondly, the wide variety of instruments qualitative and quantitative delayed the process of gathering and analyzing the data. It is also important to mention that, due to the age and level of the participants, plus the pandemic context and Covid related symptoms, some of the students were absent during the class semester, which delayed the beginning of the intervention process.

Finally, the age of the participants was a challenge in terms of metacognition, particularly when applying the self-assessment instrument. Very young learners are in the process of developing meta-cognition and self-awareness, so that their reflections are still guided. Nonetheless, after a couple of rehearsals and specific instruction regarding evaluating their own performance during the sessions, most of them were able to understand the statements

and reflect on them, providing coherent and honest answers, which contributed significantly to the second objective of this action research.

5.4 Implications

This study aimed at exploring the use of guided Phonological-Based instruction to promote EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds. To achieve this purpose, some specific dimensions were analyzed and categorized by sounds identification and production. The findings suggested that systematic and explicit phonological instruction enhance the participants' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds. Moreover, the participants' perceptions towards this intervention supported its contribution, as they appreciated the activities and strategies applied.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that, considering the EFL teaching context in Chile, and the context of the implementation of this action research (private school), the amount of exposure to the English language is above the one considered by the national curriculum and below the one provided by bilingual schools. Their background knowledge provides them with several opportunities to be surrounded by the foreign language and their families give particular importance to the learning of English. Therefore, future studies should take this into account, especially if implemented in public schools.

Finally, further research is needed to establish the instruction of pre-service teachers regarding EFL in preschool levels, specifically in terms of Phonological instruction and Phonemic Awareness.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of the main findings

Despite many well-known assumptions regarding learning a second language at a young age (Ozfidan et al, 2019), age as a factor is still being debated. Thus, the belief that children learn better at an early age has led many education systems to start their ESL or EFL instruction in preschool levels. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that age is certainly not the only factor or variable. The amount of exposure, cultural background, and teaching strategies, to name a few, are fundamental to consider when teaching EFL to young learners and very young learners. As teachers, there are many skills required, not only in terms of mastering the language, but also of being aware of how our students learn better, their characteristics and needs.

Regarding the age, young learners are in the process of developing emergent reading skills. In this context, phonological-based instruction has become a trend in EFL classes (Hamilton, 2007). According to Ehri (1998), phonological awareness and the knowledge of letter-sound correspondence are the two most reliable predictors of subsequent development of reading skills. In this context, phonological awareness (PA) is perceived as one of the key foundations for the development of emergent reading skills and, according to Phillips (2008), this ability is not supposed to be developed naturally or by intuition, but rather may require explicit teaching and practice opportunities.

As a Chilean EFL teacher working with preschool levels, I have witnessed how some of my students have been able to develop some of these pre-reading skills in the foreign language incidentally, as they are being developed in their mother tongue at the same time. These include sounds and letter recognition, rhymes, among others. Nonetheless, we have not been able to apply clear and guided EFL early literacy strategies consistently over time.

As Burns (2013) explains, AR relates to teachers taking actions, usually through a systematic intervention process to investigate a classroom issue in order to better understand or enhance an aspect of their teaching or learning. Therefore, this action research study aimed to explore the use of guided Phonological-Based instruction to promote EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds.

The research question attempted to be answered is how does the integration of a Phonological-Based instruction benefit EFL kindergarten students' phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds?

In order to answer this question, a five-lessons intervention was implemented, a pre and post intervention test and a semi-structured interview were conducted. Additionally, more data was gathered through sessions' checklists, observation and self-assessment.

Based on this quantitative and qualitative analysis of data, and regarding the first specific objective, to identify participants' ability to produce and identify beginning fricative (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /j/) sounds as a result of the intervention, the findings showed that there was an improvement in all the four analyzed criteria: sound pronunciation, word pronunciation, sound and letter association and sound and image association, as 95,4% of the participants increased their global scores while 4,54% of the participants maintained their scores. Additionally, observation checklists and self-assessment during the last two sessions provided evidence regarding the positive learners' performance, who were able to understand instructions, performed the required tasks and work cooperatively with classmates. Therefore, it can be concluded that using specific and systematic phonological based strategies in the form of a PPP structure class and working with the sounds through

minimal pairs and using multisensory activities had a positive contribution in the participants' phonemic awareness.

The main conclusions regarding the first specific objective are the following:

- A positive contribution of the intervention on the participants' ability to identify and produce beginning fricative sounds.
- The sound and image association criterion were the highest achieved by the participants.
- Presenting the sounds by minimal pairs had a positive effect on developing phonemic awareness of fricative beginning sounds.
- A positive contribution of explicit English articulatory movements instruction on the participants' ability to produce beginning fricative sounds.
- The / z / sound was the hardest sound to produce.

This last conclusion might be due to the L1 interference, phonetic ability, and articulatory differences (Uribe-Enciso et al, 2019), how to instruct students in these English articulatory movements.

Regarding the second specific objective to inquire participants' perceptions towards the use of the phonological based instruction, it can be concluded that those participants had a positive perception towards the variety of implemented strategies during the intervention. Based on their self-assessment responses and semi-structured interview, there was a general tendency to value the activities, materials, teacher's guideline and support, group work and classroom environment. In terms of activities, the participants mentioned that *"they were fun" and "challenging"*. Referring to the materials, they found them *"innovative and fun"*. They also considered the teacher's support as *"useful"*, since the teacher was available to answer questions, monitor and guide them through the activities. Group work was particularly valued by the participants in terms of *"helping each other", "have fun together"* and making the teaching and learning process more meaningful. Referring to the classroom environment, even though the participants mentioned that *"it was noisy and distracting at some points"*, they valued *"the opportunity to play games within the classroom and have fun"*.

Additionally, and regarding the self-assessments of their own performances, most of them stated that they were able to understand the instructions and complete the required tasks on time.

The main conclusions regarding the second specific objective are the following:

- A positive perception towards the use of phonological-based instruction.
- A positive perception towards the contribution of multisensory strategies.

Referring to the last conclusion, the use of multisensory strategies allowed my students to incorporate other senses and better recalling the sounds and letters. After reviewing the literature, I have learnt that these kinds of strategies, such as tactile letters, are commonly used with children with learning disabilities, as dyslexia, to enhance phonological awareness and particularly phonemic awareness in English as an L1. Nonetheless, within my EFL classroom they were suitable and enjoyable for all kind of learners, in spite their particular characteristics, fine motor skills and learning preferences.

6.2 Personal reflections

This action research study clearly illustrates the need of explicit instruction of English literacy foundations, such as phonemic awareness, since it is not acquired spontaneously and it forms an important part of the development of pre reading skills, particularly in EFL young and very young learners. Nevertheless, it also raises the question of how pre-service or in service EFL teachers are prepared and instructed to approach phonemic awareness in the classroom and, even more, to teach it to kindergarten students. Since my formal education has prepared me for teaching secondary students, it has been a long journey to develop the necessary skills to work with preschool and elementary school levels. After more than five years working with children, I strongly believe that very young learners are usually underrated and that they are more capable of accomplishing learning goals than most people believe. Kindergarten students are enthusiastic, motivated, and willing to experiment, to discover, to learn and to be challenged. EFL teachers working with these levels should take students' characteristics into account, what their interest are and, most importantly, how they learn. Finally, I have very much enjoyed this intervention process, being amazed by my students' progress, and realizing what they are capable of. Despite their age, they demonstrated compromise, excitement, and willingness to learn everything I presented to them, as well as the ability to reflect on their own work and performance with honesty and consciousness.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, practitioners should consider the challenge of teaching very young learners as an opportunity to acquire new teaching skills, to adapt to new teaching contexts and, most importantly, to grow as a professional. Teaching English in the EFL Chilean context is not an easy task. Furthermore, bilingual, and private schools provide a more developed teaching and learning context, helping to increase the inequality in education in terms of the English language. Taking this data into account and considering the benefits of developing phonemic awareness, phonological-based instruction should be part of our teaching instruction in any level or context as a way of supporting our students' pronunciation and reading skills. It is important to remember that this action research was carried out within a private school context, with five hours of EFL per week and students with a high cultural background. Therefore, it would be interesting to implement these strategies in other levels or contexts, such as rural or vulnerable ones.

Hopefully, this action research study will contribute to the yet little research in the area and benefit preschool teachers interested in English and EFL teachers struggling with young and very young learners to obtain useful tools to enhance the teaching and learning of English.

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CHAPTER VIII: APPENDIX

8.1. Intervention Lesson Plan

Date	Learning objective	Activities and Procedures	Time	Materials	Assessment	R. Objectives
May 31 st	By the end of the lesson students should be able to produce the phonemes /f/, /v/ based of their graphemes, and discriminate the different sounds after being exposed to specific instruction on articulation and phonics pictures.	<p>Warm up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners watch an ABC video, dance and sing along. <p>Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are introduced to the phonemes /f/ - /v/ and see examples of words with those specific beginning sounds. Learners listen to and watch a video song and reproduce the specific phonemes and vocabulary words related to each sound. <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the aid of a visual expressive mask, the learners see how the lips move in order to produce the two different sounds. Learners identify the differences between the sounds and then play with the sounds by saying them exaggerating. <p>Production:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The class is divided in five groups and they receive four sets of pictures (2 sets for /f/ sound and 2 sets for /v/ sounds). Each set contains three same-sound pictures and one different sound picture. 	<p>Warming up: 5minutes.</p> <p>Presentation: 10 minutes.</p> <p>Practice: Explaining how the sounds are produced and practice: 5 minutes.</p> <p>Warming up round of finding the odd one out game: 5 minutes.</p> <p>Production: 20 minutes.</p> <p>Total time: 45 minutes.</p>	Video links Picture cards Assessment check list Self-assessment	<p>Assessment instance 1: Formative assessment – check list.</p> <p>Assessment instance 2: Self-assessment form</p>	<p>SO1: To identify the participants’ ability to identify and produce beginning fricative (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /sh/) sounds as a result of the intervention.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners say the words aloud and identify the odd one out. The teacher checks the groups answers and provide feedback. Learners complete a self-assessment form. 				
June 1 st	By the end of the lesson students should be able to produce the phonemes /s/, /z/ based of their graphemes, <i>and</i> discriminate the different sounds after being exposed to specific instruction on articulation and phonics pictures.	<p>Warm up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners recall the words from the previous lesson by playing the “robot talk”. Students say the words (/f/ and /v/ sounds) by sounding as a robot. <p>Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are introduced to the phonemes /s - /z/ and see examples of words with those specific beginning sounds. Learners listen to and watch a video song and reproduce the specific phonemes and vocabulary words related to each sound. <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the aid of a visual expressive mask, explain the learners how the lips move in order to produce the two different sounds. Learners identify the differences between the sounds and then play with the sounds by pronouncing them exaggerating. <p>Production:</p>	<p>Warming up: 5minutes.</p> <p>Presentation: 10 minutes.</p> <p>Practice: Explaining how the sounds are produced and practice: 5 minutes.</p> <p>Warming up round of finding the odd one out game: 5 minutes.</p> <p>Production: 20 minutes.</p> <p>Total time: 45 minutes.</p>	Warm up slides Video Links Picture cards Assessment check list Self-assessment	<p>Assessment instance 1: Formative assessment – check list.</p> <p>Assessment instance 2: Self-assessment form</p>	<p>SO1: To identify the participants’ ability to identify and produce beginning fricative (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /sh/) sounds as a result of the intervention.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The class is divided in five groups and they receive four sets of pictures (2 sets for /s/ sound and 2 sets for /z/ sounds). Each set contains three same-sound pictures and one different sound picture. Learners say the words aloud and identify the odd one out. The teacher checks the groups answers and provide feedback. 				
June 2nd	By the end of the lesson students should be able to produce the phonemes /f/, /v/ based of their graphemes, <i>and</i> classify sight words by the beginning sounds after being exposed to specific instruction on articulation and phonics pictures.	<p>Warm up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners recall the words from the previous lesson by playing the “quiet and loud talk”. They say the words (/s/ and /z/ sounds) very quiet and very loud. <p>Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are introduced to the phonemes /h - /sh/ and provide examples of words with those specific beginning sounds. Learners listen to and watch a video song and reproduce the specific phonemes and vocabulary words related to each sound. <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the aid of a visual expressive mask, the learners see how the lips move in order to produce the two different sounds. Learners identify the differences between the sounds and then play 	<p>Warming up: 5minutes.</p> <p>Presentation: 10 minutes.</p> <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explaining how the sounds are produced and practice: 8 minutes. Instructing the learners to classify the images: 5 minutes. <p>Production: 15-17 minutes.</p> <p>Total time: 45 minutes.</p>	Warm up slides Video links Picture words Assessment check list Self-assessment	<p>Assessment instance 1: Formative assessment – check list</p> <p>Assessment instance 2: Self-assessment form</p>	<p>SO1: To identify the participants’ ability to identify and produce beginning fricative (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /sh/) sounds as a result of the intervention.</p>

		<p>with the sounds by pronouncing them exaggerating.</p> <p>Production:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The class is divided in five groups. Each group receives a big piece of colored paper divided in two columns, one with the letters H and the other with the letters SH, and a set of 12 different images and their corresponding written form. Learners say the words aloud and classify the images by pasting them in the correct column, according to the beginning sound. 				
June 6th	<p>By the end of the lesson students will be able to associate the beginning graphemes and phonemes /f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /sh/ with vocabulary pictures, reproduce and produce the graphemes after being exposed to specific instruction on tactile letters with concrete materials, being able to remember the shape of each letter and mention the</p>	<p>Warm up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners see letter cards and practice the sounds exaggerating. <p>Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the use of a wordwall game, learners identify the correct vocabulary image associated to the different beginning sounds studied before. <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The class is divided in five groups and they receive three plates containing different textures (salt, rice and cotton). In turns, learners use their fingers to trace the different letters (graphemes) as they mention the letter name and 	<p>Warming up: 5minutes.</p> <p>Presentation: 10 minutes.</p> <p>Practice: 10 minutes.</p> <p>Production: 20 minutes.</p> <p>Total time: 45 minutes.</p>	<p>Video links Online games Concrete materials Assessment check list Self-assessment</p>	<p>Assessment instance 1: Formative assessment – check list</p> <p>Assessment instance 2: Self-assessment form</p>	<p>SO1: To identify the participants’ ability to identify and produce beginning fricative (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /sh/) sounds as a result of the intervention.</p>









	corresponding phoneme.	<p>sound, in order to help them remember the shape of each letter.</p> <p>Production:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners receive a piece of white paper (block size) and finger paint with different colors. Learners lay on the floor and use their fingers to reproduce the six different letters on the piece of paper. Each letter has to be in a different color. After that, learners decorate their letters as they want (glitter, draw faces, little pieces of colored paper). Learners share their posters with the class. 				
June 7th	By the end of the lesson students will demonstrate the ability to discriminate, identify, associate and produce specific beginning fricative sounds (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /sh/), graphemes and phonemes, after being exposed to beginning sound recognition instruction and	<p>Warm up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners activate knowledge regarding the written form of the studied words by playing a random wheel game (wordwall). <p>Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are introduced to beginning sound recognition instruction: With the aid of a slide, learners see different simple words (seen and studied before) but without the beginning letter. Learners complete the words with the beginning sounds, guided by the teacher. <p>Practice:</p>	<p>Warming up: 7 minutes.</p> <p>Presentation: 8 minutes.</p> <p>Practice: 15 minutes</p> <p>Production: 15 minutes.</p> <p>Total time: 45 minutes.</p>	<p>Video links</p> <p>Online games</p> <p>Concrete materials</p> <p>Self-assessment</p>	<p>Assessment instance 1: Formative assessment – check list.</p> <p>Assessment instance 2: Self-assessment form</p>	<p>SO1: To identify the participants’ ability to identify and produce beginning fricative (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /sh/) sounds as a result of the intervention.</p>

	playing phonics hopscotch.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the aid of a wordwall game, learners see images of previous vocabulary words, but with the beginning letter removed. • Learners identify the corresponding beginning letter / sound. • Learners practice how the words would sound if the first sound were omitted (phoneme deletion). <p>Production:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners play a regular hopscotch game, but in this case, they jump on different letter sections, and once they land, they have to mention the letter, the sound and give an example word, before being allowed to move. 				
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8.2 Quantitative instruments

8.2.1 Analytic Rubric

Name:	Class: Transición Mayor A	Date:
	Total score:	Obtained Score:
Teacher: Michelle Navarrete	Final Mark / Concept:	
Assessment context: Pre / Post Test		

Criteria	Levels of Performance			
	Excellent (4pts) 	Very Good (3) 	Can do better (2pts) 	Needs improvement (1pt) 
Sounds pronunciation 	The student says the letter sounds with no mispronunciations (6).	The student says the letter sounds with few mispronunciations (5-4).	The student says the letter sounds with some mispronunciations (3-2).	The student is not able to say the letter sounds or says the sounds with lots of mispronunciations (1 or less).
Words pronunciation 	The student says the words with no mispronunciations (6).	The student says words with few mispronunciations (5-4).	The student says the words with some mispronunciations (3-2).	The student is not able to say the words or says them with lots of mispronunciations (1 or less).
Sound /image association 	The student associates all images (6) to the corresponding beginning sound.	The student associates most images (5-4) to the corresponding beginning sound.	The student associates some images (3-2) to the corresponding beginning sound.	The student is not able to associate the images to the corresponding beginning sound, or only a few (1 or less).
Sound / letter association 	The student associates all the sounds to the specific letters (6).	The student associates most of the sounds to the specific letters (5-4).	The student associates some of the sounds to the specific letters (3-2).	The student is not able to associate the sounds to the specific letters, or only a few (1 or less).
Total score	16pts			
Total obtained				

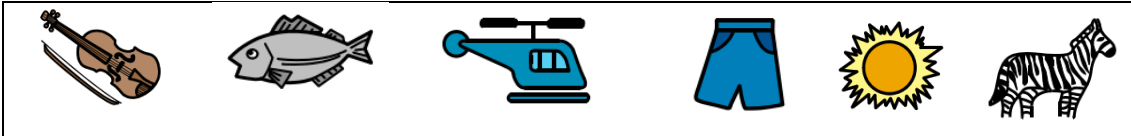
8.2.2 PRE-INTERVENTION TEST: LET'S PLAY WITH SOUNDS! 😊

NAME: _____

1. Look at the letters and say the sound aloud.

1. F	2. V	3. S	4. Z	5. SH	6. H
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2. Look at the images and say the words.



3. Match the images with the corresponding beginning letter. There is an extra image you don't need.

F



Z



V



H



S



SH



4. Listen and point the card with the sound / letter you hear.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____

8.2.3 POST INTERVENTION TEST: LET'S PLAY WITH SOUNDS! 😊

NAME: _____

1. Look at the letter and say the sound aloud.

1. SH	2. V	3. Z	4. H	5. F	6. S
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2. Look at the images and say the words.



3. Match the images with the corresponding beginning letter. There is an extra image you don't need.

H
F
S
V
SH
Z



4. Listen and point the card with the sound / letter you hear.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____

8.3. Qualitative instruments

8.3.1 Teacher's observation template

Date	Learning objective
Focus of observation	Teacher's comments (What went well? / What could have gone better?)

8.3.2. Sessions check lists

Session 1- Identification / Articulation goal checklist

Session 1		Target Sounds Identification				Target Sounds Production			
Date:	Different sound discrimination	/f/		/v/		/f/		/v/	
GROUP Names:		Isolation	Initial words	Isolation	Initial words	Isolation	Initial words	Isolation	Initial words
	1.								
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									

Session 2 – Identification / Articulation goal checklist

Session 2		Target Sounds Identification				Target Sounds Production			
Date:	Different sound discrimination	/s/		/z/		/s/		/z/	
GROUP Names:		Isolation	Initial words	Isolation	Initial words	Isolation	Initial words	Isolation	Initial words
	1.								
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									

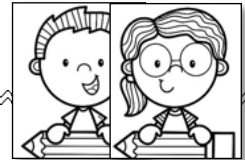
Session 3 - Identification / Articulation goal checklist

Session 3		Target Sounds Identification				Target Sounds Production			
Date:	Classification of sounds	/sh/		/th/		/sh/		/th/	
GROUP Names:		Isolation	Initial words	Isolation	Initial words	Isolation	Initial words	Isolation	Initial words
	1.								
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									

Session 4 - Grapheme / Phoneme association checklist

Session 4	Tactile letters sound association						Tactile letters Production					
Fricative beginning sounds	/f/	/v/	/s/	/z/	/h/	/sh/	/f/	/v/	/s/	/z/	/h/	/sh/
GROUP: Date:												
Names												
1.												
2.												
3.												
4.												
5.												

8.3.3 Self-Assessment



Nombre:

¿CÓMO LO HICE?

1. Seguí las instrucciones de la Miss.



2. Realicé todas mis actividades.



3. Puedo entender los sonidos aprendidos.



4. Puedo reconocer las letras aprendidas.



5. Puedo decir los sonidos aprendidos.



6. Puedo decir palabras con esos sonidos.



8.3.4. Interview

Draw & Tell

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

1. Draw yourself in the classroom while recognizing and producing the sounds. Color it and describe your drawing to the teacher.



Description:

Questions:

Use of the phonological based instruction
1. De las actividades que hicimos ¿cuál fue la que más te gustó? ¿Por qué? 2. De las actividades que hicimos, ¿cuál fue la que menos te gustó? ¿Por qué? 3. ¿Te gustaron los materiales que usamos? ¿Por qué? 4. ¿Cómo crees que fue el trabajo de la Miss? ¿Por qué?
Perception of the methodology
5. ¿Cuál fue la actividad que te resultó más fácil? ¿Por qué? 6. ¿Cuál fue la actividad que te costó más? ¿Por qué? 7. ¿Cómo te sentiste trabajando en grupo con tus compañeros? ¿Por qué? 8. ¿Cómo sentiste que estaba la sala mientras trabajábamos? ¿Por qué?

