

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study, which investigates teachers' perceptions of Jolly Phonics training as a means of enhancing pedagogical practices for Early English Language Learners (EELLs). It provides the context, significance, and purpose of the research. The chapter provides the background of the study, emphasizing the role of phonics instruction and Jolly Phonics in literacy development, as well as how teachers perceive and implement this approach in their teaching. It then outlines the research questions, objectives, and the significance of the study, focusing on its relevance to teachers, schools, and policymakers in improving literacy outcomes.

A. Background of the Study

Effective instruction in early reading skills is fundamental for the academic success of English Language Learners (ELLs), particularly those categorized as early English Language Learners (ELLs) - children aged 3 to 9 who are in the initial stages of acquiring English. Early ELLs often face unique challenges due to differences between their native language phonetic systems and English phonics, making learning to read in English more difficult. Therefore, systematic and structured phonics instruction is crucial in providing ELLs with the foundational skills to decode and read proficiently in English.

Among the most recognized approaches for teaching phonics is Jolly Phonics, a synthetic phonics program that systematically teaches the relationship

between letters and sounds. The program introduces the 42 letter sounds of the English language in a structured order, using a multi-sensory approach that incorporates songs, stories, actions, and visuals to engage learners. These features make Jolly Phonics particularly suitable for EELLs, as they cater to various learning styles and help reinforce memory retention, which is essential for children who may not have consistent exposure to English outside the classroom.

While many studies have shown the positive impacts of Jolly Phonics on student literacy outcomes, particularly in enhancing phonemic awareness and reading fluency, these studies have primarily focused on how students benefit from phonics-based interventions. For instance, research by Upward (2000) in Clackmannanshire, Scotland, researchers found that children taught with Jolly Phonics were 12 months ahead in reading abilities compared to those taught with analytic phonics. Similarly, a study conducted in Sarawak, Malaysia, found that students in a Systematic Synthetic Phonics program inspired by Jolly Phonics significantly outperformed their peers in reading fluency and spelling ability (Yap & Lee Chin, 2020). Shawaqfeh (2024) also, the effects of Jolly Phonics were examined in a study conducted in Jordan, highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing phonemic awareness, reading motivation, and student engagement.

Additionally, research conducted in the Ningo-Prampram District of Ghana demonstrated Jolly Phonics' influence on kindergarten learners, showing significant improvements in phonemic awareness, reading accuracy, vocabulary, and creative writing Skills (Gbetey, 2024).

Studies by Wyse and Goswami (2008) and other researchers Abdul-Aal (2023) and Upward C. (2000) have found that students exposed to Jolly Phonics demonstrated accelerated growth in reading and spelling compared to control groups. Despite substantial evidence supporting the effectiveness of Jolly Phonics in improving early literacy outcomes, little attention has been given to how teachers perceive, apply, and adapt its strategies in real classroom settings, particularly when working with early ELLs. Teachers' perceptions, confidence, and day-to-day implementation of Jolly Phonics strategies are critically important, as they directly influence how consistently and effectively the method is used. Positive teacher perceptions and confidence can lead to more purposeful and engaging phonics instruction, while uncertainty or perceived challenges may hinder its full integration into classroom practice.

Furthermore, Jolly Phonics as a structured phonics-based approach, offers a variety of multisensory techniques to support early literacy. However, the success of any instructional approach depends not only on its design but also on how well it is understood, accepted, and implemented by teachers. Examining how teachers use Jolly Phonics in their teaching, what they find effective, what they adapt, and what challenges they encounter can provide essential insights for improving early literacy instruction.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring teachers' perceptions of Jolly Phonics, their confidence in using its strategies, and how they implement it with early ELLs in their classrooms. Through this exploration, this study seeks to

support more effective and contextually appropriate use of phonics instruction in early education.

B. Reason for Choosing the Topic

The decision to investigate teachers' perceptions, confidence, and implementation of Jolly Phonics strategies for early English Language Learners (ELLs) originates from both practical and academic motivations. Early literacy development is a foundational skill for academic success, particularly for young learners acquiring English as a second language.

However, many ELLs face significant challenges in mastering reading and writing due to differences between their native language and English phonetics. This highlights the need for effective, engaging, and research-based instructional methods like Jolly Phonics, which uses a multisensory approach to teach phonics systematically.

C. Research Question

What are teachers' perceptions, confidence levels, and implementation practices regarding Jolly Phonics strategies for early English Language Learners (ELLs)?

D. Research Objectives

1. To explore teachers' perceptions of Jolly Phonics strategies used in English language instruction.

2. To examine teachers' confidence in applying Jolly Phonics strategies in the classroom.
3. To investigate how teachers implement Jolly Phonics strategies in teaching English to ELLs.
4. Identify challenges teachers face in using Jolly Phonics with early learners.

This research explored teachers' perceptions of Jolly Phonics training and how it influences their instructional strategies and classroom practices for Early English Language Learners (EELLs).

E. Significance of the research

This study holds significance for multiple stakeholders in education, particularly teachers, school administrators, and policymakers. For teachers, the research provides insights into their perceptions and experiences using Jolly Phonics strategies with early English Language Learners (ELLs). By reflecting on how they implement these strategies, teachers can better identify strengths and areas for improvement in their instructional practices. The findings also help them understand the benefits and challenges of phonics-based instruction, encouraging the adoption of more engaging and effective literacy methods tailored to the diverse needs of learners. Additionally, the study reinforces the importance of ongoing professional development, motivating teachers to seek further training to enhance their confidence and teaching competence.

For schools, the research sheds light on how teachers experience and implement Jolly Phonics in the classroom. This understanding can inform the

design of targeted support systems and training programs that align more closely with teachers' real instructional needs. It also provides guidance on how to integrate Jolly Phonics into existing literacy frameworks, leading to more consistent and effective classroom practices and improved literacy outcomes for students. Moreover, the insights from the study can help schools foster inclusive learning environments that are responsive to the challenges faced by early ELLs.

At the policy level, this research contributes evidence-based perspectives on the use of Jolly Phonics in early literacy instruction. It highlights the role of teachers' perceptions and classroom realities in the success of phonics-based programs. Policymakers can use these findings to make informed decisions about investing in teacher training initiatives, allocating resources more effectively, and supporting schools in the broader implementation of structured literacy interventions. By centering the voices and experiences of teachers, the study contributes to national literacy goals and supports teacher-focused reforms aimed at improving learning outcomes in the foundational years of education.