

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study, a summary and discussions of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

5.1.1 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to investigate and identify the differences of approaches between phonics and word recognition. The research was to compare and evaluate the students' spelling abilities when taught reading and spelling with phonics and word recognition, and to investigate if the word recognition method of teaching is effective and should be included in the school curriculum.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedure

The subjects of this case study were 20 EFL students attending the Kindergarten-3 program. The study was conducted for a total of more than 6 hours. The students were divided into 2 equal groups of 10.

The material which was chosen had never been taught to the students. The lesson was divided into 2 themes; the first theme was "Ordinal Numbers" and the second theme "Number in words". Altogether, there were 20 new words for the students to learn, the first 10 words were related to the theme of ordinal numbers and the other 10 words were related to the theme of number in words. The students were divided into group "A" and Group "B". Two tests were conducted at the end of every lesson and a post test was conducted after 2 weeks.

The lesson was conducted to introduce new words to each group through different approaches. For the first theme, Group "A" was taught through the phonics approach while Group "B" was taught through the word recognition approach. After

each lesson, a test was conducted to see how much they had understood and how good were their spelling skills. For the second theme, to create no bias to the result, Group “A” was switched and taught new words through the Word Recognition approach and Group “B” was taught the same words through the Phonics approach. After the lessons, the students were tested to see if they would gain any spelling skills from the way they had been taught.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows

5.2.1 Regarding the background knowledge, both groups were assumed to have similar background knowledge, since both the themes chosen for the students contained new words which they had never learnt.

5.2.2 Generally speaking, the test score had not much difference between the two groups of students. However, when looking at the post-test score, the score shows that, through the phonics approach the students could store it in their long term memory and understand the concept of spelling more than in the word recognition approach.

5.2.3 It is found that not only did the groups that were taught through the phonics approach obtain a high score, but the group that was taught through the word recognition approach did also achieve something and for some new words, they showed a better score when compared to the score of students who learnt through the phonics approach.

5.3 DISCUSSIONS

The following discussion can be drawn from the findings in Chapter 4:

According to Graph 2, it is clear that overall, the students of group “A” who were taught through the phonics approach achieved a higher percentage score when compared to the students of group “B” who were taught through the word recognition approach. For the students of group “A”, the highest score obtained was for the word

“sixth” and the lowest score obtained was for the word “third”. This could be due to the irregular phonetic sounds in the word “third”, which most of the students found difficult to spell through sounding each letter. Also from the raw test results obtained from the tests, many of them spelled it exactly how it was sounded. For example, some of the students spelled it “*thrd”, “*therd” and “*trth”.

However, for the students of group “B”, who were taught through the word recognition approach, the highest score was for the word “tenth”, which could be due to the prior knowledge of the students when they learnt how to spell numbers 1-10 in words. The lowest scores were for the words “first”, “second”, “third”, and “eighth”. Examining, through the test papers, it was found that many students refused to write down anything for the four words mentioned above since they could not remember and were not taught to sound the words out through phonics.

The results from graph 2 show that the students who were taught through the phonics approach gained a better spelling ability when compared to the students who were taught through the word recognition approach. However, the word recognition approach is still not a bad approach to use since it did work with some students who could spell the words by memorization, especially with the words that the students can relate to their prior knowledge of learning how to spell 1-10 in words, and it also worked well with some words which were much easier to memorize and rote learn the spelling.

Referring to the data in Graph 4, the students who were taught through the word recognition approach received a low percentage score for the words “twelve” and “twenty”. There could be many reasons why the students made mistakes. One reason could be the unfamiliarity of the words. Another reason was that many of the students did not attempt to write anything down since it was too complex and they could not remember all the letters in the words. Moreover, these two words are very similar to one another which might have been confusing for the students to remember and memorize.

In contrast, the students who were taught through the phonics approach obtained a very low score for the word “twelve”. The reason why students of this group got a very low percentage could be due to the complexity of the letters and

sounds, such as the blending sounds of “tw” at the beginning and “ve” in the end which the students have not yet been taught and have no prior knowledge of. From the test papers, some students wrote “*teveev”, “tavl”, “twelf” etc.

Overall, the results in graph 4 shows that the students who were taught “Number in Words” through the word recognition approach obtained a higher percentage score than the students who were taught through the phonics approach. This could be due to many reasons, for example, the students of groups “B” may prefer to learn spelling through memorization rather than sounding out the letters. Another reason could be because of the limited time for the students to grasp the concept. Also, it could be because the overall reading and spelling ability of the students of group “A” is higher than the students of Group “B”, as the study did not conduct a pre-test but rather chose the subjects randomly.

Moreover, it can be seen that the results of the students taught through word recognition are higher in some cases where the tested words were short or made up of not more than four to five letters.

According to the results in Graph 4 and Graph 6, it can be argued that, the word recognition approach is more effective when it is used to teach on the short term basis. In Graph 4, students were seen to have a faster ability to memorize and rote learn than spelling through phonemic sounds.

As the results have shown, it is easier in the short term for students to learn spelling through word recognition; however, in the long term, students seem to have a better understanding of the spelling process through phonics, which therefore results to higher or improved post-test results.

In conclusion, according to the result in Chapter Four, it can be reviewed from the findings that the use of the phonics approach was effective in the long term spelling ability of EFL students. To prove this statement right, the study has found that the post-test scores of the students taught through the phonics approach were higher than the post-test scores of the students taught through the word recognition approach. As shown in Graph 5 and Graph 6, in the “Ordinal Number” theme (Graph 5), the overall percentage of correct spelling of the students learning new words

through Phonics was 55%, when compared to the overall percentage of correct spelling of the students learning new words through word recognition which was only 35%.

Moreover, in the “Number in Words” theme (Graph 6), the overall percentage of correct spelling of the students learning new words through the phonics approach was 54%, when compared to the overall percentage of correct spelling of the students learning new words through word recognition which was only 44%.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

5.4.1 The findings provide researchers and educators with insight into the effective use of the phonics approach as a facilitator of teaching young EFL students to correctly spell words.

5.4.2 The implications of the research findings may help teachers of young EFL learners in designing English spelling instructions by encouraging the students to have phonemic awareness and use phonics to spell out words correctly. The students’ background knowledge, basic letter recognition and learning styles should also be taken into consideration when conducting a lesson. The effectiveness of spelling ability achieved by the students using the phonics approach may serve as a rationale for integrating more phonics approach in teaching young EFL students to spell.

5.4.3 Moreover, this research may present Thai EFL teachers with an option to enhance the spelling ability through teaching of phonetic sounds rather than enforcing rote learning and word recognition alone. Also, this study may provide the answer to the question of why young learners cannot spell which leads to illiteracy in reading an English language text and finally losing interest in the English language and subject in school. Here, the EFL instructors need to be responsible in detecting the students’ problems and their needs to achieve the teaching goals of the instructors and the learning goals of the students.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for further research.

5.5.1 Studies dealing with a greater number of EFL subjects should be conducted to find out whether the phonics approach is effective and relevant to teach among other Thai learners.

5.5.2 Other relevant and modern reading approaches such as the “Whole Word” approach, “Linguistic” approach and “Individualized Reading” approach could be included to find out the relevance of other approaches in teaching the students how to read fluently and spell words correctly.

5.5.3 If time allows, there should be a study that takes other factors such as learning styles and motivations of learners into consideration.

5.5.4 The method of analysis of the data could be more rigorous towards the checking of the spellings of each word. The mistakes could be analysed more thoroughly to find out the reason why the students made such mistakes, rather than discarding them only as incorrect spellings.

5.5.5 A case study can be done with students who have no reading or spelling background knowledge at all through any approaches to find out the true and reliable results for effectiveness of using the different approaches.