المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 – 8441 – ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

(26)

The Effect of Syllable-Based Instruction on Developing English Reading Skills among EFL Learners: A Case Study of Basic-Level Schools in El Obeid, Sudan.

أثر التدريس القائم على المقاطع الصوتية في تطوير مهارات القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية دراسة حالة لمدارس مرحلة الأساس في مدينة الأبيض، السودان

Dr. Abdurahman Elshreef Abdurahman Hamad

, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Education, University of Kordofan, North Kordofan, Sudan

, Email: abdurahman55309@gmail.com

Dr. Mujtaba Mohamed Sallam Ahmed,

Department of English Language and Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, University of Kordofan, North Kordofan, Sudan,

Email: mejtaba@gmail.com

Dr. Maymona Ahmed Mohamed Hamed,

Department of English Languages, Faculty of Education, Kassala – Halfa Algdeeda,

Email: omalamymwnha@gmail.com

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

Abstract

This study investigates the effect of syllable-based instruction on the development of English reading skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at basic-level schools in El Obeid, North Kordofan State, Sudan. The study was motivated by the persistent difficulties experienced by Sudanese EFL learners in decoding and reading English words, particularly multisyllabic and unfamiliar words. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining a descriptive survey design with a quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test design. Data were collected from 50 English language teachers through a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire and from 50 basic-level students through pre-test and post-test reading assessments. The questionnaire findings demonstrated strong teacher support for explicit syllable instruction, multisensory teaching techniques, systematic practice, and teacher phonological competence. In the quasi-experimental component, students' mean performance increased from 8.50 in the pre-test to 11.70 in the post-test, while the passing rate increased from 46% to 70%. A paired-samples t-test indicated that the improvement was statistically significant, $t(49) = -11.536$, $p < .001$. The findings suggest that systematic syllable-based instruction can provide an effective bridge between phonological awareness and word decoding. The study concludes that explicit instruction in syllable identification, segmentation, division, and pronunciation can contribute substantially to the development of English reading skills among young EFL learners. The study recommends the systematic integration of syllable-based activities into Sudanese English curricula, together with teacher training and the use of multisensory instructional materials.

Keywords: syllable-based instruction; English reading skills; phonological awareness; word decoding; EFL learners; basic education; Sudan.

الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في أثر التدريس القائم على المقاطع الصوتية في تطوير مهارات القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مدارس مرحلة الأساس بمدينة الأبيض، ولاية شمال كردفان، السودان. وقد انطلقت الدراسة من الصعوبات المستمرة التي يواجهها المتعلمون السودانيون في فك شفرة الكلمات الإنجليزية وقراءتها، ولا سيما الكلمات متعددة المقاطع والكلمات غير المألوفة. واعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً مختلطاً يجمع بين المنهج الوصفي وتصميم شبه تجريبي قائم على الاختبار القبلي والبعدي. وجُمعت البيانات من خلال استبيان مكون من 20 فقرة باستخدام مقياس ليكرت، طُبّق على 50 معلماً للغة الإنجليزية، ومن خلال اختبارات قبلية وبعدية للقراءة طُبّقت على 50 طالباً من طلاب مرحلة الأساس. وأظهرت نتائج الاستبيان تأييداً قوياً من المعلمين للتدريس الصريح للمقاطع الصوتية، واستخدام الأساليب التعليمية متعددة الحواس، والممارسة المنهجية، والكفاءة الصوتية للمعلمين. وفي

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

الجانب شبه التجريبي، ارتفع متوسط أداء الطلاب من 8.50 في الاختبار القبلي إلى 11.70 في الاختبار البعدي، كما ارتفعت نسبة النجاح من 46% إلى 70%. وأكد اختبار (ت) للعينات المزدوجة أن هذا التحسن كان ذا دلالة إحصائية، حيث بلغت قيمة t(49) = −11.536، وp<.001. وتشير النتائج إلى أن التدريس المنهجي القائم على المقاطع الصوتية يمكن أن يمثل جسراً فعالاً بين الوعي الصوتي وفك شفرة الكلمات. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن التدريس الصريح لتحديد المقاطع الصوتية وتقسيمها وفصلها ونطقها يمكن أن يسهم بصورة ملحوظة في تطوير مهارات القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى المتعلمين الصغار للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وتوصي الدراسة بإدماج الأنشطة القائمة على المقاطع الصوتية بصورة منهجية في مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية في السودان، إلى جانب تدريب المعلمين واستخدام المواد التعليمية متعددة الحواس.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التدريس القائم على المقاطع الصوتية؛ مهارات القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية؛ الوعي الصوتي؛ فك شفرة الكلمات؛ متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ تعليم مرحلة الأساس؛ السودان.

1. Introduction

Reading is one of the fundamental language skills required for academic achievement, independent learning, and effective communication. For learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), however, developing accurate and fluent reading skills can be particularly challenging because of the complex relationship between English orthography and pronunciation. Unlike languages with relatively consistent spelling-to-sound correspondences, English contains numerous orthographic patterns and pronunciation irregularities that may make word recognition difficult for beginning learners. Effective reading development requires learners to acquire several interrelated abilities, including phonological awareness, letter–sound knowledge, word recognition, decoding, vocabulary knowledge, and reading fluency. Among these abilities, phonological awareness is particularly important because it enables learners to recognize and manipulate the sound structures of spoken language. Although phoneme-level awareness has received considerable attention in literacy research, the syllable represents another important level of phonological organization that can facilitate the decoding of longer and unfamiliar words. The syllable occupies an intermediate position between the phoneme and the word. It provides learners with a manageable linguistic unit through which complex words can be segmented, pronounced, and recognized. For example, multisyllabic words can be divided into smaller units before the learner attempts to blend them into a complete word. Such segmentation may reduce the difficulty associated with processing long words and can provide learners with a systematic strategy for approaching unfamiliar vocabulary.

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

The issue is particularly relevant in the Sudanese EFL context. Sudanese learners acquire English within an educational environment in which Arabic is the dominant language. Differences between Arabic and English in phonological structure, syllable patterns, consonant clusters, vowel systems, and orthographic conventions may create difficulties for learners. These difficulties can become particularly evident when learners encounter English words containing multiple syllables or unfamiliar consonant sequences. In many EFL classrooms, pronunciation instruction tends to emphasize individual sounds, while less attention may be given to syllable structure, syllable division, and the relationship between syllable awareness and reading. Consequently, learners may attempt to pronounce long English words as undivided units, rely on memorization, or guess unfamiliar words. Systematic syllable-based instruction may provide an alternative strategy by teaching learners how to identify, count, segment, and pronounce syllables before attempting to read complete words. Against this background, the present study examines the effect of syllable-based instruction on developing English reading skills among EFL learners in basic-level schools in El Obeid, Sudan. It combines teachers' perceptions of syllable instruction with empirical evidence obtained through pre-test and post-test assessment of students' reading performance.

1.1 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What effect does syllable-based instruction have on learners' ability to decode and read English words?
2. To what extent does syllable-based instruction improve learners' pronunciation and reading performance?
3. How do English language teachers perceive the effectiveness of explicit and multisensory syllable-based instructional techniques?

1.2 Research Hypothesis

The study tests the following hypothesis:

H□: Syllable-based instruction has a statistically significant positive effect on the English reading performance of basic-level EFL learners.

The corresponding null hypothesis is:

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

H□: Syllable-based instruction has no statistically significant effect on the English reading performance of basic-level EFL learners.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study is significant for several groups involved in English language education. For English language teachers, it provides practical evidence concerning the value of incorporating syllable identification, segmentation, counting, and pronunciation into reading lessons. For curriculum developers, the findings may provide a basis for incorporating systematic syllable instruction into reading materials and classroom activities.

The study may also be useful for teacher educators and educational authorities by highlighting the importance of phonological and syllabic awareness in teacher preparation. Finally, the study contributes empirical evidence from Sudan, particularly from North Kordofan State, where research on syllable-based reading instruction remains relatively limited.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of the Syllable

The syllable is a fundamental unit in phonetic and phonological analysis. It is larger than an individual phoneme but smaller than a word and functions as an important organizational unit in spoken language. Roach (2002) describes the syllable in structural terms through its major constituents: onset, nucleus, and coda.

The **onset** consists of the consonant or consonants occurring before the nucleus, whereas the **nucleus** represents the central and most prominent part of the syllable, normally occupied by a vowel. The **coda** consists of the consonant or consonants occurring after the nucleus. The nucleus and coda together constitute the **rhyme**.

For example, the word cat can be represented as follows:

Syllable □ Onset + Rhyme
Rhyme □ Nucleus + Coda

Thus:

/k/ + /æ/ + /t/

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

The syllable structure can therefore be represented as:

Onset: /k/
Nucleus: /æ/
Coda: /t/

English permits a wide range of syllable structures, including simple forms such as V and CV and complex forms involving several consonants.

2.2 Structure of English Syllables

English syllables may be classified according to the arrangement of consonants and vowels. Common structures include:

Structure	Example	Transcription
V	I	/aɪ/
CV	go	/gəʊ/
VC	at	/æt/
CVC	cat	/kæt/
CCV	tree	/triː/
CVCC	jump	/dʒʌmp/
CCVC	stop	/stɒp/
CCVCC	plant	/plɑːnt/

This structural diversity can present difficulties for EFL learners whose first language permits different combinations of consonants and vowels.

2.3 Sonority and Syllable Structure

Sonority theory provides another explanation of syllable organization. Rogers (2000) explains that speech sounds differ in their relative degree of sonority. Vowels generally occupy the highest position on the sonority scale, while stops occupy the lowest position.

A simplified sonority hierarchy can be represented as:

Vowels Approximants Nasals Fricatives Affricates Stops

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

A typical syllable therefore involves an increase in sonority toward the nucleus followed by a decrease toward the coda. This pattern contributes to the perceptual organization of syllables and helps explain why vowels normally function as syllable nuclei.

2.4 Open and Closed Syllables

Syllables can also be classified according to whether they end in a vowel or a consonant.

An **open syllable** ends in a vowel sound, as in:

- go
- me
- sea

A **closed syllable** ends in a consonant, as in:

- cat
- dog
- jump

This distinction is pedagogically useful because syllable structure can influence vowel pronunciation and assist learners in predicting pronunciation patterns.

2.5 Strong and Weak Syllables

English contains both strong and weak syllables. Strong syllables generally have greater prominence, whereas weak syllables have reduced prominence. The schwa /□/ is particularly common in weak syllables.

For EFL learners, weak syllables can be challenging because their pronunciation is often less predictable from spelling. Explicit attention to weak syllables can therefore contribute to improved pronunciation and more natural English rhythm.

2.6 Syllabic Consonants

Although vowels normally serve as syllable nuclei, certain consonants can function as syllable nuclei in English. These are known as **syllabic consonants**.

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

Examples include:

- bottle /□b□tl/
- little /□l□tl/
- button /□b□tn/

Awareness of syllabic consonants can help learners understand why some English words contain syllables that do not have an independently pronounced vowel.

2.7 Syllable Types and Reading

Syllable knowledge can support learners in identifying and decoding unfamiliar words. Common instructional classifications include closed syllables, open syllables, silent-e syllables, r-controlled syllables, vowel-team syllables, and consonant-le syllables.

Knowledge of these patterns may help learners recognize recurring relationships between spelling and pronunciation. Instead of treating every unfamiliar word as an entirely new item, learners can analyze its component syllables and apply previously learned decoding strategies.

2.8 Syllable Awareness and Reading Development

Phonological awareness is closely related to successful reading development. Syllable awareness represents an important component of this broader ability because it allows learners to identify and manipulate larger sound units.

Diliberto et al. (2009) reported positive effects of syllable-skills instruction on reading achievement among struggling readers. Similarly, Moats (2001) emphasizes the importance of systematic knowledge about the relationships between speech and print in effective literacy instruction. Torgesen (2004) also stresses the importance of systematic early reading instruction for preventing reading failure.

Syllabication can be particularly useful when learners encounter long or unfamiliar words. By dividing a word into manageable units, learners can process the word sequentially rather than attempting to recognize it as one complex visual form.

2.9 Syllable-Based Instruction in EFL Contexts

In EFL classrooms, syllable instruction can be implemented through a variety of techniques. These include:

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

1. Counting syllables by clapping.
2. Using the hand-under-the-chin technique.
3. Marking syllable boundaries visually.
4. Dividing words on the board.
5. Using flashcards.
6. Providing audio models.
7. Using repetition and choral practice.
8. Organizing syllable-based games.
9. Practicing multisyllabic vocabulary.
10. Combining syllable segmentation with reading activities.

Such activities provide visual, auditory, and kinesthetic input and may be particularly beneficial for young learners.

2.10 Research Gap

Although syllable structure and phonological awareness have been extensively discussed in phonetic, phonological, and literacy research, relatively little empirical research has examined the effectiveness of systematic syllable-based reading instruction in Sudanese basic-level EFL classrooms.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating the relationship between syllable-based instruction and reading performance among basic-level learners in El Obeid, North Kordofan State. The study is particularly valuable because it combines teachers' perceptions with quantitative pre-test and post-test evidence.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a **mixed-methods approach** incorporating two complementary designs. A descriptive survey design was used to investigate English teachers' perceptions

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

of syllable-based instruction, while a quasi-experimental one-group pre-test–post-test design was employed to examine changes in students' reading performance following the instructional intervention.

The combination of these approaches enabled the researcher to examine both teachers' pedagogical perceptions and measurable changes in learners' performance.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population consisted of **170 English language teachers** working in basic-level schools in El Obeid, Sudan. A sample of **50 English language teachers** was selected to participate in the questionnaire.

In addition, **50 basic-level students** participated in the pre-test and post-test component of the study. The students completed a pre-test before the intervention and a post-test after receiving syllable-based instruction.

3.3 Research Instruments

Two principal instruments were employed.

3.3.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire consisting of 20 statements was developed to investigate teachers' perceptions of syllable-based instruction. The questionnaire employed a four-point response scale:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Not Sure

The items addressed syllable awareness, instructional techniques, teacher competence, pronunciation, phonological awareness, syllable division, and reading development.

3.3.2 Pre-Test and Post-Test

A pre-test and post-test were administered to the student participants. The assessments

focused on students' ability to identify syllables, recognize syllable structures, divide words into syllables, and apply syllable knowledge during reading-related tasks.

The same general assessment framework was used before and after the intervention to permit comparison of performance.

3.4 Validity

The research instruments were reviewed by three specialists holding PhD qualifications in English Language Teaching at the University of Kordofan. The experts examined the instruments for clarity, relevance, appropriateness, and content coverage. Their recommendations were considered in preparing the final versions of the instruments.

3.5 Reliability

The reliability of the questionnaire was examined using the split-half method and Pearson's correlation coefficient. The original study reported a reliability coefficient of approximately 0.58.

However, because the numerical calculation reproduced in the earlier manuscript contains an apparent arithmetic inconsistency, the coefficient should ideally be verified against the original SPSS output before submission to an international journal.

3.6 Instructional Intervention

The instructional intervention focused on systematic syllable awareness and decoding. The students were introduced to the concept and structure of syllables and were trained to identify, count, divide, and pronounce syllables in English words.

The intervention incorporated:

- syllable counting;
- syllable segmentation;
- word division;
- hand-under-the-chin technique;
- board-based visual representation;

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

- flashcards;
- audio–visual materials;
- teacher modeling;
- choral repetition;
- pronunciation practice; and
- syllable–based classroom games.

The instructional sequence encouraged students to analyze unfamiliar words into syllabic units before attempting to pronounce the complete word.

3.7 Data Analysis

Questionnaire data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Student performance was examined through descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations. A paired–samples t–test was employed to determine whether the difference between pre–test and post–test performance was statistically significant.

The statistical significance level was set at $\alpha = .05$.

4. Results

4.1 Teachers' Perceptions

The questionnaire results demonstrate substantial support among participating teachers for syllable–based instruction.

Table 1. Teachers' Perceptions of Syllable–Based Instruction

Thematic Area	Key Finding	Agreement
Practice and teacher competence	Mastering syllables requires continued practice	96%
Teacher competence	Effective syllable instruction requires adequately trained teachers	88%

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

Teacher pronunciation	Poor teacher pronunciation can hinder learner understanding	94%
Multisensory instruction	Flashcards, audio and video are useful instructional resources	86%
Kinesthetic instruction	Hand-under-the-chin technique is useful for syllable counting	96%
Syllable games	Syllable games make learning more enjoyable	94%
Syllable division	Dividing words into syllables improves reading skills	92%
Word decoding	Syllable division helps decode long or unfamiliar words	86%
Phonological awareness	Weak phonological awareness is associated with weak reading skills	88%

The findings indicate that teachers generally perceive explicit syllable instruction as beneficial for reading and pronunciation development. Particularly strong support was observed for continued practice, the hand-under-the-chin technique, and the use of syllable division to support reading.

4.2 Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Passing Rate
Pre-test	50	2.00	12.00	8.50	2.50	46% (23)
Post-test	50	6.00	17.00	11.70	3.24	70% (35)

The results demonstrate an improvement in student performance following the intervention. The mean score increased from **8.50** in the pre-test to **11.70** in the post-test, representing an increase of **3.20 points**.

The percentage of students achieving the stated passing criterion also increased from

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

46% (23 students) to **70% (35 students)**. Thus, the proportion of students who passed increased by **24 percentage points** following the intervention.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Table 3. Paired-Samples t-Test

Comparison	Mean Difference	*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test – Post-test	-3.20	-11.536	49	< .001

The paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test scores, $t(49) = -11.536$, $p < .001$.

The negative value of t results from calculating the difference as pre-test minus post-test. Since the post-test mean was higher than the pre-test mean, the result provides evidence of improved student performance following the syllable-based instructional intervention.

Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is supported.

5. Discussion

The findings provide empirical evidence supporting the use of syllable-based instruction in basic-level EFL reading classrooms. The teachers' responses demonstrate a strong perception that syllable awareness, systematic practice, appropriate instructional materials, and teacher phonological competence are important components of successful reading instruction.

The particularly high level of agreement concerning syllable practice suggests that learners may require repeated exposure and opportunities to manipulate syllabic structures before they can use them effectively in reading. This finding is consistent with the broader principle that phonological knowledge develops through explicit and systematic practice.

The strong support for multisensory techniques is also pedagogically important. Techniques such as hand-under-the-chin syllable counting, visual word segmentation, flashcards, audio materials, and classroom games provide learners with several ways of processing the same linguistic information. Such approaches may be especially appropriate for younger EFL learners because they transform an abstract phonological concept into a concrete

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

classroom activity.

The most important evidence, however, comes from the pre-test and post-test results. Students' mean score increased from 8.50 to 11.70, while the passing rate increased from 46% to 70%. The paired-samples t-test demonstrated that this difference was statistically significant, $t(49) = -11.536$, $p < .001$.

These findings suggest that the instructional intervention was associated with meaningful improvement in students' performance. One possible explanation is that syllable segmentation reduces the processing demands associated with long or unfamiliar words. Rather than attempting to recognize an entire word simultaneously, learners can divide the word into smaller phonological units and process these units sequentially.

The findings are broadly consistent with the work of Moats (2001), Torgesen (2004), and Diliberto et al. (2009), who emphasize the importance of systematic phonological and decoding instruction in reading development.

Nevertheless, the results should be interpreted cautiously. Because the study used a one-group pre-test–post-test design without a separate randomized control group, improvement cannot be attributed exclusively to the intervention with the same level of confidence that would be possible in a randomized controlled design. Other factors, including repeated testing, general classroom exposure, maturation, or teacher effects, may also have contributed to the observed improvement.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of syllable-based instruction on English reading development among basic-level EFL learners in El Obeid, Sudan. The findings from both the teacher questionnaire and the student assessments provide support for the pedagogical value of systematic syllable instruction. Teachers demonstrated strong support for explicit instruction, regular practice, multisensory techniques, teacher pronunciation competence, and syllable division. More importantly, students demonstrated improved performance following the instructional intervention. Their mean score increased from 8.50 to 11.70, and their passing rate increased from 46% to 70%. The paired-samples t-test confirmed that this improvement was statistically significant. The study therefore concludes that sys-

المجلة العلمية المُحكمة للأكاديمية العربية الدولية
The Scientific Journal of the International Arab Academy
IUU Membership Certificate No.: 1102202600217 - Arab Impact Factor Certificate No.: 287
ISSN (ONLINE): 1858 - 8441 - ISSN (PRINT): 1858 - 845X

tematic syllable-based instruction can serve as an effective component of EFL reading instruction, particularly when learners are taught to identify, count, segment, divide, and pronounce syllables systematically. Syllable awareness can provide an important bridge between phonological awareness and the decoding of unfamiliar English words.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that, English Language Teachers

1. English teachers should integrate explicit syllable instruction into regular reading lessons.
2. Teachers should provide learners with systematic practice in identifying, counting, segmenting, and dividing syllables.
3. Teachers should use multisensory techniques such as clapping, hand-under-the-chin counting, visual marking, flashcards, and audio-visual materials.
4. English language textbooks should incorporate systematic syllable-awareness activities.
5. Reading materials should include appropriately graded multisyllabic vocabulary.
6. Curriculum materials should include exercises on syllable identification, division, pronunciation, and word decoding.
7. Audio resources should accompany reading materials where possible.
8. Teacher-training programmes should include systematic preparation in:

- English phonology;
- phonological awareness;
- syllable structure;
- syllable division;
- pronunciation instruction; and
- reading-decoding strategies.

8. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

First, the study was geographically limited to basic-level schools in El Obeid, North Kordofan State. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to all Sudanese EFL learners.

Second, the student sample consisted of only 50 participants. A larger sample would provide stronger evidence concerning the effectiveness of syllable-based instruction.

Third, the quasi-experimental design did not include a separate randomized control group. Consequently, causal conclusions should be made cautiously.

Fourth, the study focused primarily on reading and decoding outcomes. Future studies could examine whether syllable-based instruction also affects listening, speaking, spelling, writing, vocabulary development, and reading fluency.

References

Abercrombie, D. (1989). Elements of general phonetics. Edinburgh University Press.

Araujo, J. (2019). Why study syllables? Online resource.

Crystal, D. (2003). A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics (5th ed.). Blackwell.

Diliberto, J. A., Beattie, J. R., Flowers, C. P., &Algozzine, R. F. (2009). Effects of teaching syllable skills instruction on reading achievement in struggling middle school readers. Literacy Research and Instruction, 48(1), 14–27.

Finch, G. (2000). Linguistic terms and concepts. Macmillan Press.

Forel, C. A., &Puskás, G. (2005). Phonetics and phonology: A practical course. University of Geneva.

Goldsmith, J. (2009). The syllable. University of Chicago Press.

Hancock, M. (2003). English pronunciation in use. Cambridge University Press.

Katamba, F. (1989). An introduction to phonology. Longman.

McCarthy, J. (1978). The syllable in phonology. Indiana University Linguistics Club.

Moats, L. C. (2001). Speech to print: Language essentials for teachers. Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Müller, N. (2017). Syllable-based approaches to reading development. Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 17(2), 155–172.

O'Connor, J. D. (1973). Phonetics. Penguin Books.

Roach, P. (2002). English phonetics and phonology: A practical course (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Rogers, H. (2000). The sounds of language: An introduction to phonetics. Longman.

Skandera, P., &Burleigh, P. (2005). A manual of English phonetics and phonology. Gunter NarrVerlag.

Smith, N., & Wilson, D. (1980). Modern linguistics: The results of Chomsky's revolution. Penguin Books.

Torgesen, J. K. (2004). Preventing early reading failure. American Educator, 28(3), 6–9.

Yule, G. (2006). The study of language (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.