



**UNIVERSIDAD ESTATAL PENÍNSULA DE SANTA ELENA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND LANGUAGES
PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

**“Advantages of Teaching Phonemes to EFL Young
Learners”**

RESEARCH PROJECT

As a prerequisite to obtain a:

**BACHELOR’S DEGREE IN PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL
AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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Advisor's Approval

In my role as Advisor of the research paper under the title **Advantages of Teaching Phonemes to EFL Young Learners** prepared by **Mora Elizalde Jesse David** and **Ponce Véliz Silya Corina**, undergraduate students of the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages Major, at School of Educational Sciences and Languages at Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, I declare that after oriented, studied and reviewed the project, I approve in its entirety, because it meets the requirements and is sufficient for its submission to the evaluation of the academic tribunal.

Sincerely,

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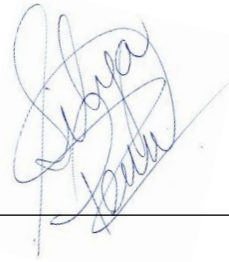


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Declaration

THE CONTENT OF THE FOLLOWING GRADUATION WORK IS MY RESPONSIBILITY;
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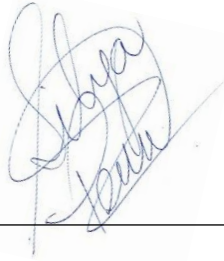


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Dedication

I dedicate this research project to my family, professors and kind friends who always encouraged and motivated me to keep moving forward in the last 4 years, making this study, a result of all the effort I have done and, the trust everyone have placed in me.

Particularly, this achievement is dedicated to the person I love the most in this world, my beloved mother, Ana Aracely Elizalde Bravo. She influenced me with her kindness and humanity towards all living beings. She taught me this life is worth living with God always leading the way. For this, I am truly honored to be her son.

This is all for you, Mom.

With love,

Jesse David Mora Elizalde

Dedication

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With love

Silya

Abstract

Despite established research affirming the necessity of phoneme instruction for successful new language acquisition, its systemic implementation remains deficient due to a lack of priority in educational syllabi, limited resources, and inadequate teacher training. This qualitative, phenomenological study was therefore initiated to explore the viewpoints of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding the value and effective methods of phoneme instruction, specifically aiming to identify the practical benefits for the spelling and reading abilities of EFL young learners. The research employed an interview method, utilizing a questionnaire of eight open-ended questions executed virtually to five experienced EFL teachers, with all data recorded and transcribed for detailed analysis of their professional perceptions and experiences. Results consistently highlighted that teachers overwhelmingly perceive a positive impact, noting that phoneme instruction significantly improves word decoding and the identification of letter-sound patterns, which consequently results in enhanced pronunciation and reading fluency when encountering new vocabulary. Highly effective strategies identified by participants include sound separation, word blending, structured exercises, and multisensory techniques such as music and play activities. Ultimately, these findings conclude that consistent phoneme instruction is fundamental in reducing student frustration, fostering greater confidence and independence, and improving overall reading comprehension, contributing positively not only to foreign language acquisition but also to the mother tongue due to improved phonemic awareness (PA).

KEY WORDS: Phonemic Awareness, EFL young learners, phoneme instruction, word decoding, reading fluency

Resumen

A pesar de que la investigación consolidada afirma la necesidad de la enseñanza de fonemas para la adquisición exitosa de un nuevo idioma, su implementación sistemática sigue siendo deficiente debido a la falta de prioridad en los planes de estudio, los recursos limitados y la formación docente insuficiente. Por consiguiente, este estudio cualitativo y fenomenológico se inició para explorar las perspectivas de los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL, por sus siglas en inglés) sobre el valor y los métodos eficaces de la enseñanza de fonemas, con el objetivo específico de identificar los beneficios prácticos para la ortografía y la comprensión lectora de los jóvenes aprendices de EFL. La investigación empleó el método de entrevista, utilizando un cuestionario de ocho preguntas abiertas ejecutado virtualmente a cinco profesores de EFL con experiencia. Todos los datos se registraron y transcribieron para un análisis detallado de sus percepciones y experiencias profesionales. Los resultados destacaron consistentemente que los profesores perciben, de forma abrumadora, un impacto positivo, señalando que la enseñanza de fonemas mejora significativamente la decodificación de palabras y la identificación de patrones grafema-fonema, lo que, en consecuencia, mejora la pronunciación y la fluidez lectora al enfrentarse a vocabulario nuevo. Entre las estrategias altamente efectivas identificadas por los participantes se incluyen la separación de sonidos, la fusión de palabras, los ejercicios estructurados y las técnicas multisensoriales como la música y las actividades lúdicas. En definitiva, estos hallazgos concluyen que la instrucción consistente de fonemas es fundamental para reducir la frustración de los estudiantes, fomentar una mayor confianza e independencia y mejorar la comprensión lectora general, contribuyendo positivamente no solo a la adquisición de lenguas extranjeras sino también a la lengua materna debido a una mejor conciencia fonémica (CF).

PALABRAS CLAVES: Conciencia fonémica, jóvenes aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera, instrucción de fonemas, decodificación de palabras, fluidez lectora.

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Introduction

Numerous research has remarked that teaching phonemes is very important and completely necessary at the moment of learning a new language. However, despite all these findings, phonics is not a priority in the syllabi yet, and there are still many teachers without proper training, or lack of materials to teach phonemes (Paris, 2018).

This topic has been researched around the world and, for instance in Spain, investigators have used YouTube videos to teach and learn phonemes, and in South Africa a study determined that a phonics approach should improve the phoneme-grapheme mapping process. Another important study made in Colombia showed that place and manner of articulation and allophonic realization sounds are the biggest challenges for most Latin American students. And finally, in Ecuador, research demonstrated that Linguistic competences could have great influence on pronunciation.

Important information found during studies showed that drills and repeated activities are useful strategies when learning phonemes, and if they are constantly practiced, specific structures could be mastered while learning. Visual mouth models, gestures and audio-visual cues are strategically necessary to reinforce both production and decoding. (Pardede, 2018)

This research used a solid methodological framework for data collection that could support the results obtained from a thorough analysis and interpretation. Due to the qualitative nature of this research, a set of beliefs, feelings, and perceptions through teachers' experiences, are considered a phenomenon according to (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023). Hence, this phenomenon must be carried out by suitable data collection techniques (One-on-one interview) to ensure high-quality responses from each participant, where a questionnaire structured with 8 open-ended questions through an online interview via ZOOM's platform, directed to five English

teachers from Santa Elena province who have worked in Elementary schools teaching English phonemes, will provide this study different perspectives to determine how beneficial phonemic instruction is and how it should be implemented.

As a result, notable intelligibility improvement over the years, better word decoding and letter-sound pattern identification, pronunciation and reading fluency improvement even for new words, frustration reduction, and self-confidence boost through strategies such as strong role modeling, word/hyphenation blending, etc., are main advantages teachers and relevant authors recognized when teaching phonemes to EFL young learners.

Chapter I

The Problem

Research Topic

Benefits of Teaching Phonemes and Reading Skills

Title

Advantages of Teaching Phonemes to EFL Young Learners

Problem Statement

An increasing number of global investigations point out the importance of methodical and clear phonics instruction in early literacy evolution. Organized phonics, which includes teaching children the relationship between sounds (phonemes) and letters (graphemes), has been exposed to importantly refining word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension (Ehri, 2020). Castles et al. (2018) argue that after decades of debate in the “reading wars,” a consensus has emerged that phoneme-based instruction is essential to reading success, especially for beginners. This authentication is not only relevant to English-speaking environments but is more and more relevant for EFL contexts, where learners must evolve skills in an unfamiliar sound system.

Despite these findings, many EFL classrooms in Ecuador do not integrate systematic phonics instruction into their teaching practices. Syllabi often place vocabulary memorization and grammar structures over phonological instruction, and teachers may be short of the training, materials, or belief to teach phonemes categorically (Paris, 2018). As a result, young learners are contemplated to develop reading skills in English without the fundamental tools required to decode words or understand English spelling-sound similarities. This can guide to reading difficulties, diminished confidence, and low academic achievement in later years.

The necessity for explicit phoneme instruction in EFL contexts has been featured in several recent studies. Albalooshi (2024) directed a systematic review that deduced teaching phonics, especially phoneme division and blending, remarkably advantages EFL learners' reading accuracy and fluency. Similarly, Hughes et al. (2018) found that young learners in Indonesia and Malaysia who got phonics-based instruction made considerable improvements in literacy skills than those who followed more conventional reading procedures. These discoveries are highly relevant for Ecuador, where most of the public and private schools carry on with adopting general communicative approaches without complete attention on fundamental reading skills such as phonemic awareness.

The linguistic differences between Spanish and English also give challenges for EFL learners in Ecuador. Spanish has a clearer orthographic system than English, it means that the relationship between sounds and letters is more expected. This can make English decoding especially difficult without selected instruction in phoneme-grapheme relationships (Silverman et al., 2020). Moreover, lots of phonemes in English, such as /θ/, /ð/, and /æ/ do not exist in Spanish, needing even more obvious teaching for learners to recognize and produce these sounds accurately.

Given these factors, there is a clear breach between research-based literacy instruction applications and the reality of classroom instruction in Ecuador. According to Moncayo (2023), the advantages of teaching phonemes to young EFL learners are demonstrated in international literature, but these applications are not yet adopted in Ecuadorian schools. This thesis points to direct this breach by investigating the advantages of phoneme instruction for young EFL learners in Ecuador, concentrating on developments in reading fluency, pronunciation, decoding ability, and learner confidence. Understanding how organized phoneme instruction can increase reading

addition in Ecuadorian classrooms will give valuable awareness for teachers, syllabus designers, and lawmakers requesting to improve English literacy results at the fundamental level.

Problem question

1. How does explicit phoneme instruction, through display to words and decoding, determine the reading confidence levels of EFL young learners?

Specific questions

1. What are the perceptions of EFL teachers concerning the benefits of teaching phonemes to young learners?
2. Which phoneme teaching strategies are considered as most effective by EFL teachers for strengthening literacy skills in young EFL learners?

General Objective

- To analyze the advantages of teaching phonemes to EFL young learners through exposure to words and decoding them in order to gain confidence when reading.

Specific objectives

- To explore the viewpoints of EFL teachers considering the benefits of teaching phonemes to young learners.
- To examine phoneme teaching strategies that are most effective for EFL young learners.
- To identify the specific benefits of phoneme instruction on the spelling abilities of EFL young learners.

Justification

English phoneme/grapheme instruction relevance arises from a necessity in Ecuadorian society, the lack of English proficiency, where in many EFL classrooms in this country, a systematic phonics instruction turns out not to be integrated. This seems to be a problem

considering how relevant English is currently, just as Pennycook (as cited in Cely & Urrutia, 2023) stated that this language and its role on global media, international forums, business, finance, politics and diplomacy, can be practically declared as a global phenomenon.

For this reason, it's essential to highlight the relevance of applying proper methods to overcome one of the most consistent difficulties whenever dealing with a foreign language, which is phonology. An article conducted by Ehri (2022) works as a key piece for what teachers need to know and do to teach Letter-Sounds, Phonemic Awareness, Word Reading, and Phonics most adequately. In here, it can easily be spotted how crucial correct pronunciation and reading comprehension from decoding large units of words is. Consequently, fluency and self-confidence can be assured over time in EFL learners if implemented in early exposure.

This research aims to explore the advantages that applying phoneme/grapheme instruction into schools can offer to EFL learners since the beginning of a person's academic career, where young learners are at their highest level of acquiring language information more efficiently than the older ones, representing a unique opportunity to implement complex sounds since childhood; sounds that tend to be difficult for most adults that were mainly focused on traditional techniques like vocabulary memorization and meaningless reading, rather than laying a solid groundwork to gain confidence for oratory and literary abilities, which can definitely contribute to learners in boosting not only English acquisition, but many other relevant languages that are significantly different from ours in terms of phonology like French, German or Swedish.

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

Background

According to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), there are 44 sounds (Phonemes) in the English language. Since sounds cannot be written, letters and symbols (Graphemes) are used to represent those sounds from the 26 letters of the alphabet individually and in combination. These phonemes can be divided into two categories: consonants, in which air flow cuts off (partially or completely), and vowels, where the air flow is unobstructed at the moment the sound is produced (Dyslexia Reading Well, 2025).

In Spain, Sinyashina (2023, p.739), considered the use of YouTube videos as a meaningful methodology to teach and learn the English consonant and semi-consonant phonemes. In South Africa, Wilsenach (2019) conducted a thorough study on the importance of PA and reading in Northern Sotho, as a way to determine how much the contribution of phonemes and syllables reading attained in Grade 3 students and that, as a result, PA seems to be a better option to consider applying when using a systematic phonics approach compared to syllable awareness, and thanks to this comparison, the phoneme-grapheme process has been improved.

A study in Colombia carried out by Uribe et al. (2019), addressed a recurring problematic for Spanish speaking learners at the moment of learning English phonemes, in which, subtopics such as place and manner of articulation, allophonic realization sounds, etc., represent a challenge for most learners from Latin American's countries, so that most problematic phonemes can be identified and provided due attention.

This problem is just one from a larger conglomerate that includes phoneme instruction and all related topics where we can find articulatory organs, description and classification of speech sounds, stress in the words and sentences, English diphthongs and consonant sounds, etc., regarding a resolution's degree by Matos (2018) in Peru, and that it may be a useful resource for English teachers. In Venezuela, Zapata-Vega et al. (2022) implemented a web application that serves as support for learning phonemes and graphemes for *Universidad de Guayaquil*'s students from Information Systems' Degree's subjects, where the participants showed a remarkable improvement in their pronunciation and symbol recognition.

A study about phonological interference from Kichwa and Spanish to English was carried out at *Universidad Técnica de Ambato* by Romero & Camacho (2017) in which a group of 24 A2 English students worked as sample recordings where they analyzed the /b/, /v/, /th/, /d/, /sh/ and /ll/ phonemes to transcribe the differences and similarities between the mother tongue (Kichwa and Spanish) to English. Therefore, it can be an advantage for Spanish and even some indigenous native speakers to learn English phonemes, due to the similarities that can be found in these languages. Furthermore, Sandoval et al. (2017) provided a quanti-qualitative research where Linguistic competences (listening, speaking, reading and writing) can influence proper pronunciation.

Thanks to the relevance of this research, nowadays there are plenty of worldwide, regional, and local information related to the implementation of teaching phonemes at early stages of education, which is highly important as a basis for the English language and its role as *lingua franca*.

Pedagogical Basis

John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner's learning theory of Behaviorism is mostly associated with teaching Phoneme-Grapheme because this learning theory is an educational approach rooted in psychology that suggests that behavior can be studied scientifically without considering mental states. Ignoring the role of psychological variables, the theory suggests that free will is an illusion and that behavior can be predicted and conditioned by, in this case, teachers (Reimann, 2018). Hence, considering the explicit, systematic and direct instruction, young learners can be directed to a stimulus (graphemes) for a group of letters to learn and associate to the corresponding sounds (phonemes) as a response, making possible in the process the decoding action, as the reading skill can be taught and learned sequentially by the repetition factor necessary to acquire a new alphabet.

According to Skinner's operant conditioning, individuals obtain satisfying responses whenever they are conditioned to a certain task, and the opposite occurs when they're not conditioned. Therefore, a positive reinforcement must be directed to students to strengthen one's behavior (Dilshad, 2017). This could be applied to young learners for setting their minds to a specific group of graphemes, allowing them the association between what they see, and how they should pronounce certain phonological structures as an attempt to condition their behavior towards repetition and positive reinforcement.

Due in large part to their emphasis on drilling tactics, pattern practice, and repetition, these paradigms have had a substantial impact on English language instruction. Despite having influenced language classes for many years, this approach is not without its detractors. Some contend that it overemphasizes mechanical repetition at the expense of practical communication abilities (Teachers.Institute, 2023). Even though this method has detractors, it is still being used

in schools around the world as one of the most effective methods to teach phonemes due to its practicality and efficiency.

Alemi & Tavakoli, (as cited in Djauhar, 2021) stated that the Audio-Lingual Method shows the importance of targeting through different types of exercises such as listening, memorizing and repeating expressions and sometimes including types of vocabulary learnt in classes. Students could often see immediate results using extensive memorization, repetition and pattern over-learning as the key to succeed in the Audio-Lingual Method. Therefore, this can be applied to this research by implementing different types of drills which are used to secure a better way of learning and practicing phonemes.

Drills and pattern exercises work as a heavy reliance based on the behaviorist-structuralist method as a key feature for teaching English. These strategies aim to solidify language structures through repeated activities that seek to promote automatic usage of correct language. The reasoning behind this approach is straightforward: the greater the amount of practice a student has with a particular structure, the higher the chances they will use it correctly in upcoming conversations. These drills are: Repetition, Substitution, Transformation and Chain, and they engage and allow students to understand the studied phonemes. With constant practice of the patterns, students can master specific structures when learning. (Teachers.Institute, 2023)

Theoretical Basis

Phonemes and phonemic awareness in EFL contexts

A phoneme is the smallest contrastive sound unit in a language that can change meaning (e.g., /p/ vs. /b/ in pat vs. bat). Phonemic awareness (PA) is the conscious ability to detect, segment, blend, delete, and manipulate phonemes in spoken words an oral/aural skill that precedes print (O'Toole, 2023). For young learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), PA

provides a perceptual map of English sounds that supports both early literacy (decoding and spelling) and intelligible pronunciation. This distinction between phonemic awareness (sound-level) and phonics (sound–symbol mapping) is well established in the reading science literature and undergirds early literacy frameworks widely adopted in L1 English; its mechanisms are relevant to EFL because learning to read an alphabetic language requires sensitivity to phoneme-level units regardless of first language (L1) (Langerberg, 2025).

The Reading–Pronunciation Interface

A main advantage of teaching phonemes to young EFL learners is its strong relation to reading development. The National Reading Panel’s review (a landmark meta-analysis) concluded that explicit PA instruction improves children’s word reading, pseudoword reading, and spelling, with effects through ages, risk profiles, and instructional settings. These effects are not minor; they reflect important changes in how children represent speech sounds and connect them to letters, allowing efficient decoding that in turn supports comprehension. Although the Panel focused on L1 English, the underlying cognitive processes—segmenting and blending phonemes—are language-general and thus informative for EFL instruction (Langerberg, 2025). Considering this, for this research, it can be appointed that giving Phonetic Awareness the necessary relevance will improve different aspects in students, including methodical decoding that supports comprehension.

According to Murphy Odo (2021), for EFL learners specifically, a growing body of research shows that phonological awareness and phonics interventions yield moderate to large effects on L2 word and pseudoword reading (e.g., overall $g \approx .53$ for word reading and $g \approx 1.51$ for pseudoword reading in a meta-analysis). These outcomes suggest that when young learners

are taught to discern and manipulate English phonemes—and to map them consistently to graphemes—they acquire measurable gains in decoding accuracy and fluency.

Cross-language transfer

Another advantage of phoneme-focused instruction is cross-language transfer. Primary studies demonstrate that phonemic awareness developed in one alphabetic language can facilitate decoding in another. For Spanish-speaking learners (such as many in Latin American contexts), PA in Spanish predicts performance in English word and pseudoword reading, indicating that learners' sensitivity to phonemic structure is not linked to a single language but can be used for L2 literacy. A well-cited work by Durgunoğlu et al. (1993) established that bilingual children's L1 PA (and letter knowledge) importantly contributes to L2 word identification. For teachers, this means that PA routines in the L1 or L2 can mutually reinforce each other, providing efficiency gains in early instruction (Koda, 1998).

Importantly, transfer is not uniform through all sounds: English includes phonemic contrasts that are not in Spanish (e.g., many vowel distinctions and final consonant groups). Therefore, while global PA can transfer, instruction should also target language-specific contrasts to avoid negative transfer and fossilization of non-targetlike categories. This combines the general benefits of PA with specific phonetic goals for English (Goodwin et al., 2010).

Advantages for pronunciation and intelligibility

Teaching phonemes early does more than help children read—it also supports intelligible pronunciation. When young learners can perceive and manipulate English phonemes, they form more precise phonological categories, which improves both perception and production of L2 sounds. Research syntheses in L2 pronunciation show that instruction focused at specific segmental or suprasegmental targets guides to measurable gains, especially when outcomes are

captured with appropriate (feature-specific) measures. In a meta-analysis carried out by Saito & Plonsky (2019) concluded that pronunciation instruction is effective overall, with stronger evidence when the instruction targets identifiable features and practice elicits monitored production. For young EFL learners, coupling early PA/phoneme work with explicit, child-friendly pronunciation tasks (e.g., minimal pairs, onset–rime games, sound–gesture links) can preempt entrenched misperceptions and reduce later remediation.

Classroom studies in EFL settings also report positive results when explicit phonemic training approaches are integrated (e.g., visual mouth models, gestures, audio-visual cues). Such methods help young people correspond with what they feel and hear to what they see in print, reinforcing both production and decoding (Pardede, 2018).

Advantages for spelling and vocabulary growth

Phoneme-level awareness also benefits spelling because children learn to map phonemes to graphemes and common spelling patterns. Evidence reviews tied to the National Reading Panel indicate improved spelling results following PA and phonics instruction. For EFL learners, improved spelling accuracy reduces cognitive load during writing and supports vocabulary consolidation; when a learner consistently encodes a word’s phonological form and orthography, the lexical gets balanced, which in turn helps recovery and reading fluency. Over time, this stability supports vocabulary width and depth, which are important for later content learning through English (Ehri et al., 2011).

Teaching phonemes to young EFL learners gives cumulative, mutually reinforcing advantages: Strong evidence links PA instruction to improvements in word and pseudoword reading; in L2 settings, combined PA/phonics produces moderate to large effects. As decoding refines, so does reading fluency, allowing access to content and vocabulary growth (Huo &

Wang, 2017). Also, phoneme–grapheme mapping balances orthographic representations, improving spelling accuracy and making lexical entries stronger (form–meaning links) (Ehri et al., 2011). In addition, phoneme-level work supports precise perception/production and lowers the risk of fossilized errors; evidence confirms that pronunciation instruction is effective, especially when focused and well measured (Lee et al., 2015); furthermore, PA learned in the L1 enables L2 decoding, allowing instructors to reinforce learners’ skills that have been maintained while focusing instruction on language-specific difference (Abu-Rabia et al., 2022). And last but not least, in EFL contexts with limited exposure outside school, short, explicit PA routines provide a powerful path to early success, supporting different learners and preventing later reading difficulties. Policy and implementation reviews have increasingly moved systems in this direction (Luscombe, 2022).

In conclusion, a lot of theoretical information related to phonemes can be found on the authors contributions to the field of study which worked as a foundation to develop methods and strategies suitable for EFL young learners.

Legal Basis

Considering the problematic about how Ecuador does not integrate systematic phonics instruction into their teaching practices, it’s essential to mention the rights young learners have in order to have access to a quality education.

La educación es un derecho de las personas a lo largo de su vida y un deber ineludible e inexcusable del Estado. Constituye un área prioritaria de la política pública y de la inversión estatal, garantía de la igualdad e inclusión social y condición indispensable para el buen vivir. Las personas, las familias y la

sociedad tienen el derecho y la responsabilidad de participar en el proceso educativo. (Constitución de la República del Ecuador, 2021, p. 17, art. 26).

Focusing on this essential right to the bilingual aspect, it also shares that:

Desarrollar, fortalecer y potenciar el sistema de educación intercultural bilingüe, con criterios de calidad, desde la estimulación temprana hasta el nivel superior, conforme a la diversidad cultural, para el cuidado y preservación de las identidades en consonancia con sus metodologías de enseñanza y aprendizaje. Se garantizará una carrera docente digna. La administración de este sistema será colectiva y participativa, con alternancia temporal y espacial, basada en veeduría comunitaria y rendición de cuentas (Constitución de la República del Ecuador, 2021, p. 29, art. 57, para. 14).

Therefore, if the purpose of this research points towards the presumption that teaching phonemes as the main methodology to implement in Ecuadorian Education for enhancing reading in young learners, it must be taken into consideration the following:

El sistema nacional de educación tendrá como finalidad el desarrollo de capacidades y potencialidades individuales y colectivas de la población, que posibiliten el aprendizaje, y la generación y utilización de conocimientos, técnicas, saberes, artes y cultura. El sistema tendrá como centro al sujeto que aprende, y funcionará de manera flexible y dinámica, incluyente, eficaz y eficiente. El sistema nacional de educación integrará una visión intercultural acorde con la diversidad geográfica, cultural y lingüística del país, y el respeto a los derechos de las comunidades, pueblos y nacionalidades (Constitución de la República del Ecuador, 2021, p. 168, art. 343).

Chapter III

Methodological Framework

The purpose of research is to gather the necessary data to write explanations, opinions, interpretations and even conclusions; it is created with the help of studies, experiments, analysis and observations. This research helps to describe what is needed to collect data, including method, instrument, technique and procedure. Data will be collected, measured, and analyzed to study the advantages of teaching phonemes to EFL young learners. The qualitative method has been chosen to be used in this thesis to collect data, analyze and interpret the results.

Qualitative

According to Tenney et al. (2022) qualitative research is the one that allows the researcher to gather opinions, experiences, and points of view of the participants; it answers questions like how or why instead of how much or how many. It is centered on personal criteria and not on numbers.

Qualitative research has been chosen due to the fact that it is a methodological approach that will allow the researchers to study and interpret experiences and opinions from the participants through non-numeric data and subjective answers about how beneficial is teaching phonemes to EFL young learners and the influence this will have on the reading process in the student's learning process.

Type of Research

This study utilizes a phenomenological approach to evaluate the advantages of teaching phonemes to EFL young learners to improve students' abilities at the moment of reading. A phenomenological study is based on the beliefs, feelings, and perceptions of the participants who are being part of a study and only their views are considered when data is being collected. This

study needs a deeper understanding of people's thoughts and perceptions of what is being studied and researched (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023).

Data collection Techniques

According to Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (as cited in Stofer, 2019), a one-on-one interview is a technique used to reach a small number of people in-depth aligned with a certain topic of interest. The participants are offered insight into an array of experiences; therefore, in order to collect the necessary information, a one-on-one technique will be applied to the interview in this qualitative research.

This study will use an interview method implemented to five English language teachers and the questionnaire has open-ended questions that will allow teachers to tell their experiences, opinions and ideas. On that account, the questionnaire will take place virtually, and the process will be recorded in order to transcribe the data obtained for an appropriate analysis.

Researchers use different methods such as audiotapes, video recordings, notes, etc, to collect necessary data for the research and it encloses three main categories that include observation, document review and interviews which are the less used ways to gather information (Taherdoost, 2021).

Instruments

Questionnaire. Taherdoost (2021) refers to questionnaires as forms suitable for gathering information in qualitative data. He also mentions a relationship with interviews, as a fundamental way of social interaction, where a set of questions is provided to the interviewees. This is the application of this qualitative research, where social interaction will enable interviewers to collect data more efficiently, ensuring high-quality responses according to different contexts.

Type of questions. The questionnaire is structured with 8 open-ended questions, which will be used for an online interview (ZOOM's platform), according to the participants' schedule availability. In this way, participants will share their experiences and opinions successfully regarding PG instruction. The purpose of this type of questions aims to obtain different perspectives from professionals to determine whether teaching phonemes is beneficial to EFL young learners.

Data Collection Processing and Resources

Table 1

Data Collection Processing

Questions	Justification
What	Interviews
Where	At Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, La Libertad - Santa Elena Province
When	September, 2025
How	One-on-one interview (8 Open-ended questions)
What for	To describe the advantages of teaching phonemes through the teacher's previous experiences in the area.

Population and Sample

The interviews will be addressed to five English teachers from Santa Elena, who have worked or are still working in Elementary schools. The teachers have worked in bilingual schools or taught bilingual programs that include Phonics as a subject or a similar one and have plenty of experience teaching English during their lives as teachers.

The sample will be a purposive one since it is necessary that the teachers have taught the subject and have knowledge of how important phonemes are at the moment of teaching early literacy programs to develop reading skills, which are highly important to have fluent readers in the future.

Chapter IV

Analysis of Findings

The analysis and interpretation of the interviewees' responses emphasized the importance and effectiveness of teaching phonemes to EFL young learners that teachers in Santa Elena, supported by their experience working in the field, have considered as a primordial basis to be implemented not only in the province, but nationwide.

Some of the benefits that these teachers pointed out (clearer pronunciation, vocabulary comprehension, better spelling and decoding skills in more than one language, confidence and independence improvement) were results obtained in their years fostering PA at early ages, results which align with many authors' learning theories that seek to overcome the difficulties English phonemic system has.

Interpretation of Data from the One-on-one Interviews

The results for the 8 open-ended questions for the 5 one-on-one interviews are condensed into a generalized interpretation as follows:

1. How would you describe your overall experience with teaching phonemes to young EFL learners, and what do you see as the primary benefit?

The interviewees agreed on having a positive and enriching experience teaching phonemes to children, as well as the importance of the instruction of connecting letters to sounds, enabling students to read and write in an easier way. Also, the participants pointed out that the primary benefit would be the confidence and independence students develop during this learning process. It was also commonly mentioned that teaching phonemes could be playful and fun and would set the foundation for pronunciation and reading development, which aligns with

what Langerberg (2025) considers: Phonemic Awareness (PA) provides a perceptual map of English sounds that supports both early (decoding and spelling) and intelligible pronunciation.

2. Considering decoding and fluency, how has teaching specific phoneme-grapheme correspondence affected your students' ability to read and understand new words?

According to the teachers' experience with their students, phoneme-grapheme correspondence affected positively by identifying letter-sound patterns and using them in future readings. It was also highlighted that fluency is improved due to students' better decoding skills as their reading becomes smoother and easier, significantly reducing their frustration levels at the moment of comprehending new words. Hence, their students would feel empowered and confident when encountering unfamiliar words.

Considering this positive effect on EFL young learners, and according to Saito & Plonsky (2019) meta-analysis, there is strong evidence of pronunciation instruction effectiveness when targeting identifiable features and practicing elicited monitored production.

Regarding decoding and fluency, applied on child-friendly pronunciation tasks, this can be pre-empted entrenched misperceptions, reducing at the same time later remediation.

3. Based on your experience, provide a specific classroom example of how focusing on individual phonemes has improved your students' pronunciation and overall intelligibility.

Most of the interviewees exemplified the improvement on clarity in specific phonemes like /b/ vs. /v/, /θ/ vs. /ð/, /t/, or /s/ to reduce common pronunciation errors, so that when applying the correct techniques by recognizing and differentiating these specific phonemes, students could improve their intelligibility. They alleged that this ability could boost students' confidence remarkably. Even though teachers provided different classroom examples, the outcome was the

same: better pronunciation and more natural speech. Just as Pardede (2018) believed that methods suitable for children, like the ones the interviewees applied in the classroom (visual models, gestures, audio-visual cues) could lead to students familiarizing to what they feel and hear with what they see in print, resulting in a positive outcome in its integration.

4. Based on your observations, how does teaching phonemes to young learners contribute to a more equitable and accessible learning environment, especially for students with diverse language backgrounds?

The interviewees emphasized the importance of how English has reached the range of a universal language; regardless of what their students' background is, they could always benefit from phoneme instruction as an attempt to level the playing field. It was also highlighted the implementation of multi-sensory strategies (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic methods) to make phoneme learning accessible to diverse learners, including those with special education needs.

Most of the interviewees concluded that English phoneme instruction at early stages of education not only sets an advantage for a foreign language, but it also reinforces their mother tongue simultaneously by creating a sense of phonemic awareness. This is related to Koda (1998) who, supported by Durgunoğlu et al. (1993), established that PA routines for children in the mother tongue and in a foreign language, can be mutually reinforced each other providing efficiency gains in early instruction, facilitating decoding in more than one language.

5. Could you describe a few phoneme teaching strategies for young learners? What makes them effective?

The teachers interviewed described a few teaching strategies like multi-sensory methods, repetition and practice, association with meaning, body involvement and gestures, systematic

process, and minimal pairs and contrasts which helps students to notice the difference between similar sounds to make them more accurate.

The teachers considered that the strategies mentioned are effective because they foster a fun and memorable experience while learning, besides internalizing sounds, as a result of a good process of recognition, production and application of phonemes in significant contexts.

This is related to what Murphy Odo (2021) suggested: when young learners are taught to recognize and utilize English phonemes, and to map them consistently to graphemes, they obtain measurable gains in decoding accuracy and fluency.

6. When teaching phonemes, what are some common challenges you have faced, and how have you adapted your strategies to overcome them?

Some of the challenges the interviewees have faced are phonemes which are not present in their mother tongue, spelling vs. pronunciation difficulties, different learning speed, support outside the classroom and developmental or language delays where students' first language development is not complete yet.

The way the interviewees have adapted these strategies to overcome these challenges is by listening and repetition activities like songs and games, exaggeration of modeling when trying to pronounce certain phonemes, involving students' parents whenever it is possible, and also a lot of patience and gradual exposure overall. As Pardede (2018) mentioned, classroom studies in EFL settings also report positive outcomes when explicit phonetic training and multimodal approaches are integrated (e.g., visual mouth models, gesture, audio-visual cues) the visual model and grand gestures will always be a fundamental part in the PA process.

7. Which specific phoneme teaching strategies do you believe have the most significant and lasting influence on strengthening literacy skills and supporting students in learning new vocabulary and grammar more easily later?

The respondents considered that the most effective strategies for developing literacy are the ones that build a solid foundation of phonics at early ages. Focusing on key contrasts like I/E and B/V and final consonants such as -s and -ed would help because it improves pronunciation and allows students to notice important spelling mistakes. They also emphasized the relevance of combining and segmenting words, which would help students understand long or unfamiliar words, gradually progressing from basic to more complex forms. It was alleged by the interviewees that teaching phonics in this way makes connections between reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar, facilitating the transfer of literacy skills.

These ideas align to what Ehri et al. (2011) mentioned, when a learner consistently encodes a word's phonological form and orthography, the lexical entry stabilizes, which in turn facilitates retrieval and reading fluency. Over time, this stability supports vocabulary breadth and depth, essential for later content learning through English.

8. In what ways have you found that teaching phonemes at an early age has an advantageous transfer and efficiency effect, helping students learn new vocabulary and grammar more easily later?

According to the participants, there are some ways that teaching phonemes has been advantageous, for instance: early phoneme instruction builds strong language foundations, which means, students learn the ability of decoding and pronouncing words more easily. Reading, vocabulary, and comprehension skills are improved, and students do not need to memorize words to recognize them in texts. Another advantage of PA is that it supports grammar acquisition and

encourages autonomy and long-term efficiency so the skills transfer to future literacy and language learning.

Just as Huo & Wang (2017) affirmed, strong evidence links PA instruction to improvements in word and pseudoword reading; in L2 settings, combined PA and phonics produces moderate to large effects. As decoding is improved, so is reading fluency, allowing access to content and vocabulary growth.

Table 2

Analysis of the Interviewees' Perceptions (teachers) to the Advantages of Teaching Phonemes to EFL Young Learners.

Questions	<i>How would you describe your overall experience with teaching phonemes to young EFL learners, and what do you see as the primary benefit?</i>	<i>Considering decoding and fluency, how has teaching specific phoneme-grapheme correspondence affected your students' ability to read and understand new words?</i>	<i>Based on your experience, provide a specific classroom example of how focusing on individual phonemes has improved your students' pronunciation and overall intelligibility.</i>	<i>Based on your observations, how does teaching phonemes to young learners contribute to a more equitable and accessible learning environment, especially for students with diverse language backgrounds?</i>
Answers	<p>Teachers found phonemic instruction positive and enriching and emphasized the importance of fostering literacy through the connection of letters and sounds. They cited increased student confidence and independence as the main benefits, as well as the fact that the lessons are fun and engaging, laying the foundation for improving pronunciation and reading skills.</p>	<p>Teaching experience shows that phoneme-grapheme association has a positive impact on students, helping them identify letter-sound patterns for later reading. This skill improves reading fluency through improved decoding, which makes reading easier and faster; significantly reduces student frustration, and increases their confidence in finding new words.</p>	<p>Respondents reported that teaching students to recognize and differentiate certain commonly confused phonemes (such as /b/ vs. /v/, /θ/ vs. /ð/, /t/, or /s/) significantly reduced pronunciation errors and improved overall comprehension. They observed that the use of appropriate techniques improved pronunciation and natural speech, which significantly increased students' confidence.</p>	<p>The interviewees emphasized that phoneme learning benefits all students, regardless of their background, as it contributes to equal opportunities. They highlighted the importance of using multisensory strategies to make learning accessible to different groups of students, including those with special needs. They concluded that early phoneme instruction in English not only contributes to foreign language acquisition but also improves students' language skills by developing their phonemic awareness.</p>
Authors	<p>Phonemic Awareness provides a perceptual map of English sounds that supports both early (decoding and spelling) and intelligible pronunciation. (Langerberg, 2025)</p>	<p>According to Saito and Plonsky (2019) meta-analysis, there's strong evidence of pronunciation instruction effectiveness when practicing elicit monitored production that in decoding and fluency, applied on child-friendly pronunciation tasks, can be pre-empted entrenched misperceptions, reducing at the same time later remediation.</p>	<p>Pardede (2018) believed that methods suitable for children, like the ones the interviewees applied in the classroom (visual models, gestures, audio-visual cues) could lead to students familiarizing to what they feel and hear with what they see in print, resulting in a positive outcome in its integration.</p>	<p>Koda (1998) who, supported by Durgunoglu, Nagy and Hacin-Bhatt (1993), established that PA routines for children in the mother tongue and in a foreign language, can be mutually reinforced each other, providing efficiency gains in early instruction, facilitating decoding in more than one language.</p>

Table 3

Analysis of the Interviewees' Perceptions (teachers) to the Advantages of Teaching Phonemes to EFL Young Learners.

Questions	<i>Could you describe a few phoneme teaching strategies for young learners? What makes them effective?</i>	<i>When teaching phonemes, what are some common challenges you have faced, and how have you adapted your strategies to overcome them?</i>	<i>Which specific phoneme teaching strategies do you believe have the most significant and lasting influence on strengthening literacy skills and supporting students in learning new vocabulary and grammar more easily later?</i>	<i>In what ways have you found that teaching phonemes at an early age has an advantageous transfer and efficiency effect, helping students learn new vocabulary and grammar more easily later?</i>
Answers	<i>Teachers have found that a combination of strategies such as multiple-choice methods, small-scale matching, and structured exercises is most effective. These strategies are considered effective because they create fun and memorable experiences that help students internalize and manipulate phonemes by identifying and processing key information.</i>	<i>Teachers face challenges such as unfamiliar sounds, speech and vocabulary difficulties, and language barriers. They have overcome these difficulties with techniques such as music and play, strong role models, and parental involvement, emphasizing the need for patience and gradual introduction.</i>	<i>Teachers agree that the best strategy for reading and writing is to build a solid phonics foundation from the beginning. This involves helping students learn spelling patterns and recognize complex words, teaching them the essential skills of sound separation and word/hyphenation blending, which ultimately develops reading comprehension, vocabulary, and spelling connections.</i>	<i>Early phonemic learning is extremely beneficial: it creates a solid linguistic foundation that improves decoding, pronunciation, reading, vocabulary, and comprehension, while supporting grammar and developing student autonomy for effective long-term learning.</i>
Authors	<i>When young learners are taught to discern and manipulate English phonemes—and to map them consistently to graphemes—they acquire measurable gains in decoding accuracy and fluency (Murphy Odo, 2021).</i>	<i>As Pardede (2018) mentioned, classroom studies in EFL settings also report positive outcomes when explicit phonetic training and multimodal approaches are integrated (e.g., visual mouth models, gestures, audio-visual cues) the visual model and grand gestures will always be a fundamental part in the PA process.</i>	<i>Ehri et al., (2011) mentioned, when a learner consistently encodes a word's phonological form and orthography, the lexical entry stabilizes, which in turn facilitates retrieval and reading fluency. Over time, this stability supports vocabulary breadth and depth, essential for later content learning through English.</i>	<i>Huo & Wang, (2017) affirmed, strong evidence links PA instruction to improvements in word and pseudoword reading; in L2 settings, combined PA/phonics produces moderate to large effects. As decoding refines, so does reading fluency, allowing access to content and vocabulary growth.</i>

The answers collected from the interviews shown on the tables above help to explore the interviewees' viewpoints when teaching phonemes, they also examine the most effective

teachers' strategies at the moment of teaching phonemes. And finally, those answers help to identify the benefits of teaching phonemes and their repercussion on the ability to spell that EFL students have.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the analysis of the advantages of teaching phonemes to EFL young learners are being presented on this chapter to enhance reading and decoding abilities at early stages of education. Interviews were conducted to participants (teachers) who have experience in this field, and it is remarkable how their answers were aligned to what renowned authors have said about the development of Phoneme-Grapheme instruction. This qualitative research study has gathered opinions, perspectives and applicable techniques that can guarantee a significant improvement of the necessary skills, thereby building confidence in EFL young learners' literacy process.

Conclusion

The present research project aims to explore different teachers' insights into teaching phonemes to EFL young learners, considering the relevant information many authors have contributed to the field of study through various learning theories, methods, strategies and techniques suitable for children, to determine the advantages early explicit phoneme instruction through display to words and decoding represent in later reading confidence.

Firstly, EFL teachers provided their viewpoints considering how beneficial teaching phonemes is to young learners through their experiences with their students' notable intelligibility improvement over the years; they highlighted the positive impact of word decoding at the moment of identifying letter-sound patterns, ultimately resulting in better pronunciation and fluent reading when finding new words.

Secondly, according to the teachers' perspectives, some of the most effective teaching strategies for EFL young learners are sound separation, word/hyphenation blending, multiple-

choice methods, small-scale matching, structured exercises, multisensory strategies like music and play activities (for students with special needs), strong role models, and even parental involvement, for building a solid phonics foundation from the beginning, overcoming common challenges like unfamiliar sounds and language barriers.

Lastly, they considered that some specific benefits of phoneme instruction on the spelling abilities of EFL young learners are that student frustration is reduced, increasing student confidence and independence; reading fluency is improved, facilitating reading as they minimize pronunciation errors, leading to overall comprehension, not only contributing to foreign language acquisition, but their mother tongue due to PA. They also emphasized the effectiveness of creating fun and memorable experiences, helping students internalize and manipulate phonemes by processing key information.

All in all, not only have teachers and relevant authors identified various advantages of phoneme instruction, but they have also spotted magnificent strategies to overcome the issues that may arise, paving the way for strong EFL readers.

Recommendations

Based on this study's results, the following recommendations are to improve the implementation of phonemes teaching' techniques and strategies at early stages of literacy.

First, it is highly recommended to teach phonemes during the first years of elementary education, doing so would help students to develop their reading abilities in the future. Applying techniques would enhance students' recognition of letters.

Another recommendation is to include a subject at the common core of schools, in which students would learn how to decode and pronounce letters properly. Drill, chants and songs would allow students to get familiar with sounds.

Furthermore, implementing the study of phonemes will allow students to gain confidence and have a better understanding of a foreign language what is pursued by teachers. While students develop self-confidence in a foreign language, they also develop awareness on the correct pronunciation of words not only but in English but Spanish.

It is recommendable to keep researching and finding newer strategies and approaches to teach phonemes. Creating spaces in which students feel that they are learning, understanding, and producing a foreign language is something that will be more than valuable for those students in the future.

Finally, future quantitative research should be done to an experimental group applying the methodology and strategies that have been studied in this qualitative investigation; consequently, the data collected from different measurements could determine the effectiveness of phoneme instruction on this experimental group.

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Annexes

Annex A. Certified Anti-Plagiarism

Certificado Sistema Anti-Plagio

En calidad de tutor del Trabajo de Integración Curricular denominado **ADVANTAGES OF TEACHING PHONEMES TO EFL YOUNG LEARNERS** elaborado por las estudiantes **MORA ELIZALDE JESSE DAVID** and **PONCE VÉLIZ SILYA CORINA**, de la Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, de la Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación e Idiomas, de la Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, me permito declarar que una vez analizado en el sistema anti plagio COMPILATIO, luego de haber cumplido los requerimientos exigidos de valoración, el presente trabajo de investigación, se encuentra con 5% de la valoración permitida, por consiguiente se procede a emitir el informe.

Atentamente,



Nieto Herrera Diego Josue, MSc.

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Annex B. Interview Model for Teachers

Advantages of Teaching Phonemes to EFL Young Learners

1. How would you describe your overall experience with teaching phonemes to young EFL learners, and what do you see as the primary benefit?
2. Considering decoding and fluency, how has teaching specific phoneme-grapheme correspondence affected your students' ability to read and understand new words?
3. Based on your experience, provide a specific classroom example of how focusing on individual phonemes has improved your students' pronunciation and overall intelligibility.
4. Based on your observations, how does teaching phonemes to young learners contribute to a more equitable and accessible learning environment, especially for students with diverse language backgrounds?
5. Could you describe a few phoneme teaching strategies for young learners? What makes them effective?
6. When teaching phonemes, what are some common challenges you have faced, and how have you adapted your strategies to overcome them?
7. Which specific phoneme teaching strategies do you believe have the most significant and lasting influence on strengthening literacy skills and supporting students in learning new vocabulary and grammar more easily later?
8. In what ways have you found that teaching phonemes at an early age has an advantageous transfer and efficiency effect, helping students learn new vocabulary and grammar more easily later?

Annex C. Interview of Teachers via Zoom

1. How would you describe your overall experience with teaching phonemes to young EFL learners, and what do you see as the primary benefit?

1. Overall, it's been a positive experience. It takes patience, but young learners respond really well when phoneme work is made playful. The biggest benefit I've seen is that it gives them a tool to figure out words on their own, instead of just memorizing. That independence makes them more confident readers and speakers.

2. Teaching phonemes specially to Second graders is a very enriching process for the Kids. Because they learn from the basics and these make them understand and assimilate it better. Why words and letters sounds like they do.

3. I think it has been a positive experience, meaning that my students had excellent outcomes from this learning process, especially, of course, little kids, because it has helped them to read maybe with more confidence, because you know that when they learn phonemes, it helps them like, to identify not only the letter, but the sound that goes with the letter. And because they're little kids, they also see like a kind of a fun game. So I think it has been extremely positive.

4. Teaching phonemes to young EFL learners has been a transformative in building their confidence as readers and speakers. I think that the primary benefit is empowerment through independence. So try to be independent, try to work as they want to. In that case, students develop the tools to decode unfamiliar words on their own rather than relying solely on memorization. This creates a foundation where reading becomes accessible rather than intimidating. And in that case, pronunciation shifts from random guessing to systematic understanding.

5. In my experience with young learners around seven or eight years old, the main benefit of teaching phonemes early is developing automatic word recognition. Even though they're still learning to read and write in their first language, they can already identify phonemes and connect sounds with letters or letter combinations. This helps them decode words and prepare for reading in English more confidently. They also begin to recognize stress patterns, mouth movements, and how sounds are formed, which strengthens their pronunciation and overall language awareness from the very beginning.

2. Considering decoding and fluency, how has teaching specific phoneme-grapheme correspondence affected your students' ability to read and understand new words?

1. It's made a big difference. Once they understand that certain sounds are linked to certain letter patterns, they start applying it everywhere. They read more smoothly, spend less time guessing, and can pay attention to meaning instead of getting stuck on every single word.

2. Like I said the understanding of the Sounds make them Easy to the decode or to breakdown New words that Maybe they haven't been taught in class, so this give them a kind of a self-teaching advantage, and not to get frustrated in the process.

3. I want to share is that I started my teaching process with little kids. They were like three, four years old. Most of them were four. So decoding all these little sounds actually helped them also with their language, with their native language, because, you know, some sounds are similar. So they were learning, I think, two things in one moment. And I think that that's something that became meaningful for them because the next day, for example, let's say today they were learning the sound kuh, kuh. So, they did it also in their school in their native language. And then the next day they were like me, you know that also we are learning this sound in our class and we learn these words. And so, I think it was well combined.

4. For example, in the coding and fluency impact, teaching a specific phoneme or grapheme correspondence has dramatically improved students' word attack skills. For example, after systematically teaching the sh, what is h sound with its common spelling sh, t, t. So, in that case, the students could independently decode words like station, spatial, And we know that station, station, we don't write like C-A-S-H, but T-I-T, that pronunciation is shion, station. It's the same as special, I said before, special, she, C-I. And delicious, for example, under Eduardo, that they never encountered before. So, this reduces, in that case, a cognitive load. instead of treating every new word as a unique puzzle. So, students apply patterns they know. I think that reading fluency improves because they spend less time struggling with decoding and more time focusing on comprehension.

5. First of all, they learn to blend, how to mix all of these letters and sounds and the symbols. okay even though they see like a game they see like a a riddle repetitions or something like that for us this blending is going to help us to and it's going to to be like it's like it is the way to achieve fluency and hearing all of these students little kids having fluency that is going to help them a lot because in the morphophonemic decoding. That means that when they don't only repeat, they already understand the differences of the pronunciation of the words and the vocabulary that they are talking about.

3. Based on your experience, provide a specific classroom example of how focusing on individual phonemes has improved your students' pronunciation and overall intelligibility.

1. I remember a group who constantly confused /b/ and /v/. We worked with mirrors, minimal pairs, and lots of practice. After a while, they started getting it right, and their speech became

much clearer and not just to me, but to their classmates too. It really boosted their confidence in speaking.

2. I don't have a specific example but something that is very common between not native learners is they tend to make the Sounds as they're speaking in for example, to say a word that starts with a s sound like school, they are going to say it like es. by teaching them The proper Sound Of Not only that letter but All the letters from the alphabet, we give them the tool to pronounce correctly and in a natural way even when they are exposed to more complex words.

3. When I worked with young children, we used the *Kid Box* books, which I really liked because each lesson focused on one specific phoneme. For example, when we practiced the /t/ sound, the whole class centered around that letter and sound through different activities. Students made the sound, added a movement, and practiced reading short sentences with it. By the end, they could read several words using that phoneme confidently. I think focusing on one sound through varied activities really helped them learn effectively.

4. Okay, in that case, improving pronunciation improvement, I think so that the very specific examples are the, the, the TH, because we have two different sounds, not TH, like the, this, this, this cellphone is mine, that cellphone is yours, et cetera. And the other sound like is Z, like I think, she thought, et cetera. So, I think that maybe those examples are specific classroom examples that we can say, or we can practice in every classroom.

5. When teaching phonemes, I focus on observing how students move their mouths and produce each sound. I encourage them to feel and notice these movements themselves to become more aware of how sounds are formed. Gestures and intonation also play a key role—students learn where to place stress and how vowel length changes meaning, like in *ship* and *sheep*. I guide them step by step: first recognizing the sound and its symbol, then practicing mouth position,

pronunciation, and finally repetition. This process helps them clearly understand how each sound is made and improves their accuracy. When students follow these stages, their pronunciation becomes more natural, confident, and consistent.

4. Based on your observations, how does teaching phonemes to young learners contribute to a more equitable and accessible learning environment, especially for students with diverse language backgrounds?

1. Phoneme instruction is something every student can access, no matter what their home language is. It doesn't rely on whether they've heard English before. For kids from different backgrounds, it's a way to approach the language systematically and feel less behind compared to peers who may already know more words. And as an ESL learner myself, this is something I experienced first hand.
2. I think that whole Point To Break down this Little rules of Sounds and phonics to the Kids is mainly for them not to get frustrated which is something that happens a lot when your teaching to non-native students, so but doing this and Giving them the main concepts, the basics, you achieve engaging the students to continue and not to block the process, creating a good environment for them. they Will be more Open to the language.
3. I'm in a new background where I have students from different countries and especially countries from Asia. They're not little kids anymore, but they are, I think, between 10 11 but still what because of my experience with phoneme I apply this to kids I mean to these young learners now because they are 10 so it helps them to identify the sound in this language but also I have noticed that they connected to the to their own language as well so I think that phonemes is I think it's something like that you can apply to every language. I think we should all learn the importance of phonemes because you actually apply this to every language. And if you don't

know, then you might end up just teaching a language without knowing about this feature of the language itself.

4. Effective phoneme teaching can use a multisensory approach, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. For visuals, phoneme cards with mouth diagrams help students see how sounds are made. For auditory learning, activities like sound isolation and blending are useful. Kinesthetic strategies, such as hand motions or moving to different sides of the room based on the sound they hear, make learning active and fun. Games contrasting similar sounds, like *ship* and *sheep*, also help students improve pronunciation in an engaging way.

5. Teaching phonemes creates a kind of universal language for students, regardless of their background or current English level. I've had students from Russia, Colombia, and different regions of Ecuador, and teaching phonemes helps everyone converge toward the same pronunciation. Even accents become more neutral, and special needs students can improve their pronunciation through careful practice. Overall, phoneme instruction not only improves pronunciation but also positively changes the classroom environment.

5. Could you describe a few phoneme teaching strategies for young learners? What makes them effective?

1. I use songs and chants because rhythm makes the sounds stick. Picture cards and gestures also help by connecting a sound to something concrete. These strategies work because they're multi-sensory. Kids see, hear, and move while learning.

2. For young learners, it's always good to match the sounds with some pictures. For example, when you are teaching beginning sounds, match that beginning sound with what word will it be going for. For example, /k/, you're showing a cat and you're teaching the /k/ sound.

Or banana, you're showing them a banana and teaching the sound of the letter B. It's also good to start by teaching the position of the mouth and the tongue. And repetition, I think, is key for this level.

3. I think teaching phonemes should include varied activities, not just repetition. One strategy I use is asking students to represent sounds with movements. For example, if a sound reminds them of something breaking, they can act that out. This makes learning more memorable because they connect the sound with an action they created. It also helps them feel more creative and involved in the lesson.

4. For example, I said some, but for example, cat, bat. For new manipulation, for example, cat, bat. So, the same sound. And the other one that I mentioned before, remember that is the pair that helps it, that is a minimal pair that helps a lot. Okay. That shape that I said before.

5. When teaching phonemes, I start by introducing the words quickly and helping students notice similarities and differences in sounds. Then I show them the phoneme symbols, linking them to letters and letter combinations. We also briefly discuss vocabulary so students understand the meaning of the words. Next, I use techniques like mirroring, where students observe my mouth movements and repeat the sounds, followed by guided repetition. After that, we practice spelling through activities like dictation, games, or riddles, reinforcing both pronunciation and vocabulary. Importantly, I always review previous words to help students notice differences and consolidate their learning.

6. When teaching phonemes, what are some common challenges you have faced, and how have you adapted your strategies to overcome them?

1. One big challenge is when sounds don't exist in the students' first language, like the 'th' sound for Spanish speakers and they naturally replace them with something familiar. To help with that,

I spend extra time on listening activities before expecting production. Again songs work wonders.

2. Ah okay So phonics is not that hard to teach Just like I said It's Easy Because you can use that like a game, what I Found difficult is when you have a large Group, not All the Kids learn at the same Speed or with the same Strategies, some kids might fall behind. In that case, giving a personalized, individual session will help those kids to understand better.

3. something that I have noticed is that sometimes it's difficult for them to make them say their phoneme, pronounce sometimes. But you know why? It's because they haven't developed their own language completely. And some of them even have problems in the language. Like, for example, you know that there are kids that cannot pronounce things until they are five or eight. So that's something that I have experienced. You try to help the kids say the sound, but it's really hard because they have problems themselves. Maybe they have a disorder in the language. So I think it becomes more complex. when you have this kind of situation or cases.

4. One main challenge in teaching phonemes is that some sounds don't exist in students' native language. For example, Spanish speakers often struggle with the /v/ sound, since in Spanish we usually pronounce it like /b/. Other difficult sounds include /θ/ as in *think* or /ð/ as in *that*. These differences make pronunciation harder because students aren't used to producing those sounds in their language.

5. The biggest challenge I faced was teaching spelling and pronunciation. For students in third and fourth grade, it was difficult to help them understand word families and the differences between symbols and sounds. I reinforced lessons in other classes and used visual activities to help them remember. Some students didn't have proper support at home, so they sometimes returned with mispronunciations. I worked with parents and occasionally specialists to ensure

extra help. Managing the cognitive load was the hardest part—students had to learn many symbols and words gradually. Over time, as they progressed to fifth grade and beyond, they became more independent and confident, making learning easier.

7. Which specific phoneme teaching strategies do you believe have the most significant and lasting influence on strengthening literacy skills and supporting students in learning new vocabulary and grammar more easily later?

1. Blending and segmenting practice stands out the most. It helps students decode longer words and recognize patterns. When they master those skills early, they read new vocabulary more easily, and over time they notice grammar markers like endings or prefixes because they're tuned in to the sound patterns.

2. I, like I said, I will go back to how important it is to teach the basic. If you haven't taught the basic, it's going to be really frustrating and hard for the students to learn new things from the language. So, I will rather start in an early age, second grade, with the basic phonics and keep them through the more complex one through the entire elementary years.

3. I think I would like to point the grammar feature because sometimes, you know, when you teach grammar, you know, the feature that all the features that grammar has require a specific sound. So I think that when we're working on literacy, grammar and vocabulary go hand by hand. because let's say that you're going to teach short statements, it's something short. So, something that we can do is maybe write the sentence. And because kids are learning how to read, we can ask them to identify the sound first before jumping straight to, you know, to reading the whole sentence.

4. For young learners, the focus should be on vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, and spelling rather than grammar. At that age, English should feel enjoyable, not like an obligation. Once

they're more familiar with the language, grammar can be introduced gradually. Since the Ecuadorian curriculum can be challenging, starting with vocabulary and listening helps build a strong foundation for future learning.

5. For me, the most important challenges are using I, E, B, and V correctly, especially in dictation and pronunciation. Distinguishing E and I can be tricky, and B and V are crucial for spelling. Also, understanding and pronouncing final consonant sounds, like in present and past tense endings (ED, D, S, Z), is a game changer for students, even if their accent isn't perfect.

8. In what ways have you found that teaching phonemes at an early age has an advantageous transfer and efficiency effect, helping students learn new vocabulary and grammar more easily later?

1. Teaching phonemes early means kids don't waste energy figuring out how to read or pronounce words. They can focus straight on meaning. That speeds up vocabulary learning. I've also seen it help with grammar; for example, they pick up plural "-s" or past "-ed" endings more naturally because they're already paying attention to the sound details in words.

2. This will make them more autonomous and they will be able to understand readings, and new words to create more vocabulary and also, this will also help them to see the grammar rules more easily and to assimilate them better.

3. For children aged four to six, visual support is very important. When they see the phoneme along with words and pictures that start with it, like *S* for *snake*, they feel more confident and engaged. I think it's essential to include images, not just words, since they're still learning to read.

4. Teaching phonemes at an early age is a great advantage, but it depends a lot on the teacher. If the teacher doesn't have good pronunciation or knowledge of how sounds are produced, it

becomes a challenge. Teachers need to understand phonetic terms and techniques to explain sounds correctly. When teachers model sounds well, students develop better pronunciation, vocabulary, and later, grammar skills. In short, effective phoneme teaching starts with the teacher's own knowledge and accuracy.

5. Learning a language at an early age is ideal because children can train their vocal cords and absorb new information more easily than adults. They can learn multiple languages, recognize sounds, and identify symbols naturally. Phonics is key—if they understand pronunciation rules, they can read new words without memorizing them all. Even if formal phonics classes aren't offered, teachers should use vocabulary lessons to help students connect sounds and symbols, which greatly benefits their overall language learning.