University of Bahrain

College of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature

The Effect of Teaching Phonology on Improving EFL Government School Students' Spelling

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master degree in Applied English Language studies.

Submitted by

Nayla Mohamed Alkaabi

20092011

Supervised by

Dr. Martin Parker

(Associate professor)

University of Bahrain

Kingdom of Bahrain

June 2019

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Defense committee's approval page

University of Bahrain
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Department of English Language and Literature
M.A Program in Applied English Language Studies

Student **Nayla Mohamed Alkaabi**, ID number **20092011**, defended her thesis by which she has fulfilled the requirements for the degree of M.A in Applied English Language Studies, entitled (The Effect of Teaching Phonology on Improving EFL Government School Students' Spelling) on this day of **13/6/2019**

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ABSTRACT

The research in this thesis tackles the issue of government school EFL students' low achievement in spelling. It researches the effect of teaching the phonics lessons in the new English subject curriculum series *Family and Friends* that are used by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Bahrain for the primary level, on improving EFL students' spelling.

Eighty grade six female government school students were randomly chosen to be the participants of this experimental study. Two phonics rules have been selected to be taught in the experiment and a list of ten words that contain the chosen rules was created to be used in the spelling assessment before and after teaching the phonics lessons.

A pre-spelling test of those pre-selected words was given to the participants to assess their prior phonological knowledge and spelling skills. The test is a standard MOE spelling assessment with a standard correcting rubric. After analyzing the results and ascertaining the level of the problem, the chosen phonics lessons were taught once a week in a one-month period. Later, a post-test of the same list of words was given to the participants in order to analyze the new results and check whether or not learning the phonics lessons has helped students become better spellers.

The results of the post-test have shown growth in students' grades and an improvement in their spelling skills. Students were more able to connect and comprehend the phoneme–grapheme relationship in spelling, have shown a better understanding of the rules behind the way words are heard-said and can relate those rules to the way words are spelled.

This research has proven that the MOE's new approach of introducing phonics as a part of the curriculum in primary government EFL education has its use in helping students improve their spelling, with the right instructions given by teachers to help guide students make those links between phonics and spelling.

DEDICATION

Thank you, Allah, for all your blessings.

Thank you, my beloved parents, my supervisor Dr.Martin Parker, my family, friends, Dr.Sarah Shono who first introduced me to the field of phonology and the entire English language department's faculty at the university of Bahrain and Bahrain teachers' college.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with a general background on the topic of the research, which is Bahrain government school students' low achievement in spelling and how students lack the phonological awareness that helps them link the sounds they hear to the words' actual letters. Explaining how helping students link the phonemes of a word to its graphemes can eventually help them be better spellers.

Second, this chapter illustrates the problem of the study, it answers the question of why it is important to research and it lists the possible hypothesis.

The chapter concludes with how this research can benefit teachers of EFL around the world in improving their students' spelling by introducing phonics to them at a young age.

1.2 Background

As a primary level English language teacher, I have noticed that students struggle with spelling words correctly, even though spelling is assessed through dictation tests on a weekly basis in government schools and is mandatory in the curriculum's syllabus. In my six years of teaching primary level English in government schools, I have given spelling tests as required by the MOE, which is

giving the students in the beginning of every unit of the book the new words they need to learn, and telling them those words will be assessed on a specific date. It was noticed that students tend to memorize the order of the letters in those words rather than focus on its sounds phonologically and try to write down the letter they hear. That is why, most of the students get good marks when given a spelling test in which they already know the words they'll be assessed on as well as the date of the assessment.

When assessing students' writing of new words and topics without prior preparation, students tend to get extremely low grades, even the ones who usually get full marks in spelling tests. From the observations made during several years and the personal involvement in EFL education, it can be concluded that the reason behind this difference in performance is the fact that students have a very low phonological awareness of letters' sounds and rules. When asked to spell words in tests or in writing assessments in general, students write the words they are familiar with and are committed to memory. However, when it comes to new vocabulary, or words they had not come across often, they spell most of the words incorrectly, without paying much attention to phonological rules and the phoneme-grapheme relationship. This research's work provides the data needed to back up this assumption and helps prove the problem and provides solutions.

It was not until 2015 that the MOE in Bahrain added phonics lessons to every unit of its new English curriculum *Family & Friends*, from grade one to grade six. This is about fifty-five phonics lessons that students should take in their primary education.

In the late 90s, English was first introduced into primary government education – grade one to six - in Bahrain as a main subject. Students used to start learning English in grade four with the very basics of the language: alphabets, numbers and colors. The books back then used to address learning the language as a whole. There were reading, writing and listening focused lessons with a unified theme, for example, food or hobbies. Students were to learn and acquire the language's grammar, spelling, phonics and other aspects all through those lessons without them being addressed or taught separately and in depth.

The curriculums of English primary level education had been changed twice before the introduction of *Family & Friends*. This books' series is now taught from grade one to grade six with the same chapters and steps in each book. They start with a vocabulary lesson of the units' words, then a grammar lesson followed by a phonics lesson and finally a reading-writing lesson. Phonics has never been taught or even addressed as a field of its own in primary education before, even though many researchers have proven that it can be beneficial when learning a foreign language (Yeung, Siegel, and Chan, 2013).

When it comes to phonics and spelling, Al-Jarf (2011) has studied the effectiveness of mind-mapping software to connect spoken phonemes with written graphemes. The strategy has appeared to be effective for differentiating the spelling of sounds produced by vowel letters a, i, o, e, and u in different positions.

In this research, the effect of the phonics lessons in the series *Family & Friends* on students' spelling is studied and whether

learning phonics can help students make the link between graphemes and phonemes in order to eventually become better spellers.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Even though the ministry of education in Bahrain has provided primary education with phonics lessons in *Family & Friends*, there weren't any instructions for teachers on how to use these phonics lessons for the specific purpose of improving students' spelling. The phonics lessons in the book simply introduce the phonics rule, provide students with few words as examples and then the lesson is concluded with two to three activities to practice using the rule. Therefore, teachers stick to the steps of these lessons as they are and can not see their full potential and how to use them towards improving spelling.

Although misspelling is a major, well known issue for government school students at primary level, it is possible that many teachers are still unable to help solve this problem properly. Many teachers may be unaware of the problem's causes and how the lack of phonological knowledge plays an important part in helping students overcome this obstacle. The data and findings of this research can prove that teaching students the phonics lessons at their primary education and helping them link the different sound combinations of letters, consonants and vowels, they will be able to make more sense of English spelling and understand its rules, hence, improve their spelling skill.

1.4 Aim of the Study

This study aims to find out whether teaching the phonics lessons in *Family & Friends* has an effect on improving EFL students' spelling.

If so, teachers all over Bahrain can focus on those lessons instead of simply teaching them as they are from the book, reading the words provided by the book, explaining the difference between the two sound combinations given as an example and finally answering the questions regarding those two or three sounds.

In the book, there are no instructions or examples on how students can link the phonics lessons they have taken to improve their spelling and use them as rules governing how to write down words based on their sounds. This research work might prove that the phonics lessons can improve students spelling when taught with the right instructions and in association to spelling.

1.5 Research Question

This research's question is:

- Do the phonics lessons in the new English subject series *Family & Friends* used by the MOE for primary education in government schools have an effect on improving EFL students' spelling?

1.6 Hypotheses

Based on the research's question, these are the research's hypotheses:

1- Teaching the newly added phonics lessons in the new English curriculums' series *Family & Friends* used by the MOE in primary government education improves students' spelling.

2- Teaching the newly added phonics lessons in the new English curriculums' series *Family & Friends* used by the MOE in primary government education has no effect on students' spelling.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Spelling is one of the biggest problems in Bahrain's EFL government school classrooms. Students have always found it hard to spell words correctly. One of the reasons behind this issue is the fact that English spelling differs from our EFL students' Arabic mother tongue tremendously. In Arabic, each letter has one sound only. When trying to write an Arabic word, students just need to focus on the sounds of its letters, and they will be able to recognize them perfectly. While in English, the letters are a lot less than the sounds made in the language. Vowels and consonants can produce many different sounds and other sounds can be made by different combinations of letters. For example, the /k/ sound in Arabic is produced by one letter only, which is ك. Whereas the same sound in

English can be made by many different letters' combinations, K, C, Ch, Ck and Qu. These different possibilities are hard to comprehend by EFL learners as well as difficult to recognize and differentiate, hence, the poor spelling.

As a teacher I have noticed that even though spelling dictations are mandatory by the MOE in our government schools on a regular basis, students tend to memorize the order of the letters rather than comprehend the link between the sounds they produce in a word and its spelling, because it is difficult for them to make that connection between a sound and its different possible combination of letters in the English language. Therefore, memorizing the order of the letters in the given dictation's words list is easier for them to do, ensuring them good grades.

This research's work can prove that introducing phonics at a young age – grade one to six- right at the beginning of learning the language and teaching the phonics lessons with the proper instructions and guidelines can help students understand English spelling and its rules better, it can teach them how to start spelling words by actually listening to its sounds and applying its rules rather than memorizing its letters, which eventually will help them be better spellers.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study would have been more inclusive and diverse if we could have overcome the following:

1- Lack of time and opportunity to teach the phonics lessons more than once a week to the targeted sample.

2- The difficulty to access schools of different genders to include males as well as females in this study.

3- The restriction of applying the experiment on a specific grade – the sixth grade- and age group.

1.9 Organization of the Study

After discussing the general view of this thesis, the study will move to chapter two, talking about the background literature made on the topic of teaching phonics and its use in EFL learning. Chapter three is about the methodology chosen to conduct this research and the justifications behind it. Chapter four illustrates the findings of the conducted experiment and the results of given tests followed by an analysis of the results and its relation to the research's problem. Chapter five is the conclusion of this study and its future recommendations.

1.10 Definitions of Major Terms

The definitions of the major terms can help better understand the background of this matter.

1- Phonics is the study of relationships between letters and sounds; in other words, it helps teachers show students

sound-symbol correspondences (Johnston & Watson, 2007).

2- *Phonology* is the way how a language sounds; it is a particular structure of the sound of speech, expressed in a way perceiving, representing, and producing sounds (Sitthitikul, 2014). These sounds are called phonemes and the symbols that represent those phonemes are graphemes. Intonation and stress are the most important aspects of English phonology (Donoghue, 2008).

3- *Phoneme* is the smallest unit of a sound, which can change the meaning in a language (Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams, 2011).

4- *Phonics instruction* is used by teachers to help students understand the relationship between phonemes and graphemes Phonics is a core method in teaching reading and writing, which helps improve students' spelling skills in the EFL environment (Martínez, 2011).

5- *Phonological awareness* is a broad term "that refers to the ability to focus on the sounds of speech as opposed to its meaning, and it has a number of different levels or components" (Konza, 2006, p. 2).

6- *Phonemic awareness* is a narrower term, which links spoken and written language through the recognition of the separate sounds in the spoken words (Hulme & Snowling, 2014).

7- *Spelling* is the way how a word is written with the help of alphabetic letters (Ehri & Rosenthal, 2007).

8- *Morphology* is the way how words are formed (Lieber, 2014).

9- *Morpheme* is the smallest unit of language, which cannot be broken, such as prefixes, suffixes, roots, and stems (Paster, 2014).

These terms will be used in the literature below.

1.11 Conclusion

This thesis is about studying the effect of teaching the phonics lessons in the new English curriculums' books series *Family & Friends* in the primary education of government schools on improving EFL learners spelling. The upcoming chapters illustrate the literature review found on this matter, the methodology used to conduct this research, its findings and the recommendations to be considered by the MOE and teachers of EFL in government schools in Bahrain.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with explaining the major terms mentioned in this literature review, which are needed to better understand the study and its background. Then it moves to stating the history of introducing phonics in the English language learning classrooms, how it started and why linguists have believed it could help in language acquisition. After, it lists and gives examples of major spelling mistakes made by EFL learners and try to explain the reasons behind them. Moving to the core of this literature review which is an illustration of previous studies made on the effect of teaching phonics in EFL classrooms and how beneficial it can be to students of foreign language followed by a short conclusion of the chapter.

2.2 History of the Introduction of Phonics and Phonology in Classrooms

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) requires that a teacher applies a complex approach as she/he has to impose different skills at once. When children start acquiring their mother tongue,

they do it from one stage to another in a natural manner. First, children acquire language, then they practice it through speaking, also, they learn linguistic skills at home and at school (Mulkey, 2012). As a result, students learn their mother tongue stage by stage in the natural environment. However, when students start studying a foreign language, they have to acquire all skills at the same time and faster. They do not have a natural environment to study as well, which creates additional problems. Usually, the first-year students start speaking a foreign language by the end of the year of education, if teaching is sufficient and accurate (Talandis & Stout, 2014).

Usually, teachers apply a number of strategies during their lessons to ensure that language is provided as a whole and that students learn different skills. However, to achieve this result, teachers have to combine speaking, reading, writing, and listening activities to ensure that students identify a foreign language as a complex of different systems. EFL students have to learn not only how to write the words, but also how to pronounce them correctly. Therefore, in order to achieve the desired results in English learning, students have to be able to acquire information faster and from different sources of information.

Leaning EFL, adults do it with the reference to phonological and morphological systems of their mother tongue (Al-Busaidi & Al-Saqqaf, 2015). That is why, if the rules of spelling and writing differ in their mother tongue than in English, students will experience problems. Even though the English language has many spelling and reading rules, there are lots of exceptions that create plenty of trouble

for foreign students who have not got used to particular patterns. For example, English is a considerable challenge for Arab students. Spelling and pronunciation patterns are different in English than in Arabic, which causes students a number of problems on their way to learning English. For example, the English language has 12 monophthongs and 8 diphthongs, while the Arabic language has only 6 vowel sounds and two diphthongs. Moreover, the pronunciation of the Arabic words depends on the context as certain words may be written in the same way and pronounced differently depending on the situation (Al-Busaidi & Al-Saqqaf, 2015). Due to the high level of difference between the Arabic and English languages, students usually make spelling and pronunciation mistakes. The problem is complicated by the fact that students usually do not understand that they have made a mistake, and in many cases, they think that they write and pronounce words correctly (Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016).

The level of acquisition of EFL and the number of mistakes much depend on the mother tongue and the principles of language construction. For example, Benyo (2014) referred to Sudanese students learning English and concluded that English spelling is irregular even though there is a range of reading and spelling rules. Still, Sudanese students failed to see any regular aspects while learning EFL. The Kurdish language is based on the Arabic and Persian languages, which explains the special spelling rules. Therefore, Kurdish students tend to add or remove some syllables inside the words, change the order of the letters, substitute

graphemes, and add or remove spaces inside or between the words (Ahmed, 2017). Gerlach (2017) also identified reading and spelling problems among EFL students due to the language differences. The researcher offered grapheme–phoneme rules to cope with the problem of spelling and pronunciation. Teaching phonics to EFL students, teachers refer not only to the transcription but also to the spelling of words, which helps students remember how the words are written.

Phonics has developed with the development of language. The complicated nature of English pronunciation and irregular grapheme-phoneme link lies in the history of the English language development, the formation of words from different languages, and ongoing development of the language, particularly spelling and pronunciation today. What is more important, the change in pronunciation in many cases is influenced by words spelling (Deterding & Mohamad, 2016). The first phonetics lecture was given by Alexander Melville Bell in 1866. It was not only the beginning of the contemporary phonics, but it was the first-time phonics was taught in an educational establishment (Ashby, 2008).

Understanding the effectiveness of the phonics method has pushed the development of phonological labs and other innovative methods of teaching forward. Nowadays, teachers use both traditional and innovative methods of teaching phonics, including computers and other means of teaching. Ashby (2008) provided examples of phonics strategies development as Analytic Listening technique, PHONLINE distance learning project, Speech Internet

Dictionary (SID), classroom computer, and live acoustic analysis. The author referred to the usefulness of the application of these innovative strategies and positive feedback from the students who tried them. Apart from computer teaching of phonetics and phonology, contemporary teachers refer to analogy to make the learning process more interesting. The main idea of this method is to refer to students' daily experience while learning (Chan, 2013). Therefore, being founded more than 150 years ago, phonics still continues its development, and teachers try to use more strategies to interest their students and help them improve their skills.

2.3 Major Spelling Mistakes Made by EFL Learners

Proper spelling is the essential component of effective written communication. It is often viewed as a sign of good education (Alhaison, 2015). However, studies of English as a second language have found that it can become a serious problem for students of different nationalities and ages. Subhi & Yasin (2015) emphasized that writing can become a challenge for the foreigner as well as native speakers of English language. However, errors made by Arabic speaking students are the most common. All Arab students reported serious trouble with writing English words (AL-Sobhi, 2017). Iraqi students in Malaysia often faced multiple problems with writing while studying English as a foreign language (Subhi &Yasin, 2015). Also, the listening comprehension tests revealed that Saudi students make spelling errors in 41.5% of the words (Subhi &Yasin,

2015). Other studies showed that fifth-grade Omani students commonly neglect or replace letters in the English words (Subhi &Yasin, 2015). Emirati students find it difficult to write words that are misspelled in the middle (Subhi &Yasin, 2015). Overall, multi-syllabic words are more difficult for Arab students to articulate and write down correctly.

For learners whose native language relies on the Roman alphabet, confusion between the sounds that the letter can produce is a common problem. Such types of errors often appear among German students or French students as well. The sounds *w, f, tʃ* or *ʃ* often become confusing for such learners (Mahmoud, 2015). For Japanese and other cultures that rely on symbols instead of the alphabet, the adjustment to the alphabetic convention becomes even more difficult (Mahmoud, 2015). However, the number of spelling errors remains high for ESL learners from all nations.

The variability of spelling errors is considerable. Researchers classified the mistakes into the following categories: omission, substitution, transposition, and insertion (Subhi &Yasin, 2015). Omission is associated with the lack of letters, substitution involves usage of the wrong letters, transposition involves putting letters in reverse order and insertion is adding extra letters that don't belong in the words.

Iraqi students are often confused by the presence of three consonants [c, z, and s] misusing them in different positions like in the words *recognize*, *traditional* and *special*. In addition, the usage of /e/ or /i/ can be puzzling like in the words *divided* or *decided*.

Learners often omit the vowel /e/ in the middle of words like *interesting* or *seventh*. Moreover, the common mistakes are the replacement of the consonants with the wrong ones at the beginning of the word like in *quickly,* or in the middle like in *and* (Subhi &Yasin, 2015). According to a research conducted by Al-Sobhi et al. (2017), substitution mistakes are the most common among the learners. 43% were substitution-caused misspellings. The examples of the misspelled words included *entertained*, *circumference*, *environment*. The errors caused by omission made up 39.8% of all misspellings. The examples of such words were *environment*, *halves*, *stopped*. 10.5% of the errors were insertion ones. The examples included *altogether*, *misused* and *misunderstanding*. Finally, transposition related errors appeared in 6.2% of cases. The most commonly misspelled words were *quietly*, *treasure*, *adventure* (Al-Sobhi et al., 2017). The misuse of vowels is also very common. Such common mistakes are associated with *i-e* choice (Mahmoud, 2015) such as in *pin, pen*.

The classification of the spelling errors can also depend on the period of learning. Mahmoud (2015) emphasized that the spelling errors that are observed and made during the first 3 years of studying the language are systematic. Such mistakes can appear from time to time because students are unable to memorize an irregular language segment. The other mistakes can be caused by the pronunciation of the learners themselves, whose native language can make it difficult to differentiate between various sounds in the foreign language (Mahmoud, 2015).

Studies have shown that EFL learners often delete the silent letters like in the word *talk*, omit *e* at the end of the words like in *hide* and fail to form the plural forms ending with *y* correctly (Mahmoud, 2015) like in the word *skies*. According to Ghafor (2016), those mistakes can be divided into the competence mistakes and analogy errors. The competence mistakes include the different mistakes caused by the wrong phoneme choices and slips that are the result of carelessness. Examples of the wrong use of phonemes are using *ea* versus *e* in the word *complete* or *u* versus *e* in the word *preferred*. Slips are anticipating the next spelling in words, like writing double *n* letters in the word *inaccuracy*. The analogy mistakes include jumblings, which appear as a result of structure confusion and splits, which imply putting unnecessary spaces in words. An example of jumbling is confusion between similar structures in the words *apostrophy – apostrophe* and *catastrophy – catastrophe*. The examples of splits are *be fore*, *out side* (Ghafor, 2016). Although different types of classifications are offered, one can see that they all are associated with the common reasons.

Second language acquisition often involves obstacles due to the fact that the person's mind has to adapt to the new rules of spelling, pronunciation, and morphology that are different than his/her mother tongue. Among the reasons for poor English writing of EFL learners, scholars point out some attention to the issue. Researchers have argued that the spelling mistakes are not associated with educational achievements or general level of the students. Instead, there are other essential reasons. The cultural impacts and

the differences in the graphotactic rules are important (Ghafor, 2016). For Iraqi students, insufficient attention to the study tools is strongly associated with the continuing instability in their country and the lack of focus on education (Subhi & Yasin, 2015). The importance of high-quality writing is often underestimated. However, the interference of the native language is another important problem that can arise (Subhi & Yasin, 2015). The rules of a foreign language can be seen as abnormal in comparison to the mother tongue. The difference in the system of the Arabic and English languages can often lead to misperceptions. The English language is alphabetical but presents lots of dissimilarities between the letters and sounds. The articulation and spelling of the words cause many problems (Alhaisoni, 2015). The English system of spelling is far from a consistent one. "One symbol for a phoneme" is not the way it can be characterized (Mahmoud, 2015). Vowels and consonants can be represented in a number of different ways. From other perspective, languages are phonologically different. For instance, due to the lack of the sound /p/ in Arabic, Iraqi EFL learners typically substitute it with the phonologically close consonant /b/ (Subhi &Yasin, 2015). Moreover, the students can lack the knowledge of the English language system. For instance, they often find it quite difficult to find the clear correlation between spelling and pronunciation (Mahmoud, 2015). Moreover, spelling rules in the English language contain many exceptions, making it difficult to memorize. Such exceptions are often associated with lots of historical influences on the development of the English language. As the language was evolving, English speakers borrowed many

everyday words from Angles, Saxons, Vikings and the French. As a result, it has included a great number of the rules from different languages.

Regarding the reasons for the error-making, Saeidi and Khodadust (2010) distinguished between the inter- and intralingual errors. The interlingual ones are the result of the differences between the languages while the intralingual ones are the result of the language structures. The statistical analysis reveals that the intralingual errors appear much more frequently (Saeidi & Khodadust, 2010). This would suggest that the university and school conditions associated with the studies of the English language by Arab students need to be reviewed. Regardless the global perspective of the English language, it is not so widely spread in Arabic-speaking countries (Al-Sobhi et al., 2017). Therefore, the memorization techniques and the teaching approaches demand improvement.

Some recommendations to improve English spelling mistakes among Arab EFL learners include increasing the portion of writing tasks, enriching the curriculum with dictations, free writing and audio writing (Subhi &Yasin, 2015). For Iraqi English teachers, additional equipment and focus on the most widely spread errors is essential advice. In some cases, when a tired or a poor memory become the reason for the mistakes, it is necessary to organize periods of active learning and rest more effectively (Mahmoud, 2015). Some other recommendations include using a dictionary more often, showing the connections between the derivatives, reading as

much as possible and outlining the major differences with the mother tongue of the students (Mahmoud, 2015). Ghafor (2016) offers that the strategies aimed at improving spelling skills of the EFL learners must rely on students' attentiveness, informing them about the common spelling mistakes, practicing spelling more often and providing a suitable amount of time for the tasks.

Spelling is a complex skill which requires a number of competences from the learner. Therefore, in order to improve the ability to write, it is necessary to develop the phonological and morphological skills. Moreover, the learner must train their visual memory and understanding of the semantic relationships and spelling rules of a foreign language. In addition to that, the understanding of the complicated and long history of the formation of English spelling can be helpful in decreasing the number of errors.

2.4 The Effect of Teaching Phonics on EFL Students' of Spelling Skills

A person cannot learn any language acquiring one skill only. Language skills must be acquired together in order to achieve better results. Due to the irregular nature of the English language, spelling and pronunciation differ greatly, which raises a number of difficulties for EFL learners. Since spelling is a major concern for students, teachers search for different strategies in order to improve students' spelling skills. Even though phoneme-grapheme correspondence is irregular in the English language, spelling is still learned through teaching phonics. The effectiveness of this strategy

was questioned due to the nature of the English language. Spelling mistakes is a serious problem for foreign students. Teachers refer to lots of different strategies in order to assist students in resolving this issue.

Understanding spelling through phonemes, Mahmoud (2013) defined spelling as a language skill where "sounds (phonemes) are represented by letters (graphemes), which constitute the smallest building blocks of a written language" (p. 7). Therefore, when considering the problems with spelling, it is important to be aware that this skill is related to phonological awareness and, therefore, should be resolved in complex with phonics instruction. The author concluded his research with the statement that teaching students spelling-pronunciation differences is an important teaching strategy aimed at improving students' proficiency in the English language (Mahmoud, 2013). Thus, teachers should refer to phonics as to one of the strategies to teach spelling. The English language is not spontaneous, it contains some specific rules of pronunciation, and if students learn these rules, they will be able to understand the irregular spelling rules and will transfer the phonemes into graphemes better.

Mohammadi and Gorjian (2015) conducted their research in terms of understanding the relation between spelling and pronunciation. One of the conclusions made by the researchers is that students with poor pronunciation skills limit their writing to those words they can properly pronounce only. Therefore, making mistakes in pronunciation, may lead foreigners to spelling the words

incorrectly, since they are not able to pronounce. As a result, the overall English learning is limited to the words people can spell and pronounce correctly, which limits their vocabulary significantly.

The authors considered spelling as a set of different skills students should develop in order to do it properly. Word structure, phonetic, and letter-naming are the basic micro-skills students should develop in order to acquire spelling skills in a proper way (Mohammadi & Gorjian, 2015). Thus, being aware of the phonemes and their use in the English language, students are able to spell the words without mistakes.

The knowledge of phonics is one of the first stages of understanding any foreign language. Griva and Anastasiou (2009) stated that in the first stage of EFL learning, students should develop phonological processing in order to acquire spelling rules. Thus, having heard an unknown word, a student should segment the word to its phonemes. However, since the word *orthography* in English is not a direct phoneme transcription, studying the grapheme-phoneme relationships is important to achieve good spelling skills. English spelling is based on the English alphabet, but phonemes do not always match the letters and vice versa. Hence, the same letters can be reflected by different phonemes in transcription. As a result, Griva and Anastasiou (2009) concluded that apart from phonological information, correct English spelling requires student awareness of morphology. Therefore, phonological awareness is important for spelling, but this is not enough to promote error-free writing skills.

Being aware of how language sounds is important for communicating in the foreign language. Bear, Helman, Templeton, Invernizzi, and Johnston (2007) clearly identified: "Spelling is a conservative measure of what students know about words, for if students know how to spell the word, they nearly always know how to read it" (p. 7). However, spelling does not help students learn pronunciation in a way as phonics can help learn spelling. Being aware of how a word is pronounced, students are able to understand how to spell it if they are aware of the specific spelling and phonics rules. Phoneme and morpheme correspondence is the major mistakes students have (Al-Jarf, 2011). Therefore, to resolve this problem, teachers of EFL should focus on introducing phonology and building up students' cognitive schemes of this correlation in the classrooms.

Maddox and Feng (2013) compared the effectiveness of whole language instruction and phonics instruction for teaching students spelling rules. Even though whole language instruction, defined as child-centered reading instruction, appeared to be effective, phonics instruction showed a higher level of efficacy in terms of teaching spelling. Researchers stated that despite the number of exceptions in reading rules, English sound-letter correspondence is more regular than it may appear at the first place. Moreover, Maddox and Feng (2013) stated that students should receive at least 15 minutes of phonics instruction at the beginning of their learning in order to improve spelling accuracy. Iadkert (2014) also studied phonics instruction as a way to improving spelling. Having focused on consonants pronunciation competence, the posttest results were

much better compared to the pretest ones. Phonics instructions were directed at teaching the students how to blend letters in such a way that they can read and spell unfamiliar words properly. Thus, phonics instructions showed positive outcomes according to the posttest results.

Al-Jarf (2011) studied the effectiveness of Free Mind 0.9.0 mind-mapping software to connect spoken phonemes with written graphemes. The main idea of the current strategy is to show that in cases when students fully understand the principles of English spelling and pronunciation rules, they can easily detect words' spelling by listening to it. The software is based on grouping the most common rules and principles of spelling and phonics categorization, which helps students to remember the major cases, therefor spell words correctly. The strategy appeared to be effective in differentiating the spelling of sounds produced by vowel letters (a), (i), (o), (e), and (u) in different positions. Apart from correct vowel spelling, the mind-mapping software helps students add a final silent (e) in a proper way. As digraphs are common in the English language, the current software helps students understand how to spell words with digraphs. Apart from the fact that most consonants in English are spelt in the same way as they are pronounced, there is a group of constants, when phonemes do not go with morphemes, such as (c), (cc), (g), (ch), and (s). Double consonants also refer to this category. Phoneme knowledge can help students resolve these spelling mistakes.

Shaw (2011) referred to the Elementary Spelling Inventory and the Developmental Spelling Analysis in the study and reported about the significant growth in spelling abilities of students who receive appropriate instruction. The researcher made a considerable conclusion that even though spelling requires good word recognition skills, "accurate pronunciation plays a role in second language spelling" (Shaw, 2011, p. 250). Thus, even though phonics is a skill, which requires that students acquire and develop appropriate listening abilities, vision, touching, and saying are also important. Synthetic multisensory phonics is focused on "letter sound knowledge and training of the phonological awareness skills" (Farokhbakht & Nejadansari, 2015, p. 41) through a number of senses. The main idea of the current strategy is that students learn phonemics not only through listening but also through using vision, touching, and saying. The application of this strategy helps students spell words better, as it was reported by the intervention conducted by Farokhbakht and Nejadansari (2015). The researchers proved that synthetic multisensory phonics is an effective strategy for teaching EFL in children, which helps develop strong spelling skills.

Ghoneim and Elghotmy (2015) reported about the same results having shown that a multisensory phonics program is effective in teaching spelling skills to children. Phonological awareness does not only help students differentiate sounds and recognize the word itself. This strategy helps students relate particular sounds to the letters in the specific conditions they appear. The English language is not always regular, and sounds may not correspond to the written letters,

which causes students to make spelling mistakes. However, teaching students phonological awareness helps them relate sounds to letters in the word, avoiding spelling mistakes. Similarly, Yeung, Siegel, and Chan (2013) studied the effect of the phonological awareness of spelling among Chinese children. The researchers proved that the instruction of phonological awareness was more effective than that of vocabulary learning in terms of spelling. The results indicated that phonological awareness should be a part of the vocabulary learning to achieve better spelling skills (Yeung, Siegel, & Chan, 2013). After having undergone a course of phonological awareness, students showed better results for both familiar and new words, which proves that phonological awareness creates a specific set of skills students will be able to use in the future to define how the words should be properly written. Thus, teaching phonics in EFL classrooms can help improve students' spelling skills.

Mulla (2011) reported that teaching phonics benefits the ability to decode and spell while reading in EFL class. Weiser and Mathes (2011) studied the effectiveness of encoding instruction in case of teaching spelling to elementary students. Even though the researchers did not refer to the EFL environment, this strategy could be helpful in this case as well. The main idea of encoding instruction is to help students learn phoneme–grapheme relationships. According to Al-Bereiki and Al-Mekhlafi (2015), "the ability of encoding a sound or a phoneme into an appropriate corresponding grapheme is complex for many learners of English" (p. 660). Alsaawi (2015) indicated that other common mistakes students make

in spelling are "consonant doubling, silent letters, final [e] and vowels in general" (p. 55). Some of these problems can be resolved with the help of teaching phonics. To have good writing (spelling skills), students must have appropriate phonemic awareness. The resent research shows that teaching phonics is an effective way of helping students to resolve their issues with spelling. Language learning starts with the letters and their pronunciation; therefore, the alphabet is associated with the sounds. Further, more complicated clusters are learned in order to differentiate between sounds and letters (Williams, Walker, Vaughn, & Wanzek, 2017). Learning phonological rules appears effective as this helps students to understand how to spell the word. Phoneme-morpheme rules guarantee that students receive the basic vision of language, because it is impossible to read without being aware of these relationships. Therefore, this strategy can be helpful for EFL students to learn spelling since a grapheme is a symbol (letter).

Trying to explain the relation between the improved spelling abilities due to phoneme awareness, Shuting and Shufen (2017) referred to the relation between phonemes and graphemes trying to connect it to spelling. Overall, the researchers proved that even though phoneme–grapheme correspondence is irregular, phonics awareness is still beneficial in understanding the spelling rules (Shuting & Shufen, 2017). González-Bueno and Shaw (2011) also confirmed this statement and proved that students' identification, discrimination, and production of the grapheme improved significantly in case of Spanish students. The reference to the

Spanish learners was significant because while learning English as a foreign language, these people have difficulties in differentiating the /th/ sound as they do not have it in their mother tongue. The authors provided an example that students would spell the word *together* as *togeder* (González-Bueno & Shaw, 2011). Therefore, phonics awareness is important to such students as it can improve their spelling skills.

Hameed (2016) called the English language "a-phonetic" and "arbitrary" (p. 203). Therefore, poor spelling is usually explained by the poor awareness of phonology. Hameed (2016) conducted a research to see what spelling problems students have as college students. The study identified the mistakes related to silent letters, consonant clusters, diphthongs, and homophones. Interestingly, the phonetically spelt words were mainly written in a proper way. Since the research involved Arab students and the Arabic language can easily be written down phonologically, the researcher concluded that when learning EFL, students refer to their mother tongue considerably. Returning to other research findings, Hameed (2016) stated that students made fewer mistakes in the words with homophones and consonant clusters since the Arabic language also contains such features. Therefore, when studying the effect of phonemics in spelling, the researcher should refer to the principles of phoneme-morpheme correspondence in the mother tongue.

Al-Zuoud and Kabilan (2013) noted that if students lack phonology understanding, it can result in mistakes in spelling. To prove this statement, the authors conducted the research to identify

whether the major spelling mistakes are related to phonemes. Substitution and omission are the major errors foreign students experience when study English. Insertion, transportation, and capitalization are other errors students make in rare cases (Al- Zuoud & Kabilan, 2013). Al-Bereiki and Al-Mekhlafi (2015) identified vowel substitution and omission, and consonant substitution as three major spelling mistakes foreign students make when learning EFL. Al- Zuoud and Kabilan (2013) stated that in order to reduce the number of errors in English spelling caused by the native language, students should learn English phonemic rules. EFL students make more mistakes if they do not receive appropriate instruction of phonology during the first year of studying English. Moreover, in case students pronounce the word in a wrong way, they are sure to spell it wrongly as well. All these findings allow making the conclusion that phonics awareness is important in learning correct English spelling.

More research was conducted regarding the influence of English phoneme learning on the spelling abilities. Russak and Kahn-Horwitz (2015) studied the development of spelling abilities of EFL students with reference to specific phonological features. The researchers proved that students who shown good grapheme–phoneme correspondence knowledge were better spellers than those who showered poor correspondence. Studying the differences between good and poor EFL spellers at different levels, the researchers concluded:

Accurate phoneme–grapheme correspondence knowledge occurs at different rates and reaches different levels of accuracy at different grades, and in relation to different ability levels, despite the nature of the EFL language instruction provided (Russak & Kahn-Horwitz, 2015, p. 20).

Khabiri and Rezagholizadeh (2014) also indicated that phonics is one of the means of teaching spelling to EFL students. Thus, accurate spelling is a result of good knowledge of phonemics. Therefore, teachers should be aware of it in order to provide effective instruction in general.

Even though much research reported about the effectiveness of using phonetics for improving spelling skills among EFL students, Al-Bereiki and Al-Mekhlafi (2016) noted that Arab students make too many mistakes in spelling because English spelling does not correspond to what they hear. Additionally, according to Dich and Pedersen (2013), "sound-spelling correspondences are inconsistent, learning basic phoneme-grapheme conversion rules, which can often be sufficient for reading and writing in transparent orthography, is far from being sufficient in opaque orthographies" (p. 52). Therefore, when learning EFL, it is difficult for students to refer to phonics when studying spelling since English lacks clear sound-spelling correspondences. Supporting the provided statements, Al-Bereiki and Al-Mekhlafi (2016) offered the following examples: the sound /b/ is always spelt in the same way, with the help of the letter (b). However, when it concerns the sound /k/, it can be spelt with the letter (c), (ch), (ck), (x) or (q). Furthermore, studying the reasons of

spelling errors in EFL students, Bancha (2013) reported about the lack of phonic awareness, which is considered as the major reason for students' mistakes since they lack knowledge of morphology. The lack of appropriate articulation and interference errors lead to misspelling of English words. Bancha (2013) ensured that students could overcome spelling mistakes if they properly learn the correspondence between letters and sounds (for instance, the phoneme [c] corresponds to morphemes (c) and (s)), study how to distinguish similar sounds (bel*ie*ve vs bel*i*ve), learn consonant cluster reduction (gover/*n*/ment), and silent sounds (i/*s*/land). All these rules are properly explained during the phonics classes.

Phoneme instruction also helps students read and spell words, as stated by Kodae and Laohawiriyanon (2011). The research was conducted with the purpose to understand the role of phonemic awareness in learning the English language in general and reading and spelling in particular. Students who study phonics showed better results in learning the English language. They recognized words better and managed to refer phonemes to morphemes. However, in terms of spelling, the results were not as perfect as in terms of word recognition. The authors provided the following examples, when having heard a word, students managed to recognize some basic letters and spell it in a way they hear it, such as "*skul*" instead of "*school*" or "*it*" instead of "*eat*" (Kodae & Laohawiriyanon, 2011). Since spelling and pronunciation differ in the English language, students showed some positive results in spelling skills, but still made mistakes, which cannot prove for sure that phoneme learning

helps reduce spelling errors. However, looking at these results in a critical way, it is possible to see that if students were aware of the reading rules (for example, (oo) is pronounced as [u] and (ea) is heard as [i:]), students could avoid such problems. The effectiveness of applying phoneme-morpheme correspondence shows considerable results from the mother tongue, but at the same time, it remains useless for EFL students, "although, explicit phonics instruction does help L1 children improve their spelling skills, for EFL children, this is not the case" (Martínez, 2011, p. 45). Therefore, phonics can help in some cases, but it is useless when students have to spell longer words and vowels without the proper knowledge and guidance from teachers.

2.5 Conclusion

Therefore, it can be concluded that despite the fact that there are controversial conclusions and research, phonics is effective in improving student spelling skills in the EFL environment. After having analyzed the literature focusing on the use of phonics awareness to improve EFL students' spelling skills, it is evident that the more differences the students' mother tongue has in spelling and pronunciation with English, the more effective phonics awareness will help them in improving their spelling techniques. The literature review analyzed the findings from different countries to show the variety of the results and approaches applied by teachers. The major

findings indicated that similar pronunciation patters in English and the mother tongue resulted in fewer mistakes. However, if the students' mother tongue contained too many differences with English spelling and pronunciation– such as the Arabic language- students experience major difficulties, which could be avoided only with the help of phonological awareness and phonics instruction.

As a result, the literature review showed that the major problems students may experience are referred to irregular English spelling, meaning that many worlds are spelt in a different way from how they are pronounced. As this is the main difficulty, phonology and phonics only cannot contribute to its resolution. In order to learn vocabulary and try to achieve better results in spelling English words, EFL students should refer to phonics, but they should also be aware of the exceptions in the English language, as well as its irregular nature. Still, according to the literature review, there is no single opinion related to this issue and apart from the majority of the research projects reporting about the positive impact of phonics on spelling of EFL students, some studies do not confirm that it refers to the irregular nature of the English language. Therefore, after having explained all the findings in the current literature review, it is possible to conclude that teaching phonology awareness is effective in improving students' spelling, but it should be explained to students and other strategies should be implemented.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

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3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the design of the study is illustrated in a detailed matter, discussing the type of the study, the tools used to collect data, the targeted group and the overall description of how the research was prepared, conducted and the rationale behind it.

3.2 The Design of the Study

In this research, it was decided to use the experimental approach to investigate this problem. The mixed method approach in research has been widely used since the second half of the twentieth century. It is one of the three main research techniques such as quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research. The mixed method approach basically combines the two other approaches with the use of the needed data. It is an effective alternative to traditional quantitative and qualitative approaches, and it provides a deeper understanding and verification of the studied phenomenon.

The mixed methods research means collecting, analyzing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data as components of research either in a single study or a set of it; the application of these approaches can occur at different stages in the research process

(Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015). Triangulation is possible when using this research approach, because one can research a problem with more than one method in order to have a fuller understanding and better results. To triangulate the data, one can collect information via various procedures with the aim to make the data interpretation trustworthy and valid (Zohrabi, 2013). More accurate information can be received due to a thorough research of a subject and a careful analysis of its data through applying numerous techniques.

Different studies show the benefit of such a research approach and its importance for different fields, including the educational one. It is considered to increase validity in the findings and be of great use with knowledge creation (McKim, 2017). This research approach proves to be valuable to researchers, as research in education should be built on valid evidence (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2014). However, one could achieve even better results if the research process included the switching between qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. In addition, according to McKim (2017), some other advantages that highlight the importance of this methodology are: an integration component, readers can be more confident about the study results, and the conclusion from it; the fact that mixed methods research helps the researchers develop plans and ideas for future projects; and, finally, as stated by researchers, this approach ensures that one can be certain of the findings and interpretations (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2014) (McKim, 2017).

As mixed methods research has proved to be a useful approach for researchers due to its ability to cover the complexity of a research problem and understand it more deeply, it became more popular by researchers lately. Nowadays this method is widely used in different fields and is becoming increasingly common.

This research was made by conducting an experiment, i.e. teaching the phonics lessons in the new government schools' English series *Family and Friends*. The participants of this study were eighty grade six female students of a government school. A pretest used as a data collecting tool to assess the level of the participants' spelling and the types of their spelling errors. Finally, a post-test was conducted and analyzed to check for progress and improvements in the participants' spelling skill.

3.3 Parts of the Study

A general overview of the study's parts – the experiment, the pre-post tests, the focus group- and the reasons behind choosing to work by them is illustrated next.

3.3.1 The Experiment

The experiment in this study serves to measure whether the phonics lessons in *Family & Friends* series can help students improve their spelling skills and increase their phonological awareness. It was researched that learning phonics and having a

better phonological awareness can help students of EFL become better writers and spellers (Al-Bereiki and Al-Mekhlafi, 2016) Therefore, this study can help prove that the new phonics lessons can contribute with the right guidance and instructions from teachers of primary education improve students' spelling.

Phonics was added to primary English government education in 2016 along with the shift from the old English curriculums *Happy Street* and *Backpack* to the new ones used nowadays, *Family & Friends*. Two main rules of phonics were chosen from the series *Family & Friends* to be taught for the participants of grade six students after observing their level and common spelling mistakes.

The chosen phonics rules taken from the series *Family & Friends* (Appendix 2) are:

1. The different sounds and use of vowels in words (a – o – u – e – i).

Ex: (Fan – Fun) (Pin - Pen) (dock – duck)

2. The effect of adding (e) at the end of words with vowels.

Ex: (game - Love – Mice)

Many researchers have found that vowels and the silent letter (e) at the end of words are two very common errors of EFL students (Al-Jarf, 2011), (Subhi &Yasin, 2015), (Al-Sobhi, 2017). Therefore,

and after observing the focus group's spelling errors, the two phonics rules have been chosen from the book to be taught in association to spelling to the participants and to measure their effect on enhancing students' spelling.

3.3.2 The Pre-Post Tests

The pre-post tests, which belongs to the data collection tools, was chosen to assess the students' spelling skills before and after the phonics lessons in the framework of the *Family & Friends* English curricula of the government education. The tools of pre- and post-testing are effective instruments used to measure the change in a specific group of individuals in certain dispositions or likings. They are conducted in various fields at multiple points of time in order to examine whether the participants' preferences or skills have changed and how they have done that, with special benefits available in the field of education.

The test was chosen as a standard MOE spelling assessment test called *Dictation* (Appendix 1) to be used as both the pre and the post tests. For grade six, the rubric of spelling assessment is direct and strict (Appendix 5). The student is expected to write an entire word given to him or her correctly with any misspelled letters in the word leading to mark deduction in the test.

Dictations are usually given in schools as weekly assessment of the new vocabulary of the studied units. Students pre-study and memorize the words for the announced and agreed spelling test; therefore, there is a tendency of getting good marks in their spelling

assessment. On the other hand, when students are asked to write new words or the words they have not memorized beforehand, they tend to misspell them.

Ten words have been chosen from the sixth grade story books based on the targeted phonics rules (Table 1). At first, they will be assessed in the pre-test without prior preparation or studying to check the errors and estimate the level of the students' spelling skills. Then, after teaching the targeted phonics rules once, the same words will be assessed in a post-test with neither the students' prior awareness nor preparation to measure whether the lessons have affected the students' spelling skills and helped to improve them in some way. Keeping in mind that those words were not used as examples during teaching the phonics lessons nor were mentioned at any time during the experiment except in the pre and post tests.

Table (1)

The List of Words Set to Be Assessed in the Pre-Post Tests

#	The 10 words set to be assessed are:
1.	Blame
2.	behave
3.	Brave
4.	Solute

5.	huge
6.	Slide
7.	Bride
8.	Volume
9.	Stole
10.	Conclude

3.3.3 The Participants

For this study, sixth-grade female students of a government primary school were chosen to be the focus group. The choice of the grade and gender was made with reference to my personal teaching experience and timing. I have been a primary English teacher of female students for five years. Over those years, I have observed students struggle with spelling words in English, regardless of their grade and language level, most students found English spelling to be confusing due to many different reasons as mentioned in the literature review.

To conduct this study, I must be able to teach and observe the participants closely. With the limited time between my own teaching duties and the time needed to conduct the study; choosing my own students as the participants was the most suitable option at the time, as I can assess their spelling level before the experiment, teach them the intended phonics lessons and then measure their improvement with efficient time and within their English periods on a daily basis.

The focus group was composed of my own sixth grade female students that I was teaching at the time in a government school. The focus group was over one hundred female sixth-grade students; however, eighty students were selected as the participants of the study, regardless of their prior phonics knowledge and level of the English language, the selection of these eighty students was mainly based on the first eighty pre-tests I have received from them.

3.4 Testing Instrumentation

For this research, I have chosen a pre-post tests tool to collect the data needed for the study known as a *Dictation* test. Dictations are used in government schools by the MOE in Bahrain for many years (Appendix 1). Every government primary level school implements this test in the same way: students memorize a list of words given to them by teachers at the beginning of each new unit of their book; then, their spelling skills are assessed on a preset day. The number of the assessed words and the marking rubric of the test change at every level. The sixth grade students are assessed on the basis of ten or more words in each test, and each letter in every word must be written correctly so that the student could get the full score of the test. The test leaves no room for errors.

In order to use this test as a data collecting tool for this study, it was piloted with the focus group several times before conducting the pre-test with a list of new words they had not prepared for. A

dictation test was given to the focus group once a week in the course of a four-month period during the first semester of 2017/2018. For each dictation, the focus group were given a list of ten words from their book to memorize and asked them to come the next day to spell them correctly in the test. It was a well-known method of spelling assessment the focus group had been familiar with throughout their primary education. Many of those students would get good to excellent marks on the test since they counted on memorization rather than understanding the phoneme - grapheme relationship and rules of phonics in spelling.

After the first month of the first semester, the focus group were given two extra unannounced words on the day of the test for correct spelling without their prior knowledge or preparation. The strategy revealed the students' actual level of spelling skills and the degree at which they struggle to spell a new word correctly, proving the problem of the research and preparing the students for the upcoming pre-test.

By the end of the first semester of 2017/2018 after fifteen dictation tests, the focus group had got used to taking the tests. They gained understanding of the marking scheme and were ready to take the pre-test of the intended words' list set for the experiment.

3.5 The Procedures

For conducting this study, I had to determine the common spelling errors made by the focus group. Observations of the spelling errors of the focus group in the dictation tests given to them throughout the first semester of 2017/2018 provided a clear idea regarding the phonics rules the students needed to comprehend and apply while writing to improve their spelling skills.

The key errors made by the focus group in their dictation tests were associated with the vowels, different sounds and functions, as well as the effect of the silent letter (e) at the end of words. After searching the *Family & Friends* book series, those two phonics rules were found in the second and third grades books (Appendix 2). Since this book was first introduced and used by the MOE in 2016, the focus group had not used it in their primary education; therefore, they were not familiar with the rules and content knowledge.

After deciding on the phonics lessons to be used and taught for the experiment, a set of ten words were made to be assessed on the pre-post tests (Table 1). Those ten words are all related to the two chosen phonics rules to be learnt in the course of the experiment.

The pre-test (Appendix 1) was given to the focus group at the beginning of the second semester of 2017/2018. Eighty participants were randomly chosen for the study. The analysis of the pre-test results and recognition of the students' spelling errors were followed with a categorization of the errors on the basis of their variability, omission, substitution, transposition, and insertion (Subhi &Yasin, 2015) (Figure 2) (Appendix 6). Omission is associated with the lack

of letters, substitution involves usage of wrong letters, transposition involves putting the letters in reverse order, and insertion is adding extra letters that do not belong to the words.

After the pre-test, the participants took the phonics lessons for four one-hour periods during a month. Each week, the students were taught a new rule in a one-hour period, starting with the different sounds and use of vowels a – o – i – e – u and then the effect of the silent letter (e) at the end of words. The phonics lessons were taught in association with spelling and writing rules as instructed by the teacher. Teaching the phonics lessons in the series *Family & Friends* with limited examples and without further instructions and association to spelling can neither help the students comprehend the phonics rule nor understand how to apply and detect those sounds in the words they hear or try to write for the first time. To make those lessons helpful in improving students' spelling skills, teachers must take the initiative to further explain phonics rules, provide extra examples, train students' ears to detect the vowels' sound effect in new words and compare different results one might get from replacing one vowel with another.

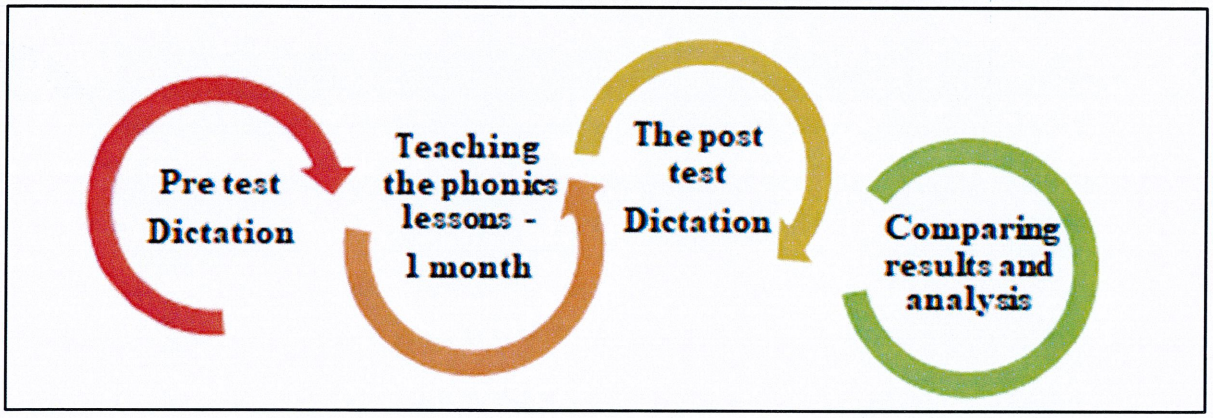
During the experiment, the students were taught different sounds of vowels, their functions before or after certain letters, and the effect of the silent letter (e) at the end of words. The participants were finally trained to listen carefully to how the word is pronounced in order to spell it correctly, implying ear training instead of memorization.

After a month of learning the phonics lessons in association with spelling, the post-test (Appendix 1) was given to the

participants to spell the same set of ten words (Table 1) assessed during the pre-test and check for the results of spelling improvement and phonological awareness. The participants' answers in the post-test were also analyzed and categorized on the basis of their variability, omission, substitution, transposition, and insertion to get a full report on the participants' level of improvement in spelling (Subhi &Yasin, 2015).

Figure (1)

The Experiment Procedures



3.6 Ethical Issues

In order to conduct this study with children in a primary government school, it was necessary to obtain the consent of the Ministry of Education in Bahrain and it was granted before conducting the experiment (Appendix 3) (Appendix 4).

All the participants remained anonymous and their names were illustrated as numbers as well as the name of the school, in which the experiment was held. The participants were neither aware of their pre-test grades nor their post-test results to prevent them from having any harmful feelings towards the language learning or being discouraged; however, they were informed of the progress they had made after the experiment to motivate them and encourage them to focus on the phonics lessons and associate them with spelling whilst writing.

3.7 Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data provided by the pre-post tests, first of all, a grading rubric of spelling assessment was taken from the MOE examination grading system for grade six (Appendix 5) to use it as a grading rubric for the pre-post tests of the experiment. The Ministry of Education in Bahrain requires sixth-grade students to be able to spell common high-frequency words correctly without any errors to get the full score of the test. Any mistake, related to missing, replacing or misplacing letters in a word results to deducting the entire mark set for that word in the test, which is usually around one or two marks depending on the test total grade.

Therefore, the grading of spelling assessment is not sufficient for having full understanding of the student's level and needs to improve spelling skills. A thorough analysis of the students' performance and spelling mistakes is required. Teachers can

categorize the students' spelling mistakes on the basis of their variability, omission, substitution, transposition, and insertion (Subhi &Yasin, 2015). This categorizing system was used to analyze the participants' spelling mistakes in their pre-test to understand the nature of their spelling problems and try to address them whilst teaching them the phonics lessons in the experiment.

Finally, the same grading and categorizing system was used in the post-test with the aim of comparing the students' performance, including their grades and spelling errors, in both tests and overlook how learning phonics in the experiment contributed in preventing or helped in improving some of these spelling errors to increase the students' grades in spelling assessments.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Using the mixed method approach in researching this problem is considered to be helpful in increasing the validity of findings and creating knowledge (McKim, 2017). It proves to be valuable to researchers as research in the educational field should be built on valid evidence (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2014).

Being an indicator of trustworthiness, validity is the main principle of mixed methods research. Such terms as external and internal validity are generally used for the description of the accuracy of a certain study (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2014). External validity describes whether one can use the study data out of context and apply them to other models, while internal validity refers to the

accordance between the data obtained and a research problem (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2014). Moreover, as the aim of this approach is to cover the complexity of a research problem, there is also inference validity used to refer to researcher's effectiveness in fulfilling that aim (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2014). Overall, it is vital for a research project to be validated, as validity is a matter of reliability and dependability.

Another requirement of any research that also deals with dependability along with consistency is reliability of the data. Zohrabi (2013) states that instead of attaining the same results, one should better think about dependability and consistency of the data; that being said, the main goal is not to obtain similar results, but to agree that on the basis of data collection, the results and the findings are consistent and dependable.

In this research, the number of the randomly selected eighty students as the study participants meant to increase the validity and reliability of the collected data and findings. In order to be able to generalize the results of the study and consider them to be valid, a sufficient number of participants must be taken into consideration as well as the sufficient amount of the data collected to be analyzed.

The results of the data analysis should answer the questions of this study to make it valid. By the end of this research, the data has provided the answers regarding the effects of the new phonics lessons in the book series *Family & Friends*. Keeping the validity and reliability in mind, the students were not informed about the conducted research. The students' awareness of the fact that they are

being assessed on their spelling for a research can compromise their performance and the results of the data collected.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed the methodology used in this research. It starts with a general overview of the mixed method design of the study and also demonstrates the steps of the study, in particular it presents the experiment in depth. It also explains the pre-post tests used as a data collecting tool in the experiment, and introduces the participants in this research.

Then the chapter moves to discussing how the instrumentation of this study was tested and checked before conducting the experiment, what procedures were made to implement the study, and how the ethical issues that may come along with conducting the research are addressed.

Finally, this chapter lists how the study findings were analyzed, shows how the rationale uses these analyzing methods, and concludes with an overview of the validity and reliability of the research and all used tools.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the results of the data collected in a thorough and detailed manner. It starts with listing the pre-test results of eighty participants with the lowest and the highest grade highlighted and mentions the most common types of spelling errors made by the participants. Afterwards, it analyses the results of the pre-test and what they mean to this study and moves to the results of the post-test. Same as with the pre-test, the chapter lists the lowest grade, the highest grade, and the most common types of spelling errors made by the participants in the post-test and after learning the new phonics rules in the experiment.

Afterwards, the chapter starts discussing the usefulness of the phonics lessons in the curricula series *Family & Friends*. It illustrates the students' performance in general, showing a comparison between the participants' grades variation and the common types of spelling errors in the pre-post tests.

The chapter finally concludes with the analysis of how the data findings answer the question of this research in terms of how those phonics lessons can help to improve the spelling skills of the EFL students with the right instructions and guidelines.

4.2 Pre Test's Results

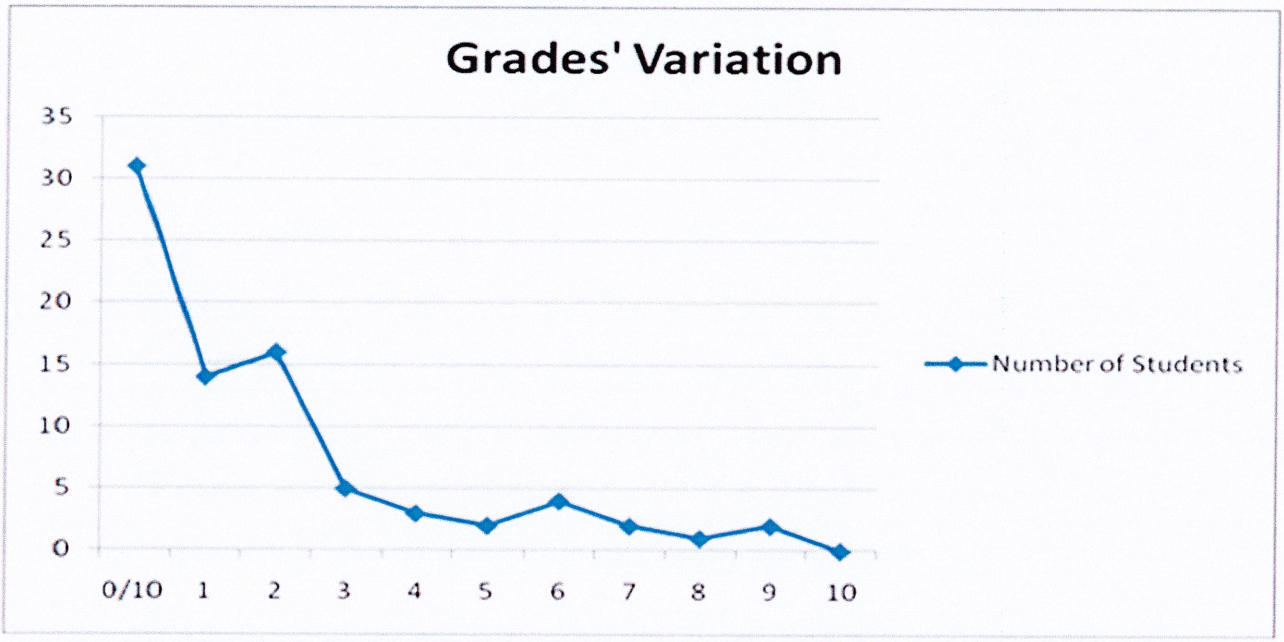
The pre-test (Appendix 1) was given to eighty participants at the beginning of the second semester of 2017/2018. The test was later marked according to the MOE spelling assessment rubric for sixth-grade English government education (Appendix 5). For the pre-test, a 'one' mark was counted for each word in the test, making the test out of ten marks for the ten words (Table 1) created to assess the chosen phonics rules.

The results of the pre-test showed the participants' lack of phonological awareness and their weak spelling skills with the words they are not familiar with or those they had no time to memorize and study for an assessment. The passing percentage for the pre-test is 60% with a grade of six out of ten or higher, which is also assigned by the MOE as the passing norm for the English subject assessments. Only nine participants passed the test (Figure 2), with the highest mark being 9 out of 10, achieved by two participants only. Seventy-one participants failed in the pre-test with the lowest mark 0 out of 10, achieved by thirty-one participants. The fact that the majority of the sixth-grade participants failed a simple spelling test made of easy words such as "Bride" is an indicator of a burning problem at hand.

Having 0 out of 10 as the most common mark in the pre-test is followed by 2 out of 10 achieved by sixteen participants, 1 out of 10 by fourteen participants, 3 out of 10 by five participants, 6 out of 10 by four participants, 4 out of 10 by three participants, 5-7-9 out of 10 each achieved by two participants, and 8 out of 10 achieved by one participant only (Figure 2).

Figure (2)

The Results' Analysis of the Pre-Test (Grades' Variation)



marking the pre-test and analyzing the results were followed with the organization of the test papers in an ascending order according to the grades achieved by the participants, starting with those that got 0 out of 10 and ending with 9 out of 10. Then the participants were assigned to numbers on their test papers instead of their names to keep their identity hidden in this study and detailed analysis of the pre-test performance (Appendix 6).

The participants' performance was also analyzed on the basis of variability of the spelling errors they had made in the pre-test, in particular omission, substitution, transposition, and insertion (Figure 3) (Subhi & Yasin, 2015).

The participants' performance in the pre-test has also shown that they are not familiar with the phonics rules chosen for this study, even though for students of their age and English language learning experience, they should have done better, at least with placing correct vowels in the chosen words of the test. Most of the participants struggled with identifying the phonemes of the letter (u), mistaking it for the vowels (a) or (o). Therefore, there were a lot of misspelled words, such as "sol**o**t" instead of "sol**u**t**e**" and "h**ao**ge" instead of "h**u**ge". Consequently, the error of "substitution" appeared to be the most common error made by the participants in the pre-test with seventy-eight participants making that spelling error. The vowels (i) and (e) were also misplaced and misused by numerous participants. Their performance demonstrates that the majority of the students are not good at differentiating between different sounds of these two vowels and often mistake one for the other. For example; many wrote "b**i**hav" instead of "b**e**hav**e**" or 'sl**e**d" instead of "sl**i**d**e**". The vowel (o) was found to be the clearest one to place correctly for the participants and the easiest to identify. Even though some participants misplaced the vowel (o) instead of (u) in such words as "vol**o**m" for "vol**u**m**e**", very few of them placed another vowel where it should have been an (o). In words like "v**o**lume, c**o**nclude and st**o**le", the vowel (o) was rarely a problem and it was typically written correctly.

The "omission" error comes second after the error of "substitution" with seventy-seven participants out of the original eighty, who made this error. It was mainly made through removing

the letter (e) at the end of the words with vowels, which is the second phonics rule to be assessed in this study. The majority of the participants were not aware of the phonological rule, known as *The Magic e*. It states that if the letter (e) is added at the end of the words with vowels, it strengthens the vowel itself, making it long and clear to hear in such words as "br**a**v**e**, st**o**l**e** and sl**i**d**e**". Even though the rule can be easily detected, the majority of the participants did not add the letter (e) at the end of the words in the pre-test, as they were not able to detect its phonological effect and most likely they were not aware of the rule itself.

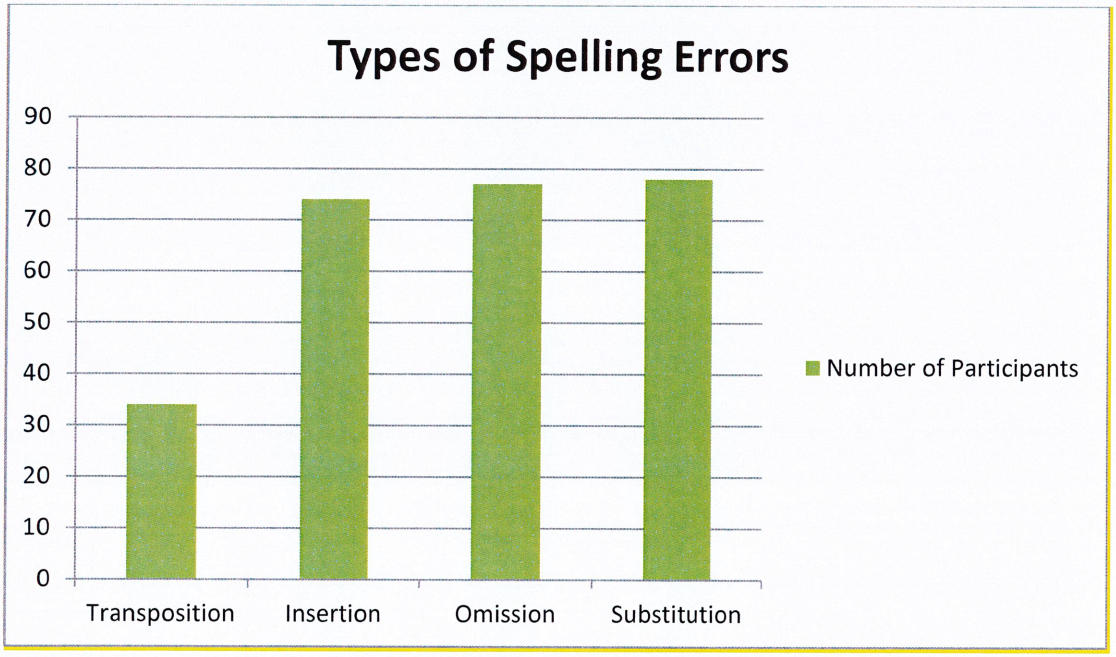
It was also found that some of the high-level participants wrote the letter "e" at the end of such words as "h**u**g**e**" and "vol**u**m**e**", but they did not apply the same rule to the rest of the words in the test. That proves that those participants tend to focus on their memory when it comes to spelling rather than apply phonics rules. They remembered that there was an (e) at the end of these familiar high-frequency words, but they were not knowledgeable of the use or phonological effect of that (e) in those words.

The "insertion" error was found to be the third most common one made in the pre-test by the participants, with seventy-four out of the eighty to make it. The majority of the participants inserted a vowel where it was not needed in the tested words. For example, some participants spelled the word "bl**a**m**e**" as "bl**ai**m" and "h**u**g**e**" as "h**uo**g**e**". This error goes back to the participants' lack of phonological knowledge when it comes to the phonemes of vowels and their effect on how the word is being heard or said.

The "transposition" error was the least frequent among those made in the pre-test. Only thirty-four participants made this error out of the original eighty. Compared to the other three errors and their percentages, the "transposition" error was uncommon and it had a very low percentage (Figure 3). This error was found in such words as "s**u**l**o**t" instead of "s**o**l**u**te" and "v**u**l**o**m" as "v**o**l**u**me". It was also clear that the majority of those "transposition" errors were made due to confusing the vowels "o" and u"; thus, it was clear that the participants had a serious problem with identifying and distinguishing between two different phonemes of the vowels.

Figure (3)

The Results' Analysis of the Pre-Test (Types of Spelling Errors)



4.3 Post Test's Results

The post-test (Appendix 1) was given to eighty participants after a month with four one-hour periods of learning the phonics lessons – one-hour period per week- from the series *Family & Friends*. Just as the pre-test, the post-test was later marked according to the MOE spelling assessment rubric for sixth-grade English government education (Appendix 5).

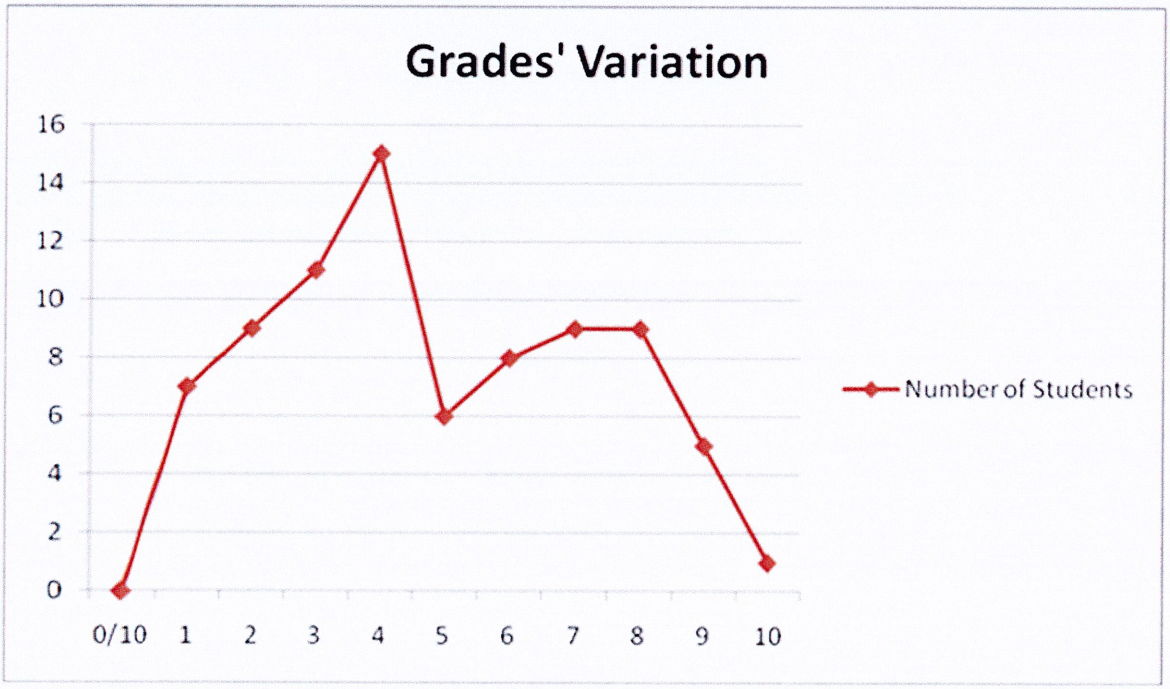
The results of the post-test demonstrated a good improvement in the participants' performance. The participants showed an increasing phonological awareness and improved spelling skills. They were able to spell some of the chosen words correctly in association with the phonics rules they had learnt in the experiment. In order to keep the collected data valid, other words were used as examples of the rules taken during the teaching experiment. The participants neither studied the correct spelling of the assessed words during the experiment nor had the chance to look at their performance of the pre-test and memorize the correct spelling of those words.

Thirty-two participants passed the test (Figure 4), with the highest mark of 10 out of 10 achieved by one participant only. Forty-eight participants failed the post-test with the lowest mark 1 out of 10, achieved by seven participants. Even though 1 out of 10 is a very low achievement, it is still considered to be an improvement and work in progress.

The most common mark in the post-test was 4 out of 10, achieved by fifteen students. It is followed by 3 out of 10, achieved by eleven participants; 2, 7 and 8 out of 10 each achieved by nine participants; 6 out of 10 by eight participants, 5 out of 10 by six participants, 9 out of 10 by five participants, and 10 out of 10 achieved by one participant only (Figure 4).

Figure (4)

The Results' Analysis of the Post-Test (Grades' Variation)



- The detailed analysis of the post-test's results is listed in (Appendix 7).

Correction of the post-test and analysis of the results was followed also with the analysis of the participants' performance based on the variability of the spelling errors the participants have made in the post-test (Figure 5), omission, substitution, transposition, and insertion (Subhi &Yasin, 2015).

The participants' performance in the post-test showed that they had a better understanding and knowledge of the phonics rules taken in the experiment, being able to apply them while spelling the tested words.

The second rule of the *Magic e* was found to be the most correctly applied rule while spelling in the post-test. The participants were able to hear the effect of the final letter (e) on the vowels in such words as "conclu**d**e, sl**i**d**e** and br**a**v**e**". They were able to hear the strengthened vowel and therefore realized that there should be an (e) at the end of those words. That is why, the "omission" error was made by only forty-nine participants out of the eighty, and some of these errors were associated not with omitting the final letter (e), but with omitting a vowel in the tested word.

The "substitution" remained the most common error made by the participants in the post-test with seventy-three participants making that spelling error out of the original eighty. The struggle between identifying the phoneme of the vowel (u) and mistaking it for the vowels (a) or (o) was still the most common mistake made as the "substitution" error in the post-test. However, even though the number of participants who made that error is still large, the number of words with that error has decreased in the majority of the post-

tests; so, for example, if a participant made that error in three words in the pre-test, it remained in just one word in the post-test. The participants showed certain improvement when it came to identifying and distinguishing those three vowels (a, u, o).

The vowels (i) and (e) were used with better efficiency in the post-test, and the participants showed a good understanding of different phonemes and their use in words. There were fewer mistakes associated with mixing two vowels together. For example, such words as "b**e**h**a**v**e,** sl**i**d**e** and br**i**d**e**" were frequently written correctly.

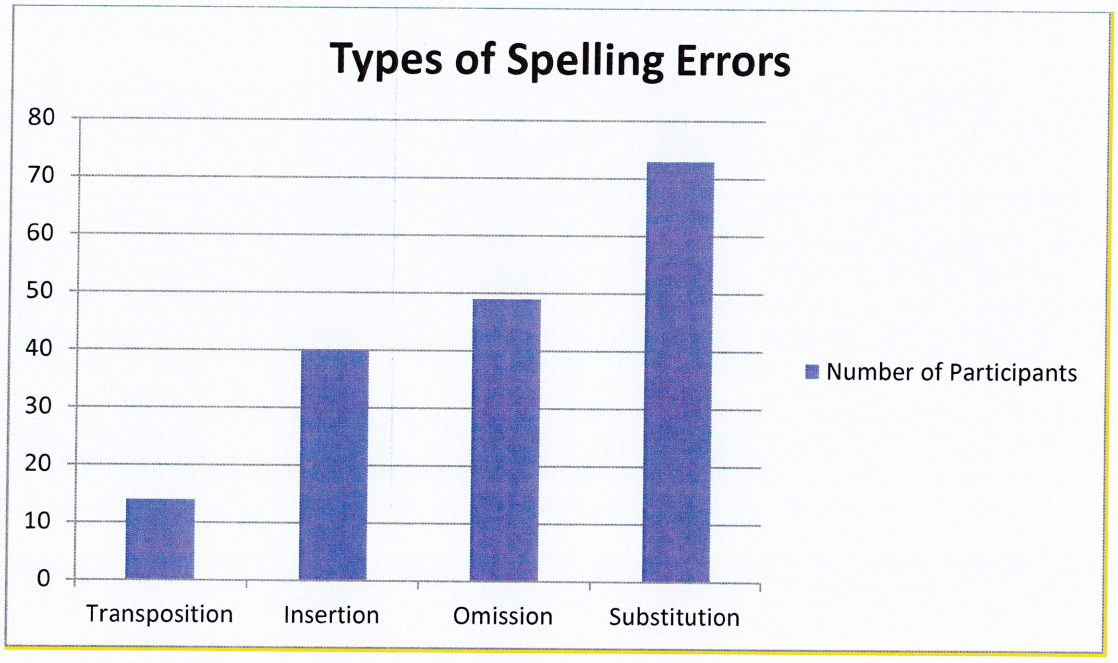
After the "substitution" and "omission" errors, "insertion" was found to be the third most common error made in the post-test. Forty participants out of eighty made the error while spelling the tested words. Even though the number of the participants, who made this error, has decreased tremendously in comparison with the pre-test, it was still associated with the participants' confusion when it came to vowels with similar sound effect and phonemes, such as using (u) and (o) together in "s**o**l**uo**t**e**" instead of "s**o**l**u**t**e**" and the vowels (i) with the word "br**ai**v**e**" as "br**a**v**e.**"

The "transposition" error was found to be very rare in the post-test. Only fourteen participants made this error out of the original eighty. This low percentage (Figure 5) shows that the students improved their phonological knowledge of distinguishing and placing the vowels in their correct place in the word. Switching the places of two vowels was mainly found in words with the vowels (o) and (u) together, such as "c**o**ncl**u**d**e**" and "v**o**l**u**m**e**". In the post-test,

the majority of the participants were able to place these two vowels correctly where they belong.

Figure (5)

The Results' Analysis of the Post-Test (Types of Spelling Errors)



4.4 Study's Findings

The study has found that the phonics lessons used at the government schools for EFL Education by the Ministry of Education in Bahrain improve and enhance the spelling skills of EFL learners, which is the first hypothesis in this research.

The results of the conducted experiment and teaching the phonics lessons to eighty participants of the study have shown an increase in the participants' marks from the pre-test to the post-test

(Figure 6) (Figure 7). The most common mark in the pre-test was 0 out of 10, achieved by thirty-one participants, while in the post-test none of these participants got all the words wrong and had 0 in the test. The most common mark in the post-test was 4 out of 10, achieved by fifteen participants, and then the marks varied into a semi bell-shaped figure (Figure 4). Even though 4 out of 10 is still an indication of low performance, it is considered to be a good increase and an improvement of the participants' spelling skills to be later developed further by the teachers.

The marks of the pre-test showed that the majority of participants, sixty-one participants, scored from 0 to 2 out of 10, while the higher marks of 7 to 9 out of 10 were achieved by five participants only, and no one got the full mark of the test. The comparison to the post-test found the opposite results: the low range of 0 to 2 out of 10 was achieved by sixteen participants only, and the higher marks of 7 to 9 were achieved by twenty-three participants. One participant out of eighty achieved the full mark in the post-test. This comparison shows that the participants' achievements in the pre-test were similar and limited to the low marks range of the test; however, in the post-test, the participants were able to achieve higher and more diverse marks, they were not limited to a specific level and they had a good semi-belled shape results.

The participants' improved performance was also shown in the analysis of the marks' increments from the pre-test to the post-test (Figure 7). It was found that the most common increment in the test marks was +2, achieved by twenty-two participants; so, for example,

if a student achieved 0 out of 10 in the pre-test, she achieved 2 out of 10 in the post-test. After the +2 increment, +4 was the second most common result, achieved by sixteen participants out of the original eighty, which is an excellent improvement in the participants' results. It is then followed by +1 mark had by fourteen participants, +3 marks by eleven participants, +5 marks by seven participants, +6 marks by three participants, +7 marks by two participants, +8 and +9 marks each achieved by one participant only. There were three participants who have remained at their level without any mark increments.

This analysis shows the usefulness of the phonics lessons in the series *Family & Friends* in improving the spelling skills of EFL students, which is the main question of this research. It demonstrates that the highest increment of the participants' marks was +9, achieved by one of the participants. Her pre-test mark was 1 out of 10, and it went up to a full mark, 10 out of 10, in her post-test. It was impressive to see how much the student needed the correct guidance when it came to spelling and how enhancement of her phonological knowledge impacted the improvement of her spelling skills.

The variation in increments is also associated with the original language level of the participants. Therefore, those students with the weak language base, who were struggling to identify the basic phonemes of the alphabets, were able to either remain at their spelling level or improve in a small amount of +1, +2 increments; however, those with a good to excellent language level and a strong foundation to build upon were more able to use the phonics lessons

to their advantage and improve their spelling skills with the use of the rules they acquired in the experiment, and they had +6 and higher increments.

No matter what increment the participants' marks demonstrated, it is still considered a good start and an improvement in their spelling skills for the teachers to keep building upon and using phonics to guide their students in their spelling improvement plans.

Figure (6)

A Comparison between the Results of the Pre/Post Tests (Marks)

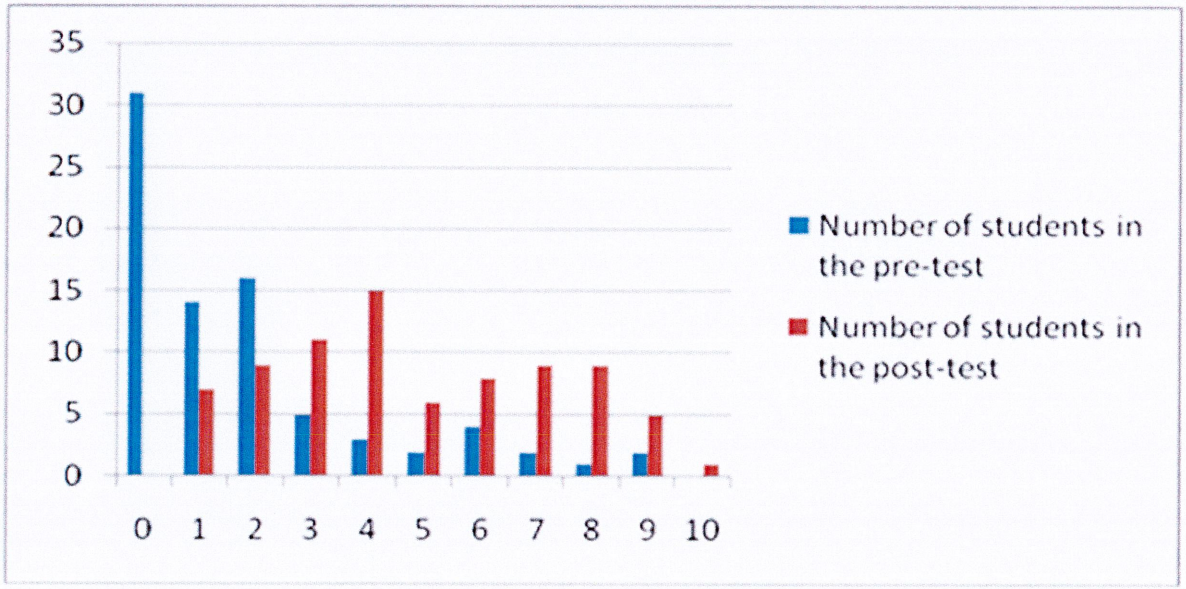
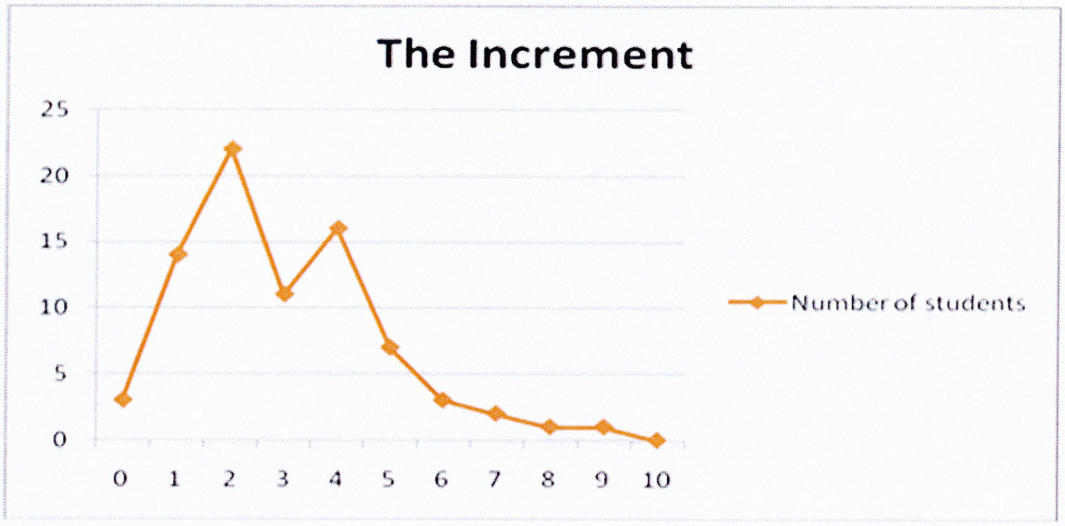


Figure (7)

The Increment in the Participants' Marks from the Pre-Test to the Post-Test



The study has also shown that teaching the phonics lessons from the series *Family & Friends* has its positive effect on decreasing the types of errors students make while spelling (Figure 8).

In the pre-test, the majority of the participants made the error of "substitution", placing a wrong vowel instead of the correct one in a word. The participants were not familiar with the phonemes of the vowels or how they affect the sounds produced in a word; hence, they were not able to distinguish between the heard vowel and the wrong one used in its place, for example, writing "br**ae**d" instead of "br**i**de". After the explanations at the phonics lessons, the number of participants, who used to make the error of "substitution", decreased to seventy-three participants instead of seventy-eight. The number is

still very high, and it shows that the participants need more practice in distinguishing and identifying the phonemes of vowels to place them correctly in the words. Nevertheless, it is still considered a small improvement and a step forward in the right direction. Even though the number of participants, who made the error of "substitution" in their post-test, has not decreased tremendously, the number of times that error was made by each participant did. So, for example, if a participant had the error of "substitution" five times in the pre-test, it happened only once or twice in the post-test; therefore, it is an improvement worth recognition.

The frequency of the errors of omission, insertion and transposition decreased greatly after learning the phonics lessons in the post-test. The error of "omission", which is cancelling a vowel in a word, was made by seventy-seven participants out of the original eighty; while in the post-test it was made by forty-nine participants only. The participants were more aware of the phonemes they heard and they were able to use them according to the rules while spelling the tested words, especially with the letter (e) at the end of the words with vowels, such as "sl**i**d**e**, br**a**v**e** and concl**u**d**e**".

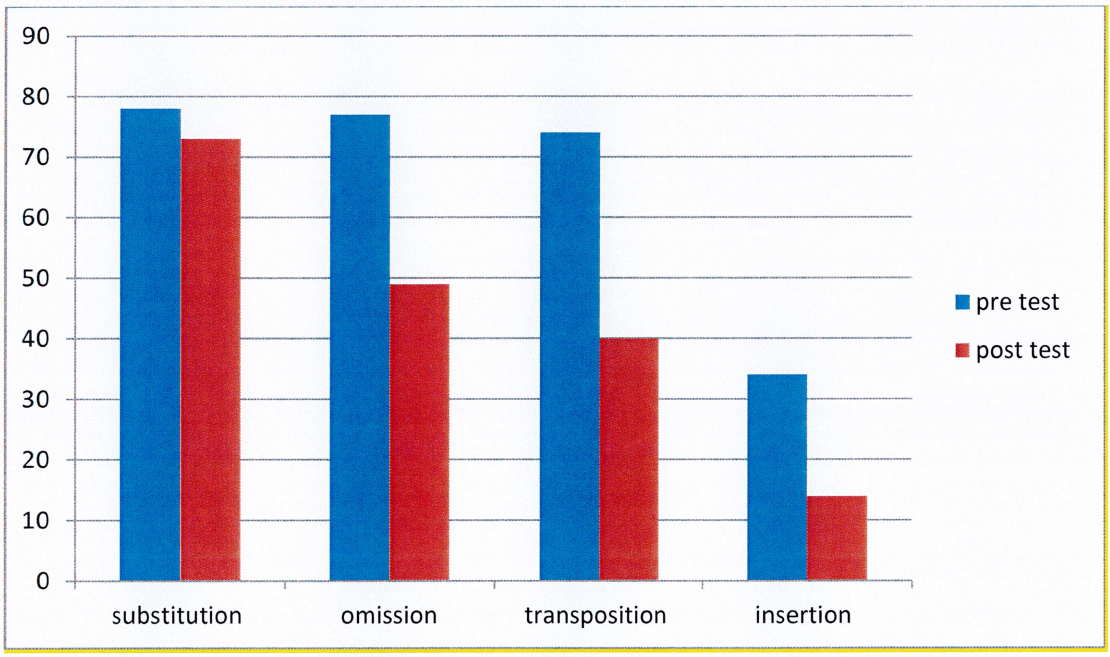
The frequency of the "insertion" error went down from seventy-four to only forty participants, and the error of "transposition" decreased from thirty-four to only fourteen participants, who made that error in their post-tests.

The analysis shows that even though the participants still need to practice in identifying the correct vowel they hear in a word, after learning the chosen phonics rules, they were much better at

understanding when and how to use the *Magic e* at the end of the words with vowels when there is no more than one vowel in a word, and how to place the vowels in the correct order in words. It is a wonderful improvement achieved after four one-hour periods which needs to be celebrated and encouraged by the teachers. If teachers everywhere in the government schools of Bahrain focus on those phonics lessons and understand their importance related to spelling, they will be able to guide their students and help them to use these rules to enhance their spelling skills and turn spelling into a fun activity instead of stressful assessment.

Figure (8)

A Comparison between the Results of the Pre/ Post Tests (Spelling Errors)



4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the study findings as well as the results of the pre-test, followed by the post-test results and overall results of the conducted experiment and its efficiency at answering the question of this study.

The pre-test demonstrated that the students lack basic phonological knowledge of the vowels and their rules in spelling the words correctly. Students were not able either to identify or distinguish the vowels they heard. Hence, their grades were low and mostly similar. After learning the chosen phonics lessons, the students in the post-test showed a great improvement in their performance. The participants were able to apply the phonological rules they had learnt. They were also able to increase their marks and improve their spelling skills. The results of the post-test were much better, and the majority of the participants achieved better marks and made fewer spelling errors.

The study has found that the phonics lessons in the new *Family & Friends* English primary education series can help students improve their spelling skills and increase their phonological awareness if taught with the right instructions and guidance to spelling.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONCLUSION

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter presents a summary of the research, starting from the research question and hypotheses to the most important findings of the research. It is then followed with the recommendations needed to fix the researched problem. Finally, it is concluded with the references and appendices of the research.

5.2 Summary of research

This research attempted to investigate the issue of low achievement level of the government school EFL students in spelling. It has one main question:

- Do the phonics lessons in the new English subject series *Family & Friends* used by the MOE for primary education in government schools have an effect on improving EFL students' spelling?

There are two possible hypotheses:

1- Teaching the newly added phonics lessons in the new English curricula series *Family & Friends* used by the MOE in

primary government school education improves the students' spelling skills.

2- Teaching the newly added phonics lessons in the new English curriculums' series *Family & Friends* used by the MOE in primary government school education has no effect on the students' spelling skills.

The participants of this study were eighty sixth-grade female government school students randomly chosen for this experimental study. Two phonics rules have been selected to be taught in the experiment from the series *Family & Friends* along with a list of ten words that illustrate the chosen rules to be used in the spelling assessment before and after learning the phonics lessons.

A pre-test was given to the participants to assess their prior phonological knowledge and spelling skills. The test is a standard MOE spelling assessment with a standard correcting rubric of the sixth-grade. After analyzing the results and defining the level of the problem, it was found from the pre-test that the participants lacked basic phonological knowledge and had a very low level of spelling skills. The majority of the participants failed the test, and the most common mark was 0 out of 10.

After the pre-test, the chosen phonics lessons were taught to the participants in a month period at weekly one-hour lessons. Later on, a post-test with the same list of words was given to the participants to analyze the new results and check whether having the phonics lessons helped the students to become better spellers.

The results of the post-test have shown certain increase in the students' grades and an improvement of their spelling skills. Students were more able to connect and comprehend the phoneme - grapheme relationship in spelling, having a better understanding of the rules behind the way the words are heard or said, and they could relate those rules to the way the words are spelled. The results of the post-test were more diverse than those of the pre-test; it had a semi-bell shape, and the participants were able to score higher marks and make fewer spelling errors than in the pre-test.

The research findings prove that the new approach of the Ministry of Education in Bahrain to introducing phonics as a part of the curricula in primary government EFL education has been useful in helping students to improve their spelling skills, with the right instructions given by the teachers to guide the students and create the links between phonics and spelling.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings of this research make it possible to come up with certain recommendations to the Ministry of Education in Bahrain and all teachers of EFL so that they can further improve students' spelling skill.

1- EFL teachers in Bahrain should start a phonology course and improve their own understanding and knowledge in this important field, specifically in phonics itself.

2- EFL teachers in Bahrain should attend training workshops on how they can provide their students with the right instructions and guidance throughout the phonics lessons in order to link the taken phonics rules with spelling.

3- Teachers must dedicate certain time in every phonics lesson to train students in how to identify and distinguish between the phonemes they hear in new words and how to link those phonemes to the correct spelling of words.

4- The way dictations are given in government schools must be changed. Memorization makes no sense if a student cannot identify the phonemes and link them to graphemes. Dictations at the advanced grades must be given without prior preparation or memorization, in order to assess students' actual spelling skill.

5.4 References

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5.5 Appendices

Appendix (1)

The Dictation Test Used as a Pre-Post Tests

Name \

#	Dictation 1	Dictation 2
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Appendix (2)

The Phonics Lessons Used in the Experiment from the "*Family and Friends*" Series



Lesson Four Phonics

1 Listen, point and repeat. 90

bed pen red

2 Listen and chant. 91 3 Circle the e in the middle of the words.

Ken's got a pen,
Pen, pen, pen.
Ken's pen is red,
Red, red, red.
Where's Ken's pen?
Pen, pen, pen.
It's on Ken's bed,
Bed, bed, bed.

4 Match the words that rhyme.

1 Ken hat
2 red pen
3 cat fan
4 man bed

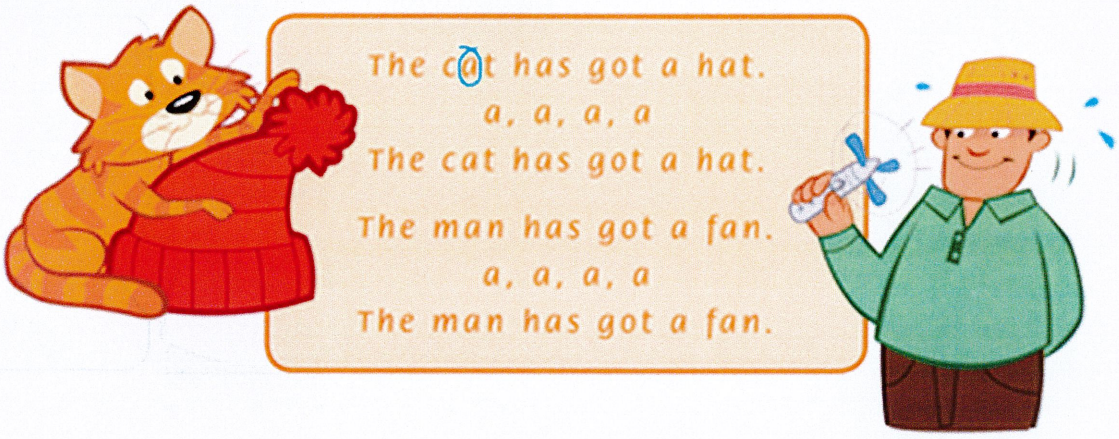
Read the story: Ant's Bug Adventure 89

CVC words e Unit 6 57

1 Listen, point and repeat. 76



2 Listen and chant. 77



3 Read the chant again. Circle the *a* in the middle of the words.

4 Write.

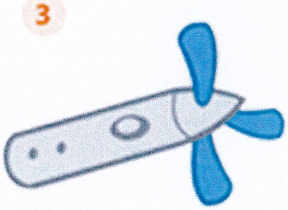
1 

tha

hat

2 

nam

3 

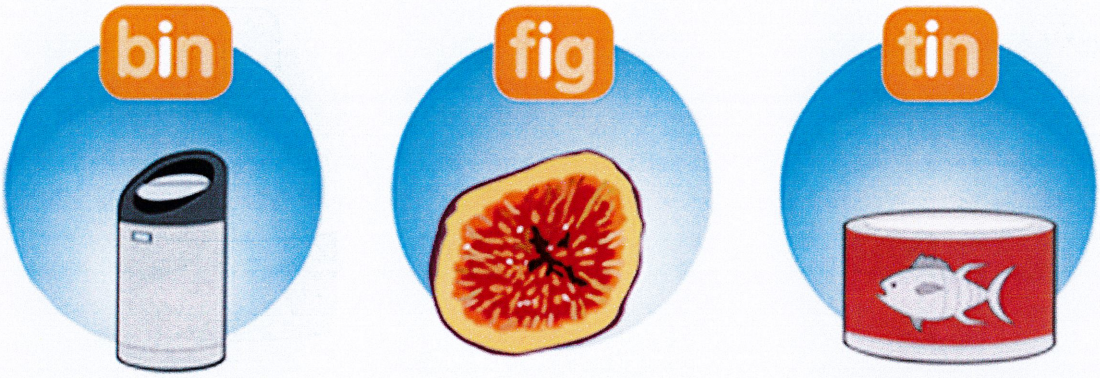
afn

4 

cta

Read the story: The Race  75

1 Listen, point and repeat. 106



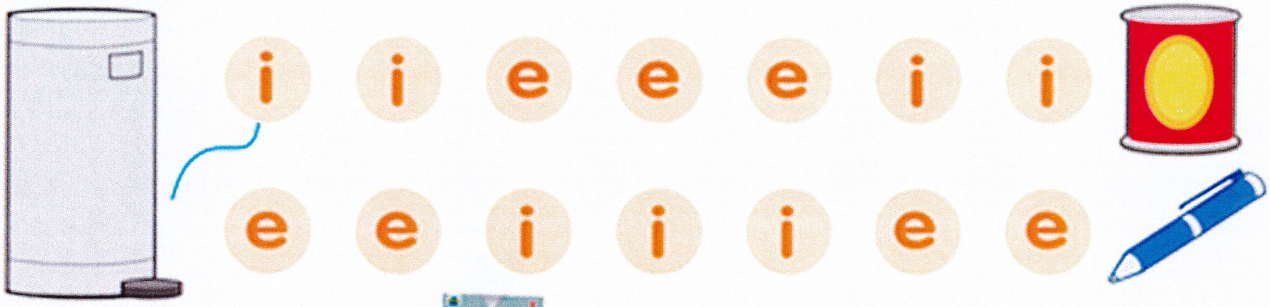
2 Listen and chant. 107



3 Read the chant again. Circle the *i* in the middle of the words.

4 Listen to the sounds and join the letters. 108

What is in the bin?

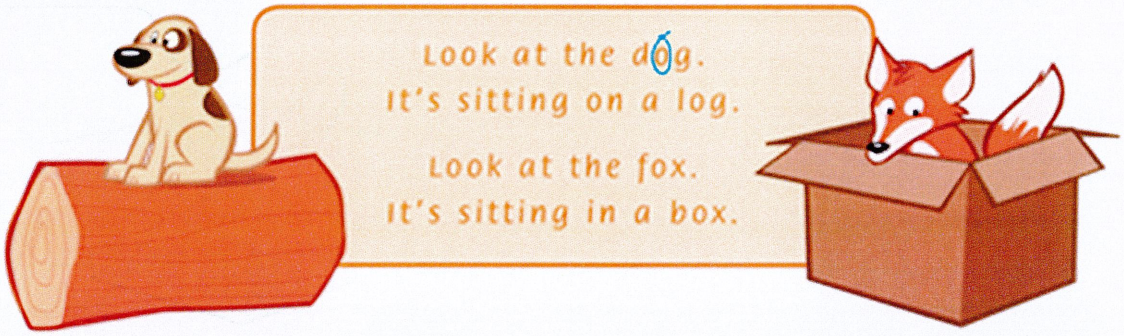


Read the story: Robo-Rex 105

1 Listen, point and repeat. 121

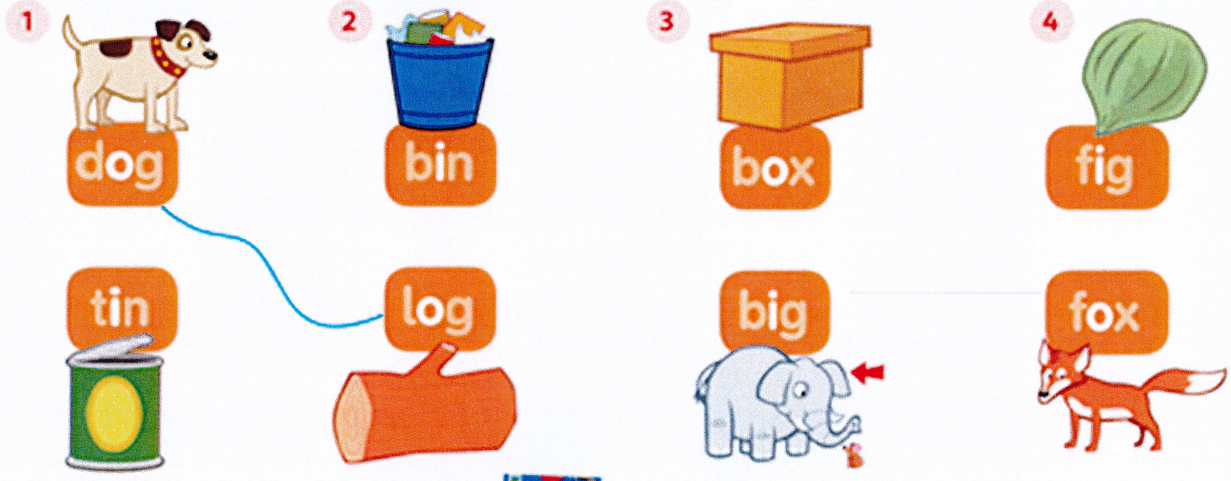


2 Listen and chant. 122



3 Read the chant again. Circle the *o* in the middle of the words.

4 Match the words that rhyme.



Read the story: *The Play Park* 120

1 Listen, point and repeat. 135

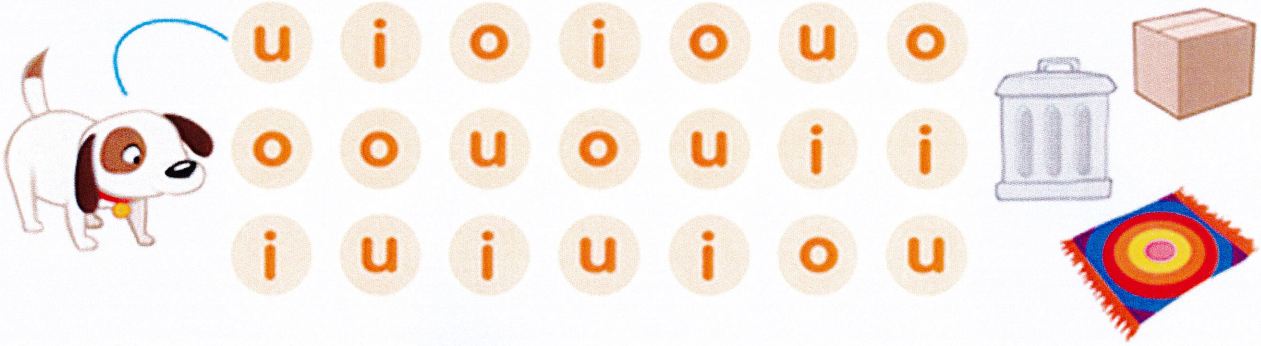


2 Listen and chant. 136



3 Read the chant again. Circle the *u* in the middle of the words.

4 Listen and follow. Where is the dog? 137



Read the story: *Rainbow* 

134

1 Listen, point and repeat. 90

Magic e makes the vowel long!



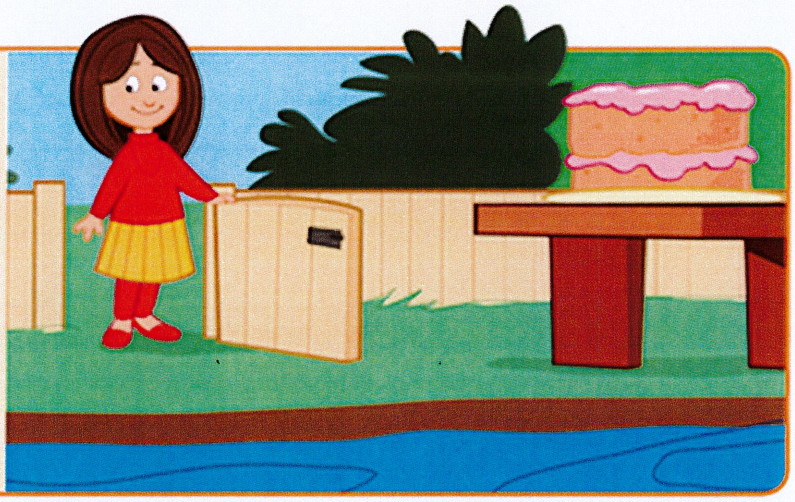
2 Listen and chant. 91

Open the gate,
The gate, gate, gate.

See the lake,
The lake, lake, lake.

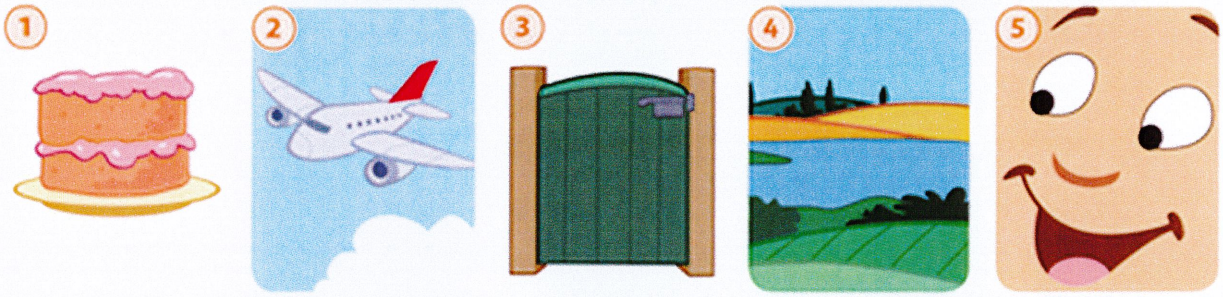
A smile on your face,
Your face, face, face.

Here is a cake,
A cake, cake, cake.



3 Read the chant again. Circle the sound a_e.

4 Listen and complete the words. 92



c a k e _ a _ e _ a _ e _ a _ e _ a _ e

Read: Max the Detective  89

Activate Wind

1 Listen, point and repeat. 107



2 Listen and chant. 108

Ride your bike. Fly your kite.
The bike is red. The kite is white.
White kite, white kite.

Count the children in the line.
Altogether there are nine.
Nine in the line. Nine in the line.



3 Read the chant again. Circle the sound *i_e*.

4 Listen and complete the words. 109

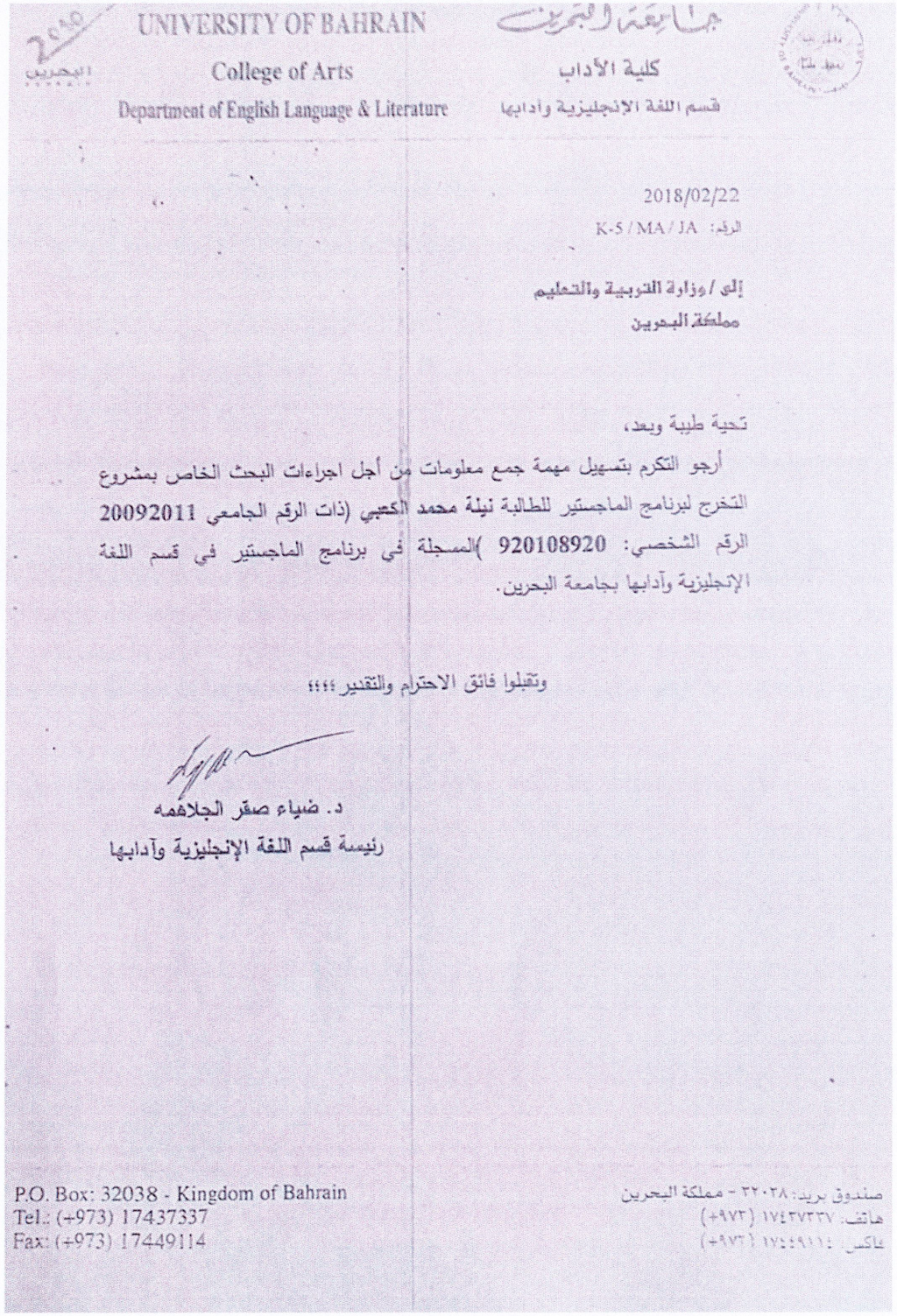


l i n e i e i e i e i e

Read: *Go Away, Molly!* 106

Appendix (3)

University of Bahrain Research Request Form



UNIVERSITY OF BAHRAIN
College of Arts
Department of English Language & Literature

جامعة البحرين
كلية الآداب
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها

2018/02/22
الرقم: K-5 / MA / JA

إلى / وزارة التربية والتعليم
مملكة البحرين

تحية طيبة وبعد،

أرجو التكرم بتسهيل مهمة جمع معلومات من أجل اجراءات البحث الخاص بمشروع التخرج لبرنامج الماجستير للطالبة **نيلة محمد الكعبي** (ذات الرقم الجامعي **20092011** الرقم الشخصي: **920108920**)المسجلة في برنامج الماجستير في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها بجامعة البحرين.

وتقبلوا فائق الاحترام والتقدير،،،

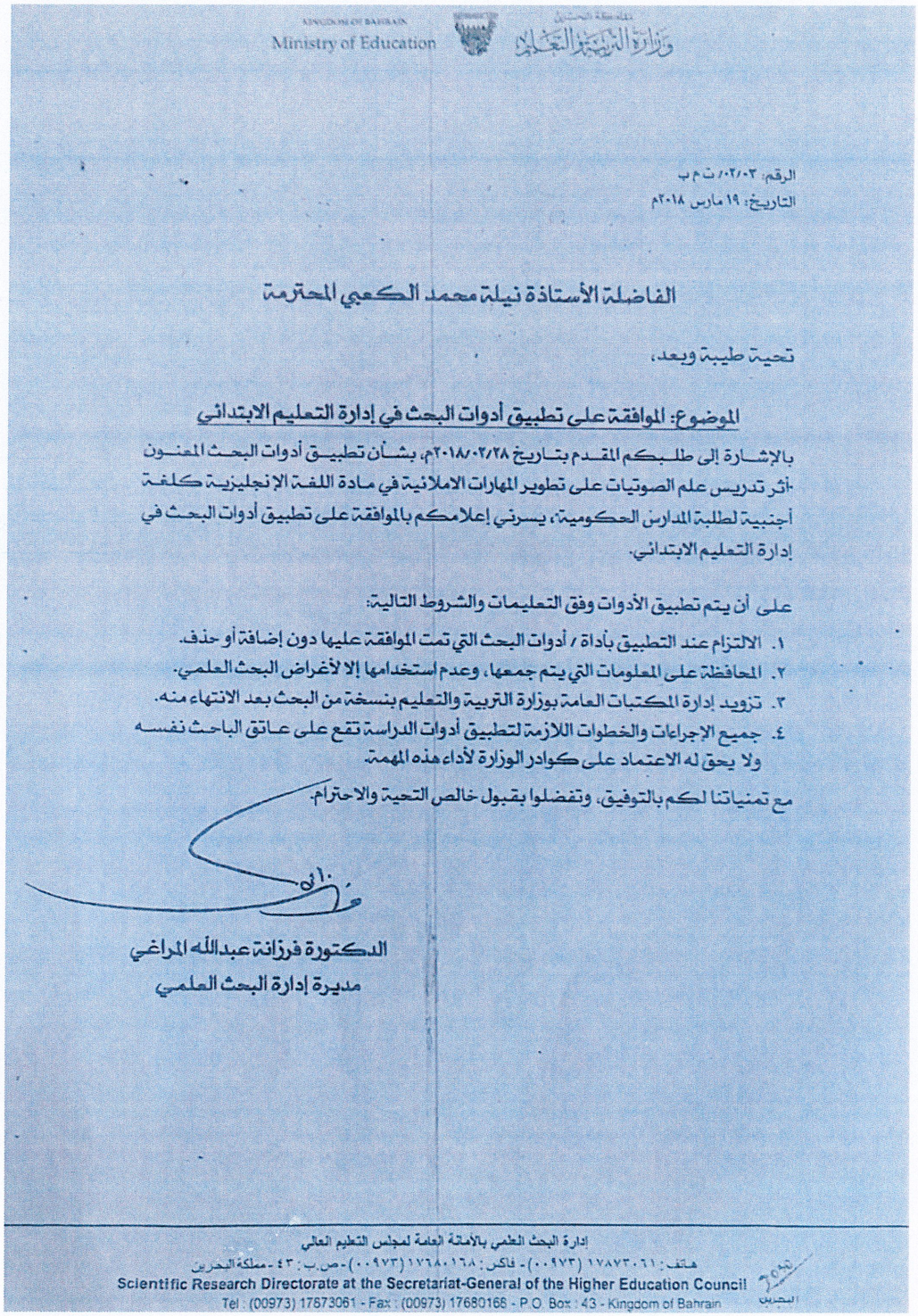
د. ضياء صقر الجلاهمه
رئيسة قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها

P.O. Box: 32038 - Kingdom of Bahrain
Tel.: (+973) 17437337
Fax: (+973) 17449114

صندوق بريد: ٣٢٠٣٨ - مملكة البحرين
هاتف: ١٧٤٣٧٣٣٧ (+٩٧٣)
فاكس: ١٧٤٤٩١١٤ (+٩٧٣)

Appendix (4)

The Research Consent from the Ministry of Education in Bahrain



KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN
Ministry of Education

وزارة التربية والتعليم

الرقم: ٠٢/٠٣ ت م ب
التاريخ: ١٩ مارس ٢٠١٨م

الفاضلة الأستاذة نيلة محمد الكعبي المحترمة

تحية طيبة وبعد،

الموضوع: الموافقة على تطبيق أدوات البحث في إدارة التعليم الابتدائي

بالإشارة إلى طلبكم المقدم بتاريخ ٢٠١٨/٠٢/٢٨م، بشأن تطبيق أدوات البحث المعنون "أثر تدريس علم الصوتيات على تطوير المهارات الاملائية في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لطلبة المدارس الحكومية"، يسرني إعلامكم بالموافقة على تطبيق أدوات البحث في إدارة التعليم الابتدائي.

على أن يتم تطبيق الأدوات وفق التعليمات والشروط التالية:

١. الالتزام عند التطبيق بأداة / أدوات البحث التي تمت الموافقة عليها دون إضافة أو حذف.
٢. المحافظة على المعلومات التي يتم جمعها، وعدم استخدامها إلا لأغراض البحث العلمي.
٣. تزويد إدارة المكتبات العامة بوزارة التربية والتعليم بنسخة من البحث بعد الانتهاء منه.
٤. جميع الإجراءات والخطوات اللازمة لتطبيق أدوات الدراسة تقع على عاتق الباحث نفسه ولا يحق له الاعتماد على كوادر الوزارة لأداء هذه المهمة.

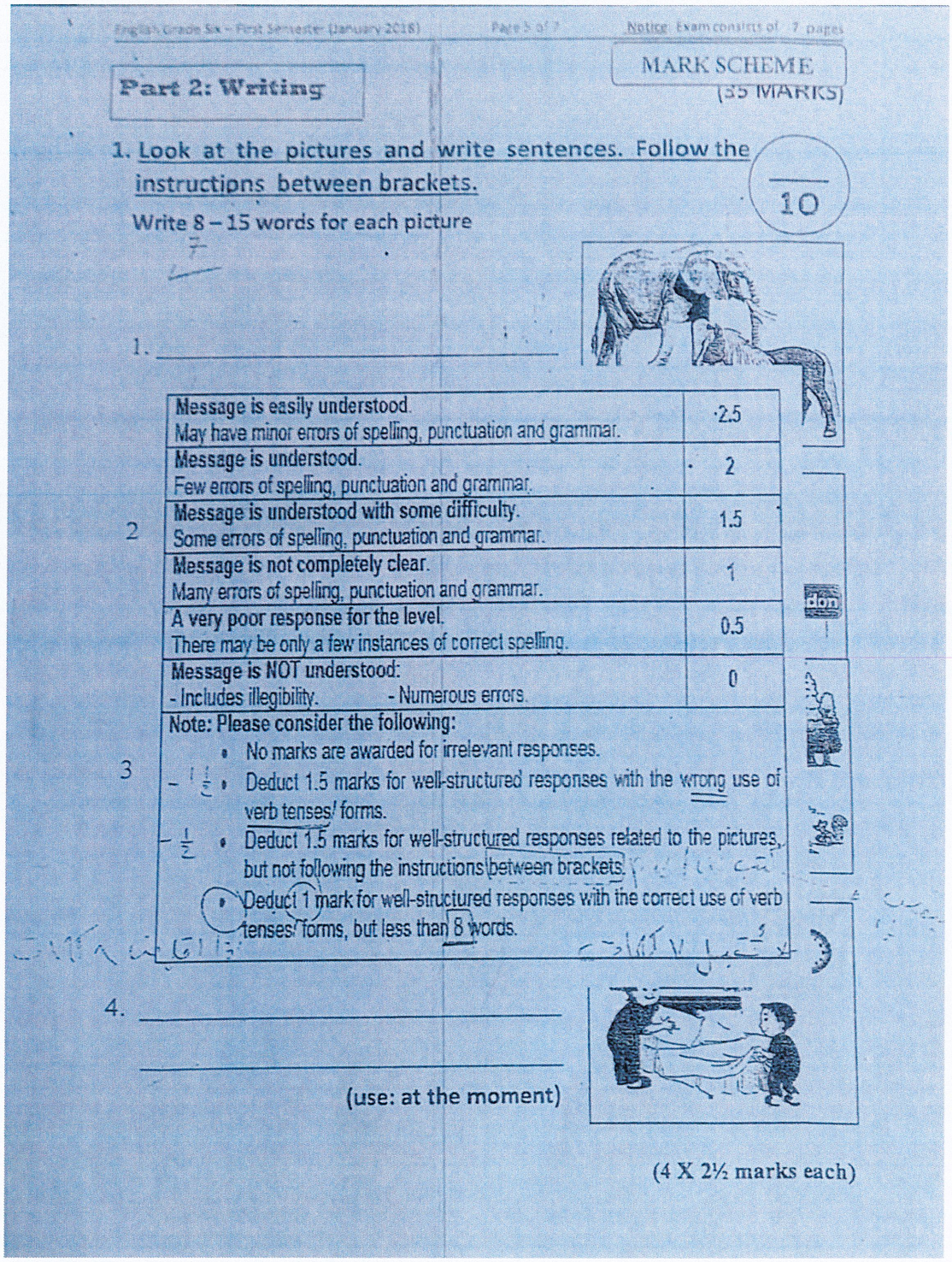
مع تمنياتنا لكم بالتوفيق، وتفضلوا بقبول خالص التحية والاحترام.

الدكتورة فرزانة عبدالله المراغي
مديرة إدارة البحث العلمي

إدارة البحث العلمي بالأمانة العامة لمجلس التنظيم العالي
هاتف: ١٧٨٧٣٠٦١ (٠٠٩٧٣) - فاكس: ١٧٦٨٠١٦٨ (٠٠٩٧٣) - ص.ب: ٤٣ - مملكة البحرين
Scientific Research Directorate at the Secretariat-General of the Higher Education Council
Tel: (00973) 17873061 - Fax: (00973) 17680168 - P.O. Box: 43 - Kingdom of Bahrain

Appendix (5)

MOE Grading Rubric of Spelling Assessment for Grade Six



English Grade Six – First Semester (January 2018) Page 3 of 7 Notice: Exam consists of 7 pages

Part 2: Writing

MARK SCHEME
(35 MARKS)

1. Look at the pictures and write sentences. Follow the instructions between brackets.

Write 8 – 15 words for each picture

10

1. _____

Message is easily understood. May have minor errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.	2.5
Message is understood. Few errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.	2
Message is understood with some difficulty. Some errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.	1.5
Message is not completely clear. Many errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.	1
A very poor response for the level. There may be only a few instances of correct spelling.	0.5
Message is NOT understood: - Includes illegibility. - Numerous errors.	0

Note: Please consider the following:

- No marks are awarded for irrelevant responses.
- Deduct 1.5 marks for well-structured responses with the wrong use of verb tenses/ forms.
- Deduct 1.5 marks for well-structured responses related to the pictures, but not following the instructions between brackets.
- Deduct 1 mark for well-structured responses with the correct use of verb tenses/ forms, but less than 8 words.

4. _____

_____

(use: at the moment)

(4 X 2½ marks each)

MARK SCHEME

3. You went to a restaurant. Write an e-mail t
about your visit to the restaurant.

15

In your e-mail include...

- where the restaurant is
- when you went
- who you went with
- what you ordered
- how the food was
- how you felt

NOTE:
15 marks are available for this task, 9 marks for content + 6 marks for language. The response is marked according to the schemes below, then the marks are added to get the total for the question.

Content Marks	
All six content points addressed	9
Five content points addressed	7.5
Four content points addressed	6
Three content points addressed	4.5
Two content points addressed	3
One content point addressed	1.5
NO content points addressed/ irrelevant response NO marks are awarded for language use	0

Language Marks	
Reader can easily understand the message. May have minor errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.	6
Reader can understand the message. A few errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.	5
Reader can understand the message with some difficulty. Few errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.	4
Reader can follow some sentences, but may not understand the message. Some errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.	3
Reader can follow some sentences, but may not understand the message. Many errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.	2
A very poor response for the level. A few instances of correct spelling, punctuation or grammar.	1
Reader does not understand the message: - Includes illegibility. - Numerous errors.	0

إذا لم تكتب أي شيء x (15 marks)

END OF EXAM

- 7 -

Appendix (6)

The Results of the Pre-Test (Participant's Number, Grade and Types of Spelling Errors)

P. Nom	Pre-test Grade Out of 10	Types of Spelling Errors (I – Insertion) (S - Substitution) (O – Omission) (T – Transposition)
1	0	I S O T
2	0	I S O
3	0	I S O
4	0	I S O T
5	0	I S O
6	0	S O T
7	0	I S O
8	0	I S O T
9	0	I S O
10	0	I S O
11	0	I S O T
12	0	I S O T
13	0	I S O T

14	0	I S O T
15	0	I S O
16	0	I S O
17	0	I S O T
18	0	I S O T
19	0	I S O
20	0	I S O T
21	0	I S O
22	0	I S O T
23	0	I O S
24	0	I O S
25	0	I O S T
26	0	I O S T
27	0	I S O
28	0	I S O T
29	0	I S O
30	0	I S O T

31	0	I S O T
32	1	I S O T
33	1	I S O
34	1	I S O
35	1	I S O T
36	1	I S O
37	1	I S O T
38	1	I S O T
39	1	I S O T
40	1	I S O T
41	1	I S O T
42	1	I O S
43	1	I O S T
44	1	I O S
45	1	I O S T
46	2	I O S
47	2	I O S

48	2	I O S
49	2	I O S
50	2	I O S T
51	2	I S O
52	2	I S O
53	2	I S O
54	2	I S O
55	2	I S O T
56	2	I S O
57	2	I S O
58	2	I S O
59	2	I S
60	2	I S O
61	2	I S O T
62	3	I S O
63	3	I S O
64	3	I S O

65	3	I S O
66	3	I S O T
67	4	S O T
68	4	I O
69	4	I S O
70	5	I S O
71	6	S O
72	6	S O T
73	6	S O T
74	6	I S O
75	6	I S O T
76	7	I O
77	7	I S O
78	8	I S O T
79	9	S
80	9	S

Appendix (7)

The Results of the Post-Test (Participant's Number, Grade and Types of Spelling Errors)

P. Nom	Pre-test Grade Out of 10	Types of Spelling Errors (I – Insertion) (S - Substitution) (O – Omission) (T – Transposition)
1	8	I O
2	5	I S
3	4	I S O
4	4	S O
5	4	I S O
6	4	S
7	4	S
8	4	I O
9	4	S T
10	4	I S O
11	4	S O
12	3	S O T
13	3	I S O

14	3	I S O T
15	3	S O
16	3	I S O
17	3	I S O
18	2	I S O
19	2	I S O T
20	2	I S O T
21	2	I S
22	2	I S
23	2	I O S
24	2	I O S
25	1	I O S T
26	1	I S
27	1	I S O
28	1	I S O T
29	1	I S O
30	1	I S O T

31	1	I S O
32	10	-
33	7	S O
34	8	S
35	8	T
36	5	S
37	6	S O
38	5	I S O T
39	4	S O
40	3	I O T
41	3	S O
42	3	I O S
43	3	I O S
44	2	O S
45	2	I O S T
46	3	I O S
47	4	O S

48	4	O S
49	4	I S
50	4	I S
51	5	I S O
52	6	S
53	6	I S O
54	6	S
55	7	I S O
56	7	S O
57	6	S O
58	7	S
59	7	I S
60	8	S
61	8	S
62	8	S T
63	7	S
64	6	I S O

65	5	S
66	5	I S O
67	4	S O
68	7	S O
69	6	I S
70	7	S O
71	5	S
72	9	S
73	8	S
74	8	S O
75	7	I S O
76	8	S
77	9	S
78	9	-
79	9	T
80	9	S

الملخص

هذا البحث يتناول مشكلة المستوى المتدني في الاملاء لطالبات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بالمدارس الحكومية بمملكة البحرين. هذه الدراسة تبحث عن اثر تدريس علم الأصوات المضاف حديثا في المناهج الجديدة المستخدمة لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الحكومية بمملكة البحرين *"العائلة و الاصدقاء"* على تحسين قدرة الطالب و كفائته في الإملاء الصحيح للكلمات.

ثمانون طالبة من الصف السادس الابتدائي تم اختيارهن بشكل عشوائي كمشاركات في هذه الدراسة التجريبية. قاعدتين من قواعد علم الاصوات الموجودة في المنهج الدراسي الجديد تم اختيارهم لتدريس المشاركات في هذه الدراسة التجريبية. تم إعداد قائمة بعشر كلمات مختارة من ضمن قصص منهج اللغة الانجليزية للصف السادس و تحتوي على القواعد المختارة ليتم إستخدامها في التقييم الإملائي قبل و بعد دراسة دروس علم الاصوات في التجربة.

تم إعطاء الطالبات اختبار تجريبي بالكلمات المعدة سابقا لتقييم مستواهن الإملائي و معرفة حجم المشكلة المراد بحثها. اختبار الإملاء كان اختبار أساسي من وزارة التربية و التعليم يستخدم لتقييم مهارة الإملاء و تم تصحيح الاختبار بمعايير وزارة التربية و التعليم بمملكة البحرين للصف السادس الإبتدائي. بعد تحليل نتائج الاختبار تبين ان المشاركات يفتقرن المهارات الأساسية في علم الاصوات, مما أدى لحصولهن على درجات منخفضة و مستوى متدني في مهارة الإملاء.

بعد الامتحان التجريبي, تم تدريس المشاركات دروس علم الأصوات المختارة سابقا لهذا البحث على مدة شهر كامل بعدد حصة واحدة مدتها ساعة واحدة في كل إسبوع. بعد الأنتهاء من تدريس الدروس, تم إعطاء المشاركات الاختبار التقيمي بنفس الكلمات التي امتحن بهم سابقا لمعرفة أثر تعليم الدروس على مستواهن الاملائي.

بعد تحليل النتائج, لوحظ أن دروس علم الأصوات في مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية الجديدة ساعدت على تحسين مهارة المشاركات الإملائية. المشاركات كن قادرات على تمييز أصوات الحروف بشكل أفضل و ربط قواعد هذه الأصوات في كتابة الكلمة بشكل صحيح, مما ساعد على حصولهن درجات أعلى و أفضل في الاختبار التقيمي و قلة أنواع الاخطاء الإملائية المرتكبة.

جامعة البحرين

كلية الآداب

قسم اللغة اللإنجليزية و آدابها

أثر تدريس علم الصوتيات على تطوير المهارات الإملائية في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لطلبة المدارس الحكومية

بحث تكميلي مقدم لنيل درجة الماجستير في الدراسات التطبيقية في اللغة الإنجليزية

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يونيو 2019