

EFL Primary School Teachers Perceptions towards the Implementation of Jolly Phonics for Enhancing Pupils' English Literacy Skills

Khadija Muftah

English Language Department, Tobruk University
Khadoojuftah@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of English as Foreign Language teachers regarding the implementation of Jolly Phonics in their classrooms, with a focus on identifying the obstacles they encounter while utilizing this technique in English language instruction. Data were collected from 27 teachers working in both private and public schools in Benghazi, Libya. All participants completed a questionnaire, and six of them engaged in interviews. The questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistics while thematic analysis was applied to analyse the interview data. The findings indicate that the majority of teacher participants hold positive attitudes toward Jolly Phonics, perceiving it as an enjoyable approach that aids in enhancing students' overall English literacy. However, a significant number of teachers do not employ this method in their classrooms, citing various reasons. One key factor is their uncertainty about how to effectively implement and utilize Jolly Phonics. Furthermore, the findings of this study reveal that many teachers in public schools lack the requisite knowledge about Jolly Phonics and receive inadequate training on how to incorporate this method effectively into their teaching practices. Based on the results of this study, several recommendations are offered for teachers and educational decision-makers. These recommendations might support teachers to apply Jolly Phonics effectively and guide educational decision makers to offer good circumstances for teachers to employ Jolly Phonics.

Keywords: Jolly Phonics approach, English literacy, early age, Libyan context, phonological awareness

تصورات معلمي المدارس الابتدائية للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه تطبيق جولي فونكس لتعزيز معرفة التلاميذ باللغة الإنجليزية

خديجة مفتاح محمد

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية/جامعة طبرق

Khadoojuuftah@gmail.com

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من تصورات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول تطبيق جولي فونكس في فصولهم الدراسية. كما تهدف إلى التعرف على المعوقات التي تواجه هؤلاء المعلمين أثناء تطبيقهم لهذه التقنية في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية الخاصة بهم. تم جمع البيانات من 27 معلماً يقومون بالتدريس في المدارس الخاصة والعامّة في بنغازي، ليبيا. وقد أجاب جميعهم على الاستبيان وشارك 6 منهم في المقابلة. وقد تم تحليل بيانات الاستبيان باستخدام الإحصاء الوصفي بينما تم تحليل بيانات المقابلة باستخدام أسلوب التحليل الموضوعي. تشير النتائج إلى أن معظم المعلمين المشاركين لديهم مواقف إيجابية تجاه استخدام جولي فونكس لأنهم يعتقدون أن هذا الأسلوب ممتع ويساعد الطلاب على تحسين مهاراتهم في القراءة والكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية بشكل عام. كما أظهرت النتائج أن بعض المعلمين لا يطبقونه لعدة أسباب. أحد هذه الأسباب هو أن المعلمين غير متأكدين من كيفية تطبيق جولي فونكس، وكيفية استخدامها بالطريقة الصحيحة. وكشفت النتائج أيضاً أن معظم المعلمين في المدارس العامة يفتقرون إلى المعرفة اللازمة حول جولي فونكس والتدريب غير الكافي لكيفية استخدام جولي فونكس بشكل فعال في فصولهم الدراسية. وبناء على نتائج هذه الدراسة البحثية فقد تم في نهاية هذه الدراسة تقديم بعض التوصيات للمعلمين ومتخذي القرار التربوي. من شأن هذه التوصيات أن تساعد المعلمين على تطبيق جولي فونكس بشكل فعال. وهذا من شأنه أن ينعكس بشكل إيجابي في تعزيز معرفة القراءة والكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطلاب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: منهج جولي فونكس، معرفة القراءة والكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية، سن

مبكرة، السياق الليبي، الوعي الصوتي

1. Introduction

One of the primary challenges faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers is nurturing their students to attain a high level of English literacy skills, a foundational element in their educational journey. Unlike other skills, literacy skills do not naturally develop without careful planning and effective guidance from educators. It is crucial to guide children in developing their literacy skills from an early age. Consequently, scholars and researchers have devised various teaching approaches and methods to assist teachers in addressing this challenge. One such approach is Jolly Phonics, which has been proven to enhance learners' literacy skills (Stuart, 2004; Johnston, 2005). Notably, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there has been no prior study conducted on any aspect related to the implementation of Jolly Phonics in Libyan primary schools. Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions of Libyan EFL teachers regarding the use of Jolly Phonics in their classrooms.

2. Literature Review

Jolly Phonics has emerged as a systematic method in the United Kingdom designed to enhance students' literacy skills. It is a structured and enjoyable method, which teaches young learners to read and write through synthetic phonics (Llods, 2008). This approach employs multi-sensory methods, incorporating actions, songs, and games to actively engage learners in mastering letter sounds and their blending to form words (Farokhbakht and Nejadansari, 2015). Jolly Phonics also focuses on the development of five core skills, including letter formation, letter sounds, blending for reading, sound recognition for writing, and the mastery of tricky words (Kwan, 2005)

To implement this approach, teachers must follow specific steps. Initially, students are taught the 42 letter sounds. Subsequently, they learn how to blend these sounds to read words and tackle initial irregular keywords. Finally, students' progress to reading stories and books (Llods, 2008). In line with this, Manzo (1993) emphasized that Jolly Phonics begins with teaching students familiar words and studying their components in sequence, concluding with instruction

on the alphabet, sight words, regular consonants, and subsequently, irregular consonants and vowels. As a result, students learn to write words by breaking them down into their constituent sounds and then writing the corresponding letters for each sound. This phonics system also equips students to identify "tricky words" that do not conform to the sound system. Furthermore, the incorporation of engaging stories, songs, and actions makes the process of learning letter sounds both memorable and enjoyable.

The following symbols are the 42 letter sounds in Jolly Phonics seven groups order:

1. s a t i p n
2. c/k e h r m d
3. g o u l f b
4. ai j oa ie ee or
5. z w ng v oo oo
6. y x ch sh th th
7. qu ou oi ue er ar

2.1 Advantages of Using Jolly Phonics

Jolly Phonics plays a crucial and important part in the field of teaching primary stages. It helps students not only developing accurate pronunciation skills but also enhancing their reading and writing skills. It also assists learners to expand their vocabulary and improve their spelling skills as well as engaging them in several activities, such as songs, actions, games and worksheets. This makes their learning enjoyable and interactive. Many research studies were conducted to investigate the effectiveness of implementing Jolly Phonics to improve learners' literacy skills. One of these studies was conducted by Almazroui and Alshumaimer (2013). This study investigated the impact of Jolly Phonics on ESL students' vocabulary development. The findings showed that using this

method enhances students' vocabulary skills by improving their phonemic awareness and word recognition abilities. Another study was undertaken by Alghamdi (2014), who investigated the effectiveness of Jolly Phonics in teaching English to young EFL learners. The results indicated that Jolly Phonics played a significant role in improving the learners reading and writing skills as well as their overall English language proficiency. Alhassan and Aliyu (2008) also examined the impact of Jolly Phonics on ESL students' Literacy skills. They found that the use of this method had a positive effect on students' phonemic awareness, reading fluency, and spelling abilities. Similarly, Dixon (2009) conducted a research study to investigate the relation between the pupils' early English literacy and utilizing Jolly Phonics principle. The results of this study demonstrated that pupils who are learnt by using Jolly Phonics gained better improvement on reading and spelling compared to those who are traditionally learnt. The findings of these studies agree that Jolly Phonics assists learners to improve their literacy skills. This suggests that teachers should have knowledge about this method and about how to apply it in their classrooms.

2.2 Teachers' perceptions about Jolly Phonics

Teachers' perceptions have significant impact on their practices, their students' outcomes and overall educational quality. These perceptions might influence their instructional decisions, their teaching methods, their strategies, and their interactions with students. Thus, it is important to study teachers' perceptions towards the various aspects of teaching and learning. This would help to identify areas where professional development intervention might be needed and where existing practices should be improved.

There are several studies undertaken to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of using Jolly Phonics. One of them was conducted by Smith & Johnson (2015). They interviewed 50 EFL teachers who had implemented Jolly Phonics in their classrooms. The findings of this study showed that most of the teachers perceived Jolly Phonics as an effective method for teaching pronunciation and improving students' reading and writing abilities. However, teachers suffer from lack of training. Another study was conducted by Brown &

Lee (2018) to explore EFL teachers' attitudes towards using Jolly Phonics. They surveyed 100 EFL teachers regarding their perceptions and experiences with implementing Jolly Phonics. The results indicated that the majority of the teachers recognized Jolly Phonics as a beneficial approach for improving students' literacy skills. These teachers also reported some challenges faced them to use Jolly Phonics appropriately, which are limited resources and lack of training. Another research study was done by Garcia & Martinez (2020). This study focused on identifying the challenges faced by EFL teachers when implementing Jolly Phonics in their classrooms. The researchers conducted interviews with 30 EFL teachers. The findings revealed several difficulties encountered by teachers, including lack of training and appropriate teaching materials and difficulties in adapting the program to suit different learner levels and needs.

Despite the growth popularity and implementation of Jolly Phonics as a method to enhance literacy skills among EFL learners, there is a lack of understanding regarding EFL teachers' perceptions and experience with this method in the Libyan context. Therefore, this study aims to investigate Libyan primary school teachers' perceptions of using Jolly Phonics for improving their students' literacy skills in their classrooms. Studying these perceptions would provide valuable insights for qualifying Libyan EFL teachers to apply Jolly Phonics effectively. To achieve the aims of the study the following research question were formulated.

Research Questions

This research study aims to answer these research questions.

1. What are the perceptions of Libyan primary school teachers on the implementation of Jolly Phonics in their classroom?
2. Do Libyan EFL teachers use Jolly Phonics in their classroom?
3. What challenges do Libyan EFL teachers face while utilizing Jolly Phonics approach or prevent them from using this method?

Variables of the Study:

1. Independent Variable:

Implementation of Jolly Phonics

2. Dependent Variables:

EFL Primary School Teachers' Perceptions Pupils' English Literacy Enhancement

3. Methodology

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the perceptions of teachers on the implementation of Jolly Phonics in their early grades classroom. It also aims to identify the difficulties that these teachers face in teaching as they use Jolly Phonics. To achieve these aims, mixed method approach was adopted. This approach is an integration of quantitative and qualitative methods for collecting and analysing data (Bryman, 2008). This approach would help to gain deep insight in the perceptions of teachers on the implementation of jolly phonics and in the difficulties encountered them as they apply Jolly phonics. Adopting this approach would make this study more valid and reliable (Johnson et al 2007).

3.1 Context and Participants

This study was conducted at public and private primary schools in Benghazi, Libya in the academic year 2022–2023. The participants of this research study were 27 Libyan EFL teachers who teach English at these schools to early age students. Most of the teachers had BA in English and few of them had MA in TESOL or Applied Linguistics. The majority of the teacher participants teach more than six years at these schools. This indicates that they have good experience in teaching early age students.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data of this study were collected by using both questionnaire and interview. These two instruments of data collection can be highly informative to understand EFL teachers' perceptions of using Jolly phonics and to identify the obstacles that teachers encounter as they utilize Jolly Phonics. The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section was devoted to collect personal information about the participants. The second section was concerned about understanding teachers' perceptions of Jolly Phonics and teachers' implementation of this approach. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the questionnaire data. This type of statistics measured the percentages and numbers of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire items. These statistics were presented and

displayed into table. The questionnaire was answered by all the teachers participants who are 27 primary school teachers. Moreover, semi-structured interview was employed to gain in-depth data about the issues investigated in this study (Cohen et al, 2007). This type of interview would also help for investigating issues beyond the answers of the teachers by asking questions about the emerged ideas and thoughts during the interview (Bryman, 2008). Only six teachers from those who answered the questionnaire were interviewed. The data collected from these interviews were analysed by using thematic analysis method. They were audiotaped, transcribed and coded. Then the codes were analysed and arranged under themes.

4. Results

In order to answer the research questions, the findings of the questionnaire and the interview will be presented according to these two main themes: 1) teachers perceptions on the implementation of Jolly phonics in their classrooms; 2) difficulties encountered teachers as they apply Jolly Phonics in their English classrooms.

4.1 Questionnaire Results

Teachers' perceptions on the implementation of Jolly phonics in their classrooms

The first set of the questionnaire items intends to examine the teachers' use of Jolly Phonics in their classrooms. It also aims to investigate the teachers' perceptions on the effect of Jolly Phonics on their pupils' language skills. The results demonstrate that 58% of the teachers utilize Jolly Phonics while the rest of the teachers do not apply this method in their classrooms. The percentage of those who do not use Jolly Phonics is high. This could be due that they have little knowledge about this method and how to apply it in their classrooms.

The results also indicate that 60% of the teachers have positive perception about the use of Jolly Phonics method. This indicates that these teachers are those who do use jolly phonics in their classrooms. They believe that Jolly Phonics plays an important role in the improvement of their pupils reading and writing skills. This suggests that those who use this method in their classroom

experienced the benefits of Jolly Phonics on their pupils' literacy skills. On the other hand, 30% of the teachers have no idea about the effect of the Jolly Phonics and only 10 % stated that Jolly phonics have no effect on their pupils' language skills.

Moreover, the teachers who used Jolly Phonics were asked whether they face some problems as they use Jolly Phonics to teach vocabulary, pronunciation, reading and writing skills. Half of them stated that they apply this method in their classes without encountering any difficulties, while the rest reported they face some problems as they use Jolly Phonics. They also added that they need some training to overcome these difficulties and apply this method appropriately.

Furthermore, the results show that only 37% of the teachers received training courses about utilizing Jolly Phonics in language classroom while the rest do not. This refers that most of the teachers suffer from lack of training. Thus, teachers need to attend training courses to expand their knowledge about Jolly Phonics and to understand how to apply this approach in an effective way. The results also demonstrate that 62% of the teachers indicate that the material of textbook is appropriate for using Jolly Phonics and for improving their pupils' literacy skills. It is also found that most of the teachers who use jolly Phonics depends on the material of the course book and some of them bring material from the internet while few of them use material from other sources. The teachers also reported that they use several types of material for applying Jolly Phonics, such as flash cards 22%, songs 14%, games 14% exercises from the course book 19% and all of previous mentioned types 31%. From these results, it is obvious that the material available in the textbook is appropriate for utilizing Jolly phonics in an English classroom. In addition, the teachers have some knowledge about using several types of material and activities to use Jolly Phonics. However, the teachers need to receive more training about using Jolly Phonics. This would reflect positively on the improvements of their pupils' literacy skills.

TABLE 1. Teachers Perceptions and Implementation of Jolly Phonic

Item 1 Do you use Jolly Phonics in your classrooms?					
Teachers' Responses	Yes52%	No48%			
Item 2 Does using Jolly Phonics have positive effects on students' reading and writing skills?					
Teachers' Responses	Yes60%	No10%	I do not know30%		
Item 3 if you use Jolly Phonics answer this question. Do you face any problems when you integrate it in teaching vocabulary, reading, pronunciation and writing skills?					
Teachers' Responses	Yes, I do without any problem50%	I am trying to but I would appreciate some more training50%			
Item 4 Have you received special training in using Jolly phonics?					
Teachers' Responses	Yes 37%	No 63%			
Item 5 Are the current material appropriate for using Jolly Phonics to improve your pupils' literacy?					
Teachers' Responses	Yes 62%	No48%			
Item 6 What kind of material do you use to apply Jolly Phonics					
Teachers' Responses	Course book65%	Internet25%	Others10%		
Item 7 What type of materials do you use to teach Jolly Phonics?					
Teachers' Responses	Flash cards 22%	Songs 14%	Games 14%	Exercise from course book 14%	All of them 31%
Item 8 if you use Jolly Phonics answer this question. How much time do you devote to use jolly phonics?					
Teachers' Responses	Less than 5 minutes 50%	5-10 minutes 12%	10-15 minutes 25%	Others 13%	

In addition, half of the teachers who use jolly phonics reported that they use it for less than 5 minutes and the rest of the teachers devote more than five minutes to use this method. This indicates that the time dedicated to English classes is short and not appropriate for teachers to apply this method in their classrooms. In sum, the findings of the questionnaire demonstrate that teachers believe that

Jolly Phonics method is helpful for developing their pupils' literacy skills, and many of them use this method in their classrooms. Moreover, the teachers reveal their awareness of the appropriate material for using Jolly Phonics available in the textbook. The teachers also show their eagerness for receiving training about this effective method. They also state that time constraints is one of the obstacles that prevent them from devoting enough time to apply this approach.

4.2 Interview Results

Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Jolly phonics in their Classrooms

In the interview, all the teachers expressed that Jolly Phonics is beneficial for improving their pupils' literacy. One of the teachers stated that using Jolly Phonics makes teaching an easy job, and his pupils likes it. He added that Jolly Phonics assists his students to build the base of their language skills and improve their writing and reading skills. Another teacher reported that she uses Jolly Phonic in her classroom to teach pronunciation. She said that this technique helps her pupils to learn letters, sounds and pronounce the words correctly. She also reported that this method is helpful to expand students' range of vocabulary. Moreover, all the teachers believe that Jolly Phonics help their pupils to not only build their reading and writing capabilities but also to improve their English pronunciation and spelling. In addition, all the teachers stated that their students have positive attitudes towards jolly phonics, and they feel that this method make the English lessons interesting and funny. These results similar to the questionnaire responses and also suggest that teachers and pupils have positive attitudes towards Jolly Phonics.

Difficulties of Applying Jolly Phonics in English Classrooms

Although, all the teachers believe that Jolly Phonics is an effective method for helping their pupils improving their literacy skills, they reported that they encounter some obstacles that impede them from applying this method effectively. One of the main obstacles is the time devoted to the English language classes. They also stated that utilizing Jolly Phonics in their classrooms need enough time for

their students to do a lot of practices. However, the time devoted to English classes limits their use of this method in the classrooms. Another significant problem reported by the teachers is the lack of training courses that they need. All the teachers agreed that there are limited training opportunities for them to expand their knowledge about this method and to understand how to use it effectively. The participants also reported that they have limited access to the teaching material and there is no support from the school administrations. These results indicate that there are four main external problems impede teachers from utilizing Jolly Phonics in their English classes in effective ways. These obstacles are lack of training opportunities, time constrains, learning material and absence of support from administrations.

5. Discussion

The results of the questionnaire and the interviews indicate that there is overwhelming agreement regarding the importance of Jolly phonics approach to enhance the pupils' literacy skills. These results are in line with the finding of the studies conducted by Alghamdi, 2014; Alhassan and Aliyu, 2008; Johnston and Watson, 2005; Smith and Johnson 2015; Brown and Lee 2018. The results of the interview show that participants believe that Jolly Phonics is a fun method of teaching and learning. These findings support the findings of Watson and Johnston (2005).

The teachers reported several problems as they utilize Jolly Phonics in an English classroom. The first main obstacle stated by most of the participants in both questionnaire and interview is lack of training courses. The participants also reported that the time of English classes is short and prevent them from utilizing this method effectively. Furthermore, the teacher participants at primary schools showed that they lack of knowledge (i.e. the fundamental acquaintance and skills to teach the new curriculum by utilizing the 21th century skills). These results are in line with Brown and Lee's (2018) study, which found that most of the teachers suffer from lack of training and limited recourse. Similarly, Garcia & Martinez (2020) stated that lack of training and appropriate teaching materials were the challenges encountered by EFL teachers. Moreover, those

who apply this approach experience the benefits that their pupils gain in improving their vocabulary, pronunciation, reading and writing skills.

Based on the contextual issues existing above, the educational policy should assess and monitor the teaching and learning processes to achieve the outcomes of the new material. Developing the quality of English education in the Libyan context need managing, permanent teacher, professional improvement courses, and monitoring all those. These are essential stages to be taken in Libyan primary schools to inspire the teachers of English to lead modern approaches of teaching needed by the existing English curricula implemented in schools.

Moreover, there had been a gap between what was predictable in the new curriculum and what was truly being done in English classrooms. Results showed that goals of the new curriculum formed a substantial challenge for the teachers at public schools.

Therefore, collecting authorized and precise report about the new curriculum implementation is the main goal of the conducted study. These concerns as a means to assess Jolly Phonics implementation in Libyan primary schools through evaluating the teachers' perceptions in order to identify the challenges of application of the new approach. Thus that can be considered in future decision making concerning the outcomes of curriculum in Libyan primary schools.

6. Conclusion

The current study contributes to the literature on EFL primary schoolteachers' perspectives by utilizing new method to improve their learners' literacy skills. It investigates the teachers' perceptions about utilizing Jolly Phonics method and to explore the challenges might face them when teaching young learners.

The results of this study showed that the majority of the teachers have positive attitudes towards Jolly Phonics approach, and they believe that applying this method is essential for improving their pupils' literacy skills. They also revealed that teachers encounter two major problems to use Jolly Phonics effectively. These problems are lack of training and short time devoted to English

classes. Most of the results of this study are in line with other studies conducted in ELT contexts.

However, the research paper investigates only a small number of primary school teachers. Thus, these results should be considered cautiously. In addition, more studies should be conducted in EFL primary schools with a large number of teachers and using more instruments for collecting data, such as observation and focus group. Based on these results of this study, some implications are drawn for teachers, for the educational authorities in Libya. Initially, teachers should try to depend on themselves to improve their ways of using Jolly Phonics. They should not only read books and journal articles about Jolly Phonics but also attend some courses about using Jolly Phonics, which are available in the internet. This would help them to extend their knowledge and improve their ways of using Jolly Phonics.

Furthermore, the educational authorities should offer the training courses about using Jolly Phonics for all the primary school teachers. They also should reconsider the length of time devoted to the English classes. This would boost the teachers' knowledge and teaching skills, which would reflect positively on the improvement of the students' literacy skills. Moreover, the educational policy should assess and monitor the teaching and learning processes to achieve the outcomes of the new material.

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