

The Impact of Raising Phonological Awareness and Phonics to Improve Reading and Spelling Skills

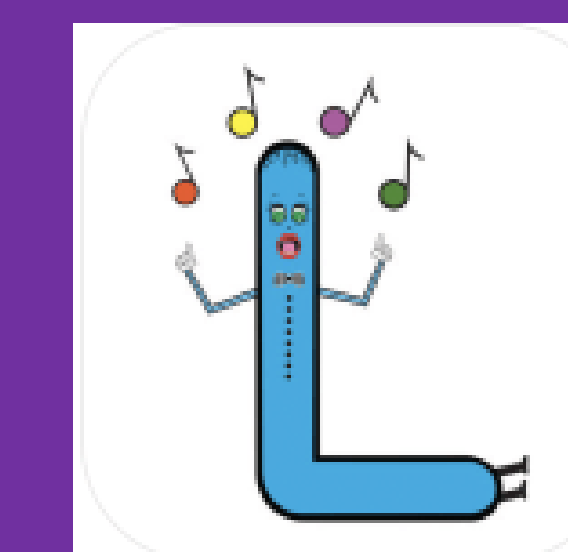


in Elementary Students in Saudi Arabia

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Building Leadership for Change Through School Immersion



Abstract

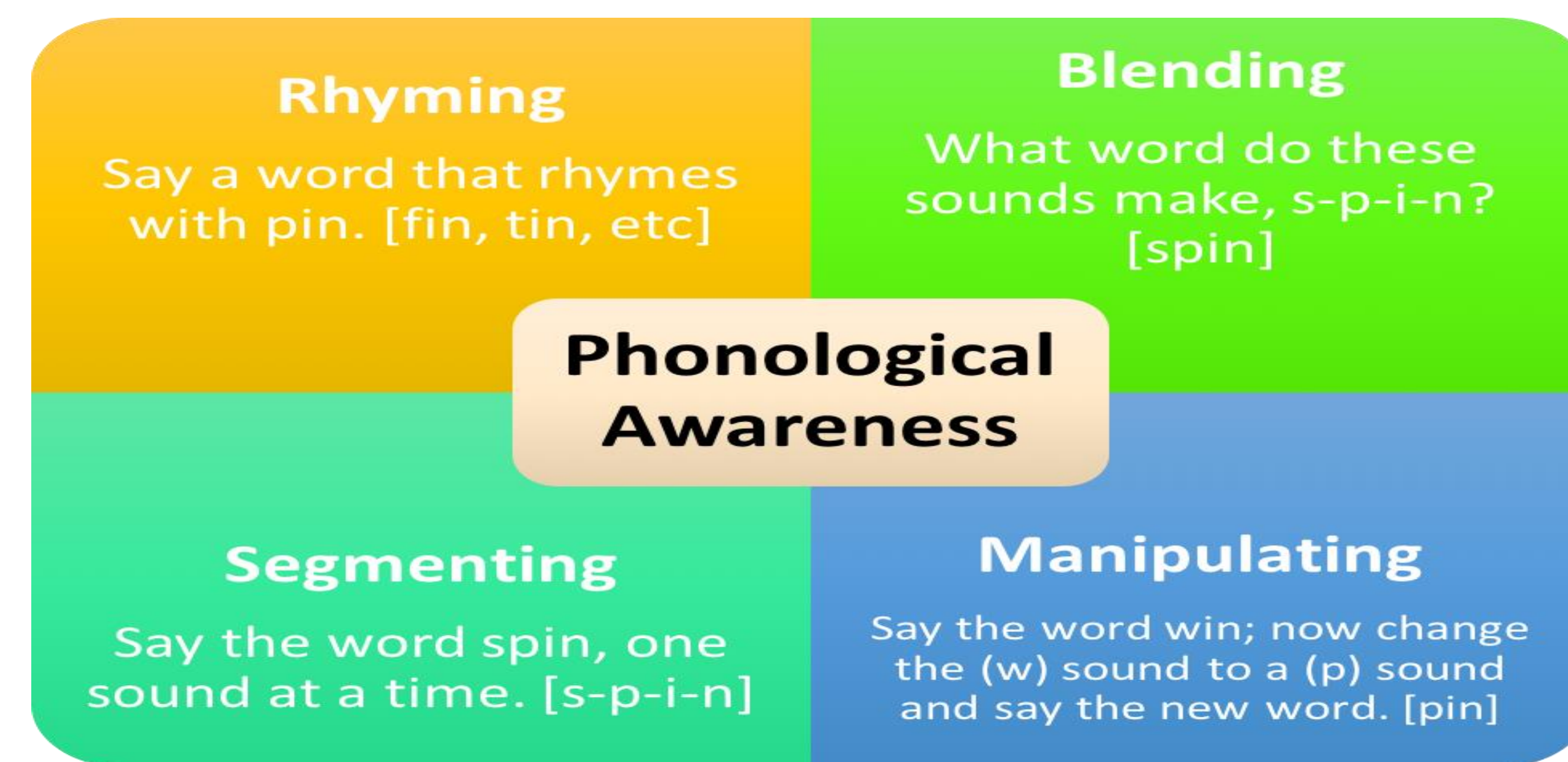
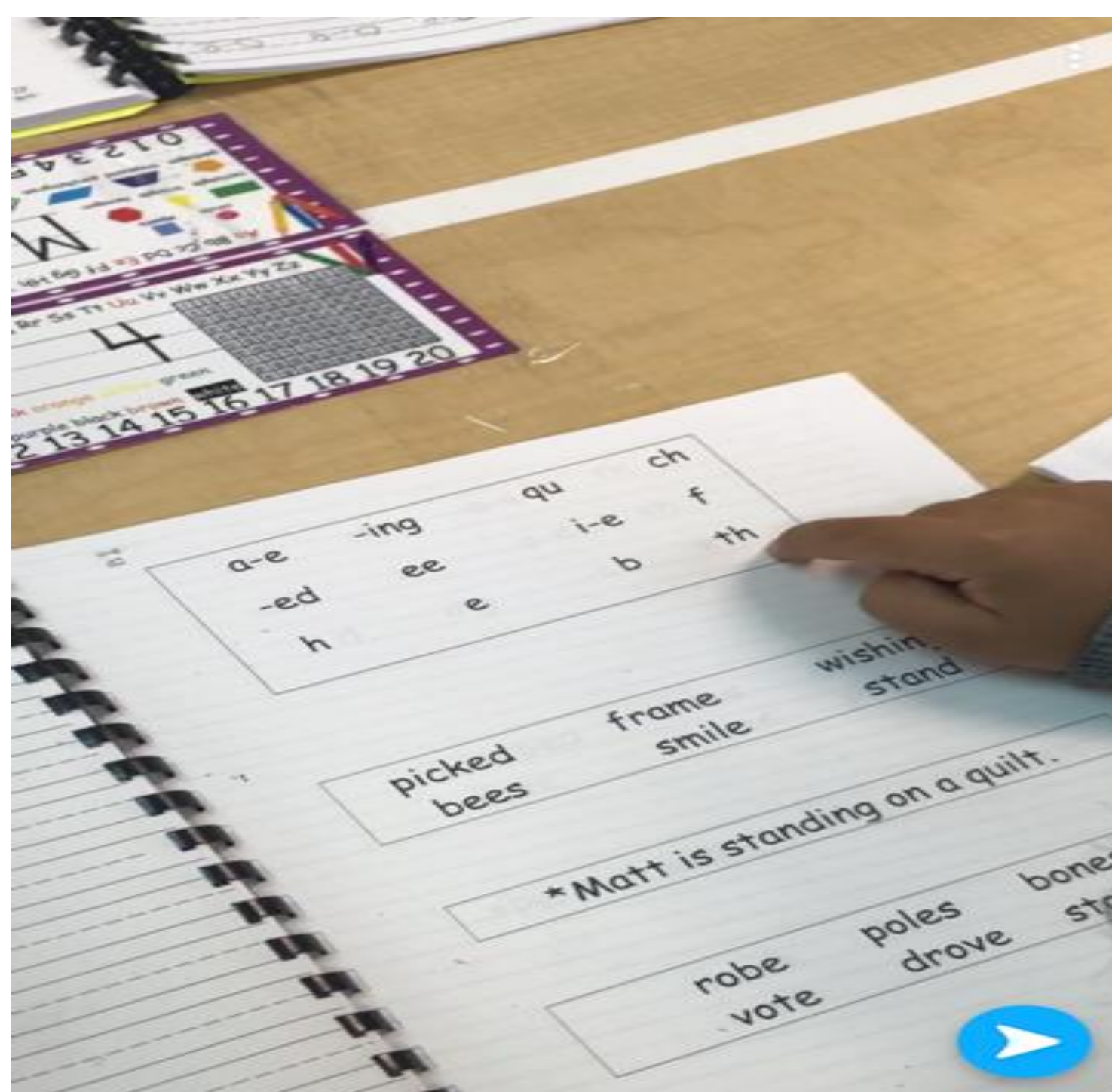
This research identifies the impact of raising phonological awareness and phonics to improve reading and spelling skills among elementary age students in Saudi Arabia during English as a second language instruction. This initiative will occur over three years. It will begin in the AL Baha district and eventually reach all Saudi Arabia school districts. As one of the Khbrat program scholars, at Kansas State University in United States of America, I have had the chance to observe various techniques and approaches using phonemic awareness and phonics in English language arts instruction that can be shared with educators to ensure the success of the students in this project. Moreover, teachers will gain a renewed interest in teaching reading and hopefully there will be an overall increase in positive attitudes regarding reading instruction.

Author Information

Najla Saaed Alharthy teaches English to elementary level students at Om Thar Alghaphariah school, located in Al baha in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. She has a bachelor's degree in English literature. She is interested in modern teaching-learning approaches. She holds professional workshops for teachers in innovative teaching strategies.

Statement of Need

Saudi students have a low level of proficiency in reading and writing English. According to the results of several English tests like TOEFL, Saudis rank as the worst in the middle east region. Their reading and writing scores placed them in the 20th position out of 20 countries in 2016. Also, IELTS scores of 2015 showed that Saudi Arabia ranked 39th out of 40 countries in reading and writing on the Academic test. In fourth grade, students need explicit instruction on the link between letters in English and the sounds they make. Otherwise, they will find it hard to remember which letter represents which sound. Most teachers in Saudi Arabia do not work on developing their students' phonological and phonemic awareness, which are both critical for learning to read and write in any alphabetic writing system. They mostly concentrate on teaching students the alphabet system.



Review of the Literature

Saudi EFL (English as Foreign Language) students face a lot of reading and writing barriers in their first three years of learning English in the elementary stage. They are involved in a teaching system which pays little attention to learning the sounds of the new language. They start reading and writing English by using traditional learning strategies such as repetition and guessing. Therefore, most simple new words are mispronounced and then misspelled. After learning Arabic in their first three years at school they begin to read and write all over again in English, which is a totally different language with completely different structure.

Recent studies report that phonological awareness is essential in reading and writing growth of EFL (English as Foreign Language) learners with different native languages such as Chinese, Spanish, Turkish and Japanese. Even though Lesaux and Siegel (2003) illustrate that EFL learners can read and write as well as English native speakers after having just one year of phonological awareness instruction at an early age. In 2000, the NRP examined the effects of phonics instruction on the word reading skills of young elementary age students and results verify that phonics improved children's reading of decodable, regularly spelled words, irregularly spelled words, and reading comprehension. Lesaux, (2012) found that teaching phonics improved reading and spelling skills. Research by Ehri and Robbins (1992) demonstrated that children must have at least some acquisition of phonics before they can read and Ehri (2013) proposed that reading is a process in which phonics is an important factor of reading acquisition.

References

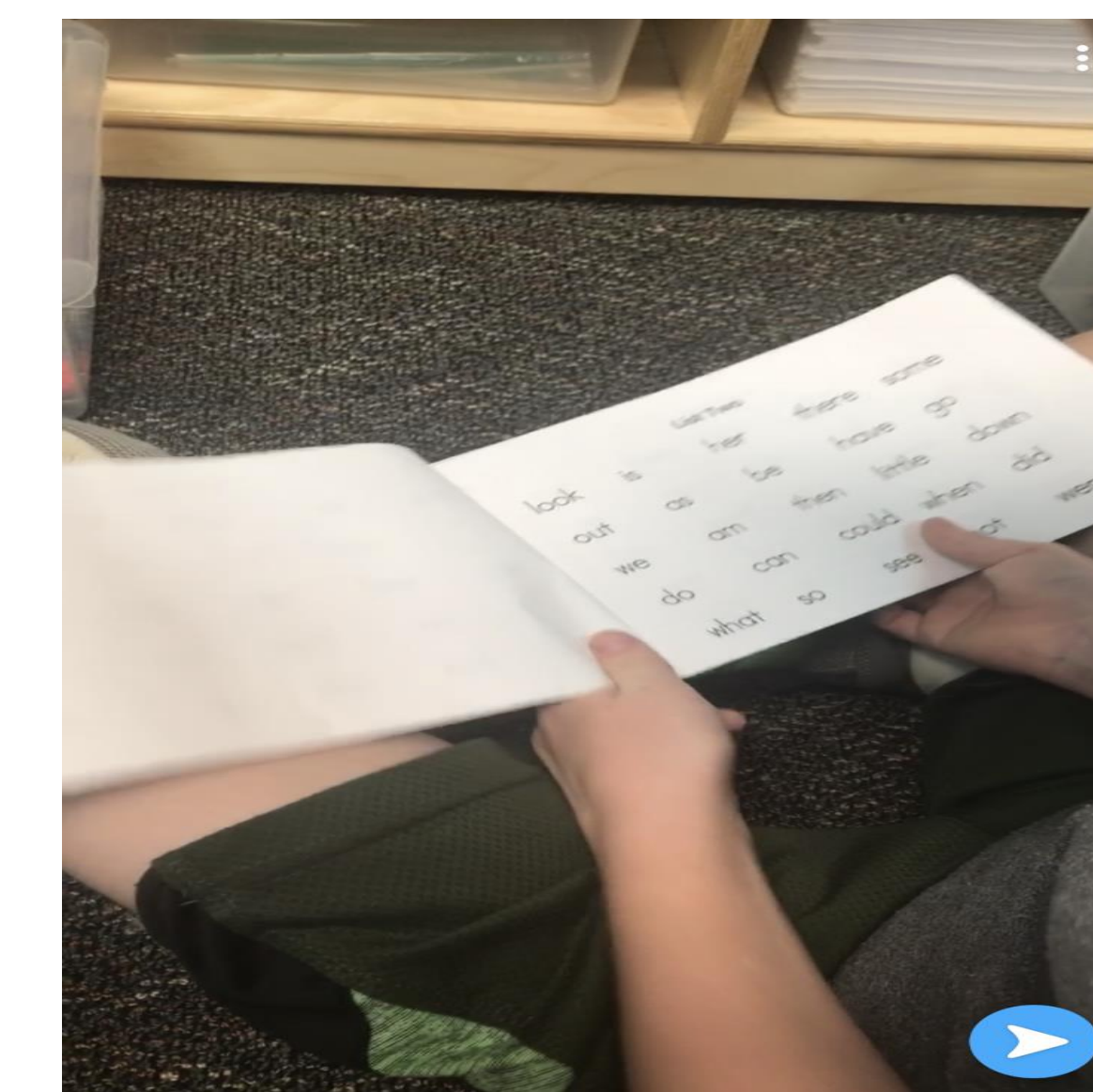
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Implementation Plan

The purpose of my plan is to describe in detail a proposal that will be implemented over the next three years to increase reading and spelling abilities of primary school students in Saudi Arabia. In order to reach this goal,

phonological awareness and phonics instruction will be utilized. The plan consists of four phases and relies on collaboration with the Ministry of Education, 44 teachers, and an American mentor.

- **Phase One:** share my experience with the forty-four elementary school English teachers in Al Baha centre.
- **Phase Two:** Choose the pilot team that will introduce and supervise the phonological and phonics instruction at each school.
- **Phase Three:** Apply the phonological and phonics instructions in all Al Baha elementary schools during 1442/1443.:
- **Phase Four:** Integrate phonological and phonics instructions into all elementary schools in Saudi Arabia in 1443/1444.



Evaluation Plan

To evaluate the outcomes of this project, qualitative and quantitative tools will be used. Several tests of reading nonsense and sight words will help to determine whether the target population improve their abilities in decoding and spelling. A questionnaire will investigate each teacher's attitude and perspective toward teaching phonics and phonological awareness as part of their reading instruction



- To monitor the experimental group progress and analyses the instruction validity, we must have a control group.
 - All experimental and control students will be tested by their teachers in spelling and reading skills at the end of each semester.
 - A follow-up test will be at the beginning of the next school year to validate the previous year's results and to check for stable gains in achievement .
- Supervisor will schedule regular visits to the participant teachers' classrooms to review and rate their performance and evaluate the students' response to the new method.
 - A questionnaire will be shared with elementary school teachers. It will highlight the specific areas of needed improvement and investigate each teacher's attitude toward using the phonics approach of teaching reading and spelling to elementary school student

Acknowledgements

Research supported by:

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY.

College of Education

CIMA
center for intercultural and multilingual advocacy

Khbrat SUMMIT

برنامج التطوير المهني للمعلمين
Teacher Professional Development Program

خبرات

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