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College of Education

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Jung-Hye Choi

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Teachers' Experiences Using Phonics Instruction in Korean Elementary School Classrooms

by

Jung Hye Choi

MA, Cyber Hankuk University of Foreign Languages, Graduate School of TESOL, 2014

BS, Daejin University, 2002

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2022

Abstract

Public elementary schools in the Republic of Korea (Korea) do not reliably include phonics in their third and fourth grade English language curriculum. Therefore, examining how teachers are currently including phonics instructions in the classroom could significantly impact the level of reading skills acquired in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes in Korea. This basic qualitative study addressed what teachers needed to reliably and competently teach phonics in Korean public elementary school districts, what difficulties they encountered, and what kind of support could effectively ameliorate said difficulties. The conceptual framework for this research was provided by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of constructivism. Eight semistructured interviews conducted with third and fourth grade teachers who had more than 3 years of experience teaching phonics. The data collected in these interviews were analyzed through inductive analysis to identify common themes. Results from the study presented a significant reality of English classrooms, such as English class focused on students' interest rather than phonics, curriculum regarding phonics, varying student levels of competency, short period of teaching phonics, and lack of phonics training. The findings of this study provided substantial insight into both how Korean teachers use phonics instruction and into what resources might support the consistent teaching of phonics in English language classrooms. Moreover, this study can support a positive social change if basic EFL literacy skills in Korea improve as a result of consistent and effective phonics curriculum.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my son, Taein, who gave me a lot of insight and constant support to facilitate my assignments as well as my husband, Chul, who supported me throughout this journey. To my mother, J. H. Cho, and father, H. D. Choi, who taught me the virtue of patience and the value of diligent work. I am deeply grateful to my mother-in-law who supports me even in heaven, and my father-in-law, who always encourages me. All my family members, friends, and colleagues have supported me in prayer and encouragement, which helped to propel me along my doctoral journey. I am sincerely thankful for being able to continue the challenges, thanks to the grace of the Lord.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Effective English phonics instruction plays a pivotal role in improving the reading and writing skills of students who learn English as a foreign language (EFL). Phonics aims to help students develop a notion about the relation between letters and sounds (Campbell, 2020). Students performing independent reading show increased self-efficacy and self-confidence (Price-Mohr & Price, 2018). Studies have shown that programs using various phonics-teaching strategies support EFL students' acquisition of reading skills, including accurate sight word reading and phoneme blending (Van De Ven et al., 2018).

The Republic of Korea (Korea) is a homogeneous country, where people use the Korean language almost exclusively for communication. Korean EFL students rarely have opportunities to practice English speaking skills in their daily lives. This environment may be challenging for these students compared to those who learn English as a second language (ESL) in English-speaking countries, including the United States, Canada, and Australia, who get abundant opportunities to use English in their everyday lives (Berns, 2019). Considering these environmental differences, learning phonics is especially beneficial for EFL students (Bae, 2017). In this study, I examined how teachers perceive phonics instruction and the teaching materials required to improve English reading for EFL students in Korea.

The Local Problem

The problem of the study is that third and fourth grade elementary students in English education in Korea are not systemically educated using phonics instruction. In

the Korean education system, the third grade public elementary school students begin to learn English, including alphabet and communicative skills. Moreover, the teacher-guide and teacher manuals given to elementary-school English teachers from Ministry of Education (MOE) in Korea do not provide sufficient information regarding the explicit teaching of phonics (Jin & Kwon, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2017; Pae, 2020; Park et al., 2017; Sohn, 2021; Yoon & Lee, 2017; Yoon & Lee, 2022). The previous researchers highlighted this issue when asked about their English instruction (Jin & Kwon, 2020; Pae, 2020; Park et al., 2017; Sohn, 2021). Based on conversations with public elementary school English teachers that I had in December 2017 and November 2019, both these challenges related to the phonics curriculum are attributed to a lack of time to teach, teaching materials, and professional development on phonics. Public elementary school English teachers shared with me in both October 2020 and March 2021 that since the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have faced challenges in teaching phonics and letting the students internalize their phonics skills in blended learning settings, which combine online and offline classes.

Furthermore, the use of the English language outside of an English classroom is extremely limited for EFL students in Korea where the country speaks the Korean language dominantly. Therefore, the internalization of English language learning is challenging for them (Bae, 2017; Jung & Choi, 2019; Lee, 2022; Pae, 2021; Sohn, 2021). The third and fourth graders take a 40-minute English class twice a week. However, this duration is not sufficient for them to internalize fundamental English literacy skills, especially phonics and decoding skills (Sohn, 2021). According to Lee (2020) and Pae

(2021), there are more than 20 students with varying academic levels in each English language class, which makes teaching English even more difficult for English teachers. The major reason is differentiating instruction for students with such a broad range of facility with the English language is hard to manage for one English teacher in a class. Effective phonics instruction is crucial for EFL students and should include adequate time for students to internalize phonics rules and to practice reading. Thus, teaching phonics effectively can be a crucial factor for EFL students (Bae, 2017; Jung & Choi, 2019).

Based on preliminary textbook analysis, neither the students' English textbooks nor the teachers' guide to these books contain systematic instruction or information about phonics. The lesson plans included in the guide only feature alphabetical and textual dialogue drills rather than practical phonics. This is problematic because phonics is essential for all English language learners (ELLs) to understand the relation between words and sounds (Flynn, 2017; Li et al., 2021; Sadeghi & Izadpanah, 2018). Comprehending this relationship is a critical factor in achieving successful reading (Sadeghi & Izadpanah, 2018). In addition, clear instructions on phonics are effective for not only native English speakers but also ELLs (Flynn, 2017). Li et al. (2021) supported the importance of understanding the relationship between words and sounds and suggested that explicit phonics instruction is critically important for both ELLs and native English speakers.

The English class curriculum for Korean elementary schools does not provide information about phonics, and the lack of related professional development

opportunities for teachers contributes to this problem (Bae et al., 2019; Yoon & Lee, 2017; Yoon & Lee, 2022). There is a lack of empirical evidence that adequately supports the effectiveness of phonics instruction in boosting reading achievement for their third and fourth graders (Yoon & Lee, 2017; Yoon & Lee, 2022). However, improving students' decoding skills can enhance their self-confidence and self-efficacy for English reading (Bae et al., 2019). The present study was designed to explore teachers' experiences in teaching phonics regarding a lack of professional development to enhance Korean EFL students' self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem of the Local Level

English is a global language used by people worldwide to communicate with each other. Proficiency in the English language is critically important for its speakers to reserve leading roles in the global society through empowered communication. Korea's MOE aims to build students' communication skills, nurturing them into global candidates to spread Korean heritage to the world (MOE, 2020). The purpose of MOE underscores the importance of English language proficiency for students to compete globally (MOE, 2020). According to MOE (2020), English language proficiency, which refers to the ability to collect, analyze, and utilize data and information ethics, is valuable in many areas, including communication, self-management, sense of belonging, and information and communication technology. In public elementary schools, the English class curriculum is structured to enhance the communicative language skills of students. MOE emphasized that students should develop their English proficiency by practicing verbal

expressions. However, the relation between letters and sounds, as well as blending letter sounds to accurately pronounce the words, is not taught systemically. Moreover, the students are not given enough opportunities to learn how to analyze and decode the combinations of letters and sounds. In other words, English language classes at the elementary level are incomplete due to the absence of phonics education, which is likely to have a negative influence on students, as they may face adversities such as being unable to read English independently and giving up the English language course easily when they move up to secondary schools (Yoon & Lee, 2017; Yoon & Lee, 2022).

Furthermore, teachers' guides and teacher manuals from MOE provided to English teachers directs them to spend one in every four lessons focused on phonics, without sufficient phonics teaching materials (Lee, 2022; Yoon & Lee, 2017). For example, the teachers are expected to instruct students about one phoneme during the third period for only 10 minutes out of the 40-minute class (Daekyo English Teachers' Guide, 2020; Dong-A English Teachers' Guide, 2020). This allotted time is insufficient for EFL students in Korea to internalize what they have learned in the class (Lee, 2022). Moreover, the student English textbooks do not have any chapter solely dedicated to phonics, which could result in teachers feel lost in teaching the students decoding skills (Lee, 2022; Yoon & Lee, 2017). According to conversations with some English teachers in public schools in December of 2017, November of 2019, and March of 2021, even though they have already taken several teaching courses in college, some feel the need to take professional development programs to effectively teach phonics. Furthermore, based on the conversations with public elementary schools in December 2017, November 2019,

and March 2021, even though other professional development programs are available for the teachers, they do not address how to teach phonics.

In a conversation with an English teacher in September 2018, who was transferred from another public elementary school in Korea, she shared that she was curious about why the students faced difficulties learning the alphabet and reading words outright. Thus, she assessed the students' English phonics competence including the alphabet and accurate reading. She ran a few tests and modified the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test for K–2 levels because there is no standardized assessment for this level in Korea. She designed and developed the tests with 30 questions, of which 10 questions were used for short vowels, 10 for long vowels ending with "e" words, and 10 for sight words. However, in contrast to her expectation, the students' performance was disappointing. She found out that only 5% of the third graders and 25% of the fourth graders understood the alphabet correctly, and only 3% of the third and fourth graders could read the English words used in the test correctly.

According to preliminary research I conducted in 2018 related to the government support for the English education department in one of the largest provinces in Korea, the school district where the English teacher conducted the tests was granted an extra budget for the students struggling with learning English. Motivated by the disappointing performance of the students, the teacher yearned for programs to teach phonics to the students. The teachers soon discovered that most of the programs primarily focused on multimedia-assisted language education, information and communication technology-

embedded classes, or culture-related instructions rather than literacy education, which the teacher desired.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

ELLs need to understand how to match sounds and letters to improve their reading skills (Nam, 2018). However, the English class curriculum for public elementary schools in Korea requires third graders to identify letters and practice letter formation rather than practicing their holistic reading behaviors, such as blending sounds to decode words and text comprehension skills (Horowitz-Kraus et al., 2017; Jung & Choi, 2019; Pae, 2021; Shin & Kim, 2017). If ELLs are made capable of independent reading, it would be a significant milestone to find their own motivation for English language learning (Horowitz-Kraus et al., 2017). Thus, Shin and Kim (2017) suggested that the English curriculum for elementary schools in Korea should not neglect helping students understand how to mix and match letters to their corresponding sounds to decode words and accurately pronounce them to facilitate independent reading.

The current professional development programs available for teachers in Korea do not specify how phonics is related to improving students' reading skills or what teaching practices are most effective in supporting English language proficiency (Jang & Hong, 2020; Jung & Choi, 2017, 2019). According to Jang and Hong (2020), teachers may use some phonics activities from these programs; however, it is challenging to run these activities in the class because the teachers' guides provide limited phonics activities. The learning stages of phonics include the understanding of letters, sounds, and sight words, whose integral knowledge can eventually lead the students to gain text-reading ability

(Van de Grift et al., 2017; Whitehead, 2017). Thus, English teachers need to know how elementary school students can develop decoding and text-reading skills. The professional development programs currently available in Korea rarely support the primary phases of literacy development that deal with helping students to decode texts. The National Curriculum Information Center (2020) cited MOE's guidance to develop communicative English language skills, in which students in third to sixth grades in elementary schools are recommended to learn 800 English words, and those in middle and high schools are encouraged to learn 2,200 words (3 years at each institution).

The English textbooks used in public elementary schools have limited texts and mainly contain visual materials such as pictures (Mun & Chung, 2019; Park, 2020; Yoon, 2019, 2021). To address this issue, Mun and Chung (2019) focused on teachers who require constructive and concise instructional strategies for teaching phonics as well as educational materials suited for students from all levels of academic background. Park (2020) and Yoon (2021) indicated that to provide a compelling learning experience to all students, English education at public elementary schools must be revisited for the better. Some English teachers in the public school system have tried restructuring teaching plans on their own, making English reading education better for all student groups (Mun & Chung, 2019; Shin & Kim, 2017; Yoon, 2019).

There is little research to support the teachers' needs about effective phonics instruction, which can substantially support struggling English readers (Jung & Choi, 2019; Yoon & Lee, 2017). Yoon and Lee (2017) revealed four themes through a survey of 102 public school English teachers. First, the teachers know that phonics education is

important for elementary school students to continuously succeed in learning English at both elementary and secondary levels. Additionally, the English textbooks do not provide enough phonics activities. Also, the English textbooks require 10% to 40% more phonics activities. Finally, English teachers require either teaching or learning models for developing phonics lesson plans. The study results indicated that high-quality phonics instructions are required for both elementary school teachers and students in Korea. However, the quantitative studies were limited in addressing the details of teachers' perceptions about phonics instruction in Korea (Pae, 2020; Yoon & Lee, 2017). Jung and Choi (2019) also found that phonics instructions can effectively help underperforming English students in public elementary schools in Korea. Therefore, the results of the my study were expected to emphasize the effectiveness of phonics instruction and provide empirical insight into English phonics education in the Korean EFL context.

Definition of Terms

The key terms used in this paper are defined as follows:

Decoding skills: The ability to understand the letter–sound relation by applying reading knowledge (Wawire & Zuilkowski, 2021).

English as a foreign language (EFL): The environment of learning EFL. The use of the English language by nonnative speakers in countries where English is generally not an inner circle (Alemi et al., 2021; Berns, 2019).

English language learners (ELL)s: The ELLs who learn English in diverse contexts. Students who come from non-English-speaking countries have limited knowledge about the English language (Li et al., 2021).

Phonics: The relation between letters and sounds (Bradley & Noell, 2018).

Phonics instructional strategy: The teaching of reading and spelling by focusing on the relation between symbols and sounds (Bradley & Noell, 2018).

Reading fluency: The ability to read text accurately and quickly (Kim et al., 2021).

Reading motivation: This can be either intrinsic or extrinsic (Wang & Gan, 2021). Intrinsic reading motivation indicates the extent to which students are curious about reading or feel that reading is an important and enjoyable activity. In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to the extent to which students are motivated to read based on grades or other external rewards (Wang & Gan, 2021).

Reading self-efficacy: The beliefs and attitudes of students about their reading abilities (Elgendi et al., 2021; Soland & Sandilos, 2021).

Significance of the Study

This study is unique because it addressed an underresearched area of English phonics instruction for EFL students in public elementary schools in Korea. I examined teachers' experiences in using phonics in English language classes and sought to identify the support or resources required by teachers to use phonics more effectively in their English instruction. The study results hold significance for stakeholders involved in English education in public elementary schools in Korea, including principals, homeroom

teachers, English teachers, students, and parents. This study can also offer meaningful insights that can be referenced by MOE for future policymaking to improve students' English literacy. Specifically, this study has valuable implications for improving and developing the phonics curriculum and teaching materials designed to strengthen EFL language skills.

English is no longer merely a foreign language but a global communicative channel that makes people feel much closer to each other as residents of the global village (Sharifian, 2017). People of all generations enjoy watching videos on YouTube and communicating on social media for both casual and professional purposes in English. Even at an early age, young children use English on smartphones to make phone calls and texts, watch video clips, and play games. Thus, teaching English to young learners in an EFL environment is vital, as it can affect their academic and professional competence as well as their daily lives as global citizens (Kim et al., 2019).

In literacy education, independent reading and writing are essential skills through which students can acquire knowledge and information in the academic and professional field they would belong to in the future (Ushioda, 2017). This study supports EFL education in Korea by explaining how phonics education can benefit students in using English for academic, professional, and personal purposes. English proficiency is an indispensable commodity for EFL students to step up to the global stage, and the study presents substantial implications for all interest groups involved in English education in public elementary schools in Korea.

Research Question

To capture how English teachers in public elementary schools perceive the current strategies for phonics education for EFL students in Korea, the study addressed the following research question (RQ):

RQ: What are teachers' experiences in teaching English language phonics to third and fourth graders?

Review of the Literature

This literature review includes an investigation of the available research on phonics instruction and related challenges in the EFL context. I address a theoretical framework of the subject before presenting specific topics related to phonics instruction. Although various phonics approaches have been developed so far, I focus on the topics most relevant to my research inquiry. The strategy for identifying appropriate research papers regarding this study involved searching peer-reviewed journal articles written in the last 5 years. The keywords used for locating the relevant papers included*, phonics instructional strategies, literacy, teachers' perceptions of phonics instruction, EFL*, and *ELLs*. These papers indicated three main themes from the collected data: (a) conceptual framework, (b) phonics instruction, and (c) phonics instruction in Korea. The databases used in the search included ERIC, SAGE, ProQuest Central, Education Research Complete, Academic Search Premier, Research Information Sharing Service, Korean-studies Information Service System, Korea Association of Teaching English, Society of Teaching English through Media, Korea Association of Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning, and Primary English Education. The two themes that emerged during this

research, which focused on Korea, were phonics instruction and phonics instruction in a foreign language classroom.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study was adopted from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of constructivism, which has been influential in the development of instrumental models of basic English literacy and English language acquisition for both ELLs and EFL learners. Vygotsky emphasized that literacy and language learning occur within the social and cultural contexts in a child's environment, and children's learning occurs through their interactions with the adults and peers in their environment. In a community, more knowledgeable adults and peers share the values, beliefs, and intellectual adaptations from their culture (Vygotsky, 1980).

Culture and community play a vital role in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). A child interacts within a setting in which cultural and social interactions most significantly affect their cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). The sociocultural theory provides foundational knowledge and theoretical insight regarding second language acquisition and the development of a language within a sociocultural context. It also indicates how culture and society contribute to cognitive development. The theory states that students who have consistent relationships with familiar instructional routines, teachers, and peers experience short-term reading achievement loss (LeBoeuf & Fantuzzo, 2018). It also highlights scaffolding, which includes the zone of proximal development (ZPD; Vygotsky, 1978). In the EFL context, teachers' instruction and

scaffolding strategies considering the students' ZPD are critically important because it is directly connected to the students' cognitive development.

Scaffolding

In the language learning field, scaffolding is an effective instruction that provides specific just-in-time support as a pedagogical drive to challenge students toward a higher level of activity (TESOL International Association, 2018). Scaffolding differs from simple teacher support and should be used only when it is necessary to adjust the students' level of understanding (Lee, 2020; Lim & Ihm, 2020). It aids students in solving problems, carrying out tasks, and improving their learning skills (Lee, 2020). Successful scaffolding characteristics are to attract the tutee's interest in the task, to make the task manageable for the tutee, to maintain goal direction, to identify critical features, to control frustration, and to model task solutions (Lim & Ihm, 2020). Scaffolding results in the learner developing task competence at a rate that far outpaces unassisted efforts (Lee, 2020).

According to the sociocultural theory, scaffolding is strongly linked to the concept of ZPD (Devina & Varona-Domblas, 2020; Gonulal & Loewen, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) defined ZPD as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). According to TESOL International Association (2018), the scaffolding techniques used in classroom contexts refer to the interventions made by teachers to facilitate and improve the students' current knowledge and skill-learning within their ZPD. Finally, scaffolding is a temporary, dynamic, unsolidified support

tailored to a child's developmental progress within their ZPD (Devina & Varona-Domblas, 2020; Gonulal & Loewen, 2018).

To connect Vygotsky's theory of ZPD and its application in the second language (L2) classroom, the ZPD for the L2 learner is the difference between the actual developmental level as determined by individual linguistic production and the level of potential development as determined by collaborative language production with a peer or teacher (Kong-in, 2020; TESOL International Association, 2018). Understanding ZPD helps teachers improve learners' problem-solving skills in real-life communication (Kong-in, 2020). When using the scaffolding technique in a classroom context, teachers should consider students' ZPD to improve their current skills and knowledge and facilitate their learning (TESOL International Association, 2018).

The scaffolding techniques are explained as modeling, bridging, contextualizing, schema-building, text re-presentation, and metacognition development (Lim & Ihm, 2020; Sugianto et al., 2021). Specifically, modeling provides learners with representative examples that serve as specific guidelines, and bridging establishes a link between the lives of students and the subject matter. Contextualizing, particularly, provides context for language use during the language-learning process. Schemata-building assists learners in incorporating new information into existing knowledge in order to activate learners' schemata. Re-presenting text aims to engage learners in the transformation of linguistic structures between genres and developing metacognition employs teachers' modeling strategies to foster learner autonomy and metacognition development (Sugianto et al.,

2021). L2 teachers' scaffolding techniques considering students' ZPD are criteria that determine how effectively students can learn the second language in the classroom.

Scaffolding Techniques in Phonics Instruction

Scaffolding is an effective method to reduce gaps in achievement (Chen, 2020; Lim & Ihm, 2020). If students are not at the required reading level to comprehend a text, the instructor can use instructional scaffolding until they are able to read the text independently without any assistance. To simplify scaffolding, teachers should assign tasks to students that they can perform in areas where they need improvement. Scaffolding techniques are appropriate to help students gradually become independent readers. According to Lim and Ihm (2020), there are six characteristics of successful scaffolding about teaching that need to be considered before, during, and after the application of scaffolding: (a) engaging the students in a task, (b) making the task manageable for the students by reducing the degree of freedom, (c) sustaining the goal, (d) noticing important traits, (e) controlling frustration, and (f) showing a model to solve the task. (Chen, 2020). These traits are related to the following phonics instructions such as engaging the students in a phonics task, making the phonics task manageable for the students by reducing the degree of freedom, sustaining the goal to learn phonics, noticing important traits regarding phonics, controlling frustration, and showing a model to solve the task, such as segmentation and combination phonemes (Chen, 2020; Lim & Ihm, 2020). Among them, it is important for teachers to control frustration through scaffolding techniques because students learning phonics must continuously remember and apply phonics rules to read texts, which require training.

In early literacy, it is important to help students understand phonics rules so that they can read text independently without any guidance (de Oliveira et al., 2021; Fehintola & Fehintola, 2021; Yan, 2021). In particular, to achieve this goal, specific and planned scaffolding with appropriate challenges that meet the learners' level and sufficient instructional support is required (Yan, 2021). To support L2 learners with scaffolding, the following six scaffolding techniques can be used: explaining, modeling, instructing, questioning, giving hints, and giving feedback (de Oliveira et al., 2021; Yan, 2021). For example, when teaching single-vowel combinations in phonics, the teacher should explain the role and rule of vowels and consonants and how to combine the phonemes and then show a model to segment and combine the three phonemes of "a consonant, a vowel, and a consonant," which is called the CVC combination. After that, the teacher should instruct the students to combine and segment the phonemes and ask questions about the points that might be confusing. If the students require hints to answer properly, the teacher should provide hints and feedback. In this process, the teacher does not have to follow all steps but only those that are required for the students. In addition, the initial instruction can be carried out for the whole group, and gradually, the students can be divided into small groups or individuals for better scaffolding. Such scaffolding can also be applied to peer-to-peer learning. For example, advanced peers can model the CVC combination in group work and provide peer instruction to their less advanced peers. They can also provide feedback through pair work or group work. As such, teachers and more advanced peers can provide timely guidance through scaffolding (Fehintola & Fehintola, 2021; Yan, 2021).

Scaffolding interaction cycles, which refer to a sequence of interactions between a teacher and students and include three learning steps, prepare, task, and elaborate, can be used in addition to the scaffolding techniques that teachers can use (Alfiansyah, 2021; de Oliveira et al., 2021; Lee, 2020; Lim & Ihm, 2020). These cycles indicate that learners must always be adequately prepared to complete each task before being asked to do so. The "elaborate" step is the main principle in reading text (de Oliveira et al., 2021; Lee, 2020). In phonics instruction, after preparing what to teach, the lesson content and providing tasks are designed to familiarize the students with the rules, and the teacher can elaborate the students' knowledge of phonics rules by asking questions and writing answers to the questions for the students. To examine the students' responses, the teacher can use the think-aloud technique, which is a teaching technique in which a teacher speaks aloud their thoughts before, during, and/or after reading text and the students can hear the teacher's thinking about text reading (Alfiansyah, 2021). This technique is widely used in teaching comprehension, and while thinking aloud, the teacher shows how to form connections, formulate predictions, answer and/or question, understand small to big units, and fix up the comprehension strategies (Alfiansyah, 2021). When teaching phonics, the think-aloud technique is also useful for students as a scaffolding technique (Dessemontet et al., 2021) because the think aloud technique is also useful as a scaffolding technique as the teacher models segmenting or combining phonemes and applying phonics rules to unknown words (House & City, 2017).

Scaffolding is a highly elaborate task that is difficult to teach, especially when teaching phonics, due to the individual differences in understanding phoneme

combinations, remembering sight words, and reading sentences (Lee, 2020; Nguyen & Williams, 2019). Thus, phonics instruction is expected to provide inevitably tailored instruction to individual learners (Bae et al., 2019; Campbell, 2020; Kang & Liang, 2018; Kulju & Makinen, 2019). However, instructional scaffolding for L2 learners is complicated for English language teachers as it requires internalizing knowledge about theoretical concepts, appropriate practical strategies about the teaching environment, and L2 learners' needs (Englert et al., 2020; Nguyen & Williams, 2019). For example, Englert et al. (2020) investigated the scaffolding technique adopted by special-education preservice teachers for training struggling readers. These techniques included phonics hierarchy, picture mnemonics and sound rehearsal, modeling sound blending and word reading using blending boxes/dots, building words with manipulatives, promoting generalization and automaticity, and phonics probes (Bae et al., 2019; Englert et al., 2020). After the scaffolding technique training, the preservice teachers exhibited improved literacy knowledge, self-confidence in delivering phonics instruction to struggling readers, and analysis of oral reading miscues (Kang & Liang, 2018; Kulju & Makinen, 2019). Thus, Englert et al. indicated that teaching phonics requires specific professional training and that teachers require professional support regarding literacy tools and instructional scripts, which should be explicit and transparent.

Because of the importance Englert et al. (2020) placed on phonics professional development, students in the EFL environment are often taught to memorize rather than understand combination of phonemes (Ren & Ma, 2017; Shangarffam, 2017). The memorizing method exhibits limitations with an increase in learners' vocabulary level

(Ren & Ma, 2017). For example, when a word is read using a phonics rule, the students can read all words, by themselves, to which similar rules can be applied. However, there is a high possibility that the students cannot read the words accurately when they memorize them. Specifically, when the focus is on memorization, students may be able to read the memorized word but may not recognize the phonics rules when faced with words with a similar pattern. Failure to read accurately also significantly reduces learners' ability to understand text accurately (Ren & Ma, 2017; Shangarffam, 2017). In other words, the phonics lesson, which fosters the ability of students to read independently, is a process that constantly examines whether students can read, and, thus, teachers must accelerate students' reading independence by using various scaffolding techniques.

Review of the Broader Problem

Literacy refers to the ability to read and write, and it requires specific learning strategies, unlike the natural acquisition of verbal language skills (Lee & Kim, 2017; Park et al., 2017). Learners typically develop their reading and writing skills through formal instructions, and this process starts with learning phonics (Shin, 2018). Reading skills involve a set of cognitive abilities, including decoding symbols into sounds to form words, constructing meanings from texts, and applying schemata to text (Lee & Kim, 2017). Learners determine the relation between letters and sounds through phonics (Bradley & Noell, 2018), and again, decoding skills are intellectual and not natural traits (Park et al., 2017). In the following section, various phonics approaches are presented. Next, phonics instruction in the EFL context, particularly in South Korea, is discussed, followed by the rationale of the current study.

Phonics Instruction

Phonics instruction aims to support students in learning how to decode words accurately (Lee & Kim, 2017; Li et al., 2021; Park et al., 2017). Phonics is a pivotal and meaningful learning for language learners to independently read by understanding and blending alphabetical codes (Li et al., 2021). Various benefits of teaching phonics have been advocated. For example, phonics instruction helps students become independent and builds the students' essential learning skills, including academic and professional skills because phonics is a part of early literacy (Lee & Kim, 2017; Park et al., 2017). However, some researchers believe that phonics is not as beneficial, due to the individual differences exhibited by the student's learning language. To address this issue regarding the individual differences, tailored reading programs in addition to the basic phonics instruction need to be applied (Park et al., 2017). In other words, a one-size-fits-all formula would not support all students as successful readers.

Another advantage of teaching phonics is that it is helpful for readers at risk (Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Johnson, 2017; Li et al., 2021). For struggling readers, learning phonics is a remedial way, and one-on-one tutoring is highly recommended as tailored learning (Johnson, 2017). Ehri and Flugman (2018) claimed that if one-on-one tutoring is not available, a small group setting can also be effective. Recently, phonics instruction has been extensively studied (e.g., Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Johnson, 2017; Li et al., 2021; Park et al., 2017), and its advantages have been advocated.

However, little research has focused on the perceptions of language teachers toward phonics instruction, particularly in EFL contexts, where individual differences

among learners are more varied than those in ESL contexts. By understanding their perceptions and the difficulties in phonics instruction, a better support system with suitable teaching methods needs to be developed. Thus, in my doctoral project, I focused on phonics instruction in Korean EFL contexts to understand the current challenges faced by EFL teachers in terms of phonics instruction. Before I delve into discussing my project, I present the phonics approaches used in relation to the main themes of my study: top-down and bottom-up approaches, interactive reading process, and synthetic phonics, including systematic synthetic phonics or explicit phonics and phonics screen check.

Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches

Phonics teaching generally considers two approaches: top-down and bottom-up. Students learn phonics differently depending on which approach they are exposed to by their teachers. According to Seo and Yoon (2017), if they are exposed to the top-down approach, they read texts, comprehend what they read, and then learn phonics. In contrast, students who are exposed to the bottom-up approach first learn phonics from the word combination and then move on to the level of texts. According to Seo and Yoon, readers using the top-down approach notice a significant improvement in letter traits. This approach is appropriate for intensive reading instruction (Manan, 2017). In contrast, readers using the bottom-up approach relate their prior knowledge and experience to the text they are reading and use them for understanding the information presented in the author's messages (Yoon & Lee, 2017). From this viewpoint, the bottom-up approach is helpful for the whole language approach and extensive reading (Seo & Yoon, 2017).

Decoding, which plays an essential role in phonics instruction, involves both top-down and bottom-up approaches (Lee, 2019; Lee & Kim, 2017; Jung & Choi, 2019; Mun & Chung, 2019; Yoon, 2021; Yoon & Lee, 2017). The bottom-up approach is more suitable for EFL students than the top-down approach because they can learn pronunciation rules and how to decode words by interpreting sets of combined letters (Yoon & Lee, 2017). Accuracy and decoding skills, including phonemic awareness and phonics, are necessary to enhance reading fluency (Mun & Chung, 2019). The students who wish to learn phonics need to know the sight words exceptions to which the common rules are not applicable (Lee, 2022). Thus, preparing decoding skills is essential for students' independent reading. In particular, phonics instruction positively influences the literacy skills of underperforming elementary school students (Lee, 2022; Yoon & Lee, 2017).

Interactive Reading Process

The interactive reading process involves a combination of the bottom-up and top-down models (Jung & Choi, 2019; Karadogan & Şahan, 2020; Seo & Yoon, 2017), considering that readers frequently use both these approaches intuitively while reading (Karadogan & Şahan, 2020; Seo & Yoon, 2017). For example, readers use the top-down approach to infer the meaning of texts and the bottom-up approach to validate their assumptions (Seo & Yoon, 2017). Jung and Choi (2019) indicated that the hybrid approach of combining the top-down and bottom-up processing skills, which is called an interactive reading process model, can positively influence young learners' literacy skills. The interactive reading process may be beneficial for internalization of phonics rules to

EFL learners because the process to infer the meaning of texts and to validate the readers' assumptions allows the learners to cross reading the texts.

Synthetic Phonics

Synthetic phonics programs are used by English teachers to teach reading skills using the relation between letters and sounds (Buckingham et al., 2019; Campbell, 2020). Synthetic phonics is also known as blended phonics, which refers to teaching isolated grapheme–phoneme correspondences (GPCs) to students so that they can understand the specific rules of blending isolated sounds into words (Campbell, 2020). That is, the rules support readers in decoding complicated words. Synthetic phonics has been recommended for the past 15 years by many significant reports on literacy development (Campbell, 2020; Cunningham, 2017). The synthesis method of phonics is called explicit, componential, systematic, or traditional phonics instruction (Campbell, 2020).

Seven crucial components are used to implement a systematic synthetic phonics instruction to optimize the effect of an explicit phonics instruction: (a) to provide the materials explained explicitly in concrete ways; (b) to model the process, skill, or concept through think-aloud and skill-modeling; (c) to provide guided practice through teacher's support and scaffolding; (d) to respond meaningfully to students to make them independent and self-regulated by applying strategies and skills; (e) to provide timely and meaningful feedback to drive student learning; (f) to respond to students' questions; and (g) to monitor students' learning (Putri & Zaitun, 2020; Wheldall et al., 2017). According to Cunningham (2017), when teaching phonics, encoding tasks within spelling should be trained to enhance students' decoding ability. Phonetic patterns indicate how to

manipulate words based on known patterns (Cunningham, 2017). Currently, numerous elementary schools teach phonics as part of their reading programs; however, its implementation is conjoined with other contents and is not practical. The hybrid method of phonics instruction aids in developing child-centered reading skills (Wheldall et al., 2017). Synthetic phonics follows an explicit and gradual sequence to let students know the sounds of English: to teach the letter names; to teach letter sounds and review; to teach the principle of blending sounds; to provide opportunities to blend unknown words in context (Putri & Zaitun, 2020). This explicit and gradual sequence helps students to get used to the flow of learning how to read letters including the letter names, sounds, and principles of blending sounds.

Systematic Synthetic Phonics or Explicit Phonics. Systematic synthetic phonics or explicit phonics is to teach letter-sound correspondences first and then to instruct semantic regalities of English (Bowers & Bowers, 2018; Bowers, 2021; Buckingham, 2020; Fletcher et al., 2020). It is to teach phonics with organized programs based on students' needs observed by teachers (Bowers & Bowers, 2018; Buckingham, 2020). It is often discussed that the range of systematic phonics contains synthetic phonics, analytic phonics, analogy phonics, embedded phonics, and onset-rime phonics, which pursue teaching letter-sound correspondences explicitly but have various specific sequences. According to Buckingham (2020), the meaning-based approach is a part of systematic phonics instruction, including morphology, vocabulary, and comprehension. It focuses on developing students' semantic, syntactic, and phonological cueing systems; word identification; fluency; and comprehension skills and increases their motivation to read

by recommending books of different levels (Johnson, 2017; Li et al., 2021). Johnson (2017) and Buckingham (2020) stated that the systematic synthetic phonics or explicit phonics and meaning-based approach are substantially helpful for struggling English readers as it can bolster their self-esteem and self-efficacy. Also, depending on the extent of students' exposure to the English environment, it may be advantageous or overwhelming to learn semantics with explicit phonics (Buckingham, 2020). Therefore, teachers need to examine how familiar learners are with English and determine at what point they should start learning meaning together.

Phonics Screening Check. Phonics screening check (PSC) is an assessment for early reading to check children's phonics knowledge and skills (Bell et al., 2020; Carter, 2020; Darnell et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2019; Schaars et al., 2017). According to Darnell et al. (2017)., PSC is related to systematic synthetic phonics, which is early reading intervention. PSC assessments consist of 40 words, which children aged 5 and 6 are required to know sound, blend and read, including 20 real words and 20 non-words called pseudo words and 'alien words' referred to in the classroom (Carter, 2020). Darnell et al. (2017) revealed children's phonics knowledge assessment from 2012 to 2014. Using their vocabulary knowledge, the children pronounced 72% of the 85 GPCs correctly (Darnell et al., 2017). Schaars et al. (2017) claimed that word-decoding drills should be a part of the phonics instruction curriculum because they are closely related to lexical retrieval, visual and verbal short-term memory, and early literacy. For ELLs in an EFL environment, decoding skills enhance the students' self-confidence and motivation for

reading. Thus, the key to enhancing EFL students' word-decoding skills is to increase their English phonemic awareness (Lee et al., 2019).

Phonics Instruction in EFL Contexts: An Overview of Teaching Phonics in Korea

In EFL contexts, English is not a major communicative means in people's daily lives (Alemi et al., 2021; Kang & Liang, 2018; Lee, 2022; Shahmirzadi, 2017), unlike ESL contexts, where speakers have ample opportunities to interact with other speakers in English. ELLs do not have an immediate aim to use English for communication, and thus, do not have many opportunities to develop English language learning strategies (Shahmirzadi, 2017). Lee (2020) also claimed that EFL learners tend to learn English for academic achievement rather than communicative skills and tend to focus on the target language rather than teaching English in the sociocultural context (Shirmohammadi & Salehi, 2018). Due to the limited exposure to the target language, the role of teachers in language classrooms is crucial in EFL contexts. That is, teachers' scaffolding, guidance, and instruction directly influence students' foreign language learning (Hidajat et al., 2017). A student-centered learning environment has also been emphasized for accelerating students' phonics learning, which requires learning in a sociocultural context (Hidajat et al., 2017). However, teachers' scaffolding, or intervention does not often encourage EFL learners to improve their communicative skills and interaction, owing to the difficulties faced by the teachers in instruction and scaffolding (Kang & Liang, 2018; Shahmirzadi, 2017). Therefore, teachers are more likely to employ traditional instructions, such as memorization and fill-in-the-blanks exercises, which are related to teacher-centered classrooms (Alemi et al., 2021).

Despite the various available techniques for phonics instruction, teachers still struggle with meeting the requirements of individual students, whose paces in language learning development can vary (Jung & Choi, 2019; Pae, 2020; Shin & Kim, 2021). The struggles teachers encounter when teaching in an EFL classroom have been studied anecdotally but little research has been conducted to thoroughly understand the difficulties and challenges they face regarding phonics instruction. Furthermore, although the benefits of phonics instruction in teaching English have been extensively advocated (Jung & Choi, 2019; Shin & Kim, 2021), only a few phonics-related studies have been conducted so far in the Korean context. Therefore, more in-depth research needs to be conducted on the challenges faced by EFL teachers in Korea in terms of phonics instruction, and practical approaches need to be developed that can help them accommodate their students more effectively.

Among the few studies conducted in the Korean context (Pae, 2020; Seo & Yoon, 2017; Yoon & Lee, 2017), Seo and Yoon (2017) analyzed the difficulties encountered by teachers and students in terms of phonics and reading education in the classroom. Seo and Yoon surveyed 78 English teachers who taught fifth and sixth graders, of whom 44 held more than three years of teaching experience. The study focused on teachers' perceptions of English reading education in the elementary school system in Korea and identified the following four themes. Frist, the gap between students in terms of their reading skills is wide. Second, adequate reading materials and activities should be provided to elementary students at all academic levels. Third, teachers feel the need for more engaging educational materials and activities to stimulate reading, preferably

covering more broad topics. Fourth, textbooks should have more English texts for reading. In addition, 31.1% of the teachers answered that teaching phonics was challenging and wished that the teacher's guide included more explicit instructions regarding phonics teaching. In another study, Pae (2020) surveyed 241 English teachers at 300 elementary schools in Korea for their views and demands regarding the current national English curriculum called the 2015 revised English curriculum. According to the survey results the majority of the teachers responded that the reading and writing skills of third and fourth graders needed improvement because the amount of learning was limited. Also, the teachers had difficulties in teaching third and fourth graders' reading and writing and managing individual differences. Pae interviewed a focus group, including three English teachers and the interviewee emphasized that practical professional development programs are necessary in the teaching field. In yet another study, Yoon and Lee (2017) surveyed 102 English elementary teachers to particularly understand perceptions and knowledge about phonemic awareness and phonics. The study revealed that most teachers realized the benefits and importance of phonics, as it can be helpful for themselves and the students who struggle with English reading. The teachers agreed to develop their phonics knowledge, teaching skills, and an instructional model for phonics is needed to be designed for students' reading skills (Yoon & Lee, 2017).

Several studies have indicated the phonics instruction-related issues encountered by Korean classrooms. For example, Jung and Choi (2019) argued that more phonics instruction support needs to be provided to third- and fourth-grade English

underperformers in elementary schools. The results showed that the factors influencing phonics instruction include intervention period, time, frequency, and the total number of sessions. Jung and Choi also suggested that more than two sessions dedicated to phonics instruction, which last 41–60 min, are required to best accommodate students' phonics-based needs. The application of an interactive approach was also expected to facilitate more positive results than a direct bottom-up approach. They also emphasized that repeated phonics instruction in the long term is important for improving students' English reading proficiency.

The process of teaching phonics often starts with teaching the alphabet. Learning the alphabet is essential for students; however, they also need to learn how to interpret the combination of letters and related sounds so that they can become independent readers (Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Lee, 2019; Park et al., 2017; Such, 2021). Often, English teachers with little experience struggle to teach phonics to students even though they are qualified teaching professionals who have taken several training courses, as phonics instruction requires specific training. It was only in the late 1990s that phonics teaching was first introduced in Korea. Teaching phonics to children requires explicit instructions about phonic awareness, letter–sound relations, and word segmentation (Park et al., 2017). Lee (2019) suggested that decoding skills benefit students in the early literacy stage. Decoding refers to phonological recording (Such, 2021). Also, Ehri and Flugman (2018) stated that recognizing the sounds of individual letters, remembering them, and combining them into pronunciations are recognized as real words. Such (2021) stressed that EFL teachers of early reading students should make considerable effort to introduce

and internalize the strategies of word decoding to support the students as successful readers.

Textbooks play a crucial role in terms of public language education. The current English textbooks for elementary school students in Korea have been updated as per the 2015 Revised National Curriculum (MOE, 2018). Even though it was newly published after the older version was issued in 2009, it still does not contain ample discussions about phonic rules (Jung & Choi, 2019; Mun & Chung, 2019; Park, 2020; Yoon & Lee, 2017; Yoon, 2019; Yoon, 2021). Yoon (2019) analyzed the phonics sections printed in five different elementary English textbooks, which complied with the 2015 Revised National Curriculum, but found critical inconsistency rather than conducive developmental strategies. Yoon (2021) found that these textbooks did not have sufficient phonics instruction and did not consider different academic levels of students.

Challenges Regarding Phonics Instruction in South Korea

EFL teachers in Korea have difficulties when teaching phonics, due to the large class size, lack of phonics teaching materials, English reading underperformers in Korea, teaching the alphabet and decoding skills in the Korean context, and English textbooks in Korea (Jang & Hong, 2020; Jung & Choi, 2019; Yoon & Lee, 2017). Even though there is no consensus about the effects of class size on students' learning achievements, many language teachers hold negative perspectives on large classes for teaching English (Amir, 2021; Bai & Wang, 2020; Bowne et al., 2017; Jahan & Ali, 2020) Amir (2021) revealed the following disadvantages of a large class size such as being difficult to control the students, organizing class activities, and communicating effectively. Based on many

teachers' complaints and perspectives, Jahan and Ali (2020) classified language teaching problems in large classes into five categories: (a) discomfort caused by physical constraints, (b) discipline control issues, (c) lack of individual attention, (d) difficulty evaluating students' performance, and (e) learning effectiveness. While learning phonics, teachers' delicate scaffolding techniques considering students' ZPD are necessary, however, large class size is apt to be unbeneficial to EFL students due to the five categories mentioned above.

The lack of phonics teaching materials specific to Korean contexts is another issue (Park et al., 2017; Yoon & Lee, 2017). Phonics education and sufficient phonics teaching resources in the public sector can support struggling ELLs in Korea. For example, Park et al. (2017) investigated how the phonics learning process works for underperforming elementary school students in fourth to sixth grades in Korea. The study focused on the students' understanding of the relation between letters and sounds, memorizing and dictating vocabularies, and reading words aloud. They observed three students attending a 40-min class twice a week for four weeks. The target students improved their reading skills and saw growth in effective domains, especially confidence, interests, class participation, and low-anxiety factors. This study showed that phonics education can help elementary school students in an EFL context, such as in Korea, who are underperforming in English literacy. Another significant finding of this study was related to the statistics, as the number of English underperformers increased from fifth grade. This is attributed to the insufficient teaching resources available in public schools and the culture of zealous private institutions. Specifically, in Korean society where

parents eager to provide various attempts and great efforts regarding private tutoring called '*Hakwon*', which has become one of the famous Korean education cultures (Jang & Kim, 2018).

Nonetheless, only a few studies have addressed the abovementioned challenges encountered by English underperformers (Jung & Choi, 2017; Park et al., 2017). Understanding the relation between letters and sounds is a fundamental ability that requires text decoding. It has not been fully explored what specific strategies and data are useful for phonics and reading instructions for underperforming English students (Jung & Choi, 2017; Park et al., 2017). More research is required to understand the current situation of English teachers and the types of support they require to enhance phonics instruction to benefit both themselves and their students.

Phonics instruction can positively influence English reading underperformers (Jung & Choi, 2019; Park et al., 2019). According to Jung and Choi (2019), the low academic performance of students in English is likely related to their underprivileged socioeconomic status. Students with greater socioeconomic affordability, which measures extra curriculum support, enjoy the advantages, whereas the less fortunate students cannot. Park et al. (2019) also emphasized the students taking extracurricular classes in public elementary schools and found that underperforming English students quickly gave up the subject when they were due to enter middle school. They felt inundated by the curriculum offered in middle schools because it was translation-oriented, with an emphasis on grammar. Jung and Choi (2019) also argued that the country's competitive culture for education is partially responsible for this academic discrepancy between

students. Park et al. (2019) added that, as English is a major subject in Korea's public education system, public schools should not neglect English underperformers and rather offer special programs to assist them.

Implications

This basic qualitative study will include an exploration of Korean elementary teachers' phonics instruction experiences in English language classrooms. Future findings from this doctoral study can guide administrators regarding developing future English curricula for the district and public sectors in Korea. Implications for possible project directions based on the anticipated findings may include professional development and resources required for teachers to improve their phonics instruction. In alignment with phonics instruction, the participants uncovered effective phonics instruction and materials. Professional development might serve as a teacher-training program for more effective phonics instruments for public elementary school students.

Summary

This study can contribute to collecting information regarding the perceptions of public-school teachers who teach English to third and fourth graders in the suburban areas of Korea. The perceptions of the teachers who implement phonics instruction will be thoroughly explored in this study. The one RQ addressed in this study will focus on teachers' phonics instruction experiences. A basic qualitative research design will be used to investigate the teachers' perceptions through interviewing. The aim of this basic qualitative study is to explore public school teachers' phonics instruction experiences and

the teaching materials they require. Expected limitations include the possible inability to represent the majority and participants' bias and limited experiences and knowledge. Section 2 will include a presentation of the methodology that will be used for sampling, data collection, strategy analysis, and ethical considerations in the proposed study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

I explored teachers' experiences of phonics instruction in an English language class for third and fourth grade students in public elementary schools in Korea through semistructured interviews. These interviews focused on gathering the teachers' experiences regarding English phonics instruction by focusing on students' decoding skills, motivation, and preparedness to read. This section includes a description of how the selected methodology addresses this study's RQ created for basic qualitative research and a discussion of the rationale of the research's design, participants, and data collection.

This study followed a basic qualitative design to investigate public elementary school teachers' experiences with phonics instruction in third-and fourth grade English language classrooms in Korea. The qualitative approach is useful for capturing teachers' opinions in detail and collecting actual data of the classroom environment. A basic qualitative study aims to understand and explain the nature of reality regarding a phenomenon and to discover the meaning of a particular part of an individual's world (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The RQ addressed in this study was created to gain a deeper understanding and explore the teachers' teaching environments by referring to Preston (2017). Qualitative research methods provide opportunities to bond both the researcher and participants (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Other qualitative research methods were also considered but did not fit the aim of this study. Qualitative case study is a method to explore a phenomenon within a specific context via various data sources (Merriam &

Grenier, 2019). However, this study focused on Korean EFL teachers' experiences of phonics instruction and exploring what their experiences means, so case qualitative study was not appropriate.

The study addressed the following one RQ:

What are teachers' experiences in teaching English phonics to third and fourth graders?

This RQ was to guide when interviewing the participants. Qualitative researchers recognize that knowledge is subjective and may have individual differences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this sense, the study findings showed in-depth insight into English teachers' perceptions regarding phonics instruction in their classrooms.

The qualitative interviews conducted with teachers could provide essential data to understand the challenges faced by English teachers teaching EFL students in public elementary schools in Korea. They could also reveal the strategies adopted by these teachers. This study's main targets were experienced teachers for third and fourth graders of a school district in one of the largest provinces in Korea. A basic qualitative study can be used to determine the experiences, preferences, phenomena, and mentoring relationships of teachers (Vasquez-Rosati, 2017). I explored the experiences of public elementary school teachers teaching the English language to third and fourth graders in Korea. Applying the method of data collection could yield answers from the participants' individual perspectives and experiences (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This doctoral study was conducted as a basic qualitative study that relied on single-interview data. Such a design is appropriate for a study related to interviewees' experiences (see Mohajan,

2018). Through the employed design, I explored the experiences and perspectives of third and fourth grade public elementary school teachers in terms of phonics instruction and teaching materials via interviews. The reason that I selected a qualitative study was that the perceptions of phonics instruction was best captured through participant interviews, which were the primary data collection method of a basic qualitative study. Other qualitative study designs were not used.

Participants

The setting for this study was suburban public elementary schools in Korea. This study's main targets were experienced teachers for third and fourth graders of a school district in one of the largest provinces in Korea. According to MOE (2018), the school district serves approximately 77,715 K–12 students in 11 elementary schools, six middle schools, and six high schools. The participants were eight teachers who had experience in teaching English phonics to third or fourth grade Korean elementary school students, had over 3 years of experience in teaching at an elementary school, and held national certificates for each target grade at a school. This standard followed Creswell and Creswell's (2018) recommendation for the least number of participants required for qualitative research. This study aimed to recruit eight teachers who had taught phonics to third and fourth graders in the target school district. I used purposeful sampling to identify research participants. In the basic qualitative methodology, purposive sampling indicates that the persons selected to participate in a research study have the background and experience to address the RQ (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Justification for Number of Participants and Criteria for Selecting Participants

According to Mohajan (2018), there are no specific guidelines about the number of participants required to form a sample, and the sample size varies depending on the type of qualitative research. Mohajan mentioned that qualitative studies can also contain a limited number of participants, which are recommended as two to 30 individuals. In this basic qualitative research as a doctoral study, the minimum participants was eight. Eight participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) Teachers who had experience in teaching English phonics to third or fourth grade Korean elementary school students, (b) teachers who had over 3 years of experience in teaching at an elementary school, and (c) teachers holding national certificates.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

The procedure for gaining access to participants contained multisteps. First, I gained approval through the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; approval number 11-19-21-0554420). After approval from the IRB, I emailed a copy of the consent form to the district elementary schools due to the COVID-19 constraints. The schools uploaded the consent form on the teachers' web bulletin boards. When the potential participants emailed me to participate in this study with content form, I checked the criteria of participants and then set the interview schedules. The consent form included an outline about the study, the purpose of this study, and my role.

Establishing a Researcher-Participants Relationship

Establishing a trustworthy relationship between the researcher and the participants was essential to this project. I built a positive rapport with the participants intentionally

selected for this study. Also, I maintained confidentiality of the information that the participants provided to me. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), building such rapport in qualitative research is crucial to gain specific data through interviews. I was not involved in teaching English in any public sector, so I did not know the participants. To establish good rapport with each participant, I assured that the participants' information was significantly valuable to this project study. I also conveyed respect to each participant and thanked them for their participation, commitment, and valuable time in this study.

Protection of Participants' Rights

Confidentiality

The participants' confidentiality was strictly guarded during the research. The collected data did not include the participants' identities. To further protect their confidentiality, each participant was assigned a number using the alphanumeric system. The encrypted data comprised the information regarding the school, grade, and interview. The participants were informed about the confidentiality policy to alleviate their privacy concerns. I, as the researcher, was the sole person having access to the data. The password to access all files in the collected data was not shared with anyone other than me. All hard copies of the data were stored in a cabinet with a locking system in my home office. All data will be stored for 5 years in the locked cabinet and then securely destroyed.

Informed Consent

All participants were informed of the research process for this project study. Participants were given detailed information about the project study, including the purpose and nature of the study and the participants' roles in the study. The participants emailed me with the consent form attached. I examined the criteria of each participant. When the potential participant met the requirements, I set the interview schedules and explained my role, the purpose of the study, an outline about the expectation from each participant, and the primary instrument to be used for data collection. Additionally, I used an interview protocol to maintain consistency during the interviews. The interviews were conducted using Zoom video-conferencing platform.

Protection From Harm

The participants were protected from any type of harm from physical and emotional factors (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It was crucial that the participants knew that the interview process might lead to emotional problems, such as the issues of underperforming students, the method of instructing phonics, and performance evaluation. To minimize possible anxiety, I reminded the participating teachers of the administrative staff were not part of this study. Also, any information they shared about the students would not affect their own performance evaluation. I emphasized that participant protection was a priority throughout this project study. The participation was completely voluntary, without any pressure related to the school district or administration, and the participants could withdraw any time without excuses.

Data Collection

In collecting qualitative data, I used semistructured questions to derive unrestrained and unbiased opinions from the participants (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Weller et al., 2018). I developed the interview questions designed to investigate the teachers' experiences with English phonics instruction for third and fourth graders in Korea. Others' interview questions were not appropriate for the type and focus on my research (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview questions focused on collecting information to address the RQ. According to Weller et al. (2018), the focus of the interview questions is critical because the data gathered from the interviews of the participants is used to address and answer the RQ.

Interviews

The specific population of the third and fourth grade teachers in public elementary schools in Korea was involved; thus, interviews were appropriate for this basic qualitative study because they aligned with the purpose of exploring the teachers' perceptions of phonics instructions. The participants had the opportunity to articulate a detailed response while being interviewed (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The semistructured interviews supported this basic qualitative study's purpose because they provided the teachers' experiences and explored their perceptions regarding phonics practices. Conversations were developed using the interview questions, and the interview protocol was guided to probe questions for deeper understanding (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I presented open-ended questions to the participants about phonics instruction used for EFL students. Answering these questions allowed them to share their opinions freely without limitations (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The collected data from the interviews were highly valuable due to the teachers' honest views about phonics instruction in their classes. While interviewing, I used the Korean language, which is the first language of the participants, so that they could freely express themselves without any language barrier. After the interviews, the recorded interviews were transcribed to be analyzed for the findings of the study. The interview began with an overview of the research for its goal and confidentiality. Then, I moved on to asking for verbal permission from the participants to record the interview using a digital device.

Each participant was interviewed for up to 1 hour. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, I used Zoom as a web conferencing tool to prevent the spread of infection. The interviews were recorded using the Zoom recording function. Upon completion of the interview, the recorded file was stored on my personal computer and securely encrypted with a password. Only I had access to the data. I did not affiliate in any way with the public elementary school system of Korea during the data collection period. This helped eliminate any bias that could hinder the research. Complying with the interview protocol also reduced the chances of bias and helped me conduct the research objectively (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Sufficiency of Data Collection

Purposeful sampling was used to obtain in-depth understanding from the semistructured interviews conducted with the participants. The semistructured interviews

provided the opportunity to gather the participants' experiences directly. Collecting qualitative data from these interviews involves strategies related to gathering information regarding experiences, perceptions, and opinions (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I interviewed eight participants, which was the sufficient quantity to ensure data saturation and to represent the description of the participants' responses in this doctoral project study. After collecting the interview data, I transcribed and organized them to be analyzed for the identified themes.

Processes for Data

Based on the RQ addressed in this study, I developed the interview questions. The semistructured interview questions were formulated by following the interview protocol defined by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The questions sufficiently explored teachers' phonics teaching experiences. According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), semistructured interviews are guided by a series of questions as well as requested specific data. While interviewing, I carefully listened to the participants' answers and obtained an in-depth understanding of their experiences, which might not have been captured by other qualitative instruments (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Systems for Keeping Track of Data

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, face-to-face interviews might have spread infection. Thus, Zoom, which is a web-conferencing tool, was used to collect interview data. The data were recorded using its embedded recorder function. Microsoft Word and *Clova Note*, which is artificial intelligent based transcription web, were also used to the

transcribe the data. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), transcripts are a summary of the participants' responses, which contain labels, codes, and notes.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher allowed me to collect the data; ask probing questions for gaining in-depth understanding about the participants' perceptions, beliefs, and challenges related to phonics instruction; and record the participants' teaching experiences. My opinions, perceptions, beliefs, and challenges did not be interjected into the interviews. I did not belong to the public elementary school sector during the data collection period; thus, I played a neutral role during the data collection. The data analysis began after the first interview.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research can provide detailed information about a phenomenon through interviews, discussions, conversations, and focus groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the process of qualitative research requires researchers to identify, record, and analyze themes through RQs. I collected interview data and conducted analysis to reveal the categories associated with the teachers' experiences of phonics instructions in an English language classroom. I examined and reviewed the interview transcripts thoroughly using inductive analysis to generate initial codes, and then I identified the themes, organizing codes into potential themes and gathering all relevant data. The identified themes were used to support answers to the RQ, in detail, regarding the teachers' experiences of phonics instruction. After identifying the themes, I color-coded the collected interview data to categorize the

associated meanings (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I identified specific descriptive codes related to the RQ. To extract answers, I converted the interview audio file into a written transcript saved as a password-protected document in Microsoft Word format. Interpretive codes were identified and categorized to examine the relation among the categories.

Evidence of Quality

The purpose of this project study was to explore third- and fourth-grade teachers' perceptions regarding phonics instruction. Qualitative research connects with the real world and is credible (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative data can be used to answer the questions addressing potential reasons behind the occurrence of a phenomenon (Rose & Johnson, 2020). To avoid researchers' subjectivity and bias and to obtain credibility, semi-structured interview questions were used. In addition, I used member checking to validate the accuracy and credibility of the findings. For conducting member checking, each participant was presented with the preliminary findings of the study. Each participant had the opportunity to review and comment on the preliminary findings. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), member checking is used to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings. Member checking is achieved when a researcher asks the participants to review the specific descriptions of the themes and provide feedback as to whether these themes are accurate.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant data are crucial to be addressed and identified as they may influence the study findings and lead to new RQs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To identify the

discrepant cases in this study, I carefully examined each interview transcript for information that might contradict with the themes of the participants (Rose & Johnson, 2020). The discrepant cases were not discovered in this study. Usually, discrepant cases are information that contradict or is different than the identified themes to address the RQs. If there are discrepant cases in a research, researchers should report evidence regarding the contradicting data of the research themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Through the reported information, the researchers can extend the validity of the research (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Data Analysis Results

The setting for this study was suburban public elementary schools in Korea. The problem of the study is that third and fourth grade elementary school students in English education in Korea were not systemically educated using phonics instruction. The purpose of this project study was to explore third- and fourth-grade teachers' perceptions regarding phonics instruction. The RQ was: What are teachers' experiences in teaching English language phonics to third and fourth graders? For this basic qualitative study, the participants were eight teachers who had experiences in teaching English phonics to third- or fourth-grade Korean elementary students, had over three years of experiences in teaching elementary students, and held national teacher certificates. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the framework of this study, represented a way to situate teacher experiences with phonics instruction within a constructivist approach to both language learning and instruction.

Based on the RQ, the data from interviews were generated, gathered, and recorded. I transcribed each interview in Korean into a Word document using *Clova Note*, which is an artificial intelligence transcription application in Korean. I started to analyze the data by reading each transcript to look for the key words and phrases and highlight them on the Word document. I placed highlighted words in a separate Word document. When I recognized the key words, I added them on the other Word document until themes emerged. Emerging themes were sorted, organized, and typed into Microsoft PowerPoint document to visualize the organization of the themes emerged.

The themes for each interview were derived as I read through each transcript. I used the same color to highlight related ideas, thoughts, or beliefs. I created a Word document labeled *analysis of interview data* and items of the same color were added to this document. I identified themes for the RQ through this process. Adjustments to the findings were made to reflect any comments made by the participants. After analyzing all data and member checking, I translated the interview transcriptions from Korean to English to address the RQ.

The interview questions addressed the RQ regarding the teachers' experiences of phonics instruction. The interview question number 3 and 4 were related to classroom phonics resources, and the interview question number 9 was about phonics education for Korean EFL students. The interview question number 5 was professional development for phonics instruction. The participants had various teaching years and teaching English years, which are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Teachers' Teaching English Experiences

Participants	Teaching years	Teaching English years
T1	20	7
T2	13	13
T3	30	10
T4	4	2
T5	18	12
T6	25	7
T7	4	4
T8	40	23

Themes and Descriptions

The research problem was that the third- and fourth-grade elementary students in English education in Korea were not systematically educated using phonics instruction. The purpose of this project study was to explore third- and fourth-grade teachers' perceptions regarding phonics instruction. I examined the interview transcripts regarding teachers' experiences in teaching English language phonics to the third and fourth graders. I chose the specific data to address the RQ. I found several types of themes during my data analysis. I organized the themes by major themes and the subthemes that support the major themes. After that, I looked for the relationship among the themes for the meaning to find out the teachers' vivid experiences of phonics instruction.

The responses of each participant were crucial because they gave a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences with teaching phonics. Based on the data analysis, four main themes emerged from the participants' responses including (a) English class focused on students' new language interests rather than phonics, (b) English

curriculum regarding phonics, (c) challenges of teaching phonics, and (d) lack of phonics training.

Theme 2, English curriculum regarding phonics, had three subthemes: (a) vocabulary and pronunciation instruction, (b) top-down approach, and (c) synthetic approach. Theme 3, challenges of teaching phonics, had three subthemes: (a) varying student levels of competency, (b) short period of teaching phonics, and (c) blended learning. The teacher participants' experiences were about the teachers understanding of the instructional approaches for phonics and the framework provided a way to situate teacher experiences within a constructivist approach to learning and instruction. The context of the specific responses for each theme was discussed below and summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes

#	Themes	Subthemes
1	English class focused on students' interest rather than phonics	
2	English curriculum regarding phonics	1) Vocabulary and pronunciation instruction 2) Top-down approach 3) Synthetic approach
3	Challenges of teaching phonics	1) Varying student levels of competency 2) Short period of teaching phonics 3) Blended learning
4	Lack of phonics training	

Theme 1: English Class Focused on Students' Interests Rather Than Phonics

Most participants answered that they were focusing on guiding third-grade students who were officially starting to learn English to have an interest in English. T8 said, “It is the role of public education to interest students who were not interested in English. I think the most important thing is to make students want to learn voluntarily, want to speak English, and want to read.” It was revealed that public education teachers did not focus on phonics instruction because they thought that the role of public education is to create an opportunity for letting students have an interest in English rather than the achievements related to decoding skills.

Most teachers mentioned that English class was not a phonics focused class because phonics and independent reading were not the achievement standard for third or fourth graders. The achievement standards for English subjects in the third and fourth grades are improving communicative skills centered on listening and speaking and reading and writing in alphabet and vocabulary units. The achievement standards for grades 5 and 6 are at a level in which listening and speaking are possible depending on the situation and reading and writing in sentence units are possible. Learning English from the basic in Grade 3 and 4 periods was tied to the learning contents in Grade 5 and 6. T6 said, “In the third and fourth-grade courses, students do not take phonics seriously, so even in fifth and sixth grades, I still think listening and speaking are easy, but I feel that reading and writing are difficult.” Two out of eight teachers have taught English to grades three to six for many years after confirming that students had difficulty reading and writing sentences in grades five and six because they could not read vocabulary

correctly. T3 mentioned, “Depending on the region, there are prominent difference of students’ English capacity.” T7 stressed that it was challenging to teach diverse leveled students in one class and one approach did not fit to all levels.

In addition, the participants mentioned that there was a marked difference in the ability to read correctly depending on the students’ private education level. T5 stated, “Among the students, those who received a lot of private tutoring are quite good at English. It's very different from those who don’t.” T8 referred,

> Because of the large difference in the level of students, when teaching phonics, it is difficult for both students who can read text well and students who can't read text to actively participate. Besides phonics, there are many other areas that need to be learned.

Accordingly, the participants answered that the biggest concern was how to effectively teach students who could and could not read in one class. T2 stated,

> When I see students who are confident in their English who have received a lot of tutoring in class, the rest of the students may feel frustrated, so I pay attention to the students’ feelings and try to make the students participate in language activities altogether.

Because the different levels of students could create a sense of incongruity among students, teachers taught the alphabet and conversation through various game activities so that they could feel interested in the language of English.

In sum, the RQ was as follows: What are teachers’ experiences in teaching English language phonics to third and fourth graders? This theme is one of the answers

about the RQ. Through the teachers' interviews, it can be confirmed that phonics is not taught systematically in English class. The reason is that elementary school students who are learning EFL for the first time need to learn so that they can feel interested in English. However, teaching English reading for accuracy can make teachers challenging because of the various student levels of competency in a class of over twenty students. In addition, reading accuracy is not included in the achievement standards for English subjects in 3rd and 4th grades, and this is because the teachers focus on letting students have an interest in learning English as a first foreign language.

Theme 2: English Curriculum Regarding Phonics

Most teachers did not directly teach phonics. However, the participants taught vocabulary while teaching pronunciation. One teacher taught phonics in a top-down approach and another teacher in a synthetic phonics approach.

Vocabulary and Pronunciation Instruction

It was found that six teachers who participated in the interview taught phonics with vocabulary and pronunciation instruction. T1 stated, "Teaching vocabulary session in the textbook, I taught the simple rules of vocabulary." The English textbook consists of a total of four lessons per unit. The first lesson was focused on explaining the rules of pronunciation while providing vocabulary guidance and listening to the pronunciation of native speakers' audio files. In the alphabet part of the 3rd grade, it was conducted as a curriculum to teach words starting with the alphabet together. T2 referred, "If the beginning consonant of the words is 'B', I focused on phonemic awareness and gave the students more words related to B."

Participants mentioned that direct instruction on phonics induced students to actively participate in class with songs or games because there was a significant difference in level between students. T8 answered, “The class focuses on the textbook, and when the vocabulary part comes out, I teach pronunciation by comparing similar pronunciations with minimal pairs or differences with Korean as the first language.” It was found that teachers showed the alphabet and phonetic song or chant video to familiarize themselves with the English text and showed the textbook PPT or photo materials. Participants also said that listening carefully to English sounds or dictation helps students learn pronunciation. Participants understood what phonics is that the ability to the relationship between spoken sounds and written letters, which are different graphemes compared to Korean language. Participants answered that the proportion of phonics instruction in textbooks was tiny and that students found it challenging to combine sounds by applying songs or chants. Meanwhile, T6 said,

> When learning songs and chants in a fun way and then moving on to combinations, students find it difficult to apply what they learn from songs or chants. I wonder if there is any learning effect other than making a song or chant fun or interesting.

It was confirmed that participants did not explicitly and directly evaluate phonics. Participants explained that there were no evaluation items regarding accurate decoding skills in the curriculum achievement goals of the 3rd and 4th graders. Participants said they assessed vocabulary by looking at pictures and writing down words or listening to and dictating words. The participants mostly used the test results to check students'

understanding. T7 said, “I intensively taught phonics in small groups after school, focusing on students classified as underachievers in the unit evaluation, and we were able to confirm that it helps the students to recover their self-confidence.” Teacher participants said that they tried to narrow the learning gap by guiding underachievers in small groups in after-school classes based on the diagnostic evaluation results.

Top-Down Approach

T5, who has taught English to Grades 3 to 6 for many years, said that she decided that it was necessary to increase the portion of teaching phonics to third and fourth graders because the achievement standard for Grades 5 and 6 was to be able to read and write sentences. T5 said,

> The phonics instruction was too vague, so the teaching sequence was arranged in a way to increase the accessibility and understanding of students while reading phonics-related books. With the flow of “goal – core – review,” I conducted phonics classes for 15 to 20 minutes every class. In the “goal stage”, the sounds of the alphabet were indicated, and the children were asked to read the words containing the sound of the alphabet. At this time, it was explained that the word selection provided the students with easy and familiar words as much as possible such as the names of animals, fruits, and food. In the “core stage”, the phonemes are combined using the corresponding pitch. The YouTube song video of “Flow Phonics” taught me the process of combining.”

She replied that this video series was composed of phonics content to combine and review phonemes and graphemes so that one could intensively practice one note. The

process of combining sounds in the brain was seen and understood step by step through video. In this stage, the class was conducted to focus as much as possible on the process of assembling. In the review stage, the sound of the alphabet was reviewed, and the sound combination process was repeated. By repeating the learning process and combining sounds, they made the sound and combination process their own. T5 did not refer to this approach as a top-down approach, but this approach corresponded to a top-down approach that proceeded in the order of learning and applying the rules. Although the proportion of phonics instruction has been increased in this way, she said that because there was no reading accuracy item in the achievement standards for the 3rd and 4th grades. She also referred that when taking the unit evaluation test, this part was not asked, but with the difficulty level. Based on the diagnostic evaluation results, the underachievers had to fill the gap between learners through small group classes after school. It was confirmed that the students could build confidence in reading through how actively they participated in class.

Synthetic Approach

A synthetic approach combines the top-down approach and the bottom-up approach. T2 did not refer the term, “a synthetic approach,” but this is the synthetic approach of phonics instruction. T2 revealed that both words to be read and sight words should be learned by applying the phonetic combination rules. T2 taught phonics through game activities to minimize the burden on the students. Students could learn sight words by making word cards and practicing them at home and in the class by playing games for accurately reading texts. In the game of learning combinations by applying the phonics

rules, teams played a game of listening to the sound and writing the words. Students who were unfamiliar with combinations in the team participated in the game by writing words with the help of peers. To help students memorize the rules of combination better, the rules learned in the last lesson were repeated as quiz game problems so that more and more rules were understood and remembered. It was confirmed that students' confidence in independent reading increased significantly, and by the end of the semester, more and more students thought they could read on their own even if they could not read accurately. T2 explained that she spent 20 to 25 minutes playing sight words and pronunciation combination games and teaching textbook contents the rest of the time. T2 said,

> To get the correct answer in the phonics game, students who can already read have an opportunity to practice more because they need to be able to read English words accurately, but it was really difficult to get students who could not read to participate in the game after being able to read. I am always worried about how to teach the level difference between students effectively.

It was explained that there was no direct evaluation of phonics learning, and no questions were asked to confirm what was learned in phonics in the unit evaluation with the 3rd and 4th-grade achievement standards.

Theme 3: Challenges of Teaching phonics

Varying Student Levels of Competency

The teacher participants said that the biggest concern was how to effectively teach phonics to students of different levels in a class of 25 to 28 students. In class, it was

difficult to teach the parts that each student lacked or did not understand because they had to guide the students in large groups. Only a small number of students receiving private education were good at English, and most students answered that they were concerned about how to improve their skills. T1 said,

> If I teach the combination in class, the students who are good at English felt too boring, and the students who are not good at it lost interest easily, making it difficult to proceed with the class. Students' various levels in decoding skills are challenging to teach phonics.

T7 emphasized that it was challenging for an English teacher to check the level of private tutoring of students and to teach English. T8 stated that she could not check students' private tutoring because it was inaccurate when asking students and because the survey was often misleading to parents.

Short Period of Teaching Phonics

The third and fourth graders received 40 minutes of English twice a week. Most participants answered that conducting textbook progress and phonics instruction simultaneously during the limited time was literally impossible. T2 stated,

> Although I had to allot the time to teach phonics in every class, it was not easy to teach it because I had to cover the textbook contents. So, the short period of teaching phonics made me difficult to teach phonics.

T5 stressed,

> One lesson in the English textbook consists of vocabulary, conversation, writing, and related game activities. I cover a lesson in four sessions. When teaching

> vocabulary in the first session, I cover the phonics, but other sessions are not available because of short period of time.

Teacher participants also said that phonics required repeated reading training, and providing sufficient reading training with 40-minute lessons twice a week was challenging.

Blended Learning

Participants said it was not easy to give feedback after the COVID-19 pandemic, as it was limited to checking group activities or students taking notes online. T8 said, "After the COVID-19 pandemic, it is difficult to determine that students have difficulty in English, making it difficult to give feedback." Because the varying levels of students were significant, teachers would lead the class toward enjoying English and learning even a few expressions in words rather than checking what they knew. Participants answered that the phonics class was conducted as activities in which students could access online English games and watch YouTube videos. Rather than focusing on the students' perception of phonemes, it was conducted in a way that they had fun while playing the game. Participants said that teachers did many activities in groups before the COVID-19 pandemic. It was noted that participants had experienced various trials and errors in finding effective English teaching-learning methods even in the blended learning environment.

Theme 4: Lack of Phonics Training

Participants said the MOE and the school district had not offered or provided any phonics teacher training. T4 mentioned,

> In Korea, the professional development trainings are requirement for the public school teachers who need to achieve the minimum scores in teacher training each year. The teacher training institutions accredited by the Ministry of Education or school district may award teacher training scores.

According to T6,

> Teachers are free to take teacher training individually, but there are various training programs at institutions that provide training scores, and the reality is that the programs dealing with phonics are very limited in private education institutions. So far, there is no training program focused on phonics by the Ministry of Education or school district.

The participants, who felt it was not enough to teach phonics to their students, said that they studied and taught on their own through YouTube, books, and websites. T8, who have attended 200 hours of teacher training annually, said,

> I participate in professional development a lot. I mainly take professional development related to hands-on activities, but there is no professional development related to phonics in the Ministry of Education. Several years ago, I took a professional development in private educational institutions that provided a brief phonics instruction as part of the training course.

The participants said there was a need for training to learn basic knowledge related to phonics instruction and to emphasize and consider when teaching phonics. Participants said they wanted to take systematic professional development to learn phonics teaching methods. They also emphasized that teachers need to learn how to teach

decoding skills in a short time and how to make the students interested in reading English texts. T3 said, “Many teachers need phonics training focused on third and fourth graders who are new to English.” In addition, the participants said that they would like to take professional development on how to teach phonics to underachievers effectively and how to make a connection between online and offline. Participants also said teachers would like to learn about fun activities linking home and school to teach students to read.

Participants emphasized that they wanted to learn effective phonics teaching methods for each level of learners through professional development. T2 said,

> The third and fourth graders are very interested in English. There is a large difference in the level of students depending on the level of private education, so support from the school or the Ministry of Education office is needed to deal with the students' various levels.

T3 said that it was essential for teachers to manage the varying students’ levels because it was questionable how much game-oriented activities improved students’ English proficiency and reading accuracy. Participants mentioned the need to learn how to evaluate phonics competence indirectly and to diagnose and guide struggling learners.

Findings and Discussion

Throughout the interviews, participants expressed and shared their own experiences of phonics instruction for third and fourth graders. Teaching phonics in the public elementary school context, English curriculum regarding phonics, challenges of teaching phonics, and lack of phonics training are reflected to the teachers’ perspectives of phonics domain. The findings of this study align with the framework of Vygotsky’s

sociocultural theory of constructivism, which has been influential in the development of instrumental models of basic English literacy and English language acquisition for EFL learners.

Phonics instruction mirrors Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of constructivism, which stressed language learning occurs through their interaction with the peers and adults in the learning environment. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of constructivism also emphasized that language must be learned within a sociocultural context, and that it is learned from knowledgeable peers and adults. However, based on the analysis of interviews, most teachers teach vocabulary with some pronunciation rules rather than teaching phonics directly. This teacher-centered instruction is difficult to see as a teaching method considering the sociocultural context. When teaching phonics, teachers need to continue training the students to understand and apply the rules of phonics in a sociocultural context considering ZPD.

In cognitive development, culture and community play a crucial and meaningful role. Teachers instruct within the students' ZPD and according to students' specific needs. In this zone, teachers create learning experiences for the learners by carefully selecting and introducing a text, supporting and interacting with the learners during reading instruction, and teaching with clarity after the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2021). Teachers teach students phonics to reflect and understand the text and use it as a way to learn more about reading.

The purpose of this project study is to explore third- and fourth-grade teachers' perceptions regarding phonics instruction. I investigated the experiences and challenges

of public elementary teachers who have taught phonics to third and fourth graders in Korea and found the answers about the RQ. The RQ showed a way to examine the instructional process of construction. The teachers' experiences and challenges were the answers about the RQ and the answers were related to constructing an effective ZPD and scaffolding strategies for phonics instruction.

Summary

The local problem was that third and fourth grade elementary students in English education in Korea were not systematically educated using phonics instruction. The purpose of this project study was to explore third- and fourth-grade teachers' perceptions regarding phonics instruction. To investigate this problem, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of constructivism was a lens as the framework of this study and provided a way to situate teacher experiences about phonics instruction within a constructivist approach. In this basic qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight public elementary school teachers who had experiences of teaching English phonics to third and fourth graders, had over three years of experience in teaching at an elementary school, and held national teacher certificates for each target school. After IRB approval, I emailed a copy of the consent to the elementary schools due to the COVID-19 constraints, and the potential participants emailed me to participant in this study. I protected participants' rights including confidentiality as well as built a positive rapport with them. Semi-structured interviews were guided by requested specific data for understanding of the EFL teachers' phonics experiences. I used Zoom and an embedded recording function to keep track of data. After collecting data, I transcribed the interview

data analyzed by inductive analysis to identify common themes of this study. To validate the accuracy and credibility, member checking was used and to identify discrepant cases, I examined each interview transcript thoroughly.

This basic qualitative study aimed to explore public elementary school teachers' experiences in teaching phonics. To investigate this, I conducted a semi-structured interview based on a RQ: What are teachers' experiences in teaching English language phonics to 3rd and 4th graders? Through the interviews, teachers mentioned (a) teaching phonics in the public elementary school context, (b) English curriculum regarding phonics, (c) challenges of teaching phonics, and (d) lack of phonics training. Students were evaluated based on the 'Learning Achievement Standard.' Since there was no item on whether students could read English texts in the Learning Achievement Standard, the teachers focused on activities that allowed students to be interested in learning English while minimizing situations that could cause frustration due to differences in students' various levels. Given this context, the third and fourth graders needed approaches for reducing the individual gaps to read English accurately in consideration of the learner's interest and active participation rather than intensive phonics learning. To acquire these teaching skills, teachers wanted to train phonics instruction, learn theories regarding phonics, and learn how to cope wisely with various students' levels of competency. These research findings clearly showed how teachers have been teaching phonics in the English classroom, what difficulties they have had, and what kind of support teachers have needed in relation to phonics instruction through the vivid experiences of teachers. This study findings will have influences on English teachers' phonics instruction, design

of professional development, and school district stakeholders. The study findings may contribute to social change by providing educational insights from teacher participants' phonics instruction experiences. Moreover, the teacher training will present specific strategies that teachers can implement phonics in the classroom.

Section 3 provides specific details of the professional development project. I describe the rationale, literature review, project evaluation and implications for social change at the local level.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the experiences of the teachers' phonics instruction in Korean public elementary schools. This doctoral project was created based on this study's data, the needs of Korean public elementary school teachers, and recent literature. Four themes emerged from the data gathered from the public-school teachers who had experiences in phonics instruction. With the findings of this study, I created a professional development training to provide the opportunities to teach phonics effectively to Korean EFL students. The professional development training includes 3 days of phonics instructional practices.

This project was based on the data analysis from participants who shared experiences, instructional practices, and perceptions of phonics. In Section 3, the project's rationale and previous studies in support of this project are specified. The literature review focuses on professional development training and suggested teacher training for phonics, including suggested deliverables for expected outcomes. Section 3 also provides the project's description, goals, a plan of evaluation of the training, and implications.

Rationale

Based on the findings of the study, the project genre I chose was professional development training. Professional development training was the most applicable genre for the current study and the findings. Participants indicated an overwhelming need for professional development training to provide strategies to educate phonics in EFL

settings. The findings from this study aligned with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of constructivism. The results of this study revealed that lack of phonics training, Theme 4, and public elementary school teachers wanted professional development training for phonics instruction. Also, the reality that it was impossible to focus on phonics due to the short English class time and various student levels, which are related to Theme 1, 2, and 3, was reflected on the teachers' needs regarding the training. The findings also indicated that most teacher participants did not focus on teaching phonics because there were no evaluation items related to reading accuracy in the Learning Achievement Standards of the third and fourth graders. The goals of the proposed professional development training will focus on providing an overview of phonics instruction, planning instruction for phonics, and implementing appropriate strategies for phonics for third and fourth graders. It was expected that teachers who taught English phonics would benefit from professional development training that was designed to increase their knowledge and pedagogy in delivering instruction for phonics.

The main goal of this project is to provide knowledge about phonics instruction, instructional modeling, and practices. Most participants wanted to participate in professional development training for phonics instruction to build up teaching phonics skills and manage the various leveled students and allotted class time. It was important that the participants' perceptions were reflected and highlighted in this project. Throughout the interviews, participants expressed interest in receiving professional development training for phonics instruction. In this project, the best practices for phonics may be identified. After this teacher training, participants may understand the

knowledge of phonics instruction and the best practices for the EFL elementary students' early literacy competence.

Teacher training includes learning opportunities that address specific topics for individuals to improve performance or transform thinking (La Velle et al., 2020). Institutions of education have used professional development training to improve curriculum, update instructional practices, or address assessment issues (Li et al., 2021). Participants of this study expressed their awareness of the significance of phonics learning for the third and fourth graders and the need for learning phonics instruction. This professional development training aims to provide opportunities to learn and train teachers for phonics instruction. Also, a 3-day professional development training can be beneficial to teachers who want to teach phonics effectively. Three days are enough to learn and train phonics instruction tailored to Korean EFL students because teacher-centered professional learning community (PLC) will be run as a follow-up session throughout each semester. The opportunities of professional development training and the PLC are for teacher collaboration to maintain the teacher participants' enthusiasm toward phonics instruction.

Review of the Literature

Professional development training tailored for teachers' needs contributes to effective onsite teaching and learning. In the education setting, the purpose of professional development training is to improve instructional practices and introduce a new curriculum (Fischer et al., 2018). This literature review includes what professional development training is and professional development for phonics instruction and for

EFL teachers' phonics instruction. The strategy for identifying appropriate academic journals regarding professional development training involved searching peer-reviewed journal articles written in the last 5 years. The keywords used for locating the relevant papers included *professional development, teacher training, teacher efficacy, professional development training for phonics instruction, EFL*, and *ESL*. These papers indicated three main themes from the collected data: (a) professional development, (b) professional development training for phonics, and (c) professional development training for EFL teachers' phonics instruction. The databases used in the search included ERIC, SAGE, ProQuest Central, Education Research Complete, Academic Search Premier, Research Information Sharing Service, Korean-studies Information Service System, Korea Association of Teaching English, Society of Teaching English through Media, Korea Association of Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning, and Primary English Education.

Professional Development

Teacher training is an influential strategy to improve student achievement (Asrial et al., 2019; Cheng et al., 2019; Dewaele, 2019; Goddard & Kim, 2018; Johnson & Golombek, 2020; Mahmood, 2021). Through teacher training, teachers can develop professionalism in education and increase teacher efficacy (Goddard & Kim, 2018). According to Asrial et al. (2019), teacher expertise is related to educational knowledge, teaching skills, understanding of goals, understanding of learners, and classroom management. Teaching skills are related to how to teach and are related to teaching methods, techniques, teaching activities, materials, and tools (Mahmood, 2021). What to

teach is related to teaching knowledge such as subject knowledge, knowledge of learners, and knowledge of society, and culture (Johnson & Golombek, 2020). According to Dewaele (2019), attitude toward the teachers' internal dynamics of themselves and these factors connect to their external performance and behavior. From the perspective of teacher education, the awareness that triggered understanding, interest, or attention to teaching knowledge, skills, and attitudes constitutes the professionalism of teachers (Dewaele, 2019).

Effects of Teacher Training

Traditional teacher training has been believed to enhance professionalism and engaged learning through individual training (Baptiste, 2019; Tantawy, 2020; Wasserman & Migdal, 2019). In traditional teacher education, teachers' performance is emphasized. Professional development in recent years has been changed in a direction that improves teachers' professionalism and positively affects students' academic achievement through teacher collaboration and the PLC within a sociocultural context. Tantawy (2020) interviewed English language teachers and found that teacher training represented how much improvement there was in classroom management, knowledge of specific educational content, and teachers' thinking about themselves. It was also found that novice teachers and experienced teachers improved teachers' subject expertise through teacher training and had a direct impact on students' academic achievement and academic performance (Baptiste, 2019).

Teacher training considering a sociocultural context was found to influence teachers' affective domains as well (Clark & Newberry, 2019; García-Martínez et al.,

2021; Hargreaves, 2019; Parkhouse & Massaro, 2019). Teacher training can increase teachers' self-efficacy and confidence (Clark & Newberry, 2019). Hargreaves (2019) uncovered that teacher collaboration in teacher training contributed to creating substantial benefits in teaching and learning. Especially in teacher training, a collaborative teaching environment enables teachers to better overcome difficulties and frustrations (García-Martínez, 2021). Furthermore, professional development training promoted teacher motivation and contributed to creating new ideas and experiences that have a positive impact on students' academic performance (Parkhouse & Massaro, 2019).

Professional Development for Phonics

In teacher training for phonics instruction, it is necessary to learn basic knowledge of the five pillars of reading, which refer to the basic skills of reading and to the elements applied when reading consciously or unconsciously (Chen et al., 2022; Phillips et al., 2018; Zhong & Kang, 2021). The five pillars of reading are phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Based on the five pillars of reading, different approaches for phonics instruction should be learned such as top-down and bottom-up approaches, interactive reading process, synthetic phonics, and phonics screening check (Chen et al., 2022). In teacher training, teachers learned what strategies and methods to develop decoding skills (Zhong & Kang, 2021). As a result of analyzing the interview results of teachers, this project was tailored based on the high demand for teacher training on phonics instruction. This training will cover the five pillars of reading and include how to deal with various leveled students for effective phonics lessons and how to teach phonics effectively in the short period of time.

Professional Development for Phonics Instruction for EFL Students

Ten factors that make up the competence of language teachers are content knowledge, language proficiency factor, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, learner-focused teaching, language teacher's identity, pedagogical reasoning skills, theorizing from practice, teacher community activities, and self-awareness of language teacher competence (Kim et al., 2019; Sulistiyo et al., 2019). These 10 factors influence the competence and performance of language teachers. Kim et al. (2019) revealed that among the components of English teacher expertise, teaching skills were the most important to Korean elementary school English teachers, and the skills influence on elementary learners. A teacher's skillful professionalism could bring positive changes in the students' affective domain (Kim et al., 2019). Therefore, teacher training is needed to expand and support to improve teacher expertise while increasing teaching skills.

To develop the expertise of English teachers in phonics class for EFL learners, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of EFL learners as well as teacher knowledge of phonics and literacy. Because English is used as a foreign language, the limited circumstances in which English is not used outside the classroom must be considered (Davis et al., 2018; Loewen & Sato, 2018; Rao, 2019). In ESL, it is possible to acquire a foreign language naturally by using English outside the classroom, but there is limited opportunity to encounter a foreign language in the EFL environment (Rao, 2019). The strategies regarding the second language acquisition are divided into learning strategies and communication strategies (Davis et al., 2018). The learning strategy is used as a means of internalizing a new language for the purpose of learning, and the latter is used

for meaning negotiation for communication (Davis et al., 2018). These restrictive EFL environmental factors can significantly limit the learning of phonics, which requires a lot of use of cognitive and memory strategies among learning strategies (Loewen & Sato, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to use social and reward strategies together for effective learning of phonics for elementary learners (Loewen & Sato, 2018).

Project Description

This project is a 3-day professional development training is created based on my study findings and the literature reviews. This training allows elementary school teachers to learn and be trained phonics instruction and how to promote interaction for learner engagement considering various student levels. The first goal of this training is to provide knowledge about phonics instruction, instructional modeling, and practical practices. The second goal is to build up facilitating interaction skills for student engagement and manage the various leveled students and allotted class time. The target audience is the elementary school teachers who want to teach phonics to third and fourth graders.

Through this training, teachers can learn the appropriate teaching method for Korean third and fourth graders who start to learn EFL by experiencing phonics instruction and discussing various challenges that may occur in teaching phonics with teacher colleagues. The learning outcomes of this professional development training are teacher participants can understand (a) the knowledge of phonics instruction, (b) the best practices for the EFL elementary students' early literacy competence, and (c) how to facilitate the EFL students who have various levels. A 3-day professional development training is designed as a video-conference format for the teachers' convenient and safe

from COVID-19 infection. After this training, I will suggest activating the online PLC for teachers to develop phonics teaching methods for continuous growth after training. Participants in this study expressed their needs for ways to improve learner engagement by considering teacher training for phonics instruction and various learner levels. Based on these needs, this professional development training was designed. This training will provide the knowledge and various approaches regarding phonics for Korean elementary school teachers. Also, the professional development training may be practical and substantial helps in creating game activities and teaching-learning materials that enhance learner engagement. For successful professional development, the following items are required: Zoom, note, and cellphone. Participants in the teacher training will receive a virtual link for formative evaluation after each session. Google survey will be used because the participants are able to receive their own response and keep watching their development. Various activities to enhance learner engagement will take place during each session and be discussed with teachers.

Day 1: Why, What and How to Teach Phonics

On Day 1, teacher participants will learn why they should teach phonics, what advantages students will have through learning phonics, and discover why phonics instruction is not easy in the current English class. This doctoral study and previous research will be shared with the participants in teacher training and will provide an opportunity to think about the difficulties teachers may face in English classes and why phonics classes are challenging. Participants will also learn what to teach, including the five pillars of reading and how to teach phonics by viewing the PowerPoint material.

Participants will learn how to effectively teach the English alphabet, phonological awareness, and phonics through game activities.

Day 2: What and How to Teach Phonics

On Day 2, participants will review the Day 1 session, such as the five pillars of reading and how and why to teach phonics. Three participants in a group will have experiences of game activities for reviewing Day 1 and discussing expected effects and anticipated difficulties to teach the graphemes and phonemes in the previous session. They will learn what and how to teach short and long vowel combinations, sight words, and schwa sounds through various game activities in small groups by changing roles such as teacher, student, and observer roles. Afterward, all participants will discuss the expected effects and difficulties about phonics game activities for teachers and students.

Day 3: How to Engage Students for Learning Phonics

On Day 3, the participants will review Day 2 and learn how to teach the rules of r-controlled vowels, semivowels, silent or irregular pronunciation, and schwa sounds through various game activities. After experiencing game activities in small groups, the teacher participants will discuss the expected effects and difficulties. In addition, the teachers will learn what gamification is and how gamification strategies can be used to accelerate independent reading and decoding skills. They will also learn how to manage the various leveled students in a class using gamification and how to teach phonics using AI *PengTalk*, an artificial intelligence English chatbot codeveloped by EBS, a Korean public education broadcaster, and the MOE and gamified learning management system called *Class123* for student engagement. Teachers will learn about gamification, using AI

PengTalk to make a link between home and school to learn English and create a game-like learning environment. They will learn how gamification strategies can be used to accelerate English reading independent reading. Gamification means creating game-like experiences by applying game mechanics or elements to the nongame context and the purpose of using gamification is to catalyst active participation with enjoyment (Choi & Choi, 2021). Gamification in education has the advantage of enhancing students' self - efficacy, confidence and self-determination with increased engagement and enjoyment in the learning process (Choi, 2021; Choi & Bang, 2021). Time limit and game-like learning environment may be beneficial to the third and fourth graders. They can also learn how to apply gamification to design a blended learning class that runs both online and offline. They may learn and discuss various approaches to seek positive changes in learners' learning achievement and affective domains. In this session, the PLC will be guided to boost the teachers' learning and enthusiasm toward phonics instruction. The online PLC will be one semester following the professional development training.

Potential Professional Development Training Limitations and Solutions

This professional development training does have a few limitations. One potential limitation is budget issues for the training in the school district. To solve the budget issues, I will explain the needs of English teachers fully to the local school district called the *Office of Education* and English academic associations, which have been in charge of English teacher training. I will state the expected effects after the training and follow-up PLC to school officials so funding may be offered. Another potential limitation of this training will be conducted online due to the pandemic. Some of the teacher participants

may want to participate in face-to-face training. To solve this issue, hybrid training may be offered to small number of teachers. I also plan to appeal to the school district, academic associations, and school officials to the fact that online professional development training is beneficial to the English teachers to participate easily and conveniently.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Researcher

This study is conducted as part of doctoral project research at Walden University, and professional development training was designed based on the findings from this study. Teachers or stakeholders who are curious about the results of this study can request it by email, and I will share it. As a researcher, I play a role in designing, conducting, and evaluating professional development training. I have taught phonics to K-G7 Korean EFL students for 17 years in the private education sector. I hold certificates regarding English phonics specialist, literacy program specialist, teaching interactive reading and writing specialist, reading specialist, and three TESOL certificates. I also have experiences of training public school English teachers and English instructors to English education. In addition, this professional development training deals with gamification teaching and learning design to boost learners' active participation. Gamification in teaching and learning is my area of expertise. I have taught gamified design in education courses at universities and graduate schools, Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), and professional development training for elementary, middle, and high school teachers.

The Project Facilitator

I will also play a role as the project facilitator to make this professional development training go smoothly. I will facilitate the professional development training, engage in discussions with the teachers, and address any questions via Zoom individual chatting feature to encourage active participation. Also, I will record the Zoom professional development training sessions and use the Google survey evaluations to monitor the quality of the training. To this end, I will record the professional development training with Zoom's embedded recording function and try to improve the quality of the training by monitoring it.

Public Elementary School Teachers

Teachers may learn effective phonics fundamental knowledge, teaching approaches and integrated phonics into the classroom via gamification for increasing student engagement and active participation. This teacher training is designed based on the teachers' phonics instruction experiences and needs of teacher training for effective phonics instruction in a short time period dealing with various student levels. While experiencing game activities with teacher colleagues, the teachers will discuss and reflect on various situations that may occur in the classroom.

Project Evaluation Plan

The purpose of this teacher training project was designed for teachers to learn practical phonics teaching approaches for elementary school students in Korea. This professional development training is tailored based on teachers' needs to learn how to teach phonics in limited time and manage the varying leveled students. Teachers' active

participation is the core in this teacher training. Teachers' evaluation of this teacher training will be conducted through formative and summative evaluation. At the end of each session, teachers will be assessed on the session and their activities. Formative assessment will be used to ensure that teachers' expertise in teaching phonics has been developed, to improve the teaching-learning process, and to identify changes in their activities for phonics instruction. To facilitate continuous self-evaluation of phonics instruction, formative assessments will be conducted by answering online Google surveys at the end of each session. Teachers can receive answers to their email in the Google survey so that they can diagnose themselves. The summative evaluation consists of a 10-point scale to indicate how much their phonics instruction has improved through the teacher training. The summative evaluation will be given before providing feedback on how the phonics instruction has affected the students. These formative and summative assessments aim to ensure that teachers have developed professional development training regarding phonics instruction. The teachers' responses obtained through the professional development training will be analyzed and reflected in program improvement to provide more practical and valuable teacher training.

Project Implications

This professional development training was designed and created based on my study findings. The purpose of this teacher training is to support phonics classroom instruction for third- and fourth graders in EFL settings. One of the goals of this training are to provide knowledge about phonics instruction, instructional modeling, and practical practices. Another goal is to build up teachers' interaction skills for student engagement

via gamification and manage the various leveled students and allotted class time. This professional development training may support social change in the local community by sharing the teachers' experiences, benefits, implications, and importance of the training, which will be posted on various SNS platforms and teacher communities. Also, the teachers' feedback may influence on the local community as well as larger context in Korea.

Social Change in Local Community

This professional development training may support teachers to know how to teach phonics dealing with various student levels in EFL setting. This professional development training is planned based on my study findings and the teacher participants may understand how important teaching phonics to Korean elementary students through the training. After the professional development training for phonics instruction, participants may be able to understand what phonics is, why it should be taught, what to teach, and how to teach it. Also, through this teacher training, there will be suggestions to teach phonics effectively with students' active participation. The methods the teachers learned through this professional development training may be a practical help to students who have difficulty reading independently in English. The students also may be able to lay the foundation for learning English confidently when the students enter 5th or 6th grade. This professional development training will help with meeting the needs of teaching different leveled students in one classroom and a diverse classroom. The trials and efforts of the teachers will contribute to raising the foreign language proficiency level of the students in the local to the next level and will significantly help the students to

have global leadership and citizenship. After the training, the participants may want to improve their phonics instruction, so the PLC as a follow-up session will be provided throughout one semester.

Importance of Project in Larger Context

The findings of this study will be communicated to teachers in other regions who want to teach phonics effectively. Through this phonics professional development, English teachers can create a learning community, explore new teaching methods, strengthen the teacher community, and play a role in solidarity with each other. These teachers' attempts may have a positive impact beyond the region and help elementary and middle school students who could not read English texts on their own. The teacher training may contribute to strengthening the teacher community for suitable phonics instruction for elementary and middle school students while continuously communicating with the teachers who participated in this teacher training and playing a meaningful role in exploring and sharing new teaching methods. Especially, online follow-up PLC will be offered for the teachers' professional enrichment and maintaining their enthusiasm for the effective phonics instruction.

Summary

The purpose of the professional development training is for Korean elementary school teachers to learn and experience how to effectively teach English phonics and various approaches that may lead to student engagement, dealing with different student levels in one classroom. The professional development training is designed based on the study findings may assist the teachers who want to learn the fundamental phonics

knowledge and game-like activities. After the training, the online PLC as follow-up sessions may support the teachers developing effective teaching methods for continuous growth. The professional development training may make a substantial contribution to the Korean elementary school students' independent reading by practical teacher training and follow-up PLC.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this project study was to explore third and fourth grade teachers' experiences regarding phonics instruction. The results of the study showed that most public elementary school teachers perceived teaching phonics as vocabulary and pronunciation instruction rather than phonics instruction. With the findings of this study, I created a professional development training to provide the knowledge of phonics instruction and how to teach phonics through game activities and gamification. Section 4 describes the strengths and limitations of the project, recommendations, details on the importance of the work, reflections on developing the project, being a scholar and leader, considerations of project implication, applications, and directions for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

The strength of this project is that teachers who will participate in this teacher training may immediately implement phonics instruction in English class after 3 days of training. This teacher training program is designed to be practical and, above all, it has the advantage of teaching the entire phonics process through the phonics games in the aspects of student engagement (Warren & Ward, 2019). After the training, the teachers may have the knowledge and to implement phonics instruction. As a follow-up session, an online PLC will be conducted, and I will facilitate the PLC. The community may contribute to vitalize the teachers' enthusiasm about effective phonics instruction and

improve their profession about teaching phonics to Korean EFL students. At the same time, gamification applying phonics instruction may be beneficial to the elementary school third and fourth graders who start to learn English for the first time and may build up confidence and self-efficacy about independent reading. One of the strengths of this teacher training project is that it allows teachers to experience gamification during the training period to confirm the positive effects on internalizing the knowledge of phonics instruction. The teachers may use the knowledge and experiences learned from the professional development training to apply gamification to teach phonics in their classroom.

Limitations

The limitation of this project is that it is expected that face-to-face teacher training will be difficult due to COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is being planned as the online teacher training program in the current Korean education environment. Considering that the actual classes are conducted offline, it is expected that this will be a little limiting for teacher training that uses a sense of realism. It is possible that the participating teachers may not prefer to use the game activities for phonics instruction or feel challenging when implementing game activities. There will be also alternative activities that may be easily adapted to the game environment. Because various game activities are introduced in elementary English textbooks, it is expected that teachers' understanding of game activities will not be a significant limitation.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

This professional development training is a video-conference format, which will be convenient for the teachers. As an alternative approach, I considered a hybrid-format whereby some of the training would be available face to face. Considering the nature of this training for phonics instruction, the teachers who attend the training may benefit from face-to-face interaction. Also, applying gamification strategies to the actual classroom environment may help to the teacher participants. The other alternative approach is curriculum development regarding phonological awareness and phonics. If teachers know the curriculum for teaching phonics, this knowledge may also positively affect teaching methods related to phonics. Teacher training is the best approach because it is realistic and allows teachers to feel the various concerns that may arise in the classroom through experience and discussion. The alternative approach is curriculum development regarding phonological awareness and phonics parts for supporting teachers' phonics instruction.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

Through this doctoral project, as a scholar and practitioner, I planned a project to solve local problems based on the meaningful findings derived from the research results and selected a teacher training project from among various genres. Through the teacher training project, teachers can learn hands-on activities that can be applied immediately in the classroom and learn and get various inspirations. Such teacher training is expected to be of practical help as teachers evaluate themselves and training programs. In this

doctoral project, I was able to discover what the local problem was through literature review and communication with teachers during interviews. Teachers' experiences shared during the interviews related to teaching phonics link to practical teacher training programs as their needs. As an educator, I was able to have keen awareness for discovering the educational challenges and problems in the educational actual field more closely. This doctoral project experiences have made me grow more and more not only as a scholar but also as a practitioner. My experience as a researcher is necessary for cultivating the leadership required as an educator. Promoting meaningful growth of learners by developing various teaching methods and creating a better educational environment while conducting a project to solve problems in the educational field based on research can contribute to positive social change.

Project Development

This professional development training project is about phonics instruction. Based on the results of my qualitative research, I realized that third and fourth grade teachers have challenges regarding phonics instruction because of various student levels of competency in a classroom and the short period of teaching phonics in the public education sector. Phonics needs to be learned by middle school students as well as elementary school students who need independence in reading English. Phonics can be difficult for EFL students who are just starting to learn English. As phonics is an area that requires continuous training of pronunciation rules by cumulative repetition while reading various texts, it is necessary to apply the activities to the students who will find it interesting. The teachers may recognize the phonics instruction presented in the

professional development training when their students decode words and read accurately in the classroom. The gamification strategy introduced in this professional development training allows learners to learn phonics with fun like playing games. The importance of this study is that the teacher training program was designed to encourage students' voluntary and active participation to enable successful phonics learning. The process of designing the professional development training facilitated my scholar and practitioner's potential.

Leadership and Change

Through this doctoral project, I identified problems in the field of public elementary education and planned a teacher training project to solve the problem that third and fourth grade elementary students in English education in Korea are not systematically educated using phonics instruction. The process of doctoral project study made me realize the need for leadership as a scholar and practitioner. Thanks to the experiences of developing my doctoral project, I cultivated leadership and learned a mindset as a scholar and practitioner as well. This experiences of collecting and analyzing the data assisted me cultivate leadership to persuade teachers what, why, and how to teach phonics based on the research as a solution for the local problem. I believe that continuous experiences from research and professional development training will be a precious contribution to positive changes in the academic and educational fields. At the same time, I am sure these initiatives can make a meaningful contribution to change in the local community and a larger society, including an international context.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

My doctoral project study results are essential to the various levels such as students, teachers, elementary schools, school districts, and English education in EFL settings. This study findings can contribute to the design of an efficient English phonics curriculum, scaffolding techniques, independent reading, and dealing with various students' levels in a class. Also, the study findings may positively affect the students' phonics learning in the short, medium, and long term. In particular, the importance of this study findings was emphasized for calling attention to the teachers who may not recognize the significance of phonics instruction in current English education in Korea.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Through this doctoral project, my personal academic inquiry and interview skills, data analysis ability, and the ability to write in academic expression were very important processes for my growth as a scholar. I discovered what the local problem was through literature research and communication with teachers and was able to confirm the vivid voices of the field while conducting teacher interviews based on this. Teachers explored experiences related to teaching phonics and planned practical teacher training program based on the findings of this study. As an educator, I could find the local problems in the actual educational field and try solving the problems via planning professional development. The findings were applied to the theoretical framework, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of constructivism. Also, as a practitioner who teaches English in the private education field, I focused on solving realistic problems by planning and trying various activities that can be used in the field. These abilities and attempts are a huge

growth for me personally, and I think that this experience will be able to develop various teaching methods that can be tried by combining them not only in Korea but also in countries where English is being taught as a second language.

Based on the findings in this study, future research should be conducted to confirm the importance and effects of phonics instruction in the EFL environment. Future research should be able to investigate the current state of phonics education in a larger area than the current research site and gain a deep insight into the difficulties and challenges faced by teachers. When one teacher teaches more than 20 students in a class, reading accuracy and decoding skills need to be scrutinized to see what teaching methods work, what effective game activities, and what kind of Edu-tech help is needed. Moreover, it is necessary to understand the difficulties students face when learning phonics. It can be easier to achieve the student's academic success considering the students' learning styles and preferences. Also, discovering what effective learning methods is necessary to apply the outcomes in large groups and areas.

In future research, the outcomes and teachers' satisfaction with the professional development training are needed to compare face-to-face, online, and hybrid. Moreover, it is necessary to investigate whether the trained teachers effectively apply and utilize the phonics methods learned in the actual classrooms. The results will be reflected when designing a new professional development training program and will be used to develop the training program continuously. As a follow-up session, PLC, running for one semester, is also needed to examine the outcomes that are helpful to teachers for a certain period and develop the training program by reflecting the results.

Conclusion

Section 4 contained the reflections and conclusions about the professional development training as my doctoral project. Based on the semistructured interview data and analysis, teachers wanted to learn how to teach phonics effectively considering varying student levels of competency and the short period of teaching phonics in one classroom. The strength of this project is that teacher participants for the professional development training may immediately implement phonics instruction in English class after 3 days of training and follow-up session as online PLC will substantially support to the implementation. This project has limitations regarding face-to-face teacher training due to COVID-19 pandemic. The alternative approach is curriculum development in the parts of phonemic awareness and phonics. The doctoral project may contribute to the paradigm shift regarding phonics instruction. My personal academic inquiry led me to develop various academic research skills such as interview, data collection, data analysis, and scholarly writing skills through this doctoral project. The professional development training was created based on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of constructivism while considering the stances of teachers and students, and this opportunity was valuable and meaningful to build up my leadership as a scholar and practitioner. Throughout the process of doctoral project study, I have gained confidence that I can make substantial contributions to English education for elementary students in Korea. I also realized that a deeper understanding of the teachers' experiences gave me a broader perspective to develop effective phonics instruction and professional development training.

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Appendix: The Project

This project is a 3-day professional development training based on my study findings and the literature reviews. This training allows elementary school teachers to learn and be trained in phonics instruction and how to promote interaction for learner engagement considering various student levels. Through this training, teachers may learn the appropriate teaching method for Korean third and fourth graders who start to learn English as a foreign language by experiencing phonics instruction and discussing various challenges that may occur in teaching phonics with teacher colleagues.

Purpose

The purpose of this professional development training is to be trained phonics instruction for third and fourth graders in EFL settings.

Goals

The first goal of this training is to provide knowledge about phonics instruction, instructional modeling, and practical practices. The second goal is to build up facilitating interaction skills for student engagement and manage the various leveled students and allotted class time.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes of this professional development training are to understand the knowledge of phonics instruction, the best practices for the EFL elementary students' early literacy competence, and how to facilitate the EFL students who have various levels.

Target Audience

The target audience is public elementary school teachers who want to learn effective phonics fundamental knowledge, teaching approaches and integrated phonics into the classroom via gamification to increase student engagement and active participation. This teacher training is designed based on the teachers' phonics instruction experiences and needs of teacher training for effective phonics instruction in a short time period dealing with various student levels.

Components of the Training

This professional development training consists of nine modules in three days. The components of each module consist of explanation phonics knowledge and game rules and practicum of instruction and playing games as three in a group role-playing.

Timeline

Day 1: Why, What and How to Teach Phonics. On Day 1, teacher participants will learn why they should teach phonics, what advantages students will have through learning phonics, and why phonics instruction is not easy in the current English class.

Day 2: What and How to Teach Phonics. On Day 2, the participants will review the Day 1 session, such as the five pillars of reading and how and why to teach phonics.

Day 3: How to Engage Students for Learning Phonics. On Day 3, the participants will review Day 2 and learn how to teach the rules of R-controlled vowels, semivowels, silence or irregular pronunciation, and schwa sounds through various game activities. After experiencing game activities in small groups, the teacher participants will discuss the expected effects and difficulties. In addition, the teachers will learn gamification and

gamification strategies, which can be used to accelerate independent reading and decoding skills.

Follow-up session. The professional learning community (PLC) will be guided to boost the teachers' learning and enthusiasm toward phonics instruction. The online PLC will be available for a semester following the professional development training.

Activities

There are three activities in this professional development training for phonics instruction.

Finger Pointing Game. *Finger Pointing Game* activity is to train students word concepts and practice Bubble Game. The expected outcomes of this game activity provide opportunities to recognize the word concepts, including combination words and sight words. The process of this game activity is 1) to listen to the word from the teacher, 2) to find the word in the textbook, and 3) to point to the word with a finger. (*Slide 34*).

Bubble Game. *Bubble Game* activity is to train decoding skills and phonics. There are seven levels: alphabet, short vowels, long vowels, blends and silence, sight words, phrase dictation, and sentence dictation. The words, phrases, and sentences will be given from the English textbooks and AI *PengTalk*. The rules of *Bubble Game* are that the teacher says the sounds of a word, and the students write the word. If correct, write the points as the number of the word' letters. If incorrect, rewrite the word and circle it like a bubble. The Game activity's expected outcomes are improving decoding skills, combination, and spelling skills. (*Slides 35 and 36*).

Zombie Word Game. *Zombie Word Game* activity is to improve decoding skills. One by one, a student reads aloud the texts and then the teacher memo the incorrect pronunciation words called Zombie words while listening. Students write the Zombie words on their notes and practice reading the words accurately. The expected outcomes of *Zombie Word Game* are to boost the decoding skills and reading accuracy. (*Slide 37*).

Trainer Notes

As a project developer and facilitator, I will write trainer notes. The trainer notes are intended for anyone who may facilitate the training other than me. It is also helpful to develop trainer notes for myself as I progress through the training.

Module Formats

There are three modules each day in this professional development training.

Module 1. On Day 1, Module 1 will begin from 9 AM to 10:30 AM. Orientation will introduce purpose, goals, objectives, and timeline for this professional development training. I will share my doctoral research and previous studies regarding phonics instruction.

Module 2. On Day 1, Module 2 will begin from 1:50 AM to 12 PM. The participants will understand 1) why to teach phonics compared with Korean and English languages, 2) what advantages students will have after learning phonics, 3) why phonics classes are challenging, 4) what to teach and how to teach phonics, and 5) how to play *Finger Pointing Game* for practicing *Bubble Game*.

Module 3. On Day 1, Module 3 will begin from 1 PM to 4:30 PM. The participants will learn how to teach phonemic awareness and short vowel combination effectively. They

also have experience with *Finger Pointing Game* and *Bubble Game* and practice the games with three in a group using a small group function in Zoom.

Module 4. On Day 2, Module 4 will begin from 9 AM to 10:30 AM. The participants will review Day 1, including the five pillars of reading and how to teach phonemic awareness and vowel combinations. Three in a group will review the *Bubble Game*, discuss the expected effects and difficulties for teachers and students, and debrief about the discussion and goals of Day 2.

Module 5. On Day 2, Module 5 will begin from 10:50 AM to 12 PM. The participants will learn what and how to teach long vowel combinations with the *Bubble Game*. They will experience the *Bubble Game* and practice the game with three in a group.

Module 6. On Day 2, Module 6 will begin from 1 PM to 4:30 PM. The participants will learn what and how to teach sight words and schwa sounds with *Bubble game*. They will experience the *Bubble Game* and practice the game with three in a group using the small group function in Zoom. They will share their game experiences, and I will debrief. At the end of this session, the participants will evaluate themselves via *Google Survey*.

Module 7. On Day 3, Module 7 will begin from 9 AM to 10:30 AM. The participants will review Day 2, including how to teach long vowel combinations, sight words, and schwa sounds. Three in a group will play *Finger Pointing Game* and *Bubble Game* for review and discuss the expected effects and difficulties for teachers and students. I will debrief the discussion and share the goals of Day 3.

Module 8. On Day 3, Module 8 will begin from 10:50 AM to 12 PM. The participants will learn how to teach the rules of R-controlled vowels, semivowels, silence or irregular

pronunciation, and schwa sounds through the *Bubble Game*. They will play the *Zombie Word Game* to build up decoding skills and reading accuracy. They will discuss phonics instruction through playing games, and I will debrief the discussion.

Module 9. On Day 3, Module 9 will begin from 1 PM to 4:30 PM. The participants will learn gamification and gamification strategies, which can be used to accelerate independent reading and decoding skills. They also learn how to apply gamification to design a phonics class, manage the various leveled students in a class using gamification, and teach phonics using AI *PengTalk* and a gamified LMS called *Class123*. They will discuss various approaches to seek positive changes in students' learning achievement and affective domains. They will share the game experiences, and I will debrief the experiences. The online professional learning community (PLC) will be guided as a follow-up session throughout one semester. The participants will evaluate themselves and this professional development training via *Google Survey*.

Training Materials

This professional development training materials are webcam or camera embedded for web conference via Zoom. The participants will need a note to memo the game activities. Three applications will be used: AI *PengTalk, Class123* as a gamified learning management system (LMS), and *Kakao Talk* open chatting for online PLC.

Implementation Plan for Training

The implementation plan of this 3-day professional development for phonics instruction will be by modules. Three modules of each day will be run. Day 1 will focus

on why, what, and how to teach phonics. Day 2 will deal with what and how to teach phonics. Day 3 will focus on how to engage students in learning phonics.

Evaluation Plan

This professional development training is tailored based on teachers' needs to learn how to teach phonics in limited time and manage the varying leveled students. Teachers' active participation is the core of this teacher training. Teachers' evaluation of this teacher training will be conducted through formative and summative assessment. At the end of each session, teachers will be assessed on the session and their activities. Formative assessment will be used to ensure that teachers' expertise in teaching phonics has been developed, to improve the teaching-learning process, and to identify changes in their activities for phonics instruction. To facilitate continuous self-evaluation of phonics instruction, formative assessments will be conducted by answering online *Google Surveys* at the end of each session. Teachers can receive answers to their email in the *Google Surveys* so that they can diagnose themselves. The summative evaluation consists of a 10-point scale to indicate how much their phonics instruction has improved through the teacher training. The summative evaluation will be given before providing feedback on how the phonics instruction has affected the students. These formative and summative assessments ensure that teachers have developed professional development training regarding phonics instruction. The teachers' responses obtained through the professional development training will be analyzed and reflected in program improvement to provide more practical and valuable teacher training.

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Professional Development for Phonics Instruction

Jung-Hye Choi
Walden University

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Table of Contents

1. Purpose & Goals
2. Target Audiences & PD Schedule
3. Objectives
4. Learning Outcomes
5. Timeline & Materials
6. Implementation Plan
7. Evaluation Plan
8. Trainer Notes

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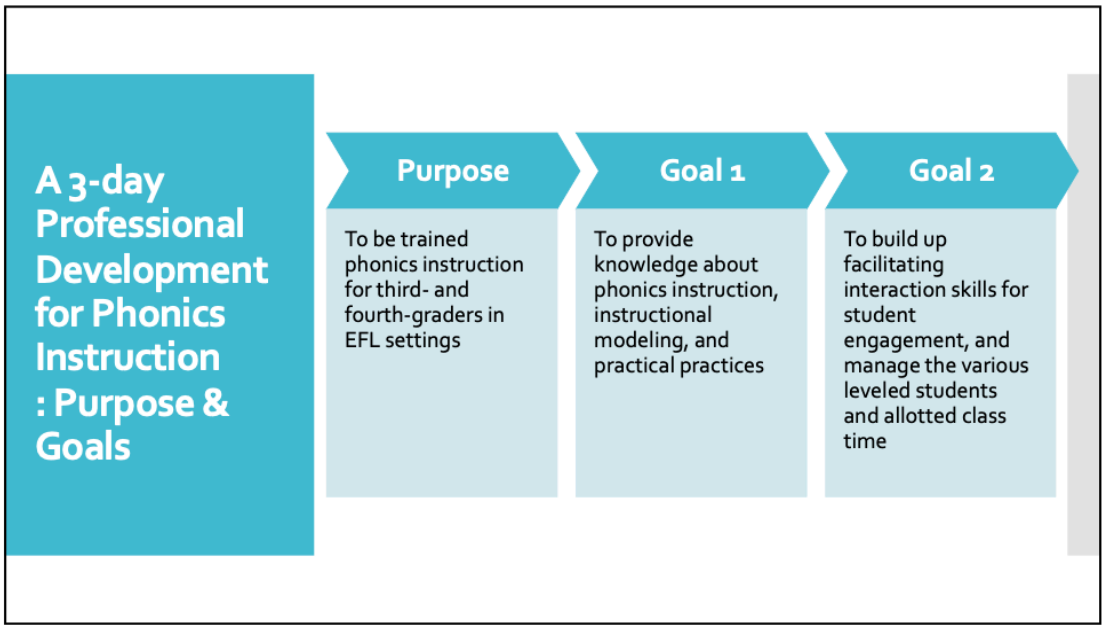
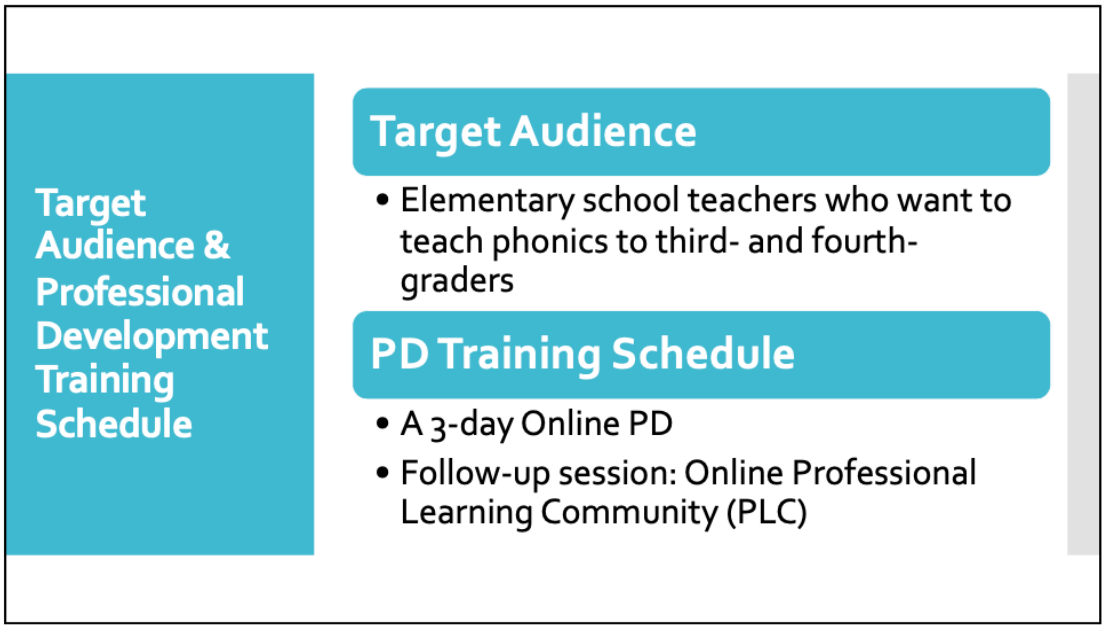
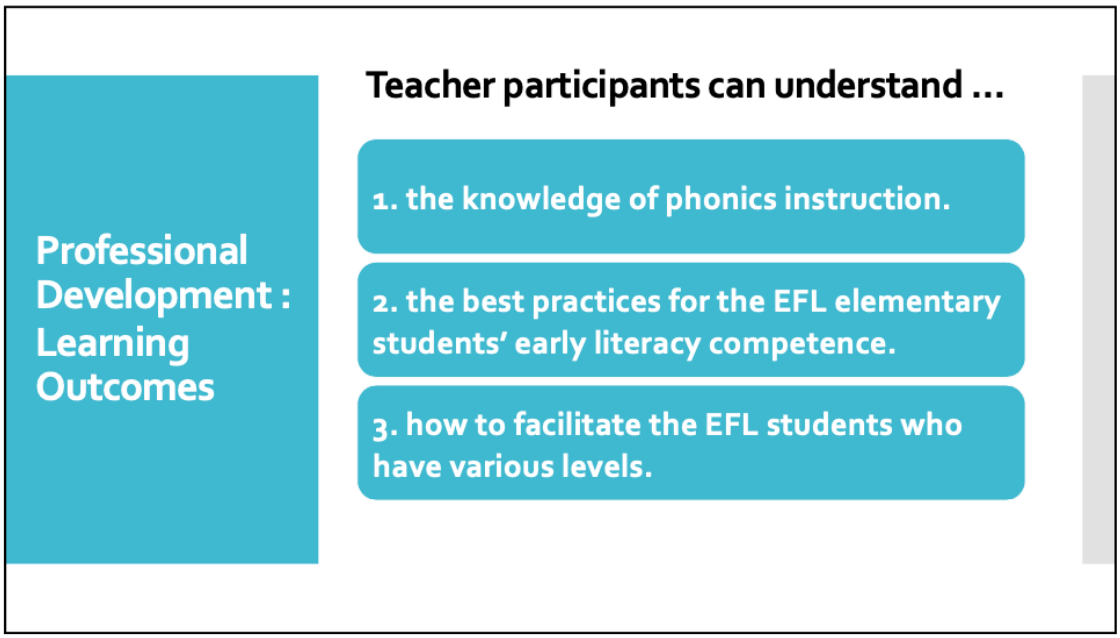

A 3-day Professional Development for Phonics Instruction : Purpose & Goals
Purpose
To be trained phonics instruction for third- and fourth-graders in EFL settings
Goal 1
To provide knowledge about phonics instruction, instructional modeling, and practical practices
Goal 2
To build up facilitating interaction skills for student engagement, and manage the various leveled students and allotted class time

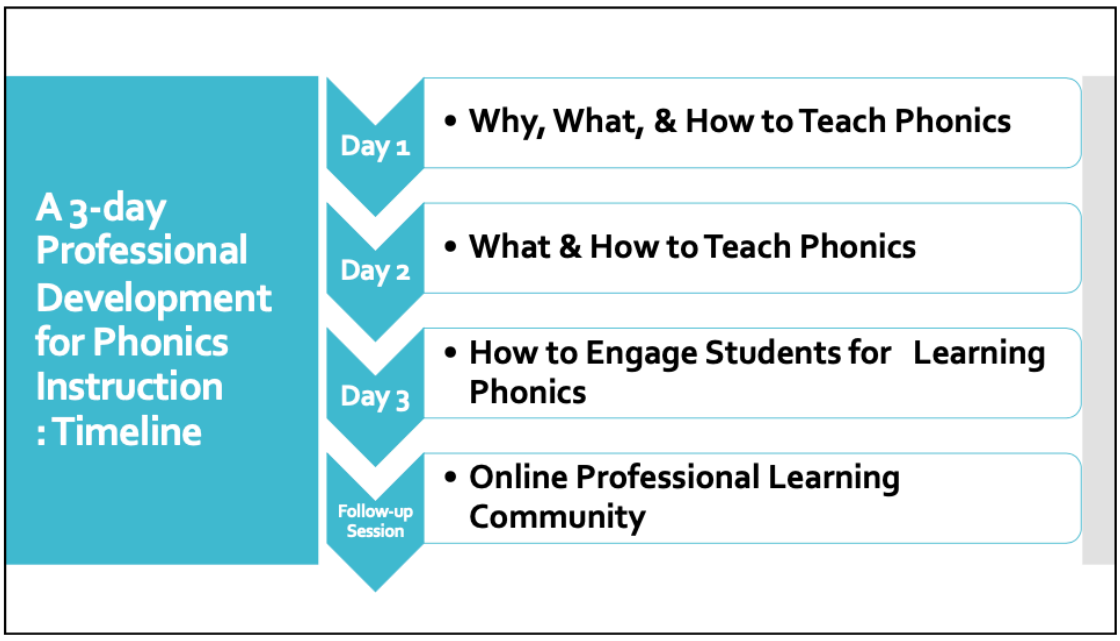
3


Target Audience & Professional Development Training Schedule
Target Audience
• Elementary school teachers who want to teach phonics to third- and fourth-graders
PD Training Schedule
• A 3-day Online PD
• Follow-up session: Online Professional Learning Community (PLC)

4


Professional Development : Learning Outcomes
Teacher participants can understand …
1. the knowledge of phonics instruction.
2. the best practices for the EFL elementary students' early literacy competence.
3. how to facilitate the EFL students who have various levels.

5


A 3-day Professional Development for Phonics Instruction : Timeline
Day 1
• Why, What, & How to Teach Phonics
Day 2
• What & How to Teach Phonics
Day 3
• How to Engage Students for Learning Phonics
Follow-up Session
• Online Professional Learning Community

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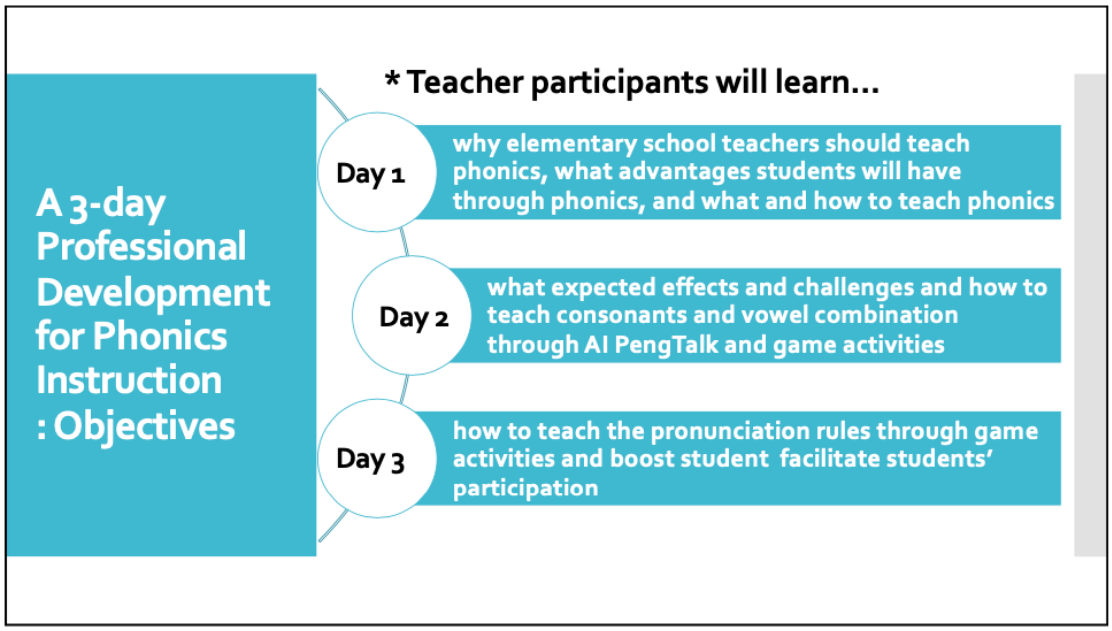
A 3-day Professional Development for Phonics Instruction : Objectives
* Teacher participants will learn…
Day 1
why elementary school teachers should teach phonics, what advantages students will have through phonics, and what and how to teach phonics
Day 2
what expected effects and challenges and how to teach consonants and vowel combination through AI PengTalk and game activities
Day 3
how to teach the pronunciation rules through game activities and boost student facilitate students' participation

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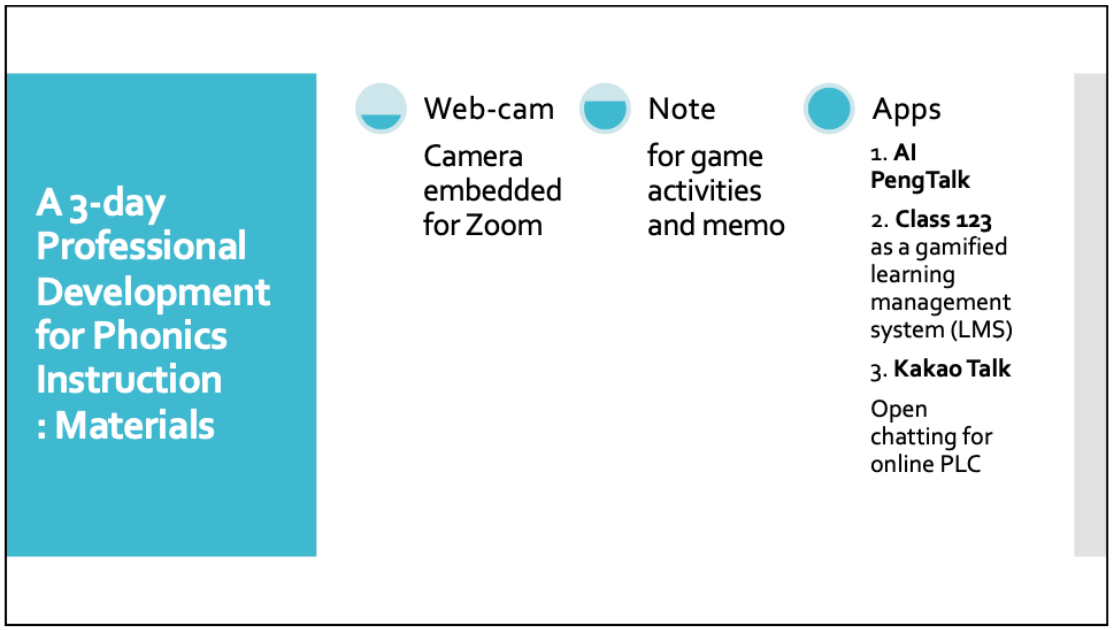
A 3-day Professional Development for Phonics Instruction : Materials
Web-cam
Camera embedded for Zoom
Note
for game activities and memo
Apps
1. AI PengTalk
2. Class 123 as a gamified learning management system (LMS)
3. Kakao Talk
Open chatting for online PLC

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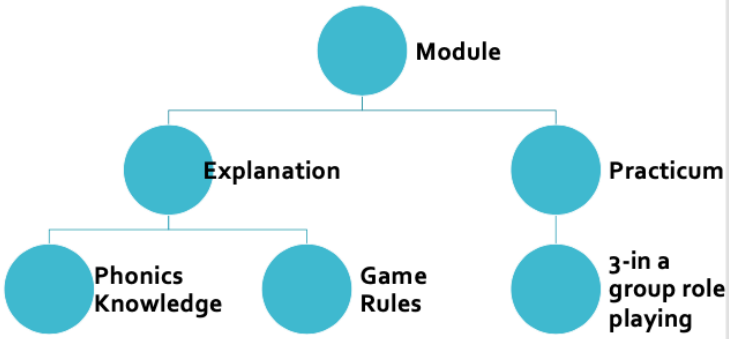
Module Components



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A 3-day Professional Development for Phonics Instruction: Implementation Plan by Modules

[Day 1] #Why, What, & How to Teach Phonics

Module 1 (9AM ~ 10:30 AM)

- Orientation: purpose, goals, objectives, and timeline for PD
- Sharing my doctoral research and previous studies regarding phonics instruction

Module 2 (10:50 AM ~ 12PM)

- Why the teachers should teach phonics comparing with Korean and English
- What advantages students will have after learning phonics
- Why phonics classes are challenging
- Five pillars of reading and kinds of phonics approaches
- What to teach and how to teach phonics
- Learn how to play *Finger Pointing Game* for practicing *Bubble Game*

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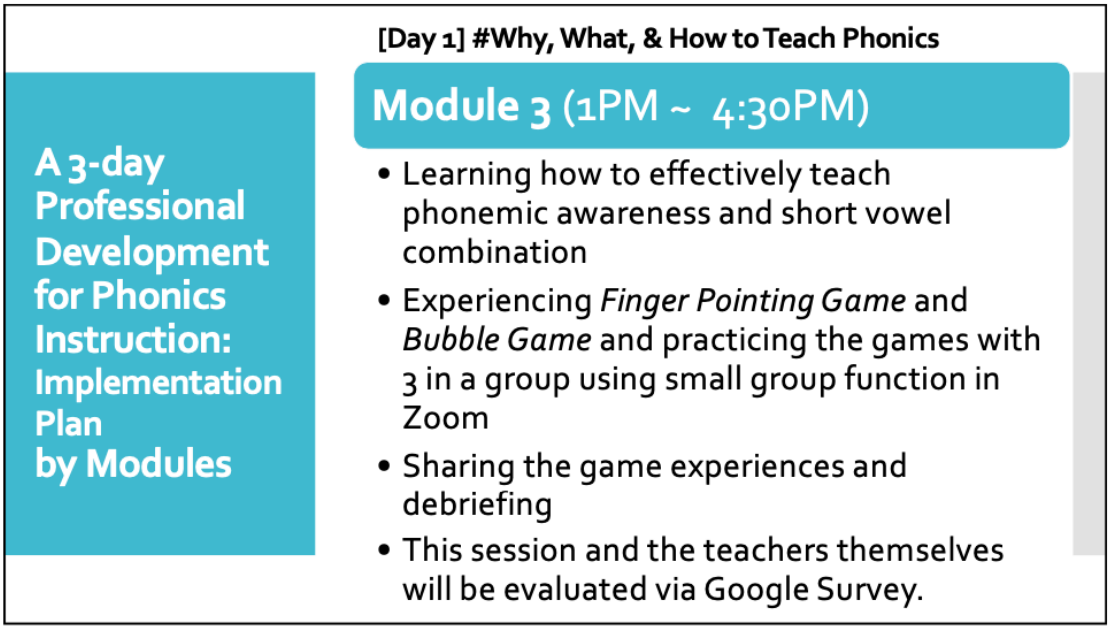
A 3-day Professional Development for Phonics Instruction: Implementation Plan by Modules
[Day 1] #Why, What, & How to Teach Phonics
Module 3 (1PM ~ 4:30PM)
• Learning how to effectively teach phonemic awareness and short vowel combination
• Experiencing Finger Pointing Game and Bubble Game and practicing the games with 3 in a group using small group function in Zoom
• Sharing the game experiences and debriefing
• This session and the teachers themselves will be evaluated via Google Survey.

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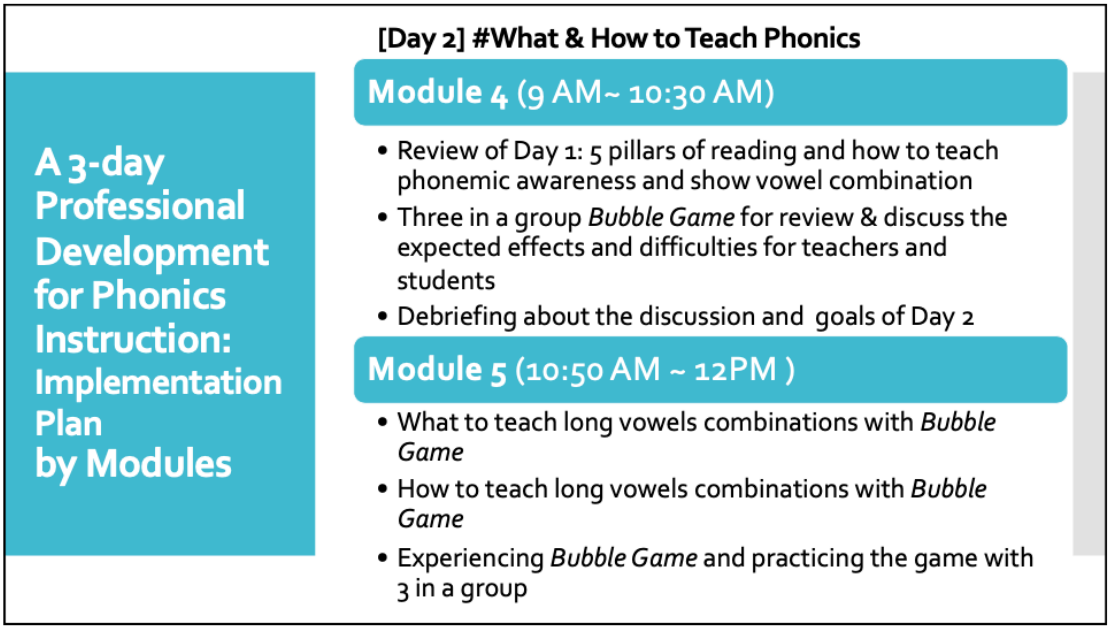
A 3-day Professional Development for Phonics Instruction: Implementation Plan by Modules
[Day 2] #What & How to Teach Phonics
Module 4 (9 AM~ 10:30 AM)
• Review of Day 1: 5 pillars of reading and how to teach phonemic awareness and show vowel combination
• Three in a group Bubble Game for review & discuss the expected effects and difficulties for teachers and students
• Debriefing about the discussion and goals of Day 2
Module 5 (10:50 AM ~ 12PM)
• What to teach long vowels combinations with Bubble Game
• How to teach long vowels combinations with Bubble Game
• Experiencing Bubble Game and practicing the game with 3 in a group

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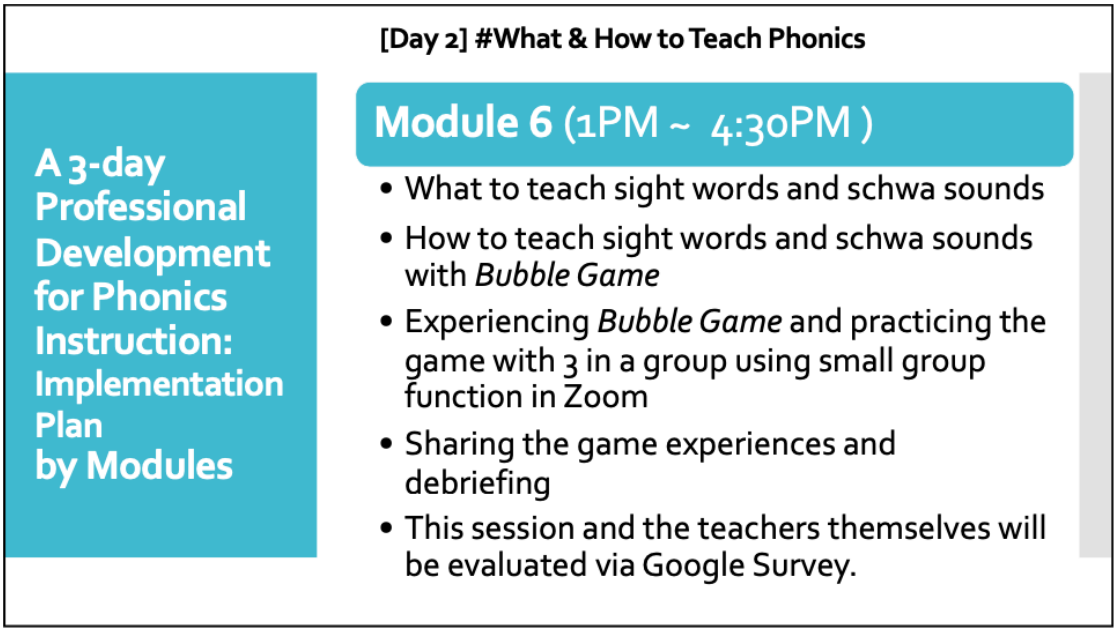
[Day 2] #What & How to Teach Phonics
A 3-day Professional Development for Phonics Instruction: Implementation Plan by Modules
Module 6 (1PM ~ 4:30PM)
• What to teach sight words and schwa sounds
• How to teach sight words and schwa sounds with Bubble Game
• Experiencing Bubble Game and practicing the game with 3 in a group using small group function in Zoom
• Sharing the game experiences and debriefing
• This session and the teachers themselves will be evaluated via Google Survey.

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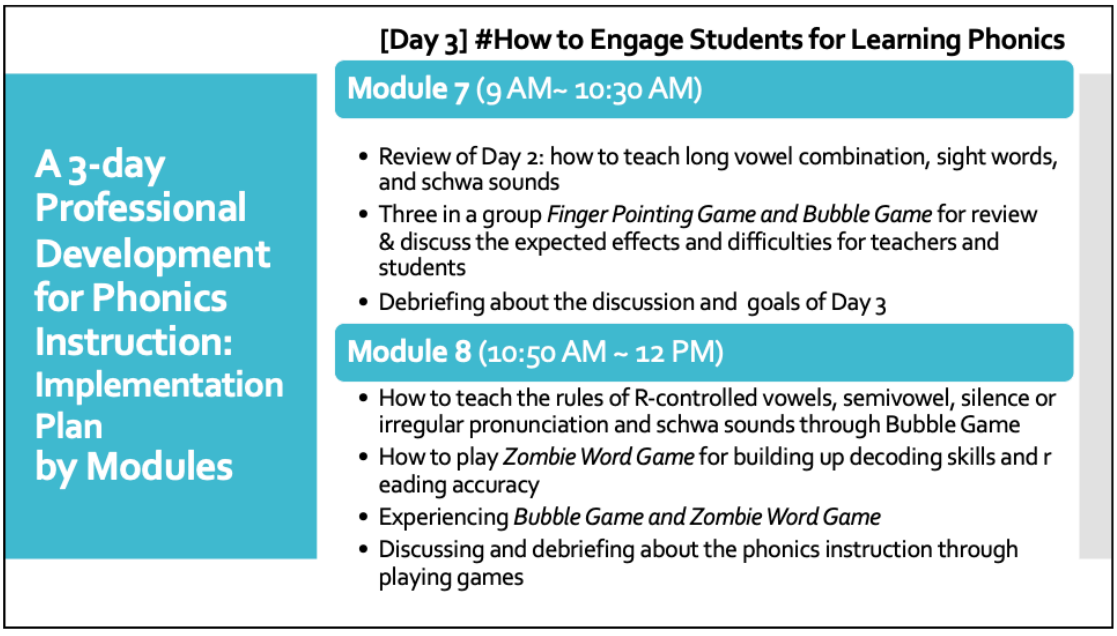
[Day 3] #How to Engage Students for Learning Phonics
A 3-day Professional Development for Phonics Instruction: Implementation Plan by Modules
Module 7 (9 AM~ 10:30 AM)
• Review of Day 2: how to teach long vowel combination, sight words, and schwa sounds
• Three in a group Finger Pointing Game and Bubble Game for review & discuss the expected effects and difficulties for teachers and students
• Debriefing about the discussion and goals of Day 3
Module 8 (10:50 AM ~ 12 PM)
• How to teach the rules of R-controlled vowels, semivowel, silence or irregular pronunciation and schwa sounds through Bubble Game
• How to play Zombie Word Game for building up decoding skills and r eading accuracy
• Experiencing Bubble Game and Zombie Word Game
• Discussing and debriefing about the phonics instruction through playing games

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A 3-day Professional Development for Phonics Instruction: Implementation Plan by Modules

[Day 3] #How to Engage Students for Learning Phonics

Module 9 (1 PM~ 4:30 PM)

- What gamification is and how gamification strategies can be used to accelerate independent reading and purpose and effects.
- How to apply gamification to design phonics class
- How to manage the various leveled students in a class using gamification
- How to teach phonics using *AI PengTalk* and gamified LMS called *Class123*
- Discussing various approaches to seek positive changes in students' learning achievement and affective domains
- Sharing the game experiences and debriefing
- Online professional learning community (PLC) will be guided as a follow-up session throughout the semester.
- This session and the teachers themselves will be evaluated via Google Survey.

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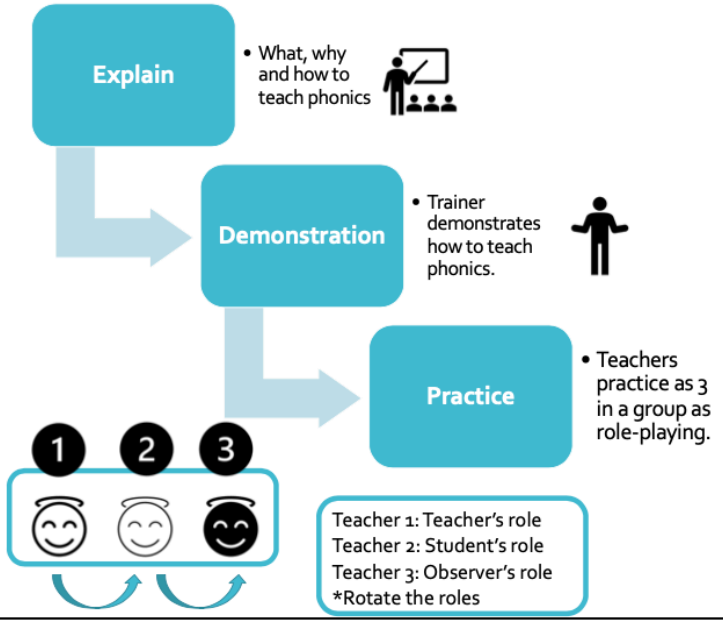
Practicum for Phonics Instruction



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Phonics

What is phonics?

a method of teaching people to read by correlating sounds with letters or groups of letters in an alphabetic writing system.

Why to learn phonics

Phonics teaches this information **to help children learn how to read**. Children learn the sounds that each letter makes, and how a change in the order of letters changes a word's meaning.

How to learn phonics

1. Mastering basic letters. 2. Tackling vowel letter sounds
3. Reading with phonics 4. Helping others learn phonics

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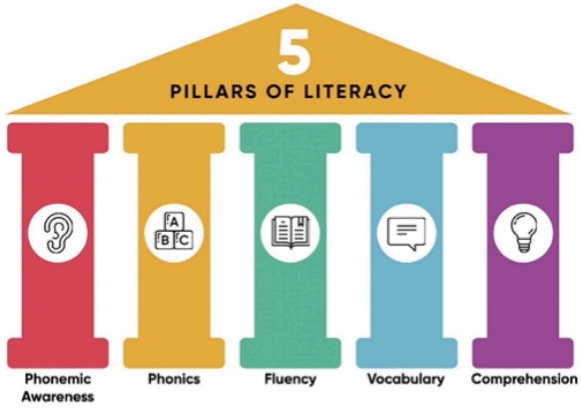
5 Pillars of Reading



The National Reading Panel identified five key concepts at the core of every effective reading instruction program: **Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension**.

https://ldadhdnetwork.ca/managing-lds-adhd/children-families/academic-subjects/reading-spelling/

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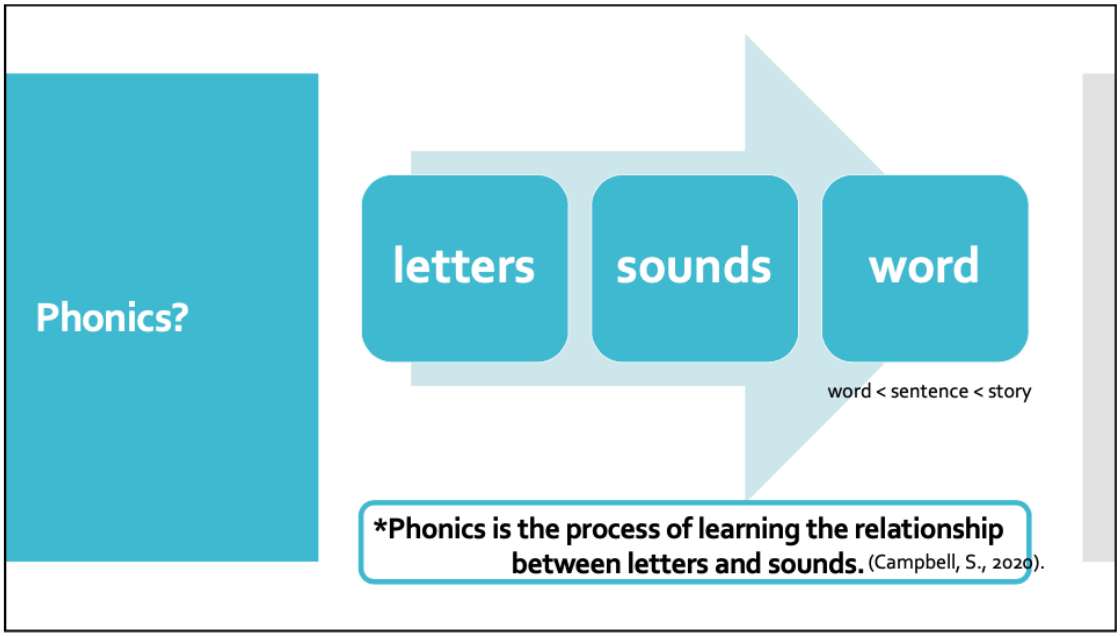
Phonics?
letters
sounds
word
word < sentence < story
*Phonics is the process of learning the relationship between letters and sounds. (Campbell, S., 2020).

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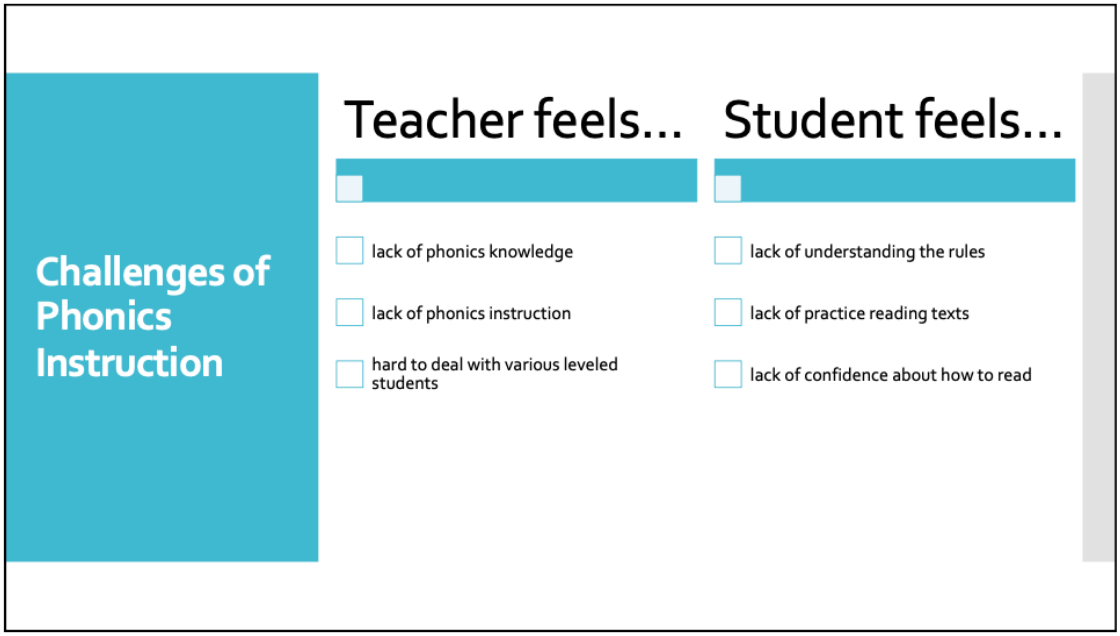
Challenges of Phonics Instruction
Teacher feels...
lack of phonics knowledge
lack of phonics instruction
hard to deal with various leveled students
Student feels...
lack of understanding the rules
lack of practice reading texts
lack of confidence about how to read

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Why to Teach and Learn Phonics

- The ability to read and write accurately and fluently is vital skill for all children including EFL students, paving the way for an enjoyable and successful school experiences.
- Phonics helps children to develop good reading and spelling skills.
- Children need a strategy to figure out unknown words.
- Children need to recognize words quickly and automatically.

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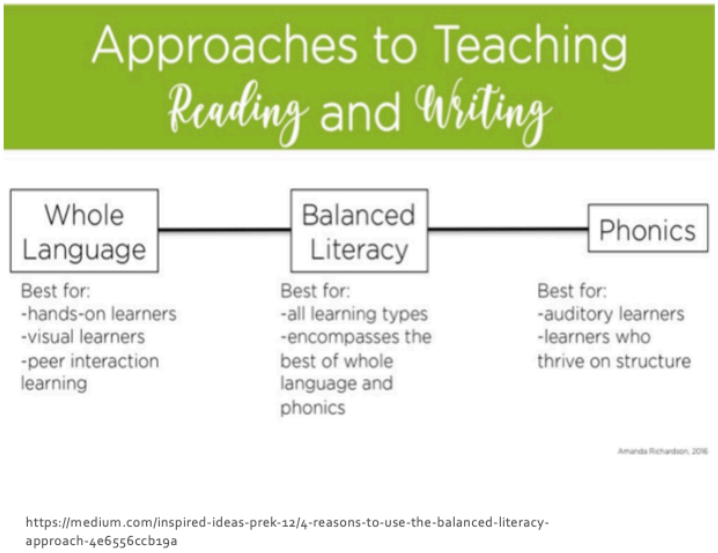
Approaches to Teaching Reading & Writing



https://medium.com/inspired-ideas-prek-12/4-reasons-to-use-the-balanced-literacy-approach-4e6556ccb19a

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Phonics Approaches

Synthetic vs. Analytic Phonics	
Synthetic Phonics	**Analytic Phonics**
Starts from word parts and builds them up to the whole.	Starts from whole words and breaks them down to the parts.
Explicit and rote learning of the rules of English language.	Learning the rules of language through inference and exposure to words in books.
A focus on coding and decoding language	A focus on creating meaning from texts
Children learn through systematic learning of phonemes and graphemes	Children learn from patterns, rhyme and analogy
Enables reading to occur without understanding context	Allows for guessing and inference from context

HelpfulProfessor.com

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Phonics Approaches

Synthetic Phonics

Summary: Starts with phenomes and builds up to words. It focuses on explicit instruction of phonemes and graphemes and blending them to construct words. It is the most direct and structured method of phonics.

Pros	Cons
• Structured instruction. • Helps students blend phonemes and build new words. • Backed by research as a highly effective method.	• Primarily involves undifferentiated whole-class instruction. • Phonemes are used in decontextualized ways.

HelpfulProfessor.com

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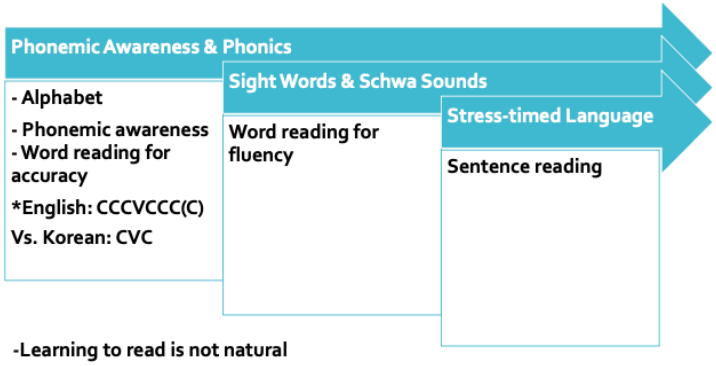
Roadmap for Phonics Instruction

[Learning to Read for Reading to Learn]



-Learning to read is not natural
-Decoding is not correlated with intelligence
-Learning phonics requires explicit instruction
-Learning phonics requires systematic instruction

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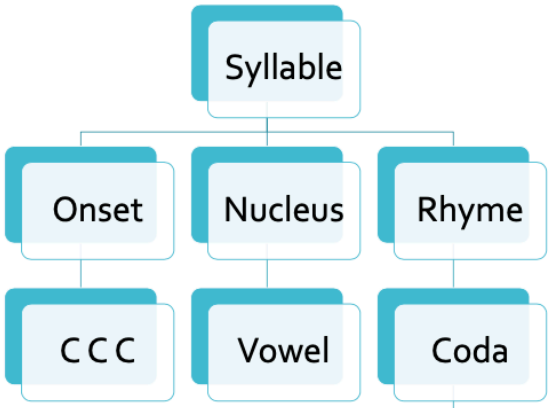
Understanding Syllable

syllable: **a unit of pronunciation that has one vowel sound, and may or may not be surrounded by consonants**. A syllable can form a whole word or part of a word. For example, there is one syllable in cat, two syllables in monkey and three syllables in elephant.

https://www.englishclub.com/pronunciation/word-stress-syllables.htm



C: Consonant
V: Vowel

***English: CCCVCCC(C)**
vs. Korean: CVC

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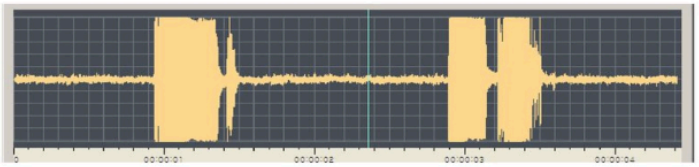
Understanding Syllable & Combination

Korean syllable structures do not allow two or more consonants to occur in the onset of a syllable, while English permits two or three consonants at the beginning of syllables.

English: tent

Korean: 텐트 /tent



English: tent
(1 syllable)

Korean: 텐트 /ten-t/
(2 syllables)

*Letter – Sound – Syllable –Combination

https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1127096.pdf

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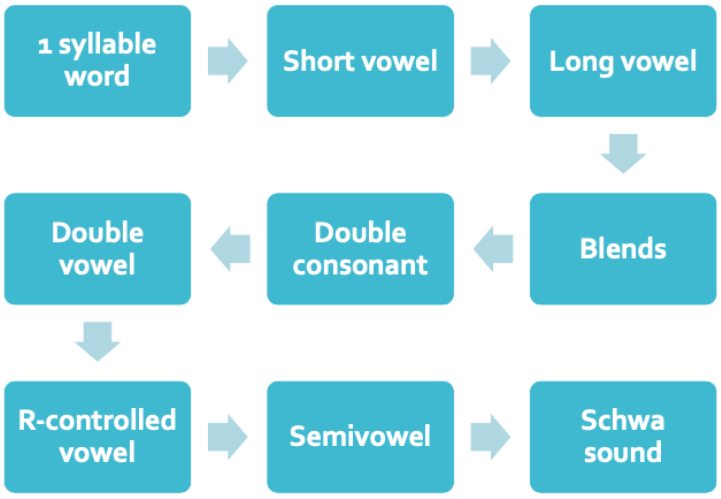
Order of Teaching Phonics



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How to Teach Sight Words

5 Ways to Make Learning Sight Words Easier for Your Kids

Tip 1: Expose your child to sight words early on.
Tip 2: Make read-aloud more interactive.
Tip 3: Engage all of their senses.
Tip 4: Sort sight words into categories.
Tip 5: Read and play with sight words daily.

https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/sight-words-activities-books.html

https://www.teachercreated.com/products/colorful-100-sight-words-chart-7928

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How to Teach Schwa

Schwa – The Lazy Sound

Schwa is *related* to the short vowel sounds because it can be spelled by any of them, including the semi-vowel 'y'.

https://phonicshero.com/schwa/

https://capture.dropbox.com/wvomZJjlbm2foaJf

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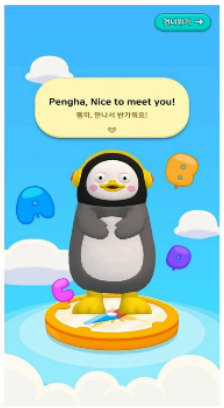
AI PengTalk application & English Textbooks for G3-G4

Teaching words from textbooks and AI PengTalk

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ebsenglish.talk&hl=ko&gl=US

[AI PengTalk for English Practice]



▶ Textbook English and everyday English together
Elementary English achievement standards and daily life announced by the Korean Ministry of Education

[Play AI PengTalk at Home]

[English Textbooks]

[Review at Class]

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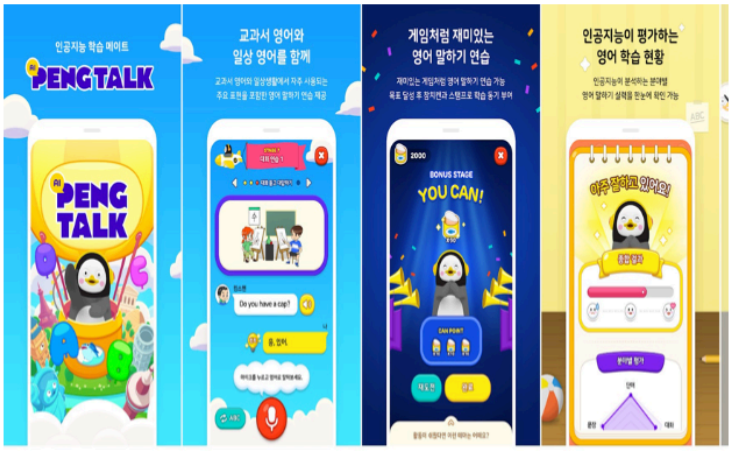
AI PengTalk application & English Textbooks for G3-G4

Teaching words from textbooks and AI PengTalk

https://appagg.com/android/education/ingongjineung-hagseub-meiteu-aipengtog-35294534.html?hl=en



* English pronunciation evaluation and words, sentences, conversations, expressions, fluency, etc. informed by AI
* Students can check English speaking skills in each field.

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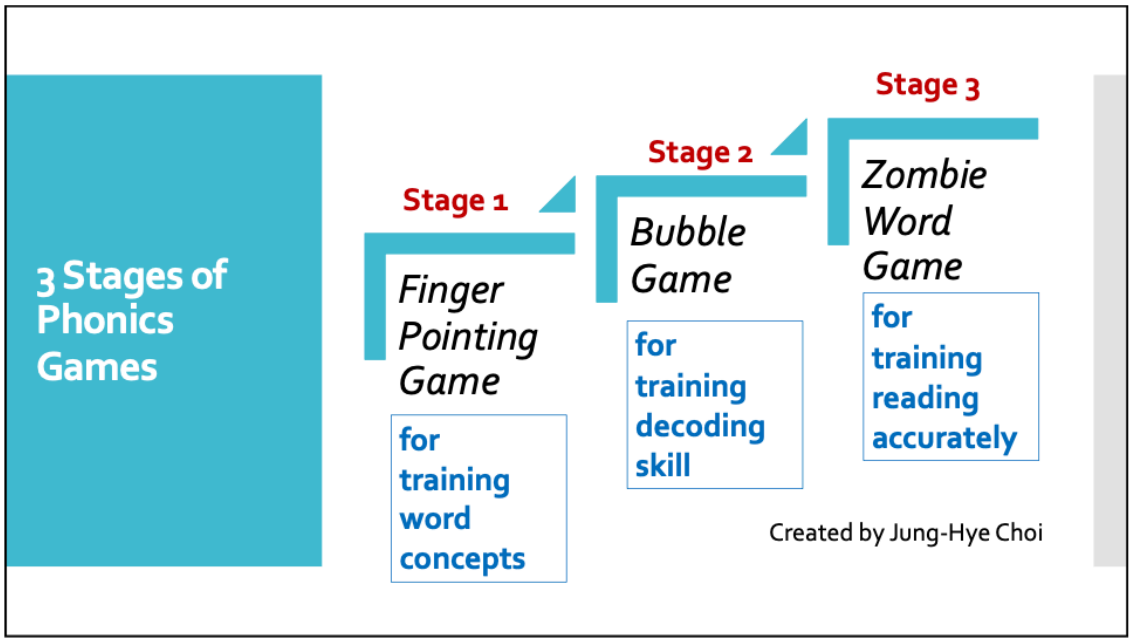
3 Stages of Phonics Games
Stage 1
Finger Pointing Game
for training word concepts
Stage 2
Bubble Game
for training decoding skill
Stage 3
Zombie Word Game
for training reading accurately
Created by Jung-Hye Choi

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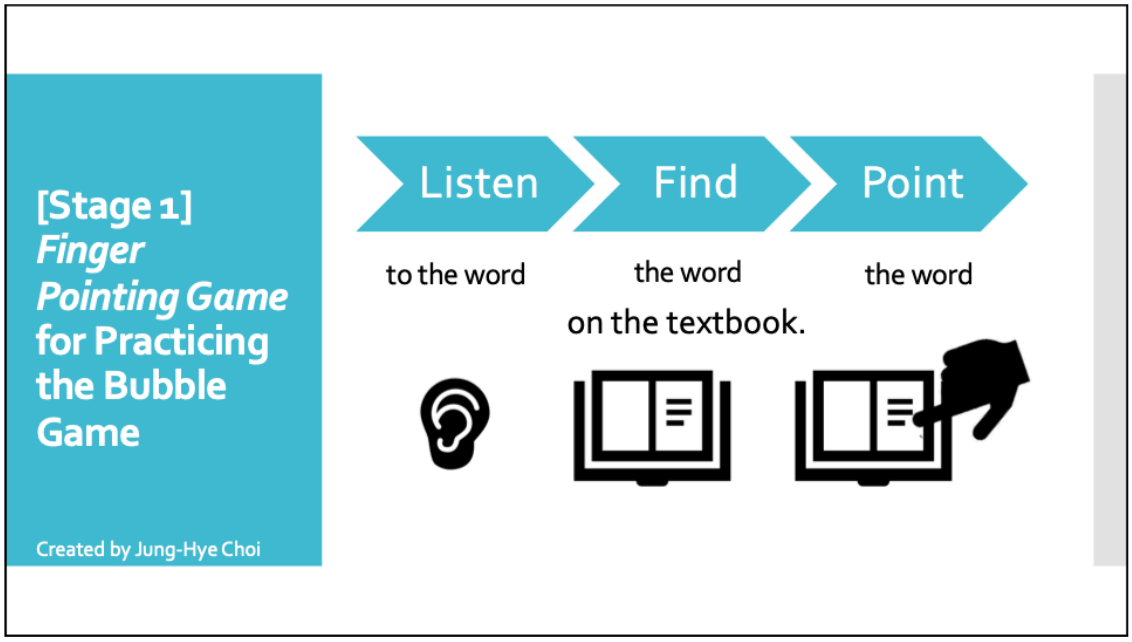
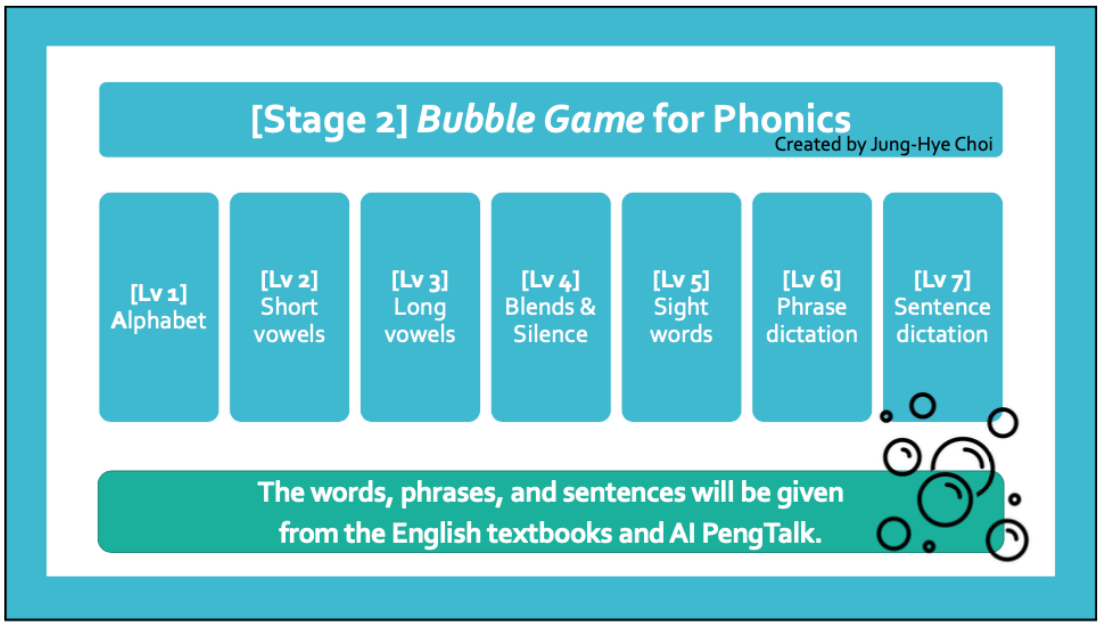
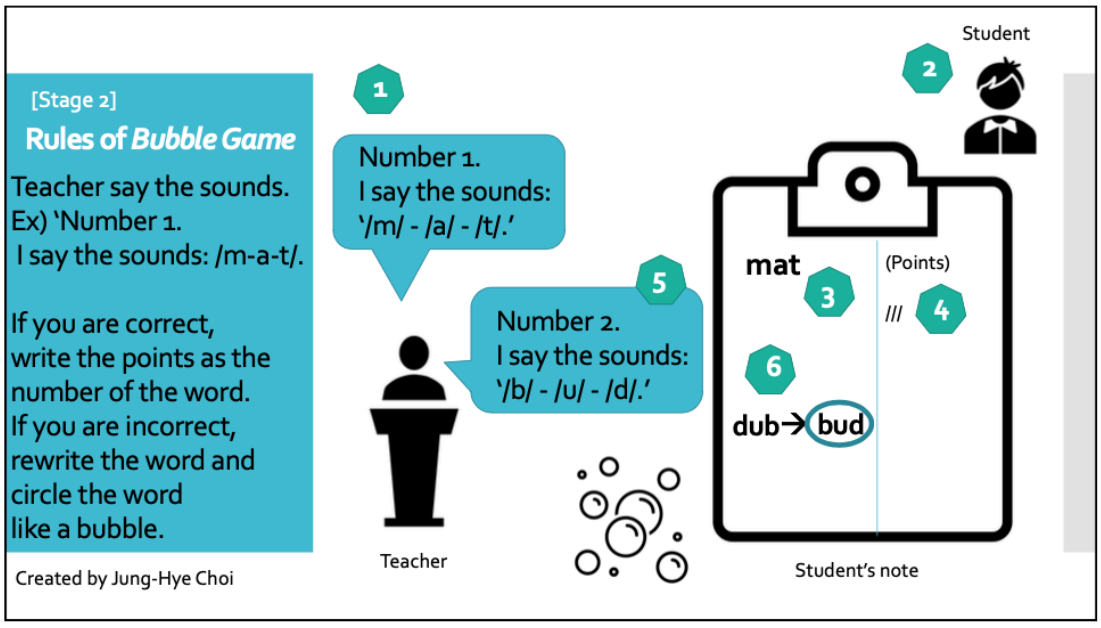

[Stage 1] Finger Pointing Game for Practicing the Bubble Game
Created by Jung-Hye Choi
Listen
Find
Point
to the word
the word
the word
on the textbook.

34


[Stage 2] Bubble Game for Phonics
Created by Jung-Hye Choi
[Lv 1] Alphabet
[Lv 2] Short vowels
[Lv 3] Long vowels
[Lv 4] Blends & Silence
[Lv 5] Sight words
[Lv 6] Phrase dictation
[Lv 7] Sentence dictation
The words, phrases, and sentences will be given from the English textbooks and AI PengTalk.

35


[Stage 2]
Rules of Bubble Game
Teacher say the sounds.
Ex) 'Number 1.
I say the sounds: /m-a-t/.
If you are correct,
write the points as the number of the word.
If you are incorrect,
rewrite the word and circle the word like a bubble.
Created by Jung-Hye Choi
1
Number 1.
I say the sounds:
'/m/ - /a/ - /t/.'
Teacher
5
Number 2.
I say the sounds:
'/b/ - /u/ - /d/.'
Student
2
mat
3
(Points)
///
4
6
dub→bud
Student's note

36

[Stage 3] *Zombie Word Game* for Decoding Skills

Created by Jung-Hye Choi

1. Read
- One by one student reads aloud text.

2. Memo
- Teacher memo the incorrect words called Zombie words while listening.

3. Write
- Students write the Zombie words on their notes and practice reading the words accurately.

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Gamification for Student Engagement

1. Gamification

(1) Definition

https://www.udemy.com/course/gamification-in-teaching-and-learning/

Ex) Education is not a game field. If applying game elements and mechanics to education, it is gamification in education.

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Gamification for Student Engagement

1. Gamification
(2) Gamification in Education

What Why How

Gamification in Education

"Student engagement"

Fun
Interaction
Long-term memory
+ education

(Kim, et al., 2018, p. 25-38)

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Gamification for Student Engagement

Gamification elements refer to the set of strategies taken from games that are used in real-life situations, loyalty programs or community engagement.

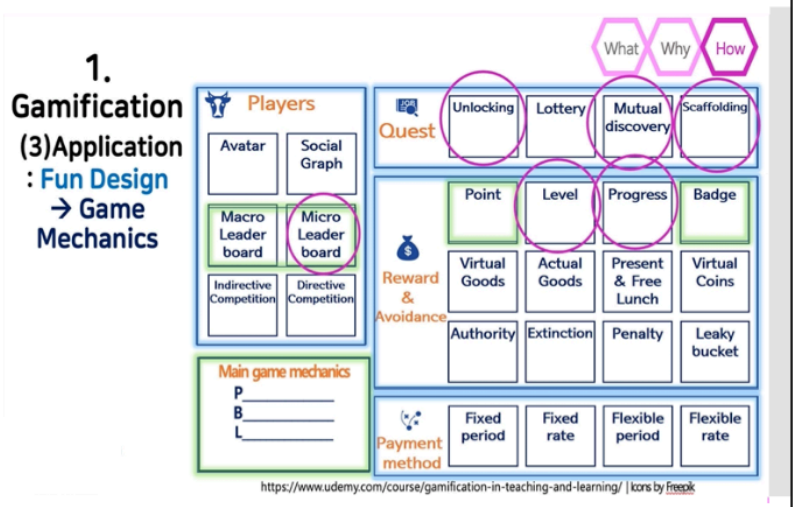
https://mambo.io/blog/gamification-elements-and-mechanics

https://www.pinterest.co.kr/pin/821344050776146091/

40

Gamification for Student Engagement

Gamification mechanics are the rules which define how the game is going to work.



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Class123 for Gamified Learning Management System

*Design gamified English class using Class123.

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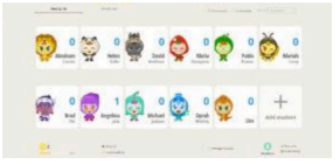
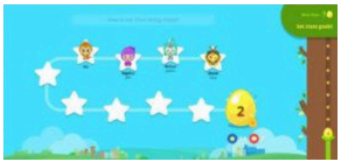
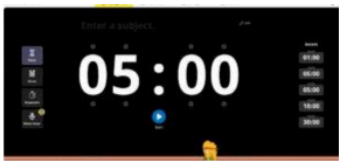
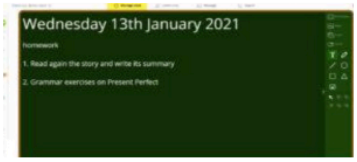
Class123 for Gamified Learning Management System

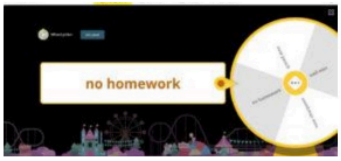
Teachers can use the functions for gamified English class such as student avatar, golden eggs for whole class goal achievement, lucky draw, timer, noise meter, and chalkboard.











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Professional Development Evaluation (Formative 1)

Phonics Professional Development Evaluation Form (Formative)

Date: _____

Session Title: _____

Facilitator: _____

I am a (Highlight One): third-grade teacher fourth-grade teacher

My perception of the overall session (Highlight One):

Very Effective Effective Not Sure Ineffective Very Ineffective

How engaging were the session activities? (Place an O on one):

___ Very Engaging: The learning activities piqued my interest most of the time. The learning activities matched the way I learn. I valued the learning activities.

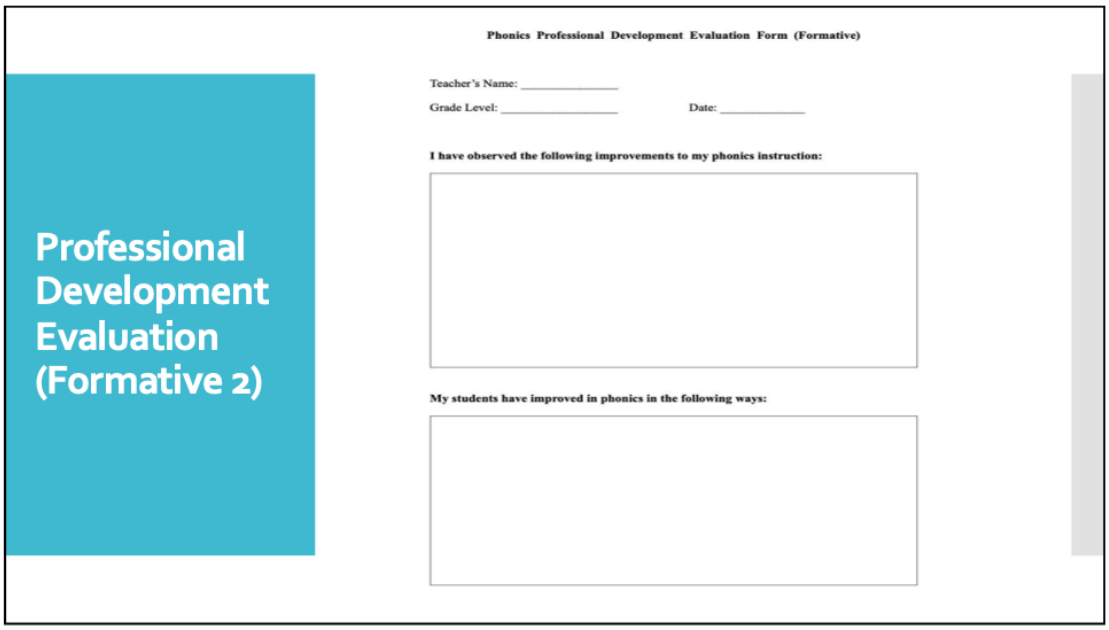
___ Basically Engaging: The learning activities were basic and typical. The learning activities engaged me for the time allocated for this training. I attended because I was expected to.

___ Not Engaging Enough: I attended the session, but the learning activities were not engaging enough to involve me significantly.

Which task(s)/activity(ies) was/were too difficult for you to complete? Why? Please type your response below.

Is there any information you need clarification on? Please type your response below.

44


Professional Development Evaluation (Formative 2)
Phonics Professional Development Evaluation Form (Formative)
Teacher's Name: _____
Grade Level: _____ Date: _____
I have observed the following improvements to my phonics instruction:
My students have improved in phonics in the following ways:

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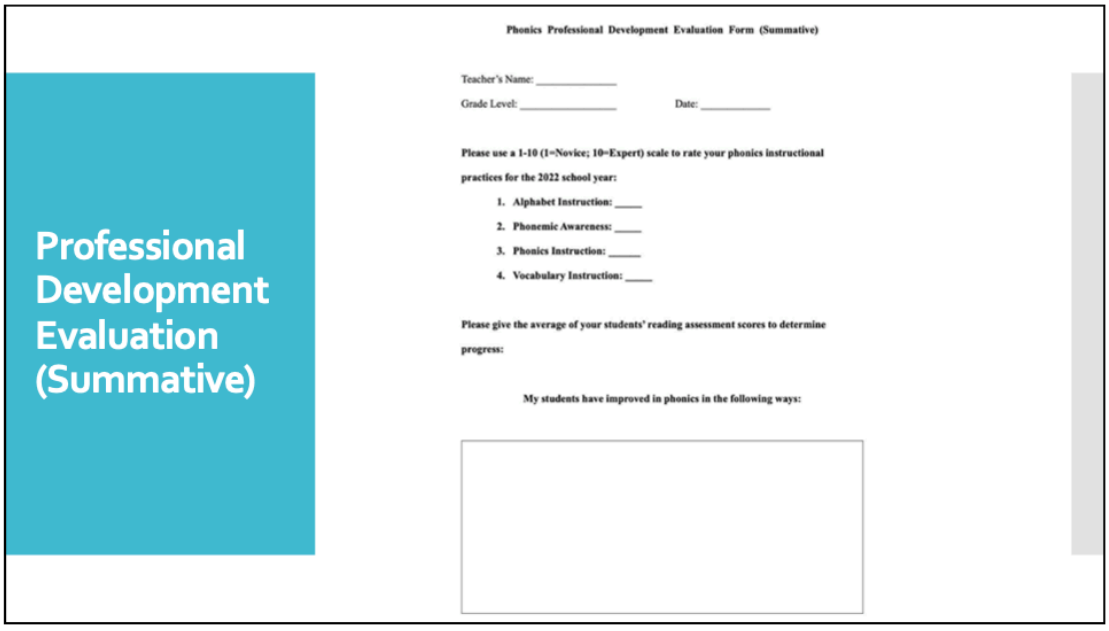
Professional Development Evaluation (Summative)
Phonics Professional Development Evaluation Form (Summative)
Teacher's Name: _____
Grade Level: _____ Date: _____
Please use a 1-10 (1=Novice; 10=Expert) scale to rate your phonics instructional practices for the 2022 school year:
1. Alphabet Instruction: ____
2. Phonemic Awareness: ____
3. Phonics Instruction: ____
4. Vocabulary Instruction: ____
Please give the average of your students' reading assessment scores to determine progress:
My students have improved in phonics in the following ways:

46

References

Campbell, S. (2020). Teaching phonics without teaching phonics: Early childhood teachers' reported beliefs and practices. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *20*(4), 783-814.

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TESOL International Association. (2018). *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching, 8 Volume Set*. John Wiley & Sons.

Wheldall, K., Snow, P., & Graham, L. (2017). Explainer: What does the term 'synthetic phonics' really mean. *Learning Difficulties Australia Bulletin*, *49*(1), 6-7.

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4. **Vocabulary Instruction: _____**

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My students have improved in phonics in the following ways: