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**English Teaching for I and II Cycle**

**Practicum Seminar Course**

**“Improving Fluency and Pronunciation through a Phonics Instruction in the third  
grade students of the Felix Arcadio Montero School”**

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## **“Improving Fluency and Pronunciation through a Phonics Instruction in the third grade students of the Felix Arcadio Montero School”**

### **1. Chapter I:**

#### **1.1 Problem Statement**

##### **a. Antecedents of the problem**

Over the past decades, there has been a significant interest for the Costa Rican student body to learn English as a foreign language without distinction if they belong to the public or private system of education. Emphasizing the previous idea, The Ministry of Education states the following: “Speaking English fluently is one of the abilities a 21st Century learner must develop to have access to better life opportunities... for citizens to communicate effectively in the global context and to face the challenges of an interconnected world, they need to possess a number of competences...” (p-4, Nuevo Programa de Estudio/Inglés I Ciclo “EDUCATING FOR A NEW CITIZENSHIP”). Regarding the previous statement, students must achieve certain competency levels in listening, speaking, reading and writing, and one very important competence needed is to know how to read effectively.

To obtain a good level of reading, learners have to acquire a number of skills and concepts to progress successfully through this process which is key for a student’s academic success. However, the Ministry of Public Education’s previous English program focuses on the listening and speaking competences as the first stages of learning English for I cycle students:

“In the teaching of English in the I and II Cycles, the oral and aural skills of the language are the object of study. Emphasis is given to the two basic linguistic abilities: listening and speaking, the main focus of the curriculum. In the I Cycle, students acquire communicative competence through the integration of oral and aural skills listening and speaking only, at a basic level.” (p-20, Programa de Inglés “RELANZAMIENTO DE LA EDUCACIÓN COSTARRICENSE”)

According to the stated above, the competences of reading and writing are put aside until the students reach the II cycle (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grades):

“In the II cycle, reading and writing skills are introduced gradually to complement listening and speaking skills by promoting sub-skills, techniques, activities and tasks, such as substitution, skimming, looking for details and production of short pieces of writing, in order to improve communicative competence. In addition, the teacher should design varied teaching procedures based on the above guidelines to create a highly motivating atmosphere to encourage meaningful communication.” (p-20, Programa de Inglés “RELANZAMIENTO DE LA EDUCACIÓN COSTARRICENSE”)

The omission in the previous English program to integrate the reading (and writing) competence until second cycle is based on Stephen Krashen and Terrell theory that: “...when a child is learning any language there is a silent period devoted to acquire comprehensible input, known as the pre-production level. It is during this stage when listening is highly reinforced to assure a better understanding of the language...” In other words a formal reading instruction or strategies are not suggested in this English program, nor applied (at least in general). Reading activities and strategies that I cycle students receive are based

widely on the “Whole Word” method, where they recognize banks of vocabulary words according to the topic studied at the moment along with a language function or structure. By this manner, the students learn the word by recognizing and memorizing it as a whole and its pronunciation implicitly, basically relying on the teacher’s pronunciation of the same.

### **b. Description of the problem**

The third grade students of the Felix Arcadio Montero School have not received a reading instruction or reading techniques because of the existing void in MEP’s I cycle English program. According to the mentioned previously, the focus of their English classes are on listening and speaking activities; therefore, they struggle when it comes to reading simple words and if they manage to read a few words the pronunciation and fluency is poor. This is a reality not only for this particular school but also for the majority of public institutions in the Costa Rican educational system. According to this context, it is important to mention that since MEP incorporated the English subject in primary school curriculum, there has been a concern in improving its program throughout the years. In 2017 the English program suffered a curricular transformation that led to the production of new programs. One change that is important to mention is the integration of reading strategies in I cycle, and in addition, the teaching of Phonemic Awareness, which is an important component when teaching to read. The issue relies upon the fact that this generation of third grade students did not have the privilege of receiving this new change.

The teaching-learning process to read is not an easy task to accomplish, according to National Reading Panel (2000): “...students must coordinate many cognitive processes to read accurately and fluently, including recognizing words, constructing the meanings of

sentences and text, and retaining the information read in memory...” Due to this complexity many researches have surfaced in the past decades trying to affirm the most effective instruction for the teaching-learning process of reading, where the general conclusion is that there does not exist only ONE effective method, there must be a combination of a variety of strategies to cover all the students learning styles. Since the third grade students have not received a formal instruction of reading and due to the low reading performance of the majority of students based on the observation during the teaching practice, reading strategies and activities are important to improve the third grade students’ fluency and pronunciation accuracy when reading words or short texts.

### **c. Justification of the problem**

A proper reading instruction in the early stages of the learning process is a very important vehicle for the students’ academic development. According to (Chall, 1996): “Early reading achievement is the major primary determinant of later reading performance which is a very significant factor of the thorough academic achievement.” Effective reading is essential for success in acquiring a second language; after all, reading is the base of learning all aspects of language such as using the textbooks, writing, learning vocabulary and grammar. The topic in discussion is that the Ministry of Education in the previous English curriculum advocates in its majority to the “Communicative Approach” of teaching English, consequently the main focus is on listening and speaking activities. According to the stated above, reading is basically considered a non-communicative activity, therefore is left aside in the I cycle period. A consequence of this isolation regarding the reading skill, is that it has opened a path for English teachers to teach reading in an eclectic way, where a proper set of reading strategies are not defined.

Since the third grade students have not received formal reading education intrinsically, it is imperative to provide students with specific procedures and activities that help them improve their reading skills. The main focus of this study is to conduct a research to analyze the efficiency of a Phonics instruction for improving reading fluency and pronunciation, to finally discuss and evaluate the implementation of this method. According to the literature review and many researches based on teaching Phonics, Phonics instruction plays an essential role in developing students' reading skills; furthermore, Phonics instruction has been proven to be effective where English is a foreign language. Third grade students need to acquire reading skills since they will be receiving Reading in II cycle and also where it's observed that they present difficulties when reading words and short texts. It is important to jump start a basic reading instruction based on a Phonics instruction as a bridge between I cycle and II cycle English curriculum.

#### **d. Formulation of the problem**

Is the Phonics Method of reading instruction effective to improve the fluency and pronunciation of the third grade students of the Felix Arcadio Montero School?

### **1.2 Objectives**

#### **General Objective:**

- To analyze the effect of teaching reading with a phonics instruction on the pronunciation accuracy of the third grade students of the Felix Arcadio Montero Monge school.

**Specific Objectives:**

- To identify the level of the third grade pronunciation by applying an entry test
- To apply a basic phonics instruction to the third grade students
- To measure the effect of the phonics instruction on the pronunciation of the third grade students by applying an exit test

**2.Chaper II: Theoretical Framework****2.1 Historical Antecedents of Teaching English in Costa Rican Public System**

The teaching of English and other languages has evolved considerably over the past centuries. Language teaching for most of the 20th Century was heavily influenced by the ‘grammar-translation’ of the 19th Century, which involved learning a new word or grammatical structure, translating it into the native language and memorizing it. Now it’s known that to successfully dominate a language it is not only important to know grammar rules and memorize large lists of vocabulary, but it’s important to take into account many other skills. Costa Rica has also evolved in its methodologies and vision of learning and teaching English as a foreign language. It is in July 18th, 1994, as an offering of José María Figueres Olsen political campaign for the Costa Rican presidency, that the teaching of English in public schools started with the supervision of the program named PROLED (Programa de Lenguas Extranjeras para el Desarrollo). This program started in twenty seven public schools, and its objective was for the majority of Costa Rican children have access to the English language in order to obtain a cultural level that provides better job opportunities. Later on, on May 8th, 1997 it’s declared English as part of the basic subjects of the I and II cycles. According to one of the senior English teachers, the Felix Arcadio Montero School entered

in the early years with the PROLED program and from there on they have implemented the different English programs provided by MEP. Therefore the school has a long trajectory of being part of the teaching-learning process of English in the public system, more than 20 years to be specific. Currently in 2017, the school started this year with the new English program “Educating for a New Citizenship” in the first grade level.

To continue with MEP’s trajectory of the English programs, in 2004, the “Oficina de Lenguas Extranjeras” (OLE) formerly PROLED, counts with 1570 schools and 1568 teachers in the English program, for a total of 73.7% of national coverage, according to MEP’s Statistics Department. This program promoted the teaching of English emphasizing in the oral and aural skills, for this reason a specific textbook was not used, the teachers followed the program elaborated by OLE with different topics and objectives, and they would be in charge of seeking out the proper material to cover those topics. (La Enseñanza Del Inglés En Costa Rica Y La Destreza Auditiva En El Aula Desde Una Perspectiva Histórica. Patricia Córdoba Cubillo, Rossina Coto Keith, Marlene Ramírez Salas. Revista Electrónica “Actualidades Investigativas en Educación”). The English program “Relanzamiento de la Educación Costarricense” in 2004, implements the reading and writing competences in the II cycle; although continues with its focus on the listening and speaking competences. Brown (2001) states: “for more than six decades now, research and practice in English language teaching have identified the “four skills” -listening, speaking, reading and writing- as of paramount importance... ESL curriculum and textbooks around the world tend to focus on one or two of the four skills, sometimes to the exclusion of the others” (p. 232). The previous statement can be compared to the situation lived in the Costa Rican public system, regarding the reading competence the Ministry of Education states: “...reading is introduced gradually

in the II Cycle” and continues to describe: “It has to be understood as a secondary skill, used to reinforce the oral skills.” Taking into account this affirmation, the main objective of learning English in the Costa Rican context is for the students to be able communicate successfully, and by communicating successfully it means that communicator should be able to deliver a clear message, as well as to understand one. The focus is on listening and speaking activities, and the reading activities are usually limited to the memorization of grammar structures and vocabulary items. Due to this limitation it is important to underline and mention what have research found about teaching English reading as a second language.

## **2.2. The Great Debate**

Learning to read is a much discussed topic, it has been object of never ending researches over the past centuries, since it has always been a very important competence in the learning process. After all these investigations and research, there are two main instructions used today for teaching reading which are the Phonics Method and the Whole Language Approach. It is known that for decades, reading scholars have argued between using Phonics or the Whole Language Approach as for which is the best teaching method. This debate has generated a debacle called the “Reading Wars” and “The Great Debate” (Chall, 1967). This so called debate has managed to survive throughout many decades going back and forth, but in the early eighties, researcher Jeanne Chall suggested that: “both Phonics and Whole-Word Approaches have their places in reading instruction. She considered that a different emphasis is required at different stages of a reader’s development. Thus we have balanced literacy.”

Currently it is recognized, based on major studies such as the Report of the National Reading Panel that: “effective reading programs should include instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. The panel concluded that beginning readers need “explicit instruction and practice that lead to an appreciation that spoken words are made up of smaller units of sounds... ‘sight’ recognition of frequent words, and independent reading, including reading aloud” (Snow et al., 1998, p.7); in other words, a balanced approach to reading. As a matter of fact, this group saw their purpose as providing an “integrated picture of how reading develops” (Snow et al., 1998, p.2), with the hope that their report “may indeed mark the end of the reading wars”.

### **2.3 Theoretical Context of the Two Main Reading Instructions: Whole Language and Phonics Methods**

The following chapter is an overview of relevant concepts, characteristics, methods, impact and influence of the main reading instructions applied to both native English speakers and English learners. The purpose of this chapter is to enable a better understanding and vision of these reading philosophies to be used as future English teachers/instructors. One of the reading methods that stand out is the **Whole Language Approach**, where children are encouraged to visually remember words and use contextual clues to deduce meaning. And the opposing method that stands out is the **Phonics Method**, which is a way of teaching literacy by recognizing relationships between sounds and letters and the patterns that can occur. Learners are prompted to ‘sound out’ words and combine sounds in a process known as blending. Since the 1980s, reading instruction has been characterized by these two methods.

The following is a short description of one of the main instructions widely used for both native and non-native learners.

## **2.4 The Whole Language Approach**

The Whole Language philosophy is: “A method of teaching children to read by recognizing words as whole pieces of language. Proponents of the whole language philosophy believe that language should not be broken down into letters and combinations of letters and decoded. Instead, they believe that language is a complete system of making meaning, with words functioning in relation to each other in context.” (Dr. Monica Bomengen, 2010). The vision of this approach is that learning language successfully is by communicating and obtaining real meaning. The strategies to obtain the language are used in a holistic way, this means they are based on skills rather than systems and learner-centered rather than teacher- centered. Advocates of the Whole Language Approach believe that this theory consists of many benefits and it is the best way to teach reading. “The Whole Language Approach” was advocated in the middle of the 1980’s and became fashionable for a time in the educational world of America, and it is still popular nowadays. At the very beginning, it was mainly used to deal with the study of the mother tongue, but since the 1990’s, it began to be used in foreign language teaching” (Hedgecock, Jogn & Sandra,1994). Actually in Costa Rica the Whole Language Approach is used widely to teach reading in the public and private systems of education. The following is a basic example description of the “Look and Say” technique applied in the Whole Language Approach.

## **“Look and Say”**

### **Step 1: Learning and locating whole words**

It begins by choosing printed nouns from the reading the instructor will be using and matching them with images. Then, the instructor holds up one of the printed nouns and without reading it, asks students to find the word that matches the noun from the reading. Students use scanning skills to locate the word that matches the instructor's in the reading. This process continues with each noun until each they completed searching all of them.

### **Step 2: linking words together**

When the children had learnt at least half of the word labels, they then can begin to link them into phrases or sentences. The teacher says a sentence containing two of the words, and asks the students to find the nouns in the sentence. After, the teacher asks the students to link them together using 'and'.

### **Step 3: building sentences**

The words the students learned can be placed into different sentences, using sentence cards. As students became more familiar with the words which support how we structure sentences, such as 'on', 'of', 'a', the words are separated and ordered into a sentence that made sense, to be re-ordered to make a question, then question marks are introduced.

### **Step 4: adding interest by using adjectives**

When students know a few nouns and structure words they began to learn some adjectives, such as colors. Eventually, multiple adjectives can lead to the use of commas. This develops the context processor of the brain.

### **Step 5: Practicing reading sentences**

The students start practicing using whole short sentences rather than individual words. For this, the teacher writes a short sentence representing a picture displayed. Says the sentence and ask the child to repeat it while pointing and looking at each individual word as he/she repeats what the teacher said.

For the purpose of this research the technique above is an example of how the third grade students have learned to read; according to their teacher they have never had a direct phonics instruction previously. The following information makes reference to the description of the phonics method and some of its techniques applied, since the Phonics instruction is the base of this research.

### **2.5 Phonics**

The Phonics instruction originated around the time of the Civil War, “phonic” readers began to emphasize the sounds that letters made instead of merely their names. This instruction was divided in three elements:

**1) An invented or reformed alphabet:** In the 1800’s to begin reading instruction they used an alphabet with one-to-one correspondence between sounds and letters (Harrison, 1964; Monaghan & Barry, 1999). This would avoid the confusion created by multiple spellings for one sound. It was intended to replace the traditional Latin alphabet with an alternative, more phonetically accurate alphabet for the English language, but eventually it was discontinued.

**2) Diacritical Markings on the Traditional Alphabet:** Other educators, however, believed that instead of a reformed alphabet, text should include diacritical marks that showed how

letters were to be pronounced (Monaghan & Barry, 1999). Edward G. Ward, former superintendent of schools in Brooklyn, New York, produced a popular set of readers at the end of the 1800s that made extensive use of diacritical marks. Stories such as “The Little Red Hen” and fables like “The Wind and the Sun” appeared in this reader, along with tales of speaking animals. The tale of Little Silver-Hair and the three bears is still recognizable.

### **3) Synthetic Phonics Approaches**

Synthetic phonics approaches emerged at the end of the 1800s, in this category readers followed a predictable sequence: (a) Teach the letter names and their sounds, usually with pictures; (b) Sound out and blend words as soon as a few letter-sounds are learned; and (c) Orally read sentences and stories containing words with the letter sounds learned. Today these would be called decodable texts. While synthetic phonics is still widely used in the twenty-first century, analytic (whole-to-part or deductive phonics), and an analogy form using onset and rime or word families (Adams, 1990) have replaced diacritical markings and invented alphabets. (Barry, 2008)

Currently, Phonics is a widely used method to teach reading. It has lasted throughout the past couple of centuries, even though it has disappeared in periods of time, it has made a comeback nowadays as an effective reading instruction.

### **2.5.1 Definition of the Phonics Method**

The definition of Phonics as a method is: "a system of teaching reading that builds on the alphabetic principle, a system of which a central component is the teaching of correspondences between letters or groups of letters and their pronunciations" (Adams, 1990, p. 50). In other words, Phonics refers to associating letters or letter groups with the sound they represent. For this method, the learners use phonics skills, which starts with letter-sound correspondences, to pronounce words and then attach meaning to them. As the student progresses, they begin to use other skills, such as recognizing word parts (e.g., roots and affixes) and the ability to decode words with more than one syllable. (Tankersly, 2003).

Like mentioned previously, Phonics instruction has been part in the teaching reading process for over more than a century. Because of this long history of phonics in the reading instruction, many research and discussion has been done about its effectiveness. Phonics has long been thought of as a teaching strategy; today it is seen more as "content" within an overall teaching strategy. Phonics aims to teach letter-sound relationships as they relate to literacy and as such, is a valuable means for helping beginning readers to identify and build an internal database of known words. Phonics, however, doesn't help beginning readers with overall comprehension and meaning and therefore must only be thought of as a piece of the puzzle that also includes reading, writing and spelling.

### **2.5.2 Two Main Approaches in Phonics:**

Among phonics teaching methods, two major approaches to phonics instruction, synthetic and analytic:

## **A. Synthetic Phonics Approach**

Synthetic phonics, also referred to as “direct” or “explicit” phonics, builds from part to whole (Dakin, 1999). This method follows a bottom-up model of learning to read (Blevins, 2006, p.111). The word synthetic reflects the practice of synthesizing or blending together. There is a strong consensus that early literacy teaching in English should focus on teaching letter–sound relationships in an explicit, organized, and sequenced fashion (systematic phonics); Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001; Torgerson, Brooks, & Hall, 2006). The National Curriculum in England (Department for Education, 2013) makes more specific recommendations and advocates that children should be taught to sound out each phoneme in a word then blend these phonemes together to pronounce the whole word (synthetic phonics). A synthetic phonics approach is strongly aligned with theories of early reading development. For the beginning reader, each written word will be initially unfamiliar, until the letters are translated into speech sounds (decoded). Ehri (2008) describes early decoding as a highly effortful process in which each grapheme must be translated one by one (e.g., ‘b-l-e-n-d, blend’; phonic decoding). Each time a child successfully decodes a word, they have the opportunity to build up their store of orthographic representations, facilitating a focus on larger units (e.g., ‘bl-end, blend’) and eventually enabling fast access from print to meaning (Grainger, Lete, Bertand, Dufau, & Ziegler, 2012; Share, 1995). In line with this theory, synthetic phonics encourages children to start with a slow and systematic phonic decoding strategy, which facilitates the development of orthographic representations and ultimately enables children to become independent, fluent readers.

## **B. Analytic Phonics Approach**

Analytic phonics is a form of phonics in which sounds are not taught in isolation and individual units as those in synthetic phonics, but are taught within the context of known and familiar words (Cunningham, 2000). It is also known as indirect or implicit phonics. In other words, the focus is on the complete word primarily and later the analysis is done of different components of the word. Children avoid pronouncing sounds in isolation to guess the word in this approach; they analyze the letter sound relation after getting familiar with the word. To understand better the Phonics instruction, the following expresses eight interrelated skills in the basic process of learning to read within this instruction. (“Steps in Learning to Read”, n.d.).

### **1. Recognizing the letters of the alphabet**

First uppercase letters will be recognized and then lowercase letters. Recognition is followed by production and being able to write the different letters of the alphabet, not always in sequence. This will allow a child to encode sounds he/she hears.

### **2. Learning the sounds associated with the letters of the alphabet**

First individual sounds (the sound of the letter ‘b’ for example) and then initial sounds in short words followed by the ending or final sounds are learned. The middle or medial sounds are the last sounds learned. First children learn to recognize and match the sounds heard, and then encode a letter for the sounds heard.

### **3. Word families and word building**

Students must be able to recognize familiar patterns of letters as a way to read new words that are similar to known words. A child learns to attend to the part of the word that has changed and encode that with a new letter. For example, the word “hat” then change a letter to make the word “sat”. The child must change the ‘h’ to an ‘s’, leaving the remaining letters the same.

### **4. Sight word vocabulary**

Sight word vocabulary helps a child learn to read words that are difficult to decode phonetically. A child will build and read short sentences with sight vocabulary. The next step a child will take is to acquire “word sense.” Word sense is recognition of groups of letters as a word, decoding and reading, with particular meaning attached.

### **5. Decoding**

Decoding is learning the phonetic rules that tell us how to pronounce sounds of letters in conjunction with each other. Short vowel sounds are learned first as these are more consistent. Long vowel sounds are studied next and must be recognized and decodable by a child if further growth in reading is to occur.

### **6. Punctuation and capitalization**

Punctuation and capitalization conventions are taught as signals in the reading (and writing) process. Early readers need to learn to stop at a period, which marks the end of a sentence and to pause at a comma. Recognition of basic punctuation is followed by more advanced

conventions, apostrophes to represent contractions and possessives, and quotation marks to denote conversation.

## **7. Spelling patterns**

A more advanced component in learning to read involves being able to recognize the different possible pronunciations of the letter or spelling pattern. For example, the sound of long ‘a’ can be spelled in two ways in the following example: “wait or weight”

## **8. Comprehension**

Finally, a reader needs the ability to pull all of these components together to create meaning (comprehension). This involves being able to indicate the beginning, middle and ending of a story as well as specific details of the story. In order to offer an alternate ending, the reader needs to understand the theme of the story. This allows the reader the ability to infer meaning beyond what was explicitly written in the story.

After analyzing the skills involved in the basic process of learning to read with Phonics, it is important to outline briefly the steps implicated within the Phonics instruction to obtain a better understanding of the practical part of this method. The steps about to be mentioned are part of the reading instruction for beginner readers; therefore a concise description is used.

### **2.5.3 Example of Phonics Steps in Sequence (Brief Outline)**

#### **Cluster 1:**

Step 1: Introduce the vowels and their short sounds.

Step 2: Introduce the consonants and their sounds.

Step 3: Begin blending short vowels with consonants.

Step 4: Begin blending and reading one vowel words and short sentences.

**Cluster 2:**

Step 5: Introduce the long vowel sounds.

Step 6: Practice blending long vowels with consonants.

**Cluster 3:**

Step 7: Begin blending and reading two vowel words and introduce two special rules.

Rule #1: The One Vowel Rule

Rule #2: The Two Vowel Rule

Step 8: Introduce the special sounds that are made when letters “stick” together. (Digraphs)

**2.5.4. Phonics and ESL context**

The National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children (2006), found that: “Systematic phonics instruction can benefit learners of English but there are a few big differences between how L1 learners experience learning how to read and how L2 English learners experience it.” Some circumstances that should be taken into account when using phonics instruction with ELL’s is that native learners already have a vast bank of vocabulary they are likely to encounter, so they are able to connect the pattern of letters to a representation of the word that they already know. On the other hand L2 learners have much less vocabulary; to counter this situation, the instructor may choose texts that contain words that the learners already know so they comprehend the meaning.

Another important fact to consider is that L2 learners of English may not have accurate phonological knowledge of English, which could make something like explaining the rule of magic ‘e’ after long vowels difficult to explain if learners cannot differentiate

between long vowels and short vowels to begin with. Therefore when teaching students who are learning to read, teachers must use instructional materials that are of interest to students. In addition, these students need to use materials that will enable them to experience reading success.

According to the Costa Rican EFL context of teaching reading, it is important to take into consideration that some teachers have experience teaching phonics and know about the method, and some have not even heard of it ever. Hence, MEP included phonemic awareness into the program, and the reaction of many teachers is that they have little experience of teaching it and a lot of questions about the what, the why and the how. This lack of information and disorganization on a consensus on reading instructions has provoked a significant delay in the public school students reading skills. The consequences of this delay has affected the reading performance up to high school students reading ability where the exit profile of the English learner contradicts the aim of MEP's exit profile. In the Costa Rican public school system, phonics has been completely ignored, and context and visual memory were being used as the sole tools for children learning to read. Research has proven that there is no reason why teachers cannot point out contextual clues to learners alongside phonics. In fact, research indicates that the most successful readers are able to line up both phonics and whole language processes simultaneously. Due to the fact that this research is to analyze the effectiveness of implementing Phonics into the regular English classes, it is important to mention the differences between a native learner and a non-native learner.

#### **2.5.5. Similarities and Differences between L1 and L2 in the Reading Process**

Most studies done on phonics have been conducted on L1 speakers of English. The National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children (2006) funded by the US

government found that systematic phonics instruction can benefit learners of English; however, there are a few big differences between how L1 learners experience learning how to read and how L2 English learners experience it. L1 English learners already know nearly all of the vocabulary they are likely to encounter in a book aimed at their age group, so they are able to connect the pattern of letters to a representation of the word that they already know, whereas L2 English learners have smaller vocabularies. It is important to only choose texts that contain words that you know the learners already know if you want them to comprehend the meaning.

The other big difference is that L2 learners of English may not have accurate phonological knowledge of English, which could make something like explaining the rule of magic 'e' after long vowels difficult to explain if learners cannot differentiate between long vowels and short vowels to begin with. These differences have implications when it comes to deciding how to teach phonics to our learners, which I will touch on during my tips for teaching phonics. The following is a concise description of the differences stated above existing between L1 (native speaker) and L2 (non-native speaker) students in the reading process, William Grabe states:

“...L1 and L2 reading abilities share many of the same component skills and that the reading construct is very similar in terms of underlying cognitive and linguistic components. In most respects, this is a reasonable position to take. At the same time, any consideration of L2 reading abilities has to recognize that there are several ways in which L2 reading differs from L1 reading abilities. Most of these differences center, either directly or indirectly, on the linguistic resources that a reader can bring to bear on text comprehension.”

The author in his article continues to describe these differences in six concise statements as follows:

A. L2 students have much smaller linguistic knowledge base when they begin reading. Their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structure is more limited.

B. L2 students have much less experience with reading exposure in the second language; they simply have much less practice in L2 reading.

C. L2 students experience L2 reading differently because the cognitive processing will involve two language systems (e.g., accessing the bilingual lexicon, using a joint strategy system—Kern, 1994; Koda, 2005\* as cited by this article).

D. Aside from the possibilities of developing somewhat distinct cognitive processing, students that engaged in L2 reading will also experience a range of transfer effects (cognitive skills, strategies, and goals and expectations). Some transfer effects will involve interference from the L1; others will facilitate L2 reading processes.

E. L2 readers rely on different combinations of general background knowledge when reading in the L2. Drawing on information about “how the world works” sometimes varies between L1 and L2 reading experiences.

F. L2 readers will encounter distinct social and cultural assumptions in L2 texts that they may not be familiar with or find somewhat hard to accept.

The following section describes some useful tips based upon the previous experience of an ESL teacher on how to tackle these differences that might appear in the learning process to read in the public education context.

### **2.5.6. Tips of how to teach phonics:**

#### **1) Be consistent**

Consistency is key. It can be helpful to make it part of the class routine and put aside 20 minutes every class at a set time, for example in the Warm-Up activities. It is also important to have a plan of which letters and sounds you will work on each week throughout the term, rather than approaching them arbitrarily, because logically there are some spelling rules that are more complex than others.

#### **2) Always start with pronunciation work and be conscious of sounds that your learners have problems with in their L1**

This is one of the areas in which teaching phonics in an L2 context can be quite different to teaching it in an L1 context. It goes without saying that if a learner has inadequate phonological knowledge of the L2, then phonics can quite easily become unsuccessful. An example is that Spanish speakers confuse the 'v' and 'b' in writing. This is because for many speakers of Spanish /b/ and /v/ are not contrastive phonemes. If learners cannot hear the difference between two sounds, we cannot expect them to be able to distinguish successfully in the early stages of writing. Playing some pronunciation games can help check that learners are producing the desired sounds correctly before introducing them to the written form. Highlighting where in the mouth the sounds are made can be helpful too.

### **3) Beware of published materials designed for L1 learners of English**

It is important to be aware that some materials that are designed for L1 learners of English are not suitable for the L2 context, because materials designed for English speaking children tend to rely a lot on students having native-like vocabularies

### **4) Scaffold**

Scaffolding is a teaching method that enables a student to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal through a gradual shedding of outside assistance. Like most activities in the primary classroom, it is important to break tasks down for learners in order to help them achieve their best. For example, start with the pronunciation of individual sounds, then introduce the written form of those sounds before moving on to blending, and then finally the reading and writing of whole words.

### **5) Get kinesthetic**

Phonics is usually associated with old school teaching. There are many phonics activities involving movement that you can be done in the classroom and that allows learners to burn off some steam at the same time. For example practicing writing CVC words, the students can do a hopping relay race to write the word you say on the board, and read it.

### **6) Try to contextualize it, but don't beat yourself up if you can't**

Context can make things more memorable for learners. Sometimes trying to contextualize phonics sessions and tying them to a scheme of work is not possible. For example, trying to connect a phonics slot to the colors vocabulary and finding some common phonological pattern is impossible. Sometimes obvious links are just not there.

After analyzing important concepts and research regarding the Phonics instruction in English Language Learners, the next section describes the application of a Phonics instruction in fourteen students from a public school in Heredia. The aim is to analyze how a group of children from the public school system, with no previous reading instruction, react to this method.

### **3. Chapter III: Methodological Implementation**

#### **3.1 Type of research**

The research followed a mixed design. For the qualitative research carried about in the public school, a direct observation was conducted in the natural setting of the English classes of third grade students of a public school in Heredia. After a period of several weeks of observation, it is noticed that the third grade students (in general) presented a low performance when it came to reading simple words and sentences. Based on this information, and for the quantitative research, an experimental study that consisted of an explicit Phonics instruction was chosen to analyze the impact on the reading fluency and pronunciation accuracy on a group of fourteen students from the Felix Arcadio Montero School. The group of students received the treatment (test group) and the rest of students (control group) remained without one. The independent variable of this study was the instructional method and the dependent variables were reading fluency and pronunciation accuracy. First, the pre-test was to determine the level of the group's reading fluency and pronunciation accuracy; and second, the post-test was to determine the effectiveness of the instruction. After the instruction ended the results were compared to prove the effectiveness of an explicit Phonics instruction along with the regular English classes.

### **3.2 Participants**

Fourteen third grade students from the Felix Arcadio Montero School in Santo Domingo of Heredia were selected to participate in a Phonics instruction. The participants in this study were young learners aged nine to ten from the 3-1, 3-2 and 3-4 classes, where it is observed that the majority face reading difficulties. The participants in this study were a combination of a total of fourteen third grade students from the three different classrooms mentioned above. The participants in this study were randomly assigned to the test group, by choosing 5 names from each of the 3 third grade classes where the teaching practice was carried out. The 5 names were drawn from a bag that included the complete list of names of each classroom. It is important to mention that one student could not continue with the instruction due to illness (the group was reduced to 14). The 14 students consisted of 6 boys and 8 girls where none of the students attend any formal English instruction outside the school; also none of the students present any special condition, or physical, cognitive or emotional. Demographically speaking, there are 13 Costa Rican born students in the study, one student with a Russian background and two other with Nicaraguan backgrounds.

### **3.3 Methodological Strategies**

On July 17<sup>th</sup>, the researcher gathered data with pre-tests scores on reading fluency and pronunciation accuracy, by measuring the amount of words read correctly in fluency drills word lists. The list of 120 words adjust to the characteristics and nature of the Phonics instruction and were used to compare pre-test and post-test scores of the experiment.

Over the course of the next three weeks, the third grade students met with the research teacher twice a week in forty minute sessions each. It was explained to the students that they were going to be part of a reading competition and had to receive a reading instruction in order to participate. Each session focused on specific phonics rules along with strategies that go in hand with the practices and philosophy of the Phonics instructional theory. The instructor explicitly taught phonics patterns and rules, and the students practiced remembering the rules. It is important to mention that there was no use of stories or texts, or visual context clues; instead, the main focus was on memorization of rules.

The Phonics instruction implemented was systematic (done according to a fixed plan) and sequential (in succession without other rules or concepts coming in between); therefore, first a step with a specific rule was taught and then the students practiced, to eventually move on to the next step. The Phonics reading instruction was outlined by learning four steps that included short and long vowel rules, since the participants are third grade beginner readers and due to time restraint. When all the steps were completed, they were quickly combined to make practice more productive and real.

**Instruction:**

Before the students learned the rules for reading short and long vowel sounds, they started by recognizing and producing these sounds reliably. The instruction started with the short vowels sounds *ă, ě, ĭ, ǒ, ů*, with examples of short vowel words: **at, egg, it, ox, up**, and practiced recognizing the short vowel sounds by listening activities. The students continued

with long vowel sounds after. It was explained to the students that vowels have more than one sound in the English alphabet.

**Phonics Step 1: Introducing the vowels and their short sounds:** the primary goals for the students were letter recognition and learning the short vowel sounds using examples of clue words and songs. First, the sound of each vowel was introduced by using specific songs for each one, and then by using individual Power Point flash cards for each vowel and repeating after the instructor.

Example using alphabet flashcards: First introduce the letter ‘a’ by name and by short sound: read the flashcard by saying: A says ă, ă apple.

The same activity was done with the rest of short vowels, by introducing and reading each of the 5 vowel flash cards the same way. The students read the Power Point slides with clue words, pronouncing each clue word emphasizing on the short vowel sound. It is explained to the students to smile when pronouncing short “a” and “e”.

A says ă, ă apple

E says ě, ě egg

I says ĭ, ĭ igloo

O says ǒ, ǒ octopus

U says ŭ, ŭ umbrella

Then the students read just the vowel sounds: **ă, ě, ĭ, ǒ, ŭ**. The instructor mixed up the order by pointing randomly to each vowel, to be sure learning and not just memorization was taking place. As the session wrap up, a video with the short vowel sounds was presented.

**Phonics Step 2: Short Words.** The instructor introduced the V+C (vowel + consonant) rule and the C+V+C (consonant + vowel + consonant) rule for short vowels, which is that the words with these patterns make the short vowel sound. The instructor provided example words, such as “hat”, “bed”, “bat”, “dig”, and so on.

**Phonics Step 3: Introducing the long vowel sounds.** The primary goal for the students was learning the long vowel sounds using clue words. The instructor explained the sound of the long vowels and students began to distinguish between the short sounds and the long sounds by listening and repeating after the instructor. The students read Power Point Flashcards with clue words; the teacher tells the students that long vowels say their name. The instructor introduces the long vowel sounds in the same way the short vowels sounds were introduced. For example

A says ā, ā acorn

E says ē, ē eagle

I says ī, ī ice cream

O says ō, ō open

U says ū, ū uniform

After reading in order the vowel sounds: **ā, ē, ī, ō, ū**, they read them mixed up.

**Phonics Step 4:** The teacher introduced the magic –e rule, by explaining students that words with C + V + C + e, with a final “e” make the long vowel sound.

**Phonics Step 5: Introducing the team vowel long vowels sounds.** The teacher introduced the rule: “When two vowels go walking, one does all the talking”. This rule means that usually when there are two vowels together in a word it makes the long vowel sound of the first one. For example: team, rain, boat... The teacher presented this rule with long a, long e, and long o.

**Phonics Step 6: Controlled R.** The teacher introduced to the students this rule, where the “r” changes the sound of the vowel, such as in: “car”, “for”, “fur”, “father”. The instructor

explained that when pronouncing “r” it’s easier to change the vowel sound next to it. The instructor used videos. For this rule, there was no practice; it was only mentioned to the students.

**Phonics Step 7:** The students practiced along the guidance of the instructor the phonics rules presented.

\*If there were exceptions, the rules for these should also be given.

After the steps in the instruction were completed, an exit test was conducted using the same decoding fluency word lists and the same amount of words. The teacher checked the correct amount of words read correctly by recording each student meanwhile they read the lists. The recordings were analyzed and introduced in the students’ checklists, to be measured later on.

### **3.4 Instruments**

Performance checklists were used to measure the reading performance before and after the Phonics instruction, the results of these checklists were used to compare the effectiveness at the end of the instruction. The performance checklists are conformed of four lists of one hundred and twenty control words: 10 short a words, 10 short e words, 10 short i words, 10 short o words, 10 short u words. Also, 10 long a words, 10 long i words, 10 long o words and 10 long u words with the silent –e rule. Finally, 10 vowel team long a words, 10 vowel team long o words and 10 vowel team long e words. Each student reads a different list of words. The teacher used a recorder to recollect the reading data. For the instruction, the students were given 3 basic Phonic rules, along with audiovisual support and oral practices and explanations. The exit test to analyze the effectiveness of the instruction was a different list of the one read in the entry test, although the same patterns of control words were used.

The teacher listened to the recordings and checks if the amount of correct words increased, decreased or maintained the same.

#### **4. Chapter IV. Analysis and interpretation of the results**

##### **4.1 Analysis of the diagnoses of the situation**

The following section is a presentation of the results obtained from the effect of the Phonics instruction on the fluency and pronunciation accuracy of the third grade students of the Felix Arcadio Montero Monge School. For the data analysis, Excel sheets were used for the pre-test and post-test results, by introducing the data recollected during the experiment to be later analyzed by the use of graphics. The first section of the analysis was to identify the level of students' reading fluency and pronunciation by applying an entry test using decoding fluency drills list of words and introducing the data in an Excel Sheet. The data introduced consisted of the amount of words read correctly. Each student read ten groups of words for each of the three steps in the Phonics instruction to be applied.

## Entry Test

### Amount of control words read correctly per vowel

STUDENT	SHORT A	SHORT I	SHORT O	SHORT U	SHORT E	LONG A	LONG I	LONG O	LONG U	V.T. LONG A	V.T. LONG E	V.T. LONG O	TOTAL
ANGELINA	0	0	10	2	6	8	7	0	1	1	7	4	46
HILLARY	0	0	5	0	10	7	2	4	0	0	3	8	39
PABLO	0	0	0	0	10	3	6	2	2	1	1	8	33
IAN	2	0	0	0	10	6	9	0	1	0	0	7	35
YANURY	1	0	0	0	10	4	7	0	0	2	3	5	32
GENESIS	0	0	0	1	10	7	4	4	1	0	0	7	34
MATIAS	0	0	0	0	10	1	1	3	0	0	0	5	20
SAUL	0	0	0	0	10	9	8	10	3	0	0	9	49
DANA	0	0	0	0	10	3	0	4	3	0	1	1	22
CARO	0	0	5	1	10	5	7	5	1	0	7	1	42
KRISTINA	0	0	0	0	10	1	5	6	1	6	10	5	44
ADRIAN	0	0	0	4	10	6	6	9	2	9	1	9	56
ERIC	0	0	0	0	10	1	9	4	2	0	8	5	39
FIGURELLA	0	0	0	5	10	9	0	1	1	0	0	5	31

**The Entry Test is a performance checklist consisting of the amount of words read correctly by each participant. The list is conformed of groups of 10 words for each type of vowel, and the type of vowels come from 3 phonic rules taught during the instruction. The total amount of words read correctly is added at the end of the table.**

After recollecting the data from the entry test, the Phonics instruction was applied. The Phonics Instruction consisted of the teaching of three basic Phonics Rules for reading beginners; the rules comprehend the sound and pattern of short vowels and long vowels.

**Rule #1:** Words with VC and CVC pattern are pronounced with the short vowel sound.

**Rule #2:** Magic “e”. Words with CVCe pattern are pronounced with long vowel sound.

**Rule #3:** “When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking” Words with team vowels such as: ai – ea – oe – oa make the long vowel sound.

The second section of the analysis was to measure the effect of the phonics instruction by applying an exit test using a different list of decoding fluency drills and introducing the

data in an Excel sheet. The data introduced consisted of the amount of words read correctly.

Each student read the same pattern and amount of words.

### Exit Test

#### Amount of control words read correctly

STUDENT	SHORT A	SHORT I	SHORT O	SHORT U	SHORT E	LONG A	LONG I	LONG O	LONG U	V.T. LONG A	V.T. LONG E	V.T. LONG O	TOTAL	
ANGELINA	0	5	8	10	10	10	10	9	3	5	6	5	2	73
HILLARY	10	9	10	9	10	10	10	6	0	10	9	4	97	
PABLO	0	0	0	4	10	2	5	4	2	5	7	6	45	
IAN	10	5	5	5	10	10	10	10	9	7	9	10	100	
YANURY	6	2	10	6	10	10	8	9	1	6	10	4	82	
GENESIS	10	8	10	10	10	7	8	10	7	8	5	10	103	
MATÍAS	7	6	7	4	8	6	0	5	6	6	7	4	66	
SAUL	10	3	10	5	9	10	10	10	8	10	10	10	105	
DANA	6	8	9	7	8	10	10	9	8	10	8	8	101	
CARO	0	7	10	2	10	8	8	4	8	3	10	10	80	
CRISTINA	10	5	10	7	10	8	10	10	9	10	10	8	107	
ADRIAN	9	7	7	10	10	9	9	9	6	8	6	6	96	
ERIC	3	6	0	7	8	7	5	10	6	10	9	4	75	
FIORELLA	10	10	0	3	10	8	7	4	8	5	6	7	78	

**The Exit Test is a performance checklist consisting of the same amount of words read correctly by each participant. The list is conformed of groups of 10 words for each type of vowel, and the type of vowels come from 3 phonic rules taught during the instruction. The total amount of words read correctly is added at the end of the table. In this test the students were given different list from the Entry Test.**

The following chapter demonstrates the results obtained before and after the application of the Phonics instruction.

#### 4.2 Interpretation of the results

The results demonstrated that after the phonics instruction there was a global improvement in the students' reading efficiency regarding pronunciation and fluency with all 14 students. Nevertheless, it is important to appoint that the individual performance of each student varied regarding the type of rule and pronunciation. It is observed during the instruction and Exit Test that the students were very concerned for doing their absolute best. During the relaxed environment of the instruction, it was noticed that students responded

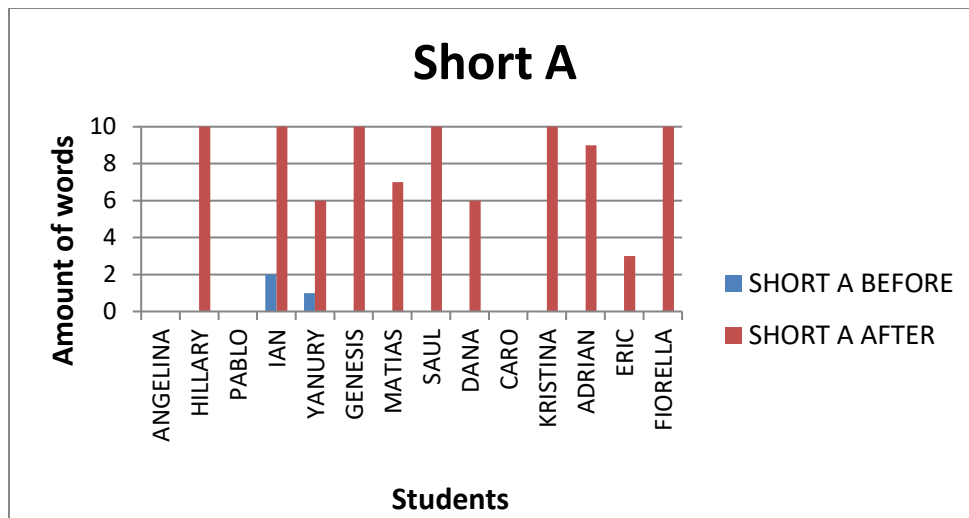
very well to the rules and explanations presented, they recalled the rules taught previously and their pronunciation of the different vowels improved. They recognized the pattern for the short vowel pronunciation and applied the rule taught. For the long vowels pronunciation, the students recognized the rules for the “magic e” rule and the “two vowel rule”. Previous to the instruction, the participants pronounced the short vowels in their native language, and some did not recognize the long vowel sounds either (the name of the letters). It appeared that the phonics treatment resulted in gains in the global result of number of words read correctly compared to the number of words from the pre-test for all participants.

Despite these overall positive effects, as mentioned before, it is important to address that individual student performance varied in different stages of the instruction and in rules. For example some students excelled in some short vowel pronunciation, and on the other hand they would maintain or decrease in other pronunciations. Although, results reflect that at the end, all students benefited from the phonics instruction in some extent. Various observations made during the process might explain the reasons of these differences in performance. For example a few students demonstrated to be distracted and uninterested during some sessions, also there were noticeable differences in ability across the three groups. For example, some students learned most of the rules and vowel sounds after the first teaching exposure and rarely made mistakes. Some students, who were more delayed in their mother tongue literacy skills, would transfer those problems when reading the control words. Another important factor that might have interfered with students’ performance was nervousness; when the exit test was executed, the majority of students had admitted to be very nervous, even though there was an attempt to calm the students. The fact that the exit test was conducted in isolation and at the computer lab might have influenced some or all

students' performance. The following graphics reflect the different results obtained of how the phonics instruction affected the students' reading performance in each vowel sound and pattern.

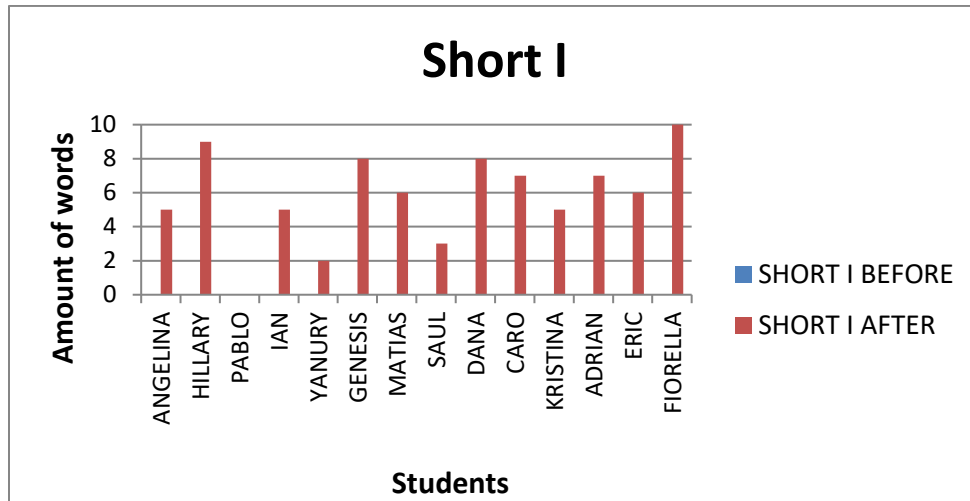
Each of the following figures is the representation of the results of each of the students' amount of words read correctly. On the left of the graphic is the total amount of words for each vowel. The bars indicate the amount of words read correctly before and after the instruction. Blue is for the results of the Entry Test and Red is for the results of the Exit Test.

**Figure 1. Short A Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



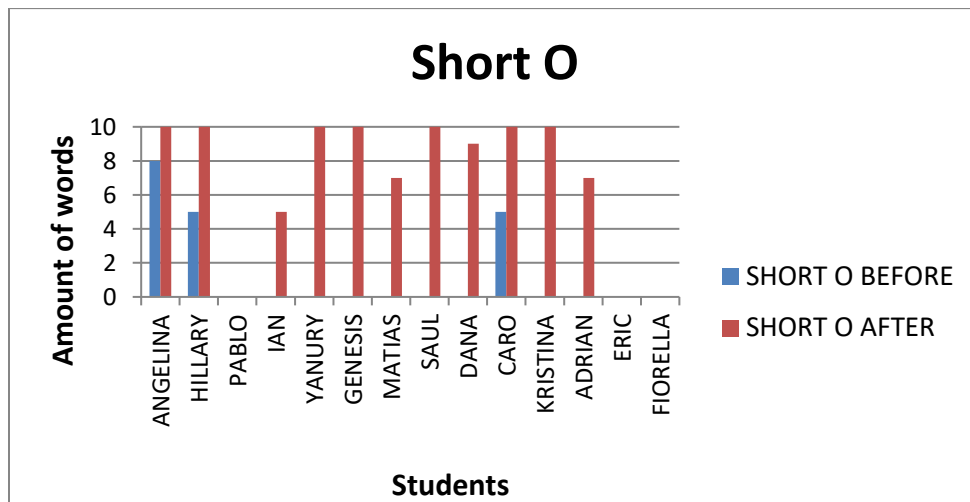
For the short A, the students read the control words which had the CVC pattern. In the Entry Test they pronounced the “a” as in their L1. After the instruction, their pronunciation improved. This vowel was the easiest for the participants.

**Figure 2. Short I Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



For the short I, the students read the control words which had the CVC pattern. In the Entry Test they pronounced the “i” as in their L1. After the instruction, their pronunciation improved. Much practice was needed for this vowel, this vowel was more difficult.

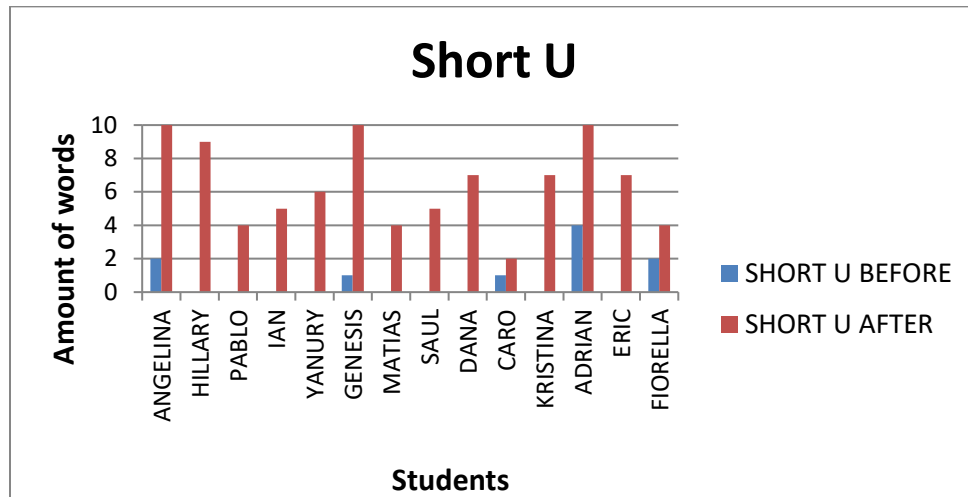
**Figure 3. Short O Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



For the short O, the students read the control words which had the CVC pattern. In the Entry Test they pronounced the “o” as in their L1. After the instruction, their pronunciation improved. It was explained to the students that they had to open their mouth. Only three

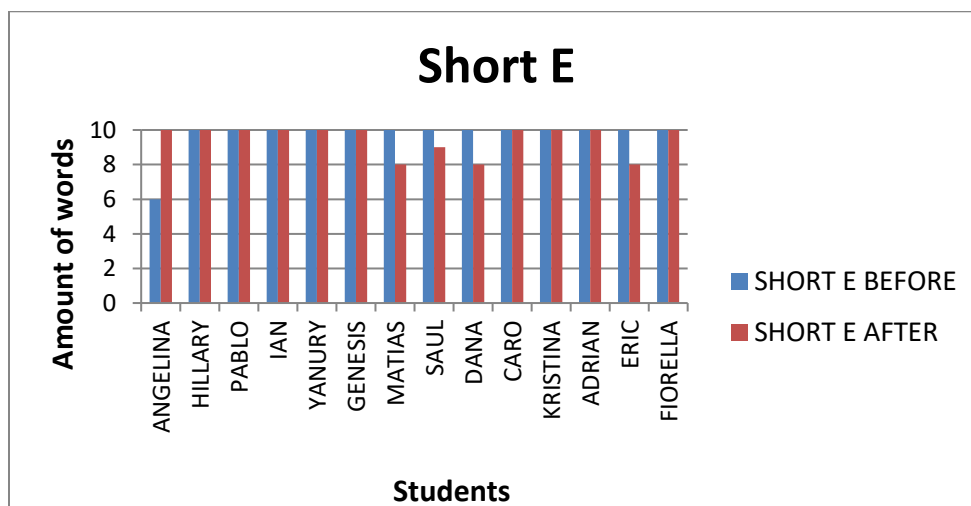
students read some words correctly, this could be because they had seen the words previously in another context.

**Figure 4. Short U Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



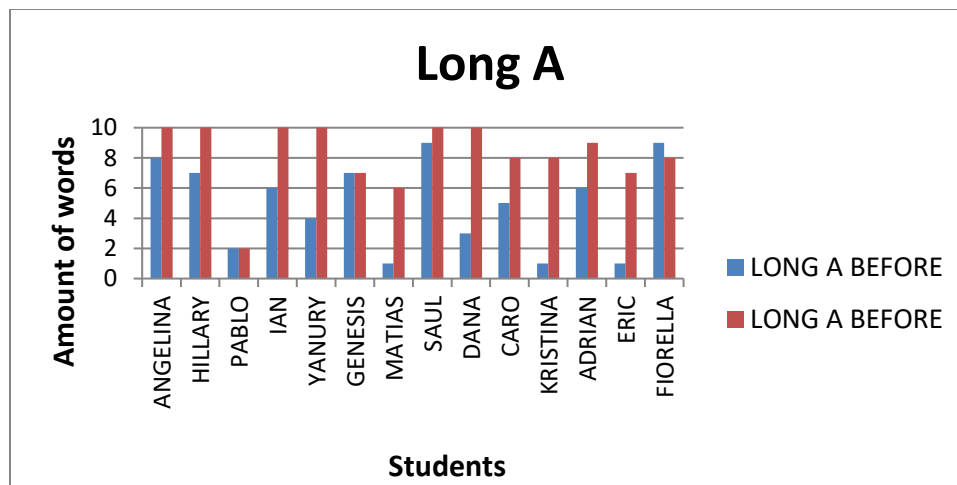
For the short U, the students read the control words which had the CVC pattern. In the Entry Test they pronounced the “u” as in their L1. After the instruction, their pronunciation improved. Much practice was needed for this vowel, this vowel was more difficult.

**Figure 5. Short E Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



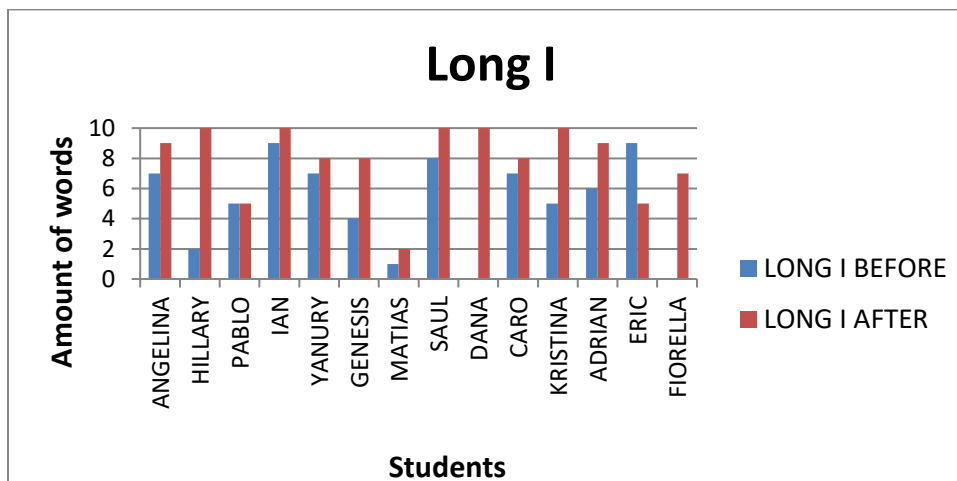
For the short E, the students read the control words which had the CVC pattern. In the Entry Test they pronounced the “e” as in their L1, which is the same pronunciation in their L1. Not much practice was required for this vowel.

**Figure 6. Long A Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



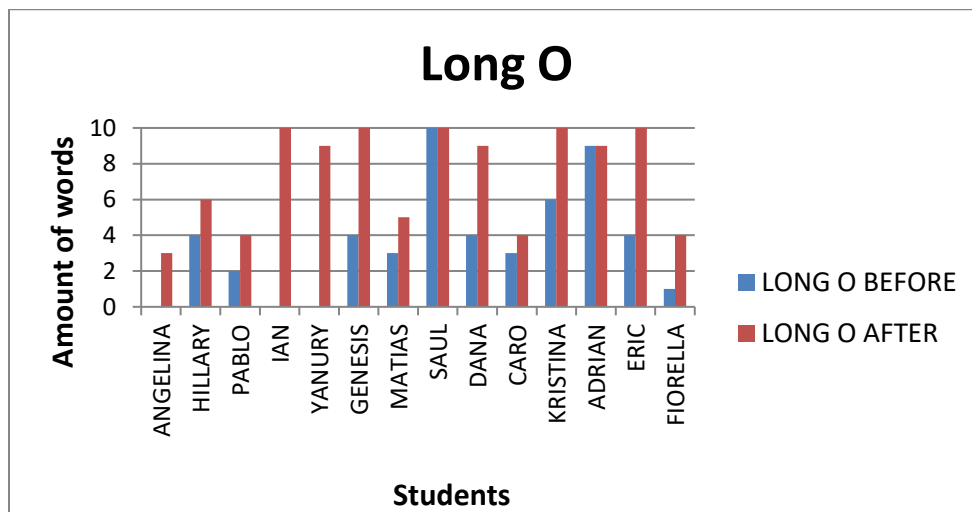
For the long A, the students read the control words which had the CVCe pattern. In the Entry Test, most of the students were familiar, at least in some patterns, and they pronounced correctly the long A. After the instruction they improved in recognizing and pronouncing correctly.

**Figure 7. Long I Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



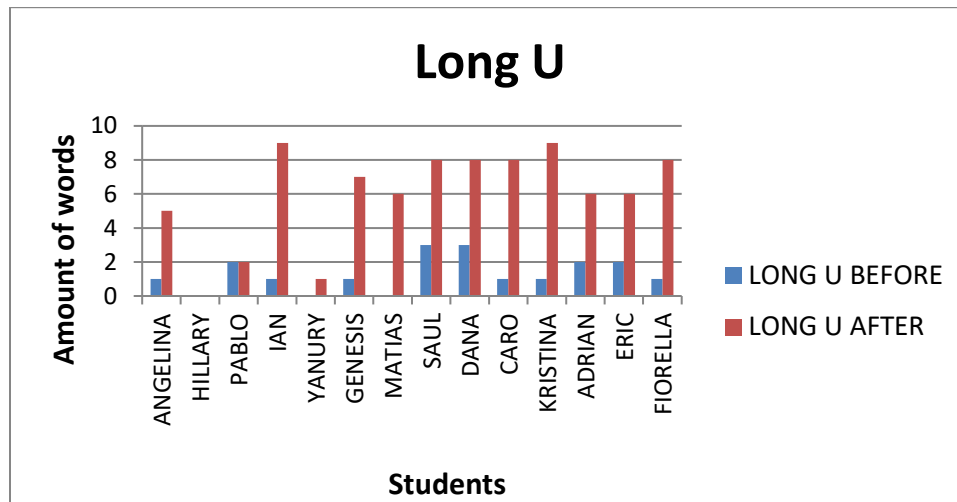
For the long I, the students read the control words which had the CVCe pattern. In the Entry Test, most of the students were familiar, at least in some patterns, and they pronounced correctly the long I. After the instruction they improved in recognizing and pronouncing correctly. Only one student decreased after the instruction.

**Figure 8. Long O Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



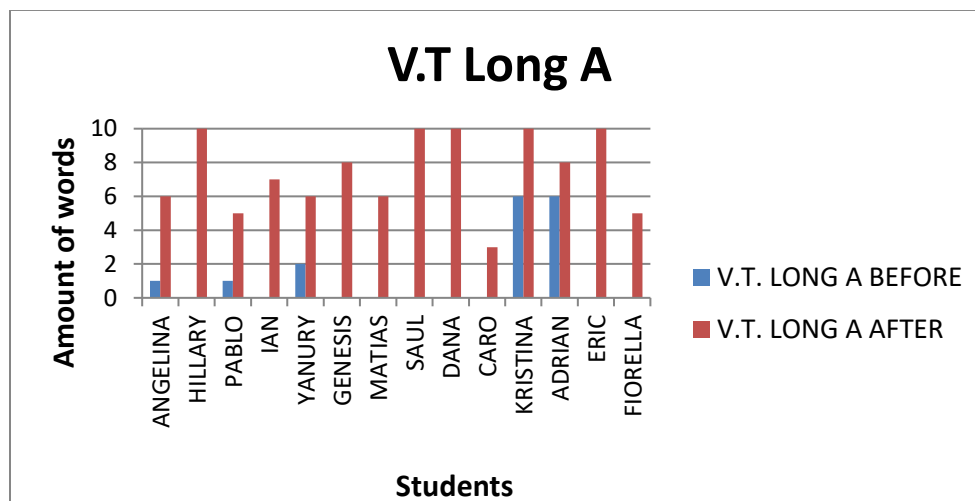
For the long O, the students read the control words which had the CVCe pattern. In the Entry Test, some of the students pronounced the /o/ with a rare open sound that did not match any correct pronunciation. After the instruction they improved in recognizing and pronouncing correctly. One student made the same amount of misreading words.

**Figure 9. Long U Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



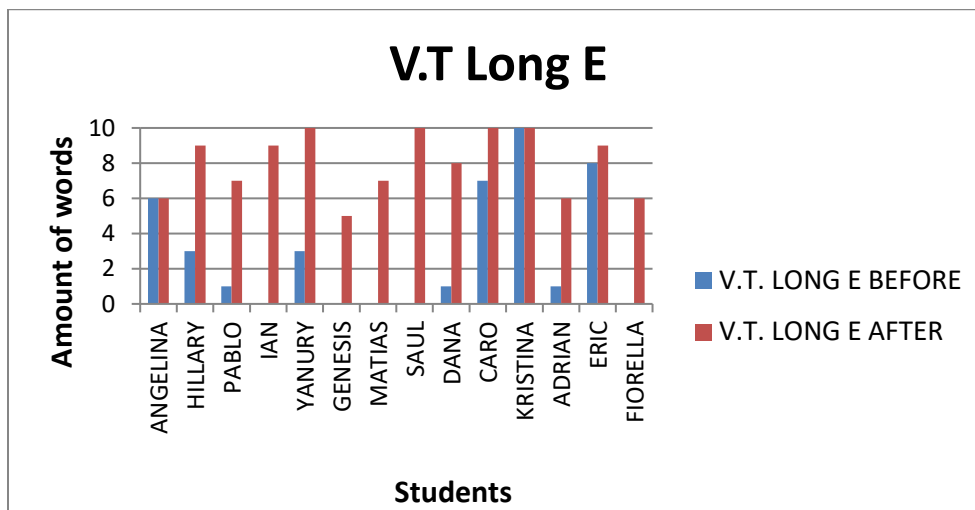
For the long U, the students read the control words which had the CVCe pattern. In the Entry Test, most of the students pronounced the long U like the /u/ in their L1. After the instruction they improved in recognizing and pronouncing correctly. The participants received well this pronunciation.

**Figure 10. Vowel Team A Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



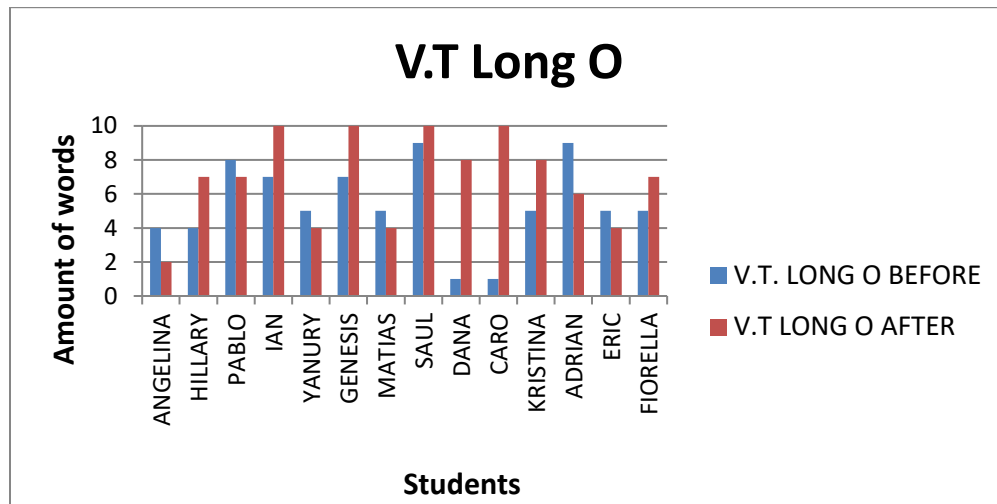
For the vowel team long A, the students read the control words which had AI pattern. In the Entry Test, most of the students read /ai/ like their L1, After the instruction they improved in recognizing and pronouncing correctly. This vowel did not present much difficulty for the participants to learn.

**Figure 11. Vowel Team E Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



For the vowel team long E, the students read the control words which had EA pattern. In the Entry Test, some of the students read the words correctly, the rest of students would pronounce it like an /e/. After the instruction they improved in recognizing and pronouncing correctly. This vowel did not present much difficulty for the participants to learn.

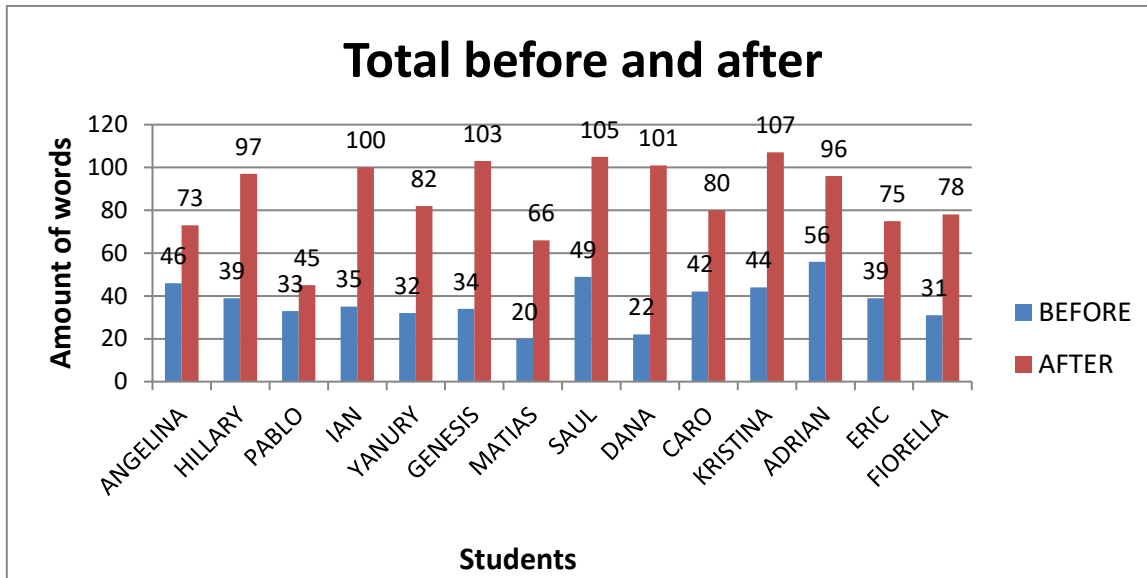
**Figure 12. Vowel Team O Entry and Exit Tests Results.**



For the vowel team long O, the students read the control words which had OA and OE patterns. In the Entry Test, the majority read the words correctly, the rest of students would pronounce it like an /o/. After the instruction they improved in recognizing and pronouncing correctly. This vowel did not present much difficulty for the participants to learn.

The previous set of graphics was a detailed result of each of the amount of words read by the participants. It is observed based on the figures that the majority of students made an improvement in their reading skills.

**Figure 13. Global results of the total words read correctly**



The figure above is the reflection of the overall result of all the combined words read correctly by the participants. It was proven that a Phonics instruction could increase the students' reading performance,

### 4.3 Limitations

There were several limitations of this study that might have interfered with the results of the instruction. First, the small sample group sizes limited the external validation of the findings; on account that, the Phonics instruction was meant to be applied on a large class in the natural setting. In addition, the interventions lasted for only three weeks and occurred only twice per week for 40 minute sessions; this represents a very time-limited intervention. Time restraint to introduce more rules and practice was present due to institution activities and personnel meetings. Some sessions were held up to four days after the previous session, interrupting the instruction flow.

## **5. Chapter IV: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

The aim of this research was to analyze the effect of teaching reading with a phonics instruction on fluency and pronunciation accuracy of the third grade students of the Felix Arcadio Montero Monge School; since they presented a low performance in their reading skills observed during the natural setting of their English classes. The reason for the students' low performance could rely on the fact that their activities were solely based on listening and speaking activities, and the teaching of reading skills was left to the memorization of words. The observation mentioned above, lead to apply a basic Phonics instruction to measure its effect on the students' reading skills. According to the findings of this research, it was concluded:

1. During the process it was observed that with the learning of basic Phonics rules, the students enhanced their pronunciation, making possible a better oral communication; therefore the reading competence should not be considered separated from the oral communicative competence, since both of them are connected. Knowing to read correctly translates into better communication skills.
2. According to the results, when they were taught differences in the grapheme-phoneme relationships between the short vowels and the long vowels along with the corresponding rules, it facilitated the ability to read fluently and an accurate pronunciation occurred. Although it is important to mention, that the learning of the different sounds present in the English vowels is not an easy task to accomplish. Much practice should be taken into

consideration; it is only until the students master these differences, that they will achieve a proper pronunciation and reading fluency.

3. There exist many grapheme-phoneme relationships in English that are similar to the Spanish grapheme-phonemes, especially the majority of the consonant phonemes. This enabled the students to recognize and read properly many of the control words from the entry and exit tests. Although, it is relevant to consider the differences between these relationships, for example letters such as /b/ and /v/ in Spanish are usually pronounced as /b/, also /s/ and /z/ are pronounced as /s/, and the same case for /g/ and /k/ which is pronounced as /k/. For this reason the differences between the two languages should be understood, or else the communication skills may be affected negatively.

4. It was observed during the instruction, that L2 reading competencies were influenced by L1 competencies. The students transferred prior knowledge between the two languages, for example, who had mastered the L1 grapheme-phoneme relationships, would transfer it to the L2 literacy. The negative side of this process was noted in the students that had a low level of L1 reading skills. For example, students who presented a confusion regarding the pronunciation of some consonants in their native language would transfer these errors to the L2 language. For example the word “dig” was read as “big”. Therefore it is important, not only, to take into consideration whether to teach Phonics or not, but when and how this could be done most effectively making use of transferable knowledge from L1.

5. Incorporating interesting and motivating activities was relevant for the students learning performance. Since Phonics instruction might be very uninteresting due to the rigidness of the rules to be memorized, fun and easy explanations for the phonics rules should be

introduced in this method. The resources presented to the students brought out a new interest and motivation during the instruction.

6. In conclusion, it is important to consider the implications of the theoretical discussion and practices of Phonics in the public school system in order to achieve a broader understanding of how students might respond to an instruction of this nature. To hold on only to a Phonics method and the related ability to read correctly should never be considered as the only way to teach reading. The ability to understand what we read is the main objective of the reading competence. It is important to underline that a Phonics instruction is recommended to go alongside other reading methods and strategies. Phonics is only a part of a broader process of the teaching of reading, were the results demonstrated an improvement in pronunciation in such a short period of time.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Replication of the instruction is needed with larger samples in future investigation, to understand better the response of a Phonics instruction in the natural setting of a regular English classroom. Also, the implementation of more frequent sessions in longer periods of time is recommended, to give more opportunities for the students to learn the rules. More frequent sessions translates in more practice, this should help focus on maintaining the rules originally mastered.

Based on the results of the Phonics instruction, any other reading instruction or activities used in the regular English classes would be most effective with a basic phonics instruction integrated into the daily lesson plan. Instead of listening to a song or singing along, the warm up or wrap up part of the lesson can be used as a time to teach a phonic rule

and practiced in a posterior warm-up session. Also, in the public school system there are five English lessons; one of those lessons could be used as a Phonics lesson plan from time to time.

Phonics reading instruction should include consistent, specifically planned, teacher-directed, phonics activities. It is recommended that the teacher begins a literacy lesson by introducing a specific phonics pattern, followed by a brief demonstration of how that pattern is used in various words, and should not introduce any another rule, this instruction has to be systematic. Distinguishing and listening repeatedly to the different phonemes in fun phonics songs is recommended for students to familiarize with the sounds. To add, conducting a guided reading lesson with preselected text that includes the new spelling pattern should be applied. The objective of the guided reading lesson is to develop comprehension, and not only focusing on decoding of single words.

Since the third grade students responded well to the instruction, it's recommended that a Phonics instruction can be used in the EFL public school context; nevertheless, further and more extended investigation is worth conducting to achieve more insight since this investigation yielded such positive results. Ultimately, a curriculum that combines other reading strategies and truly emphasizes phonics instruction will most effectively build literacy skills for all young readers.

**Annex****Short A Words**

cab

lab

tab

bad

dad

fad

lad

had

tag

wag

am

dam

**Short I Words**

bib

fib

rib

bid

did

hid

kid

lid

dim

him

rim

in

## Short O Words

cob

job

mob

rob

sob

cod

nod

pod

box

fox

dock

lock

## Short U Words

sun

up

cup

pup

us

bus

but

cut

buck

duck

luck

tuck

## Short E Words

bed

fed

led

red

deck

neck

peck

less

sell

tell

well

yell

## Long A Words (Silent e)

face

lace

pace

race

brace

grace

place

space

wade

blade

grade

shade

## Long I Words (Silent e)

ice                  dice                  dime                  lime

pride                slide                life                  wife

bike                 dike                 smile                while

## Long O (Silent e)

code                strode                joke                 woke

broke                tone                 zone                 shone

stone                cope                 hope                 pose

## Long U (Silent e)

cube

cute

fume

fuse

mule

muse

mute

prune

use

flute

June

lute

### Power Point Presentation Slides

Review of the consonants sounds



Short Vowels

ă		apple
ĕ		egg
ĭ		igloo
ŏ		octopus
ŭ		umbrella

Short vowel rule

CVC Pattern

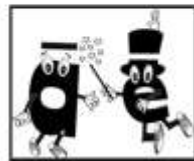
Consonant + Vowel + Consonant

P I G



Magic "e"

It has the power to make the first vowel say its name

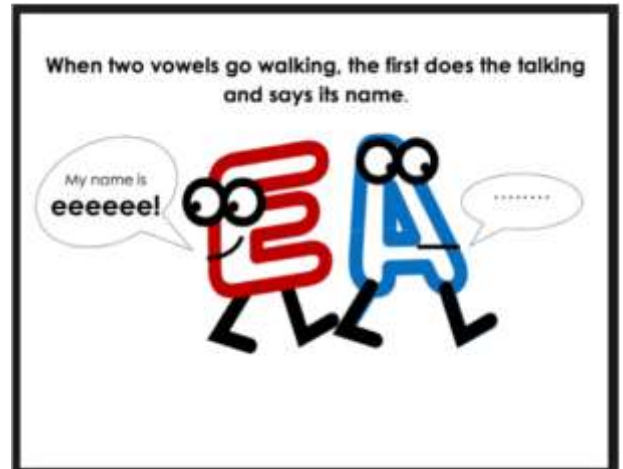


## Patrones

Aparecen en las palabras que poseen:

C + V + C + e

fine	pane
mane	hide
note	robe
side	wine
mete	ripe
pete	scrape
pine	shade
pipe	site
plane	paste
quite	state
rate	ate
ride	sale

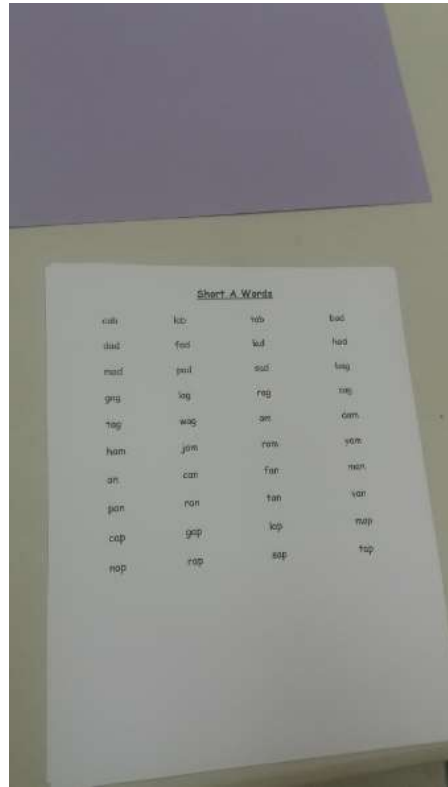


## Online Activities

- <https://www.kizphonics.com/phonics/short-vowels-a-e-i-o-u-phonics-practice-activity/>
- Short Vowel Song:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iYnFv-1EeU>

1.	act	snail	snake	whale
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.	cute	bed	puma	blue
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.	comb	goat	dig	geese
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.	cop	deer	eel	sheep
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.	eagle	bug	maid	fail
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.	bat	leap	heal	seam
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.	reap	cap	goat	deer
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.	cute	tiger	green	pen
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>







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