

**A MODEL OF BEGINNING READING INSTRUCTION: EXPLICIT  
INSTRUCTION IN PHONEMIC AWARENESS, ALPHABET  
KNOWLEDGE AND ENCODING/DECODING WITHIN A  
FRAMEWORK OF SHARED BOOK READING**

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I certify that the substance of this thesis has not been submitted for any degree and is not being currently submitted for any other degree.

Any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged.

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Ruth Fielding-Barnsley

## **ABSTRACT**

In this study a model of reading was designed, implemented and evaluated over a period of 16 months. The significant parts of this study included training in phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, matching alphabet letters to the taught sounds using multi-sensory aids, and using this knowledge to read a set of words.

The first 12-week phase, instruction in phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge, took place at preschool when the children were 4-5 years old. The second phase, learning to read words, took place in the children's first 10 weeks at school in the following year. The follow-up evaluation took place 16 months after the commencement of the initial preschool training.

The preschool phase included shared book reading. The aim of including shared book reading was to make the training phase more relevant to the children and to increase their awareness of concepts about print and how books function.

One hundred and thirty-four male and female children made up the first part of the study at preschool. One experimental group (E1) of 38 children was trained in phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge and letter-sound matching, all in the context of shared book reading. The second experimental group (E2) of 33 children was given the same training as (E1) but did not receive shared book reading. A control group (C) of 63 children received only training in phonemic awareness.

Results indicated that both groups (E1 & E2) trained in phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge and letter-sound matching outperformed the control group (C) in a forced word-choice test.

The shared book reading group (E1) showed superior results in a test of concepts about print (CAP) over E2. However, no other measures, including alphabet knowledge, vocabulary (PPVT), or reading attitude (RA), distinguished the two experimental groups, E1 and E2.

The second part of the study included sub-groups totalling 32 experimental children, from the first part of the study. Seventeen children were selected from E1 and 15 children from E2. These groups were further split into two groups, one of which was taught to read a set of words using decoding and encoding methods (D/E) and the other taught to read the same set of words using a whole-word method (WW).

At posttesting the children taught by the decoding/encoding method were superior in reading and writing both novel real words and pseudowords, compared with the whole-word group. These results support the contention that explicit instruction in decoding is helpful even when children have high levels of phonemic awareness.

The 16-month follow-up study confirmed the superiority of both the experimental groups (E1 & E2) over the control group (C) in significantly higher scores on the Woodcock Word Identification Test. At the 16-month follow-up, the children from the second phase of the study who were taught by the decoding/encoding method produced superior spelling scores over the children who were taught by the whole-word method. Both trained groups (DE & WW) were superior to the untrained groups in pseudoword reading and spelling.

Implications for educationalists are discussed, for example, the inclusion of written and spoken language structure in teacher education programmes, and screening children for phonemic awareness during their first year of schooling.

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