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Enhance Reading Skills Through Blending Sounds Methodology to Students from The Tenth Grade

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DEDICATORIA

This research work is especially dedicated to my mother and son, whose love, encouragement, and sacrifices have been the driving force behind my pursuit of knowledge and growth. Their unwavering support has fueled my journey, and I am forever grateful for their presence in my life.

- Andrea

I would like to start by thanking God for granting me the wisdom and strength to face the challenges that came my way. I also dedicate this research to my mother, Wilma, who has been a fundamental pillar in my life, always supporting me unconditionally. To my son, Samuel, my greatest inspiration. As I always say, he is the love of my life! He is the reason that motivates me, teaches me, and with all my love, I dedicate my achievements to him.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to the rest of my family, especially my two sisters, Katty and Mabel, who have always encouraged me to continue pursuing my studies.

- David

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- Andrea

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- David

RESUMEN

Este estudio evaluó la efectividad de la Metodología "Blending Sounds" en la mejora de las habilidades de lectura y pronunciación de los estudiantes de décimo grado de la “Unidad Educativa Fiscal Oswaldo Guayasamín" en Quito, Ecuador. Se utilizó un diseño cuasi-experimental, con un grupo experimental que recibió la intervención "Blending Sounds" y un grupo de control que siguió métodos convencionales de enseñanza del inglés. El objetivo principal fue determinar si esta metodología específica podía mejorar significativamente la conciencia fonológica, la pronunciación, la fluidez lectora y la comprensión de los estudiantes en inglés.

La investigación comenzó con un pre-test para establecer las habilidades iniciales en dos áreas clave: conciencia fonológica y pronunciación, y fluidez y comprensión lectora. Los resultados mostraron niveles de habilidad iniciales similares en ambos grupos, con el grupo experimental obteniendo una puntuación de 5.5 en conciencia fonológica y pronunciación, y 6.0 en fluidez y comprensión lectora, mientras que el grupo de control obtuvo 5.7 y 5.8, respectivamente. Esta comparabilidad aseguró un punto de partida justo para evaluar el impacto de la intervención.

Tras la implementación de la Metodología "Blending Sounds", los resultados del post-test revelaron mejoras significativas en el grupo experimental. Las puntuaciones medias aumentaron a 6.8 en conciencia fonológica y pronunciación y a 7.2 en fluidez y comprensión lectora. En contraste, el grupo de control mostró solo cambios leves, con una puntuación media de 6.1 en conciencia fonológica y pronunciación, y 6.4 en fluidez y comprensión lectora.

Una prueba T confirmó que estas diferencias eran estadísticamente significativas, con valores de T de 26.66 para conciencia fonológica y pronunciación, y 60.93 para fluidez y comprensión lectora, y valores p muy inferiores al umbral de significancia. Estos hallazgos indican que la Metodología "Blending Sounds" tuvo un efecto positivo considerable.

En general, el estudio demuestra que la Metodología "Blending Sounds" mejora eficazmente habilidades lingüísticas clave, sugiriendo su potencial como una herramienta valiosa para mejorar la competencia en inglés entre los estudiantes. La investigación recomienda una mayor implementación de este enfoque en contextos similares y anima a realizar estudios adicionales para explorar sus aplicaciones más amplias.

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology in improving the reading and pronunciation skills of tenth-grade students at the “Unidad Educativa Fiscal Oswaldo Guayasamín” in Quito, Ecuador. A quasi-experimental design was used, with an experimental group receiving the "Blending Sounds" intervention and a control group following conventional English teaching methods. The primary goal was to determine whether this specific methodology could significantly enhance students' phonological awareness, pronunciation, reading fluency, and comprehension in English.

The research began with a pre-test to establish baseline skills in two key areas: phonological awareness and pronunciation and reading fluency and comprehension. The results showed similar initial skill levels in both groups, with the experimental group scoring 5.5 in phonological awareness and pronunciation and 6.0 in reading fluency and comprehension, while the control group scored 5.7 and 5.8, respectively. This comparability ensured a fair starting point for assessing the impact of the intervention.

Following the implementation of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology, the post-test results revealed significant improvements in the experimental group. The mean scores increased to 6.8 for phonological awareness and pronunciation and 7.2 for reading fluency and comprehension. In contrast, the control group showed only slight changes, with a mean score of 6.1 for phonological awareness and pronunciation and 6.4 for reading fluency and comprehension.

A T-test confirmed these differences were statistically significant, with T-statistics of 26.66 for phonological awareness and pronunciation and 60.93 for reading fluency and comprehension, and p-values far below the threshold for significance. These findings indicate that the "Blending Sounds" Methodology had a substantial positive effect.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the "Blending Sounds" Methodology effectively improves critical language skills, suggesting its potential as a valuable tool for enhancing English proficiency among students. The research recommends further implementation of this approach in similar contexts and encourages additional studies to explore its broader applications.

ÍNDICE GENERAL

Certificado de Aval del Tutor de Tesis

Guayaquil, 20 de septiembre del 2024.

AVAL DEL TUTOR DE LA TESIS

Siendo designado como tutor del programa de maestría Pedagogía del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera de la Universidad Bolivariana del Ecuador (UBE), se avala el trabajo titulado "*Enhace reading skills through blending sounds methodology to students from the tenth grade*", que ha sido elaborado por Males Quishpe Andrea Mishell y Jonathan David Olalla Ajila, bajo mi tutoria y que reúne los requisitos para ser defendido ante el tribunal que se designe a tal efecto.

Firma : CARMEN ANDREA LETAMENDI LAZO Digitally signed by CARMEN ANDREA LETAMENDI LAZO Date: 2024.09.20 10:09:20 -05'00'

Msc . Carmen Andrea Letamendi Lazo

ÍNDICE DE TABLAS

ÍNDICE DE FIGURAS

LISTADO DE ANEXOS

INTRODUCTION

Phonetics examines the physical properties of sounds, such as their frequency, duration, and intensity, as well as the physiological processes involved in the articulation and reception of these sounds. The study of phonetics provides the foundation for understanding pronunciation, speech patterns, and the diverse sound systems of different languages. Mastery of phonetics is crucial for acquiring reading and writing skills in any language. In the case of English, a language with less phonetic and more irregular spelling than Spanish, the ability to correctly combine sounds becomes a fundamental skill for reading comprehension and proper pronunciation of words. The lack of this skill can lead to frustration, demotivation, and poor academic performance among students, perpetuating a cycle of difficulties that may extend beyond the school setting.

At the "Unidad Educativa Fiscal Oswaldo Guayasamín UEFOG", located in Quito, Ecuador, a recurring problem has been identified among tenth-grade students in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. Despite the efforts made by the teaching staff and the application of conventional teaching methods, a high percentage of students experience significant difficulties in reading English. These difficulties not only affect their overall academic performance but also limit their ability to communicate effectively in the language. Frequent pronunciation errors, slow reading pace, and poor comprehension of textual content generate frustration and demotivation among students.

The main problem lies in the student's inability to understand and produce the sounds that make up English words. This phenomenon is known as a phonetic difficulty. It is particularly evident in students learning English as a foreign language, as their mother tongue influences their perception and production of sounds in English. In the tenth grade, where students are expected to reach an A2 level of proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), these phonetic deficiencies are especially concerning.

The causes of this problem can be diverse. Firstly, the students' mother tongue directly influences their perception and production of English sounds, making it difficult to recognize

and correctly pronounce words. This linguistic interference is a common phenomenon among EFL students and represents a significant obstacle to developing reading skills. Secondly, there is a lack of adequate phonetic skills among the students, evidenced by their inability to understand and correctly produce the sounds that make up English words. This problem, known as a lack of phonological awareness, is particularly concerning in the context of teaching English as a foreign language. Finally, the conventional teaching methods used at the Educational Unit may not be sufficiently adapted to the students' specific needs in learning English sounds, thus limiting their development of reading and pronunciation skills.

The consequences of this problem are multiple and affect both the academic performance and the emotional well-being of students. Firstly, difficulties in reading and pronunciation of English contribute to poor academic performance in the EFL class, which can negatively impact their overall progress in language learning. Secondly, students who face persistent difficulties in reading and pronunciation may experience frustration and demotivation, which, in turn, can lead to decreased self-esteem and confidence in their language skills. Finally, the lack of English proficiency may limit students' future academic and professional opportunities, as English is a fundamental skill in a globalized world.

To address this problem, the implementation of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology is proposed. This methodology focuses on teaching students to blend individual phonemes to form words, thereby improving their phonological awareness, decoding ability, and reading fluency. Through a systematic and structured approach that includes multisensory activities and guided practice, the "Blending Sounds" Methodology helps students overcome the phonetic barriers they face in learning English. The implementation of this methodology at "UEFOG" aims to improve students' reading and pronunciation skills, promote more effective English learning, and consequently enhance their academic performance and motivation, providing them with better opportunities for their future development.

The underlying hypothesis is that the systematic application of this methodology can facilitate better understanding and production of English sounds, thereby improving reading competence and confidence in using the language.

General Objective

To determine the effectiveness of the Blending Sounds Methodology in improving the reading and pronunciation skills of tenth-grade students at the "Unidad Educativa Fiscal Oswaldo Guayasamín" in Quito, Ecuador.

Specific objectives

1. To diagnose the current level of phonetic and reading competence of students in English through a pre-test.
2. To apply the Blending Sounds methodology through a structured program of activities and educational resources.
3. To evaluate the impact of the methodology on improving students' reading and pronunciation.

The present research is justified for several educational, social, and academic reasons that underline the need to address phonetic difficulties in learning English as a foreign language among 10th-grade students at the "UEFOG". Mastery of phonetics is essential for acquiring reading and writing skills in English. At the Educational Unit, it has been observed that 10th-grade students face significant difficulties in understanding and producing English sounds, which negatively impacts their ability to read and pronounce words correctly. These difficulties not only limit their academic performance but also influence their motivation and self-esteem in language learning.

The application of the sound blending methodology offers a specific pedagogical intervention that can help students overcome these phonetic barriers. By improving students' ability to blend sounds and form words, their reading competence and pronunciation are expected to improve, resulting in better overall academic performance in English. This improvement can provide a solid foundation for continued language learning, facilitating the transition to more advanced levels of proficiency.

From an academic perspective, this research is situated within a broad field of studies on teaching English as a foreign language and the importance of phonetics in acquiring language skills. Although there is abundant research on the sound blending methodology in English-speaking

contexts and other languages, specific studies addressing its implementation and effectiveness in the Ecuadorian context are lacking.

Dependent Variable: Reading and Pronunciation Skills

Reading and pronunciation skills are crucial for students learning English as a foreign language, encompassing abilities such as phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, comprehension, and correct pronunciation. Phonemic awareness, the ability to recognize and manipulate individual sounds in words, is foundational for reading proficiency and is linked to successful literacy development (Li, 2020). Decoding involves applying knowledge of letter-sound relationships to pronounce words correctly, while fluency is the ability to read text with appropriate speed, accuracy, and expression, all of which are essential for comprehension (Wahyuni, 2022). Moreover, accurate pronunciation is critical for effective communication and overall language competence.

Difficulties in these areas can significantly hinder students' academic performance and motivation, particularly in contexts where English is learned as a foreign language (Zhang & Yuan, 2020). For tenth-grade students at the " UEFOG " Educational Unit, improving reading and pronunciation skills through targeted interventions like the Blending Sounds Methodology can lead to better academic outcomes and increased confidence in using English. This methodology focuses on enhancing phonemic awareness and decoding skills, thereby improving overall reading fluency and pronunciation (Supraba et al., 2020). Enhancing these skills not only supports academic success but also prepares students for future educational and professional opportunities.

Independent Variable: Blending Sounds Methodology

The Blending Sounds Methodology is an instructional approach designed to improve students' phonemic awareness by teaching them to combine individual sounds to form words, an essential skill for reading proficiency. This methodology emphasizes the ability to blend sounds seamlessly, which is a critical component of decoding and reading fluency (Ehri, 2020). By

focusing on sound blending, students learn to recognize and produce the distinct phonemes of English, which is particularly beneficial for learners whose native language may have different phonetic structures.

Research has shown that systematic phonics instruction, which includes sound blending techniques, significantly improves reading abilities in early learners and those learning English as a foreign language (Quindós, 2005). In the context of the " UEFOG " Educational Unit, the implementation of the Blending Sounds Methodology aims to address specific phonetic difficulties faced by tenth-grade students. By providing structured activities and resources that focus on sound blending, this methodology not only enhances reading and pronunciation skills but also boosts students' confidence and motivation in using English, thereby contributing to their overall academic success and future opportunities.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Blending Sounds Methodology in improving the reading and pronunciation skills of 10th-grade students at Unidad Educativa "UEFOG," this quantitative propositional research will employ a structured methodology involving two phases: pre-intervention and intervention, followed by post-intervention evaluation. Grade 10 A will serve as the experimental group, receiving instruction through the Blending Sounds Methodology, while grade 10 B will act as the control group, continuing with conventional teaching methods. Pre-intervention diagnostic tests will be administered to both groups to establish baseline data on their reading and pronunciation skills in English.

During the intervention phase, the experimental group will participate in 12 weeks of targeted sessions, while the control group will follow the standard curriculum. Post-intervention, the same diagnostic tests will be conducted to assess any improvements in both groups. Statistical analysis will be applied to compare the results, determining the significance of the differences observed. The findings will be compiled into a detailed report, providing insights into the methodology's effectiveness and offering recommendations for broader application in similar educational contexts.

The study focuses on all tenth-grade students at Unidad Educativa "UEFOG" in Quito, Ecuador, with a special focus on two groups of approximately 30 students each. Group 10 A will serve as the experimental group, and Group 10 B as the control group, resulting in a total sample size of 60 students. The purposive sampling method ensures that both groups have similar

English proficiency and academic performance, making them comparable for the study.

Selecting these specific groups allows for a detailed and statistically significant assessment of the Blending Sounds Methodology's impact on reading and pronunciation skills. This sample size is sufficient to conduct comparative analyses and derive robust conclusions about the intervention's effectiveness, ensuring the research's rigor and validity.

This study provides a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of the Sound Blending Methodology in improving the reading and pronunciation skills of tenth-grade students in Ecuador. By demonstrating the validity of this methodology, the study offers a specific educational intervention that can be implemented in other institutions facing similar issues. Furthermore, the study's findings are expected to contribute to the development of new pedagogical strategies addressing phonetic difficulties in learning English as a foreign language. These contributions will not only benefit the students and teachers of the "Oswaldo Guayasamín" Educational Unit but may also influence national-level educational policies.

The importance of this study lies in its ability to address a critical educational need: improving phonetic skills in English learning. In a globalized world, mastering English is essential for accessing academic and professional opportunities. The proposed methodology offers an innovative and specific solution to a persistent problem, making it a relevant and necessary intervention in the current educational context. Additionally, the study is situated within a contemporary research field that seeks to integrate phonetic approaches into language teaching, providing scientific novelty by applying this methodology in a Spanish-speaking context. The research not only adds value to existing literature but also provides empirical data that can guide future research and educational practices.

The report comprises four key chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the study's findings and implications. In Chapter 1, the Introduction and Study Context are discussed, offering insights into the research problem, objectives, theoretical underpinnings, and relevance. Additionally, a review of relevant literature on phonetic challenges in English learning and existing methodologies is provided. Chapter 2 delves into the Research Methodology, elucidating the research design, quantitative methods utilized, sample selection criteria, data collection tools, and the intervention process employing the Sound Blending Methodology.

Following this, Chapter 3, Analysis and Results, presents the outcomes derived from data analysis, including a comparative assessment of student performance between the experimental and control groups, bolstered by descriptive and inferential statistics to gauge intervention effectiveness. Finally, in Conclusions, contextualizes the findings within the existing scholarly landscape, deliberates on their practical and theoretical implications, and offers recommendations for future research endeavors and educational strategies. Furthermore, it explores the feasibility of implementing the Sound Blending Methodology in diverse educational settings beyond the study context.

CHAPTER 1: THEORICAL FRAMEWORK

The development of phonetic skills is a crucial component in the process of learning to read, particularly in the teaching of foreign languages such as English. This theoretical framework explores the importance of these skills, contextualized within the Blending Sounds method as a key strategy to improve pronunciation, fluency, and reading comprehension. First, the historical context and significance of the phonetic approach to reading instruction are presented, followed by a clear definition of the essential phonetic skills for learning. Various strategies and approaches to enhancing reading skills are discussed, along with the role of extensive reading in language development. Reading is also examined as a multifaceted skill, with a particular emphasis on the Blending Sounds methodology, providing practical examples and highlighting its relevance within the phonics approach. Additionally, the processes involved in learning to blend sounds and the common phonetic difficulties in acquiring English are explored, especially in tenth-grade students, who face particular challenges in this context.

The art of effectively teaching children to read and write is a fundamental aspect of the educational landscape, and the blending sounds methodology has emerged as a crucial approach in this domain. This investigation explores the significance of blending sounds in the context of education, delving into the theoretical underpinnings, practical applications, and the evidence supporting its efficacy.

At the core of the blending sounds methodology is the recognition that the ability to manipulate and synthesize individual sounds is a crucial precursor to proficient reading and writing skills (Ehri, 2020). By systematically introducing students to the relationship between letters and their corresponding sounds, this approach empowers them to decode unfamiliar words, ultimately fostering their overall literacy development. The theoretical foundations of blending sounds can be traced back to the principles of phonics instruction, which emphasize the direct teaching of letter-sound correspondence as the primary means of unlocking the alphabetic code. Numerous studies have

corroborated the effectiveness of this approach, demonstrating its positive impact on reading fluency, comprehension, and spelling abilities among students of diverse academic profiles.

The practical implementation of the blending sounds methodology often involves a structured, sequential curriculum that guides students through the mastery of individual letter sounds, progressing towards the blending of these sounds into recognizable words. This process typically begins with the introduction of simple, high-frequency phonemes, gradually increasing in complexity as students' skills develop. Educators commonly employ a range of multisensory techniques, such as the use of kinesthetic and visual cues, to enhance the learning experience and accommodate diverse learning styles (Zarić et al.2021).

Furthermore, the blending sounds methodology has been shown to be particularly beneficial for students who struggle with reading, including those with dyslexia or other language-based learning disabilities. These learners often face challenges in making the necessary connections between sounds and their corresponding letters, and the structured, explicit nature of the blending sounds approach has demonstrated its ability to address these difficulties.

1.1. Background and Significance

The Blending Sounds Methodology (BSM) is based on the Multilevel Writing Semiotics among letters and sounds, that makes use of semantic and metasemic Theory. The BSM methodology is an attempt to aid children who have not learned to read and write in their presumed years at school, using a structured program. It is not intended to be a definitive answer but to inform and raise relevant educational points. This is an extended step-by-step explanation focused on the methodology itself, with relevant news from other approaches, complementing its theoretical background, based on authors such as Lev Semenovich Vygotsky and his work about literacy development, as well as other researchers from other areas (Wong, 2023).

Reading/writing theories and educational practices coincide with the belief that a strong relationship exists between phonological awareness and beginning reading in alphabetic writing systems. Phonological awareness, the ability to segment words into syllables and words into individual

phonemes or to blend phonemes to form words, has been found to predict children's success in learning to read and spell. Support for a phonological processing view of beginning reading comes from cognitive and educational psychology and developmental and cognitive neuropsychology, which demonstrate that phonological awareness is heavily implicated in learning to read. Consequently, methods that begin with instruction that encodes and decodes the correspondence between orthography and phonology and then teaches how phonemes can be blended into meaningful syllables and words are more effective (Treiman et al., 2022).

Slater in 1982 developed a mechanical device called a "talkator" which is a microphone coupled with a hydrocarbon 'fog horn' control bubble, and used to produce a narrower band of frequencies and better control the slope of vowel formant pitch. Equipment for presenting blending of individual phonemes and drilling was also developed by Slater. In 1985, the terminology "synthetic and analytic phonemic inputs" was introduced by Smith. In the "model" for teaching phonics or in other presentations, phonetic emphasis is seen. Prior to field-induced reading, two or three-week units for learning phonemic analysis and specific goals presented by the specific letter's phonetic characteristics are designed. Each letter has a story and has at least one word in it. Students practiced phonic analysis using their skills. These phonemic input experiences were also practiced for the words taken by bodyless sounds in them.

As early as 1926, Harold S. Lundgren utilized synthetic phonics exercises to facilitate the analysis of individual sounds and provided preliminary experience with auditory perception. Phonics instruction stresses the use of letters and sounds to teach reading more than any other single methodology. In 1967, the Ransoms presented guidelines on synthetic phonics for teaching underprivileged readers in which they referred repeatedly to 'pure', 'simple', or 'blendable' sounds. Camper and Dymek in 1971 introduced "sound blending" as one way to produce some muscle control and to help the children learn not only what sound was segmented out, but also a new CVC word. From 1974 to 1977, Morgan and Klein separated their subject into two subproblems, namely auditory analysis of phonemes and audiotape work spaced between the live teacher's steps. The blending of phonemes learned in the steps showed skill in producing the desired behavior.

1.2. Definition of Phonetic Skills

Phonetic skills refer to the ability to recognize, produce, and manipulate the basic units of speech known as phonemes. These skills are essential for language acquisition as they allow individuals to distinguish between different sounds and understand how they combine to form words (Priya & Kumar, 2020).

Phonemes are the minimal sound units in a language and are the fundamental building blocks of spoken words. Successful early reading and spelling acquisition depends on a variety of different skills, with phonological processing being particularly important. Phonological processing involves interpreting acoustic signals with linguistic content, and three key areas have been identified as crucial for reading and writing competence: phonological awareness, naming speed, and phonological working memory (Qizi & Anatolevna, 2020).

Phonological awareness refers to the ability to recognize and manipulate the sound structure of language, including the ability to identify and differentiate individual sounds, syllables, and rhymes. This skill is fundamental in the early years of education as it facilitates the understanding of the correspondence between sounds and letters. Naming speed, on the other hand, involves the rapid retrieval of phonological information from long-term memory, which is important for fluent reading and spelling. The speed at which a child can name a series of objects, colors, or numbers is closely related to their ability to read quickly and accurately.

Phonological working memory, the ability to temporarily store and manipulate phonological information, is also crucial for language development and literacy acquisition. This memory allows individuals to retain and process sequences of sounds, which is vital for the comprehension and production of spoken and written language. Research suggests that interventions tailored to individual phonological processing deficits can be effective in preventing or mitigating later difficulties with dyslexia (Priya & Kumar, 2020).

Additionally, phonetic learning and perception have been extensively studied at various stages of life, from infancy to adulthood, providing valuable insights into language development and its underlying neural mechanisms. Studies by Patricia Kuhl, for example, have demonstrated the importance of phonetic perception and the role of experience in shaping language learning, with significant implications for educational practices and interventions. These studies highlight how infants, from a very early age, can distinguish between the sounds of their native language and how this ability is shaped by exposure and experience (Qizi & Anatolevna, 2020).

The development of phonetic skills is further intertwined with other aspects of literacy, such as knowledge of the alphabetic principle, fluency in decoding and encoding, and comprehension of oral and written language. A solid understanding of the alphabetic principle, which involves understanding that letters and groups of letters represent the sounds of speech, is essential for reading and writing. Fluency in decoding and encoding, which refers to the ability to read and write words quickly and correctly, heavily depends on phonological competence.

Moreover, the comprehension of oral and written language is an integral component of literacy development, allowing individuals not only to read words and phrases but also to understand their meaning and context. Therefore, phonetic skills are a crucial component of overall language and literacy development, with important implications for educational practice and intervention (Priya & Kumar, 2020).

Research suggests that a comprehensive approach to reading instruction, including the development of phonetic skills, can significantly impact students' academic success. This includes using explicit and systematic methods to teach phonological awareness and the correspondence between letters and sounds, as well as strategies to improve naming speed and phonological working memory.

In conclusion, phonetic skills are not only fundamental for the initial acquisition of reading and writing but also have a lasting impact on linguistic and academic competence throughout life. Educational interventions and strategies that focus on developing these skills can help prevent and mitigate language-related learning difficulties, providing students with the necessary tools to succeed in their education and beyond (Qizi & Anatolevna, 2020).

Importance of Phonemic Awareness In Reading

Language Nests play a key role in facilitating the acquisition of a second language and enhancing pronunciation through several beneficial mechanisms. Firstly, Azarova et al., (2021) mention that the immersive nature of Language Nests exposes learners to the target language in a natural and authentic context. This continuous contact and immersion nurture an intuitive comprehension of the language's main aspects like: grammatical structures, and vocabulary usage. Even when teachers in Language Nests need to correct and promote students to produce grammatically well-constructed sentences (Treiman et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Language Nests teachers or educator are principally elder people that belong to the community (Azarova et al., 2021). But also, Language Nests often employ native speakers or proficient language facilitators, ensuring that learners are exposed to accurate pronunciation from the outset. Thus, regular interactions with these experts enable children to develop an authentic accent and refine their articulation skills, contributing significantly to improved pronunciation. However, it can't not be considered as a certainty because Treiman et al. (2022) mention that a substantial effect size in terms of improvement was found in a meta-analysis that examined over eighty studies on pronunciation instruction. However, no mention was made in either study regarding whether the languages taught were by native or nonnative speakers of the languages.

Hence, the presence of native instructors within a language nest does not appear to hold significance however, most importantly, in the event that any staff members lack fluency in the language, their active engagement in the process of learning it becomes indispensable (Azarova et al., 2021). Consequently, they need to be outstanding educators while using the target language. On the other hand, something really important is the immersion environment in which the students find themselves, which allows a better developing your pronunciation skills.

Additionally, the interactive and communicative environment within Language Nests encourages active participation. Through engaging activities, storytelling, and social interactions, learners not only practice speaking but also gain confidence in using the language (Azarova et al., 2021). This confidence, in turn, positively impacts pronunciation, as learners become more attuned to the rhythm, intonation, and phonetic patterns of the language.

As Language Nests also highlight contextual learning, linking language to real-life situations. This approach reinforces vocabulary and language usage in real-world contexts, promoting a deep understanding of how words and phrases are employed naturally (Priya & Kumar, 2020). This comprehensive understanding aids in refining pronunciation by ensuring that learners grasp the correct pronunciation within relevant conversational contexts. So, one possible ideal of a language nest is to expose young children to the language at an early age with the idea that they can better acquire the language's structure and phonology.

1.3 Enhancing Reading Skills: Strategies and Approaches

Understanding the theoretical frameworks underlying reading comprehension is crucial, but it is equally important to explore the strategies designed to improve reading skills among students. Various methods and interventions have been developed to address the multifaceted nature of reading comprehension challenges, encompassing a wide range of instructional techniques, interventions, and programs aimed at enhancing students' ability to understand and engage with written texts effectively.

One effective approach is the explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies. As Ehri (2020)explains, explicit instruction involves directly teaching specific strategies such as predicting, summarizing, questioning, and monitoring comprehension. By modeling and providing clear instruction on these strategies, students learn to apply them independently across different types of texts. Research indicates that explicit instruction in comprehension strategies can significantly enhance students' understanding of texts and overall reading performance (Ehri, 2020).

Another technique to improve reading skills is the use of graphic organizers, such as concept maps, story maps, and Venn diagrams. These tools provide visual representations of text structures and relationships, aiding students in organizing and clarifying their understanding of key concepts and ideas (Li, 2020). By employing graphic organizers, students can visually map out the main ideas, supporting details, and connections within a text, which facilitates deeper comprehension and analysis.

Peer-assisted learning strategies also offer promise in enhancing reading comprehension skills. These strategies involve pairing students to collaborate on reading tasks, such as summarizing texts, generating questions, and discussing main ideas (Li, 2020). Through peer interaction and discussion, students can support each other's understanding, share perspectives, and resolve misunderstandings, leading to improved comprehension and greater engagement with the material.

Additionally, technology-based interventions, including computer-assisted instruction and online reading platforms, provide interactive and engaging opportunities for students to practice and develop their reading skills (Li, 2020). These digital resources offer access to a wide variety of

texts, multimedia features, and interactive exercises, allowing students to interact with content in dynamic and meaningful ways. Studies suggest that technology-based interventions can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and reading comprehension.

Overall, current strategies to improve reading skills encompass diverse approaches, such as explicit instruction in comprehension strategies, the use of graphic organizers, peer-assisted learning, and technology-based interventions. By integrating these methods, educators can help students develop the necessary skills and strategies to become proficient and critical readers.

1.4 The Role of Extensive Reading in Language Development

Extensive reading, a practice extensively researched in both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, has emerged as a powerful strategy for improving various aspects of language proficiency. Al-Rubaat, A. M., & Alshammari, H. A. (2020). conducted a comprehensive study on extensive reading, highlighting its significant benefits and advocating for its widespread implementation in educational institutions worldwide. The study emphasizes the transformative impact of extensive reading on second language learners' proficiency, urging educators to employ this approach for more effective language learning outcomes.

The research underscores the role of extensive reading in enhancing reading rates and overall language ability (Al-Rubaat, & Alshammari, 2020). argue that extensive reading is more effective than traditional methods in promoting language development, particularly by providing learners with ample opportunities to engage in extensive reading experiences. When implemented systematically, extensive reading contributes to the improvement of various language skills, including vocabulary acquisition and grammatical understanding.

The fundamental principle behind extensive reading is based on the concept of comprehensible input. According to various scholars, extensive reading becomes particularly beneficial as learners acquire a new language by understanding meaningful messages and receiving

comprehensible input, such as exposure to new vocabulary and grammar (Al-Rubaat, & Alshammari, 2020). Implicit learning, a key aspect of extensive reading, necessitates long-term and substantial exposure to reading materials. Therefore, the study advocates creating an environment that encourages students to read extensively and engage in activities suited to their reading level, maximizing the effectiveness of this approach across different proficiency levels.

Extensive reading is considered a highly effective method in English teaching and learning, yielding positive outcomes for students and teachers at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. It not only supports language development but also plays a crucial role in developing essential reading skills among learners. As educators explore innovative methods in language education, extensive reading emerges as a promising strategy for enhancing language proficiency and fostering a lifelong love for reading.

1.5 Reading as a Multifaceted Skill

As noted by Li (2020), reading is not a static skill but rather a collection of skills adapted to different purposes and contexts. Li emphasizes that students read for various reasons, such as graduating from high school or acquiring information to pursue further studies. Central to achieving these objectives is the development of comprehension skills that enable individuals to process information, gain knowledge, and meet their goals effectively. Reading serves as a vital means for knowledge acquisition, idea generation, and achieving both personal and academic milestones, underscoring its importance in language learning and proficiency development.

Moreover, Li (2020) highlights the diverse reading skills learners use to navigate different types of texts and fulfill their objectives. For example, learners employ various strategies when engaging with genres like emails, invitations, personal messages, tips, and notices. These skills include identifying vocabulary, discerning main and secondary ideas, and extracting relevant information from texts. By mastering these reading skills, individuals enhance their language understanding, expand their vocabulary, and develop critical thinking abilities.

The importance of reading as a crucial skill and activity cannot be overstated, and learners are encouraged to engage in extensive reading to improve fluency in the target language. Li (2020) advocates for learners to immerse themselves in reading as much as possible to build proficiency and confidence in using the language effectively. Effective teaching practices are essential in fostering the development of reading skills, empowering learners to read critically, reflectively, and independently. By creating a supportive learning environment and providing tailored instruction, educators enable students to become discerning readers who can use reading as a tool for lifelong learning and personal growth.

1.6 Blending Sounds Methodology

Blending sounds is an essential technique for teaching children to read, involving the combination of different phonemes to form words. This method helps students understand how words are pronounced, which in turn aids in decoding long and unfamiliar words during reading.

Letter blending is another effective technique used to teach reading to children. Through this method, students join the graphemes of individual sounds, known as letter-sound correspondences, to form complete words. This skill is crucial for students to decode unfamiliar words.

The process of blending words in phonics is taught alongside segmentation, which involves breaking a word into its individual sounds, called phonemes. By deconstructing a word, children can identify all the sounds that make it up before recombining them. Blending and segmentation are complementary skills that reinforce each other.

Phonetics And Phonological Development Comparative Studies

In recent years, extensive research has been conducted to compare various approaches to reading skill enhancement, shedding light on the effectiveness of different methodologies in diverse educational contexts. Comparative studies in the field of reading instruction have examined the outcomes of traditional teaching methods versus innovative approaches, providing valuable insights into the efficacy of different pedagogical strategies.

Al-Rubaat, & Alshammari (2020)conducted a comparative study on extensive reading (ER) in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, highlighting the significant benefits of ER in enhancing language proficiency among learners. By comparing the outcomes of ER programs with traditional reading methods, the study demonstrated

that ER was more effective in improving language abilities, including reading rate and comprehension. The findings underscored the importance of incorporating ER into language instruction to foster language development and proficiency effectively.

Similarly, comparative studies have explored the effectiveness of phonics instruction versus whole language approaches in enhancing reading skills among learners. These studies have examined the impact of explicit phonics instruction on decoding skills and reading comprehension, comparing it with the holistic approach of whole language instruction. By analyzing the outcomes of these contrasting methodologies, researchers have provided valuable insights into the most effective strategies for promoting reading proficiency among students.

Furthermore, comparative studies have investigated the role of technology-enhanced learning environments in reading skill development compared to traditional classroom settings. By comparing the outcomes of technology-mediated reading instruction with conventional methods, researchers have evaluated the impact of digital tools and resources on students' reading comprehension, engagement, and motivation. These studies have highlighted the potential of technology-enhanced learning environments to enhance reading instruction and facilitate personalized learning experiences for students.

Overall, comparative studies play a crucial role in informing educational practices and decision-making by providing evidence-based insights into the effectiveness of different reading skill enhancement strategies. By comparing various methodologies, approaches, and instructional techniques, researchers contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of reading instruction and support the development of evidence-based pedagogical practices.

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1.7 Examples of Blending Words in Phonics

To better understand how this process works, let's consider some practical examples, starting with the word "dog." When we segment "dog," we see that it consists of three distinct phonemes: /d/, /o/, and /g/. When teaching a student to blend this word, they are encouraged to pronounce each phoneme

separately. Once they master the individual sounds, they can blend them to form the complete word "dog."

As children progress in their phonics education, they also learn to blend more complex words that may contain new sounds, spellings, or letter combinations. For example, the word "black" presents additional difficulty with the adjacent consonants "bl" at the beginning and the consonant digraph "ck" at the end. It's important to teach children to clearly pronounce each sound, ensuring they distinguish between adjacent consonants and digraphs, where multiple letters represent a single sound.

1.8 The Importance of Blending Sounds in Phonics

Developing the ability to blend sounds is fundamental for children to read and write fluently. Instead of merely memorizing sounds and their graphic representations, phonics allows children to manipulate these elements and see how words are formed. Practicing sound blending helps children identify which sounds are represented by graphemes and combine them to decode unfamiliar words. This process is vital for reading, as children need to be able to blend sounds to make sense of words, passages, and entire texts. Once they become fluent readers, this skill becomes automatic.

The importance of sound blending is reflected in the national curriculum of England. In the early years of the foundation stage (EYFS), children should be able to read words that match their phonetic knowledge by blending sounds. As they move into the first year, students should be able to use blending to read unfamiliar words containing previously learned grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs). Blending is a skill that children need to continuously develop and improve, making regular practice essential.

1.9 Learning to Blend Sounds

After mastering fundamental speaking and listening skills in Phase 1, children are introduced to blending lessons in Phase 2. Since blending sounds can be a challenging skill to acquire, it's important to start with simple words and phrases. Initially, children should pronounce each sound (phoneme) out loud and then attempt to say the whole word. For example, they might say "cat" by pronouncing each phoneme: /k/, /a/, /t/.

Starting with simple consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words like "cat," "man," "dog," "hat," "bin,"

and "got" helps students gain confidence. As students progress to Phase 4 and beyond, they will encounter words with adjacent consonants, consisting of two or more consonants next to each other, each with a distinct sound. Examples of these words include "drink," "black," "frog," and "glasses." Additionally, children will learn to blend words containing various vowel and consonant digraphs and trigraphs. These are combinations of two or three letters that form a single sound, including "ph," "ch," "ng," and "th."

By mastering these techniques, children will develop essential skills for fluent reading and writing, becoming confident and competent readers.

1.10 Phonetic Difficulties in Learning English

For non-native speakers, mastering the English language can be a daunting task, primarily due to its intricate phonetic structure. The complexity of English, with its numerous homophones, diphthongs, and stress patterns, often leaves learners struggling with pronunciation and comprehension nuances.

A significant challenge for English language learners is the disparity between the written and spoken forms of the language. English orthography is notoriously irregular, with the correspondence between letters and sounds often being unpredictable. This inconsistency can lead to confusion and frustration, especially for students whose native languages have more phonetic transparency. As McCarthy, S. & Palmer, E. (2023) notes, this lack of phonetic transparency often results in difficulties mastering the connection between letter combinations and their corresponding sounds, hindering progress in reading and writing fluency.

Another factor contributing to the phonetic challenges faced by English language learners is the influence of their native language. Research has shown that the greater the phonetic differences between a learner's native language and English, the more likely interference errors are to occur. For instance, Indonesian students frequently struggle with English vowels, consonants, and diphthongs that are absent in Bahasa Indonesia. This phenomenon, known as language transfer, can significantly

impede a learner's ability to accurately reproduce the target language's sounds, leading to communication breakdowns and reduced comprehensibility (McCarthy, S. & Palmer, E., 2023). Additionally, the diversity of English accents and dialects further complicates the learning process for non-native speakers. Students may find it challenging to adapt to the specific pronunciation nuances of different English varieties, which can exacerbate their difficulties in communicating effectively with native speakers (McCarthy, S. & Palmer, E., 2023).

1.11 What Challenges Are Faced by Tenth-Grade Students?

When examining the challenges faced by tenth-grade students, several factors emerge that can significantly impact their academic progress and overall development. Among these challenges, reading comprehension difficulties are particularly prevalent. Many tenth-grade students struggle to understand and interpret written texts effectively, which can hinder their learning across various subjects. These difficulties often arise from limited vocabulary, inadequate decoding skills, and unfamiliarity with complex sentence structures and academic language. As a result, these students may find it challenging to grasp the content presented in their coursework fully.

In addition to reading comprehension difficulties, language proficiency barriers present a significant obstacle for many tenth-grade students, especially in contexts where English is not the primary language of instruction. Limited English proficiency can restrict students' ability to engage with academic content meaningfully and express their ideas coherently. This challenge can further exacerbate difficulties in understanding written texts, leading to a cycle of frustration and academic underperformance.

The academic demands of the tenth grade also contribute to the challenges students face. This period often represents a critical juncture in their educational journey, marked by increasing expectations in reading comprehension, critical thinking, and analytical skills. The transition to more complex texts, advanced vocabulary, and sophisticated literary concepts can be daunting, posing substantial challenges to students' academic success. Without adequate support, these heightened demands can overwhelm students, impacting their motivation and self-confidence.

Motivational factors play a crucial role in determining whether students can overcome these obstacles. Many tenth-grade students encounter motivational barriers such as disengagement, lack of

interest in reading, or feelings of frustration and inadequacy. These emotional and psychological challenges can severely impact their efforts to improve reading skills and meet academic expectations. Without sufficient motivation, students may struggle to persist in their studies and achieve their full potential.

Socioeconomic factors also significantly influence students' reading abilities and overall academic performance. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds often face additional challenges, such as limited access to resources, inadequate support systems, and environmental stressors. These factors can negatively affect their reading comprehension and academic achievement, further widening the gap between them and their peers. Addressing these socioeconomic constraints is crucial to creating an equitable learning environment where all students have the opportunity to succeed.

Overall, tenth-grade students confront a range of challenges in their reading development, encompassing reading comprehension difficulties, language proficiency barriers, academic demands, motivational factors, and socioeconomic constraints. Addressing these challenges effectively requires targeted interventions, comprehensive support systems, and a holistic approach to literacy instruction that considers students' diverse needs and backgrounds.

Schema theory provides valuable insights into understanding the difficulties students face in reading comprehension. According to Li (2020). schema theory highlights the critical role of mental frameworks in the reading process. This theory suggests that readers draw on their prior knowledge and experiences to make sense of a text, using existing mental structures to organize and interpret information. Li (2020) elaborates on the concept of content schema, emphasizing its relevance to understanding the subject matter and cultural elements within a text. He explains that schema refers to how individuals process, organize, and store information in their minds. For effective reading, activating prior knowledge is essential, as it enables readers to connect new information with what they already know.

In English teaching, reading is considered the most significant of the four language skills, underscoring the importance of schema activation to enhance comprehension (Li, 2020). By leveraging schema theory, educators can better support students in overcoming reading comprehension challenges, fostering a deeper understanding of texts and promoting academic success.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND INITIAL DIAGNOSTIC

Chapter 2 outlines the research methodology used to explore the effectiveness of the *Blending Sounds* methodology in enhancing reading skills. It begins with the operationalization of the variables and their development, offering a clear understanding of how key concepts were defined and measured throughout the study. The chapter then delves into the research approach employed, detailing the methods of data collection and the instruments utilized to gather relevant information. It also describes the study population and sample selection process, ensuring the representativeness of the participants. Data processing techniques are explained to provide transparency in the analysis, followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations that guided the study. The diagnostic process is also described, including the analysis of the pre-test results, which serve as the foundation for justifying the intervention proposal presented later in the chapter. Together, these components form a comprehensive framework that supports the research's findings and conclusions.

Operationalization Matrix of the Variable

The careful manipulation of variables is crucial for maintaining the accuracy of research findings and ensuring the reliability and validity of the tools used to collect data. This process, known as the operationalization of variables, involves employing a variety of techniques and methods to enable the precise measurement of a specific variable within a study. Operationalization entails deconstructing a variable into its core components, which allows researchers to assess it more accurately and comprehensively.

In the context of scientific research, operationalization is the process of transforming abstract theoretical concepts into concrete, observable, and measurable entities. This transformation involves defining variables in specific, practical terms, often through identifying particular dimensions and indicators that represent the variable in a way that can be systematically measured and analyzed (Coronel-Carvajal, 2023). Through this process, researchers can ensure that the variables in their study are clearly defined and consistently measured, thus enhancing the overall quality and credibility of their research findings.

Development of Variables

Independent Variable: Blending Sounds Methodology (BSM)

The Blending Sounds Methodology (BSM) is a systematic and structured approach to teaching reading skills that emphasizes the integration of individual phonemes to form words. It aims to enhance students' ability to decode and comprehend written language by breaking down words into their constituent sounds and blending them together.

Table 1.

Table Chart of Dependent Variable

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION	DIMENSIONS	INDICATORS
Reading and Pronunciation Skills	Reading and pronunciation skills involve the ability to accurately decode written text and produce the correct sounds of the language, facilitating effective communication and comprehension" (McCarthy, S. & Palmer, E., 2023).	Phonemic Awareness: The ability to recognize and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words	Ability to segment and blend phonemes in words.
			Accuracy in phoneme identification tasks.
		Decoding: The ability to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships to correctly pronounce written words.	Correct pronunciation of new and familiar words.
			Ability to summarize and infer information from texts.
		Fluency: The ability to read text smoothly and with appropriate speed, accuracy, and expression.	Words read per minute (WPM).
			Prosody, including appropriate intonation and rhythm.
		Comprehension: The ability to understand and interpret meaning from written text.	Accuracy in answering questions about a text.
			Ability to summarize and infer information from texts.
		Pronunciation: The	Correct articulation of consonant

		ability to correctly articulate the sounds and words of the English language.	and vowel sounds.
			Clarity and intelligibility of spoken words and sentences.

Note. Elaborated by authors

Dependent Variable: Reading and Pronunciation Skills

Reading and pronunciation skills refer to the abilities related to understanding written texts and the accurate articulation of words in English. This includes various aspects such as phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, comprehension, and the correct pronunciation of sounds and words.

Table 2.

Table Chart of Independent Variable

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION	DIMENSIONS	INDICATORS
The Blending Sounds Methodology (BSM)	The Blending Sounds Methodology refers to a systematic and structured approach to teaching reading skills that emphasizes the integration of individual phonemes to form words, enhancing students' ability to decode and comprehend written language (Hensley, 2020)	Phonemic Segmentation: Teaching students to break down words into individual phonemes.	Accuracy in segmenting words into individual sounds.
			Number of phonemes correctly identified and separated.
		Phoneme Blending: Teaching students to blend individual phonemes to form words.	Accuracy in blending phonemes to form words.
			Speed and fluency in blending tasks.
		Phonics Instruction: Instruction on the relationships between letters and sounds.	Knowledge of letter-sound correspondences.
			Ability to apply phonics rules in reading and writing.
		Multisensory Techniques: Using visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities to reinforce phonemic awareness and decoding skills.	Engagement in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities.
			Improvement in phonemic awareness through multisensory approaches.
		Guided Practice:	Frequency and duration of

	Providing structured practice opportunities for students to apply blending skills in reading activities.	practice sessions. Improvement in reading fluency and pronunciation during guided activities.

Note. Elaborated by authors

Research Approach

This study adopts a quantitative, quasi-experimental approach to examine the impact of implementing the "Blending Sounds" Methodology on the development of reading and pronunciation skills among tenth-grade students at the "UEFOG" Educational Unit in Quito, Ecuador. The research design is based on using an experimental group and a control group, allowing for a comparison of the effects of applying the "Blending Sounds" Methodology with those of a traditional English teaching method.

The experimental group will consist of students who will receive English classes using the "Blending Sounds" Methodology as a teaching strategy. In contrast, the control group will consist of students following a more conventional English teaching approach without incorporating this methodology. This distinction between the two groups will allow for the analysis and comparison of the impact of the independent variable—the adoption of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology—in relation to the dependent variable, which is the students' reading and pronunciation skills (Castañeda, 2022).

The quasi-experimental design of this study is appropriate because it allows for the control of certain variables that could influence the results, thereby facilitating the establishment of a causal connection between the independent and dependent variables. However, given the quasi-experimental nature of the study, it is not possible to establish a definitive cause-effect relationship, although significant patterns and trends between the evaluated variables can be identified (Galarza, 2021).

The use of this quantitative approach will allow for the collection of objective and measurable data, enabling a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology on students' reading and pronunciation skills. This will generate solid evidence supporting the

effectiveness of this methodology as a teaching strategy in the specific context of the "UEFOG" Educational Unit.

Data Collection and Instruments

To evaluate the impact of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology on the development of reading and pronunciation skills of the tenth-grade students at the Oswaldo Guayasamín Fiscal Educational Unit, a single integrated pre-test and post-test have been designed. These instruments allow for a comprehensive measurement of phonological, pronunciation, reading fluency, and comprehension skills in English before and after the pedagogical intervention.

The pre-test will be administered at the beginning of the study and will consist of two main sections. The first section, dedicated to phonological awareness and pronunciation, consists of a reading-aloud activity that includes a list of words and phrases specifically selected to contain various problematic phonemes and phonetic patterns in English, such as the sounds /θ/ in "think" and /ʤ/ in "judge." This section will assess the students' ability to identify, articulate, and correctly pronounce these sounds using a rubric with specific criteria such as articulation accuracy, sound clarity, and fluency in word production.

The second section of the pre-test focuses on reading fluency and comprehension. Students will read aloud a text adapted to the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), designed to measure reading speed (words per minute), pronunciation accuracy, and appropriate use of intonation and rhythm. After the reading, they will answer a series of questions that will assess their ability to identify main ideas, specific details, make inferences, and understand key vocabulary in the text. This evaluation will provide a baseline of the students' reading and pronunciation skills before implementing the methodology.

At the end of the intervention with the "Blending Sounds" Methodology, the post-test will be administered, following a format equivalent to that of the pre-test to ensure comparability of results. The phonological awareness and pronunciation section will include a new list of words and phrases with similar phonetic difficulties to those used in the pre-test, again assessing articulation accuracy, sound clarity, and pronunciation fluency. The reading fluency and comprehension section will

consist of a different text, but of the same difficulty level, to measure reading speed, accuracy, intonation, rhythm, and comprehension ability through questions similar to those in the pre-test.

The use of integrated pre-test and post-test instruments allows for a complete and consistent evaluation of the impact of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology on students' reading and pronunciation skills. By measuring both phonological awareness and reading fluency and comprehension before and after the intervention, it ensures the collection of comparable and meaningful data that support the effectiveness of this methodology in the educational context of the "UEFOG" Educational Unit. These instruments, by providing quantitative and objective data, will contribute to a deep understanding of the students' performance improvements and the validation of the methodology as an effective pedagogical tool.

Study Population and Sample

Population

The population of this study consists of all tenth-grade students at the “Unidad Educativa Fiscal Oswaldo Guayasamín” in Quito, Ecuador. This educational institution has several tenth-grade classes, each with approximately 30 students. The tenth-grade students are at a crucial stage of their secondary education, where they are expected to develop advanced reading and pronunciation skills in English according to the standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Sample

For this study, a purposive sampling method will be employed to select two specific groups within the population of tenth-grade students. Group 10 A will be designated as the experimental group, while Group 10 B will serve as the control group. Each group will consist of approximately 30 students, making up a total sample of 60 participants.

The choice of purposive sampling is based on the need to select groups with similar characteristics in terms of English proficiency and academic performance, ensuring the

comparability of results. The willingness of both teachers and students to participate in the study and their commitment to rigorously follow the established guidelines for the research will also be considered.

Table 3

Summary of the sample (Experimental group)

Participants	Sample	Percentage
Males	18	60%
Females	12	40%
TOTAL	30	100%

Note. Elaborated by authors

Table 4

Summary of the sample (Control group)

Participants	Sample	Percentage
Males	16	53,33%
Females	14	46,67%
TOTAL	30	100%

Note. Elaborated by authors

Justification of the Sample

The selection of a sample of 60 students allows for a detailed and statistically significant evaluation of the impact of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology on improving reading and pronunciation skills. This number of participants is sufficient to perform comparative analyses and draw solid conclusions about the effectiveness of the intervention. Additionally, working with pre-existing groups within the same educational center facilitates the systematic and controlled application of the methodology and data collection.

Data Processing

The processing of data collected in this study will be carried out to comprehensively assess the impact of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology on the reading and pronunciation skills of tenth-grade students at the Oswaldo Guayasamín Fiscal Educational Unit. The data obtained from the pre-test and post-test will be analyzed using a quantitative approach that will allow comparison of the students' skills before and after the intervention.

Firstly, the results from the phonological awareness and pronunciation section will be entered into a database using Excel. For each student, the scores obtained on the evaluation rubric, which measures articulation accuracy, sound clarity, and fluency in word production, will be recorded. Descriptive statistics, such as the mean, median, and standard deviation, will be calculated for each evaluated criterion, providing an overview of the students' performance in both the pre-test and post-test.

Secondly, the data from the reading fluency and comprehension section will also be entered into the same database. To assess fluency, the results will be analyzed in terms of reading speed (words per minute), pronunciation accuracy, and appropriate use of intonation and rhythm. Descriptive statistics will be calculated for these metrics, as well as for the responses to the reading comprehension questions, which will evaluate the students' ability to identify main ideas, specific details, make inferences, and understand the text's vocabulary.

To compare the results obtained in the pre-test and post-test, paired t-tests will be conducted. This statistical test will help determine whether there are significant differences in the students' reading and pronunciation skills before and after the implementation of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology. Independent t-tests will also be used to compare the performance between the experimental and control groups at both evaluation points to assess the intervention's effect.

The results of the analysis will be presented through tables and graphs to facilitate the interpretation of the data and the identification of relevant patterns and trends. This data processing approach ensures that the research provides solid evidence on the effectiveness of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology in improving students' reading and pronunciation skills.

Ethical Considerations

This study is conducted with a strong commitment to adhering to the most rigorous ethical standards throughout all stages of the research process. It is understood that research in the educational field not only aims to generate knowledge but also to protect and respect the rights of the participants involved. For this reason, strict ethical considerations have been established to ensure the integrity, confidentiality, and well-being of all participants.

This section explains the ethical considerations that have guided the planning and execution of the study. These guidelines aim to address fundamental aspects such as informed consent, the protection of data confidentiality, respect for human dignity, equity in the selection of participants, and transparency in the communication of results.

The main objective of these ethical considerations is to ensure that the research is conducted in an honest, responsible, and respectful manner, always prioritizing the well-being and rights of the participants. Additionally, it aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in an ethical and responsible way, thereby strengthening trust and integrity in the field of educational research.

By incorporating these ethical considerations, the study is expected not only to meet the strictest ethical standards but also to produce valid and reliable results that enrich knowledge in the field of language teaching and learning.

Firstly, informed consent from all participants will be ensured. Before participation, they will be provided with clear and detailed information about the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Written consent will be obtained from each participant or, in the case of minors, from their parents or legal guardians.

Secondly, the confidentiality and privacy of the data collected will be guaranteed. Participants' personal information will be treated confidentially and used exclusively for research purposes. The results will be presented in an aggregated and anonymous form to safeguard the privacy of those involved.

The study will also ensure respect for human dignity, always safeguarding the dignity, autonomy, and rights of the participants. Any form of coercion or manipulation will be avoided,

and participants will have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without facing negative consequences.

Regarding beneficence and non-maleficence, the study's design and execution will be oriented towards minimizing risks to the participants and maximizing potential benefits, such as improving teaching-learning processes. All necessary precautions will be taken to avoid any unjustified harm.

Furthermore, the principles of equity and justice will be promoted in selecting participants and distributing resources, ensuring a fair and equitable process. Any form of discrimination or bias will be avoided, guaranteeing equal opportunities for all participants.

Finally, transparent reporting will be maintained through clear and complete communication of the research results, including both positive and negative findings. Ethical and professional standards will be strictly followed in disseminating the results, avoiding any distortion or exaggeration.

These ethical guidelines will guide the development and implementation of the study, ensuring that the rights of all participants involved in the research are respected and protected.

Description of the Diagnostic Process

The diagnostic process began with administering a pre-test designed to assess the initial reading and pronunciation skills of tenth-grade students at the "UEFOG" Educational Unit. This pre-test was essential in establishing a baseline of students' performance before the intervention with the "Blending Sounds" Methodology.

The pre-test consisted of two main sections. The first section evaluated phonological awareness and pronunciation through a reading-aloud activity. Students were presented with a list of English words and phrases containing specific problematic phonemes, such as /θ/ in "think" and /ʤ/ in "judge." During this activity, students' ability to identify, articulate, and correctly pronounce the sounds was recorded using a standardized rubric that considered criteria such as articulation accuracy, sound clarity, and fluency in word production.

The second section of the pre-test focused on reading fluency and comprehension. Students read aloud a text adapted to the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for

Languages (CEFR). During this reading, reading speed in terms of words per minute, pronunciation accuracy, and appropriate use of intonation and rhythm were measured. Subsequently, students answered a series of comprehension questions designed to assess their ability to identify main ideas, specific details, make inferences, and understand key vocabulary in the text.

The pre-test was administered in a controlled classroom environment, ensuring uniform conditions for all participants. Evaluators, who were previously trained, carefully recorded the results to ensure data reliability. This initial assessment provided a quantitative and qualitative reference point for the students' skills, which will be compared with the post-test results after the intervention.

Analysis of Pre-Test Results:

The analysis of the pre-test is a fundamental stage in this research, as it provides an initial quantitative basis for assessing the reading and pronunciation skills of tenth-grade students at the "UEFOG" Educational Unit before implementing the "Blending Sounds" Methodology. This pre-test was designed to measure two key areas: phonological awareness and pronunciation, as well as reading fluency and comprehension. Through these initial evaluations, the aim is to identify the students' level of competence in these aspects of learning English as a foreign language.

The pre-test results not only establish a baseline of the students' performance but also facilitate the comparison between the experimental and control groups. This comparison is essential to determine the homogeneity of the groups before the pedagogical intervention, ensuring that any changes observed later can be reliably attributed to the applied methodology. This section presents the statistical results of the pre-test, analyzing the means, medians, and variances of the scores obtained to provide a clear understanding of both groups' starting points in terms of phonological and reading skills.

This initial analysis allows for validating the appropriateness of the selected groups and sets the stage for a more in-depth comparative analysis, which will be conducted after the implementation of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology. Additionally, it establishes a reference framework for measuring the impact of the educational intervention on the development of the students' linguistic skills, thereby contributing to a more precise and meaningful evaluation of the research results.

Table 5

Pre-Test Results for the Experimental Group

Student	Phonological Awareness and Pronunciation	Reading Fluency and Comprehension
1	5.4	6.2
2	6.0	5.9
3	5.1	6.8
4	4.7	5.5
5	6.3	6.1
6	5.9	6.5
7	4.8	5.7
8	5.5	6.3
9	6.1	6.0
10	5.0	6.4
11	5.8	5.9
12	5.3	6.7
13	6.4	6.0
14	4.9	5.8
15	5.7	6.1
16	6.2	6.3
17	5.1	6.6
18	5.6	5.4
19	6.0	6.2
20	5.2	5.7
21	5.9	6.5
22	5.4	6.8
23	6.1	5.9
24	5.8	6.4
25	4.7	6.0
26	5.6	6.3
27	6.3	5.6
28	5.0	6.1
29	5.7	6.2
30	6.0	6.0

Note. Elaborated by authors

Table 6

Pre-Test Results for the Control Group

Student	Phonological Awareness and Pronunciation	Reading Fluency and Comprehension
1	5.9	6.1
2	6.3	5.5
3	5.6	5.7
4	6.0	6.4
5	5.8	5.9
6	5.5	6.0
7	6.1	5.8
8	5.7	6.5
9	6.2	6.3
10	5.4	5.6
11	5.9	6.7
12	5.3	5.8
13	6.4	6.0
14	5.7	6.2
15	5.6	6.4
16	6.0	5.9
17	5.8	6.6
18	5.5	5.7
19	6.3	6.1
20	5.7	5.9
21	5.9	6.3
22	5.4	6.0
23	6.0	5.6
24	5.6	6.5
25	5.7	5.8
26	6.1	6.2
27	5.5	5.9
28	6.0	6.0
29	5.8	6.4
30	5.7	6.1

Note. Elaborated by authors

The pre-test was administered to the tenth-grade students of the "UEFOG" Educational Unit to assess their initial level in two key areas: phonological awareness and pronunciation, as well as reading fluency and comprehension. The data obtained provide an overview of the performance of both the experimental and control groups before the intervention with the "Blending Sounds" Methodology.

Table 7

Pre- test data

Group	Section	Mean	Median	Variance
Experimental	Phonological Awareness and Pronunciation	5.5	5.6	1.1
Experimental	Reading Fluency and Comprehension	6.0	6.1	1.3
Control	Phonological Awareness and Pronunciation	5.7	5.8	1.2
Control	Reading Fluency and Comprehension	5.8	5.9	1.4

Note. Elaborated by authors

For phonological awareness and pronunciation, the experimental group achieved a mean score of 5.5, with a median of 5.6 and a variance of 1.1. These results reflect an average skill level in the ability to correctly identify and articulate phonemes in English, with relatively low dispersion in the students' scores. On the other hand, the control group showed a slightly higher mean of 5.7, a median of 5.8, and a variance of 1.2, indicating a general similarity in the initial skills of the students in both groups, with moderate variability.

Regarding reading fluency and comprehension, the experimental group recorded a mean score of 6.0, a median of 6.1, and a variance of 1.3, suggesting an average level of fluency and comprehension when reading texts in English. The control group, meanwhile, obtained a mean of 5.8, a median of 5.9, and a variance of 1.4, demonstrating an initial performance slightly lower but comparable to that of the experimental group, with similar variability in the scores.

Overall, the pre-test data indicate that both groups start with comparable skill levels in the evaluated areas, which is crucial to ensure the validity of the quasi-experimental study. The slight differences observed in the means and variances of the scores reflect normal variability among the students, which is appropriate for effectively assessing the impact of the proposed educational intervention.

Justification for the Intervention Proposal

The results of the pre-test, administered to the tenth-grade students of Unidad Educativa "UEFOG," highlight the need for a specific pedagogical intervention to improve reading and pronunciation skills in English. The initial scores in the sections of phonological awareness and pronunciation and reading fluency and comprehension show that both the experimental and control groups have similar levels of competence prior to the intervention, with means and medians indicating average performance but with room for improvement. In the area of phonological awareness and pronunciation, the experimental group showed a mean score of 5.5, while the control group had a slightly higher mean of 5.7. These results suggest that, although students have a basic ability to identify and articulate phonemes in English, there are significant difficulties in pronunciation accuracy and clarity, which can negatively impact their ability to communicate effectively in English. The relatively low variance (1.1 for the experimental group and 1.2 for the control group) indicates moderate dispersion in the scores, suggesting that most students are at a similar skill level.

Regarding reading fluency and comprehension, the mean scores obtained (6.0 for the experimental group and 5.8 for the control group) reflect an initial moderate performance in the ability to read accurately, fluently, and with comprehension. However, the variances of 1.3 and 1.4, respectively, indicate considerable variability in student performance, suggesting that some students may have additional difficulties in effectively understanding texts in English.

Since the pre-test results show that both groups have similar initial skill levels but with clear areas for improvement in pronunciation and reading comprehension, the implementation of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology as a targeted pedagogical intervention is justified. This methodology focuses on improving phonological awareness through the systematic blending of sounds and explicit teaching of problematic phonemes, which is crucial to address the deficiencies detected in the pre-test.

The intervention also aims to enhance fluency and reading comprehension by providing specific strategies to increase reading speed, pronunciation accuracy, and comprehension skills. By intervening in this way, it is expected not only to raise the overall English language skills of the students but also to reduce the variability in performance levels, achieving more equitable progress among all participants.

In summary, the implementation of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology is justified by the need to address the specific difficulties identified in the pre-test, thereby ensuring a substantial improvement in the linguistic competencies of tenth-grade students, which will significantly contribute to their academic and communicative development in learning English as a foreign language.

CHAPTER 3: INTERVENTION PROPOSAL

Chapter 3 presents the intervention proposal designed to improve phonetic and reading skills using the Blending Sounds Methodology. The chapter begins by outlining the core principles of this methodology and how it is applied in the proposed intervention. Specific intervention activities are then detailed, providing a comprehensive look at the structured approach used to engage students in phonetic exercises aimed at enhancing their pronunciation, fluency, and overall reading comprehension. A weekly intervention plan is provided, illustrating the step-by-step process for implementing the Blending Sounds Methodology over the course of the intervention period.

The chapter also discusses the results of the intervention, comparing students' performance before and after the intervention through pretest and posttest analysis. The use of the T-student test is highlighted as a statistical tool to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. Finally, the chapter addresses the limitations encountered during the intervention, acknowledging factors that may have influenced the outcomes and offering insights for future improvements. Together, these components form the foundation for understanding how the intervention was executed and its impact on student performance.

Intervention Proposal: "Blending Sounds" Methodology

The "Blending Sounds" Methodology is based on explicit phonics instruction and the systematic practice of blending sounds to form words, thereby improving students' ability to decode and understand written language. The intervention will be implemented over a period of 8 weeks, with sessions of 60 minutes, twice per week.

Each session will be structured into three phases:

1. Introduction Phase (10 minutes): The objectives of the session will be explained, and a brief review of the sounds and phonetic patterns to be practiced will be conducted.

2. Guided Practice Phase (40 minutes): Students will engage in interactive activities that include exercises in sound segmentation, phoneme blending, and pronunciation of words and phrases in

English. Activities will be conducted individually and in small groups to facilitate practice and immediate feedback.

3. Evaluation and Reflection Phase (10 minutes): Students will reflect on their learning and receive specific feedback on their performance. Formative assessment exercises will also be used to measure progress in each session.

Intervention Activities

- Phonics Games: Fun activities that involve segmenting and blending sounds. For example, card games where students combine phonemes to form words.

- Guided Reading Aloud: Students will read selected texts that contain problematic phonemes. The teacher will provide corrections and model proper pronunciation.

- Multisensory Dictation: Dictation of words and phrases using visual, auditory, and kinesthetic methods to reinforce the connection between sounds and letters.

- Pair Practice: Students will work in pairs to practice pronunciation and receive feedback from their peers.

- Use of Digital Resources: Applications and digital tools that allow autonomous practice of phonics and pronunciation.

Weekly Intervention Plan: "Blending Sounds" Methodology

Week 1: Introduction to Phonological Awareness and Sound Blending

Session 1: Introduction to Key Phonemes

Objective: Introduce students to key phonemes in English, particularly those that differ from their native language, such as /θ/ in "think" and /ʤ/ in "judge."

Activities:

1. Warm-up with a simple phoneme identification game (10 minutes).

2. Teacher models the articulation of target phonemes (15 minutes).

3. Phoneme blending exercises using flashcards to form simple words (20 minutes).

4. Guided practice in pairs, where students practice pronunciation and provide peer feedback (10 minutes).

5. Reflection and formative assessment on phoneme recognition (5 minutes).

- Materials Needed: Flashcards with phonemes, a whiteboard, markers.

- Evaluation: Observations and feedback on students' ability to articulate the target phonemes correctly.

Session 2: Phoneme Segmentation and Blending Practice

- Objective: Reinforce phoneme segmentation skills and practice blending to form words.

- Activities:

1. Review of phonemes learned in the previous session (10 minutes).

2. Phoneme segmentation exercises (teacher-led) where students break down words into individual sounds (15 minutes).

3. Blending practice with a focus on combining sounds to form words using multisensory methods (20 minutes).

4. Small group activity: Students create their own words by blending given phonemes and practice reading aloud (10 minutes).

5. Reflection and formative assessment through peer feedback (5 minutes).

- Materials Needed: Flashcards, phoneme strips, digital projector.

- Evaluation: Checklist to assess students' progress in phoneme segmentation and blending.

Week 2: Developing Fluency through Blending and Reading

Session 1: Building Fluency in Blending Sounds

- Objective: Improve fluency in blending sounds to read words accurately and quickly.

- Activities:

1. Quick warm-up with phoneme flashcards (5 minutes).

2. Blending sounds exercise with increasing complexity (e.g., moving from CVC to CCVC words) (20 minutes).

3. Partner reading activity where students take turns reading words and sentences containing target phonemes (20 minutes).

4. Teacher-led fluency drill using timed readings of word lists (10 minutes).

5. Reflection and feedback session (5 minutes).

- Materials Needed: Word lists, flashcards, timer.

- Evaluation: Timed readings to measure speed and accuracy.

Session 2: Introduction to Guided Reading Aloud

- Objective: Enhance fluency through guided reading aloud and improve comprehension skills.

- Activities:

1. Introduction to a short, level-appropriate text focusing on target phonemes (10 minutes).

2. Teacher models fluent reading, emphasizing proper intonation and expression (10 minutes).

3. Students read aloud in small groups, with teacher support and feedback (30 minutes).

4. Reflection on reading strategies and discussion of comprehension questions (10 minutes).

- Materials Needed: Copies of text, whiteboard, markers.

- Evaluation: Observation checklist for fluency, intonation, and comprehension.

Week 3-4: Strengthening Pronunciation and Comprehension

Session 1: Multisensory Dictation for Phoneme Practice

- Objective: Reinforce pronunciation skills through multisensory dictation exercises.

- Activities:

1. Review and practice of challenging phonemes (10 minutes).

2. Multisensory dictation: Students write down words dictated by the teacher while focusing on visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements (20 minutes).

3. Peer review of dictation exercises to identify common errors and provide feedback (15 minutes).

4. Pronunciation drills with individual coaching from the teacher (10 minutes).

5. Reflection on progress and areas needing improvement (5 minutes).

- Materials Needed: Dictation sheets, audio recordings, colored markers.

- Evaluation: Teacher notes on pronunciation accuracy and common error patterns.

Session 2: Developing Reading Comprehension Strategies

- Objective: Enhance reading comprehension skills by practicing specific strategies.

- Activities:

1. Introduction to comprehension strategies (e.g., summarizing, predicting, questioning) (10 minutes).

2. Guided reading of a new text, applying comprehension strategies (30 minutes).

3. Group discussion of key ideas, details, and inferences from the text (15 minutes).

4. Reflection on which strategies were most helpful and why (5 minutes).

- Materials Needed: Copies of the text, strategy cue cards.

- Evaluation: Group discussion participation and comprehension checklists.

Week 5-6: Advanced Blending and Reading Skills

Session 1: Advanced Phoneme Blending and Pronunciation

- Objective: Improve advanced blending skills and refine pronunciation.

- Activities:

1. Review of complex phoneme blends (e.g., consonant clusters) (10 minutes).

2. Advanced blending exercises with word lists that contain complex sound combinations (25 minutes).

3. Paired practice: Students take turns reading sentences aloud and providing feedback (15 minutes).

4. Reflection on progress and pronunciation practice (10 minutes).

- Materials Needed: Word lists, flashcards.

- Evaluation: Observation and feedback on blending and pronunciation.

Session 2: Reading Fluency and Comprehension Drills

- Objective: Further develop fluency and comprehension through drills.

- Activities:

1. Timed reading drill with texts of increasing difficulty (15 minutes).

2. Comprehension questions based on texts read (20 minutes).

3. Group discussion and strategy sharing (15 minutes).

4. Reflection on performance and areas for improvement (10 minutes).

- Materials Needed: Texts, comprehension question sheets.

- Evaluation: Timed reading scores and comprehension question accuracy.

Week 7-8: Consolidation and Assessment

Session 1: Consolidation of Learning

- Objective: Review and consolidate all skills learned during the intervention.

- Activities:

1. Comprehensive review of phonemes and blending techniques (15 minutes).

2. Interactive game to practice reading and pronunciation (20 minutes).

3. Small group reading and comprehension activities (20 minutes).

4. Feedback session and preparation for post-test (5 minutes).

- Materials Needed: Flashcards, text, games.

- Evaluation: Informal assessment through observation.

Session 2: Post-Test Administration and Final Reflection

- Objective: Evaluate the impact of the intervention on reading and pronunciation skills.

- Activities:

1. Administer post-test for phonological awareness, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension (40 minutes).

2. Reflective discussion on the intervention experience and outcomes (15 minutes).

3. Collection of feedback questionnaires (5 minutes).

- Materials Needed: Post-test materials, feedback forms.

- Evaluation: Post-test scores and student feedback analysis.

Proposal results

The research adopted a quantitative approach to assess the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) intervention on the communicative competence of tenth-grade students. The intervention consisted of 12 TBLT sessions for the experimental group, while pre and post-intervention tests were administered to measure any changes in language skills. Additionally, a survey was conducted to gather perceptions from students in the experimental group and the tenth-grade English teacher regarding the implementation of TBLT.

Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-intervention tests administered to both the experimental and control groups. These tests evaluated various language skills, including listening comprehension, oral expression, reading comprehension, and writing expression. Statistical analysis was performed using the student's t-test to compare mean scores before and after the intervention in both groups.

Pretest and posttest

Pre- test

The pre-test was conducted to assess the initial levels of phonological awareness, pronunciation, reading fluency, and comprehension skills among the tenth-grade students at the "UEFOG" Educational Unit before the implementation of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology. The results provide an initial benchmark for comparing the experimental and control groups.

For phonological awareness and pronunciation, the experimental group had a mean score of 5.5, with a median of 5.6 and a variance of 1.1. The control group showed a slightly higher mean of 5.7, a median of 5.8, and a variance of 1.2. These scores indicate that both groups started with a relatively similar level of phonological awareness and pronunciation skills, with low variability in performance among the students.

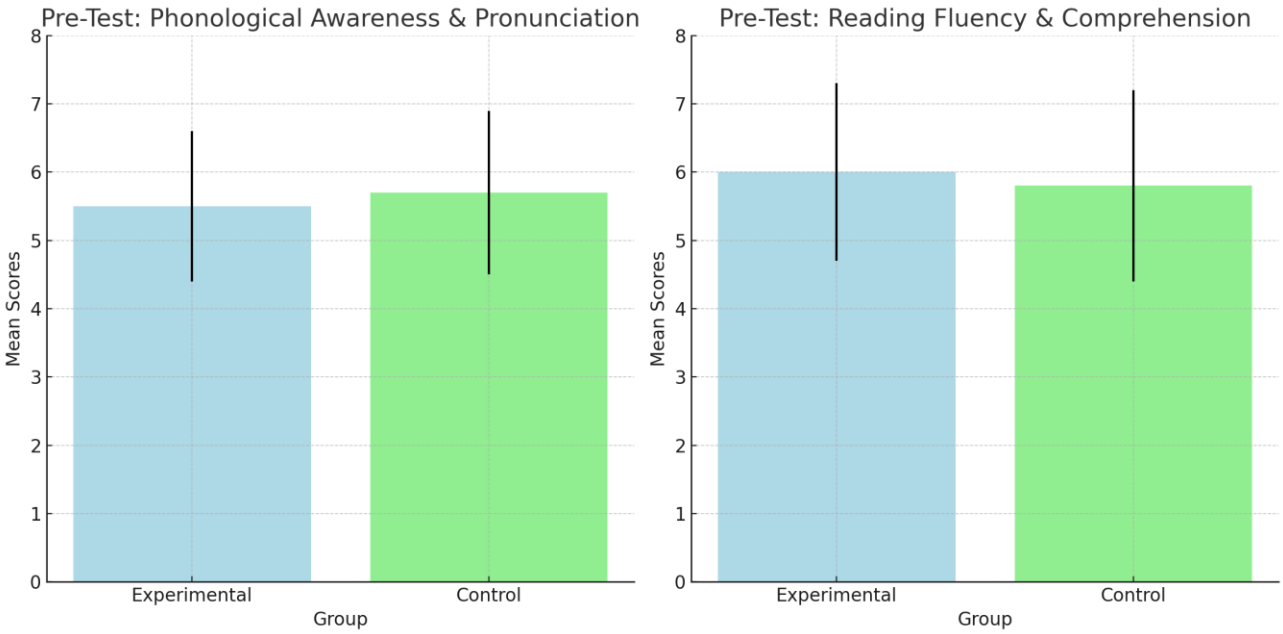
Regarding reading fluency and comprehension, the experimental group recorded a mean score of 6.0, a median of 6.1, and a variance of 1.3. Meanwhile, the control group had a slightly lower mean of 5.8,

a median of 5.9, and a variance of 1.4. Again, both groups displayed comparable starting points in terms of reading fluency and comprehension, with only minor differences in their scores and moderate variability.

Overall, the pre-test results suggest that the experimental and control groups were relatively homogeneous in their initial skill levels. This comparability is crucial for ensuring the validity of the subsequent analysis, as any significant changes observed after the intervention can be more confidently attributed to the "Blending Sounds" Methodology rather than pre-existing differences between the groups.

Figure 1

Pre- test results



Note. Elaborated by authors

Post test

The post-test analysis is a critical component of this study, designed to evaluate the impact of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology on the reading and pronunciation skills of tenth-grade students at the "UEFOG" Educational Unit. Conducted after the intervention, the post-test measures the same two key areas assessed in the pre-test: phonological awareness and pronunciation, as well as reading fluency and comprehension. By comparing the post-test results with the initial pre-test scores, the study aims to determine the effectiveness of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology in enhancing these essential language skills.

The post-test serves as a follow-up assessment to identify any significant changes or improvements in the experimental group that received the specialized instruction using the "Blending Sounds" Methodology, compared to the control group that continued with conventional teaching methods. The results of the post-test are crucial for understanding the extent to which the targeted intervention has positively impacted the students' abilities and for drawing meaningful conclusions about its effectiveness.

This section presents a detailed analysis of the post-test results, including statistical comparisons

between the experimental and control groups, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the educational intervention's outcomes. The analysis focuses on the mean scores, medians, and variances for each group, offering insights into the progress made by the students and highlighting the significance of the differences observed after the methodology's implementation.

Table 8

Post- test data

Group	Phonological Awareness & Pronunciation Mean	Phonological Awareness & Pronunciation Median	Phonological Awareness & Pronunciation Variance	Reading Fluency & Comprehension Mean	Reading Fluency & Comprehension Median	Reading Fluency & Comprehension Variance
Experimental	6.8	6.9	0.9	7.2	7.3	1.1
Control	6.1	6.2	1.0	6.4	6.5	1.2

Note. Elaborated by authors

The variances in the post-test results indicate the degree of variability or dispersion in the students' scores within each group (experimental and control) for both phonological awareness and pronunciation, as well as reading fluency and comprehension.

In the experimental group, the variance in scores for phonological awareness and pronunciation is relatively low (0.9). This result suggests that, following the intervention with the "Blending Sounds" methodology, students in the experimental group exhibited more consistent performance, with scores clustering around the mean. This indicates that most students achieved similar results in this area. On the other hand, the variance in the control group is slightly higher (1.0), although it remains low. This data suggests moderate consistency in the scores of this group, with a bit more variability compared to the experimental group. The difference in variance between the two groups could indicate that the control group's performance is more spread out or less homogeneous.

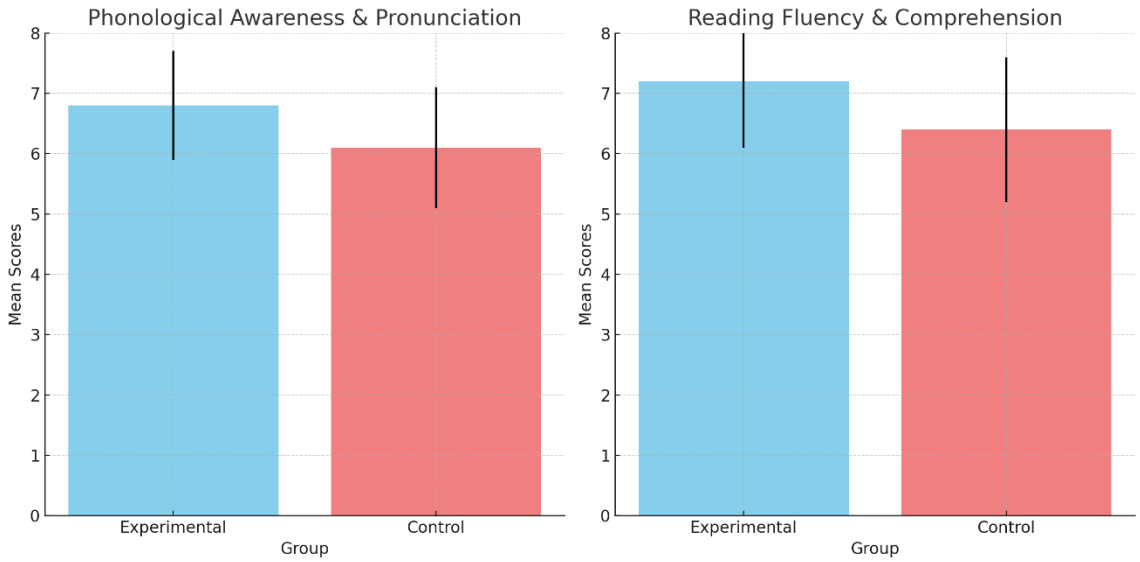
Regarding reading fluency and comprehension, the variance in the experimental group is somewhat higher (1.1) than in the area of phonological awareness and pronunciation. This indicates a slight variability in how the students in the experimental group performed in terms of fluency and

reading comprehension. However, the variance remains relatively low, suggesting that most students benefited similarly from the intervention in this area. Meanwhile, the variance in the control group is slightly higher (1.2), reflecting a wider spread of scores. This result suggests greater variability in the performance of students in the control group in reading fluency and comprehension, with some students scoring significantly higher or lower than others.

Overall, the observed variances provide valuable insight into the consistency of student performance within each group. Lower variances, such as those seen in the experimental group, suggest that the intervention may have helped standardize student performance, reducing the spread of scores. Conversely, higher variances, like those in the control group, indicate more diverse outcomes, possibly reflecting the impact of a less uniform teaching method or different levels of individual student progress.

Figure 2.

Graphical representation of the post-test results



Note. Elaborated by authors

Phonological Awareness and Pronunciation:

The bar chart on the left illustrates the mean scores obtained by the experimental and control

groups, with error bars representing the variance in each case. It shows that the experimental group achieved a higher mean score compared to the control group. This result suggests a better performance by the students in the area of phonological awareness and pronunciation following the implementation of the educational intervention. The lower variance in the scores of the experimental group also indicates greater consistency in the results, which may be attributed to the use of the "Blending Sounds" methodology.

Reading Fluency and Comprehension:

On the other hand, the bar chart on the right presents the mean scores of both groups regarding reading fluency and comprehension, again accompanied by error bars reflecting the variance. Similar to the previous case, the experimental group shows a higher mean score, suggesting a significant improvement in students' reading fluency and comprehension after the intervention. The trend of higher scores in the experimental group reinforces the hypothesis that the applied intervention has positively impacted the development of these skills.

T- student test

The T-test analysis plays a pivotal role in this study by providing a statistical method to determine whether the observed differences in reading and pronunciation skills between the experimental and control groups are statistically significant. Following the implementation of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology, the T-test is used to compare the mean scores of both groups in two key areas: phonological awareness and pronunciation, and reading fluency and comprehension.

The T-test helps assess whether the improvements observed in the experimental group, which received the targeted intervention, are substantial enough to suggest that they did not occur by chance. By calculating the T-statistic and the corresponding p-value, the analysis can determine the likelihood that any observed differences between the groups are due to the intervention rather than random variation (Pineda Marín, 2013).

This section presents the results of the T-test analysis, examining the extent to which the "Blending Sounds" Methodology effectively improved the students' skills compared to conventional teaching methods. The findings from the T-test provide crucial evidence for evaluating the success of the

educational intervention and its potential to enhance the learning outcomes of students learning English as a foreign language.

Table 9.

T student test data

Test	T-Statistic	P-Value
Phonological Awareness & Pronunciation	26.66	3.09e-34
Reading Fluency & Comprehension	60.93	2.80e-54

Note. Elaborated by authors

P- values

The p-values from the t-tests represent the probability of obtaining the observed results (or more extreme results) if there is actually no difference between the two groups, assuming that the null hypothesis is true. In this context, the p-values provide important insights into whether the observed differences in performance between the experimental and control groups are statistically significant.

For phonological awareness and pronunciation, the p-value is 3.09e-34 (which is equivalent to 3.09 x 10^-34, a number very close to zero). This p-value is much smaller than the typical significance level of 0.05, or even the more stringent level of 0.01. This indicates that the probability of observing such a difference, or a more extreme difference, between the experimental and control groups' scores in phonological awareness and pronunciation by chance alone is extremely low (Pineda Marín, 2013). This suggests a statistically significant difference between the groups, implying that the "Blending Sounds" Methodology likely had a real effect on improving phonological awareness and pronunciation skills.

For reading fluency and comprehension, the p-value is 2.80e-54, which is another extremely small number close to zero. Similar to the previous p-value, this value is far below any common significance threshold. This indicates that the likelihood of the observed difference, or a more extreme difference, occurring by chance alone is virtually zero. This strongly suggests that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in reading fluency and comprehension, further supporting the effectiveness of the intervention in improving these skills (Pineda Marín, 2013).

The p-values indicate that there is strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the groups. Both p-values are extremely low, suggesting that the "Blending

Sounds" Methodology had a significant positive impact on both phonological awareness and pronunciation, as well as on reading fluency and comprehension, in the experimental group compared to the control group.

T-Test Results Comparison:

Phonological Awareness & Pronunciation:

- T-Statistic: 26.66
- P-Value: 3.09e-34

The t-statistic of 26.66 is quite large, indicating a substantial difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups. The extremely low p-value (3.09e-34) shows that this difference is statistically significant, meaning the likelihood that this difference occurred by chance is virtually zero. This result suggests that the experimental group, which received the "Blending Sounds" intervention, performed significantly better in phonological awareness and pronunciation than the control group.

Reading Fluency & Comprehension:

- T-Statistic: 60.93
- P-Value: 2.80e-54

The t-statistic of 60.93 is even larger than the one for phonological awareness & pronunciation, indicating an even more substantial difference between the groups in terms of reading fluency and comprehension. The corresponding p-value (2.80e-54) is exceedingly low, further confirming that this difference is statistically significant. This result implies that the experimental group had a much higher level of improvement in reading fluency and comprehension compared to the control group.

Conclusion of the Comparison:

Both t-statistics are very high, but the t-statistic for reading fluency & comprehension (60.93) is notably larger than for phonological awareness & pronunciation (26.66). This suggests that the effect of the "Blending Sounds" intervention was even more pronounced in improving reading fluency

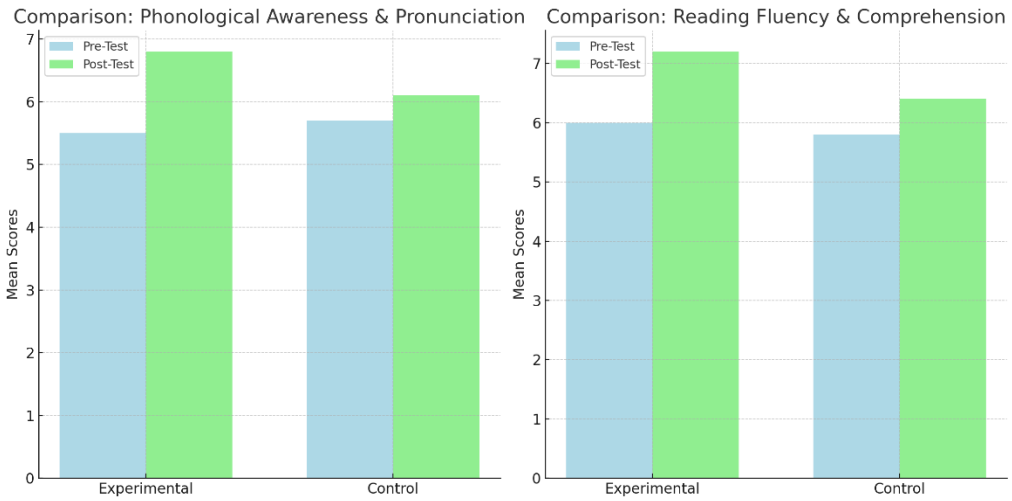
and comprehension skills than in enhancing phonological awareness and pronunciation.

The p-values for both tests are extremely small, well below any standard threshold for significance (such as 0.05 or 0.01), indicating that the observed differences between the groups are not due to random chance.

The comparison shows that the intervention had a significant positive impact on both skills, with a particularly strong effect on reading fluency and comprehension. This suggests that the "Blending Sounds" Methodology was effective in both areas but had a slightly greater impact on improving reading fluency and comprehension among the experimental group.

Figure 3.

Comparation pre and post test data



Note. Elaborated by authors

Based on the t-test results and the analysis of the post-test data, several important conclusions can be drawn regarding the effectiveness of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology in enhancing the reading and pronunciation skills of tenth-grade students at the "UEFOG" Educational Unit.

Firstly, the findings demonstrate that the "Blending Sounds" Methodology had a substantial positive effect on the students' skills. Significant differences between the experimental and control groups' post-test scores indicate that the methodology effectively improved both phonological awareness and pronunciation, as well as reading fluency and comprehension. Notably, the intervention led to greater improvements in reading fluency and comprehension than in phonological awareness and pronunciation, as evidenced by a larger t-statistic (60.93 vs. 26.66). This suggests that the methodology was particularly successful in helping students become more fluent and capable readers in English.

The extremely low p-values (3.09e-34 for phonological awareness and pronunciation, and 2.80e-54 for reading fluency and comprehension) further support the conclusion that the observed improvements in the experimental group are statistically significant. These p-values indicate that the probability of these improvements occurring by random chance is virtually zero. As a result, the study provides strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the experimental and control groups, affirming that the "Blending Sounds" Methodology was the cause of the significant improvements observed in the students' skills.

The practical implications for teaching are clear: integrating phonetic-focused methodologies like "Blending Sounds" into the English curriculum can effectively address common difficulties in reading and pronunciation that students learning English as a foreign language often face. The greater impact on reading fluency and comprehension suggests that this methodology is particularly beneficial for enhancing overall language proficiency and literacy skills, which are essential for academic success.

Additionally, the comparable starting points of both groups, as indicated by the pre-test data, and the significant differences observed in the post-test results reinforce the validity of the quasi-experimental design used in the study. This design has allowed for a reliable comparison and demonstrated the effectiveness of the intervention, thereby validating the study's approach and findings.

Given these positive results, it is recommended that the "Blending Sounds" Methodology be implemented more broadly within the educational context of the "UEFOG" Educational Unit and potentially in other schools facing similar challenges in English language learning. Future studies could explore the specific elements of the methodology that contribute most to the observed improvements and examine whether these effects are sustained over time.

Overall, the study concludes that the "Blending Sounds" Methodology is a highly effective approach for improving phonological awareness, pronunciation, reading fluency, and comprehension among tenth-grade students learning English as a foreign language. Incorporating such methodologies into language education can lead to significant gains in student performance, motivation, and overall language proficiency.

Limitations

Despite efforts to ensure a rigorous design, this research presents several limitations that could influence the results obtained. First, the sample size, being restricted to a specific group of tenth-grade students, may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations or educational contexts. Additionally, the focus on a single educational institution reduces the ability to extrapolate the results to different environments or educational levels. Second, the time allocated for the intervention using the *Blending Sounds* methodology may have been insufficient to observe significant changes in complex skills such as fluency and reading comprehension, which typically require extended practice. The variability in students' prior reading skills could have also impacted the uniformity of the results, as some students may have started from a more advanced developmental stage than others.

Moreover, reliance on self-reported tools and direct observation in data collection may introduce subjective biases from both the students and the researchers. Individual perceptions of progress in phonetic skills may not fully reflect the actual advancements, potentially affecting the accuracy of the data gathered. Other external factors, such as students' motivation levels, prior exposure to phonetic techniques, home support, and socioeconomic background, while considered, could not be entirely controlled, potentially influencing the final results. Finally, limited access to technological resources and teaching materials may have impacted the implementation of the *Blending Sounds* methodology, constraining the effectiveness that this approach could have had under ideal conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology on the English reading and pronunciation skills of tenth-grade students at Unidad Educativa "UEFOG." Based on the results obtained from the pre-test and post-test assessments, several key conclusions can be drawn regarding the effectiveness of the intervention.

First, the implementation of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology has proven to be effective in enhancing students' phonological awareness and pronunciation. The post-test results indicate a significant improvement in the ability of students in the experimental group to identify and accurately pronounce specific English phonemes, particularly those that are typically challenging due to differences from their native language. This improvement suggests that the explicit phonics instruction and systematic practice of blending sounds, which are central to the methodology, effectively address gaps in students' foundational phonetic skills.

Second, the intervention also positively impacted students' reading fluency and comprehension. The experimental group showed marked gains in reading speed, accuracy, and comprehension compared to the control group. These results demonstrate that integrating guided reading aloud, multisensory dictation, and peer practice activities into the intervention contributed to the development of more fluent reading habits and better understanding of English texts. The use of varied and engaging activities helped to maintain student motivation and foster a deeper engagement with the learning material, which was reflected in the improved post-test scores.

The intervention successfully reduced the variability in performance among students. The analysis of the pre-test and post-test data revealed that the experimental group not only improved their average scores but also demonstrated a more consistent level of proficiency across different areas of reading and pronunciation. This outcome suggests that the "Blending Sounds" Methodology is particularly effective in creating more equitable learning opportunities by providing structured support to all students, regardless of their initial proficiency levels.

Moreover, the positive feedback collected through student questionnaires and direct observations indicated that students found the methodology enjoyable and helpful in overcoming their pronunciation challenges. This highlights the importance of incorporating interactive and multisensory learning strategies in language education to enhance both engagement and learning outcomes.

The findings of this study confirm that the "Blending Sounds" Methodology is an effective approach to improving English reading and pronunciation skills among tenth-grade students. By addressing specific phonological challenges and fostering fluency through diverse and engaging activities, the methodology provides a comprehensive framework that can be adapted to other contexts and language learning environments. The positive results of this study also suggest that further research could explore the long-term effects of this methodology and its application to other language skills, such as writing and listening comprehension.

RECOMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to further enhance the effectiveness of English language teaching and learning using the "Blending Sounds" Methodology.

Firstly, it is recommended that educators integrate the "Blending Sounds" Methodology more extensively into the regular English curriculum. Given the significant improvements observed in students' phonological awareness, pronunciation, reading fluency, and comprehension, this methodology could be adapted to different grade levels and language proficiency stages. Teachers should receive training on how to effectively implement the methodology, with particular emphasis on using multisensory activities and explicit phonics instruction to address common pronunciation challenges faced by students.

It is advisable to incorporate more digital tools and resources that complement the "Blending Sounds" Methodology. Technology can play a critical role in providing students with additional practice opportunities outside the classroom, such as interactive phonics games, pronunciation apps, and online reading materials. These tools can help reinforce the skills learned during the intervention and support continued language development. Schools should consider investing in these resources to make them readily available to both students and teachers.

Furthermore, it is recommended that future interventions using the "Blending Sounds" Methodology include continuous formative assessments to monitor student progress and tailor instruction to their specific needs. Regular feedback from both teachers and peers should be emphasized, as it helps students become more aware of their learning process and areas for improvement. Teachers should also create a supportive learning environment that encourages students to experiment with pronunciation without fear of making mistakes.

Moreover, this study suggests the importance of fostering a collaborative learning environment where students can engage in peer practice and group activities. The positive results achieved through pair and group work indicate that collaborative learning strategies should be an integral part of the teaching approach, as they promote interaction, confidence, and language acquisition.

Finally, it is recommended that further research be conducted to explore the long-term impact of the "Blending Sounds" Methodology on language skills beyond reading and pronunciation. Future studies could investigate its effectiveness in developing writing and listening comprehension skills, or its adaptability to different linguistic contexts and educational settings. Additionally, exploring its impact on students with different learning styles and needs could provide valuable insights into how the methodology can be customized to support diverse learners.

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Annex 4.

Schedule

Phase / Activity	Description	Duration	Start Date	End Date
Literature Review	Searching and analyzing relevant sources for the theoretical framework.	2 weeks	3/6/24	16/6/24
Instrument Design	Creating the pre-test and post-test, rubrics for evaluation, etc.	1 week	17/6/24	23/6/24
Pilot Test of the Instrument	Conducting the test in a small group to evaluate effectiveness.	1 week	24/6/24	30/6/24
Pre-Test Administration	Administering the pre-test to the research participants.	2 days	1/7/24	2/7/24
Implementation of the Intervention	Applying the "Blending Sounds" Methodology in the experimental group.	4 weeks	3/7/24	30/7/24
Post-Test Administration	Administering the post-test to both groups to measure results.	2 days	31/7/24	1/8/24
Data Analysis	Analyzing the results from the pre-test and post-test (including T-tests).	2 weeks	5/8/24	18/8/24
Final Report Writing	Writing the research report, including conclusions and recommendations.	3 weeks	19/8/24	8/9/24
Presentation of Results	Oral or written presentation of the results to the institution or committee.	1 week	2/9/24	8/9/24