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Survey on the Knowledge Base of EFL Pre-service Teachers for Phonics Instruction

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Abstract

Phonics which refers to the letter-sound relationship originates in English speaking countries. Phonics instruction is part of early reading instruction. Based on previous literatures, the most suitable one for EFL students is synthetic phonics instruction approach. Since 2011, phonics is required by National English Curriculum in China, literatures indicated that in the actual teaching activities, it is hard to implement phonics instruction, regardless of phonics instruction approaches. The rationale for this is that the in-service teachers and pre-service teachers are short of subject matter content knowledge. Very few studies are conducted to look into in-service EFL teachers and pre-service EFL teachers' knowledge base to teach phonics. To bridge the gap, this study aims at providing preliminary descriptive data via a survey on pre-service EFL teachers' knowledge base to teach phonics. To attain this goal, 104 pre-service EFL teachers ranging from the first academic year to the fourth academic year are selected via random sampling technique to fill in the survey. The findings indicate their weak knowledge base for phonics instructions. This study hopes to provide empirical information for policy makers or researchers to look into this matter to take some measures to prepare pre-service EFL teachers to teach phonics in order to promote the implementation of phonics instruction in EFL context in China.

Keywords: Pre-service EFL Teachers, Subject Matter Content Knowledge, Phonics Instructions, Teacher Preparation

Background

English is an alphabetic language which contains 26 letters and represents 44 different sounds (International Literacy Association, 2019)[ILA, 2019]. Hence, for each individual letter, there may not be only one sound to be pronounced. Phonics is just the study of the relationship between letters and sounds (ILA, 2018). Once, the new language learners grasp the decoding rules with phonemic awareness, could they successfully turn those prints into their inner verbal speech to improve their reading fluency. With more sight words and practice, more mental attention could be paid on comprehension rather than decoding, reading comprehension abilities might be improved (Blevins, 2017). Thus, the initial purpose