

Ahmad Munir IJESSR Teaching Phonics

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TEACHING PHONICS TO KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS IN INTERNATIONAL BASED SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The Study was aimed to observe teaching and learning practice in reading class of Kindergarten students using Phonics method. The study involved one subject teacher and the students as the subjects of the research. The study was conducted by using non-participant observation in kindergarten reading class in international based school with 23 students. The observation was done in five meetings to identify how far the use of phonics help students to read. For four meetings, the students were taught reading three-letter words using Phonics method by the subject teacher followed by several examples of the words being learned. At the end of the meeting, the students were asked to read simple sentences. From the study it showed that the students could easily follow the instruction delivered by the subject teacher. In four afore meetings, the students could integrated every sound of letter in word. In the end, the students could read the word fluently. To this point, the phonics method taught by the subject teacher was fair effectively help students to understand and read the word in English sentence.

KEYWORDS: Kindergarten students, phonemic awareness, phonics method, reading

INTRODUCTION

Reading nowadays belongs to a fundamental skill that should be mastered by all people especially students. A Polling conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 62% of parents identified reading as one of the most important skills their children needed to learn (Blevins, 2006). Many teachers agreed that those students who fail to read may face many problems in the future, for example problem in their self-confident development, motivation to learn, and also their later performance (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2008). From this fact then, teachers have been searching for the best way how to teach reading to their students in early age with enjoyable and fun way.

In Indonesia, English has been introduced in early education. Since the use of English matters in this globalization era, many schools have been developed as international based school with English as their language instruction. In early education, early age students have been taught all the English lesson including reading English textbook. Many kindergarten schools nowadays already implement teaching to read for their students, especially those international based schools. Students are expected to be able to understand and recognize English alphabet and its sounds even words written in English since they are little.

In teaching reading English textbook, there are two strategies provided that are claimed as better way to teach young learner to read; Phonics and Whole Language. Those two methods have different way

in teaching reading. Many studies then have been conducted to prove which one is the best method to teach students to read, especially for young learner (Blevins, 2006). Phonics, as the prior method in teaching reading, teach children to decode the letter from word while whole language is learnt by recognizing the word in whole unit not decoding the letter, which it should memorize to know what the word is. Those two method then always become great debate in this decade on which one is better than which one. Whole language is believed becoming the innovative way to teach children in early reading and writing since 1990 in the United States (Richards, 2002). However, many studies have been conducted to prove that Phonics is better method to teach reading to early learners (Kuo, 2011; Northcross, 2011; Phipps, 2011) although that it would be more effective when whole language approach combines with phonics method and emphasized into the language arts curriculum (Maddox & Feng, 2013).

Phonics is a method to teach reading by recognizing the sound letter (Washtell, 2008). Thing that makes this method different to whole language method is that in phonics, students are taught to decode word into sound letter. Furthermore, students are expected to be able to combine every sound letter into good word. Essentially, teaching phonics should be started early in Kindergarten and should be taught in short, regular, fast-paced teaching sessions (approximately 20 minutes in one meeting). In teaching explicit phonics, teachers are forced to pronounce the sounds they are teaching clearly and consistently. Teachers need to be able to help the students to improve and develop their capacity to pronounce the phonemes in words. Teachers should be able to be a model to pronounce and show the right way how to blend the letters in the right order (initial medial, and final as well) through word.

For the point, student needs to be aware that in every single English word is consisted of a sequence of distinct sounds so that they can feel the sense of phonics learning. Phonics focuses on the ability to recognize that phonemes of spoken language and graphemes of written language that have predictable relationship that represents in written language (Martinez, 2011). Therefore, phonemic awareness and phonics method should be integrated in teaching learning. Moreover, phonics method also needs to be related in the reading time and into learning in other learning aspect. When children get exposed to lots of phonics learning in authentic reading and writing context, they will get more benefit and will more successful in applying and transferring phonics knowledge. This is the reason why there are so many international-based schools use phonics not as the subject of the study but as a tool and method to teach students in learning to read.

Phonics is not a new thing in learning how to read for children in education range (Smith, 2011). Phonics has been used in all of the continents throughout the English-speaking world. This method has been implemented in England, America, Australia, and other countries which use English as their first language. However, several countries have already implemented this method in their class activity as the main method to teach students to read English text although they use English as a second or foreign language. In Southeast Asia, this method has been implemented in several

countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, and Brunei Darussalam (Smith, 2011; Prasad, Maarof, & Yamat, 2016; Thaen-nga & Leenam, 2016) and the teaching of phonics is demanded in the Standard-based Curriculum for Primary Schools and was implemented in 2011 with Year 1 pupils in Malaysia (Abdullah, Kepol, & Shari, 2014). In Indonesia, English is not its neither first nor second language spoken, but foreign language. This condition makes reading English text more difficult to be applied. In conventional Indonesian schools, not international based-school, it use whole language method in teaching reading in which learning by remembering. Whereas, international based schools had already been applied Phonics method to teach reading.

In Indonesia, mostly, students are taught spelling in their first initial reading (Daud & Salamah, 2016), particularly in their own language, Bahasa Indonesia. Students will spell the every letter, combine it to word, then get the meaning of the word. This action leads to confusion when they deal with English word. They will directly implement their spelling skill they know to read and get the meaning of word in English words. Thus, not rarely do they get wrong in writing English words since Indonesia language and English language have dissimilarities in terms of sound of letter. This problem challenges the educators and the teachers to start to implement Phonics as the method to teach reading for their students. They start to introduce the units of sound of the letter instead of doing spelling in every letter to read English word (Luthy & Stevens, 2012).

It is not stated when the precise time that Indonesian schools begin to implement this Phonics method to teach initial reading for young learner. However, there are a lot of studies that have been conducted to investigate how Phonics was implemented in Indonesian schools, how effective this method implemented to young learner as the foreign language, and also some of them shown the obstacle in both teaching and learning Phonics method. In Indonesia, most of the schools, that implement the Phonics method, use Jolly Phonics for their method. Jolly phonics is teaching reading and writing using fun synthetic phonics method with multisensory approach for young learner. Multisensory approach is useful to be implemented in Jolly Phonics as this approach assist students to remember the letter since they learn the letter with not only one sense but three senses simultaneously, visual, auditory, and kinetic (Dwiastuti, 2014). The purpose of using multisensory approach is to meet the needs of different learning styles of the individuals depends on how the brain receives the information.

Jolly Phonics was taught in several things such as introduction to letter sound, write the letter correctly, spelling letter and word, identify sound of letter in a word, introduction to English vocabulary, and also learn to read English tricky words. All of those things were conveyed students by associating all the letter sound with the movement (Ruhaena, 2008). This was done in order to make the concept of the sound letter more concrete thus students will be able to easily understand and remember. The Kindergarten students, as the participants, were asked to get involved in the activity such as; seeing a flashcard (visual), tracing a flashcard (tactile), listening to the teacher

pronounce the letter sound (auditory), following teacher to make a movement of the letter in the air (kinaesthetic) (Dwiastuti, 2014).

Phonics has been studied by so many researcher not only for seeking how phonics implemented itself but also the effectiveness of Phonics as well as the advantages of using Phonics in class. Dwiastuti (2014) stated in her study that Phonics not only gives advantage in developing reading ability but also can trigger students' attention, enthusiasm, and participation level towards learning activity so that students can learn reading with fun. Students also feel more enthusiast in learning reading by using this Phonics method. This is because Phonics method, in learning activity, uses songs or games for their way to learn new sound letter and/or word. Phonics, apparently, can be applied to students with visual impairment by read aloud the story to visual impairment students (Prakosha, Salim, and Sunardi, 2018). Phonics also can help children with Down Syndrom by giving them 25 lessons (Lemons, 2008). Each lesson included targeted letters or letter combinations, decodable words, sight words, and an intervention-aligned story. In the end, in reading growth of children with DS (Down syndrome), on average, they showed significant growth on taught sight words, letter sounds, and decodable words. Children with DS could also predict nonsense words, in average, that summed up the conclusion that phonics worked effectively to teach children with DS to read.

Phonics is claimed giving beneficial to those students use English as their foreign and/or second language. The beneficial may appear in term of recognizing the word as well as enhancing reading skill in beginning level (Kodae & Laohawiriyanon, 2011; Eshiet, 2014). In another cases, Phonics is able to be used to facilitate spelling (Kuo, 2011). The teachers believed in the utility of phonics knowledge in spelling is given before the relevant phonics knowledge was available to the learners, meaning that learners may have to develop different strategies to cope with spelling tasks.

Phonics also emphasizes to train blending ability so that students are able to read words by sounding and blending (Faustina & Syukri, 2014). Phonics is claimed effective to develop the attention, enthusiasm, and participation level of students towards learning activity (Dwiastuti, 2014). Phonics is able to give impact to the students to develop their initial reading ability, thus they can read syllable and simple word in English text correctly (Puspitasari, Hafidah, & Sujana, 2016; Sudiarta, 2017). Phonics is then asserted to be useful not only for teaching to read but also for helping students to learn how to write since it requires students to identify the letters that represent the speech sound of the target language (Hidajat, Yosephine, & Iskandar, 2017). The last, Phonics is also claimed able to assist Visually Impaired students in gaining vocabulary in English text (Prakosha, Salim, & Sunardi, 2018). This all studies show that phonics is now widely implemented in Indonesia due to the fact that its advantages.

International based preschool implement the use of Phonics method as a method to teach reading to preschool students. This method mostly is implemented in school at play group level and kindergarten level. It is expected to give benefits for students to be able to read English text when

they come to higher level of education, elementary level. Thus, this practice becomes trend in school, especially international based school, to teach students to read using Phonics method adopted from native country. This, then, becomes a case in education range whether Phonics method is agreed to be implemented for the preschool teacher or not.

It is clearly understood that Phonics gives so many beneficial for the students in learning to read. Even though it is taught in countries with English as their foreign language, Phonics still gives its effectiveness in teaching students to read, especially those early age students. From those all the studies presented, this study then try to dig up how far the use of phonics help students to read and how the teacher teach and implement Phonics method in kindergarten classroom.

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2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study conducted qualitatively due to the researcher observed and collected the data through observing with wide range of data collected such as text (field notes) and also images (photos and videos). This study examined by scrutinizing the participants in natural setting without any interference from the researcher in term of manipulating the situation. The role of the researcher was non-participant observer, which meant that the researcher did not take part in any activities being observed. Moreover, the role of the researcher was not the key instrument in this study, which meant that the researcher was not the one who actually gathered information through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants without any willing to rely on questionnaires. All this statements elaborated are the main characteristic of qualitative study according to Dornyei (2009), and Creswell (2014), thus this study was obviously a qualitative study.

2.2 Setting and Subject

The school chosen for this study was one of the international schools in Surabaya, Indonesia. This school applied phonics method as their method to teach reading since in Play Group class. The focus of the research was observing the kindergarten class. The class consisted of 23 students (13 males and 10 females students) age range 4-5 years old. . Students were able to understand the instruction delivered in English language, yet most of them did not use English as their first language. Students mostly used Indonesian language in their daily activity and when it came to English class, they spoke in English. The subject teacher who taught reading class was also the subject of the research. The subject teacher was from Javanese ethnic and used Indonesian language as his first language.

2.3 Data and Source of Data

There were several main data offered in this section. Main data of this study was verbal data which was students' and subject teacher utterances about the use of phonics. Utterances were needed to be collected to support and answer question related to how the teacher teach phonics to their students as

well as how students response and imitate the use of phonics that the teacher taught. All those utterances were gathered from students and teachers in reading using phonics activity.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher observed this study through non-participant observation. In non-participant observation, observer or researcher did not take part into all of the activities. All of the activities were done by the participants; subject teacher and students, without neither any interruption nor any treatment from the researcher (Kothari, 2004). The researcher sat on the back of the class and observed all the situation, condition, and all of the activities done in class. The observation was done in 5 meetings. The researcher observed the subject teacher by identifying his utterance and the way he implemented phonics method. The researcher also investigate the understanding of the students in reading English text. At the end of the meeting, the students were asked to read simple sentences written by the subject teacher. The sentences consisted of words the students already learned and familiar with. The researcher made field notes as the instrument for collecting data to support research data.

2.5 Data Analysis

In analysing data, the researcher listed all the common activities that always occurred while teaching and learning activity. The researcher also draw conclusion in the end of the notes to know the capability of the students seen from the first meeting until the last meeting. From those activities then the researcher draw line to present the steps used by the subject teacher in teaching reading using phonics method. To know the use of phonics helps to kindergarten students, the researcher analyzed the data mostly by re watching the recorder to know every progress of the students during the lesson. The data then was composed orderly from the first meeting until the last meeting in order to know students' progress in gaining the concept of phonics method in class. By identifying the progress, the researcher afterwards could draw a conclusion about how phonics can help children to read.

3. RESULT

In Kindergarten school, Phonics does not belong to independent lesson, yet this method was used in reading class as the way to teach students to read. Teaching reading English text was done by the subject teacher, who focused only on teaching reading using Phonics method. The subject teacher in this school was only one for six Kindergarten 1 (K1) classes. In teaching reading, the subject teacher was not accompanied by the class teachers. The class teachers only helped the subject teacher to manage the class ready to get the lesson, not teaching reading.

The current study was conducted in term two. In this term, the students have already learned about the letters and the sound of letters which they already got on the first term. According to the informal interview to the subject teacher, on the first term, the students were taught about all letters a to z along with the sound of every letter. The students were asked to remember all the sounds of the letters that would be used in the next term, the second term. In teaching letter and sound letter, the

subject teacher usually used picture or flashcard containing the letter on it. For example, the letter "C" which had sound of /k/ containing the picture of cat. The subject teacher taught only one letter in every picture, he did not teach the students all the word (picture cat only comes up with letter C not word cat). This lesson was recurred in reading lesson in term one so that the students understood and could remember the sound of the letter.

In term two, the students started to learn to read combination of three letters to form a word, mostly CVC (consonant, vowel, consonant) word. There were several steps found in teaching phonics in the class taught by the subject teacher. The steps comprised presenting the letter, identifying the sound of the letter, recognizing the group of letter, inserting the first letter to the group of letter, identifying the sound of the letter in the word, reading the word by spelling using phonics, reading the word fluently, and the last was reading short and simple sentence. All those steps always appeared in every meeting. Sometimes the subject teacher asked the students about the meaning of the word to make sure that the students understood about what they read. Not rarely did the students also ask the subject teacher about the meaning of every word they learn.

The first step the subject teacher did in teaching students to read using phonics in class was presenting the letter. Before started to write word, the subject teacher tended to present only one letter written in the white board. The letter written was mostly a vocal one written in lower case. As noted, all the letters written were in lowercase since the students get familiar only in lower case. Thus, all written forms were formed in lower case alphabet. After the subject teacher wrote the letter, the subject teacher asked the students what letter in the white board was. This was always done in the class since the students sometimes confused about how to spell whether in Indonesian language or English language. Students also got spelling in Indonesian class, not rarely did they bring the language into the English reading class. Therefore, the subject teacher always reminded the students that they did belong to English class and the students should spell in English alphabet spelling.

Identifying the sound of the letter would be the next step done by the subject teacher. Students had to recognize and comprehend about what sound of every letter they see. Essentially, this activity was mostly done in the term one, however the subject teacher still brought this activity in the term two since the students sometimes forgot what sound of the letter written. Every so often did the students miss understand between sound of the letter and what letter was, thus the subject teacher evenly asked the students about those things, as presented below.

(5th meeting, conv. 1)

ST : Marvel, what letter is this?

S1 : /juh/

ST : The sound is /juh/ but what letter is this? I ask what letter is this, not the sound?

S1 : [dʒʌg] (for the word 'jug')

In this situation, the subject teacher did not directly give the students what the correct answer was, however, the subject teacher gave another students a chance to answer the correct answer. The subject teacher in purpose wanted to raise his students' recognition in the attention and raise his students' attention to the teacher.

(5th meeting, conv. 2)

ST : Letter. Not the sound. We don't have letter /juh/ in this. So K1-3, what letter is this?

SSS : J

ST : Good.

Identifying the sound of the letter in reading lesson was also very imperative. By identifying the sound of the letter, students would be so much easier in associating the letter sound in order to read word. In teaching reading to kindergarten students, the subject teacher also presented the group of letter as shown in the Phonics book. These groups of letters then were being the ending sound of every word that they learned later on. Basically, differ to the phonics taught in English language Countries, the Phonics book used in this current study taught the students to read and understood the word based on the group of letters that would be the ending sound of the word. The book was contained of ten groups of letters and was taught 2 groups of letters in one day. However, when the subject teacher felt that it was not enough learning 2 groups of letter in 30 minutes due to the lack of students' attention, then the subject teacher only taught one group of letters in a day. Before the students were given the group of letters, the subject teacher always asked the students to utter each letter sound then blend it into one sound.

(4th meeting, Conv. 3)

ST : what the sound of this? (write letter 'o')

SSS : /a/

ST : and what is this? (write the letter 't')

SSS : /t/

ST : and how you read this?

SSS : /at/

By recognizing the ending sound of the word, students had ability to guess letter placed in the first place. This would be the next step that the subject teacher did in teaching reading English text book. Soon after the subject teacher presented one group of letter to the students, then the subject teacher added the first letter using different color of marker from the ending sound. Since the students got exposed English language, they every so often could guess what the first letter placed to make a complete word. Generally, the words that students proposed were based on the book they read, Phonics book. However, the subject teacher frequently added one word outside the book to test students' logical thinking and also students' phonemic awareness. This was done in so many times so

that students could think outside the book what other words that have the same ending sound like they learned.

In identifying the sound of the letter in complete word, this section was done to improve students' self-phonemic awareness so that students learned how to read the word easier. The subject teacher asked the students to utter every sound of letter then blend it into a good pronunciation. This action also helped students who cannot read directly on the text. Therefore those students can read the word by associating the sound of every letter and blending it. The subject teacher typically asked the students to read in two parts of spelling, the first letter sound and the ending sound. When the subject teacher wrote new word in the white board, he always asked the students to read phonically, even several students were able to read directly. In learning new word, the subject teacher always made sure that all the students understood about the word and the sound of letter they learned. Therefore, there were no students would be left behind due to slow learning.

Even though the students were asked to read phonically, yet in the end of the lesson, they were also asked to read fluently without any interruption in phonics spelling. Students were asked to do so with the intention of when they read sentence, they would be not distracted by the phonic spelling and could focus on the reading and meaning of what they read. The subject teacher also gave them short and simple sentences in four until five words.

(4th meeting, Conv. 5)

ST : What is cub by the way?

S4 : Cup is for drinking

ST : Really? Cub? For drinking? Yes or no?

SSS : Yees

S5 : cub is the baby's dot?

ST : No, cub is not baby's dot. What cup here means?

S6 : Cub is the baby's bear

ST : Yess, the baby's bear is a cub. So, cub is something u use for drinking?

SSS : No

ST : No. So how do you spell cup?

SSS : /si/ /yu/ /pi/

ST : Yes. That's the cup for drinking. Not this one. This is cub

Typical sentence given by the subject teacher was combining words between words they learned in reading class (using phonics method) and in English class (using sight word method/whole language method). In brief explanation, kindergarten students got two classes in English language. The first one is reading class, which uses phonics as a method to read, and also the English class. In English class, students were taught sight words by remembering several words in English like pronoun, conjunction, and an article.

In English class, students were drilled to remember common vocabularies that mostly appeared in sentences. In every meeting, students needed to remember five until six words presented in their English book. Those words then appeared also in reading class as it combined with word that could be read phonically. The subject teacher typically gave three sentences with various length of words combined. In every sentence, the subject teacher added one or sometimes three words with the same (or sometimes different) ending sound that they learned in reading class, which means reading word by spelling phonically.

There are three sentences written in the white board (4th meeting)

“a big bug is in my mug”

“a red rug and a jug”

“I hug my pup”

Students who could not read the sentence were asked to read it phonically by utter first letter then associated it with the last ending sound. But, when they could not read the sight word, the subject teacher directly told how to pronounce it. Although the sight word could be read using phonics method, however the subject teacher did not teach them that way because students already know how to read those sight words. The subject teacher then asked another student when there was a student who could not remember sight word.

Learning to read does not mean only read, but have to know about what is being read. When giving new words or vocabulary to students, the subject teacher every so often ensured that his students could also understood about meaning of the words they read, this would be helped them to gain new vocabulary. In learning to read, long voice and short voice also did matter. The subject teacher also concerned in the way students read the sentence. When they read with long voice, the subject teacher would corrected it as there was no reading such way, long voice.

(3rd meeting, Conv. 10)

S2 : /tuh/ /εεεεd/ /tεεεεεd/

ST : It is not like that you read ted. /tuh/ /εd/. Not /tuh/ /εεεdd. Only short /εd/.

S2 : /tuh/ /εd/ /tεd/

ST : Good. So, class. What is ted? You dont know?

SSS : Noo

ST : Ted is like teddy bear

In brief, there were several steps done in teaching reading to Kindergarten students. The very first step was presenting letter, inserting the first letter to the group of letter, identifying the sound of the letter in the word, reading the word by spelling using phonics, reading the word fluently, and the last was reading short and simple sentences. All those steps always appeared in every meeting.

Sometimes the subject teacher asked the students about the meaning of the word to make sure that students understood about what they read. Sometimes, students also ask the subject teacher about the meaning of every word they learn.

(4th meeting, Conv. 4)

ST : Do yo know what tot means?

S1 : Like a baby

ST : Very good, champion

In teaching and learning activity, subject teacher tended to ask students one by one in order to make sure that no students left behind. Typically subject teacher would asked the students about the letter, the sound of the letter, the sound of group of letter, and what letter supposed to be the first letter in the word. Not all the students could read the word fluently. Many of them had to remember what they supposed to read the word when it came to deal with simple long sentences. When the students met any difficulties in reading the word, the subject teacher then would taught and asked them to read phonically.

Subject teacher firstly taught how to read the word then the students imitated what the subject teacher spoke. This sometimes led to students memorized how to read it instead of recognizing how to spell. In every meeting, as mentioned above, subject teacher always tried to dig up the memory of the students about the sound of every letter they learn. This helped students to awaken their phonemic awareness when they started to read text. Student recognized the sound of the letter, blended it with another letter, and then read it as the whole word. By recognizing sound of every letter, students had pattern to always spell the word phonically when they met new. For those students who could read easily and fluently in every word, subject teacher still asked them to read phonically in purpose to develop their phonemic awareness.

In kindergarten level, on this current study, students were not only asked to read simple three-letter words but also simple four-word sentences. The sentences provided to the students were combination between word they learned in the reading class (using phonics method) and in the English class (sight word method). Those words in the sentence were typically words they have ever learned before. The sentences were so simple, usually it contained of two words (or more) that could be read using phonics method and the two word (or more) that could be read using sight word. In reading sentences, teacher did not initiate to read first. Subject teacher directly asked the students to read in chorus. Students typically could directly read the sentences when they read together in whole class. Yet, when they were asked to read by their own, not all of the students could read it fluently.

In reading sentences, when the students could not read the word, they would automatically paused reading, and started to spell the word. They began to identify and recognize the sound of the first letter and blend it with the last sound of group of letter. This skill of reading always worked for those

who could not or forgot how to read word. By applying this phonics method, students felt easy to read by synthetically decoded letter then blended it.

4. DISCUSSION

Since this study conducted in school in which not using English as their first or second language (but as their foreign language), the teaching process were different from the way phonics is taught in native countries. In this current study, the focus of the teaching phonics is to recognize three-letter words starting with stating groups of word first. According to books about Phonics, essentially phonics can be used to teach reader to read tricky words, however, in this current situation phonics is only used for reading very simple words. This condition may be adjusted to the curriculum in Indonesia, which the early age students should be taught about recognizing letter and its sound. However, for words that are difficult to teach using phonics, students tend to be taught with whole language method or sight word in the English class.

Phonics method is something that can be separated from phonemic awareness. Subject teacher constantly use many activities to build phonemic awareness by asking students to know and utter every letter and its sound since phonemic awareness can be taught and learned. The statement is in line with Armbuster et. al. (2009) stated that phonemic awareness can be taught and learned by applying many activities such as phoneme isolation, phoneme identity, and phoneme categorization. This condition then causes students to be more aware to phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is very essential in learning to read. Students who are able to understand phonemic awareness will be easily read new word. When they are faced with a new word they will be able to read the word using the principle of phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness makes it easy for students to read words in English by knowing every sound of letter, then blend it with another letter to make good pronunciation. Thus, phonemic awareness is important to be taught to the students. This statement is in line with Taylor, Branscombe, Burcham, & Land (2011). They agreed that phonemic awareness has significant value for reading development It is clearly understood and agreed that the successful students in reading ability is indicated by their ability in phonemic awareness. The argument then is strengthen by the claim stated by Booker (2013) that is phonemic awareness is essential for students to become literate.

In teaching phonics in this current study, students are tended to learn about the sound of the letter. They will learn all twenty-six letters with its every sound with picture on it. Students only know the 26 basic sound as proposed in alphabet orthography. However, according to the phonics guideline, sound of the letter should be taught first since there are 44 sounds (or more, depend on dialect, speech pattern, or other variables) in English language. This condition may be happened due to the fact that the school only introduced the basic sound of the English language along with its letter. According to the Indonesian government regulation regarding to the early age education, early age students should not go further than only know and recognize the sound and the letter at the point, the

basic proposed in alphabet orthography. As a result, there might be adjustment in teaching reading material in kindergarten school in Indonesia.

In reading class, subject teacher always asks about the meaning of the word they read, especially uncommon words or new words like keg, peg, and ted. In reading, knowing the meaning of the word that is read is essential one since it will affect children's reading performance. If the readers are able to understand what they read, their reading skill will improve too. This statement is in line with the argument stated by Blevins (2006). After struggling in decoding words, children will focus on the meaning of the word. They must be capable to understand what they read by knowing the meaning of the word they read. By this mean, children then will be fast and acknowledged reader.

In Indonesia, phonics is something that should be considered. Not all the kindergarten schools use phonics as a method to teach their students to read. Whereas, the use of phonics is fair help when applied in kindergarten school. Although Indonesian government restricts to teach kindergarten to read, write, and count, many early age schools still give lesson how to read to kindergarten students. This initiation is given by purpose to generate children be more prepared to encounter the next educational level. Subject teacher tends to drill students to absorb and understand the lesson. When they have difficulty in reading lesson, subject teacher gives clue and asks students over and over again until the students understand and could pronounce the word. This situation is contrary with the statement argued by Maryatun (in Asiah, 2018). The lesson should be in fun and enjoyable way so that the students do not feel that they are pushed to learn reading.

Many studies have searched for the importance and the effectiveness of phonics method in the entire world, not only in native English speaker countries but also in countries which use English as their second or foreign language. There are so many prove that phonics is indeed the best method to teach students to read. The reason why phonics can be the effective way for teaching reading is related to phonemic awareness. By knowing and aware about phoneme, students will be so much easier to read. Phonics also helps students to read by recognizing every letter and its sound then blend it with another sound letter to make good spell. When they come to face the word they do not know how to read, using phonics, they can spell every letter and blend it. In line with this statement, Puspitasari et. al. (2016) stated that using phonics method, students seem easier to understand about letters and easier to synthesize the letter and its sound (Puspitasari et.al., 2016). Moreover, Martinez (2011) also stated that phonics method make students easy to construct the connection between the letter and its sound, students then can read the words by themselves.

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The results obtained indicate that using phonics can help the learners to read and form words effectively. Furthermore students' word recognition significantly improved. This is proven by the fact that the students always know how to read word provided just before the subject teacher read. This is in line with statement proposed by Thaen Nga (2016). It seems that teaching reading through phonics can enhance student's word reading for many reasons. Firstly, phonics played significant

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role to assist students to learn how to read. After teaching phonics, students were able to pronounce sounds example the sound /b/, then /u/, and the /g/, blended together as a word. In addition, the students who are skilled in phonics can sound out the words they have not seen before, without first having to memorize them (Thaen Nga, 2016). It means that the students have learnt a technique that they can use for themselves. Moreover, by knowing phonics method, students also be able to guess the words group which has the same ending sound, such as dot, tot, pot, and not.

In reading lesson, kindergarten students not only exposed with simple word but also they have to be able to read simple sentences. The sentences typically are combination between words they learn in reading class and words they learn in English class. Since the words come up from different class, the way they read the word is also different. Students tend to use sight word or whole language method to read words they cannot decode like my, above, under, and the by typically memorizing all words in the English class. The way they read by using mix method is very essential too. This helps students to read simple long sentences without bothering to decode sight word since not all sight words can be decode like words learned in reading class. This statement is in line with Maddox & Feng (2013). They also stated in their study that it would be more effective when whole language approach combines with phonics method and emphasized into the language arts curriculum. Since whole language allows students to read by context and phonics is method in reading text by decoding words, Maddox and Feng suggest that to achieve successful reading learning, teachers and educators need to combine two methods into one cohesive curriculum: phonics method and whole language methods. However, using combined method of reading, whole language and phonics method, also less beneficial when the students meet words they forget. For common word they learn in phonics class, they easily decode the word by recognizing every sound letter then blend it. Yet, it does not work with sight words presented. Since the students learn sight word by memorizing, they have no ability to guess and to manipulate the sound of the word. This will be a problem faced by the students. They then typically will just stop reading since they cannot sound the word out. This will make reading progress slow since students more pay attention to remembering how to read the word. This statement is supported by the argument stated by Waldo (2006). Waldo stated that whole language only gives a sight of word to remember, when children come to words they do not know, they have no ability to recognize how to pronounce the word. In other way, Phonics give art of language, it gives the ability to manipulate the sound of words and decode it then blend it. It does not mean that whole language gives no outcomes in teaching reading to children. Since whole language teach children how to read in whole and in context, it showed that this environment resulted in better reading and writing achievement for children (Pasa, 2001). Hence, the educators and the teachers should sometimes combine both methods at the right time to teach how to read to early age children (Maddox, 2013).

5. CONCLUSION

After all of the research focus on the teaching phonics, it can be concluded that phonics is indeed help students to read but in moderate level in kindergarten school. This fact is accomplished after

knowing that the use of phonics should be accompanied by another way of teaching, which is introducing the sight word list. Children can read only several word using phonics, however, another word such as the, above, and my should be read using whole language method since the children learn to read those word in a sight. This condition then makes the effectiveness of reading using phonics not really helpful. When the students cannot remember the word, they just skip the word. Yet, it does not mean that the students cannot apply the phonics method when they meet new three-letter word. Since the current study was focus only on kindergarten students, it does not matter whether they cannot read sentences because kindergarten's reading level is just know and recognize the letter.

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