

GRADE ONE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S
PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: A
CASE OF ONANKALI CIRCUIT, NAMIBIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at exploring the challenges Grade 1 teachers encounter when teaching phonological awareness in English as a Second Language (ESL) in the Onankali Circuit of the Oshikoto Education Region of Namibia. The difficulties that children face during the early stages of learning affect the acquisition of better reading skills in future (Naiken, 2016). In an effort to comprehend the difficulties that Grade 1 teachers face in teaching phonological awareness, a single case study design and qualitative approach were used in this study. In addition, the study used purposive sampling to identify the three schools, which consisted of six Grade 1 teachers, three Junior Primary Heads of Departments, and one Advisory teacher from Onankali Circuit. For data collection, face-to-face interviews, observations and document analysis were utilised. Moreover, content analysis was used for data analysis. Some major challenges revealed in the study are but not limited to are a lack of conceptual knowledge about the development of phonological awareness, insufficient teaching and learning resources for phonological awareness, teachers' lack of English proficiency as well as the insufficient training on the development of phonological awareness which leads to poor reading skills among the Grade 1 learners. The study further revealed the need for Grade 1 teachers to broaden their pedagogical content knowledge of the suitable teaching strategies for phonological awareness and the usage of relevant teaching activities for phonological awareness. Finally, the study recommends Educational Regional offices to make provision for quality professional development training workshops and universal teaching materials for all Grade 1 teachers to support phonological awareness instruction.

Keywords: phonological awareness, emergent literacy, initial reading, teaching strategies, conceptual knowledge

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	x
DEDICATION.....	xi
DECLARATION.....	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the study	2
1.3 Statement of the problem.....	4
1.4 Research questions	6
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	7
1.6 Limitations of the Study.....	7
1.7 Delimitation.....	8
1.8 Definition of terms.....	9
1.9 Chapter Summary	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11

2.1. Introduction	11
2.1.1 Defining phonological awareness.....	11
2.2 Emergent Literacy Framework.....	12
2.3 The Science of Reading (SoR) Research.....	17
2.3.1 Connecting Emergent literacy to the SoR.....	19
2.4 Phonological Awareness as a precursor for initial reading	20
Examples of South African and Namibian Studies	22
2.5 Teachers’ knowledge and experience in developing phonological awareness	25
2.5.1 Instructions for early reading skills and developing emergent reading through Phonological awareness.....	29
2.5.2 Activities for phonological awareness instruction.....	31
2.6 Teachers’ challenges in developing phonological awareness	33
2.7 Intervention strategies to address phonological awareness challenges.....	37
Teacher training and professional development programs	37
2.8 Contextualisation of the study	39
2.9 Chapter summary.....	40
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	42
3.1 Introduction	42
3.2 Research Approach and Design	42
3.3 Population	44

3.4 Sample and sampling procedure.....	44
3.5 Research methods and instruments.....	45
3.5.1 Interview schedule	45
3.5.2 Observation schedule.....	46
3.5.3 Document analysis.....	46
3.6 Data collection procedures.....	47
3.8 Data analysis	48
3.9 Research ethics	51
3.10 Chapter Summary.....	52
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS	53
4.1 Introduction	53
4.2 Demographic information of the participants	53
4.3 Data analysis	55
4.3 Presentation of findings	62
4.3.1 Teachers’ have an implicit sense of phonological awareness instruction and their contribution towards initial reading skills	62
4.3.2 Teachers’ lack of conceptual knowledge in phonological awareness	68
4.3.3 Teachers’ lack of proficiency in English to teach phonological awareness skills.....	69
4.3.4 Teachers’ lack of resources for phonological awareness instruction	70

4.3.5 Teachers’ awareness of professional development training and support	71
4.4 Chapter Summary	73
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	74
5.1 Introduction	74
5.2 Teachers have an implicit sense of phonological awareness activities and their contribution to initial reading skills.....	74
5.3 Teachers’ lack of conceptual knowledge in phonological awareness	77
5.4 Teachers’ lack of resources for phonological awareness instruction	78
5.5. Teachers’ lack of proficiency in English to teach phonological awareness skills	79
5.6 Teachers’ awareness of professional development training and support	81
5.6 Chapter Summary	83
CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	84
6.1 Introduction	84
6.2 Summary of the study	84
6.3 Conclusions	85
6.4 Recommendations	86
6.4.1 Teachers	86
6.4.2 Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture	87
6.4.3 Recommendations for future research	87

REFERENCES.....	89
APPENDICES.....	105
Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance Certificate	105
Appendix 2: Permission Letter from UNAM.....	106
Appendix 3: Permission Letter from Ministry of Education Arts and Culture .	107
Appendix 4: Permission Letter from Oshikoto Regional Council	108
Appendix 5: Informed Consent Letter for the Teacher.....	109
Appendix 6: Teacher’s Interview Questions.....	110
Appendix 7: interview guide for Head of Department.....	111
Appendix 8: Interview Guide for Advisory Teacher	112
Appendix 9: Teacher’s Observation Checklist	113
Appendix 10: English Language Syllabus.....	115
Appendix 11: Emerging codes.....	116
Appendix 12: Oshikoto Region	117

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: An outline for the chapter.....	11
Figure 2: Activities for phonological awareness instruction	31
Figure 3: Data analysis process.....	50
Figure 4: Emerging codes	59

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participants' age, qualification and teaching experience	54
Table 2: Participants' responses and codes.....	55
Table 3: Categories and themes	60

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BED	Bachelor of Education
BETD	Basic Education Teacher Diploma
CK	Conceptual knowledge
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ESL	English as a Second Language
DJPE	Diploma in Junior Primary Education
INSET	In-service Education and Training
JPP	Junior Primary Phase
MBESC	Ministry of Basic Education, Arts and Culture
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
PA	Phonological Awareness
SoR	Science of Reading
SRI	School Readiness Initiative
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis to my late mother, Hilya Ndeyapo Ankonga. May her soul continue resting in peace. I also dedicate my thesis to my children, Marry-anne Chuma Ntelamo, Larkin Mushaukwa Ntelamo, and Simataa Adan Ntelamo. I appreciate your patience and understanding of my hectic commitments. This thesis is also dedicated to Mrs. Emma Ndapewa Nepolo, my beloved guardian parent. Throughout my upbringing, you showed me so much love and made sure I had all I needed to grow into the person I am today, thank you. Lastly, I dedicate this study to all of the Grade One teachers. You are doing a fantastic job by educating young learners to acquire initial-reading skills, keep it up!

DECLARATION

I, Suama Magano Nepolo, hereby declare that this study is my own work and is a true reflection of my research, and that this work, or any part thereof has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

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Suama Magano Nepolo



17 January 2025

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Phonological awareness is an important aspect of reading that helps children develop their initial reading skills. According to Zhang and Roberts (2019), phonological awareness is the ability to use sounds in a spoken language, while Jain et al. (2020) explain phonological awareness to a skill that has an influence on the development of early literacy skills and these include initial reading skills. Initial reading starts at an early stage of a child and that is when teachers need to use phonological awareness in teaching reading skills (Nicholas & Rouse, 2021). Research has consistently shown that children whose phonological awareness skills are well-developed are more likely to become successful readers (Wang, 2022).

In addition, Carson et al. (2013) investigated the influence that phonological awareness instruction has towards the enhancement of initial reading and spelling skills. The investigation revealed that phonological awareness instruction is important because it can enhance children's spelling development and reading achievement. To acquire good reading skills, Grade 1 learners need to be well-developed for their phonological awareness. In 2015, the Namibian Junior Primary curriculum was revised in which phonological awareness now features prominently (The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2015). For this reason, careful consideration is needed concerning teaching and learning. Since the introduction of phonological awareness (PA) into the curriculum for Grade 1 in Namibia, assessment programs such as Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) have been introduced in teaching and learning as well as assessment in reading.

However, capacitating early-grade teachers in critical aspects such as phonological awareness instruction remains a concern (Nghikembua, 2020).

In Namibia, there is a huge concern about whether Grade 1 teachers have the skills necessary to teach phonological awareness as well as the knowledge of what the concept entails (Nghikembua, 2020). Therefore, the present study sought to explore the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching phonological awareness to Grade 1 learners at selected schools in the Oshikoto Educational Region.

1.2 Background of the study

Research on the teaching of the English language has gained prominence globally. In Namibia, research based on English Second Language has also received substantially fairly enough attention. English has been considered an official language in the Namibian Language Policy of 1992, as well as the use of English as a Second Language (ESL) which has equally received emphasis since then. However, research on specific language pre-skills such as phonological awareness is not yet fully explored from the perspectives of both teachers and learners. Phonological awareness is defined as the ability to recognise similarities and differences between sounds and to locate these sounds in various words and phrases (Kasawneh, 2024). In the current study, phonological awareness (PA) refers to the ability to manipulate sounds in a spoken language. Phonological awareness is crucial for learning to read due to the fact it enables children to connect spoken language with written language through sound-letter correspondence, and it strengthens word recognition and spelling abilities (Taherian et al., 2024). If learners are well prepared for this skill, they can develop into good and successful readers in the future.

Instruction in the learners' mother tongue has been incorporated under the Namibian language policy through the first three years of schooling followed by a transition to English medium of instruction in Grades 4 upwards (Ministry of Basic Education, Arts and Culture [MBESC], 2015). The Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture introduced the school readiness program for Grade 1 learners in 2011, which aims at preparing learners for preparatory learning areas including phonological awareness in the first five school weeks. During the school readiness programs, the Grade 1 learners are taken through different preparatory reading activities, including phonological awareness.

Particularly, this exposure to and instruction in phonological awareness in English in the early years can prepare children better to enter the early grades with the necessary skills to begin reading (Tye, 2020). Ehri (2020) affirms that teaching initial reading is more challenging since children need to understand how sounds are pronounced in spoken language (phonological awareness) and after that, discover the letter-phonetic links by decoding the alphabetic code. Thus, phonological awareness is emphasised at the beginning of teaching learners how to read. Furthermore, phonological awareness is regarded as the most fundamental ability in modern society, and being literate is one of the most significant objectives of the early school years (Tye, 2020).

In education, ensuring learners acquire adequate initial reading skills through quality classroom instruction is crucial. According to Billow (2017), even highly skilled early grade teachers, special education teachers and reading specialists were unable to acquire the advanced abilities required to deliver instruction that was appropriate for every learner. In addition, Haile and Mendisu (2023) confirm how the quality of early reading instruction benefits young learners especially if it offered by teachers who have an in-depth

understanding of how to develop this skill (initial reading skills). This is why a comprehensive training programs covering every aspect of literacy acquisition, including phonological awareness academic instruction, need to be made available to first-grade teachers (Costa & Carnoy, 2015). Thus, PA skills intervention is viewed as crucial during early grades to foster skills and prevent children from developing reading problems (Abdon & Barrios, 2022).

Furthermore, Mendisu and Haile (2023) affirm that it would be easier to give children the right assistance to help them develop reading skills in the early grades through phonological awareness if teachers can identify and understand the difficulties they encounter when teaching initial reading in the classroom. As a result, it is important to explore the challenges that teachers are experiencing in the development and teaching of initial reading skills and examine alternative strategies for effective reading instruction. Moreover, early-grade learners could successfully gain the necessary reading skills if the challenges experienced by teachers in developing PA could be overcome. Therefore, the main objective for the current study was to explore the challenges Grade 1 teachers encounter when developing phonological awareness in English Second Language.

1.3 Statement of the problem

According to Alhumnsia and Awwad (2020), teachers are positive about the use of phonological awareness in developing initial reading skills in young learners. Studies have indicated that making use of phonological awareness skillfully in the classroom improves early grade reading proficiency (Carson, 2013). In addition, Catts et al. (2012) also indicate in their study that a lack of phonological awareness and alphabetic knowledge hurts the development of word recognition skills, which has a secondary effect on reading

comprehension. However, the present researcher, as an assistant lecturer who has also run a Diploma in Junior Primary Education (DJPE-INSET) program, has observed minimal knowledge of phonological awareness instruction such as the effective implementation of instructional strategies during classroom visits and assessment of teaching in the English reading lessons. This indicates that if learners are taught by a less knowledgeable teacher, they may find it challenging to blend sounds together to form words, thereby leading to difficulties in reading fluency and comprehension in future. Similarly, Khasawneh and Alkhaldeh (2020) found that teachers encountered challenges when teaching learners how to read through the practice of phonological awareness, which affects their performance in reading. In another study, teachers in Namibia showed a lack of knowledge regarding literacy concepts such as phonological awareness as well as pre-service training in phonological awareness aspects (Nghikembua, 2020). The lack of knowledge could be linked to teachers' instruction of phonological awareness which could make it difficult for learners to acquire adequate initial reading skills. An example of how learners encountered difficulties with understanding phonological awareness patterns could be seen in the EGRA report (Anteneh et al., 2016). The report indicates that kids may lag behind more in later years if they are not well prepared for initial reading during the early years of learning how to read since they may not be able to read printed information, follow written instructions, or identify sounds (Gove & Waterberg, 2011). Nonetheless, a number of real-world challenges in the classroom can prevent teachers from practicing phonological awareness as part of the literacy curriculum (Haile & Mendisu, 2023). The absence of resources and systemic reading instruction, teachers' lack of phonological awareness, time constraints, and resource accessibility are some of these obstacles. Moreover, a study assessing the

phonological awareness of teachers in early primary schools also found that teachers in the field of education lack competency in actual phonological awareness skills (Bayeto & Calson, 2018).

A similar study carried out by Haile and Mendisu (2023) indicates that teachers had challenges in developing phonological awareness due to a lack of resources, lack of training, and conceptual knowledge. Considering all of these issues, phonological awareness instruction may be ineffective if teachers persist in their weaknesses and do not get the assistance they require. Additionally, learners may not be adequately prepared for early reading, which could negatively impact their future reading skills. Therefore, effective instruction for phonological awareness requires teacher support in any area such as the provision of teaching resources, teacher training and other supporting resources (Yaegar, 2018).

According to the Advisory Teacher, novice teachers are trained in school readiness. Additionally, Senior Teachers also serve as a support system for novice teachers (Personal communication with Elizabeth Kashululu, 12 May 2023). Despite all these efforts, teachers continue facing challenges in developing phonological awareness. This implies that learners may be poor readers in the future. In light of this, the study's main objective was to explore the challenges for Grade 1 teachers in teaching phonological awareness in the English Language in the Onankali Circuit of the Oshikoto Region and find solutions to address the arising concern.

1.4 Research questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

What are the teachers' experiences with the development of phonological awareness?

What strategies do Grade 1 teachers at Onankali Circuit use when developing phonological awareness?

What support do Grade 1 teachers in the Onankali Circuit need to effectively develop phonological awareness?

1.5 Significance of the study

Phonological Awareness is widely emphasised under the English Second Language curriculum as well as the School Readiness document, relatively as a new concept in early language learning and teaching in Namibia. Carrying out this study was important as it enlightens the understanding of PA as one of the five components outlined in the National Reading Panel (2000). These components (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) were later emphasised in the revised National Reading Panel report for 2005. Since the initial reading begins with a well-articulated phonological awareness, this skill must be developed at an early stage of learning how to read. Consequently, this study might benefit both teachers and learners since it could contribute to the improvement of teaching methods that could also advance Grade 1 learners' initial reading skills in the Oshikoto Region. Additionally, the results from this study may inform educational stakeholders, including teachers and learners, on the strategies to overcome reading difficulties in English in Grade 1. Lastly, the study might also be useful to researchers who conduct studies in the field regarding English reading skills difficulties. The researcher believes that children who have strong phonological awareness skills are more likely to become proficient readers, whereas those who have limited phonological awareness abilities experience difficulties with initial reading skills in English.

1.6 Limitations of the study

Simon and Goes (2013) define limitations of a study as matters and occurrences that arise in a study that is uncountable for the researcher. In the current study, the first limitation encountered was the withdrawal of a participant from the study which reduced the number of participants affecting the researcher's procedure in the data collection process. The second limitation encountered was that some teachers initially lacked interest in the study and were unwilling to provide information or participate in it. As a result, the amount of data needed for the study was reduced. However, the researcher assured the participants about the research ethics and that any information they shared would be kept private to overcome this constraint. They then actively participated. The third limitation was the fact that the study did not include learners' experiences in the development of phonological awareness skills which would have also consolidated the experiences and challenges of the teachers in the development of phonological awareness. In addition, the study's results cannot be generalised to other schools in Oshikoto Region.

The researcher additionally observed less evidence of the teachers' experiences and challenges in Namibia in developing learners' phonological awareness skills. Hence, the researcher cited research that was conducted globally.

1.7 Delimitation

Even though teachers' experiences in developing phonological awareness in Grade 1 may be observed country-wide in Namibia, this study was confined to Oshikoto Region. Onankali Circuit has 29 schools in total. Due to the long distances between schools, the research was only carried out at three selected schools in Onankali Circuit. Therefore, the study drew data from teachers from three schools in the Oshikoto Region only since it was the focus population of the study.

1.8 Definition of terms

Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is a fundamental phrase for understanding spoken sound units, onsets and rimes as well as individual sounds of the spoken language (Gurjar, 2023). Phonological awareness requires the ability to turn one's attention to sounds in spoken language while temporarily inhibiting its meaning (Yopp & Yopp, 2009). Belmon et al. (2024) define phonological awareness as the child's ability to detect and manipulate the sound units of oral language.

Phonics

Phonics is defined as a method of teaching beginners of a language by using the science of sound (Sitthitikul, 2014).

Initial reading skills

According to Iser (2022), initial reading skills are the skills acquired by a person in the early stages of reading a text or material.

Syllables

In this study, syllables are small units with sounds in words (Goldsmith, 2011). Macmillan (2007) similarly defines syllables as the smallest units in a word which consist of a vowel sound.

Phoneme

According to Ehri (2022), phonemes are the smallest units in word pronunciation which are distinguished by their phonetic and articulatory characteristics. For instance,

the word *check* consists of three phonemes (ch/e/ck/). In another example, the word *show* has three phonemes ‘/sh / o / w/’ while the word *swim* has 4 phonemes ‘/s /w / i /m /’ (Bizzocchi, 2017).

Segmentation

Phoneme segmentation is the process of breaking words into their component sounds. For instance, the learners divide the word "run" into its r, u, and n sounds (Ehri, 2022).

Onset-rimes

These are the consonant sounds that precede a vowel in a syllable (Muyassar, 2023).

Rhyme

A short poem/song often for children that has lines ending in the same sound (Macmillan, 2007).

1.9 Chapter summary

An informational background of the study which was about the challenges experienced by Grade 1 teachers when developing phonological awareness in the Onankali Circuit of the Oshikoto Region was outlined. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the significance of the study to both the teachers and the educational stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education. In the next chapter, the theoretical framework employed in the study as well as the literature review are outlined.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter begins by giving a brief definition of phonological awareness. The chapter also situates phonological awareness instruction in the body of Science of Reading (SoR) research which gives insights into a review of evidence and research-based findings relating to phonological awareness as well as highlighting the gaps that have been acknowledged within the reviewed literature. The chapter continues with a description of the theoretical framework employed in the study with an attempt to understand the challenges experienced by Grade 1 teachers when developing phonological awareness in English initial reading skills. The chapter is outlined as indicated in the figure.

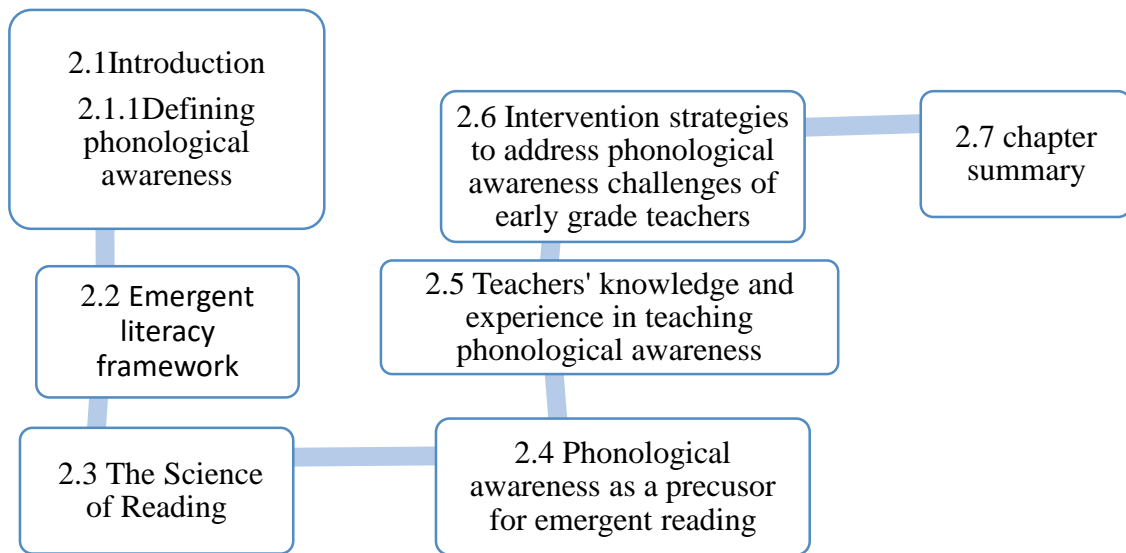


Figure 1: An outline of the chapter

2.1.1 Defining phonological awareness

Smith (2012) defines phonological awareness as the capability to manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. In other words, phonological awareness involves the capacity to

hear and control individual speech sounds independent of their meaning (Mahura, 2021). Phonological awareness (PA), according to Milankov and Golubovi (2021), is the capacity to recognise, consider, and control the phonological parts that makeup spoken words of various complexity and length. Taking all these definitions into consideration, one could say that phonological awareness is a talent that comprises knowledge of the various ways in which the words in our spoken language can be dissected into their parts and then modified (Zoubek, 2017). In this study, phonological awareness refers to the area of oral language that is associated with the ability to manipulate and think about the sounds in a spoken language rather than just the meaning of spoken words (Mohammed, 2014). Thus, the emphasis is on understanding the significance of phonological awareness in developing young learners' initial reading skills. It is vital for teachers of young children to understand the concept of phonological awareness before they even teach it to the learners (Wessels, 2011). It follows that if teachers are unaware of the definition of phonological awareness, they may be unable to teach it to learners successfully and may not be able to decide on appropriate PA activities, which could have an impact on the young children's initial reading development.

2.2 Emergent literacy framework

To fulfil the study's objective which was to explore the teachers' experiences in developing phonological awareness, the study was guided by Clay's emergent literacy theory (1997). The researcher utilised the theory of emergent literacy as it highlights the acquisition of early literacy skills, thereby making it applicable to the development of phonological awareness. This is supported by Wasike (2024), who affirms that the emergent literacy emphasises the development through which children acquire early

literacy skills as well as stipulating the benefit of it towards the attainment of initial reading at an early age.

Clay (1997) believes that phonological awareness is a crucial component of emergent literacy because it helps children understand the relationship between spoken and written language. Clay's idea was for teachers to use activities that can build phonological awareness and thus she identifies three types of activities for phonological awareness: blending, syllabification, and rhyming (Clay, 1997). Ehri (2022) defines blending as the ability to join one or more sounds together in order to read a word, which should be taught as PA activities in Grade 1. This way, it prepares the learners for sound awareness in words which can enable them to read. Syllabification is the process of dividing words according to the vowel sounds (Andrukova, 2017). An example would be when the teacher syllabifies the word "mo/ther/", whereby learners would hear the first vowel "o" and the second vowel sound "er" in the word "mother". This helps learners to decode sounds in words enabling them to read with ease. On the other hand, rhyming is defined as a repetition of similar sounds in the final stressed syllables (Grofčíková & Máčajová, 2021). Rhyming entails, the ability to recognise similar sounds in words, in which the teacher sometimes can also ask learners to categorise words that are rhyming, for example, "fat, mat, pat" are all in one category since they all end with the "at" sound. Through these, learners may be stimulated early for pre-reading skills. This implies that learners can be adequately prepared for pre-reading skills provided teachers use activities that are relevant to phonological awareness.

Moreover, Clay's (1997) emergent literacy theory reveals a direct correlation between the instructional scaffolding that teachers use to support the oral, written, and reading

development of young children and their literacy (Clay, 1991). Affirming Vygotsky's theory about scaffolding (1997), Clay claims that "the essence of successful teaching is to know where the frontier of learning is for any learner on a particular task" (Clay, 1991). The relationships between teachers and children are also highlighted by Clay's emergent literacy instructional techniques, which also put an emphasis on the social settings and supports that teachers and learners jointly build (Christine et al., 2021). In accordance with Clay's idea, teaching is an exchange between the learner and the teacher (or another expert). Thus, it recognises teacher scaffolding as a beneficial tool for assisting kids in learning to read. Because each child's literacy development is unique, it is crucial to have clear instructional techniques that assist the child's capacity to find and use ways to promote the acquisition of early literacy skills (Clay, 1998). This means that teachers must support and scaffold literacy acquisition activities as well as create interactions between children and themselves for early literacy to be successful. Moreover, a child who receives good reading support at an early stage may also be able to achieve great success in later reading activities.

Furthermore, emergent literacy facilitates early literacy acquisition by offering instructional guidance and literacy development (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). In the case of this study, it means that teachers are the providers of instruction in preparing learners for early reading skills. In addition, the emergent literacy theory places a strong focus on the idea that children learn important skills and information through their everyday interactions with language and print (Callahan et al., 2009). It is these interactions that serve as a basis when children come to school. This has been emphasised by Callahan et

al. (2009), that emergent literacy acquisition starts long before formal teaching in reading and writing.

Another principle in the emergent literacy theory is that it emphasises how a child's home and classroom environments play an important role towards the development of their language skills (Trace & Morrow, 2012). According to Tracey and Morrow (2012), children who grow up in homes with a high level of reading usually have better and more efficient literacy skills. This means that there is a good probability for children to succeed in their first reading if there are many books available for reading, parents read to children frequently, and more reading activities are important for literacy development. Although some home and classroom environments in the Namibian context may not be print-rich to promote emergent literacy, it is rich in spoken versions such as story-telling, singing, folktales, rhyming, traditional dances as well as oral language discussions. This context provides a good foundation in developing phonological awareness skills for young children. Emergent literacy sees initial reading as something that needs to begin from home. Parents should consider their children's reading skills at an early age provided they can help them. The current researcher argues that children who may come from homes where one or both parents are uninformed about early literacy could fall behind in these abilities and may have a limited baseline in terms of emergent literacy. A qualified teacher might be required to compensate for what the learner could have missed in this area of preparation in reading or else these learners may lag behind. The researcher contends that young children may lack pre-reading skills if their oral language is not well stimulated and prepared for sound awareness.

In addition, Clays' theory of emergent literacy also holds the idea that reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are all related to one another as children develop these skills (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). This indicates that children who are good at speaking and listening tend to perform better than their peers on early reading and writing activities. Equally, children who have difficulties or are delayed in the areas of listening and speaking tend to be more at risk for reading difficulty (Gambrell et al., 2011). As an illustration, a teacher facilitating phonological awareness activities must do so by combining the skills of listening, reading, speaking, and even writing. For this reason, these are significant skills that are expected to be enhanced with phonological awareness instruction (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). The integration of these skills could be used by the teacher to enhance phonological awareness skills, for instance, the teacher could read words and ask learners to identify the beginning and ending sounds of the words. Later on, the teacher may need to ask learners to listen to familiar sounds in words and sort them according to their phonological character (all rhyming words). Doing this will develop the young learners initial reading skills.

In summary, Clay's theory of emergent literacy offers insightful perspectives and a foundation for pre-reading instruction for teachers preparing young learners for reading acquisition. Teaching PA within the framework of Clay's theory of emergent literacy requires a teacher to have an understanding of the discussed developmental stages and principles in literacy acquisition, addressing learners through differentiated instruction as well as engaging learners in activities that can develop early reading skills. If teachers are aware of the principles of Clay's theory and what it entails, they can effectively teach and

develop early literacy skills by incorporating phonological awareness in their instruction in the attainment of initial skills.

2.3 The Science of Reading (SoR) Research

The Science of Reading (SoR) is the body of research body that seeks to understand how people read and how to teach reading effectively (Shanahan, 2020). Currently, when the term "science of reading" is used, authors frequently attempt to make pedagogical and policy statements based mostly on basic neuroscience and cognitive science research, especially with regard to beginning reading (Seidenberg, 2017). According to Hudson et al. (2021), the science of reading integrates various elements that contribute to literacy development, with phonological awareness being one of its essential pillars.

Moreover, the Science of Reading appears to depend on which instructional strategies teachers can advocate and what they are willing to accept as a functional one in terms of teaching initial reading skills (Persely, 2023). Therefore, the teaching strategies in the SoR matter and how effective they are in the development of initial reading skills. According to Shanahan (2020), scientific research has shown that the human brain is not designed for reading, hence reading is an acquired talent rather than an inherent one. As a result, reading must be clearly taught, which means that learners must understand the various sounds in spoken language and be able to connect these sounds to written letters to make sense of print (Richardson & Lyytinen 2014). This implies that getting started with reading begins with an awareness of sounds in a spoken language (phonological awareness), and a link of letter sounds is later created for a child to be able to read print, which should be taught by a teacher who is familiar with the notion of PA and does not

encounter any challenges in doing so, as it could hinder young learners' acquisition of foundational reading skills.

This component has been emphasised in the National Reading Panel for 2000 which was earlier introduced in section 1.5 that learners require explicit instruction in the following reading components: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Therefore, if teachers do not prepare learners well and implement scientific reading strategies, learners may struggle with reading throughout their lives (Palasan, 2017).

Furthermore, the SoR research is a basis that PA is one of the essential components of reading instruction as earlier dissipated in the National Reading Panel for 2000. These are said to be the five pillars of reading instruction. Research has indicated that if the five components are effectively taught, learners have the highest chances for reading success (National Reading Panel, 2000). It can be argued that, because of the significance of this component to early reading instruction, it should be explicitly taught so that learners can be able to manipulate sounds in the spoken parts of words and sentences (Miller et al., 2013). Also, it forms the foundation for all the other four components of reading. Furthermore, awareness of the sounds in spoken language is required to learn letter-sound correspondences and to blend sounds together to decode a word (Kilpatrick, 2015). Similarly, Moats (2014) believes that readers must have an awareness of the speech sounds that letters and letter combinations represent in order to move from a printed word to a spoken word (reading). In order to correctly decode a written word, children require to understand that speech is made up of a continuous set of sounds that get smaller and smaller over time (words, syllables, rhyme and onset, phonemes), and that these sounds

can be changed. Moreover, they also need to understand that these sounds have a random and conventional correspondence with written units (Anthony & Francis, 2005). The study argues that in order learners to excel in future reading, teachers must explicitly prepare them for phonological awareness skills.

The science of reading supports instructional strategies that allow learners to draw connections between their first language and English, enhancing both languages' proficiency (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2018). In the context of this study, where English is not the learners' mother tongue, the SoR provides a structured and evidence-based approach to literacy instruction that can significantly benefit learners in reading acquisition. This approach includes the use of components phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, integration of oral language skills, comprehension strategies, culturally relevant materials, scaffolding techniques to develop reading skills through PA instruction. English and Oshindonga share similar sound structures which make it possible for learners to apply their PA skills when learning in English. However, not all phonemes in both the languages are the same, and this could lead to a mispronunciation or confusion over similar-sounding words.

2.3.1 Connecting emergent literacy to the SoR

The link between emergent literacy and the Science of Reading lies in the foundational skills that both concepts emphasise for successful reading development. Phonological awareness is a central component which is highlighted by both the emergent literacy framework and the science of reading. According to Snow and Matthews (2016), the Emergent literacy framework provides an insight that early exposure to high-quality language has a big impact on children's future reading skills. This is supported by the

Science of Reading, which promotes rich language experiences through the five pillars/components of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension) which are crucial components of emergent literacy. Emergent literacy and the Science of Reading are linked since both contribute to children's literacy foundation, which serves as the cornerstone for their reading skills throughout their lives.

2.4 Phonological awareness as a precursor for initial reading

A variety of literature broadly acknowledges that the basis for good literacy development is phonological awareness, or the capacity to analyse the sound structure of language (Al Otaiba et al., 2009). Gillon (2004) acknowledges that children may make connections between a word's written representation and spoken form when they are aware of the phonological structure of the word. These are also views of Panell (2012), who, in his study found that learners in kindergarten who had high phonological awareness scores also had high scores. In a study by Nghikembua (2020), phonological awareness at the beginning of Grade 1 was found to be a predictor of reading at the end of Grade 1 and Grade 2. Since the development of phonological awareness in learners is critical for learners' reading success, it is an important part of an early childhood curriculum. These are also sentiments of Layes et al. (2022), who found that phonological awareness instruction along with print accuracy training helps learners who have trouble learning how to read. This might be why early-grade teachers need to infuse phonological awareness skills in their teaching as an intervention for children who might struggle to read (Ferolino, 2023). To address learners who might struggle with reading, components to develop emergent literacy, particularly phonological awareness need to be addressed in the curriculum. For example, Pallasan (2017) emphasises that phonological awareness

should be taught first through instruction. In addition, the Namibian English Second Language Syllabus also stipulates that teaching reading should not start until learners have a good grasp of the sounds of English (English Second Language Syllabus, NIED, 2015). In light of this, the School Readiness Initiative (SRI) was introduced in 2018 to allow activities including phonological awareness in preparation for learners' initial reading skills.

The South African New Revised Curriculum Statements (NRCS) explicitly states that phonological awareness activities should be carried out daily, that phonological awareness and letters should be introduced, and that children should be given opportunities to listen to sounds and write down what they hear to enable them to actively participate in their literacy (Hugo et al., 2005). Similarly, in the Namibian Revised Curriculum for Grades 1-3, phonological awareness activities are also clearly stated and It is emphasised that teaching reading should not begin until learners have a firm understanding of English sounds and how to manipulate them (phonological awareness), (English Second Language Syllabus, NIED, 2015). The researcher concurs with this implication that children can only begin reading if they are aware of the sounds in the language they are learning, in this study, English. Sound awareness and learning to read go hand in hand; for example, a child cannot read a word if they do not comprehend the relationship between the sounds and the letters (Melby-Lervåg & Hulme, 2012). This follows that a child may not learn to read if they are unable to recognise and differentiate environmental sounds (sounds of objects and things in the environment).

Phonological awareness may not only benefit learners' overall, reading skills but also enhance their oral vocabulary. As an example, the phonemes in the word "*pet*" can be

segmented into "p/e/t). By doing so, children would be able to read the word by decoding its phonemes and also pick it up as a new term in their vocabulary (a pet is a domestic animal). These are also the views of Kalia et al. (2018), who state that young child's phonological segmenting abilities can predict their vocabulary abilities in both their native language and a second language. However, the immersion of vocabulary needs explicit instruction to prepare and equip the learners for initial reading and become lifelong readers (Kalia et al., 2018). In a study done by Goodrich and Lonigan (2018), phonological awareness is considered the best indicator of a learner's word reading proficiency as they advance through the educational system. Hulme et al. (2015) note that learners who lack phonological awareness abilities may be confused by how the alphabetic principle represents the spoken word. Even though phonological awareness skills are primarily concerned with sounds rather than letters, the researcher concurs that it is vital for Grade 1 teachers to prepare learners to acquire these abilities to eventually learn how to connect sounds and letters to first comprehend spoken words. Thereafter, they can manipulate sounds and remember what happens when certain sounds are combined. Lozada (2022) contends that phonological awareness empowers young children to correctly pronounce written words and interpret words using their understanding of letter-sound relationships and letter patterns. This means that if teachers develop this skill (phonological awareness) earlier, learners can build a strong foundation for literacy success and enhance their initial reading skills.

Examples of South African and Namibian Studies

In South Africa, Hugo et al. (2005) examined the relationship between first-grade learners that received Afrikaans instruction as their mother tongue and their success in reading

later on in terms of early phonological awareness. The study was divided into two stages: the first was a pre-test that evaluated children's phonological awareness in grade R, and the second was a post-test that evaluated the same set of kids' reading comprehension as they approached the end of Grade 1. Children's phonological awareness activities were evaluated during the pre-test using an Afrikaans translation of a contextualised phonological test, which was created in the United States. The assessment tasks were of rhyming word identification, syllable identification, word segmentation using visuals, phoneme counting, and sound discrimination in words with comparable sounds.

In addition, Malda et al. (2014) investigated the connections between phonological awareness and reading in first-grade Setswana learners and discovered a strong correlation between the two. In a different South African study, Diemer (2016) evaluated the connection between phonological awareness and first-graders' acquisition of Xhosa reading skills. The results showed that children were more perceptive to syllables than to phonemes, and nearly all learners had not yet gained sensitivity to 33 phonemes by the time they reached Grade 1. Moreover, Wilsenach also confirmed that learners in Grade 1 learning to read Northern Sotho were more successful at recognising syllables than phonemes, further supporting the idea that syllables are more important than phonemes. However, in the same study, phoneme awareness outperformed syllable awareness in predicting reading outcomes. In another study, Lerkkanen (2003) emphasises the phonological awareness' reciprocal influence on the development of reading and spelling as well as its influence on these skills. Despite any potential conflicts, it appears that phonological awareness and reading are more closely related in the early years than in later ones, but the contribution to spelling abilities is still made in the upper grades

(Landerl & Wimmer, 2008). It is, therefore, apparent from the studies that developing clear reading skills needs phonological awareness and Grade 1 teachers must explicitly prepare learners for it.

On another instance, some researchers have agreed that phonological awareness activities are important in reading acquisition regardless of the type of orthography analysed (Caravolas, 2012). Additionally, developing phonological awareness helps children become ready for later reading teaching, which includes phonics, word analysis, and spelling instruction (Adams, 2019). It also was found that the most common barrier to learning early word reading skills is the inability to process language phonologically (Lieberman, 2012). The researcher discovers widespread agreement and considers that phonological awareness may help the teaching of reading. According to Macdonald and Cornwall (1995), poor phonological awareness development (the ability to segment, blend, and delete letter sounds) affects the development of reading and spelling skills. Therefore, although some studies indicated that the development of word identification abilities comes first and is led by phonological awareness, others found that the development of reading skills comes first and is led by phonological awareness (De Witt & Lessing, 2016). It seems undisputed, in light of the literature, that mastering phonological awareness is fundamental to learning to read and teachers need to fully teach and prepare learners for this skill to develop initial reading skills.

Although studies arise with mixed findings about the role of phonological skills in reading, most studies agree that it has predictive power in learning to read and spell (Nghikembua, 2020). Similarly, Shingenge (2017) also found that linguistic awareness including phonological awareness has a positive influence in preparing a child to read. Since, songs

and rhymes are used to introduce phonological awareness activities to learners as early as Pre-primary, it is necessary for Grade 1 teachers to put additional effort and emphasis on teaching this skill for the development of early initial reading skills among learners.

As researchers have asserted, phonological awareness skills' contribution to initial reading acquisition, the researcher would argue that such instruction would require a teacher to know about the progression of how children learn to read, such as the tasks of phonological awareness outlined (Hugo et al., 2005). In light of this, the teacher may be able to know what and how to teach the specific preparatory literacy skills such as phonological awareness that can contribute to initial reading acquisition. However, given that phonological awareness is a part of the spoken language system that is essential to early reading, this study strongly recommends that all Grade 1 teachers in the Onankali Circuit use it as a strategy to teach initial reading skills. None of these studies has focused on the challenges teachers face when developing phonological awareness to Grade 1 learners, therefore, this study will examine how teachers are implementing phonological awareness instruction and the challenges they experience when teaching this component.

2.5 Teachers' knowledge and experience in developing phonological awareness

Various studies have revealed the effect of teacher quality and experience towards the teaching of PA to develop initial reading skills (February, 2019). Thus, it is believed that a teacher's knowledge and experience in the classroom are significant factors that affect their quality as teachers (Rice, 2010; Rockoff, 2004). This is an indication that an experienced teacher needs to have subject knowledge for effective teaching to happen (Orchard & Winch, 2015).

According to Shulman (1986), teachers need to have a strong Conceptual knowledge (CK) about the subject content being learnt or taught. This knowledge, according to Shulman (1986), consists of proven methods and processes used to generate it as well as concepts, theories, ideas, organisational frameworks, proof, and evidence.

Several researchers have highlighted the significance of teacher knowledge as the primary component of teacher training (Joshi et al., 2015). Additionally, Arrow and McLachlan (2011) state that there is literate knowledge necessary in the provision of instructional guidance to promote early literacy growth in a child. Similar arguments are made by Shulman (1986), who identified different types of knowledge which include curriculum knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics; knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends. Afterwards, he identified pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) as being of special interest: the blending of sound subject knowledge together with an understanding of pedagogy. Norashilah et al. (2013) state that PCK is the kind of knowledge for which teachers must have a thorough understanding of the idea behind the material being taught in the subject. According to Shulman (1986), a teacher must also have a thorough understanding of the subject matter being taught as well as the logic and supporting evidence. In addition, PCK includes the knowledge a teacher should have in order to effectively teach and develop a certain skill, in the context of this study, it is how to develop phonological awareness. The type of knowledge associated with PA is Pedagogical Content Knowledge. Since the present study looks at the strategies of developing PA as well as how effectively teachers could develop it among the Grade 1 learners. In the context of initial reading, Pedagogical Content Knowledge involves the

teacher's understanding of the content of what is taught, in this case phonological awareness. Thus, the present researcher argues that if Grade 1 teachers have sufficient PCK on phonological awareness towards the development of initial reading skills, they would make informed choices about the relevant teaching strategies and activities to use in differentiated teaching of phonological awareness.

According to Nghikembua (2020), phonological awareness, morphology, and other crucial ideas in literacy acquisition must be well understood by teachers and teachers should show content knowledge of such concepts. To be able to provide the appropriate teaching of initial reading skills, this is important. Globally, teaching PA has been a challenge for Grade 1 teachers (Lafferty, 2021). The research agrees with these segments that a lack of teachers' knowledge and experience with phonological awareness, coding, and retrieval of verbal sounds has powerful and long-term effects on the development of early reading in young learners. In addition, findings in the studies reveal that there could be weaknesses in delivering the use of phonological awareness to teach reading skills if teachers lack content knowledge in the concepts they teach (Ciesielski & Craighead, 2020). To add on, many teachers including those from Namibia do not understand the difference between phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and phonics and this can be one of the major challenges they face when teaching PA. In one study, Williams (2012) specifically points out that teachers confuse phonological awareness with phonics. This is an indication that teachers lack the knowledge of phonological awareness concepts, thus they may be in such confusion. Teachers could choose tasks that are not appropriate for phonological awareness as a result of this misconception. According to Schafner et al. (2021), this appears to be more severe in courses where learners are studying English as their second (or even third or fourth) language and are not skilled in it.

The studies and research presented by Withrow (2014) document that teachers are not exhibiting appropriate knowledge in phonological awareness, phoneme awareness, morpheme awareness, and phonics. This implies that the Grade 1 teachers would need Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) to understand what they are teaching and how to teach it. In the case of this study, it is knowing what phonological awareness is and how to teach it to enhance initial reading skills.

To determine teachers' knowledge of early reading skills, Bos et al. (2001) conducted a study on the perceptions and knowledge of in-service and preservice teachers. The teachers completed two surveys, the Teacher Knowledge Assessment and the Teacher Perception Survey. The Teacher Knowledge Assessment consisted of a 20-question-multiple-choice assessment, used to measure the structure of word language based on phonological awareness and phonics (Bos et al., 2001). The results found that the preservice teachers scored an average of 10.6 items correct out of 20 items on the Teacher Knowledge Assessment; whereas the in-service teachers scored an average of 12 out of 20 items correct (Bos et al., 2001). The Teacher Perception Survey discovered that both preservice and in-service teachers expressed that K-2 teachers should know how to teach phonological awareness, and poor demonstration of this component contributes to early reading failure (Bos et al., 2001). In addition, teachers documented the importance of teaching these literacy skills, but they did not demonstrate the knowledge of these skills. This shows that the teachers did not have sufficient PCK to teach these skills which could also have contributed to early reading failure. According to the study done by Withrow (2014), there seems to be a commonality between preschool teachers' understanding of phonological awareness and the lack of knowledge of phonological awareness in both

school-age teachers and preschool teachers. Recently, it has been found that lower-grade teachers who are trained and have strong pedagogical content knowledge in developing phonological awareness produce higher literacy outcomes in their students (Majsterek et al., 2000). Thus, the Grade 1 teachers would need to have PCK of the teaching strategies and activities for phonological awareness in the English language for effective instruction.

2.5.1 Instructions for early reading skills and developing emergent reading through

Phonological awareness

Supporting education that aims to improve beginning reading proficiency and lessen inequity in reading outcomes requires an understanding of how to teach and incorporate phonological awareness instruction into the regular classroom setting (Carson et al., 2013). Additionally, Mihai et al. (2015) claim that targeting effective phonological awareness instruction requires an early-grade teacher to have multiple opportunities to engage in activities such as word play that could help develop phonological awareness skills. For example, teachers can use the song "*Willoughby Wallaby Woo*" in a game to help children learn phoneme awareness. Even though some children might find it challenging to identify and control the sounds in this type of wordplay, they nevertheless find enjoyment and advantages in engaging in this activity (Yopp & Yopp, 2009). Saiegh-Haddad (2019) indicates that there are many activities teachers could use to develop phonological awareness. Some of the activities to develop children's phonological awareness revealed by Lyster (2002) included language structure tasks such as rhyme judgments, segmenting words in sounds, counting words in sentences and syllables in words, and deleting morphemes in words.

In another study, Karla (2014) found that the majority of the participants in her study (teachers) used rhyme, syllable, and phoneme activities to encourage the growth of phonological awareness. In addition, Barker and Torgesen (1995), proffers that by assigning tasks like (a) blending tasks, (b) blending and segmenting tasks, and (c) language experience (no phonological awareness), researchers examined the effects of additional activities. Children who received instruction in blending and segmenting performed better on phonological awareness tasks and a reading analogue task than either of the other two groups. Furthermore, other examples of PA activities included in the Spanish Early Phonological awareness training in Spanish was found to be inadequately provided by literacy programs, and it is evident that phonological awareness and reading and spelling proficiency in Spanish, as well as other languages, are related (Karla, 2014). Another study carried out an instructional programs based on the works of Bennett and Ottley (2000). The steps in their curriculum were predetermined and included discrimination, onset and rime, rhyming, segmentation of syllables, and awareness of sound as a unit of words. Only the first five programs teaching components were completed by the learners, according to the studies conducted. They were trained to recognise that an English word can have more than one syllable as well as to tap syllables inside words. Additionally, teaching included phoneme identity (final and initial) and rhyming techniques. No print was utilised in any of the learning activities; instead, a lot of visuals and audios were employed to keep the children' interest and attention (Yeung et al., 2016). In most of the studies referred to, the emphasis on activities such as blending, rhyming, onset, and rhyme were considered part of phonological awareness. In this light, the researcher argues that effective instruction requires teachers to keep track of the appropriate activities they need to use in developing phonological awareness so that they

can teach with ease and help learners develop initial reading skills. Furthermore, understanding these activities could aid in guiding the decisions about instruction and identify where and when a child may need support (Mihai, 2015). By incorporating these activities into teaching initial reading, teachers could support learners in developing strong phonological awareness skills, which are fundamental for successful literacy acquisition. Hence, in this study, the phonological awareness activities instilled are depicted in the figure below and are discussed separately.

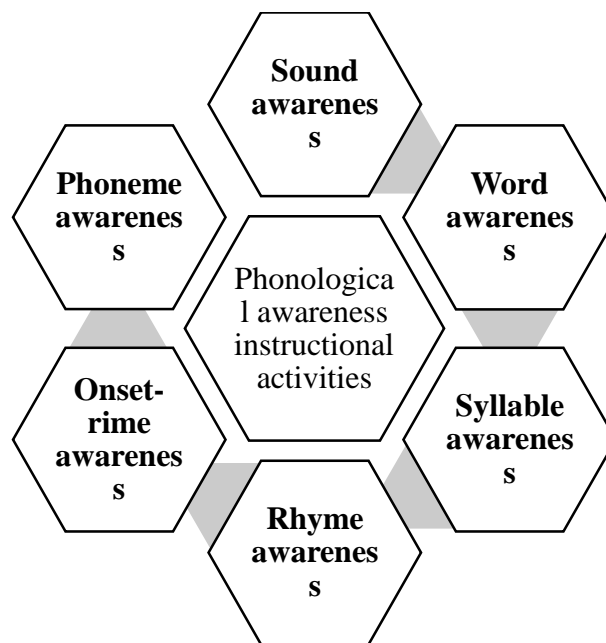


Figure 2: Activities for phonological awareness instruction

2.5.2 Activities for phonological awareness instruction

Sound awareness

Phonological awareness development starts with becoming aware of sounds in the surroundings (Adams et al., 1998). According to Mihai (2015), children develop more complex understandings of sounds in words they hear as they go from connecting sounds

with objects. Here, teachers need to clearly incorporate activities that can develop sound awareness including the sounds in the environment (Good & Gillon, 2014). For example, differentiating sounds of birds and a car hoot.

Word awareness

By separating and recognising particular words that are said, children can show that they are aware of words (Lane et al., 2002). Additionally, Nicholas and Rouse (2021) attest that through this exercise, children learn that some words are compound words and may be formed out of two simpler ones. In this activity, teachers can ask the children to listen to separate words that have been joined together (for instance, the word mother and hood and the word motherhood). Another example would be a teacher reading the sentence “*The girl is happy*”, and asking learners to identify the four separate words they heard.

Syllable awareness

Syllables refer to the sound segments within a word (Mihai, 2015). Ehri (2020) reveals that syllable awareness can ensure the ability to gain an awareness of smaller units of speech sounds, which may help learners with decoding words, and this can make reading much easier. Here, the teacher can list down words and ask learners to break them into their syllables. For example, the word “mother” has two syllables (*mo/ther/*).

Rhyme awareness

Performance in rhyming activities is a predictor of the latter success in reading success (Catts et al., 2001; Culatta et al., 2007). This activity gives an insight that some words have the same ending sounds or beginning sounds. For example, the words “*light, fight* and *might*” are rhyming words as they all have the same ending sounds. Here, children

will need to listen to how the words sound to recognise the rhymes in the spoken words. Activities incorporating rhymes in books, poetry, and songs can help learners improve their knowledge of phonological awareness (Yopp & Yopp, 2009).

Onset-rime

Onset-rime awareness means separating one-syllable words into two parts: their onset or beginning sound, and their rime or ending (Mihai, 2015). According to Hodgins and Harrison (2021), onset-rime could be taught in the context of rhyming activities in which a word ending, for example, when a word is presented, and different onset sounds are added to it to create a series of rhyming words (e.g./b/a/ll/, /w/ /all/, /m/ /a/ll/).

Phoneme awareness

Mihai (2015) states that phoneme awareness is developed when children are taught the sounds associated with letters (e.g., the word bat has three separate phonemes /b/ /a/ /t/) and combinations of letters (e.g., the /sh/ in sheep or the /ch/ in the word *child*). Phoneme awareness as part of PA in young children is an important aspect of teaching them to read. If teachers incorporate these instructional activities to teach PA, they may have a good chance of producing successful future readers.

2.6 Teachers' challenges in developing phonological awareness

Grade 1 English teachers face multifaceted challenges when teaching phonological awareness, instructional strategy implementation, resource limitations and lack of support (Moore,2023). According to Carson and Bayetto (2018), the teacher's understanding of phonological awareness and how to teach phonological awareness is related to the learners' outcomes; however, many teachers have an inadequate understanding of PA.

Apandi and Nor (2019) explore the teachers' perceptions of phonological awareness and discovered that Malaysian teachers believe that phonological awareness is a highly beneficial quality that learners should possess, particularly in the early phases of learning the English language. They believe that phonological awareness not only helps learners who lack the foundational knowledge to utilise the language, but it also enhances their performance in English literacy (Apandi & Nor, 2019). This view is supported by Snider (2007) who believes in the value of phonological awareness in helping children improve their English literacy, particularly in the early stages of learning how to read. Other researchers also believe that this skill is not only useful during the preliminary stage but also useful for the learners when learning other types of skills such as word recognition (Bhat et al., 2003). Hence, for some teachers, phonological awareness poses certain benefits to the learners as it helps them to improve their English literacy skills (Haile et al., 2023). However, the teachers also believe that phonological awareness alone is not enough to help the learners survive in the English literacy world. This sentiment was also shared by native speakers who view the English Language to be a complicated language and that phonological awareness alone will not be sufficient to help them learn the English language (Apandi & Nor, 2019).

A study conducted by Haile and Mendisu (2023) reveals different challenges for teachers in developing phonological awareness in the Koorete Language. For example, in their study, teachers revealed the unavailability of supplementary reading materials to improve reading instruction, lack of textbooks, lack of support from stakeholders, lack of teacher training, and overcrowding of classrooms with children as the main challenges faced by teachers, challenges related to teachers' preparedness in teaching phonological awareness.

A survey conducted by Marima (2016) shows that the majority of teachers observed in his study indicated that there were challenges in developing phonological awareness, particularly in providing reading materials and providing teacher training at both institutional and school levels. If teachers are not receiving quality training on the teaching of PA, it may hinder the effectiveness of the instruction, and this can affect the acquisition of initial reading skills.

Early childhood education in Ethiopia is influenced by a number of factors, as noted by Mikre (2011). The most common challenges in the classroom are a shortage of instructional resources, reading materials, teacher qualifications, additional materials availability, and the presence of a library (Early Grade Reading Assessment, *reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Monitoring and Evaluation*, USAID, 2018).

Carson (2012) affirms that, to attain early literacy, the curriculum should promote the explicit teaching of reading instructions and suitable reading resources in the classroom as part of an effective phonological awareness teaching method. However, phonological awareness as part of the literacy curriculum might be impacted by a variety of real-world issues in the classroom.

Furthermore, other challenges included a lack of teachers' knowledge of phonological awareness, difficulties in accessing teaching resources, and the lack of materials and lack of using systemic reading instructions (Haile & Mendisu, 2023). Thus, teachers need support such as the provision of teaching materials and professional training programs to enrich them with the knowledge they need to effectively teach PA. This is supported by Mihai (2015) who affirms that developing phonological awareness instruction with the

use of teaching aids can provide a meaningful context for children to develop an awareness of sounds in the environment, words, syllables, rhyme, onset-rimes, and phonemes.

Wambiri (2007) found that children's phonological awareness is developed using different learning materials such as auditory teaching aids and any other materials that can enhance sound awareness. Incorporating such aids into PA instruction can enhance the children's ability to recognise and manipulate sounds in spoken language. For instance, if teachers can play audio of rhyming words or ask learners to participate in sound blending games, it can strengthen their PA skills. This allows children to encounter pre-reading skills and be able to recognise sounds in written words (Haile, & Mendisu, 2023). In the instance of the present study, this means that the classroom environment in which teachers practice phonological awareness affects children's reading development. If the classroom lacks teaching resources and materials, it affects how the teachers can deliver reading instruction through the practice of phonological awareness and also how learners can acquire initial reading skills. In literature, a rich literacy environment has a great impact on the development of children's literacy skills and teachers' teaching practices (Haile & Mendisu, 2023). Read (2020) reports that a lack of learning materials and reference materials can affect learners' reading outcomes in future. If teachers do not have proper teaching aids, they may struggle to engage learners in meaningful phonological awareness activities, leading to reduced learning outcomes and early reading skills. Furthermore, inadequate teaching aids for PA may limit the diversity of teaching strategies that teachers could use to accommodate learners with different learning abilities (Khasawneh, 2021). Thus, developing phonological awareness effectively requires a Grade 1 teacher to be well-equipped in terms of teaching and learning materials.

Taking into account all the challenges described in the studies, the researcher would argue that persistent challenges in developing phonological awareness can contribute to widening achievement gaps among young learners. Those who may not receive appropriate assistance in acquiring this skill may lag behind their peers in reading. Even though the majority of these studies were not conducted in the setting of instruction in Grade 1, the researcher observed lessons, interviewed teachers, and analysed documents to take note of the challenges they encountered while developing phonological awareness to their students.

2.7 Intervention strategies to address phonological awareness challenges

Teacher training and professional development programs

Withrow (2014) emphasises the significance of teacher training and professional experience towards the teaching of phonological awareness. However, Hsieh et al. (2009) indicate that some of the teachers are new to the field and have minimal experience with teaching emergent literacy and reading acquisition and they are also exposed to emergent literacy for the first time through professional development and classroom practice. This implies that although teachers are trained, they have little knowledge of how to teach initial reading skills through PA, and therefore, they may need continuous professional training programs. Similarly, the National Staff Development Council (2001) recommends that professional development takes place over time, be collaborative, occur in the classroom setting, and be linked to both curriculum and learners' learning outcomes.

According to Haile and Mendisu (2023), early grades teachers need to become proficient in teaching the key components of reading skills to prepare young learners to learn to read from an early stage. The researcher argues that this may be achieved if teachers can get

enough support from teacher training programs by being exposed to the appropriate teaching strategies, programs such as jolly phonics, well-informed teaching resources and sufficient preservice and in-service training.

Effective early-grade reading instruction is fundamental for children learning how to read (Trudell et al., 2012). To make this happen, teachers need to receive continual, in-depth training, mentoring, and support (Henry & Namhla, 2020). The percentage of qualified primary teachers increased from 41% in 2001 to 78% (77% female) in 2012, according to a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) which assessed Namibia's needs for teacher training and development. At the secondary level, the percentage increased from 73% in 2001 to 93% (93% female) in 2012 (UNESCO, 2013). Although the number of qualified teachers in Namibia has increased, reviewing the quality of teacher preparation, particularly in reading instruction in the Junior Primary grades would be required. Researchers from the University of Cape Town's Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) discovered that teachers in Southern Africa, which includes Namibia, lacked the necessary training for the development of phonological awareness in English as a second language (February, 2019). However, most of the Namibian Grade 1 teachers received training at the former colleges, therefore there is a need for an in-depth investigation on the quality of training that they have received in teaching initial reading skills as part of their three-year Basic Education Teachers' Diploma (BETD). According to February (2019), there is also a need to scrutinise what has been offered at the University of Namibia since 2011 and if teachers received training on initial reading instruction including phonological awareness through their Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.). It would seem clear that if teachers are well trained

and prepared to teach initial reading acquisition instruction, they could use the knowledge acquired to demonstrate effective teaching strategies and teaching resources that can inform the teaching of phonological awareness.

2.8 Contextualisation of the study

Phonological awareness skills acquisition requires both a teacher who is fully equipped with the knowledge of developing it and one who uses relevant teaching strategies to develop it. Furthermore, a teacher should be competent in the language where PA is being developed. Based on the linguistic characteristics of Onankali circuit in Oshikoto, the majority of schools are using Oshindonga language as a medium of instruction. Studies have explored the link between mother tongue proficiency and phonological awareness in English second language. Callahan et al. (2009) affirm that when children interact in their mother tongue through games, stories, and songs, they frequently strengthen their auditory discrimination abilities, which helps them when they learn PA in English. According to Yeong and Liow (2012), phonological awareness instruction in mother tongue and English differs significantly from one another despite the connection between the two (PA instruction in mother tongue and in English). These differences are attributed to changes in sound inventory, syllable structure, and instructional strategies that are specific to each language's unique characteristics. Oshindonga, being the primary language used at home by the majority of teachers and learners in Onankali as well as in the classroom as a teaching instruction could result in little exposure to English, which could make it challenging for teachers to teach phonological awareness activities in the English language. If teachers are not exposed to the language, they are more likely to find it difficult to teach and facilitate activities for PA effectively. According to the Emergent

literacy framework, all the language skills are inter-related (Clay, 1997). This means that, if one can speak the language, they are more likely to learn to read and write the language. In the context of the current study, there is a minimal exposure to the language in both teachers and learners due to their home backgrounds. Furthermore, the emergent literacy framework sets an emphasis on early literacy acquisition through a print-rich home environment. Children who come from homes where parents are able to develop sound discrimination through folktales, riddles and other PA-related skills through a print rich environment may have higher chances of becoming good readers in future as these activities may develop their sound awareness. This is an implication that a teacher would need to fill the gap and learners may be delayed in acquiring the initial reading skills. In addition, children from households where parents could afford to invest in educational materials and spend more time practicing sound awareness activities with their children might benefit in terms of early literacy acquisition and this could be a better chance for their children to acquire PA skills even before they learn it from school.

2.9 Chapter summary

Numerous pieces of research that were examined demonstrated the challenges in preparing young children for initial reading in Junior Primary schools. Even though most of the research that was reviewed examined how to teach phonological awareness, only a small number of them were conducted in Namibia, which has a unique educational system. The literature reviewed in this study has specifically highlighted possible, (a) phonological awareness as a precursor of emergent reading, (b) teachers' knowledge and experience in using phonological awareness to develop emergent reading, and (c) challenges for teachers in developing phonological awareness. The study employed Marie Clay's

Emergent Literacy theory as its theoretical framework in an effort to comprehend the challenges that Grade 1 teachers encounter when developing phonological awareness and how the teachers teach phonological awareness. The main point of Marie Clay's theory of Emergent Literacy is that effective instructional guidance can promote early literacy development (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). In the context of this study, it means that a knowledgeable teacher is needed to facilitate and support the development of emergent literacy skills. In the next chapter, the methodology used in this study for the collection and analysis of data is presented.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter's first section addresses in detail the methods used in the study to collect data. The chapter further explains the different types of research designs, the research equipment used for data collecting, and the data analysis procedure. Additionally, the methods for data analysis and the data collection approaches utilised to gather qualitative data are described. Finally, the chapter discusses ethical considerations for data collection process as well as strategies used to assure the validity and trustworthiness of the data.

3.2 Research approach and design

Due to the nature of the problem underlying this study, a qualitative approach was used. Qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the research setting to obtain an in-depth understanding of the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them (Gay et al., 2012). In this case, a qualitative approach was utilised to better understand the research problem and the challenges that Grade 1 teachers experience when developing phonological awareness to their learners. This allowed the researcher to explore and have a comprehensive notion of the factors that influence or hinder the development of phonological awareness in Grade 1. In addition, the study used a phenomenological case study. A phenomenological case study aims to explore and describe the lived experiences of individuals regarding a specific phenomenon (Lindseth & Norberg, 2022). In the case of the present study, it is examining the teachers' experiences in the development of phonological awareness. Furthermore, the selection of this design was done to understand the participants' perceptions, feelings and interpretation of the teachers' experiences in the teaching and development of

phonological awareness skill in English. For example, through interviews with Grade 1 teachers, the researcher could discover specific challenges they experience while developing phonological awareness such as a lack of training or inadequate teaching materials and how these challenges arise in their daily instruction. Understanding these experiences and challenges would help the researcher provide the necessary recommendation by the end of the study. Teachers may as well gain the knowledge and skills they need and the support they need in developing phonological awareness.

Oshikoto is one of the regions that form a large unit of schools using Mother Tongue as a medium of instruction, thus leading to the present researcher's interest to focus on the development of PA in the English language which is the case of the current study. A phenomenological case study method provided more information on where the implementation is lacking or why a particular implementation style might be selected over another (Crowe et al., 2011). Moreover, the present study is situated within an interpretivist paradigm. In essence, this research paradigm is concerned with the uniqueness of a particular situation, contributing to the underlying pursuit of contextual depth (Myers, 1997). An interpretative research paradigm assumes that the best way to understand such a phenomenon is by studying it in natural contexts such as classrooms (Wessels, 2010). To accomplish an understanding of the phenomenon underlying the current study, the researcher identified patterns of meaning that emerge and can be interpreted in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon (Connole, 1998). In essence, this research paradigm is concerned with the uniqueness of a particular situation, thereby contributing to the underlying pursuit of contextual depth (Myers, 1997). Thus, in this study, an interpretivist research paradigm was used to own the importance and

understanding of the participants' experiences and challenges that are discussed within the study. Moreover, this research paradigm was used for the researcher to give meaning to the data.

3.3 Population

A population is a big group from which a sample is drawn (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Creswell (2009) explains that a population is the total set of people that the research findings can be applied to. The population in research is the entire group of people, things, or events that display the behaviors and/or have the qualities that the researcher is interested in (Berndt, 2020). The present study's population was Grade 1 English teachers from the 29 schools in the Onankali Circuit.

3.4 Sample and sampling procedure

Gay et al. (2009) define sampling as the process of identifying and choosing a subset of people (a sample) from a broader group of people who have comparable characteristics (a population). In the present study, purposive sampling was instilled to identify teachers who participated in the research. A qualitative research case study usually uses purposeful sampling to find and pick the cases with the greatest information so that the resources are used as efficiently as possible (Etikan et al., 2016). This entailed identifying and choosing a person or group of people who are knowledgeable and skilled about a topic of interest, in the case of this study, Grade 1 teachers. The sample for this study comprised three (3) schools with a representation of six teachers, two from each school and three Heads of Departments from each of the selected schools. The research sites for the study are three primary schools in Onankali Circuit. Onankali circuit is situated nearby the food court called Kunene Africa, alongside the B1 road to Omuthiya. It is strategically positioned

by the road in the region, making it accessible to most people in Namibia. This area was selected due to its unique features such as two groups of Grade 1 per school. Furthermore, the selection of participants was done based on the following criteria: Two years or more teaching experience in Grade 1, a qualified Junior Primary teacher who should have taught English as a Second Language as part of the subjects he/she teaches.

3.5 Research methods and instruments

The study used a non-participant classroom observation, semi-structured interviews and document analysis to collect data. Each of the instruments was used as follows:

3.5.1 Interview schedule

The first instrument used in this study was a face-to-face, semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix 6,7 & 8). A semi-structured interview is explained as a method that enables the investigator to control the interview process by going deeper into the respondents' initial answers to obtain a more thorough response to the question (Hartas, 2010). In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to allow the researcher to explore the participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the challenges they face when they teach phonological awareness. Semi-structured are adaptable, enabling extra inquiries or probing during the interview process (Robinson, 2023). Furthermore, in this study, semi-structured were used to seek information on the study's main questions 1. What are the teachers' challenges and experiences in the development of phonological awareness? 2. What activities do Grade 1 teachers use to teach phonological awareness skills? And 3. What support do Grade 1 teachers require to effectively teach phonological awareness?

3.5.2 Observation schedule

The second instrument used in this study was non-participant observation (see appendix.9). According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), when doing an observation, a researcher must physically visit the study location, which could be a community gathering place, staff room, school, or classroom, and see what is happening there. Merriam (2001) also emphasises that observations are a primary method of data collection in qualitative research because they provide an eyewitness account of the situation being studied and, when paired with document analysis and interviews, it enables a comprehensive interpretation of the phenomenon being studied.

The researcher opted to use a non-participant observation, since it allows insight and understanding of the nature of the situation lived by the participants without any intervention. In this case, the researcher did not react to any event or anyhow interrupt the teachers during the lessons.

3.5.3 Document analysis

In its broadest sense, the term "document" refers to any resource that conveys relevant information, including sound, images, video, and texts (Dia de Figueiredo, 2010). Documents show the actions and values of individuals. Lesson plans, syllabuses, and the school readiness teacher's manual were among the pertinent documents that the researcher reviewed, interpreted, and analysed. In this study, a document analysis guide was done to determine which documents are expected to be used by teachers in terms of phonological awareness. The researcher studied the syllabus to ensure that the competencies for developing phonological awareness were appropriately interpreted. Another reviewed document was the School Readiness Teachers' Manual for Grade One, to see whether the

teachers have captured the concept of phonological awareness as stipulated in the document.

3.6 Data collection procedures

Following permission from the Oshikoto Regional Director and the Circuit Inspector of Education of Onankali Circuit to conduct research, the researcher made preliminary visits to the three schools to familiarise herself with the school environment and to request permission for the teachers, HODs, and Advisory teachers for participation in the study through the school principals. Before the data collection process began, the researcher provided each participant with informed permission letters. The researcher used three methods to acquire data for the study. These were non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and a document analysis guide. Classroom observations took place in a natural setting, at the relevant Grade 1 classrooms of the three schools.

For consistency and data validity purposes, the researcher conducted two 40-minute observation sessions during the reading periods for the 6 participants, which led to a total of 12 lesson observation sessions. Besides, an observational checklist was used to establish the teachers' teaching activities, the teaching strategies, the availability of early literacy resources to teach PA activities as well as the physical classroom setting. All the classroom observations were conducted twice in the third week of January 2023, after schools had re-opened during the school readiness.

Besides the observations, face-to-face interviews were also conducted in the afternoon on the last day of the observations between 13H00 and 14H00. Each interview session was scheduled for about 30 minutes. Furthermore, the individual interviews with the Grade 1 teachers, HODs, and Advisory teachers were conducted to learn more about how they

develop phonological awareness and their challenges as well as the experiences they encounter when developing this component. For the researcher to ensure that the interviews were efficient and that the data collected was rich and accurate, a voice recorder was used with the participants' permission. According to Creswell (2014), recorded interviews save and manage time in data collection. Additionally, the researcher took notes in the interview guide and recorded reflecting notes from the interview in the field book for triangulation and future reference.

Finally, all supporting documents, such as the Grade 1 English syllabus (see appendix 10) were used and studied to ensure that the intervention complies with departmental specifications (Grade 1), particularly in terms of teaching activities for developing phonological awareness, time spent on tasks and the effectiveness of the teaching strategies.

3.8 Data analysis

Qualitative data were obtained from observation notes and face-to-face interviews and document analysis. In this study, the researcher used a content analysis approach due to its nature, that it allows the researcher to identify patterns, themes and meaning within the data that may not be immediately apparent. Through content analysis, the researcher could break down the text into manageable codes and categorised them to find specific themes that are relevant to the study. In this study, the researcher analysed the content interviews, field notes and observations to construct categories and look out for reoccurring themes. Krippendorff (2018) describes content analysis as a systematic review of a collection of written works, visuals, and symbolic materials, not always from the viewpoint of the creator or reader.

Gay (2014) further states that content analysis enables the researcher to identify patterns and themes through coding and categorising data making it easier to interpret the data collected. Thus in this study, the researcher manually coded and condensed the collected data into categories which were later developed into themes based on the codes' similarities. The emerging themes from the data were used to present the data in the study.

To ensure the credibility, trustworthiness and transferability of the study, a written copy of the findings was submitted to the participants for their verification before data analysis to build trust with participants. The three methods of data collection - interviews (individual), observations, and document analysis - were used to determine whether the data provided in-depth information on the topic under research. Thus, the three sources were employed in combination to provide credibility, objectivity, and validity to the interpretation and data analysis.

Figure 3 shows the steps followed in the data analysis process.

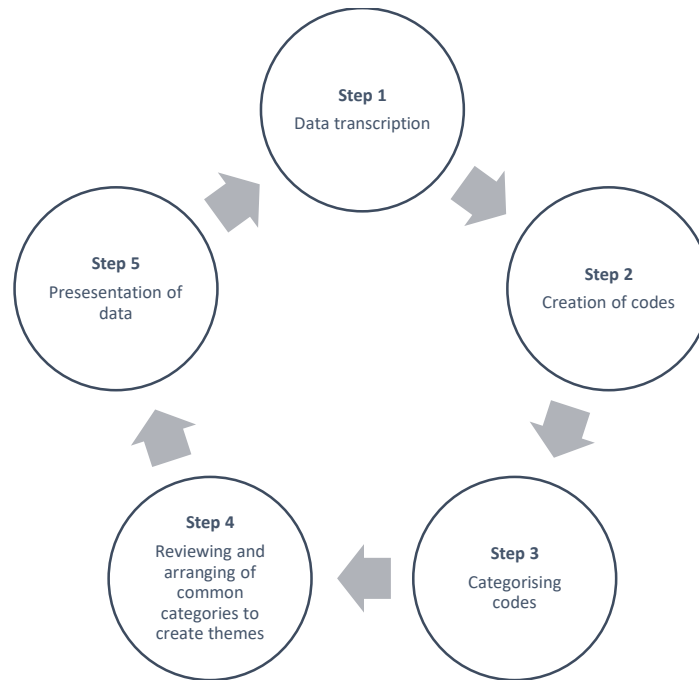


Figure 3: Data analysis process

During the process of data analysis, the researcher compared information collected using an interview guide, observation schedule, and document analysis in order to develop patterns of similarities and differences between various themes (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 461). The researcher evaluated observation and interview data to ensure consistency between teaching practice and interview responses.

Additionally, the researcher listened to the audios of the interviews numerous times in order to record the participants' initial responses and write them down. After the transcriptions were done, the next step was to create codes from both the interviews and the observations. Moreover, categories were generated from common codes emerging from the transcribed data. Lastly, similar themes were grouped and the researcher generated the main themes emerging in the study. The basic principle in reporting results from qualitative studies, such as this one, is to develop descriptions and themes that

convey multiple perspectives from the participants and detailed descriptions of the settings or individuals (Creswell, 2009). Thus, themes arising in the study were based on the participant's perception of phonological awareness.

For easy grouping of codes, the researcher used colored sticky notes (blue, orange, and red) to categorise the codes. In order to facilitate data analysis, the research findings were organised primarily according to the study's main research questions. The themes that emerged in this study were grouped and presented as follows: (1) Teachers' implicit knowledge of phonological awareness instruction; (2) Lack of conceptual knowledge about initial reading concepts; (3) Incompetence to teach phonological awareness in the English language; and (4) Awareness of professional development training and support.

3.9 Research ethics

According to Jacobs (2020), in order to ensure that study subjects' rights and welfare are maintained, ethical guidelines for designing and carrying out research have been developed. In adherence with the ethical considerations, the researcher first obtained the ethical clearance certificate (see appendix 1) from the University of Namibia's ethical committee with a reference number of HPC0005. Secondly, a research permission letter from the University of Namibia was submitted (See appendix 2). Thirdly, the researcher obtained permission from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to have access to the selected region (see appendix 3). Finally, permission from the Oshikoto Regional Education office was granted to access the selected schools (see appendix 4). After all the authorisations had been granted, the participants signed a consent form (see appendix 5) that explained their participation in the study before any data collection sessions. Furthermore, the researcher explained the objectives of the study and assured all

participants that the data they provided would be kept confidential, no real names would be used, and the data collected would only be used for the purpose of the study. Participants were also guaranteed their rights to discontinue their participation from the study at any time when they felt threatened or their interests waned. To sum up, data collected from the participants would be kept in the researcher's personal computer, protected by a password known only to me, and disposed of in line with acceptable environmental standards after five years.

3.10 Chapter summary

The research methodology used to gather information on the difficulties Grade 1 teachers face in developing phonological awareness was covered in this chapter. A case study design guided the methodology of the study. Interviews, observations and document analysis were used to collect data. Data collected through these instruments were later triangulated as Patton (2002) recommended. The methods of data collection as well as how data was analysed were described in this chapter. The population, sample, and sampling procedures used in this study were also covered in this chapter. This chapter concluded with a discussion of the ethical considerations that were considered in the study. The study's findings are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter begins with an outline of the findings of the study about the challenges of teaching phonological awareness in English reading skills at schools in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia. Furthermore, the biographical information of the participants is also provided in this chapter as indicated in Table 4.1. Following content analysis, the findings are structured by four emerging themes as indicated in Figure 4.1 with an attempt to address the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers' experiences in the development of phonological awareness?
2. What teaching activities do Grade 1 teachers at Onankali Circuit use when developing phonological awareness?
3. What support do Grade 1 teachers in the Onankali Circuit need to effectively develop phonological awareness?

The chapter also provides instances of how the researcher used the information gathered. The data presentation based on the four developing themes brings the chapter to a close.

4.2 Demographic information of the participants

A total of ten (10) teachers participated in this study. Informational background about participants to offer the reader a better understanding of the teachers is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Participants’ age, qualification and teaching experience

Name	Age range in years	Highest qualification	Home Language/Mother Tongue	Teaching experience	Teaching experience in Grade 1
T1S1	50-59	BETD	Oshindonga	9 years	9 years
T2S1	50-59	BETD	Oshindonga	15 years	3 years
T3S2	40-59	BETD	Oshindonga	12 years	12 years
T4S2	30-40	BETD	Oshindonga	6 years	2 years
T5S3	40-59	BETD	Oshindonga	10 years	10 years
T6S3	30-49	BED	Oshindonga	7 years	7 years
HOD 1	40-59	BETD	Oshindonga	10 years	10 years
HOD 2	40-59	BETD	Oshindonga	12 years	12 years
HOD 3	30-49	BETD	Oshindonga	8 years	8 years
Advisory Teacher	30-49	BED	Oshindonga	9 years	9 years

Key: Basic Education Teachers’ Diploma (BETD), Bachelor of Education (BED)

A total of 10 participants took part, six Grade 1 teachers, three Junior Primary Heads of Departments (HODs), and one Advisory Teacher. The participants were identified with codes to distinguish their schools and for anonymity purposes. To give an example, the first teacher who was teaching at the first school was identified as T1S1 as indicated in Table 1. Nine female participants and one male participant, all of whom were aged 30-59,

made up the sample for this study. Moreover, all the participants were in possession of educational qualifications. However, the researcher found that only two of the participants held a Bachelor of Education in Pre- and Lower-Primary degree, while the remaining participants all held Basic Education Diplomas. Lastly, every participant had prior experience teaching Grade 1 English second language. All participants in the study indicated that they were qualified to teach in the Junior Primary Phase. This was disclosed when they indicated the kind of qualifications they held, all of which were relevant and came from different accredited Namibian universities.

4.3 Data analysis

In Chapter 3, Section One, the researcher explained how the data were analysed from both the interviews and observations. Firstly, raw data were transcribed from the instruments. Secondly, the researcher familiarised herself with the transcriptions by reading through them several times to obtain a sense and comprehension of the data. Furthermore, the transcribed data were coded, and similar codes were grouped to create categories and emerging themes. Table 2 indicates an example of the first step of how data were analysed.

Table 2: Participants' responses and codes

<i>What is your understanding of the term “phonological awareness”?</i>	<i>Attributing code</i>
<i>T1: Mmmm. I understand it better. It is only that I fear giving out the wrong sounds. It is how letters sound. For</i>	<i>The teacher refers to phonological awareness as phonics</i>

<i>example, letter sounds for “m”. It is not about how the letter looks like.</i>	
<i>HOD 1: Uhhh, phonological awareness is the ability to identify sounds in spoken words.</i>	<i>The teacher has knowledge of phonological awareness</i>

Codes	Sub-categories	Categories
<i>All teachers are qualified including HODS and Advisory teachers (10) -All teachers are experienced (10)</i>	<i>Qualified and experienced teachers.</i>	<i>Teachers are qualified and have a variation of teaching experiences</i>
<i>-All teachers use phonics approach/sound identifying (6) -All teachers taught phonics activities (6) -Teachers are not fully aware of phonological awareness activities (9). -All teachers lacked</i>	<i>-Teachers are teaching phonics-related activities instead of Phonological awareness activities.</i>	<i>Teachers lack conceptual knowledge of Phonological awareness.</i>

<p><i>-Refers PA to phonics (5)</i></p> <p><i>-Teacher refers PA to reading, spelling, and sounding of words (2)</i></p> <p><i>Incorrect definition of PA (5)</i></p> <p><i>-Lack of phonological awareness and conceptual knowledge (8)</i></p> <p><i>-Confusion of letter sounds between English and Oshindonga (3)</i></p>	<p><i>Teachers have insufficient contextual knowledge of phonological awareness</i></p>	<p><i>Teachers are aware of some of the phonological awareness teaching activities to develop pre-reading skills</i></p>
<p><i>Teachers are aware of Phonological awareness activities (4).</i></p> <p><i>-the teaching of rhyming words (3).</i></p> <p><i>-Syllabification approach (4)</i></p> <p><i>- Phoneme blending (4)</i></p> <p><i>- Phoneme segmentation (1)</i></p>	<p><i>The usage of relevant phonological awareness activities</i></p>	

<p><i>-Using stories and rhymes to teach PA activities (2)</i></p>		
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For the next level of analysis, the researcher used phrases and short sentences to find aspiring codes from both observations and interviews through which she arrived at 37 codes.

Thereafter, the researcher realised that the codes were too many, so she then collapsed them according to their similarities and grouped them into descriptive subcategories. The greater number of subcategories were consolidated into fewer categories by the researcher using relationships among them. At this level, 11 categories were derived from the subcategories (see Figure 4).

Table 3: Categories and themes

Categories	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers are aware of some of the phonological awareness teaching activities to develop pre-reading skills. ▪ Teachers are aware of the importance of phonological awareness. 	<p>1. Teachers have an implicit sense of phonological awareness activities and their contribution to learning to read.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers lack the conceptual knowledge of PA. ▪ Teachers find it difficult to differentiate between phonics and phonological awareness pedagogy. ▪ The use of words is seen as a gateway to teaching pre-reading skills. ▪ The teachers use the pedagogy received during teacher training. ▪ Lack of teaching materials for developing PA activities. 	<p>2. Teachers' lack of conceptual knowledge in teaching phonological awareness.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers lack English competence. ▪ Mother tongue influences the teaching of phonological awareness. 	<p>3. Teachers' lack of proficiency in English to develop phonological awareness skills.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resources for developing phonological awareness are insufficient. 	<p>4. Teachers lack of resources for phonological awareness instruction.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers did not receive training on the development of PA. ▪ Teachers are aware of the need for continuous Professional development. 	<p>5. Teachers' awareness of professional development and support.</p>

Afterwards, the researcher studied the five (5) themes to detect common concepts to which all themes bind in order to come up with the final findings from the results of the analysis. The final finding is that teachers are aware of the contribution that phonological awareness has on emergent reading skills in English. Thus, it is the pattern that was created around the themes as indicated in Figure 4.

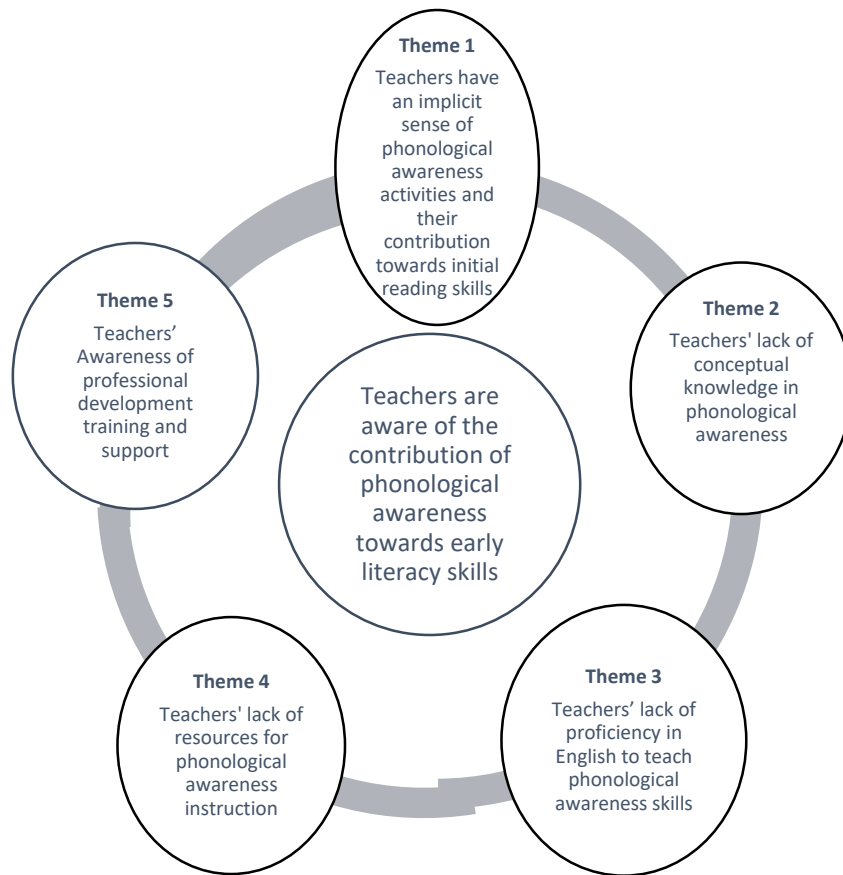


Figure 5: Pattern of the main findings

4.3 Presentation of findings

In this section of the chapter, the themes indicated in Figure 4 are presented and additional references to the analysis process are provided.

4.3.1 Teachers have an implicit sense of phonological awareness instruction and their contribution towards initial reading skills

Participating teachers in this study all claimed that they teach phonological awareness using various instructional strategies. As observed by the researcher, teachers used activities such as phoneme segmentation, phoneme addition and deletion, syllabification, and rhyming of words. These activities were also picked up from the interviews and

indicated as such by the participants. In addition, two teachers, T1 and T4 indicated that they use stories and rhymes to teach phonological awareness activities. A few activities such as sound awareness, phoneme blending that teachers can employ to teach phonological awareness were also mentioned by the HODs and the Advisory teacher during the interviews. Furthermore, views on how the teachers use the above-mentioned teaching activities are presented below:

Phoneme blending

During the interview, T1 indicated that she uses a phoneme blending activity to teach phonological awareness activities. For example, she specifically stated that *“If I teach the word “egg”, I would teach each sound in that word and ask learners to blend the sounds of the letters in the word, then they read the whole word”*.

However, during the observation of lessons, it was grasped that four teachers used phoneme blending activities to deliver phonological awareness activities. For example, T4 asked learners to sound out the letters in each word and later asked them to combine sounds the sounds together to read the whole word. The word t/a/bl/e reads as “table”.

In another classroom, it was observed that the T3 used phoneme blending by asking learners to recognise sounds heard in words as she read them. Later she would read the whole word without blending the phonemes together with the learners.

Referring to the Heads of Department’s responses, when they were asked during the interview to talk about the activities used by teachers when developing phonological awareness, HOD 1 responded *“I think the activities for phonological awareness include”*

sound discrimination, for example when the teacher asks learners to listen to a different sound in the environment and differentiate between sounds of objects”.

Rhyming

During observation, two participants out of six showed the usage of rhyming words in their lessons to reinforce phonological awareness activities. For example, T1 used the following rhyme “*Mimi has a book*

She likes to see the moon

Soon she will jump in the pool

To keep her body cool.

Learners were asked to mention the sound that plays a role or appears mostly in the rhyme, and they spotted the long vowel “oo” in words like book, moon, pool, soon, and cool.

Similarly, T3 used a rhyme during the lesson introduction.

There is a cat

It is big and fat

It sleeps on the mat

It plays with the tap

Learners were asked to recognise similar sounds in words and read them aloud. The words “*cat, fat, mat, and tap*” were the rhyming words in the rhyme used in the lesson introduction. Although this activity worked for the teachers, none of them indicated in the interviews that they used this teaching activity, it was picked up during the lesson

observation. In addition, this activity was also indicated by the Advisory teacher as one of the phonological awareness activities. For example, the advisory teacher responded, *“The teacher can also use words that are rhyming” to teach phonological awareness”*.

Lastly, in another instance, the researcher observed during a phonological awareness lesson, T6 gave learners a list of rhyming words such as "hat, fat, mat, cat, bet, pet, get," and directed them to group the words based on whether they had the same ending sound. Children achieved this by paying close attention using their listening skills, as the teacher read aloud the rhymes, and then grouping words in writing.

Syllabification

In an interview, HOD 1 revealed syllabification as a teaching strategy for phonological awareness.

She cited, *“I think, learners could be asked to clap words into their syllables and they can be asked how many sounds they hear in words”*.

During the observation, three teachers used the activity of syllabification. In one lesson, Reading was facilitated by involving learners in breaking words into syllables for easy reading. For example, T1 asked, *“How many syllables are in the word **mother**”? Can you put that word into the correct syllable? Which sound do you hear first, and which sound do you hear last, how many times did we clap”? The word was identified as *mo/ther* with two syllables.*

In addition, T2 similarly taught by using this activity, she asked learners to clap syllables in the words *“family and sister”*. The syllables were identified by the number of times

learners clapped. For example, learners clapped twice in the word ‘brother’ and its two syllables were identified as *bro/ther/*.

T6 was also seen teaching phonological awareness activities through syllabification in a different lesson. Her words, "mother, sister, brother," were written on the chalkboard, and learners were instructed to clap out each word to indicate the number of syllables it had.

Phoneme identification

All four teachers exposed the use of phonics and sound identification approaches in the development of phonological awareness. For instance, T2 mentioned, *“I first introduce the letters to the learners, then teach them the sound they represent. Later I would teach them how to read the words using the sounds of letters in each word”*. Similarly, T1 stated, *“I present pictures that relate to the word, move on to the sounds of the letters in that word, and then they read the word”*.

Also, during the observation, T4 asked learners to identify the sound in the words “boy” and “toy”. Learners were connecting the letters to their sounds for easy reading of words. The learners could easily make a difference between the first sounds appearing in the two words and it was easier for them to read the words. The first sound in the word boy is */b/* and the second word is */t/*.

Phoneme segmentation

The researcher observed that one teacher used the phoneme segmentation activity to teach phonological awareness activities. The teacher divided words into their sound components. For example, T1 asked *“Which sounds do you hear in the work pink? The*

word was classified into sounds as “*p/i/ink*”. The teacher also asked learners to clap out sounds and ask them how many sounds they heard in the words.

What the researcher noted is that the majority of the teachers had an understanding of a few phonological awareness activities and made use of them during their lessons, even though they did not show differentiation between phonics activities and phonological awareness activities. They rather used phonics to address phonological awareness activities. Generally, teachers had an understanding that teaching phonics-related activities were also part of phonological awareness, which is not the case.

Sound awareness

It came to light through the interviews that certain teachers engaged sound identification as a phonological awareness teaching activity. For example, T6 indicated “*I can also use learners to make sounds and ask them to identify by naming the person who made that sound*”. In a similar view, HOD 3 also suggested that “*Most teachers can teach learners sound identification activities. For example, if you make sounds using two different objects and ask learners to identify them, then it tells you that the learners are phonologically aware*”. Correspondingly, the Advisory teacher also suggested during the interview that “*I think another one is that the teacher can ask learners to identify sounds in the environment and say what they could hear since phonological awareness is about the awareness of sounds*”.

It was also the views of T6 who cited “*I can also use learners to make sounds and ask them to identify by naming the person who made that sound*”.

4.3.2 Teachers' lack of conceptual knowledge in phonological awareness

Ultimately, teachers seem not to have enough conceptual knowledge of phonological awareness and its effectiveness in learning how to read. The majority of teachers could not define “phonological awareness correctly” or relate it to the teaching practices. Most of the teachers referred to phonological awareness as phonics. For instance, T4 defined phonological awareness as *“I think it is about alphabetical letters and the sounds”*. T3 also defined phonological awareness as *“sounds of letters”*. Similarly, T1 explained *“Ummm”. I think it is about how the letters sound. For example, the letter sounds for “m”*. Some teachers expressed that they were not sure about the concept of phonological awareness and gave a different understanding of the concept. For example, T4 further said *“I am not very sure. Maybe it is part of the effective reading involving spelling, sounding of words, and general learning of how to read and write”*. Another evidence that shows teachers' lack of conceptual knowledge is seen in T5 who responded *“I think it is about alphabetical letters and the sounds. Well, I am not very sure”*.

Additionally, when teachers were asked about the importance of phonological awareness, they showed their level of understanding of the concept. Many teachers did not understand the importance of phonological awareness as indicated in the interviews.

Teachers mostly based their explanation of the importance of PA on the concept of phonics. For instance, when T2 was asked to explain the importance of phonological awareness, she stated, *“To make learners aware of the letter sounds”*. Additionally, T3 also indicated *“it is impossible to learn how to read without being aware of sounds in letters and words”*. However, there were instances where three teachers showed minimal understanding of the importance of phonological awareness. It was picked up from their

responses. For example, T1 said, *“It is important because it is the only way learners can learn how to read. Instead of memorising words, they will read by sounding out and blending letters”*. *“It helps enhance reading”*. Moreover, T4 cited, *“It is the main component of learning how to read”*. Furthermore, T3 also stated, *“Learners learn to read through that”*.

During an interview with HOD3, he also acknowledged the understanding of phonological awareness, as he was even able to define it by examples. He said *“In my view, phonological awareness has to do with the sounds we hear and not really what we are seeing in the words. What sound did you hear? I heard the sound of a car. What sound did you hear first when you I read the word red” I heard the sound “rrr”. I am not sure but that’s how I understand it”*.

4.3.3 Teachers’ lack of proficiency in English to teach phonological awareness skills

According to the observations made by the researcher, three teachers seemed to have challenges with teaching English phonological awareness activities, which could be a downfall to the teaching and learning process of reading in the learners. It was observed that teachers were code-switching most of the time in the lesson, which somehow affected the way learners read words in English. Sometimes, the sound of the letters in some words was read and confused with the sounds in Oshindonga. T1 read the word “dog” and it sounded like *“ndong”*. In another instance, the word chair” sounded like *“cheya”* when the teacher pronounced it. When the teachers were interviewed, they indicated that their mother tongue affects the way they teach their English reading lessons and that most of their learners could easily pick up and understand instructions better when delivered in

their mother tongue. This negatively affects the development of phonological awareness reading activities, because some words would be wrongly pronounced in English.

All teachers noted the challenges regarding their English competence and it is quoted below:

T3 *“I also do not know how to read or give correct sounds in words and for some individual letters in English”. I fail to read some words correctly because I do not know their sounds”.*

T1 also indicated that she does not know how to teach words with multi-sounding letters, for example, the word bear, has an “ea.” sound. She would read it as “beer”. There was no distinction made between the sounds she hears in these two words, “bear and beer”.

In one instance during the lesson observation, T1 seemed challenged to read several words properly in English during the lesson observation. Due to the way she read them, it appeared that the teacher had trouble understanding how the words in English sounded. She spoke phrases she had written on the boards to the students, such as “everybody” being read as “evelbody” and “shoes” being read as “sue”. As a result, learners began to read and pronounce words just as they sounded. T4 had a similar experience. The manipulation of sounds in words was wrongly delivered in the lesson during reading activities. For example, the teacher did not make a difference between the letters “l and r”. Where there was r she replaced it with l and vice versa. An example is when she read these words: “red as led’ and” fly as fry”.

4.3.4 Teachers’ lack of resources for phonological awareness instruction

Based on the observations, all three classrooms did not have adequate reading materials to reinforce the development of phonological awareness. The majority of classrooms observed did not have reading corners. The reading corner has several advantages to increase interest in reading learners, such learners will be interested in reading because of its attractive design (Maharani et al., 2020). However, T2 had a poster of rhyming words on the wall, whereby she also used in one of her lessons to teach reading. The same teacher had a poster of words divided into syllables. Basically, only T2 showed a minimum understanding of using teaching materials that can address phonological awareness. However, all teachers seemed to have a challenge of insufficient teaching aids to address phonological awareness as seen during the lesson observations, even though they did not indicate it as a challenge in the interviews.

The Advisory teacher claims that many Grade 1 teachers are described as old and developing phonological awareness could be a challenge since they do not have enough conceptual knowledge. This was revealed during the interview as follows: *“Majority of Grade One teachers are old and they do not have that good experience to teach phonological awareness. That is why if you go into their classrooms, most of the learners are not reading well. Some do not use the correct teaching aids; this can be because the school does not have”*.

4.3.5 Teachers’ awareness of professional development training and support

Although the teachers indicated a lot of challenges in the development of phonological awareness, they showed their awareness of professional development programs such as the Jolly Phonics training. They understood the need for more training in phonological awareness. This was supported by their suggestions for more training as they see the

significance of it in the development of phonological awareness. Five (5) out of Six (6) teachers indicated that they did not receive any training on how to teach phonological awareness at the institutions they studied. During the interview, teachers were asked a few questions about the training and developmental workshops on PA that have been conducted so far and they indicated as quoted below:

T3 said, *“I was never trained on how to teach phonological awareness at the institution”*.

However, in two instances, teachers used the pedagogy skill achieved during the jolly phonics training to facilitate reading activities. T1 was using a book with reading activities whereby the words were divided into syllables and showed how different sounds in words are pronounced. The teacher used actions and then sounded the letters in words. Later she could read the whole word to the learners. For example, when she read the word ‘green’, at first, she asked learners how many sounds they could hear in the word. She blended the sounds ‘gr/ee/n’ and asked learners to read the whole word. Although some teachers revealed that they had attended the Jolly phonics workshop, one teacher indicated that she had not received the training yet, because the region only selected one teacher at each school and there were two who teach Grade 1.

All the teachers understood the need for professional development training and thus they pleaded for more support from the Regional Educational Office and the Ministry of Education. The Advisory teacher has also supported this idea. When they were asked the type of support they needed, all of them responded that they needed enough training in developing phonological awareness. For example, T1 said, *“I need more training on phonological awareness”*. T2 similarly stated, *“I need more training on phonological awareness at least twice a year. Jolly Phonics is good but must be done twice a year and*

also during the school readiness because that is when I start with phonological awareness activities”.

T3 indicated, *“I need more training on phonological awareness. I know little about it and that is why I fail to teach learners”.*

T6 also stated, *“I do not really get sufficient support from the ministry. For example, the jolly phonics workshop is only provided once in a while and we need it because it helps us teach this concept effectively”.* Furthermore, the same teacher indicated, *“Maybe I can just say that I need more support like training and enough teaching aids. Workshops specifically phonological awareness programs would help us in teaching reading”.*

In addition, HOD 3 indicated that phonological awareness instruction benefits greatly from professional development opportunities like Jolly Phonics Workshops. She stated, *“I think the Jolly Phonics program can help teachers if offered every year so that they can be fully prepared to teach this concept”.*

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the findings obtained from interviews and observations in alignment with the main research questions for this study. The presented findings described the challenges that Grade 1 teachers in one of the Circuits in the Oshikoto Region experienced when developing phonological awareness. Based on the interview responses and observations, it was found that lack of procedural content knowledge, inadequate teaching and instructional material, insufficient training, and professional development workshops are the major challenges that hinder the development of phonological awareness in English for Grade 1.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the findings of the study on the challenges experienced by Grade 1 teachers when developing phonological awareness. The results of the study are discussed based on the research questions as well as the main themes that emerged from the data, mainly: (a) Teachers have an implicit sense of phonological awareness activities and their contribution towards initial reading, (b) Teachers' lack of conceptual knowledge in phonological awareness, (c) Teachers' lack of proficiency in English to teach phonological awareness skills and; (d) Teachers' lack of teaching resources for phonological awareness, and (e) Teachers' awareness of professional development training and support. Moreover, the discussions are also linked to Clay's emergent literacy theory used earlier as a theoretical framework of the study as well as what the Science of Reading says about the development of PA skills.

5.2 Teachers have an implicit sense of phonological awareness activities and their contribution to initial reading skills

The findings indicate that teachers possess some implicit knowledge of phonological awareness activities, however, they could not explicitly practice these activities with the children during the teaching. This is an indication that there is a need to 'unpack' phonological awareness even for the teachers before they can explicitly teach these skills to the children. Early-grade learners would require a teacher who is able to clearly demonstrate or practice how words are structured through the practice of PA. This is supported by Gillon (2020) who states that in order to understand the impact of PA towards initial reading, teachers need to explicitly teach this component by enabling

learners to make connections between a word's written representation and spoken form (sound). This means that if teachers are developing phonological awareness unconsciously as was the case in this study, it may have a negative impact on the learners' literacy development, since they may not make informed decisions on the relevant and appropriate teaching strategies and activities leading to reduced reading abilities in future.

In addition to this finding, Shulman (1986) highlights the significance of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge towards the teaching of phonological awareness. Similarly, Tracy and Morrow (2012) also emphasise how learners' initial reading instruction should be guided by a knowledgeable teacher. I agree with these researchers that a teacher should show an understanding of the importance of PA towards initial reading skills. This should be demonstrated through preparatory activities such as blending, syllabification and rhyming as proposed by Clay's Emergent literacy theory, Adams (2019), and Kardaleska and Karovska (2018).

Participants from this study are not far from what is emphasised by Clay's theory (1987). This was shown by some teachers who used some of the PAs such as phoneme blending, phoneme addition and deletion, syllabification, rhyming, and sound awareness. However, the practice of these activities in the classroom did not feature in the interviews showing that teachers did not have the required procedural knowledge and may misinterpret the pedagogical content knowledge for initial reading skills. If this continues to be the case, the Grade 1 teachers may miss the effectiveness of PA instruction towards the preparation of children for initial reading skills. These are also the views of Moats (2014), who observed that the majority of teachers were only aware of engaging in the different phonological awareness activities on an unconscious basis. This shows that, although

teachers may be aware of certain phonological awareness teaching activities, they may not completely understand how applicable they are to the development of phonological awareness since they are using them unconsciously and not reveal them during interviews. If teachers are not aware of whether they are using required PA activities to stimulate early reading skills, it can lead to ineffective instruction, which may hinder learners' progress in developing strong literacy skills.

Another important activity for PA instruction demonstrated by the teachers in this study was sound awareness. The importance of sound awareness is emphasised by Adams et al. (2019) as one of the aspects needed to develop phonological awareness. Teaching sound awareness is an important aspect of language development and literacy skills, especially for young children as it prepares them to be able to manipulate sounds in spoken words which will later develop their initial reading skills. Therefore, a Grade 1 teacher must use more of sound awareness activities during the development of phonological awareness to ensure that learners are well prepared for this skill.

However, in the instance of this study, the usage of the mentioned activities was minimally observed during the teaching, despite the teachers' indication that sound awareness is one of the important activities to develop phonological awareness. If teachers do not teach sound awareness, it can have a negative impact on a child's development of learning to read. For instance, if the teacher does not teach learners to orally distinguish between the sounds /b/ and /p/ or *b* and *d*, they may have difficulties reading words like “*bat*” and “*pat*” or *bad* and *dad*. Mihai (2015) has highlighted how young children develop in reading from connecting sounds with objects to more complex understandings of sounds in the words they hear. As a result, the researcher concurs with the mentioned study that

teachers' knowledge of concepts adds significantly to the success of content teaching, in this case preparing learners for initial reading through the practice of PA.

5.3 Teachers' lack of conceptual knowledge in phonological awareness

Developing of phonological awareness skills requires a teacher to have sufficient procedural conceptual knowledge to effectively enhance the understanding of phonological awareness to the learners. This type of knowledge is well outlined by Shulman (1986), who advocates for teachers to not only have sufficient PCK, but to present the subject content in a way that suits learners' diverse interests and abilities. Shulman has also highlighted the significance of teachers' conceptual knowledge towards what they are teaching. This infers that teachers need to understand the concepts fully before they teach them to the learners. In the case of this study, teachers are required to know the concepts of phonological awareness for an effective instruction for early reading skills. This finding is similar to Shingenge's study (2017), who states that if teachers who are entrusted with an important task to prepare children for reading are unable to conceptualise the terms or concepts for PA, they may not teach what they do not know. Smith and Neale (1986) in their study also believed that teachers with good pedagogical conceptual knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge may be aware of their learners' typical errors in a particular topic. This shows that, if teachers have the required conceptual knowledge they can plan lessons using suitable strategies with effective clarification which would help learners develop a conceptual understanding of phonological awareness.

The other finding was that teachers confused phonological awareness with phonics. Similarly, Chessman et al. (2009) also indicate that teachers confuse phonological

awareness with phonics instruction. If teachers confuse these two concepts, they may lack the knowledge and skill to select appropriate activities for phonological awareness such as phoneme blending, phoneme segmentation, rhyming, sound awareness and syllabification. Teachers during their lessons used phonics activities such as introducing the alphabetical letters and their sounds and identifying letter sounds in written words. With this observation, the researcher sets forth that teachers who are entrusted to prepare and stimulate young learners' initial reading skills experience this confusion between the two concepts, it may hinder reading. The researcher's argument re-emphasised what Shingenge (2017) mentions about the significance of teachers' conceptual knowledge and that teachers may not be able to teach what they do not know, nor will they be able to prepare and utilise the resources around their environment for PA instruction.

5.4 Teachers' lack of resources for phonological awareness instruction

The utilisation of teaching aids is essential for successful pedagogical practices while developing PA. This correlates with Mihai (2015) who states that developing phonological awareness with the use of teaching aids can provide a meaningful context for children to develop an awareness of sounds in the environment, words, syllables, rhyme, onset-rimes, and phonemes. The researcher argues that sound awareness needs to start from home and if teachers are aware of this, they can better advise and educate the parents about the activities their children can do at home for reinforcement. These are also the views of Clay (1987), who emphasises the importance of a home and classroom environment towards the development of early literacy skills.

Not only did the study show a lack of content knowledge from the teacher, but teachers also indicated insufficient teaching resources for phonological awareness which can also

be used for classroom display for support. This means that if the classroom environment where the child is learning is not print-rich, the teacher may not appropriately stimulate learners' interest who learn through seeing, touching, hearing and doing 'things'. Khasawneh (2024) also highlights the importance of teaching resources as the enhance learning experience and captivate learners' interest in the concept learned.

The findings of the study are consistent with those of Haile and Mendisu (2018), who similarly discovered that the unavailability of supplementary resources affects the preparation of young learners for reading through phonological awareness practice. Read (2020) also emphasises how the lack of learning materials and reference materials can affect learners 'reading outcomes in future. This highlights the importance of reference and supplementary materials as great sources to enrich the teacher's knowledge to teach initial reading with ease.

5.5. Teachers' lack of proficiency in English to teach phonological awareness skills

To teach PA in the English Language requires a teacher who is proficient in this language. PA is an oral and auditory skill which requires the teacher to demonstrate this skill orally and using correct pronunciation of words, alliteration, intonation and be able to negotiate meaning (choice of words, sounds and vocabulary). Developing phonological awareness in English requires a thorough understanding of various components of phonological awareness as well as the ability to successfully teach these skills to learners. Participants in this study did not demonstrate this proficiency. If teachers lack proficiency in English while they are tasked to prepare learners for reading in this language, it may have a negative impact on the development of phonological awareness. For instance, it was observed when a teacher requested learners to listen to initial sounds in words such as

“dog, and chair”. These words were pronounced by the teacher as *“ndong”* and *cheya*”. This is an indication that if teachers continue pronouncing words wrongly, learners will learn the wrong way since the teacher scaffolds instruction and acts exemplary. These are also views of Vygotsky (1991) in relation to Clay’s emergent literacy theory that the teacher is a facilitator and provides learning support.

Certain ethnic groups' mother tongues may mislead the pronunciation of words in languages such as English. For instance, when East African natives speak English, for example, you can easily detect the accent (Strickland et al., 2013). Most of the teachers seemed to have been influenced by their mother tongue when they spoke some English words. This also shows a lack of proficiency in the English language. As a result, the teachers' mother tongue could influence their accents and pronunciation of words in the English Language and this may have a negative effect on the learners' pronunciation of words in reading. Teachers' proficiency in developing phonological awareness in the English language can have significant consequences for Grade 1 learners' literacy development.

Nghikembua (2020) urges that the alphabetic principle, phonics, phonological awareness, and other crucial ideas in literacy acquisition must be well understood by teachers to provide proper teaching. Nonetheless, the research indicates that teachers lack proficiency and understanding in developing phonological awareness in the English language. The current study further revealed that teachers were excessively between their mother tongue (Oshindonga) and English during their phonological awareness lessons in the English Language. According to Shafi et al. (2020), code-switching refers to the use of more than one language in a sentence or discourse. In Namibia, code-switching is encouraged in the

Junior Primary Grades and it is regarded positive. However, access use of code-switching from English to the mother tongue may cause confusion of sounds, especially in languages with different ethnographies in written words which could also hinder the children's ability to develop accurate pronunciation and the ability to be exposed to sound awareness in the English Language. These findings are supported by Alatis (2013), who affirms that when developing phonological awareness in a learner's mother tongue, there may be an inadequate focus on English language conventions, such as word stress, sounds, intonation, and syllable structure, which are essential for effective communication in English. As a result, teachers confuse the sounds of letters in words between English and Oshindonga. Obviously, not all Grade 1 teachers are proficient in English skills and that is why they found it difficult to manipulate sounds in English words. This has also been stated by the Heads of the Departments as a challenge noted for the Grade 1 teachers. The study concludes that the majority of teachers' competency in English is influenced by their mother tongue. Additionally, using their mother tongue as a medium of instruction at the Junior Primary Phase (JPP) affects how teachers are exposed to English, which makes it challenging for them to teach phonological awareness activities in the English language. This in turn affects the ability of learners to learn how to read.

5.6 Teachers' awareness of professional development training and support

The National Staff Development Council (2001) recommends that professional development needs to take place over time and should occur in the classroom setting, and be linked to both curriculum and learners' outcomes. It is important that teachers are developed professionally and regularly to enrich their knowledge about phonological awareness. In this study, teachers are aware of professional development training and

support programs. However, it was revealed during interviews that the majority of teachers lack training related to the development of phonological awareness. Even though all teachers indicated their qualification to teach at the Junior Primary phase, they all revealed that they did not receive adequate institutional training in development of phonological awareness skills. Withrow (2014) highlights the importance of teacher training and professional development. This finding resonates with February (2019) who observed that teachers were not properly trained on how to teach initial reading in English as a second language. This implies that if teachers are not properly trained, developing phonological awareness skills in the Grade 1 learners could be compromised since they will have limited understanding of what is being taught and learners may lack reading skills.

In addition, the findings of the study also show that teachers did not receive enough professional development from the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture in terms of the provision of workshops and training. This was also confirmed by the HODs and as well as the Advisory teacher. If teachers do not have enough support it can result in effective instruction leading to learners' inability to develop initial reading skills. Professional development training and support are crucial while developing phonological awareness so that teachers can effectively teach initial reading skills. Haile and Mendisu (2023), in their study, stress the need for early-grade teachers to enrich their professional knowledge through teacher training and professional development programs. By providing teachers with training, it may refresh and expose them to a variety of teaching strategies and activities. The study concluded that most teachers are mindful of the knowledge gap they possess in terms of teaching initial reading through phonological

awareness activities. Being aware of this void shows that the teachers know what they lack and how they can be supported to uplift their knowledge and skills in preparing young learners to read.

5.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the main findings that are significant to the research questions for this study are discussed. The first research question produced responses by participants, a discussion of which revealed their views regarding challenges faced by Grade 1 teachers in developing phonological awareness at selected schools in Onankali Circuit of the Oshikoto Region. The second research question addressed participants' views on the teaching activities Grade 1 teachers use when developing phonological awareness. The last question addressed the findings on views of what support Grade 1 teachers need to effectively teach phonological awareness.

The findings support the widely held belief that factors such as teachers' knowledge, level of teaching qualification, subject-matter knowledge, teaching pedagogy, kind of teaching aids available, and the Ministry of Education support affect how teachers teach, interpret, and transmit the curriculum. In the next chapter, the summary and conclusion of the study as well as recommendations for further studies are to be outlined.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the study's summary and conclusions in addition to the recommendations that were generated by the study's results. Furthermore, it also suggests potential areas for additional studies.

6.2 Summary of the study

This study aimed to establish the challenges Grade 1 teachers face when developing phonological awareness in three selected schools in the Oshikoto Region. The following main research questions were used to guide the study: (1) What are the teachers' challenges and experiences in the development of phonological awareness? (2) What strategies do Grade 1 teachers at Onankali Circuit use when teaching phonological awareness? (3) What support do Grade 1 teachers in the Onankali Circuit need to effectively teach phonological awareness?

A qualitative design was adopted in this study. It revealed the views of Grade 1 teachers, HODs, and an Advisory teacher on their experiences and challenges while developing phonological awareness. Purposive sampling was used to select three public schools and from those schools, six Grade 1 teachers, three Junior Primary Heads of Departments, and one Advisory teacher were selected to participate in the study. The study used interview questions comprising both open-ended and close-ended questions for the teachers, HODs, and the Advisory teacher. An observation schedule and document analysis were used to collect data.

The findings of the study revealed that teachers face a variety of challenges when developing phonological awareness such as lack of teachers' conceptual knowledge, lack of proficiency in English, a lack of teaching and learning resources as well as a lack of professional and teacher training programs. If challenges such as these continue to be experienced by foundation phase teachers, the development of initial reading skills among young learners may be compromised and the learners may experience difficulties with reading in future.

The literature in the study revealed some of the teaching activities that teachers could use to develop PA skills.

6.3 Conclusions

Developing phonological awareness in young children is challenging and requires the teacher's high knowledge and skills. Learners' phonological awareness skills should be developed for them to be able to be successful readers. For teachers to successfully teach phonological awareness, there is a need for them to have strong conceptual knowledge about phonological awareness, adequate teaching resources that can enhance the understanding of PA and professional development training. Phonological awareness is regarded as fundamental to learning how to read and should be emphasised at a younger age to develop initial reading skills in Grade 1 learners.

With the challenges spelt out in this study, it shows that it is not easy to prepare learners for initial reading even if a teacher is qualified and experienced. The study further revealed how proficiency in the language of instruction is also required for the instruction about initial reading skills. In addition, developing PA also requires a knowledgeable teacher who needs to have specific knowledge, in this case, conceptual and pedagogical

knowledge of how to use PA activities to prepare learners for initial reading. These challenges should not be experienced by foundation grades teachers, as learners may experience difficulties in reading which may affect their performance in learning in the future.

Furthermore, teachers demonstrated an understanding of the importance of ongoing and sufficient professional development trainings. This is an implication that teachers require support in terms of professional development trainings. If teachers continue experiencing these challenges, it may be problematic to teach phonological awareness activities to learners, thus resulting in poor reading skills in the learners. Therefore, phonological awareness forms the basis and strong foundation to the development of a child's initial reading skills.

6.4 Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, the study makes the following recommendations under three different levels, namely, the teachers, the Educational Regional office and future research.

6.4.1 Teachers

- Teachers should explore different ways to broaden their pedagogical content and knowledge of phonological awareness such as self-study and studies on PA.
- Teachers can practice reading, speaking and listening to words in the English Language to improve their English proficiency.
- Teachers can use the relevant teaching strategies revealed by the study to enhance the development of phonological awareness.

- Furthermore, teachers should develop and make use of teaching and learning resources that can help in the teaching of phonological awareness.

6.4.2 Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture

- The Ministry of Education Art and Culture should provide teachers with frequent training and workshops on the development of phonological awareness skills for them to be fully equipped with the knowledge on teaching initial reading skills.
- Senior Education Officers should visit schools and assist teachers with any challenges that they face regarding the development of phonological awareness.
- The school management should make provisions in their budget to purchase teaching and learning resources.
- HODs and Advisory teachers should be a strong support system for the teachers in addressing the challenges faced by teachers in developing phonological awareness. This means that they should organise mini-workshops at the circuit level.

6.4.3 Recommendations for future research

- This study focused only on three (3) schools, further research can be carried out to cover a broader range of schools nationally to ensure comparison of data.
- Further research needs to be conducted on development of phonological awareness in the mother tongue since this study focused only on English.
- Research on PA specifically in alignment with the Science of Reading (SoR) needs to be carried out to reflect the Namibian context.

- Teacher training programs should be strengthened and implemented in educational institutions and schools to provide teachers with the knowledge they need to teach phonological awareness.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance Certificate



ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: DEC: HPC0005 Date: 31 MAY 2022

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Ethics Committee (REC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the ethics committee.

Title of Project: Challenges experienced by grade one teachers in teaching phonological awareness in English language at Onankali circuit of the Oshikoto region

Student: SUAMA NEPOLO

Student Number: 201034883

Supervisor(s): Dr T. Nghikembua (Main Supervisor)
Ms F. Shingenge (Co-Supervisor)

Centre for Research Services

Take note of the following:

1. Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the ethics committee. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
2. Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the ethics committee
3. The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the ethics committee (through the Chairperson) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by the ethics committee
4. The ethics committee retains the right to:
 - i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
 - ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

The ethics committee wishes you the best in your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angelina Popyeni Amushigamo".

Dr Angelina Popyeni Amushigamo(Chairperson DEC HPC)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Davis Mumbengegwi".

Prof. Davis Mumbengegwi (Head, Multidisciplinary Research)

Appendix 2: Permission Letter from UNAM

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH SERVICES
Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor: Research, Innovation & Development
University of Namibia, Private Bag 13301, Windhoek, Namibia
340 Manumato Ndumutayo Avenue, Pioniers Park, Office F223 - Fblock, Second Floor
☎ +264 61 206 4672; E-mail: cmr@unam.na; URL: <http://www.unam.edu.na>



RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER

Date: 05/12/2023

Student Name: SUAMA MAGANO NEPOLO
Student Number: 201034883
Programme: MASTERS OF EDUCATION (EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION)
Approved Research Title: Challenges experienced by grade one teachers in teaching phonological awareness in English language at Onankali circuit of the Oshikoto region.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

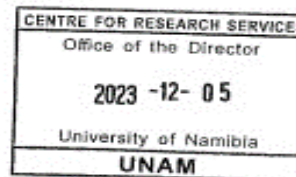
I hereby confirm that the above-mentioned student is registered at the University of Namibia for the programme indicated. The proposed study met all the requirements as stipulated in the University guidelines and has been approved by the relevant committees.

The proposal adheres to ethical principles as per attached Ethical Clearance Certificate. Permission is hereby granted to carry out the research as described in the approved proposal.

Best Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AEE', is written over a horizontal line.


Dr. AEE Shikongo
Head: Postgraduate Research Support Services
Tel: +264 61 206 3129
E-mail: aeshikongo@unam.na



Appendix 3: Permission Letter from Ministry of Education Arts and Culture



Appendix 4: Permission Letter from Oshikoto Regional Council


REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

<p><i>Enquiries: Mr. G. Munene</i> Tel: +264 61-293 3202 Fax: +264 61-293 3922 Email: Gibson.Munene@moe.gov.na File no: 13.2.9.1</p>	<p><i>Luther Street, Govt. Office Park</i> <i>Private Bag 13186</i> <i>Windhoek</i> <i>Namibia</i></p>
--	--

Ms. Suama Magano Nepolo
P O Box 1295
Ondangwa

Dear Ms. Nepolo,

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN OSHIKOTO REGION

The Ministry wishes to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated, 20 June 2022 seeking for permission to conduct academic research in the Oshikoto region for your Masters Degree studies which is focusing on: *“Challenges Faced by Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Phonological Awareness in English Language at Selected Schools in Onankali Circuit of the Oshikoto Region.”*

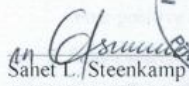
Permission has been granted to you. However, you have to seek for further clearance from the Oshikoto Regional Director of Education, Arts and Culture to ensure that:

- staff members’ normal work is not disrupted during your interviews;
- participation is voluntary;

Furthermore, you are kindly requested to share your research findings with the Ministry after completion of the research project. You may contact Mr G. Munene on the above provided contacts at the Directorate: Programmes and Quality Assurance (PQA) for submission of your research findings at the above indicated details.

We wish you the best in conducting your research and the Ministry looks forward to hearing from you upon completion of your studies.

Yours sincerely,


Sahet L. Steenkamp
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
Office of the
Executive Director
01 JUL 2022
Tel: 061-2933523/4
Fax: 061-293671
Private Bag 1186, Windhoek, Namibia

All official correspondence must be addressed to the Executive Director

Page 1 of 1

Appendix 5: Informed Consent Letter for the Teacher

P O BOX 1295

Ondangwa

12 May 2022

Inquiries: Ms Suama M Nepolo

Cell: 0818413429

Email: snepolo@unam.na

Dear sir/madam

I am **Suama Magano Nepolo**, a student at the University of Namibia, pursuing a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education. The research topic is: *Challenges faced by the Grade 1 teachers in teaching phonological awareness, which is a case study for English at selected schools in the Onankali Circuit of the Oshikoto Region*. As part of my studies, I am requesting you permit me to carry out my studies at your school, in your classroom, and for you to be my interviewee. I have selected you to be the focus area of my research based on your valuable teaching experience and knowledge related to my research topic.

The study will last up to three (3) weeks and it will entail a 40-minute interview session at the time that best suits you as well as two observation sessions in the English reading lessons. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are allowed to withdraw at any time should your interest wane. The data will be treated with maximum confidentiality and will only be used for the study. With your permission, an audio will be recorded during the interview to serve as a reference for the transcription of data.

If you accept to participate in my study, kindly sign in the consent form below:

Yours sincerely

Suama M Nepolo

CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked, have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Name of Participant (print)

.....

Signature of Participant

.....

Date (day/month/year)

.....

Appendix 6: Teacher’s Interview Questions

General information

Teacher (√): A, B, C, D, E

Age group (√)

25-30	40-50	50-60
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Teaching experience:

Mother tongue:

Medium of Instruction used at the school (√)

Oshindonga	oshikwanyama	English
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1. How long have you been teaching English in Grade 1?
2. What qualifications do you have?
3. What is the medium of instruction at the school you are teaching?
4. How do you understand the concept of “Phonological Awareness”? Briefly explain.
5. In your view, what is your understanding of “the importance of phonological awareness” to reading in English?
6. What strategies do you use when teaching” phonological awareness? Explain in detail how you teach reading skills to the Grade One learners or how do you ensure learners can read at this Grade.
7. What challenges do you face when teaching phonological awareness in English?
8. How do you address those challenges?
9. What assistance do you need to effectively use phonological awareness when teaching reading skills in English?
10. How well do you think the teacher-training institutions you have studied with have prepared you to teach reading in English at Grade 1 level?
11. What recommendation would you like to make about the training of the junior primary teachers in teaching reading skills?
12. How can the Ministry of Education and the school help teachers to teach reading skills effectively?

Appendix 7: interview guide for Head of Department

Interview guide for the Junior Primary Head of Departments

General information

HOD (✓) : 1, 2, 3

Age group (✓)

25-30	40-50	50-60
-------	-------	-------

Teaching experience:

Mother tongue:

Medium of Instruction used at the School (✓)

Oshindonga	oshikwanyama	English
------------	--------------	---------

1. What do you think the term "Phonological Awareness" means? Describe in detail.
2. In your opinion, what is your understanding of the importance of phonological awareness to reading in English?
3. What instructional techniques/ tasks do teachers employ to teach phonological awareness? Give specific examples of how teachers use the idea of phonological awareness to improve the reading abilities of Grade One learners.
4. What challenges do teachers face when teaching phonological awareness in English?
5. How do you handle those challenges in your capacity as Head of the Department?
6. What kind of support do you provide for the Grade One teacher to effectively teach phonological awareness?
7. What recommendation would you like to make about the training of the junior primary teachers in teaching phonological awareness?
8. Are there any other relevant information or issues you would like to address regarding phonological

Appendix 8: Interview Guide for Advisory Teacher

For the JP Advisory Teacher/ Education Officer JP

1. What do you think the term "Phonological Awareness" means? Explain in detail.
2. In your opinion, what is your understanding of the importance of phonological awareness in the teaching of Early reading in English?
3. What challenges have you noticed teachers face when teaching phonological awareness in English?
4. How do you handle those challenges in your capacity as Head of the Department?
5. What kind of support/interventions do you provide for the Grade One teacher to effectively teach phonological awareness?
6. How often does your office provide this support/intervention?
7. What suggestions do you have as an Advisory Teacher/Education Officer for Junior primary in improving the teaching and learning of PA in Grade one, with regards to:
 - (i) The syllabus
 - (ii) Teacher Training
 - (iii) Teaching/Teachers and learners
 - (iv) Advisory Services

Appendix 9: Teacher’s Observation Checklist

Classroom observation checklist

Statement	Ye s	N o	Comments
A. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT 1. There is a reading corner. 2. There is evidence of phonological awareness phonics materials in the classroom.			
1. Description of the classroom:			
B. TEACHER APPROACHES/STRATEGIES AND PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS KNOWLEDGE			
1. The teacher is fluent in English. 2. The teacher explicitly states the lesson objectives of phonological awareness to the children. 3. Songs and Rhymes are used in teaching phonological awareness. 4. The teacher shows understanding of phonological awareness in her teaching. 5. The teacher understands the difference/relationship between phonemic awareness and phonological awareness. 6. The teacher understands the difference between phonics and phonological awareness. 7. Approaches used by the teacher to teach PA:			

8. The most used approach/strategy in PA lesson.																							
9. The least used approach/strategy in PA lesson.																							
10. The teacher's role in the PA lesson																							
10. The most effective approach/strategy in PA lesson.																							
11. The least effective approach/strategy in PA lesson																							
12. Teacher facilitates reading through phonological awareness activities																							
13. The teacher coaches learners individually as needed, especially by addressing phonological awareness where needed.																							
14. Teacher models the correct way of teaching reading by using phonological awareness through the practice of phonics.																							
15. Teacher pronounces sounds of the letter correctly as well as correct pronunciation of words. (Phonological awareness)																							
16. Teacher provides reading activities and assists learners who are struggling with reading by using phonological awareness.																							
17. Types of PA activities done in class: D. Activities used by the teacher to teach PA: Tick \checkmark																							
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Sound identification (initial, middle, final)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Songs and rhymes</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tongue twisters</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Blending</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Segmenting</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Phoneme deletion</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Phoneme segmentation</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other (Specify)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>.....</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>.....</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Sound identification (initial, middle, final)		Songs and rhymes		Tongue twisters		Blending		Segmenting		Phoneme deletion		Phoneme segmentation		Other (Specify)				
Sound identification (initial, middle, final)																							
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Other (Specify)																							
.....																							
.....																							
18. Assessment and evaluation of phonological awareness activities																							

E. Challenges experienced by the teacher while teaching PA.

.....

Appendix 10: English Language Syllabus

TOPICS/SKILLS	READING AND VIEWING		
	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3
Preparatory exercises	Learning Objective Learners will be aware of the need to read in English and develop good reading habits		
Incidental reading	Competencies Learners should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> show respect for books and handle them with care demonstrate good 'reading' habits through eagerness to 'read', e.g. 'read' frequently in the reading corner of the classroom or library 	Competencies Learners should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> show respect for books and handle them with care demonstrate good reading habits through eagerness to read, e.g. read frequently in the reading corner of the classroom or library 	Competencies Learners should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> show respect for books and handle them with care demonstrate good reading habits through eagerness to read, e.g. read frequently in the reading corner of the classroom or library
	Learning Objective Learners will demonstrate phonological awareness	Competencies Learners should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify number of words in sentences, and omit or replace words within sentences clap and count syllables in words identify rhyming words in rhymes and songs identify short and long vowel sounds in single-syllable words 	Competencies Learners should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clap and count syllables in words delete and replace syllables in words to make new or nonsense words identify rhyming words in rhymes and songs distinguish between short and long vowel sounds in single-syllable words

Appendix 11: Emerging codes

Definition of PA (Teacher)

- Teachers refer to PA as AT (1)
- Teachers are aware of PA (1)
- AT = Awareness of phonological and orthographic patterns (2)
- All HO are aware of the meaning of PA (3)
- HO could define PA and relate it to its activities (3)

Participants' biographical information

- All teachers have teaching experience (6) and are qualified (6)
- All HODs are qualified (3)
- All HODs are experienced (3)

Importance of PA

- PA is an umbrella for learning how to read (2)
- PA helps with reading comprehension (1)
- PA helps learners be aware of letter sounds (2)
- PA helps learners recall better (1)
- PA makes it easy to learn how to read (1)
- PA helps with the awareness of letter sounds (1)
- AT helps in making reading possible (1)

PA teaching activities

- Phoneme blending task/activity (5)
- Rhyming activity (4)
- Using stories to teach PA (3)
- Phoneme addition + deletion (1)
- Stories + rhymes (2)
- HO: Rhymes and Songs (2)
- HO: Phoneme addition + deletion (1)
- HO: Initial + Ending Sounds in Words (1)
- HO: Syllabic identification (2)
- HO: Syllabification (1)
- HO: Rhyming activities (1)
- Syllabification activities (4)
- Reading words as a PA activity (2)
- Sound identification (1)
- HO: Picture-word awareness (1)
- HO: Syllabification (1)
- HO: Rhyming activities (1)

Challenges for teaching PA

- All teachers lack digital teaching aids (6)
- Difficulties in teaching multi-sound letters in words (1)
- Letter-sound confusion between English and Mother tongue (2)
- No HODs have noted that teachers do not have enough teaching aids for PA (3)
- Few PA aids observed (1)
- All teachers lack professional training for PA (6)
- Teachers' content knowledge lack of (5)
- Institutional training in teachers (1)
- All teachers indicated that HODs did not read that teachers' PA training materials confuse phonics with PA (1)
- Teachers lack English skills (4)
- All lesson observed did not have sufficient PA materials (6)
- All HODs have noticed lack of content knowledge (3)
- AT confirmed that teachers lack content knowledge (1)
- Advisory teacher confirms that teachers are less experienced in teaching PA (1)

Teachers' support for teaching PA

- More training on how to teach PA after 1st term per term (2)
- Suggestion for all Grad teachers to be trained for Jolly phonics (2)
- AT suggests more training to all Grad teachers (1)
- AT provides help by organizing workshops at circuit level (1)
- AT suggests more PA activities to be added to the syllabus (1)
- AT provides support by involving HOD to help when they can (1)
- All teachers need supportive teaching aids (6)
- All teachers suggest more PA-related training e.g. Jolly phonics (6)
- AT encourages teachers to create teaching aids (1)
- AT encourages teachers to explore PA on the internet and use Jolly phonics (1)
- HO: recommends of more initial training on the topic of PA (1)
- Lack of support from the Ministry of Education (1)
- HO: recommends the Jolly phonics to be conducted before the end of the year (1)
- HO: supports teachers by providing them with workshop opportunities (3)

