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SYNTHETIC PHONICS: BELIEFS AND TEACHING TECHNIQUES AMONG EFL INSTRUCTORS IN SPAIN

SYNTHETIC PHONICS: CREENCIAS Y TÉCNICAS DE ENSEÑANZA ENTRE LOS PROFESORES DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA EN ESPAÑA

Leticia Quesada Vázquez
Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

Ángela Álvarez-Cofiño
Universidad Nebrija, Spain

Stephen Jenkins
Universidad Nebrija, Spain

Abstract

In the last two decades, the implementation of a Synthetic Phonics approach has increased in early childhood and primary education EFL classrooms in Spain. This study investigates the influence of working experience in Phonics, and both training in Phonics and general pronunciation teaching in teachers' beliefs and practices. To this end, a survey was sent to teachers in Spanish schools from May to October 2023. A total of sixty-four instructors filled in the questionnaire. Results show practitioners think Phonics is beneficial especially to improve reading and writing skills, although they believe it also enhances students' oral competence. Besides, findings reveal that both having experience and being trained in Phonics influence their beliefs and teaching choices, while training in general pronunciation teaching does not. Hence, teachers will benefit from more specific training in Phonics in teaching programs and pronunciation courses.

Keywords: Synthetic Phonics, professional teacher development, English as a foreign language teaching, pre-primary education, primary education.

Resumen

En las últimas dos décadas, la implementación del enfoque de *Synthetic Phonics* ha aumentado en las aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera de educación infantil y primaria en España. Este estudio investiga la influencia de la experiencia laboral en *Phonics*, así como de la formación en ésta y en pronunciación general, en las creencias y prácticas del profesorado. Para ello, se envió una encuesta al profesorado de centros educativos españoles entre mayo y octubre de 2023. Un total de sesenta y cuatro profesores respondieron al cuestionario. Los resultados muestran que los profesionales consideran que la enseñanza con el método *Phonics* es beneficiosa, especialmente para mejorar las habilidades de lectura y escritura, aunque también creen que mejora la competencia oral del alumnado. Además, los hallazgos revelan que tanto la experiencia como la formación en *Phonics* influyen en sus creencias y decisiones docentes, mientras que la formación en enseñanza de la pronunciación no. Por lo tanto, el profesorado se beneficiará de una formación más específica en *Phonics* en los programas de enseñanza y los cursos de pronunciación.

Palabras clave: *Synthetic phonics*, formación del profesorado, inglés como lengua extranjera, enseñanza del inglés, educación infantil, educación primaria.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the implementation of synthetic Phonics in English as a second language (ESL) and foreign language (EFL) contexts has been an area of burgeoning interest. However, the literature about this issue is still limited (Zin et al., 2023). Phonics is a method of instruction that teaches students correspondences between graphemes in written language and phonemes in spoken language and how to use these correspondences to read and spell words (Papps, 2020). The implementation of synthetic phonics in pre-primary and primary classrooms provides students with skills such as phonemic and phonological awareness, blending and segmenting, that will help them to learn the correct positioning of the speech organs to produce the English sounds, thus favoring better pronunciation in the language, as well as how to map the sounds onto their corresponding graphemes, which will be a must for later reading and writing. By doing it in a playful and multisensory way, as sounds, gestures, key words, pictures, stories and songs are used to introduce each sound, students learn and consolidate them and their graphic representation effortlessly and meaningfully. Moreover, in EFL contexts, the amount of vocabulary that students acquire through Phonics instruction exceeds the one that could be learned in traditional EFL classes. It goes without saying that the interests when teaching Phonics to English native speakers and to ESL/EFL learners are very different. Whilst in the first case Phonics is important for the development of reading, so that learners can understand how the sounds of their mother tongue map onto the letters, and use this phonic knowledge to read and to make sense of words they have not seen before (Blevins, 2006), phonic knowledge, in the case of ESL/EFL learners, can benefit their vocabulary development and help improve their pronunciation (Blevins, 2017).

Due to the complexity of English alphabetic code, it is important that practitioners teach it thoroughly and systematically. Phonics instruction becomes systematic when all the major grapheme-phoneme correspondences are taught and covered in a clearly defined sequence (Ehri et al., 2001). Synthetic Phonics offers teachers the possibility of simplifying the code by teaching young learners to read each of the forty-four speech sounds, which will allow them to crack the code more easily. Depending on each individual, there will be some learners who will crack the code more quickly than others, but teachers should use all possible strategies and resources to get all learners there. A systematic and synthetic Phonics program introduces phonemes to learners in a given order that allows them to quickly start building a bank of decodable words that they can read. Learners pay attention to single phonemes in words and then, they blend them to read the word (e.g. /k/+ /ʌ/ +/t/ = 'cut'). In order to be able to blend sounds, learners need to be able to hear the individual sounds within words (phonemic awareness). Besides, systematic synthetic Phonics programs should include an initial stage that supports the development of both phonological and phonemic awareness through aural/oral games (i.e., Total Physical Response by raising up arms if they hear the target sound in words the teacher calls out, or cross arms over their chest if they do not hear the target sound - for instance, /s/ in words like *chair, book, sun, kiwi, cats*, and *Tuesday*; fly swatters game to swat the grapheme/diagraph that represents the sound the teacher says, among others) (Álvarez-Cofiño, 2024).

By contrast, analytic Phonics teaches learners to recognize and hear patterns in words, and to read whole words drawing on prior knowledge of letters and sounds. To do this, learners "analyze" words using clues such as identifying the initial sound, parts of the word, syllables and the context. Analytic Phonics instruction requires that learners have developed phonological awareness, thus, that they can

hear sounds at the phoneme, rhyme and syllable level. Since analytic Phonics is based on the identification of spelling patterns at whole word level, it is likely to be more suited to older ESL/EFL learners who already know how their own writing system works and have some insight into rime and syllables.

In view of the above, we can note that there are two main approaches to teaching Phonics: a synthetic approach, which may better support the development of early literacy in younger learners, and an analytic approach, which might be suitable for older learners (Álvarez-Cofiño, 2024). At the light of the aforesaid, hence, the synthetic Phonics approach seems to be the most effective one, since "among other strengths, […] it teaches children directly what they need to know" (Rose, 2006, p. 16). This study, which belongs to a broader project concerning the instruction of synthetic Phonics in EFL classrooms in Spain, is a first step towards enlarging the existing literature on the issue. Particularly, this article examines how work experience in synthetic Phonics, specific training in synthetic Phonics and training in general pronunciation teaching might influence English teachers' beliefs and practices.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Phonics instruction in EFL contexts

Improvement in both speaking and reading skills is often reported by synthetic Phonics studies in ESL contexts, where students are continuously exposed to the target language. By contrast, EFL students suffer from a lack of daily input that might influence the development of these competencies. There have been several researchers who have been interested in examining the benefits synthetic Phonics instruction might bring to the EFL classroom. Martínez (2011)'s research on the implementation of synthetic Phonics in Colombian schools is a good example of it. In this study, the target group consisted of eighty-five girls from Year 1 who were studying English as a foreign language. Martínez differentiated Phonics instruction for this group of girls regarding both the instructional time and sequence, and the Phonics program vocabulary, to adapt it to the EFL learners' needs. After having passed several tests, done classroom observations and interviewed the teachers, the author realized that differentiated Phonics adapted to the group of students helped them to decode and pronounce better English words, which led to better understanding of what they read and helped EFL students to improve reading comprehension and literacy skills in general.

Dixon et al. (2011) also investigated reading instruction in an EFL setting. The aim of their research was to check whether the implementation of synthetic Phonics programs in schools for low-income families in India would increase reading and spelling attainment in English. Over five hundred Year 1 children took part in the six-month program with nearly half of them being taught using the Jolly Phonics program materials. The other half of students continued with their normal reading method which depended on memorizing whole words by sight. The findings of this study showed that the test scores of the students taught by synthetic Phonics was significantly higher than the scores of their counterparts in word reading, spelling and letters identification.

Koirala et al. (2015) carried out a study on the implementation of synthetic Phonics in Nepal. It was conducted in ten schools with Year 1 students, and the main aims were to find out if the Phonics programs helped students increase their learning performance and to analyze teachers' skills when

implementing the Phonics program (in this study Jolly Phonics was also used). They stated that, undoubtedly, "[…] the Synthetic Phonics approach to teaching can be one of the effective ways to teach English" (p.18), and they pinpointed that the program was even successful regardless of students' instruction in pre-primary, as both students who attended and those who had not attended pre-school have reached high scores in the Phonics tests passed to them. Finally, in their interviews with teachers they observed that even though they had scarce resources and lack of electricity during school time, which they supplied with their own mobile phones, teachers were really enthusiastic about how the program worked, because they noticed how motivated their students were during the Phonics sessions and how fast they were learning the code of the English language, which helped them to read quite fluently, with confidence, understanding what they read and with a good pronunciation. The authors pointed out that these teachers had a proper training in the Phonics program and that they used gestures, they spoke in an expressive way, and they moved around the classroom to engage students in the tasks they planned.

Hmeadat and Yunus (2018) did research on synthetic Phonics use in Jordan schools. Their study consisted of a questionnaire passed to two hundred Jordan EFL teachers with the aim of knowing their attitudes and perspectives on the use of synthetic Phonics programs with Year 1 students. To their surprise, the researchers found out that most practitioners who answered the questionnaire did not know anything about synthetic Phonics or never had heard about it along their university studies (41%). Teachers also proved total lack of training in Phonics and showed no idea on how to implement it. The authors highlighted the importance of a proper training of EFL Jordan teachers to be up to date to more modern methodologies.

In 2021, Ly and Thuy aimed at investigating the point of view of English teachers in Hue (Vietnam) regarding Phonics implementation in primary schools. The target group consisted of twenty-seven teachers who had to answer a questionnaire, take part in an interview and be part of classroom observation sessions. All teachers agreed to point out that Phonics instruction was important and useful for the development of their students' reading skills in English, as it helped them to read more accurately, spell words correctly and pronounce them better. However, most of the teachers thought that the Phonics work was more oriented to help students with their pronunciation, rather than with their literacy skills. On the other hand, the study also revealed that a vast majority of the teachers interviewed considered that Phonics instruction should be explicit and systematic, as young learners of English as a foreign language are too young to learn implicitly by deducing rules. This group of teachers also listed those elements of the Phonics program that they considered more relevant to be worked in class with their students, such as word families, alphabetic writing and recognition, and blending and decoding short sentences. In the observed classes, these teachers devoted around five minutes to teach letters and sounds using visual resources as a support.

In a recent research, Agüero and Francioni (2023) carried out a study on the efficiency of Phonics instruction with a group of eleven Year 1 students who were learners of English as a foreign language in a school in Hurlingham (Buenos Aires, Argentina). The main objective of the study was to prove that Phonics intervention three times a week during three weeks would help students improve accuracy and fluency when decoding in English. In their conclusions, the authors called attention to the fact that, as regards accuracy, phonological awareness work in the synthetic Phonics approach enhances phonemic

awareness in EFL learners, which also improves their decoding skills. Regarding fluency, it was found that EFL students reached the same rates as native speakers of the language thanks to Phonics instruction. Finally, they also showed that those sounds that students had not consolidated before were highly improved after the three-week intervention schedule planned by the researchers.

Zin et al. (2023) were interested in investigating the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices in the teaching of Phonics. To this end, they ran a survey study among a hundred and twenty-four practitioners at thirty-nine primary schools in Malaysia. Overall, teachers agreed that teaching phonics was necessary to teach reading skills to beginners, and the statistical analysis conducted revealed a positive correlation between teachers' views and the teaching techniques employed.

Although improvement is still registered in EFL contexts, the differences between the system of students' mother tongue and the target language might make a difference when acquiring skills in the latter. Both Martínez (2011) and Agüero and Francioni (2023) studied EFL Spanish natives reporting improvement in reading skills, influenced by a better phonological awareness and decoding competence. Nonetheless, this is not the only factor that affects language learning: the education curriculum and the schooling context of each country might influence the process as well. Hence, the situation of EFL classrooms and, in particular, the use of Phonics, in American Spanish-speaking countries and Spain might differ.

2.2. Phonics instruction in Spain

One of the first references to the implementation of Phonics in Spain appears in an article by Lázaro Ibarrola (2007), where she presents a methodological proposal to introduce English Phonics instruction in Spanish primary education classrooms. She explains two main reasons for her proposal: on the one hand, to avoid the transference of Spanish sound-letter relationships into English, so as to protect and improve the pronunciation in the second language; on the other hand, to facilitate the acquisition of reading skills in English by helping students to link the oral text with the written one, thus favoring reading comprehension in the second language. The author refers to the fact that, for many years, the acquisition of the pronunciation in EFL contexts did not require explicit instruction, because it was assumed that it would be acquired "naturally" as the language was learned. However, the complexity of a non-transparent language such as English and the lack of oral comprehension and production that students showed brought out the need of a more solid training in this linguistic area. The study claimed that Spanish EFL learners in primary education are not taught explicitly how to read. They are just taught the alphabet and the names of the letters, but this has been proved as not useful for the reading process (Ball & Blachman, 1991). Therefore, synthetic Phonics programs can help students develop their reading and pronunciation skills by adopting the same strategies used with native speakers of English in their reading learning process. Indeed, the explicit intervention in Phonics could help students to progress faster.

López Cirugeda and López Campillo (2016) analyzed the impact of the synthetic Phonics approach in the process of the acquisition of the communicative competence of pre-primary Spanish children learning English, focusing on phonological attainment and linguistic transfer from the mother tongue to the second language. The authors refer that pre-primary English teachers could easily implement a

synthetic Phonics program to approach such a complex non-transparent alphabetical code as that of the English language. To do so, teachers need proper training in the Phonics program, as well as a bank of real and attractive resources to be used with groups of very young children eager to learn new things in a stage of full interest and curiosity. They also pinpointed that Phonics intervention in English reinforces the acquisition of reading and writing skills in Spanish, as most of the phonemes are alike in both languages. They consider this transference as very positive, especially in a stage where the language comprehension and production are paramount and more important than linguistic accuracy.

In her doctoral thesis of 2019, Rendón Romero did research in two Spanish schools on the implementation of synthetic Phonics programs for learning English as a foreign language. She concluded that these programs were effective when used in an EFL context and that they were even more effective when combined with whole reading and global methods. To this success, both the adaptation that teachers had to do of the Phonics approach for their Spanish students, and the amount of time that they devoted to daily practice at home were important as well. Phonics programs cannot be implemented straight forward with EFL students, as those have been created for native speakers of English who already understand the words they sound out when blending the letter-sounds together. Therefore, EFL teachers have to do adaptations of the phonics programs in order to help their students, especially with the comprehension of what they blend/read; otherwise they could become mechanical readers lacking comprehension. Using small pictures at the back of the printed cards, for example, could be of great help for students to see the meaning of the words they sound out and, thus, understand what they read. Rendón Romero also added the importance and pivotal role of an appropriate and quality training in Phonics for the teachers of English in Spain. In the interviews conducted with teachers she found out that they also benefited from the Phonics programs, as it helped them to know a new methodological approach for the teaching of English and to improve their own Phonics knowledge of the language. Teachers insisted on the fact that the work with synthetic Phonics in their classrooms was very motivating, as children were enthusiastic when they were able to read their first words in English, and it also helped to maintain their attention and participation in the EFL sessions, where they were learning in a funnier and more natural way.

A couple of years later, Rendón Romero et al. (2021) carried out a study on the implementation of a synthetic Phonics program in a bilingual school in Spain, with a group EFL learners in Year 1 of primary education. Their findings revealed that the implementation of a synthetic Phonics program had been efficient and positive in two main aspects: one, it enabled children to read in English many words, and even pseudo-words and, on the other hand, the method helped students acquire and certain number of the vocabulary that had been worked in class with them through this approach. They also claimed that teachers should do adaptations of the Phonics programs for EFL students, as they had been created by native speakers and for native speakers of English. They also found out that Spanish students did many transferences from their mother tongue to the learning of the second language when working through synthetic Phonics, as the phonological and phonemic awareness they had acquired from their own mother tongue allowed them to do so, thus boosting literacy development in both languages.

In one of the most recent articles on synthetic Phonics implementation in EFL contexts, Álvarez-Cofiño (2024) suggested that the benefits regarding synthetic Phonics implementation in English speaking countries, already referred to in different studies mentioned along this paper, could be taken

as an advantage and extended to EFL contexts where Phonics could become a vehicle for learning correct pronunciation of English sounds for both speaking and spelling, and to the development of vocabulary in English, too. Thus, understanding the letter-sound system of a new language is a valued route to both speaking and becoming literate in it. One of the main tasks for teachers of English in EFL contexts will be that of doing adaptations of the Phonics programs before implementing them, especially as regards working on comprehension. English native speaker students will understand the words they start blending and sounding out, as they are part of their everyday language. However, this is not the case of foreign language learners, who could be able to decode the written words in English thanks to Phonics instruction, doing it in a mechanical but not comprehensible way. And, without comprehension, there is no real reading, just decoding.

Along these lines, this study aims at examining how work experience in Phonics (i.e., any experience teaching Phonics in their classes, regardless the extent and type) and training in Phonics and general pronunciation teaching (i.e., having attended any courses during their bachelor's or master's degree, courses outside or inside work, or specific workshops and conferences, in which teaching techniques were introduced), influence the beliefs and practices EFL teachers in secondary schools in Spain have towards Phonics instruction. To this end, the following research questions are formulated:

RQ1. To what extent does working experience in Phonics, training in Phonics and training in general pronunciation teaching affect teachers' beliefs in the effectiveness of synthetic Phonics?

RQ2. To what extent does working experience in Phonics, training in Phonics and training in general pronunciation teaching affect teachers' teaching choices regarding synthetic Phonics?

3. METHODS

3.1. Procedure

An online survey was designed and administered via Outlook Forms. Before sending the questionnaire, it was first validated by two professors from different Spanish universities whose research expertise was English pronunciation teaching. One of them, besides, had experience working with Phonics. Once the suggested modifications were made, the survey was distributed through snowball sampling and social media posting (Twitter). The data presented in this paper was collected for six months, from May to October 2023.

3.2. Instrument: The survey

The questionnaire consisted of forty-two questions distributed in four different sections: background (Questions 1-14), beliefs (Questions 15-18), training (Questions 19-26), and teaching (Questions 27-42). Due to the extent of the survey and the diversity of the results obtained, findings were divided and examined in different studies. As a first step, this article aims at presenting the big picture: on the one hand, it will focus on the results obtained in the beliefs section, especially on the answers to questions 15, 17 and 18 containing information on general beliefs. Question 16 was not included in this study, since it asks for specific views concerning Phonics instruction and pronunciation learning. On the other hand, it will also examine answers to question 29 of the teaching section, as it responds to the real applicability in the classroom of the teachers' beliefs in questions 17 and 18. The remaining questions

in this section delve into details regarding the coursebook used, students' attitude in class and more detailed teaching practices, which will be studied in depth in forthcoming studies. Answers to questions in the background section regarding age, gender and workplace will be used to outline the participants' profile. With regard to the training section, answers in questions 19 and 23 will be used to classify participants according to the training received; other questions asking for more specific information about the type of training will be considered in future research. Most of the questions in the survey were adapted from a previous questionnaire conducted with EFL teachers at secondary schools in Spain (Quesada Vázquez, 2024; 2025).

3.3. Participants

Sixty-four teachers took the survey: Sixty of them were Spanish, one was half Spanish, half British, one English, one British, and one Romanian. Regarding gender, fifty-seven were female, six male and one person preferred not to say. The average age was 40.9 years, and the mean of teaching experience was 14.6 years. Participants came from fourteen of the fifty-two provinces in Spain: thirty-two of the subjects came from La Rioja, eight from Asturias, six from Madrid, three from León, three from Seville, two from Navarra, and one from Alicante, Almería, Burgos, Cádiz, Cantabria, Córdoba, Cuenca, Pontevedra, Salamanca and Valladolid.

Participants taught in different types of institutions. Most of them worked for just one type of institution: Thirty-four participants were teaching at a public school, eight at a private school, seven at a bilingual school, and one at a charter school. However, there were some that worked at different types of institutions at the same time: eight of them were working at both a public and a bilingual school, five at a private and a bilingual school, two at a private and a public school, and one claimed working at a public, a private and a bilingual school.

Regarding the level of education in which they were teaching, many participants had experience in more than one level. The subjects under study had more experience with year 1 and year 2 students (thirty-two of them), followed by the inferior levels (thirty of the teacher had experience in pre-primary 5, twenty-seven in pre-primary 4, and twenty-six in pre-primary 3). For higher levels, there were twenty-five teachers with experience in year 3, sixteen in year 4, fifteen in year 5, and twelve in year 6.

3.4. Data analysis

Teachers' beliefs in the effectiveness of Phonics instruction are examined to answer Research Question 1. First, results are analyzed from a broad perspective, considering their thoughts in the general benefits of teaching Phonics. Second, teachers' views on the effectiveness of different Phonics features are studied regarding two educational levels: pre-primary and primary education. On the other hand, practitioners' current instruction of these Phonics features in their classes is also examined, which aims at answering Research Question 2.

For each of the items under study, a general overview is first presented using graphs; then, percentages according to the effect of working experience in Phonics, training in Phonics, and training in how to teach pronunciation are displayed; author's found interesting to include the latter type of training in the analysis as an attempt to further investigate the role of Phonics as an approach that can enhance phonemic and phonological awareness, and improve EFL students' pronunciation (Agüero &

Fancioni, 2023; Álvarez-Cofiño, 2024; Blenvins, 2017; Martínez, 2011; Papps, 2020; Zin et al., 2023). Finally, Fisher's exact tests are run to determine whether there are significant differences among the different groups.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Teachers' general beliefs in the benefits of Phonics instruction

Participants seemed to agree that Phonics helps students improve different skills (see Figure 1). On the one hand, teachers considered learners' speaking skills are boosted: sixty-two out of the sixty-four respondents thought that Phonics enhances students' pronunciation, fifty-four that this method improves students' phonological awareness and fifty that it improves their phonemic awareness. Only thirty-four of the teachers believed that it enhances students' intonation, though. On the other hand, teachers also considered Phonics improves students' ability to read and write: sixty participants believed Phonics improves students' reading skills, while forty-nine thought that it improves their writing skills.

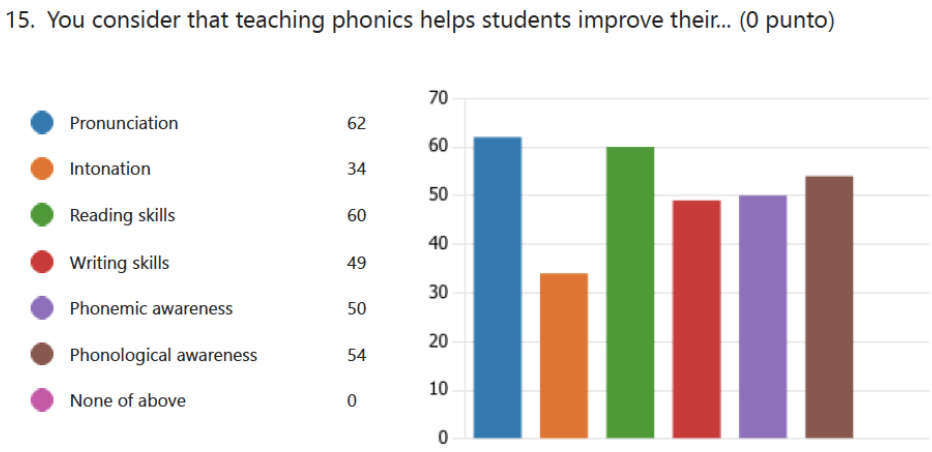

Figure 1. Answers to question 15: "You consider that teaching Phonics helps students improve their…"
Source: own elaboration

To further study how training and working experience affected their opinions, results were distributed according to three parameters: first, whether they were currently working with Phonics; second, whether they had received training in Phonics; and third, whether they had received training in teaching pronunciation in general. As displayed in Table 1, those practitioners who were teaching Phonics, had received Phonics training, or just training in how to teach pronunciation believed more in the benefits Phonics can imply in the different areas under study. The only exception was pronunciation. However, percentages were very high and the difference between those who taught Phonics and those who did not, or those who had received training and those who had not was minimal.

	Current Phonics instruction		Phonics training received		General pronunciation teaching received	
	YES ($N = 55$)	NO ($N = 9$)	YES (N = 52)	NO ($N = 12$)	YES ($N = 33$)	NO ($N = 31$)
Pronunciation	96.36%	100%	96.15%	100%	93.94%	100%

Intonation	58.18%	22.22%	57.69%	33.33%	60.61%	45.16%
Reading skills	98.18%	66.67%	98.08%	75%	100%	87.1%
Writing skills	87.27%	11.11%	88.46%	25%	87.88%	64.52%
Phonemic awareness	78.18%	77.78%	80.77%	66.67%	84.85%	70.97%
Phonological awareness	85.45%	77.78%	88.46%	66.67%	90.91%	77.42%
None of the above	1.81%	0%	1.92%	0%	0%	3.23%

Table 1. Percentages of general participants' beliefs according to training and work experience
Source: own elaboration

Differences between groups in each parameter were more notable for writing skills. 87.27% of teacher who taught Phonics believed it improves students' writing skills, while only 11.11% of those who did not teach it agreed. Similarly, more teachers who had received Phonics training found it beneficial for writing (88.46%) than those who had not (25%). Hence, it seems that knowing about the method makes a difference when it comes to understand how it benefits the ability to write in English. It was similar for intonation, although in both cases (i.e., either teaching Phonics or having been trained on it) only a bit above half of the respondents considered Phonics can help improve it.

Fisher's exact tests were performed to determine whether there was a significant association between the teachers' working experience or type of training and the different features under analysis. As shown in Table 2, having worked with Phonics showed significance for reading (two-tailed $p = .007$) and writing skills (two-tailed $p = <.001$), but not for the rest of the aspects related to speaking. Interestingly, the only one that almost reached significance was intonation (two-tailed $p = .071$). Therefore, although there is not a strong tendency to believe that Phonics help improve students' intonation, it tends to be considered more beneficial once you start applying the method.

	Current Phonics instruction	Phonics training received	General pronunciation teaching received
	p (2-sided)	*p (2-sided)*	*p (2-sided)*
Pronunciation	1	1	.493
Intonation	.071	.199	.316
Reading skills	.007*	.019*	.050*
Writing skills	<.001*	<.001*	.039*
Phonemic awareness	1	.438	.232
Phonological awareness	.622	.082	.178
None of the above	1	1	.484
Note. *$p = <.05$			

Table 2. Fisher's Exact Tests' results according to training and experience
Source: own elaboration

As for those teachers who had received training in Phonics, Fisher's exact tests show significance for reading (two-tailed p = .019) and writing skills (two-tailed p = <.001) as well. In this case, phonological awareness almost reached significance (two-tailed p = 0.082). Finally, regarding teachers who had received training in teaching pronunciation in general, results also showed significance for reading (two-tailed p = .05) and writing (two-tailed p = .039), but not for any of the tested pronunciation-related features. This is interesting since the percentage of teachers who believed Phonics helped improve students' pronunciation was high, but this belief does not seem to be associated to training, nor work experience. However, the effectiveness of Phonics in students' reading and writing skills shows significance in the three groups under study, which suggests that training in either pronunciation or Phonics, and experience with this approach might influence teachers' positive view in this respect.

4.2. Teachers' beliefs in the benefits of specific techniques of Phonics instruction in pre-primary education

Researchers were not only interested in determining the skills and general aspects teachers considered the Phonics approach to be more effective, but also which of the specific elements taught with the Phonics method they believe were more beneficial according to their level of study. Figure 2 displays the results obtained in question 17 regarding pre-primary education. At this level, most of the practitioners thought working with songs (sixty-one respondents), sounds (sixty) and gestures (fifty-eight) were the more relevant features. On the contrary, they considered teaching alternative spellings (ten), the magic -e (twelve) and tricky words (twenty-four) the least important.

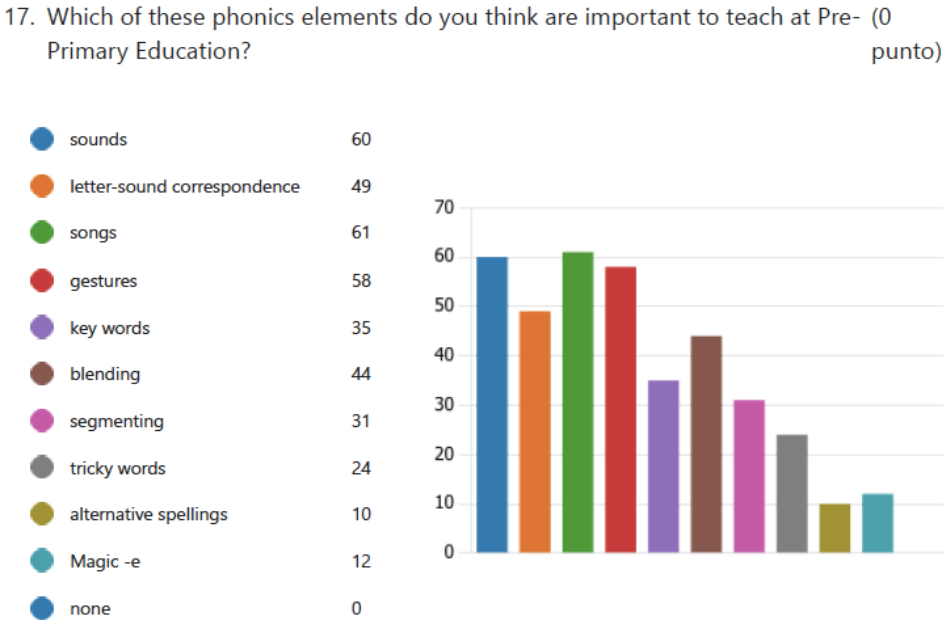

Figure 2. Answers to question 17: "Which of these Phonics elements do you think are important to teach at pre-primary education?"
Source: own elaboration

Results were distributed into the three groups under study and percentages were calculated (see Table 3). Those teachers who were currently following the Phonics approach in class tended to find the different features more relevant than those who did not. The only exceptions were letter-sound correspondence, in which both subgroups had similar percentages (76.36% those who taught Phonics; 77.78% those who did not), alternative spellings (14.55% those who taught Phonics; 22.22% those who did not), and the magic e- (14.55% those who taught Phonics; 44.44% those who did not). The element these subgroups differ the most was blending, which was considered important by a high number of Phonics instructors (74.55%), but not that many of the teachers who did not used the method (33.33%). Sounds, songs, and gestures were thought to be the most relevant whether they taught Phonics or not.

	Current Phonics instruction		Phonics training received		General pronunciation teaching received	
	YES ($N = 55$)	NO ($N = 9$)	YES (N = 52)	NO ($N = 12$)	YES ($N = 33$)	NO ($N = 31$)
Sounds	92.73%	88.89%	96.15%	75%	87.88%	96.77%
Letter-sound correspondence	76.36%	77.78%	78.85%	66.67%	72.73%	80.65%
Songs	96.36%	88.89%	94.23%	100%	93.94%	96.77%
Gestures	90.9%	88.89%	92.31%	83.33%	87.88%	93.55%
Key words	56.36%	44.44%	55.77%	50%	57.58%	51.61%
Blending	74.55%	33.33%	78.85%	25%	66.67%	70.97%
Segmenting	52.73%	33.33%	55.77%	25%	48.48%	51.61%
Tricky words	38.18%	33.33%	38.46%	33.33%	27.27%	48.39%
Alternative spellings	14.55%	22.22%	15.38%	16.67%	12.12%	19.35%
Magic -e	14.55%	44.44%	21.15%	8.33%	9.09%	29.03%
None	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 3. Percentages of Phonics features according to training and work experience for pre-primary education

Source: own elaboration

Similar results were obtained when Phonics training was examined, but not for general pronunciation teaching. In this case, percentages tended to be higher for those who had received no training in how to teach pronunciation. Only the teaching of key words was considered relevant for more teachers who received training in teaching pronunciation (57.58% those who were trained in teaching pronunciation; 51.61% those who did not).

On the other hand, sounds, letter-sound correspondence, songs, gestures and blending (to some extent) were relevant for a high number of respondents in each group, while tricky words, alternative spellings, and magic e- were not that important for most of the participants. Therefore, at first sight, it seems that working experience or training did not significantly affect teachers' beliefs in the most relevant features at pre-primary education. Nonetheless, Fisher's exact tests were run to examine the

relevance of these two factors in the teachers' cognition. As displayed in Table 4, blending was found significant for both current Phonics instruction (two-tailed p = .022) and Phonics training (two-tailed p = <.001). Hence, when teaching or being trained in Phonics, practitioners tend to think that blending is important to teach at a pre-primary level.

	Current Phonics instruction	Phonics training received	General pronunciation teaching received
	p (2-sided)	*p (2-sided)*	*p (2-sided)*
Sounds	.544	.042*	.356
Sound-letter correspondence	1	.453	.56
Songs	.37	1	1
Gestures	1	.312	.673
Key words	.72	.757	.802
Blending	.022*	<.001*	.791
Segmenting	.474	.107	1
Tricky words	1	1	.121
Alternative spellings	.622	1	.504
Magic e-	.055	.436	.057
None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Note. *p = <.05; N/A = Not Applicable			

Table 4. Fisher's Exact Tests' results according to training and experience for pre-primary education
Source: own elaboration

Sounds also reached significant when Phonics training was considered (two-tailed p = .042), but not when it was taught (two-tailed p = .544). As for training in general pronunciation teaching, none of the tests performed showed statistical significance.

4.3. Teachers' beliefs in the benefits of specific techniques of Phonics instruction in primary education

As shown in Figure 3, different features were considered important at primary education: songs (forty out of sixty-four), gestures (forty-four), sounds (fifty) and sound-letter correspondence (fifty-one) were important for fewer practitioners, while tricky words (fifty-nine), alternative spellings (fifty-five), magic e- (fifty-four) and segmenting (fifty-two) were chosen by more of the respondents.

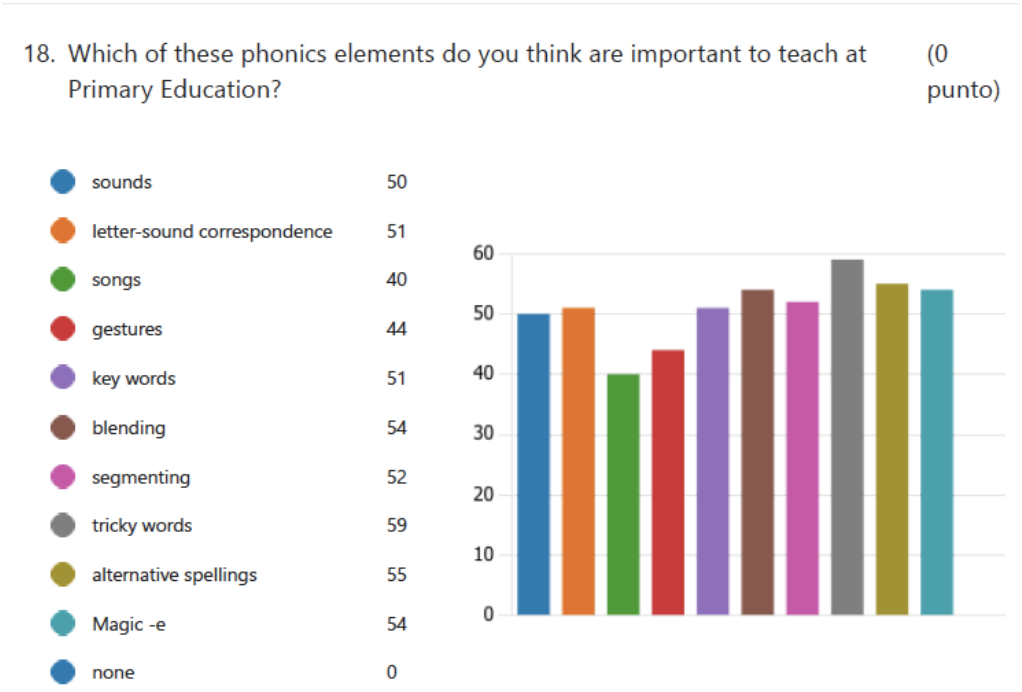

Figure 3. Answers to question 18: "Which of these Phonics elements do you think are important to teach at primary education?"
Source: own elaboration

Hence, it seems that there is a progression of the elements taught: at pre-primary students should get familiar with individual sounds and practice it with simple elements such as singing songs and using gestures, while in primary is when they start to deal with alternative spellings or tricky words, which, in the end, are exceptions to the rule. However, all the features are considered important by a high number of respondents at this stage, which suggests that students should keep practicing the elements they studied at a pre-primary education.

Tricky words and alternative spellings are still considered relevant at primary education by most of the participants when having working experience and training of any kind (see Table 5). It is observed, though, that those who are currently teaching Phonics or have training in the approach tend to find alternative spellings more relevant (92.73% and 98.08% respectively) than those who did not (44.45% and 33.33%). A big difference is also seen for segmenting when Phonics training is concerned (94.23% those who were trained in Phonics; 25% those who did not). However, as a whole, percentages were high for all the techniques used regardless their work experience or training received.

	Current Phonics instruction		Phonics training received		General pronunciation teaching received	
	YES (*N* = 55)	NO (*N* = 9)	YES (N = 52)	NO (*N* = 12)	YES (*N* = 33)	NO (*N* = 31)
Sounds	78.18%	77.78%	78.85%	75%	75.76%	80.65%
Letter-sound correspondence	81.82%	66.67%	82.69%	66.67%	81.82%	77.42%
Songs	60%	66.67%	59.62%	66.67%	60.61%	61.29%
Gestures	70.91%	55.56%	71.15%	58.33%	66.67%	70.97%
Key words	83.64%	66.67%	84.62%	66.67%	84.85%	77.42%
Blending	85.45%	77.78%	90.38%	58.33%	84.85%	83.87%
Segmenting	85.45%	55.56%	94.23%	25%	84.85%	77.42%
Tricky words	94.55%	77.78%	94.23%	83.33%	93.94%	90.32%
Alternative spellings	92.73%	44.44%	98.08%	33.33%	90.91%	80.65%
Magic -e	87.27%	66.67%	94.23%	41.67%	87.88%	80.65%
None	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 5. Fisher's Exact Tests' results according to training and experience for primary education
Source: own elaboration

In order to examine the importance of these two factors, several Fisher's exact tests were also performed (see Table 6). This time, the influence of having received Phonics training showed significance for several of the features under study: blending (two-tailed p = .015), segmenting (two-tailed p = <.001), alternative spellings (two-tailed p = <.001) and the magic -e (two-tailed p = <.001) were found more relevant when the teachers were trained in the approach. Alternative spellings were also found significant when teaching Phonics (two-tailed p = .002), but not the rest of the features. As for pronunciation teaching training, none of the tests run reached significance again.

	Current Phonics instruction	Phonics training received	General pronunciation teaching received
	p (2-sided)	*p (2-sided)*	*p (2-sided)*
Sounds	1	0.715	0.765
Sound-letter correspondence	0.372	0.243	0.761
Songs	1	0.751	1
Gestures	0.443	0.492	0.791
Key words	0.351	0.215	0.531
Blending	0.622	0.015*	1

Segmenting	0.055	<0.001*	0.531
Tricky words	0.141	0.233	0.667
Alternative spellings	0.002*	<0.001*	0.296
Magic e-	0.140	<0.001*	0.504
None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Note. *p = <.05; N/A = Not Applicable			

Table 6. Fisher's Exact Tests' results according to training and experience for primary education
Source: own elaboration

Hence, results suggest that training in general pronunciation teaching does not affect teachers' opinion on the different Phonics elements under study, while training and experience in working with Phonics influences, to some extent, the beliefs practitioners have. Nevertheless, beliefs not always translate into real practices, which are going to be examined in the following section.

4.4. Teachers' use of specific techniques in their classrooms

As shown in Figure 4, the most common practices in class were the use of gestures (chosen by fifty-nine out of the sixty-four respondents), the teaching of letter-sound correspondence (fifty-six) and the use of songs (fifty-five). However, all the items were chosen by a high number of participants, being the magic -e the least chosen with forty teachers introducing it in their lectures. There was only one subject who claimed not teaching any of the features.

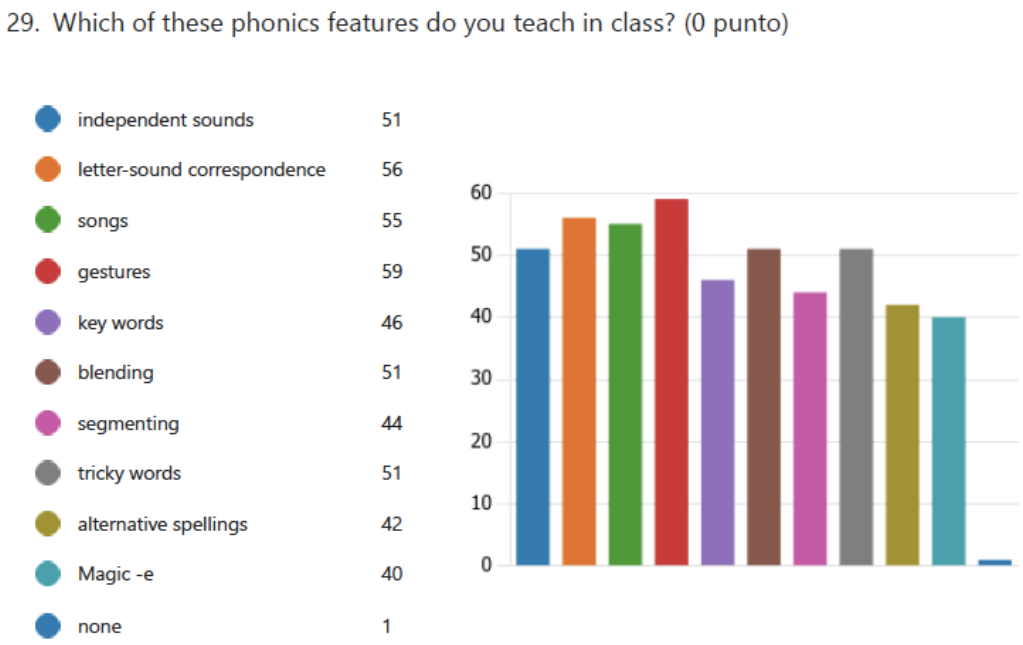

Figure 4. Answers to question 29: "Which of these Phonics features do you teach in class?"
Source: own elaboration

Results were also examined according to work experience and training. As shown in Table 7, the number of practitioners who introduced the different features under study is always higher when they had some working experience with the method or have received training in either Phonics or teaching general pronunciation. Songs are the only exception: there were more teachers who did not received Phonics training who used songs in class (91.67%) than those who did (84.62%), and teachers who did not received training in teaching general pronunciation (87.1%) also used them more often than those who did (84.85%).

	Current Phonics instruction		Phonics training received		General pronunciation teaching received	
	YES ($N = 55$)	NO ($N = 9$)	YES (N = 52)	NO ($N = 12$)	YES ($N = 33$)	NO ($N = 31$)
Sounds	81.82%	66.67%	84.62%	58.33%	84.85%	74.19%
Letter-sound correspondence	90.91%	55.56%	92.31%	58.33%	84.85%	87.1%
Songs	89.09%	66.67%	84.62%	91.67%	84.85%	87.1%
Gestures	96.36%	66.67%	94.23%	83.33%	93.94%	90.32%
Key words	78.18%	33.33%	75%	58.33%	75.76%	67.74%
Blending	87.27%	33.33%	90.38%	33.33%	81.82%	77.42%
Segmenting	78.18%	11.11%	78.85%	25%	75.76%	61.29%
Tricky words	85.45%	44.44%	84.62%	58.33%	78.79%	80.65%
Alternative spellings	72.73%	22.22%	73.08%	33.33%	72.73%	58.06%
Magic -e	69.09%	22.22%	71.15%	25%	72.73%	51.61%
None	0%	11.11%	1.92%	0%	03.03%	0%

Table 7. Percentages of the Phonics features taught according to training and work experience
Source: own elaboration

Percentages are generally high regardless of their work experience and training. However, elements such as alternative spellings, the magic e-, blending or segmenting show a notable difference between those who had experience or training in Phonics, who are the ones that introduced them more in class, and those who did not. Perhaps these elements are more specific to the method, so some previous knowledge is needed to teach them.

Again, Fisher's exact tests were run to examine the relevance of the association of the different types of training and the work experience with the use of each of the elements under study. Table 8 summarizes the results obtained. As it can be observed, all the tests showed significance when those teachers currently using Phonics were implied except for sounds (two-tailed $p = .372$) and songs (two-tailed $p = .106$). This is not surprising as the elements examined are part of the method, but we have previously mentioned that songs were also very common among teachers with no expertise in Phonics. What is striking is that, despite using the method and believing in its benefits, especially for reading

and writing skills (see Table 2), the belief in the importance of its instruction was only significant associated with blending at pre-primary education (see Table 4) and with alternative spellings at primary education (see Table 6). Therefore, results suggest that practitioners do not generally agree in which elements of the method are more relevant to help students improve their skills.

	Current Phonics instruction	Phonics training received	General pronunciation teaching received
	p (2-sided)	*p (2-sided)*	*p (2-sided)*
Sounds	.372	.056	.359
Sound-letter correspondence	.018*	.009*	1
Songs	.106	1	1
Gestures	.017*	.233	.667
Key words	.0012*	.293	.581
Blending	.001*	<.001*	.761
Segmenting	<.001*	<.001*	.283
Tricky words	.005*	.056	1
Alternative spellings	.003*	.016*	.294
Magic -e	.007*	.006*	.121
None	.013*	1	1
Note. *p = <.05			

Table 8. Fisher's Exact Tests' results according to training and experience for the Phonics features taught
Source: own elaboration

Regarding Phonics training, tests were significant for sound-letter correspondence (two-tailed p = .009), blending (two-tailed p = <.001), segmenting (two-tailed p = <.001), alternative spellings (two-tailed p = .016,), and the magic -e (two-tailed p = .006). This time results correlate more with the results obtained for Phonics training at primary education, since the association with the same elements was also found significant except for sound-letter correspondence (see Table 4). Therefore, these teachers, although not having to use the method in class, seemed to introduce those elements that they find more relevant. Thus, it appears that teachers do not fully believe in strictly following the method, but on introducing the elements they consider more effective.

As for training in general pronunciation teaching, no tests showed significance, which suggests that this type of training does not affect teachers' beliefs and practices. It is true, though, that, despite many of them expressing the relevance of Phonics in students' speaking skills, it did not reach significance, while reading and writing skills did. Hence, although Phonics might help students improve their pronunciation or phonetic and phonological awareness, it is seen as a method to teach reading and writing rather than speaking.

5. DISCUSSION

Research Question 1 aimed at examining the extent to which having working experience in Phonics or having received training in either Phonics or general pronunciation teaching influence teachers' beliefs towards this methodological approach. The results displayed in Figure 1 suggest that there is a general agreement in the use of Phonics to develop oral skills. Sixty out of sixty-four of the teachers strongly agreed that Phonics is useful for teaching pronunciation, fifty-four of them thought the same for phonological awareness, and fifty for phonemic awareness. These findings echo the work of Blevins (2017), who claimed that phonic knowledge does indeed bring about benefits in the development of vocabulary and ultimately in pronunciation. They also complement the results obtained in studies carried out specifically in the use of Phonics in EFL contexts by Martínez (2011), Ly and Thuy (2021), Agüero and Francioni (2023), and Álvarez-Cofiño, (2024). However, there is a much lower level of agreement on the positive impact of Phonics on intonation, perhaps because this skill is perceived as less central than the broader issues of phonemic and phonological awareness, since only thirty-four out of the sixty-four participants agreed that Phonics helped to improve intonation. On the other hand, when training and working experience are considered, no statistical significance is found. Hence, their belief in the positive influence of Phonics in students' oral skills development cannot be associated to the practitioners' training and work experience. Indeed, the Phonics method has traditionally been considered a literacy approach in its broader sense (i.e., a set of techniques to teach how to read and write), but not a methodology to teach how to produce and understand speech orally. Therefore, an improvement of students' oral competence thanks to Phonics might be felt as a side benefit (see the following section for a further discussion).

In fact, if we examine the findings on teachers' opinions of the use of Phonics in reading and writing skills, training and experience do have a significant impact (see Table 2). Overall, sixty out of the sixty-four participants expressed the view that the use of Phonics was beneficial in developing reading skills, while fifty-four of them expressed the same view for writing. Nevertheless, when we break down the findings in terms of training and experience, we see that there are notable differences between teachers with and without training or experience. In terms of actual work experience with Phonics, 87.27% of teacher who had taught Phonics expressed their belief that it improves students' writing skills, compared to just 11.11% of those without any specific teaching experience in Phonics. Likewise, the study suggests that 88.46 % teachers who had received Phonics training found it beneficial for writing, whereas only 25% of those teachers who had not received training perceived the methodology as useful in these areas (see Table 1). These results further support findings of previous studies in EFL contexts (Agüero & Francioni, 2023; Dixon et al., 2011; Ly & Thuy, 2021; Martínez, 2011). In Spain, Lázaro Ibarrola (2007), López Cirugeda and López Campillo (2016), Rendon et al. (2021) and Álvarez-Cofiño (2024) also emphasized the benefits of training with Phonics to aid understanding and its subsequent implementation in working on reading and writing skills.

Results on practitioners' beliefs were further broken down for two different educational contexts: pre-primary and primary education. Teachers in pre-primary education overwhelmingly considered song, sounds and gestures to be the most valuable aspect of Phonics in the classroom with sixty-one participants agreeing on the value of songs, sixty for sounds and fifty-one for gestures (see Figure 2). Nevertheless, the only statistical effect observed among the three was for sounds when Phonics training

was considered (two-tailed p = .042). However, when we examine what might be more advanced uses of Phonics such as blending, statistical significance is found for both teachers who had experience (two-tailed p = .022) and who had received some training in Phonics (two-tailed p = <.001). These findings correlate with Ly and Thuy's (2021) work with Vietnamese teachers, who also found blending important. On the other hand, no statistical significance was shown for any of the items under study when teachers who had only received general pronunciation training were considered, so this type of training does not seem to influence pre-primary teachers' view.

Regarding primary school teachers, the specific elements of Phonics most widely used change as the cognitive abilities associated with older children become a factor. For them, the key elements of Phonics were tricky words, identified as important by fifty-four of the participants, alternative spellings (fifty-five participants) and the magic e- (fifty-four participants). Nonetheless, at this educational level, all the items are considered very important by many of the practitioners who fulfilled the survey.

When statistically analyzing the results according to work experience and training, the use of alternative spellings was found significant (two-tailed p = .002) for those teachers with actual experience of Phonics (see Table 6). If we examine the perceptions of teachers with training in Phonics then blending (two-tailed p = .015), segmenting (two-tailed p = <.001), alternative spellings (two-tailed p = <.001) and the magic -e (two-tailed p = <.001) showed statistical significance. There is no statistical significance when we examine the perceptions of teachers who have only received general pronunciation training. Once more, it seems that training in general pronunciation does not have a significant impact on primary school teachers' beliefs, but specific training in Phonics clearly does. As mentioned before, Phonics is not usually considered an approach to teach orality; hence, it is not commonly introduced in pronunciation teaching programs even if the Phonics features under study directly relate to pronunciation aspects.

Research Question 2 addressed the extent to which work experience and training in Phonics and training in general pronunciation teaching affect teachers' choices. Participants reported to teach with gestures, letter-sound correspondence and songs the most, although all the items were highly present in their classes. The survey reveals statistical significance between all classroom techniques associated with Phonics and teachers having working experience, except for the use of songs and sounds (see Table 8). This is striking, since these latter two elements constitute the uses which are considered most beneficial and therefore may reflect a broader familiarity with them among teachers. As for specific training in Phonics, the use of complex techniques such as sound-letter correspondence (two-tailed p = .009), blending (two-tailed p = <.001), segmenting (two-tailed p = <.001), alternative spellings (two-tailed p = .016), and the magic -e (two-tailed p = .006) were found significant. This is interesting because these usually associated with older students, while most of the participants had experience in early stages. Finally, general pronunciation training again does not show statistical significance for any of the items under study, suggesting no influence in the teaching choices practitioners make.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examines teachers' beliefs and teaching choices in Phonics according to the type of training received and their experience working with the approach. On the one hand, results reveal that practitioners consider Phonics particularly beneficial for developing reading and writing skills, although

it is also valued as a tool for enhancing oral competence. On the other hand, the study shows a key role played by both training and experience in Phonics. However, general pronunciation training has little or no impact on teachers' perceptions or use of the tools available.

One of the aims of this paper was to provide new insights from practitioners' perspective and point of view regarding the implementation of phonics in non-native EFL contexts, as the literature existing in this topic is very limited (Álvarez-Cofiño, 2024; Lázaro, 2027; Dixon et al, 2011; Redón, 2019; Redón el at, 2021; Agüero & Francioni, 2023) and did not focus on teachers' perceptions and beliefs in the success of the phonics programs. Thus, this article contributes the phonics implementation discussion with new data and analysis obtained from the participant teachers and taking into account their personal and practical experience in their classrooms.

Due to a scarcity of teaching resources, practitioners many times rely on traditional teacher-centered, non-interactive settings in which children's use of their individual capacity to decode and understand texts is limited (Papps, 2020). Teachers normally learn about the Phonics approach through specific workshops and courses rather than during their university studies. In fact, some do not become familiar with the program until they must teach it. Therefore, it would be beneficial to include more specific training in Phonics within general teaching programs (Hmeadat & Yunus, 2018; Rendón Romero, 2019).

In addition, it will also be interesting to include Phonics in pronunciation teaching courses, as not much is taught about how to teach pronunciation to children. Papps (2020) considers oral skills development essential to guarantee emergent literacy, defined as a group of "skills, knowledge and attitudes that are presumed to be developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading and writing and the environments that support those developments" (p. 2). Improvements in the oral competence can lead to important developments in comprehension through the acquisition of a better vocabulary, syntactic, semantic, conceptual and discourse narrative knowledge (Agüero & Francioni, 2023; Martínez, 2011; Papps, 2020). For example, Spanish children might find it easier to understand the difference in meaning of the words "very" and "berry" if they are taught about the sound /v/, which does not exist in their mother tongue. The practitioners of this study who have work or training experience with Phonics generally agree on the benefits of the program to enhance students' oral competence. Therefore, it seems reasonable to think that it could emerge as a method to boost pronunciation teaching among EFL young learners (Lázaro Ibarrola, 2007).

As Zin et al. (2023) pointed out, it is crucial to take teachers' opinions into account because they are the ones who apply educational policies and, thus, can contribute successfully to a progressive improvement of the curriculum with their hands-on experience in the classrooms. In the end, teachers' beliefs usually shape the teaching practices and approaches they use, inevitably affecting the quality of the teaching and the students' learning progress.

Unfortunately, the study is limited by the number of participants, and future research with more teachers would shed more light on the relationship between experience, training and the use of Phonics. Classroom observations as evidenced by Martínez (2011) or Ly and Thuy (2021) would also provide interesting data, particularly on the actual time dedicated to each element within Phonics. The relationship between training, experience, and the use of specific classroom techniques is complex.

However, aspects such as the type of training received, the amount of work experience, or the materials and coursebooks used will be further investigated in forthcoming studies to delve into these issues. Hence, this study must be seen as a first attempt to examine this issue in Phonics teaching in Spanish schools.

7. TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

Below can be found some teaching tips and implications that, taken from the surveys and from the authors' personal experience, could be helpful for EFL teachers interested in working with phonics in their classrooms. However, quality training in phonics programs is pivotal to assure success in implementing them:

- Phonics implementation should be systematic and cumulative, in the sense that a new sound should be introduced in each session, making sure that previous worked sounds are revised, too. Sounds should also be reviewed or spotted in other moments of the sessions, like during storytelling, for example, or playing games.
- It is advisable to stop some time in the so called "critical sounds", which are those completely different or those which do not exist in the EFL students' mother tongue (e.g. /ʌ/ or /z/ in Spanish). By playing games or using manipulatives, students could acquire and consolidate these sounds better.
- Teachers should sit opposite the students and making sure they can see her face and mouth clearly. By exaggerating the movements of the lips and tongue, students will start being conscious of the way to position them to produce the sounds correctly.
- Use a multisensory approach that involves sounds, letters, songs, pictures, stories, rhymes, gestures…to make the learning process more meaningful and memorable for students.
- Do all necessary adaptations from the phonics program taking into account the students' needs. Just by adding small pictures at the back of word cards, for example, we could help a lot with the comprehension of the words and what the students read.
- Phonics instruction in EFL contexts should be complemented with a lot of oral input through storytelling, songs and rhymes, where sentence patterns, language structure, rhyme, intonation and vocabulary appear constantly.
- Finally, the main aim of phonics instruction is not accuracy in pronunciation, but fluency in language use.

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