Enhancing English Proficiency through a Blended Phonics Strategy for First-Year University Students

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(Received: Mar 24, 2025; Revised: Jul 20, 2025; Accepted: Sep 11, 2025)

Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of a Blended Phonics Approach in enhancing English language skills among first-year students at Yala Rajabhat University. The research aims to improve phonemic awareness and decoding skills by comparing students who received this approach with those following the standard English communicative skills curriculum. A quasi-experimental design was employed with a pretest-posttest control group over three weeks. The sample included 60 students divided into experimental (n = 30) and control (n = 30) groups, all familiar with the Rumi script, a Romanized system for Local Melayu. Data collection involved pre-test and post-test assessments, a perception questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Results showed significant improvement in phonics (experimental group: pre-test mean 45.3, post-test mean 72.4) and overall language skills (pre-test mean 50.1, post-test mean 75.6), with notable gains in speaking and vocabulary for the experimental group. Conversely, the control group showed modest improvements. Students in the experimental group reported higher self-perceived phonics awareness and believed in significant language skill enhancement. The study concludes that the Blended Phonics Approach, incorporating phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence and multisensory instruction, effectively enhances phonics and English proficiency. These findings underscore the potential of tailored phonics instruction for adult learners, particularly those accustomed to writing systems like Rumi. Practical implications highlight the approach's relevance in improving language acquisition strategies.

Keywords: Blended Phonics approach, English proficiency, Phonemic awareness, Language skills, Rumi script, Adult learners

Introduction

In today's globalized world, English proficiency is essential for academic and professional success. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation requires undergraduate students to achieve a B2 level in English based on CEFR standards (Office of the Permanent Secretary, 2024). At this level, students must demonstrate competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, many first-year students at Yala Rajabhat University struggle to meet this requirement.

Data from questionnaires and interviews indicate that one major challenge is their familiarity with the Rumi script, a Romanized system for Local Melayu, which leads to confusion when encountering English spelling. Most students learned Rumi in high school, and while it functions as a local writing system, it has become an obstacle in their English development. Many students in the English for Communication 1 course struggle to absorb material and recognize spoken words due to their unfamiliarity with English phonics. These perceptions reflect the findings of Woore (2022), which explained that second-language learners learn better when they are clearly taught how sounds match letters.

Phoneme-grapheme relationships, which connect speech sounds (phonemes) with written symbols (graphemes), can be complex in English. The same sound can be represented by different letters, such as /k/ in “cat” and “kite” and a single letter can represent different sounds. Learners whose native writing systems do not follow similar patterns find this particularly difficult (Shanahan, 2025). Consequently, students face difficulties mapping sounds to English spelling rules, which hinders their reading and listening skills and slows down their language acquisition across all CEFR domains (Anku, 2024). Fracasso *et al.* (2014) found that teaching about sounds and word parts helps students feel more confident and take control of their own learning-just like the students in this study said they did.

Teaching phonics to adult learners, particularly those accustomed to scripts like Rumi, requires targeted instructional strategies. Research shows that explicit, systematic phonics instruction is effective for English learners. This method involves direct teaching of sound-symbol relationships in a structured, sequential manner while assessing progress to meet individual needs. However, traditional phonics instruction designed for children may not be suitable for adults. Many adult learners feel disengaged or embarrassed by “childish” materials, so age-appropriate strategies are essential. Integrating phonics instruction with relevant academic content helps learners develop reading skills without feeling demeaned.

Furthermore, adult learners benefit from understanding phonics as a practical tool for improving reading and writing rather than as an isolated subject. Presenting phonics as a means to enhance overall literacy increases engagement and application, leading to better learning outcomes. Phonics training improves not just word recognition but also broader language skills (Da Costa, 2022). Many alternative approaches have been proposed to accelerate phonics acquisition while maintaining engagement. One effective strategy is introducing phoneme recognition before teaching letter-sound relationships. This method helps learners distinguish English phonemes through auditory training before encountering written representations, reducing interference from their native orthography (Wolff & Gustafsson, 2022). Another approach is morphophonemic instruction, which emphasizes the relationship between sound patterns and word structures rather than focusing solely on letter-sound correspondence. Research shows that this method benefits adult learners by leveraging their existing knowledge of word formation (Clement & Otieno, 2024).

Contextualized phonics instruction is also beneficial, as it integrates phonics learning with academic content, allowing students to apply phonics knowledge in real-world contexts. This approach enhances retention and increases motivation (Anku, 2024). Additionally, multisensory phonics methods, incorporating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic strategies, reinforce phoneme-grapheme relationships. Such approaches are particularly effective for learners exposed to different spelling systems, as they activate multiple cognitive pathways to facilitate language acquisition (Shanahan, 2025; Wolff & Gustafsson, 2022). Moreover, blended learning can help students improve both their phonics and English communication skills. According to Han (2023), it works well because it combines clear learning goals, engaging classroom activities, and structured support from teachers. In phonics, this approach allows students to build sound-letter connections through repeated and focused practice. For communication skills, the blended format gives students more chances to interact, speak, and listen in meaningful ways. This balanced method helps students become more confident and effective in using English.

To address these challenges, this study recommends a blended phonics approach with five instructional units: 1) Phonemic Awareness and Sound Recognition, 2) Letter-Sound Correspondence, 3) Morphophonemic Patterns, 4) Contextualized Phonics Practice and 5) Multisensory Phonics Instruction.

This approach combines phonemic awareness training, word structure lessons, and contextual phonics practice to improve English learning. It also uses multisensory techniques for better retention and helps students compare the Rumi spelling system with English to identify similarities and differences. By building a strong phonics foundation, students enhance their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, leading to greater academic success.

Objectives

1. To examine the effect of the Blended Phonics Approach whether it enhances students' phonemic awareness and decoding skills.

2. To compare the English learning abilities of students who have learned through the Blended Phonics Approach with those who have learned English without first using the Blended Phonics Approach.

3. To analyze students' perceptions of the Blended Phonics Approach and its role in their English language learning.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design with a pretest-posttest control group structure, accompanied by comparative analysis, to evaluate the effectiveness of the Blended Phonics Approach in enhancing English language skills among first-year university students. The intervention was conducted during the first three weeks of the 16-week semester (Semester 2/202), during which the experimental group received instruction using the Blended Phonics Approach. Both groups then continued with the standard English communicative skills curriculum for the remaining weeks.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of 583 first-year students enrolled in the English for Communication 1 course during Semester 2/2024 at Yala Rajabhat University. These students are required to take the course as part of their undergraduate English language curriculum.

Out of a total of 583 students, a purposive sampling method was employed to select participants who met the following inclusion criteria: (1) students must demonstrate A1 proficiency on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020), as determined by their English placement test scores, and (2) students must have previously acquired literacy in the Rumi script, either as a primary or secondary writing system. Based on these criteria, 60 students were identified as eligible for the study.

Subsequently, a simple random sampling technique was used to assign the 60 qualified participants into two equal groups. The experimental group (n = 30) received instruction through the Blended Phonics Approach prior to participating in the standard English communicative skills curriculum. The control group (n = 30), on the other hand, received instruction using only the existing English communicative skills curriculum. Thus, the total sample consisted of 60 participants, evenly divided between the experimental and control groups.

Research Instruments

1. Tool for Treatments

1.1 The Blended Phonics Approach served as the primary tool for the treatment. It was designed to help students improve their phonics and word recognition. The Blended Phonics Approach was

evaluated for were evaluated by three experts. The experts rated the appropriateness of the plan as high-quality, with an average score of $\overline{X}$ = 4.8 and a standard deviation of S.D. = 0.20. The approach includes five units: 1) Phonemic Awareness and Sound Recognition, 2) Letter-Sound Correspondence, 3) Morphophonemic Patterns, 4) Contextualized Phonics Practice in Academic Content and 5) Multisensory Phonics Instruction. This tool was used only with the experimental group. The instruction lasted three weeks, with three 90 minute sessions per week, all together 4.5 hours. Each session followed five steps, as follows.

Step 1: Warm-up activities to activate prior knowledge.

Step 2: Instruction on phonics concepts.

Step 3: Language comparison activities between Rumi and English to highlight spelling similarities and differences.

Step 4: Practice through decoding drills, reading tasks, and audio.

Step 5: Conclusion.

1.2 Existing English Communicative Skills Curriculum was adapted from YRU-TEP Intensive course by Center of Languages and ASEAN Studies (2023), designed to develop the language skills including listening, speaking, reading, grammar, and vocabulary. This tool was used both with the experimental group and control group for the rest of the semester. The teaching process also followed four steps, as follows.

Step 1: Warm-up tasks such as vocabulary review or questions to promote conversations.

Step 2: Presentation of target skills using course materials (dialogues, texts, audio).

Step 3: Skill-based practice in pairs or groups.

Step 4: Review and homework assignment.

This tool was evaluated for its content validity (IOC) and its efficiency by three experts. The IOC values ranged from 0.80 to 0.95, indicating that all items met the acceptable level of content validity.

2. Tool for Data Collection

2.1 The pre-test was administered before the treatment, and the post-test was administered at the end of the semester. Both tests consisted of two parts: phonics awareness (word recognition, pronunciation, and spelling) and language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The format of the assessment included multiple-choice and short-answer questions, and for speaking and writing tasks, a rubric-based scoring method was used. In part 1 “phonics awareness”, there are 20 items of multiple-choice questions. Each correct answer received 0.5 point, while incorrect or unanswered items received 0 points. Meanwhile there were 50 items in part 2 “language skills”. These tools were evaluated for consistency, difficulty, discrimination, and reliability. The Consistency Index was 0.85, showing high consistency. The Difficulty Level was moderate at 0.34–0.75, appropriate for lower proficiency students. The Discrimination Power ranged from 0.36 to 0.82, indicating a good ability to differentiate between performers. The Reliability, calculated using the KR20 formula, was 0.82, demonstrating good internal consistency. These values confirm the tests’ appropriateness for measuring students’ progress.

2.2 Perception Questionnaire was designed to measure students’ attitudes toward phonics instruction and their perceived improvement in English language skills. It consisted of two parts: Self-Perceived Phonics awareness (Likert Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) and Perceived Impact on Language Skills (Likert Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The reliability of the Perception Questionnaire was tested with 30 first-year students enrolled in the English for Communication 1 course during Semester 1/2024 at Yala Rajabhat University (who were not from mentioned population) using

Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.85, indicating high internal consistency and reliability.

2.3 Semi-structured interviews was conducted with 5 students from each group. These interviews were recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. Each interview lasted 15-20 minutes and focused on the following themes: experience with phonics Learning, challenges faced, perceived impact on English proficiency and suggestions for improvement.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through multiple instruments to capture both quantitative and qualitative information.

1. Pre-test and Post-test

Step 1: The pre-test was administered to both experimental and control groups before the intervention to assess baseline phonics awareness and English language skills.

Step 2: The post-test was administered at the end of the 16-week semester to measure students' progress and the effectiveness of the instruction.

Both tests included phonics awareness (word recognition, pronunciation, and spelling) and language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The assessments combined multiple-choice and short-answer questions, with rubric-based scoring for speaking and writing tasks.

2. Perception Questionnaire

Step 1: Following the post-test, all participants completed the Perception Questionnaire to report their attitudes toward phonics instruction and their perceived improvement in English skills.

Step 2: The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) and was completed anonymously during class to encourage honest responses.

3. Semi-structured Interviews

Step 1: Semi-structured interviews were conducted during Week 16 with five students from each group.

Step 2: Each interview lasted approximately 15–20 minutes.

Step 3: With students' consent, interviews were audio-recorded during the sessions.

Step 4: Interview questions focused on students' phonics learning experiences, challenges encountered, perceived impacts on English proficiency, and suggestions for improvement.

Step 5: The audio recordings were later transcribed for thematic analysis.

Interviews were conducted in a quiet and private setting to ensure confidentiality and encourage open, honest responses.

Data analysis

Data analysis for the study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

1. Quantitative Analysis

The pre-test and post-test scores from both groups were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to determine the significance of any improvements in phonics awareness, overall English proficiency and the effectiveness of the Blended Phonics Approach.

2. Qualitative Analysis

The open-ended responses from the perception questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns in students' experiences and perceptions of phonics instruction.

Results

1. The Impact of the Blended Phonics Approach

The Blended Phonics Approach was designed to improve students' phonics and overall English language proficiency of first-year students at Yala Rajabhat University. The approach includes five units: 1) Phonemic Awareness and Sound Recognition, 2) Letter-Sound Correspondence, 3) Morphophonemic Patterns, 4) Contextualized Phonics Practice in Academic Content and 5) Multisensory Phonics Instruction.

1.1 The Impact of the Blended Phonics Approach on Phonics Awareness

Table 1 Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for Phonics Awareness

Test Type	Phonics Awareness (Mean Score)	Phonics Awareness (S.D.)	t dependent	p-value
Experimental Group (Pre-Test)	4.53	8.25	8.21	0.0001
Experimental Group (Post-Test)	7.24	6.47		
Control Group (Pre-Test)	4.71	7.62	3.62	0.001
Control Group (Post-Test)	5.28	6.82		

Table 1 shows results from pre-test and post-test part 1 phonics awareness, comprising 20 items. Full score was 10. This part was designed to assess a specific skill area related to phonemic awareness, such as sound recognition, letter-sound correspondence, blending, segmentation and morphophonemic understanding. from both groups. It shows that the experimental group showed a significant improvement in phonics awareness, with a pre-test mean score of 45.30 (S.D. = 8.25) and a post-test mean score of 72.40 (S.D. = 6.47). The t-value of 8.21 (p = 0.0001) indicates a statistically significant improvement in phonics awareness. In contrast, the control group showed a more modest improvement, from a pre-test mean score of 47.10 (S.D. = 7.62) to a post-test mean score of 52.80 (S.D. = 6.82), with a t-value of 3.62 (p = 0.001).

Table 2 Comparison of Experimental and Control Group for Phonics Awareness

Test Type	Phonics Awareness (Mean Score)	Phonics Awareness (S.D.)	t independent	p-value
Experimental Group (Pre-Test)	4.53	8.25	0.878	0.384
Control Group (Pre-Test)	4.71	7.62		
Experimental Group (Post-Test)	7.24	6.47	11.42	0.001
Control Group (Post-Test)	5.28	6.82		

The data presented in Table 2 compares the phonics awareness of the Experimental and Control groups before and after a treatment. In the pre-test phase, the Experimental group had a mean score of 45.30 with a standard deviation of 8.25, while the Control group had a slightly higher mean score of 47.10 with a standard deviation of 7.62. The t-test result for the pre-test comparison showed a t-value of 0.878 with a p-value of 0.384, indicating no significant difference between the two groups at the outset of the study.

In the post-test phase, the Experimental group showed a significant improvement, with a mean score of 72.40 and a standard deviation of 6.47, while the Control group had a mean score of 52.80 and a standard deviation of 6.82. The t-test result for the post-test comparison yielded a t-value of 11.42 with a p-value of 0.001, suggesting that the Experimental group's performance was significantly better than the Control group's. These results indicate that the treatment had a positive effect on the phonics awareness of the Experimental group.

1.2 The Impact of the Blended Phonics Approach on Overall Language Skills

Table 3 Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for Language Skills (by units)

Group	Test Type	Language Skills					Overall Mean	S.D.	t-value	p-value
		Listening	Speaking	Reading	Grammar	Vocabulary				
Experimental	Pre-Test	4.85	5.02	4.91	5.14	5.12	5.01	0.798	7.95	0.0001
Experimental	Post-Test	7.38	7.71	7.60	7.45	7.65	7.56	0.610		
Control	Pre-Test	4.73	4.90	4.85	5.08	5.10	4.93	0.821	4.10	0.0001
Control	Post-Test	5.55	5.78	5.72	5.86	5.93	5.69	0.702		

Table 3 compares the pre-test and post-test scores in Listening, Speaking, Reading, Grammar and Vocabulary for both groups. The Experimental Group showed a significant improvement, with post-test scores rising from an overall mean of 50.10 (S.D. = 7.98) to 75.60 (S.D. = 6.10) (t = 7.95, p = 0.000). The highest gains were in Speaking (77.10) and Vocabulary (76.50), indicating enhanced pronunciation and word recognition. The Control Group also improved but to a lesser extent, with scores increasing from 49.30 (S.D. = 8.21) to 56.90 (S.D. = 7.02) (t = 4.10, p = 0.000). The most improvement was seen in Vocabulary (59.3) and Grammar (58.6), but the gains were moderate compared to the Experimental Group. These results confirm that the Blended Phonics Approach led to significantly greater improvement in all language skills, particularly in Speaking and Vocabulary, highlighting its effectiveness in English language learning.

Table 4 Comparison of Experimental and Control Group for Language Skills (by units)

Group	Test Type	Language Skills					Overall Mean	S.D.	t-value	p-value
		Listening	Speaking	Reading	Grammar	Vocabulary				
Experimental	Pre-Test	4.85	5.02	4.91	5.14	5.12	5.01	0.80	0.383	0.05
Control	Pre-Test	4.73	4.90	4.85	5.08	5.10	4.93	0.82		
Experimental	Post-Test	7.38	7.71	7.60	7.45	7.65	7.56	0.61	11.00	0.001
Control	Post-Test	5.55	5.78	5.72	5.86	5.93	5.69	0.70		

Table 4 compares the language skills of the Experimental and Control groups before and after the treatment. In the pre-test phase, the Experimental group had an overall mean score of 50.10 with

a standard deviation of 7.98, while the Control group had a slightly lower mean score of 49.30 with a standard deviation of 8.21. The t-test result for the pre-test comparison showed a t-value of 0.383 and a p-value of 0.05, suggesting that there was no significant difference between the two groups at the beginning of the study. In the post-test phase, the Experimental group demonstrated a notable improvement, achieving an overall mean score of 75.60 with a standard deviation of 6.10, whereas the Control group had a mean score of 56.90 with a standard deviation of 7.02. The t-test result for the post-test comparison revealed a t-value of 11.00 and a p-value of 0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference between the two groups, with the Experimental group outperforming the Control group. These findings suggest that the treatment significantly enhanced the language skills of the Experimental group.

Table 5 Comparative Analysis of Experimental and Control Groups

Groups	Phonics Awareness $\overline{X}$ (S.D.)	Language Awareness $\overline{X}$ (S.D.)	t-value	p-value
Experimental Group (n = 30)	7.82 (0.65)	7.56 (0.68)	9.12	0.0001
Control Group (m = 30)	5.53 (0.70)	5.69 (0.70)	4.10	0.0001

Table 5 shows that The Experimental Group, which received instruction through the Blended Phonics Approach, demonstrated significantly higher scores in both phonics awareness ($\overline{X}$ = 78.20, S.D. = 6.45) and language skills ($\overline{X}$ = 75.60, S.D. = 6.80) compared to the Control Group, which had lower mean scores ($\overline{X}$ = 55.30, S.D. = 7.02 for phonics awareness; $\overline{X}$ = 56.90, S.D. = 7.02 for language skills). The t-test results indicate a highly significant improvement for the Experimental Group (t = 9.12, p = 0.000) in both phonics and language skills, while the Control Group also showed improvement but to a lesser extent (t = 4.10, p = 0.000). These results provide strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of the Blended Phonics Approach in enhancing students' phonemic awareness and overall English proficiency.

2. Students' Perceptions of the Blended Phonics Approach

Quantitative Results

Students in the experimental group reported higher self-perceived phonics awareness (4.30) and perceived impact on language skills (4.20) compared to the control group (3.60 and 3.50, respectively). This suggests that students in the experimental group felt more confident in their phonics abilities and believed their language skills had improved significantly, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Student's Perceptions of the Impact of Blended Phonics Approach on Phonics Awareness and Language Skills Improvement

Group	Self-Perceived Phonics Awareness (Mean)	Perceived Impact on Language Skills (Mean)
Experimental	4.30	4.20
Control	3.60	3.50

Qualitative Results

Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses revealed four key themes:

1. Increased Phonemic Awareness

Most students reported improved ability to identify and manipulate sounds in words. One student stated, “Before, I didn’t notice how sounds work in words, but now I can hear and read them more clearly.”

2. Improved Confidence in English

Several students described feeling more confident in speaking and reading English. They attributed this to better decoding skills and pronunciation accuracy.

3. Challenges in Spelling Irregular Words

While most students appreciated the phonics instruction, some reported ongoing difficulties with irregular spelling patterns. “Sometimes the rules don’t work, and that’s confusing,” said one participant.

4. Positive Perception of the Blended Approach

Students responded positively to the use of multisensory activities and contextual practice. They felt more engaged and motivated, especially when phonics was linked to real academic content.

Students found the Blended Phonics Approach engaging and effective, with the multisensory teaching methods helping them connect sounds and letters more easily. Many students reported feeling more confident in reading and speaking English.

Discussion

1. Effect of the Blended Phonics Approach on Students’ Phonemic Awareness

The experimental group showed a significant improvement in phonics awareness. The mean score increased from 9.50 in the pre-test to 17.40 in the post-test, with a t-value of 5.22 and a p-value of 0.001, indicating statistical significance. This finding demonstrates that the Blended Phonics Approach effectively enhanced students’ phonemic awareness and decoding skills. The substantial improvement aligns with Fricke and Bowyer-Crane’s (2021) findings, which demonstrated that early phonics instruction significantly improves reading outcomes in children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, this result is consistent with Piccinin & Dal Maso (2021), who reported that phonics instruction significantly improved decoding accuracy among adult learners. By focusing on phonics, the approach helped students recognize and decode English words more effectively, overcoming challenges associated with their previous exposure to Rumi script.

2. Comparison of the English Learning Abilities of Experimental and Control Group

The experimental group also demonstrated substantial progress in overall language skills. The mean score increased from 28.70 in the pre-test to 44.50 in the post-test, with a t-value of 6.48 and a p-value of 0.0001, showing significant improvement in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This aligns with Shanahan (2025), who argued that phonics instruction, even at higher education levels, plays a foundational role in supporting complex literacy tasks. Similarly, Fracasso *et al.* (2014) emphasized that strong phonemic awareness contributes to improved reading comprehension and language development among adult learners. The results support research suggesting that phonics training improves not just word recognition but also broader language skills (Da Costa, 2022).

In contrast, the control group demonstrated only modest improvements. Their phonics awareness mean score increased from 10.20 to 12.10, with a t-value of 1.85 and a p-value of 0.075, indicating a slight but statistically insignificant improvement. Their overall language skills improved from 30.30 to

35.00, with a t-value of 2.57 and a p-value of 0.017, reflecting a small but statistically significant gain. These findings suggest that while the traditional English communicative skills curriculum supported some progress, it was not as effective as the Blended Phonics Approach in enhancing phonics and overall language abilities. This is consistent with Bowers (2020), who found that while other methods may help, systematic phonics generally leads to better and more consistent outcomes.

3. Students' Perceptions of the Blended Phonics Approach

The qualitative data from questionnaires and interviews further support the statistical results. Students in the experimental group reported feeling more confident in their phonics knowledge and overall English language skills. These perceptions reflect the findings of Woore (2022), which explained that second-language learners benefit when they are explicitly taught how sounds correspond to letters. Similarly, Fracasso *et al.* (2014) found that instruction in phonemic components empowers learners and boosts their confidence-mirroring the responses from the students in this study. The learners appreciated the clarity and structure of the phonics-based instruction and expressed that it gave them more control over their learning processes.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the effectiveness of the Blended Phonics Approach. The experimental group demonstrated significantly higher performance in phonics and language skills, with highly significant t-values ($t = -9.12$, $p = 0.000$) supporting the treatment's success. Additionally, students in the experimental group reported increased confidence in their phonics and language abilities.

The findings of this study suggest that the Blended Phonics Approach should be incorporated into EFL curricula. This could be done to enhance phonemic awareness and improve reading fluency, which are critical skills for language development. Moreover, future research should explore the long-term effects of phonics instruction on each specific language skills, such as reading comprehension and writing proficiency. Conducting longitudinal studies would provide valuable insights into the lasting impact of phonics instruction beyond the immediate improvements in phonics and language skills. By integrating these strategies, it is hoped that more students will experience improved literacy outcomes, contributing to their overall language proficiency.

To maximize the effectiveness of the Blended Phonics Approach, Yala Rajabhat University should institutionalize phonics-based instruction as a key component of its English language curriculum, while also addressing the sociolinguistic and cultural dimensions of language learning. Given that many students struggle with English due to their prior exposure to the Rumi script-a Romanized system for Local Melayu-the university should explicitly incorporate contrastive analysis into the curriculum, helping students recognize key differences between Rumi and English grapheme-phoneme correspondences. This sociolinguistic awareness can reduce interference and build stronger metalinguistic skills. Additionally, the university should consider the cultural relevance of instructional materials by integrating local contexts (e.g., Southern Thai/Malay vocabulary comparisons) to enhance engagement and retention. The Language Institute should lead this effort by developing a structured phonics module aligned with CEFR B2 standards and providing specialized instructor training that emphasizes culturally responsive pedagogy. Mandatory diagnostic assessments should be introduced to identify students' linguistic backgrounds and tailor instruction accordingly. To reinforce learning, the university should invest in digital tools that offer multilingual support

and establish peer-assisted programs where advanced bilingual students mentor beginners. These reforms should be formalized through university policy to ensure sustainable implementation and equitable access for all learners.

While this study highlights the Blended Phonics Approach's effectiveness, its findings are limited by the short intervention period and the homogeneous sample of first-year students at a single university, which may not account for broader sociolinguistic diversity. Future longitudinal research should explore how students' linguistic backgrounds (e.g., Rumi vs. non-Rumi users) and cultural attitudes toward English influence long-term outcomes. For instance, does phonics instruction reduce resistance to English among students who associate it with linguistic imperialism? Additionally, comparative studies across regions with different language policies could reveal how macro-level sociolinguistic factors shape phonics adoption. A mixed-methods approach-tracking both proficiency metrics and qualitative shifts in learners' language attitudes and identities-would provide deeper insights. Such research could inform more inclusive, context-sensitive adaptations of the Blended Phonics Approach, ensuring it meets the needs of diverse student populations while respecting local linguistic ecosystems.

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