

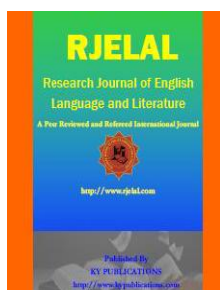


## THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHING SIGHT WORDS AND PHONICS SIMULTANEOUSLY ON IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION OF IRANIAN ELEMENTARY EFL LEARNERS: WITH A FOCUS ON GENDER

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### ABSTRACT

The present article explores the influence of teaching sight words and phonics simultaneously on improving the reading comprehension of Iranian elementary learners: with a focus on gender. There are a number of approaches to improve reading comprehension, including improving one's vocabulary and reading strategies. This study investigates that whether teaching phonics and sight words simultaneously; which both are significant in recognition of words, leads to proficient reading or in another word the ability to recognize the words quickly and effortlessly. In order to examine the influence of these strategies; phonics and sight words, on elementary learners, a total of 180 elementary in third and fourth grade students in a private English institute in Iran, both male and female take KET Starter Exam reading and writing test as their pretest and 120 homogeneous students are chosen. This group is divided into two sub groups, i.e., 60 in experimental group receiving the required treatment and 60 in control group without that. In 10 sessions 6 reading comprehension texts from Oxford Primary Skills-Reading and Writing are taught on the basis of treatment. Students will take posttest consisting of 4 piloted reading comprehension texts from Oxford Primary Skills-Reading and Writing. The data will be analyzed using two-way ANOVA which assume normality of the data and homogeneity of the variances of groups. The posttest scores of experimental group indicates that the treatment can improve the reading skills of ESL students and also comparing the posttest scores of two groups of male and female in experimental group doesn't indicate significant difference between male and female subjects' means on posttest. The data illustrates that the usage of phonics and sight words teaching strategies simultaneously in a reading class is supportive and improving.

**Key words:** phonics, sight words, whole word, lexical route, dual route

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### INTRODUCTION

Because of increasing day to day quick growth of technology in Iran and considerable Iranian interests in learning English as an international language, it is essential to apply appropriate strategies to facilitate

the process of learning English. Nowadays most Iranian parents send their children to different English institutes. They even prefer bilingual kindergarten to others. On the other hand, in most of the gifted students schools in Iran, students are

encouraged to do variable research based on their school subjects, in a way that in upper grades, students' proficiency in English is necessary. Since reading plays a fundamental role in language, this study investigates different valuable reading strategies. As far as an elementary learner is concerned, teaching reading becomes more complicated. Most of the teachers around the world are concerned about their students reading ability. Fortunately in recent years, most of the Iranian principals and English teachers in English Institutes eagerly try to take advantage of the newest teaching methods to improve the quality of teaching in ESL classes. In spite of these struggles; some of the learners still have numerous problems with reading comprehension.

Recent studies show that knowing alphabet (phonics) can improve children's learning reading comprehension. Lack of phonemic awareness and decoding strategies lead to poor reading comprehension. Many researchers have indicated that phonemic awareness and phonetics are fundamental for reading (Admos, 1994; Ehri, 2004; Torgesen et al., 2001). Decoding or phonological recoding is one way, with which a reader can sound out and blend graphemes in to phoneme which is a bottom-up process, and put more letters together to make words. The process of producing language reading involves taking linguistic information through some stages which is called levels of representation (John Field, 2002).

One of the most common reading strategies starts with teaching alphabets and sounds through Phonics. Phonics is based on a lower level process. Phonics is one the most popular and important method of teaching sounds. Those learners whose training is on the basis of phonics are so confident, because they've learned the sounds of letters completely and they are able to sound out unfamiliar words or they know how to spell new words. In spite of these advantageous, it can be so complicated and difficult to learn for some learners.

Another interesting strategy by which reading can be increasingly improved is sight words.

In 1948 sight words were defined by Dr. Edward Dolch and Edward Fry (1948). He used the pictorial sight words flash cards in order to improve

school children's reading skills. The learners practice with flash cards on which the word with its picture has been printed. Using sight words by students gradually make confidence in reading quickly and fluently (Dolch 1948). In classrooms across America, the development of sight word recognition continues to be a top priority when instructing beginning readers. Sight word practice is based on the higher level process. Despite its usefulness, it was not enough, because it was helpful for subjective readers who use a whole word as a visual symbol which is called lexical route. (John Field, 2002) Higher level process deals with inferring meaning which is not exactly stated in the text. It is a controlled process and depends on the working memory a lot. This process is a top-down process (context and whole words) which is knowledge-driven. In this process a reader can recognize the words easily and fluently. Although, using sight words in elementary levels seems practical but it considerably based on memorization which is not suitable for some learners.

In spite of the fact that both phonics and sight words are great methods in teaching sounds of letters, individually they are not able to improve learner's reading skills completely, and some

Learners can't be satisfied with. On the other hand some learners are objective and the others are subjective that each one need specific teaching strategies to achieve the appropriate degree of reading. Moreover, there are differences between male and female in reading comprehension (Moyar Stephanei, 2010) that should be considered. In regard to these cases, applying different strategies is necessary and should not be restricted to one. (Wiley Blevin, 2014) Present study is an attempt to solve these problems and make little successful readers who can read easily and fluently and comprehend the meaning well.

### **1.1.Statement of the Problem**

In spite of the usage of correct method of teaching phonics and vocabulary, some of the students not only have problem with reading simple words but also can't comprehend some of the meaning of words. It is obvious that when someone can't read correctly he won't be able to understand the meaning too. According to Jennie Herron

study(2008), it seems that because of using traditional phonics instruction which mostly concentrate on decoding or phonological recoding in teaching reading skills some of the students aren't able to read fluently and correctly and the method should be changed. The usage of suitable visual aids such as pictorial stimuli with which a reader becomes able to guess the meaning of each word can be so helpful(Alice Omaggio,1979) ,but sometimes ESL students are confronted with the texts without any pictures and need to elicit the meaning from the content of the text and to achieve this , at first one should be able to read each words and sentences correctly and then understand the meaning.

In regard to gender differences in reading based on the study by Moyar Stephanei(2010) teacher's teaching methods can influence on both females and males females. In a similar study, females are more successful in reading comprehension than male (Keshavarz. & Ashtarian, 2008) and females are more global and are able to guess meaning from context while males are more analytic. (Brudice, 2009). In another study of this kind boys need to be motivated to read and they also need to use visual stimulation. According to some research boys take a more phonological approach to reading than girls. (Rhona S. Johnston ; Sarah McGeown & Joyce E. Watson)

Decoding or phonological recoding is a lower level process which is more suitable for objective readers, whereas there are some subjective readers in the class too, who show more success with higher level process which deals with Whole Word Approach. In addition recognizing sight words automatically is said to be advantageous for beginning readers because many of these words have unusual spelling patterns, cannot be sounded out using basic phonics knowledge and cannot be represented using pictures. In order to achieve a situation in which most of the beginning readers benefit and improve their reading comprehension skills ,phonics and sight words can be taught simultaneously , that the latter deals with lower level process and the former refers to higher level process.

### **1.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Concerning the problem stated above, the following research questions are projected:

- Q1: Do teaching phonics and sight words simultaneously have any significant influence on improving reading comprehension of elementary EFL learners?
- Q2: If the answer to question 1 is yes which gender benefits more?

Based on the research questions mentioned above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H<sub>0</sub>1: Teaching phonics and sight words simultaneously do not have any influence on improving reading comprehension of Iranian elementary EFL learners
- H2: Teaching Phonics and sight words simultaneously have more influence on male Iranian EFL learners than female ones.

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

Since reading correctly is the first step to recognize a word and then finding out the meaning and this critical phase should be done as fast as possible, so it is so important to investigate the useful strategies for different readers to Improve their reading skills that lead to better reading comprehension. According to Wiley Blevins(2014) a teacher should not be limited to one method in the class. Few studies have investigated the influence of teaching sight words and phonics simultaneously on reading comprehension of learners. This research has conducted based on phonics method and also Dolch sight words which both have great influence on ESL reading comprehension of students . For better reading comprehension, phonics and sight words can be taught simultaneously in ESL classes .So the purpose of the study is to investigate the Influence of Teaching Sight Words and Phonics Simultaneously on Improving Reading Comprehension of Iranian Elementary EFL learners who can be subjective or objective readers with a Focus on Gender.

### **1.4. Significant of the Study**

This research focused on the investigating of the strategies that lead to better reading comprehension that consist of phonics and sight words. Phonics as the method of teaching reading skills to children, is so popular all around the world

.In addition, various studies have been done to investigate the incredible role of teaching sight words. After combination of these methods; phonics and sight words, learner's performance in the course can be significant. So the result of this research can be used by second language teachers in ESL classrooms where the learners need to be supported by teachers to read correctly and fluently. The result of this study can also be used as a teacher's guide with which a teacher will be able to follow step by step teaching reading strategies.

#### Review of Literature

According to Scarborough (2001), reading is a kind of complicated and multifaceted skill which based on two main branches. The first one is language comprehension that is increasingly strategic

And is divided in to five subgroups :

- 1.Back ground knowledge
- 2.vocabulary knowledge
- 3.Language Structures
- 4.Verbal Reasoning
- 5.Literacy knowledge

The second branch is word recognition and consists of three subgroups:

- 1.Phone Awareness
- 2.Decoding and Spelling
- 3.Sight Recognition

This study deals with Iranian 8 to 10 year – old elementary learners who has recently attended English classes and have limited range of knowledge of structures, vocabulary and grammar. So with respect to the level of the learners the focus on the word recognition should be more. Phone awareness can be achieved by phonics(Admos, 1994; Ehri, 2004; Torgesen et al., 2001) .

Decoding and spelling are based on the degree of awareness. By means of sight words practice (pictorial flashcards of letters and words, repetition and reading aloud) sight recognition increases and working memory can be engaged more so, the learner can decode the sound easier and read the words faster. On the other hand, sight words flash cards can improve the knowledge of learner's vocabulary. In regard to these useful results, teachers can take advantage of both methods, Phonics and sight words simultaneously.

#### • *Sight Words*

Sight words, defined by Dr. Edward Dolch and Edward Fry (1948), can be found for several times in a text. Using Dolch sight words can be helpful for the elementary learners who want to facilitate their reading. Dolch has a list of the most frequent words and children can memorize them gradually. A number of sight word lists have been compiled and published; among the most popular are the Dolch sight words. Sight words can be taught by practicing in the class and at home, repetition, flash cards, story and play (using labeled pictures), class environment (labeled objects in the class), word walls, and games, practicing sound and letters, different family activities.

#### 1.2. Whole Word Approach

It means teaching the word as if it was one of the letters. In order to use this approach Some valuable whole word strategies consist of repetition, listening, saying sight words and playing game. Its process can be started by daily using flash cards of words and their pictures, singing song related song related to that sight words and home practice. Sight words can lead to proficient reading and improve elementary children reading comprehension that has been shown by diagram 1.

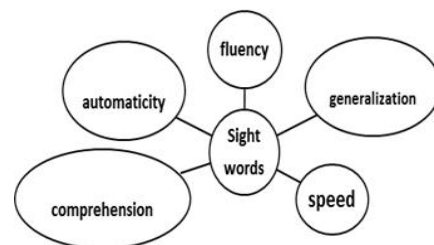


Diagram 1

#### 1.3. Phonics

Phonics is the method of teaching reading skills to children and it focuses on the undivided sounds of letters and blending them together and at last blends them to make a word. Research shows that sounds and letters should be practiced together. The advantageous of phonics has been shown by diagram 2. Reading is a complicated task. The process of reading consists of decoding the pronunciation of words and determining their meaning. Word decoding is a cognitive task and doesn't occupy working memory a lot, but it can be difficult especially for early readers. But sight words

can be recognized immediately and help learners to read easily and fluently. It can increase the speed of reading because word decoding is eliminated. The advantageous of phonics has been shown by diagram 2.

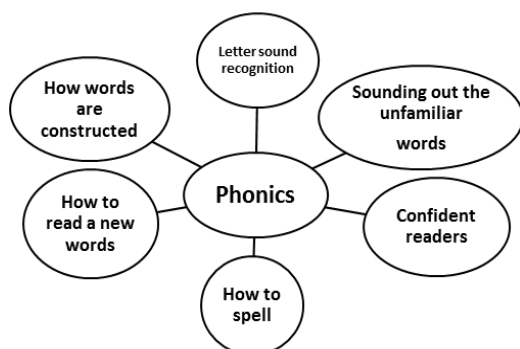


Diagram 2

#### 1.4. What If Both Phonics And Whole Language Learning Are Used Simultaneously?

Since young learner's ability for reading is different, in other words there are different types of readers; some of them use a whole word as a visual symbol which is called lexical route. These readers are subjective readers. It seems a faster way of reading. Subjective readers use counter clock wise way of learning meaning. This perceptual learning starts from Visual to meaning (John Field, 2002).

According to John Field, 2002 decoding system based on phonology is called a sub-lexical route. The phonology is in the form of GPC shows the great relationship between graphemes (units of writing) and phonemes. All the words can be interpreted using Grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC) rules. These readers are called objective readers. In a class room that there are different kinds of readers, a teacher has a great responsibility to deal with all of them and use a suitable method of teaching to improve both subjective and objective readers' reading ability. The best way of improving the reading process can be dual route which consists of both lexical route and sub-lexical route strategies to help and support different learners. In other words the usage of lexical route and sub-lexical route at the same can be efficient, furthermore shifting between strategies can be much more significant. (Sanabria Díaz G; Torres Mdel R; Iglesias J, et al., 2009)

## Methodology

### 1.1. Participants

A total of 180 elementary in third and fourth grade students in a private English institute in Iran, both male and female take KET Starter Exam reading and writing test, 120 homogeneous students are chosen. This group is divided into two sub groups, i.e., 60 female and male in experimental group receiving the required treatment and 60 female and male in control group without that.

### 1.2. Instrumentation

KET- beginners reading and writing test was administered as the pretest to choose 120 homogeneous students. KET Starter Exam is the first of three English language tests; Starters, Movers and Flyers, for young learners from Cambridge English Language Assessment. Reading and writing part of the test is chosen on paper, consists of 20 questions. It takes about 30 minutes. It consists of multiple choice, sentence completion and reading comprehension questions. In 10 sessions; each takes 1 hour and 30 minutes, 6 reading comprehension texts from Oxford Primary Skills-Reading and Writing 1 which is published by Oxford university press (2009) are taught. These 6 units are suitable for beginners and each unit is taught per one session. After each unit there are some useful exercises to examine whether students have comprehended or not. Moreover, teacher and student's flash cards and posters are also used in order to practice more.

Students will take posttest consisting of 4 piloted reading comprehension texts from Oxford Primary Skills-Reading and Writing 1, that takes 20 minutes.

### 1.3. Procedures

During 10 sessions, both groups are taught 6 beginners reading texts. In experimental group the reading texts are taught by phonics and sight words method but the other group are taught by traditional method based on phonetic method which is decoding or phonological recoding. In experimental group class who were 60 with different gender, new words are taught by phonics instructions. Moreover, pictorial sight words of each word are practiced and reviewed every session. In this class, the teacher helps students to read faster

and also to understand the meaning of the words. At first teacher shows each of the sight word flashcard which is included in the new text and asks students to look at its picture (if it has) and repeat the word after the teacher for several times (higher level process). Then teacher writes the word on the board and pronounces it and uses phonics instructions (decoding or lower level process). Students repeat that word again. The teacher asks each of the students to read it from the board or their own sight words flashcards loudly. Then the students open their books and start reading the story individually or even in a group. After that the teacher asks some questions from the text to check the degree of their comprehension.

**1.4. Results and Discussion**

This study is an attempt to investigate the effects of teaching sight word and phonics simultaneously on male and female Iranian primary students' reading comprehension. To achieve these

goals the following research questions were posed:

- Q1: Do teaching phonics and sight words simultaneously have any influence on improving reading comprehension of Iranian elementary learners?
- Q2: If the answer to question 1 is yes which gender benefits more?

The data were analyzed using two-way ANOVA which assume normality of the data and homogeneity of the variances of groups. As displayed in Table 1, the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors were within the ranges of +/- 1.96; hence normality of the data. (Table 1) The assumption of homogeneity of variances will be discussed when reporting the results of two-way ANOVA; although as noted by Bachman (2005), Field (2013) and Pallant (2011) there is no need to worry about the violation of this assumption if groups' sizes are equal; as is the case in this study.

**Table 1.** Testing normality assumptions

Group	Gender		N	Skewness			Kurtosis		
				Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Experimental	Male	Pretest	30	-.209	.427	-0.49	-.455	.833	-0.55
		Posttest	30	-.675	.427	-1.58	-1.085	.833	-1.30
	Female	Pretest	30	-.594	.427	-1.39	-.913	.833	-1.10
		Posttest	30	-.807	.427	-1.89	.079	.833	0.09
Control	Male	Pretest	30	-.234	.427	-0.55	-.425	.833	-0.51
		Posttest	30	-.466	.427	-1.09	.690	.833	0.83
	Female	Pretest	30	-.674	.427	-1.58	-.472	.833	-0.57
		Posttest	30	-.062	.427	-0.15	.597	.833	0.72

**Pretesting Phase of Study**

During the pretesting phase of this study, the target instrument to be used in this research was administered to 180 subjects. The objective was twofold; to select 120 homogenous subjects to participate in the main study, and also to measure

the reliability of the instrument. Based on the mean of 14.12 plus and minus one standard deviation of 4.03; 120 subjects were selected for the main study. The KR-21 reliability index for the piloting test was .78. (Table 2)

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics; piloting test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
PreN180	180	14.12	4.032	16.253
KR-21	.78			

A two-way ANOVA was run to compare the male and female experimental and control groups' means on the pretest in order to homogenize them in terms of their reading ability prior to the main

study. Before discussing the two-way ANOVA results it should be mentioned that the groups did not enjoy homogenous variances on the reading test. As displayed in Table 3 the Levene's F-value (F (3, 116) =

16.46,  $p = .000$ ) was significant. However; there is no need to worry about the violation of this assumption when sample sizes are equal.(Table 3)

**Table 3.** Levene's test of equality of error variances

F	df1	df2	Sig.
16.460	3	116	.000

As displayed in Table 4 the experimental ( $M = 9.91$ ,  $SE = .23$ ) and control ( $M = 9.80$ ,  $SE = .23$ ) groups had almost the same means on the reading test.(Table 4)

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics, pretest of reading test by group

Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental	9.917	.232	9.456	10.377
Control	9.800	.232	9.340	10.260

Based on the results displayed in Table 5 ( $F(1, 116) = .126$ ,  $p = .723$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .001$  representing a weak effect size) it can be concluded that there was not any significant between experimental and control groups' means on the pretest reading test. Thus it can be claimed that the two groups were homogenous in terms of their reading ability prior to the administration of the treatment.(Table 5)

**Table 5.** Tests of between-subjects effects, pretest of reading test by groups and gender

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Group	.408	1	.408	.126	.723	.001
Gender	4.408	1	4.408	1.361	.246	.012
Group * Gender	.008	1	.008	.003	.960	.000
Error	375.767	116	3.239			
Total	12043.000	120				

As displayed in Table 6 the male ( $M = 10.05$ ,  $SE = .23$ ) and female subjects ( $M = 9.66$ ,  $SE = .23$ ) had almost the same means on the reading test.(Table 6)

**Table 6.** Descriptive statistics, pretest of reading test by gender

Gender	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male	10.050	.232	9.590	10.510
Female	9.667	.232	9.206	10.127

Based on the results displayed in Table 5 ( $F(1, 116) = 1.36$ ,  $p = .246$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .012$  representing a weak effect size) it can be concluded that there was not any significant difference between male and female subjects' means on the reading test. Thus it can be claimed that they were homogenous in terms of their reading ability prior to the main study.

And finally there was not any significant interaction between the groups and gender on the reading test ( $F(1, 116) = .003$ ,  $p = .960$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .000$  representing a weak effect size) (Table 7). As displayed in Table 7 and Figure 1 the experimental group had higher means than the control group irrespective of their gender. (Table 7, Figure 1)

**Table 7.** Interaction between gender and groups; pretest of reading

Group	Gender	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental	Male	10.100	.329	9.449	10.751
	Female	9.733	.329	9.082	10.384

Control	Male	10.000	329.	9.349	10.651
	Female	9.600	329.	8.949	10.251

**Research Questions**

This study explores the following two research questions:

Q1: Do teaching phonics and sight words simultaneously have any influence on improving reading comprehension of elementary Iranian learners?

Q2: If the answer to question 1 is yes which gender benefits more?

A two-way ANOVA was run to compare the male and female experimental and control groups' means on the posttest of reading in order to probe the research questions posed in this study. Before discussing the two-way ANOVA results it should be

mentioned that the groups did not enjoy homogenous variances on the reading test. As displayed in Table 8 the Levene's F-value ( $F(3, 116) = 17.55, p = .000$ ) was significant. However; there is no need to worry about the violation of this assumption when sample sizes are equal.(Table 8)

Table 8. Levene's test of equality of error variances

F	df1	df2	.Sig
17.559	3	116	000.

As displayed in Table 9 the experimental group ( $M = 46.18, SE = .68$ ) had a higher mean than the control ( $M = 40.81, SE = .68$ ) group on the posttest of reading test.(Table 9)

Table 9. Descriptive statistics, posttest of reading test by group

Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental	46.183	.686.	44.824	47.543
Control	40.817	.686.	39.457	42.176

Based on the results displayed in Table 10 ( $F(1, 116) = 30.57, p = .000$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .209$  representing a large effect size) it can be concluded that there was a significant difference experimental and control groups' means on the posttest reading test. Thus the

first null-hypothesis was rejected. The experimental group after receiving phonics and sight words simultaneously; significantly outperformed the control group on the posttest of reading

Table 10. Tests of between-subjects effects, posttest of reading test by groups and gender

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	.Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Group	864.033	1	864.033	30.573	000.	.209.
Gender	7.500	1	7.500	265.	607.	002.
Gender *Group	48.133	1	48.133	1.703	194.	014.
Error	3278.333	116	28.261			
Total	231268.000	120				

As displayed in Table 10 and Table 11; the male ( $M = 43.25, SE = .68$ ) and female subjects ( $M = 43.75, SE = .68$ ) did not had significantly different ( $F(1, 116) =$

$.265, p = .607$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$  representing a weak effect size) means on the posttest of reading test. (Table 11)

Table 11. Descriptive statistics, posttest of reading test by gender

Gender	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male	43.250	.686.	41.891	44.609
Female	43.750	.686.	42.391	45.109

As displayed in Table 12 the experimental group – both male and female – had higher means than the

control group. (Table 12)



**Table 12.** Interaction between gender and groups; posttest of reading

Group	Gender	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental	Male	45.300	971.	43.378	47.222
	Female	47.067	971.	45.144	48.989
Control	Male	41.200	971.	39.278	43.122
	Female	40.433	971.	38.511	42.356

The results of simple effect analysis (Field 2013) (Table 13) indicated that;

A: There was not any significant difference between male (M = 45.30) and female (M = 47.06) groups' means in the experimental group (MD = 1.76, p = .201).

B: There was not any significant difference between

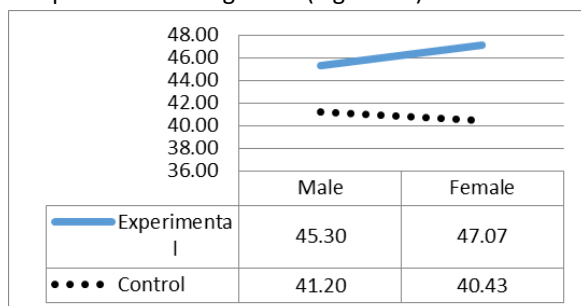
male (M = 41.20) and female (M = 40.43) groups' means in the control group (MD = .767, p = .578).

Based on these results it can be concluded that the second hypothesis **was rejected**. None of the two methods had any significant effect on the improvement of the reading comprehension of male and female subjects. (Table 13)

**Table 13.** Pairwise comparisons; Posttest of reading by gender and group

Gender	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental	Male	Female	1.767-	1.373	201.	4.485-	952.
	Female	Male	1.767	1.373	201.	952.-	4.485
Control	Male	Female	767.	1.373	578.	1.952-	3.485
	Female	Male	767.-	1.373	578.	3.485-	1.952

It should be noted that each comparison has appeared twice; male experimental vs. control; then male control vs. experimental. That is why half the mean differences were negative. And finally there was not any a significant interaction between the groups and gender on the reading test (F (1, 116) = 1.703, p = .194; partial  $\eta^2 = .014$  representing a weak effect size) (Table 10), i.e. the experimental group had higher means than the control group irrespective of their gender.(Figured 2)



**Figure 2:** Posttest of reading test by gender by group

### Construct Validity

A factor analysis was run to probe the underlying constructs of the pretest and posttest of reading. It should be mentioned that the assumption of sampling adequacy was met. As displayed in Table 13 the KMO index of .500 was equal to the minimum acceptable criterion of .50.(Table 14)

The Bartlett's test was significant ( = p ,4.22 = (1) <sup>2</sup>χ<sub>ton did xirtam notialerroc eht taht gntiacidni (000.</sub>

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The SPSS extracted one factor which accounted for 59.39 percent of the total variance (Table 15).

**Table 14.** KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	500.
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square 4.223
	df 1
	Sig .040.

Table 15. Total variance explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.188	59.395	59.395	1.188	59.395	59.395
3	.812	40.605	100.000			

As displayed in Table 16 the pretest and posttest of reading loaded on the only extracted factor which can be labeled as "reading ability" factor.(Table 16)

Table 16. Component matrix

	Component 1
Posttest	771.
Pretest	771.

### Conclusion

This paper investigated the influence of teaching sight words and phonics simultaneously on improving the reading comprehension of Iranian elementary learners: with a focus on gender. A total of 180 elementary students took Ket-beginners reading and writing test as their pretest and 120 homogeneous different genders were chosen, from which 60 in control group without treatment and 60 in experimental group who in 10 sessions received treatment included 6 reading comprehension texts from Oxford Primary Skills-Reading. During these 10 sessions sight words and Phonics were taught simultaneously. The findings supported the idea that teaching sight words and phonics simultaneously can improve young learners' reading comprehension. Moreover, the second research hypothesis was rejected and the data illustrated that teaching sight words and phonics at the same time, have the same effect on elementary children's reading comprehension with different gender.

The usage of different strategies in teaching ESL classroom provides the learners with various opportunity of learning. Different kinds of readers regardless of their gender can improve their reading skills. By using different methods and breaking the chain of traditional laborious methods the process of reading will be enjoyable and easy and the number of students who say : " I won't go to that class!" will decrease. Although in this study some influential teaching strategies on reading have been examined,

there is a need to investigate other effective elements which can be crucial in reading improvement such as parental support at home and the degree of this monitoring.

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