

## GLOBAL READING - (NON)CONVENTIONAL MODEL OF READING

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### Abstract

Reading as a complex process is presented as an important factor for the proper organization of the general activity of the individual, and especially for his intellectual development. As a rather complicated activity, reading includes different psychological, social-ecological, as well as physical viewpoints. This "hitting" of the alphabetic code to determine the words and the construction of meaning from them, in an organized and systematized form, begins to develop in the first developmental cycle. From the phonetic awareness that helps to decode the word, students create a "visual dictionary". This visual image facilitates "seeing" and matching words to create meaning.

Similar to the teaching of the spoken language that is presented as a complete form, and not with analysis and synthesis, the graphic representation of the read word is visualized in consciousness as an image, during which the meaning of the word also appears reflexively. Given that 65% of the population are visual learners, today the use of the whole word method is an unpretentious necessity. The whole word method stems from the premise that students living in this century are surrounded by technology and are in constant contact with written material. The basic unit of reading is the word, the graphic image of which is transmitted as a picture, so television announcements, computers, food labels, street advertising, and books are great causes and triggers of early literacy.

Internet providers use the universality of symbols to make reading easy for everyone, including children who are in constant contact with this medium. Technology gives them the ability to read without knowing the letters, so they show awareness of the displayed symbols through computer tools. Although the Albanian language has a morphological structure and phonetic spelling, the use of this alternative model of reading is encountered more and more in school practice every day due to the need and many benefits which will be elaborated below in the paper. 50 children aged 6 years with different demographic characteristics were checked. The same approach is the checking of the skill to read words with the whole word and phonological method. The obtained results were processed with the t-test statistical method, results which allowed the findings presented which show a very pronounced difference.

*Keywords: reading, whole word reading, whole word method, (non)conventional model.*

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### 1. Introduction

The language approach continues to be a very important pedagogical preoccupation in early childhood education. Many debates still take place on the issue of applying the most profitable method that will enable students to read and write, and there is no clear answer. Many linguistic philosophy researchers cultivate the belief that reading is a progressive, active, and interactive process. Therefore, they declare that the language as a whole should not be broken down to be understood. It, the language, is interpreted with words that are related in context.

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Based on the idea that language is learned as a whole, researchers think that even words as the basic unit of reading should be perceived as pictures by readers instead of being broken down into syllables or letters into smaller units. Therefore, the most challenging issue today is to ascertain whether the poor results of the tests conducted at the national level are a reliable sign of the failure of literacy instruction practices and curricula, or whether the whole-word method approach is presented as a truly effective strategy that should be used in classrooms today. These dilemmas represent the main focus of the present study. How to approach these questions is essential to the organization and scope of the research, which presents a theoretical part of the notions, beliefs, and values, but does not overlook the practice that is carried out in the classrooms to support comprehensive approaches to enable early literacy.

## 2. Literature Review

*2.1. New literacy configuration:* The earliest forms of written communication were found in southern Mesopotamia in the 3400s BC in an area called Sumer near the Persian Gulf. However, the first alphabetic system with characteristic signs for consonants and vowels was born in the time of the ancient Greeks (750 BC) according to the anthropologist Jack. The notion of literacy has been encountered since 1880-1885. Since that time, literacy as a form of transmission and storage of thoughts has developed into one of the basic tools of education and is one of the most important constituent segments of modern society. This development was due to the beginning of the transfer of knowledge and information to future generations from oral to written form.

Since then, there have still been attempts to define the notion of literacy that would have covered all the attributes and functions of the same. While traditionally literacy has been interpreted as the ability to write, read, and do arithmetic, in the modern world literacy has expanded to include the ability to use language, computers, images, and other basic tools to understand and receive useful knowledge. The many attempts to define it generally include the ability to *read and write*. To expand and clarify the meaning, the term specific includes *competence and knowledge in a particular field*.

From the wide range of definitions given, we single out the integrated approach to the term literacy that successfully fits into the comprehensive concept of literacy offered by UNESCO. In it, this concept is clarified as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and calculate, through the use of printed and written materials related to different contexts. Literacy encompasses a continuum of learning to enable individuals to achieve their goals, develop their knowledge and potential, and contribute fully to their community and wider society.

In an attempt to create narrower and more generic specifications that can encompass a whole range of attributes of the term, many definitions of literacy focus on the ability to read and write at an appropriate level. Blake and Hanley try to create a narrow specification of behaviors that show that the attribute of literacy is accepted as one of the main educational goals of compulsory education. It refers to the ability to read and write at an appropriate level of fluency (Blake, 1995), although there is no generally accepted definition of what "adequate" means or no universal standard for literacy (Lawton, 1996).

The term literacy is often interpreted as a completed literacy process, but more widely - as an educational level or culture acquired from a certain field (Adamçeska, 1997). Referring to examples from the pedagogical literature, the most common meaning of literacy is related to cognitive skills for reading and writing, while the terminology critical literacy, thinking, or awareness is widely used to define, explain, and clarify this concept.

The mastery of critical literacy skills is essential as it is envisioned as the conduct of life, school, and literacy experiences, constructed in the frameworks of science, art, and literature, and disseminated throughout schooling and life. Mackay's statement that literacy is not a set of fixed skills (Mackey, 2004) reflects the claim that he describes literacy as a historical process.

Literacy changes in parallel with changes in society and appears as a non-static concept. For literacy, Florence's summary principles are:

- Literacy is an action. Literacy is not a generalized skill of the person who possesses it (or does not possess it). Literacy is the set of activities and transitions that people use to read and write for personal and social purposes.
- Literacy is a movement within the discourse of practice. When people engage in the literacy process, they are doing much more than encoding or producing text. Like any social practice, it has a history with a set of social expectations and conventions.
- Literacy acquisition depends on knowledge of social conventions and individual problem-solving skills.
- The new "foundation" must begin with expressive and rhetorical practice. From this perspective, what is essential is the "how-to" knowledge that goes by various names—process plans, rhetorical or problem-solving strategies, and critical thinking skills—but essentially they are action plans for performing an act. In this rhetorical tradition, the basic skills in the literacy process are the skills needed to read situations; plan, organize, review; build and negotiate; used and adapted conventions; and discover what new discourses you expect and how to introduce them.
- Literacy opens the door to metacognitive and social awareness. In other words, literacy as a social and cognitive act creates several opportunities for strategic thinking and reflection.

In this context, this complex cognitive task welcomes diverse theoretical models that will aim to explain the multifaceted characteristics that this multifaceted process has in its nature. According to a comprehensive study by the National Reading Panel, effective reading instruction directly affects children's comprehension skills and overall literacy levels. A critical point from their research is that different theoretical models of reading may have different impacts on the development of children's reading skills (Main, 2023). So what would have been the way for teachers to promote children's cognitive processing and literacy?

*2.2. The whole word method:* It begins in the 18th century by Nicholas Adam, and crosses the borders of Europe. It spread in the countries with etymological spelling, in England, France, Belgium and today in America. In the speech of the English language, it is found as a look and say method. Since it is a base in whole words, it is often found as the method of whole words. This designation is related to the normal word method, so it is considered inappropriate because in essence the whole word method and the normal word method are different. The name known as global method fully summarizes the character of the method.

Disputes over the name were not the only ones. Great discussions and dilemmas are evident about the placement of this method in synthetic or analytical methods. There are also such authors who separate this method from all groups, giving it a place as a group in itself. Whole word reading is recognized as the first stage that helps and acts with the aim of strengthening motivation, interest and ability to read. Whole word reading is the stage on which reading is based. Based on cognitive psychology, the whole language learning model is a knowledge-based philosophy of child development (Maus, 2017).

According to Frith, children acquire and develop the ability to recognize the printed letters of the most frequent words by characteristics of shape, color, and size. When children are faced with the golden "M" of McDonald's they want to eat the "Happy Meal" (Frith, 1980). At this stage, children accept the meaning of the symbol as a coded message. The whole word method stems from the assumption that students living in this century are surrounded by technology

and are in constant contact with written material. The basic unit of reading is the word, the graphic image of which is transmitted as a picture, so television announcements, computers, food labels, street advertising, and books are great causes and triggers of early literacy.

Internet providers apply the universality of symbols to facilitate access to reading by all. Young children are experts in navigating this medium (Kremin, 2017). Authentic literature fosters curiosity and motivation in children and increases students' interest and learning in the literacy process. Technology gives them the ability to read without knowing the letters, so they show awareness of the displayed symbols through computer tools. A significant factor influencing the rapid spread of this method is the influence of the theory of Gestalt psychology. Proponents of this theory justify the view by saying that learning is a process of acquiring the whole such as a global view of the phenomena and occurrences faced by the subject (Potkonjak, 1989).

The "whole" theory predicts that identifying the parts separately loses their identity, so reading should be studied as a unified process. In this case, the word is not divided into its elements, but through repetition enters consciousness as a whole with a certain meaning. Reading begins with memorizing words and sentences (Beci, 2006). In fact, the child learns to speak with complete forms of speech, not with analysis and synthesis, which should certainly be taken into account when introducing students to the reading process (Delçeva-Dizdareviq, 2003). This means that during reading, the graphic presentation of the read word is visualized in consciousness as a picture, during which the meaning of the word also appears reflexively.

Another very important factor that affects the implementation of this method is dictated by the nature of languages. Languages that are etymological in nature benefit the most from this method. In these languages, words do not change form according to gender, number, or case (Vejnaht, 1970). The same author presents the reasoning that the reading of the letters in the composition of different words differs. There is a big difference between optical and acoustic analysis and synthesis. For this reason, it is necessary to memorize the words as a whole (Vejnaht, 1970). The detailed analysis of these attitudes shows the inevitability and importance of applying this method in countries with etymological spelling where most words are known and easily remembered.

The methodological procedure in writing with this method is similar, but not the same as that of normal words. While the method of normal words is characterized by the fact that the word is divided into constituent elements, the global method requires the memorization of the graphic image without further analysis. This method is also characterized by its variations. These variants depend on whether the starting point is a syllable, a text, a sentence, or the text as a whole. Regardless of which variation is chosen, the methodological procedure does not conflict with the application methodology.

As stated above, this method corresponds to languages in which words do not have suffixes which cause the change. But this does not mean that languages with a phonetic structure reject this procedure. In France it is used to encourage reading, initial impulse. The global method represents an economical approach to the organization of initial reading adapted to the students' prior knowledge, in which teaching is differentiated and individualized. Literacy is initially organized in such a way that the processing is accompanied by a picture under which the written word is located.

Once children have memorized the picture, it is removed to give them a chance to recall the word. This is the methodology that enables students to learn a certain vocabulary. The ability to recognize 50 to 100 words, according to Petkoska, will enable children to read short, simple texts, make sentences from learned words, and practice writing (Petkoska, 2008). Here the suspicion arises that in this method the properties of synthetic methods appear, because the learned words are synthesized into a whole, a sentence, and then into the text.

2.3. *Top-down approach:* Constructivist learning theory forms the basis of the global language approach, which is known as a concept-driven model or often considered a top-down paradigm.

Top-down processing refers to the use of background knowledge to understand the meaning of a message, as opposed to bottom-up processing which goes from language to meaning. Vygotsky's concept known as the Zone of Proximal Development which is based on social constructivism emphasizes the role of social interactions in cognitive development. The top-down approach allows adults to act by leading by example, then facilitating students to develop the ability to read on their own. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of language in cognitive development. Global method theory shares this perspective by promoting a holistic approach to reading that focuses on rich and meaningful language experiences.

The cooperative nature of learning in the top-down method reflects Vygotsky's idea that learning is an active and social process, and language is not only a means of communication but also a means of thinking and solving problems. In addition to Vygotsky's opinion that states that children learn best when what is to be learned is functional and relevant, suggesting that a global approach to learning to read would be the best way to promote understanding and enjoyment of language. written (Stone, 2007), are the statements of Piaget who considers learning a social process and that learning must come through interactions with the environment (Blumenfeld, 2007).

Theorists such as Goodman (Goodman, 1986) and Smith (Smith, 1971) view reading acquisition as a behavioral and developmental process, claiming that children learn to read and write from the moment they are allowed to practice before the instruction they receive in institutions. and formal programs. Goodman (Goodman, 1986) states that 60% of 3-year-olds and 80% of 5-year-olds can read frequently encountered words from familiar prints, such as cereal boxes, familiar logos, and the like. According to their attitudes, readers overcome the limitations they have with the recognition of letters, but by the ability to select the necessary signs that will allow the confirmation of the word, hearing (sound image), and intellect (image of meaning-concept).

They argue that readers involve prior experience in constructing meaning during reading and knowledge of the language by interpreting these skills as syntactic cues, which refer to sentence structure and semantic cues to convey meaning. As a result, readers' contributions to the text in terms of prior understanding of the topic and command of the language help them to predict what will be said next. Goodman (Goodman, 1986) calls the reading model whose flow starts from understanding to word identification "psycholinguistic guessing game", an attitude which has often been criticized on the grounds that the reader should rely on graphic knowledge in addition to assumptions. Although graphic information does not convey meaning on its own, it often appears to be more efficient than attempts to predict words based only on context and linguistic structure, especially when readers encounter words they have not encountered before.

2.4. *Bottom-up approach:* Numerous arguments from the proponents of the model who advocate the strategy that emphasizes the correspondence between sounds and letters led the polemic between those who emphasize word recognition and context clues to be called the Reading War, the catalyst of which is thought to be Horace Mann . Mann, around the middle of the 18th century, presented his position which opposed the bottom-up model. This war, fought for more than a century, still does not seem to find a powerful truce. Fluctuations in opinions about the most effective model caused (are) doubts and confusion among teachers.

In contrast to the model that started from the whole, the bottom-up approach starts from the recognition of letters, the groups that create them, words, and then step by step to the processing of whole texts. The bottom-up reading paradigm involves step-by-step mastery of reading components, with the goal of the student eventually becoming literate (Pearson, 2017).

This progression moving from individual units leads to the overall idea of the text which is built on the prior understanding of its smaller units. Based on an exhaustive review of 12 meta-analyses, Bowers emphasizes the efficacy of systematic phonics. He underlines that the failure to bring sufficient evidence to encourage the bottom-up approach does not mean that the opposite approach should be strongly supported, but rather, highlights the need to explore alternative approaches to reading instruction (Bowers, 2020). The dissecting nature of reading according to this model imposes a focus on sounds or phonemes, which affects the possibility of reading comprehension. Seidenberg emphasizes the importance of immediate recognition of words and phrases for fluent reading, as the opposite will cause reading to be developed as a process of sounding out (Seidenberg, 2017).

### **3. Methodology**

*3.1. Participant:* This study included 50 children aged 6 years enrolled in preschool institutions. In order to avoid different demographic and social influences that are likely to have a profound impact on the results, this sample included children from the city and the countryside, of Albanian and Macedonian ethnicity, of male and female gender, with different levels of parenting of education, and those who learn from educators with experience of up to 10 years and more. These variables were not studied in this research.

*3.2. Instrument and procedure:* The children underwent a test in which they were instructed to read words globally and according to the phonological method. In both variations, the same words were included, but in different orders that differed in terms of their visual appearance. They differed in background, color, direction (written horizontally and vertically), written if the first and last letters were correct and others were not, and similar. After obtaining the consent of the preschool institution and the parents, the children underwent the assessment of reading skills through two methods, global and phonological. During reading, the number of words read and the time within 1 min were recorded.

### **4. Results and discussion**

During the implementation of the tests, in parallel with the collected data, we also present the attitudes of the educators, impressions gained from the children's actions and various evidences that prove the current practice in preschool institutions. During the informal conversations, we managed to establish that the largest number of educators did not plan intentional activities to apply the global method. The students' actions inform that the teachers have no preference regarding literacy methods. They apply a mixture of methods and strategies unconscious of the effects that bring about the same.

The processed results from the students' tests gave data that show very high differences in the difference. From the results, reading ability in global form for one minute includes the maximum number of words read with 93.75% and a minimum of 31.25, according to the phonological method, reading ability for one minute expresses a maximum of 81.25% and a minimum of 12.25. However, the results presented above represent rare cases from the sample, therefore we cannot consider them important results. To see the real difference of the entire sample, we processed the results with the t-test statistical method, which gave a real insight into the very high difference. The processed results provide the following information:

P value and statistical significance:

The two-tailed P value is less than 0.0001

By conventional criteria, this difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant.

Confidence interval:

The mean of Global reading minus Group Two equals 18.32

95% confidence interval of this difference: From 14.24 to 22.40

Intermediate values used in calculations:

$t = 9.0145$

$df = 49$

standard error of difference = 2.032

**Table 1.** Results of groups

Group	Global reading	Phonological reading
Mean	32.26	13.94
SD	16.99	11.57
SEM	2.40	1.64
N	50	50

Values that are considered extremely statistically significant between two observed groups with approximately normal distribution with  $df=49$  and standard error of the difference of 2.032 are highly unlikely to have occurred by chance alone. The mean difference between groups is 18.32 and the 95% confidence interval for this difference is from 14.24 to 22.40. The interval in question supports the true population parameter and ensures the conclusion that the difference is significant, namely with a high value of  $t = 9.0145$ . This combination of a very low value, a confidence interval that excludes zero, and other intermediate values that support the observed difference indicate that the difference between the two groups is highly statistically significant.

## 5. Conclusion

From the review of the literature that examines this problem and the impressions created during the contact with the teacher, there is evidence that the language programs of our country include the teaching of phonics/decoding skills, in addition to the practice of applying the global method to children/students in preschool and beginning of the first year in elementary school. The analysis of the results from the children's testing provided evidence that students are more successful in reading words with the global method. The highlighted difference together with the findings of positive impacts from the many researches encountered in the literature, as well as those that we were able to collect from our research, allows us to promote the application of the global method.

The same later enables the understanding of more complicated texts as a result of the activation of mental representations, the connection with previous experience and prediction, which guide the reading process. However, here the limitations accompanying the global method are not excluded, therefore we conclude that practice should not isolate either approach. The combined and measured application of the two methods would have been a successful practice in the literacy process. In addition to the many debates regarding the benefits that both approaches bring, further analyses are needed to prove that the two methods are not "invulnerable" to each other, as well as the positive effect that emerges as a result of interweaving the global method with the phonological one.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the literature review and research findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Educators/teachers should include a balanced approach to literacy.
2. Educators/teachers should combine methods to adapt the possibilities of students.
3. Educators/teachers should apply a variety of strategies, techniques and materials during the literacy process.

4. Updating their knowledge about the benefits that the methods bring according to the latest scientific research concerning the development of society.
5. More in-depth multidisciplinary research related to the facilitation of literacy acquisition.

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