DE_JOURNAL (Dharmas Education Journal)
http://ejournal.undhari.ac.id/index.php/de_journal
E-ISSN : 2722-7839, P-ISSN : 2746-7732
Vol. 7 No. 2 (2026), 250-259

Implementation of the Jolly Phonics Method to Improve Understanding of English Letters and Sounds In KG 1 At Kiddos Preschool

Ni Nyoman Pande Pemi Rusma Urip[1], Ni Made Ayu Purnami[2], I Wayan Numertayasa[3]
e-mail: [1]pemi641@gmail.com, [2]madeayupurnami1995@gmail.com,
[3]numertayasawayan@gmail.com
[123]Faculty of Education, Markandeya University

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah metode Jolly Phonics dapat meningkatkan pemahaman siswa KG 1 terhadap huruf dan bunyi bahasa Inggris di Kiddos Preschool Gianyar, serta mendeskripsikan bagaimana proses pembelajaran dengan metode ini berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan rancangan Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) mengacu pada model Kemmis, McTaggart, dan Nixon (2014), yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus dengan masing-masing empat pertemuan. Subjek penelitian adalah 20 siswa berusia 4-5 tahun dari kelas Moonlight, dengan fokus pada bunyi huruf Group 1 (s, a, t, p, i, n). Data dikumpulkan melalui instrumen pre-test dan post-test berskor (skor maksimal 72) yang mencakup pengenalan bentuk huruf, produksi bunyi, dan respons Gerakan Jolly Phonics, dilengkapi observasi kualitatif terhadap pembentukan huruf. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan skor rata-rata kelas secara konsisten, dari 24,1 pada pre-test menjadi 39,55 pada akhir Siklus 1 dan 52,1 pada akhir Siklus 2, dengan persentase siswa kategori Baik atau lebih tinggi meningkat dari 0% menjadi 80% pada akhir Siklus 2, melampaui Kriteria Keberhasilan sebesar 75%. Temuan ini menunjukkan metode Jolly Phonics efektif meningkatkan pemahaman siswa terhadap bunyi huruf Group 1 bahasa Inggris serta keterampilan pembentukan hurufnya, melalui model pembelajaran multisensory yang semakin interaktif dan kolaboratif.

Kata Kunci: Jolly Phonics, Bunyi Huruf, Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini

Abstract

This study aimed to determine whether the Jolly Phonics method could improve KG 1 students' understanding of English letters and sounds at Kiddos Preschool Gianyar, and to describe how the learning process contributed to that improvement. This research used a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2014), comprising planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, over two cycles of four sessions each. The subjects were 20 students aged 4 to 5 yeard from Moonlight Class, focusing on Group 1 letter sounds (s, a, t, p, i, n). Data were collected through a scored pre-test and post-test instrument (maximum score 72) covering letter shape recognition, sound production, and Jolly Phonics action response, complemented by qualitative observation of letter formation. Results showed a consistent increase in class mean score, from 24,1 at the pre-test to 39,55 at the end of Cycle 1 and 52,1 at the end of Cycle 2, with students reaching the Good category or above rising from 0% to 80%, exceeding the 75% Criteria of Success. These findings indicate that Jolly Phonics was effective in improving students' understanding of Group 1 English letter sounds and letter formation skills, achieved through a progressively interactive multisensory learning model.

Keywords: Jolly Phonics, Letter Sounds, Early Childhood Education

Article Information: Received August 2026 | Accepted September 2026 | Published October 2026

Introduction

The mastery of letters and sounds serves as a crucial foundation for the development of early childhood literacy, particularly in the context of learning English as a foreign language. Research has consistently demonstrated that systematic phonics instruction, which involves explicitly teaching children the relationships between letters and their corresponding sounds, yields superior outcomes in reading and spelling compared to methods that predominantly focus on whole-word memorization (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001; Roberts et al., 2018). This systematic approach is especially effective for young children when it is integrated into tangible, playful, and repetitive experiences, rather than being presented through abstract drilling, as children at this developmental stage heavily depend on sensory and motor interactions to build new knowledge.

For Indonesian children learning English as a foreign language, the challenge is compounded by differences between the phonological systems of Bahasa Indonesia and English. Several English sounds have no direct equivalent in Bahasa Indonesia, and children frequently default to Indonesian pronunciation patterns when attempting to produce unfamiliar English sounds. This first-language interference can slow the acquisition of accurate letter-sound correspondence unless it is addressed through instruction that provides sufficiently rich and repeated exposure to the target sounds.

This issue is not confined to a particular preschool. The introduction of English at younger ages has become more prevalent in Indonesian early childhood education, largely due to parental demand and the growing acknowledgement of English as a global language. However, there is a notable lack of curricular guidance on teaching English literacy specifically tailored for four- and five-year-olds, as opposed to older primary school students, in many local contexts. In the absence of a structured phonics framework, educators often resort to the same rote, vocabulary-first methods used with older children, even though the cognitive and attentional characteristics of KG 1 children necessitate a substantiallydifferent instructional approach.

At Kiddos Preschool Gianyar, English instruction in the KG 1 class has been dominated by vocabulary repetition, flashcards, and conventional letter pronunciation, with minimal emphasis on the systematic relationship between letters and their sounds. Preliminary observations indicated that several children still struggled to recognize and pronounce letter sounds accurately, frequently confused similar sounds, and found simple blending challenging. Some children were able to identify letters visually but tended to name them by their alphabet name (e.g., “ef” for the letter F) rather than produce the corresponding sound, a pattern that is common when instruction emphasizes letter naming over letter-sound correspondence.

The Jolly Phonics method offers a multisensory approach that integrates auditory, visual, and kinesthetic elements through songs, actions, and interactive games, making it considered more suitable to the learning characteristics of young children than a conventional short story or song, so that children encode the sound through multiple sensory channels simultaneously rather than through auditory input alone. This multisensory principle is consistent with a broader body of research indicating that learning which engages more than one sensory modality tends to produce stronger encoding and retention than unisensory learning, particularly for young or developing learners (Shams & Seitz, 2008; Widyana et al., 2020).

Phonics instruction is typically categorized into two main approaches: synthetic and analytic. Synthetic phonics emphasizes teaching individual letter sounds initially, allowing children to blend these sounds into complete words. In contrast, analytic phonics starts with whole words and encourages children to dissect them into their constituent sounds. Jolly Phonics adopts a predominantly synthetic approach, introducing individual letter sounds in Group 1 prior to any blending exercises. This method is particularly advantageous for novice EFL learners, as it does not assume any prior knowledge of sight words in the target language. The synthetic foundation is a key reason why this study concentrated on mastering Group 1 sounds as an essential prerequisite before progressing to blending, segmenting, or complex words in subsequent lessons.

Previous studies have shown the effectiveness of Jolly Phonics in improving letter recognition and sound association in children. Damayanti et al. (2020) likewise found that Jolly Phonics improved letter recognition among children aged 4-5 years through a two-cycle Classroom Action Research intervention. Almansoori et al. (2024) also reported positive effects of integrating Jolly Phonics lessons into preschool literacy instruction, including improvements in letter-sound identification and letter formation. Mayarita, Amelasasih, and Yulyanto (2024) found that a multisensory Jolly Phonics approach enhanced with visual media improved young children's letter recognition and letter-sound association, highlighting the added value of combining the method's built-in multisensory routine with supplementary visual materials. Similarly, Rahma, Alfarisi, and Gunawan (2025) reported that multisensory Jolly Phonics activities involving songs and games improved children's letter recognition and writing skills among Group A kindergarten students, a population close in age to the KG 1 subjects of the present study. Nafgerin and Abu Bakar (2023) found that the Jolly Phonics method improved young learners' understanding of English letters and sounds despite differences in research design, suggesting that the method's core effect is robust across variations in how it is implemented and measured. Puspitasari, Wahyuningsih, and Jumiatmoko (2023) reported gains in English vocabulary mastery following Jolly Phonics instruction, indicating that the benefits of the method may extend beyond letter-sound knowledge narrowly defined. Outside the context of Jolly Phonics specifically, Kurniati, Nur Alfaeni, and Andriani (2020) found that multisensory methods more broadly were effective in improving early reading ability among 6-7-year-old children, lending further support to the multisensory principle that underlies Jolly Phonics from a source independent of the Jolly Phonics program itself.

Despite this growing body of evidence, most existing studies have focused on kindergarten B children or on a single aspect of literacy such as letter recognition, and relatively few have examined the application of Jolly Phonics to KG 1 children in a bilingual context, particularly regarding first language interference on the pronunciation of certain English sounds. The specific ways in which Bahasa Indonesia phonology interacts with the acquisition of individual English letter sounds, and how a multisensory method such as Jolly Phonics might help compensate for this interference, remain underexplored.

Based on this gap, the present study aimed to (1) determine whether the Jolly Phonics method could improve KG 1 students' understanding of Group 1 English letters and sounds (s, a, t, p, i, n) at Kiddos Preschool Gianyar, and (2) describe how the learning process using this method contributed to that improvement. The novelty of this study lies in its bilingual KG 1 context in Bali, where first-language interference on specific English sounds has not been closely examined in prior Jolly Phonics research, and in its attention to which individual letters prove most resistant to instruction and why. This study was limited to Group 1 of Jolly Phonics and did not cover blending, segmenting, or tricky words, given the time constraints of classroom action research and the developmental characteristics of children aged 4-5 years, who learn best through concrete experience, play, and multisensory repetition rather than extended abstract instruction.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study is grounded in the view that early foreign-language literacy develops most effectively when instruction proceeds from concrete, embodied experience toward more abstract symbolic understanding, a principle broadly consistent with theories of young children's cognitive development that emphasize action and sensory experience as the primary route through which new concepts are constructed at this age. Jolly Phonics operationalizes this principle through its structured sequence of seven letter groups, of which Group 1 (s, a, t, p, i, n) is designed as the entry point because it allows children to begin blending simple three-letter words almost immediately, thereby providing early, motivating success before more complex groups are introduced (Lloyd, Wernham, & Hockley, 2020). Within each group, every session follows a consistent cycle of introducing the sound through a story, pairing it with a physical action, practicing the sound in isolation, and then practicing the corresponding letter formation, a structure intended to distribute the same content across auditory, kinesthetic, and graphomotor channels within a single session rather than treating these as separate skills to be taught in sequence.

The choice of Classroom Action Research as the design for this study is itself theoretically motivated because the intervention under study is inherently iterative, with each cycle intended to respond to the specific difficulties observed in the previous one; a design that formally incorporates a reflection stage between cycles was considered more appropriate than a single-shot and pre-test/post-test design, which would not captured how the intervention was adapted in response to early evidence of which sounds and skills were most difficult for these particular learners.

Method

This study used a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following the spiral model of Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2014), comprising the stages of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher, acting as the class teacher, to systematically trial a pedagogical intervention, observe its effects on real classroom learning, and revise the approach based on evidence gathered directly from the setting, rather than through a controlled experimental design that would be difficult to implement ethically or practically with children of this age. The research was carried out over two cycles, each consisting of four sessions, with a pre-test administered before Cycle 1 and a post-test administered at the end of each cycle.

The subjects were 20 students from the Moonlight Class, KG 1, Kiddos Preschool Gianyar, aged 4-5 years, a developmental stage in which children learn best through concrete experience, play, repetition, and multisensory engagement rather than abstract instruction. Prior to this research, English instruction in this class was delivered primarily through vocabulary repetition, flashcards, and the introduction of letter pronunciation, with limited emphasis on systematic letter-sound correspondence. In Cycle 1, learning activities used teacher-led songs, actions, stories, and individual letter formation practice to introduce the target sounds, following the standard Jolly Phonics sequence of presenting the sound, its associated action, and a short story before moving to letter formation practice. Reflection on the results of Cycle 1 informed the development of Cycle 2, which preserved the same multisensory foundation but incorporated collaborative, game-based activities, namely Letter Slap on the Wall, Jumping Flashcards, and Group Letter Retrieval, to increase students' active engagement and provide additional repetition through peer interaction rather than teacher-directed repetition alone.

Across the four sessions of each cycle, each meeting was structured around one or two of the six Group 1 letters, beginning with a warm-up review of previously introduced sounds, followed by the introduction of the new sound through its associated story and action, guided group practice of the sound and action together, and finally individual letter formation practice on worksheets. In Cycle 2, the final segment of each session was replaced with one of the three collaborative games, chosen to correspond to the sounds introduced earlier in that session, so that the game served as an additional, socially mediated repetition of the same content rather than an unrelated activity. This session structure was kept consistent across both cycles so that the primary variable distinguishing Cycle 2 from Cycle 1 was the shift from individual, teacher-directed practice to collaborative, game-based practice, rather than a change in the overall amount of instructional time or content covered.

Data were collected through a scored pre-test and post-test instrument consisting of three sections: (A) Letter Shape Recognition, in which students identified the correct letter shape corresponding to a given sound; (B) Sound Production, in which students produced the correct sound for a given letter; and (C) Jolly Phonics Action Response, in which students performed the action associated with a given sound. Each section covered the six Group 1 letters and was scored on a four-point scale (1 = Poor to 4 = Very Good) for each item, producing a maximum score of 72 (6 items × 3 sections × a maximum score of 4). Letter-sound association, the fourth indicator in the research instrument, was measured as a composite of students' combined performance on Sections A and B, on the grounds that a student who could both recognize a letter's shape and produce its corresponding sound had demonstrated the underlying association between the two, and that this composite approach was more suitable for KG 1 children than a separate matching task. The quantitative data were complemented by qualitative observation of letter formation, using a three-level rubric (not yet able, assisted, independent), documented across the four meetings of Cycle 1.

Each item in Sections A, B, and C was scored using a four-point rubric ranging from 1 (Poor), indicating the student was unable to complete the task even with assistance, to 4 (Very Good), indicating the student completed the task independently and correctly, with intermediate scores of 2 (Fair) and 3 (Good) reflecting varying degrees of teacher assistance or partial accuracy. Total scores were then converted into four achievement categories, Poor, Fair, Good, and Very Good, based on the proportion of the maximum possible score of 72 that a student achieved, with the Good category and above (a score of 49 or higher, equivalent to approximately 68% of the maximum score) serving as the operational threshold used to judge whether the intervention had reached a practically meaningful level of impact.

Data were analyzed by calculating the class mean score at each measurement point and the percentage of students reaching each achievement category. The Criteria of Success for this study were set at 75% of students reaching the Good category (score ≥49 out of 72) on the post-test, a threshold commonly used in classroom action research to indicate that an intervention has achieved a practically meaningful level of success at the class level rather than benefiting only a small subset of students. To determine whether the observed pre-test to post-test gains were statistically significant rather than attributable to chance, a paired-samples t-test was additionally used to compare each student's individual score between measurement points: pre-test to post-test 1, post-test 1 to post-test 2, and pre-test to post-test 2.

Before implementation, content experts reviewed the pre-test and post-test instruments for suitability for KG 1 learners, ensuring alignment with Group 1 sounds and indicators. Minor revisions were made based on this evaluation before field application. During each session, the researcher, as the class teacher, observed and documented substantial responses, challenges, and behavioral patterns in field notes. These notes guided modifications for activities in subsequent cycles during the reflection phase at the end of each cycle. Taken as a whole, the procedure described above was designed so that each stage of data collection served a distinct analytical purpose: the pre-test established a common baseline against which subsequent change could be measured, the two post-tests allowed the trajectory of change to be tracked across cycles rather than only measured once, and the qualitative observation of letter formation provided a check on whether gains in the scored instrument were accompanied by corresponding development in a skill that the scored instrument did not directly capture. This combination of measures is reported in full in the following section.

Results and Discussion

Research Result

The results showed a consistent increase in the class mean score at every stage of measurement, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of Pre-test and Post-test Results

Measurement	Class Mean Score	% Good Category or Above	Criteria of Success (75%)
Pre-test	24.1	0%	Not met
Post-test 1 (end of Cycle 1)	39.55	40%	Not met
Post-test 2 (end of Cycle 2)	52.1	80%	Met

At the pre-test, individual student scores ranged from 18 to 38 out of a possible 72, with all 20 students falling into the Poor category and none reaching even the Fair category, indicating that prior to the intervention the class as a whole had very limited familiarity with the systematic relationship between Group letters and their sounds, despite prior exposure to English vocabulary and letter names through the school's existing instructional routine. This narrow, uniformly low baseline distribution provided a consistent starting point against which the effect of the intervention could be more clearly observed, since gains could not be attributed to a subset of students who already possessed strong prior knowledge.

The class mean score increased from 24,1 at the pre-test to 39,55 at the end of Cycle 1 (a gain of 15,45 points) and to 52,1 at the end of Cycle 2 (a further gain of 12,55 points), an overall increase of 28 points across the two cycles. The percentage of students reaching the Good category or above rose from 0% at baseline to 40% at the end of Cycle 1 and 80% at the end of Cycle 2, exceeding the 75% Criteria of Success. While the raw score gain was somewhat larger in Cycle 1, the proportion of students who crossed the Good category threshold doubled in Cycle 2, suggesting that the collaborative, game-based activities introduced in that cycle were particularly effective in pushing students who were already progressing toward the threshold, rather than merely raising the class average.

A paired-samples t-test confirmed that these increases were statistically significant. Students scored significantly higher at post-test 2 (M=52,10, SD=9,34) than at the pre-test (M=24,10, SD-6,27), $t(19) = 22,17$, $p<.001$, with a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 4,96$). The increase from the pre-test to post-test 1 was likewise significant, $t(19) = 12,27$, $p<.001$, $d = 2,74$, as was the further increase from post-test 1 to post-test 2, $t(19) = 19,53$, $p<.001$, $d = 4,37$. These results indicate that the improvement in students' understanding of Group 1 English letters and sounds across both cycles was very unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Further analysis at the level of individual letters showed that the letters T and P were the most challenging for students throughout both cycles, while S and N were relatively easier to learn due to their pronunciation being more similar to Bahasa Indonesia; I and A were intermediate in difficulty and were sometimes mispronounced according to their Indonesian vowel sounds. This finding is consistent with the pattern of first-language interference in foreign-language sound acquisition, in which sounds that are phonetically distant from a learner's first language are acquired more slowly than sounds with a close first-language counterpart.

On the qualitative side, letter formation skills also developed over the course of Cycle 1: a majority of students were classified as "not yet able" at Meeting 1 (70%), whereas by Meeting 3 all students had progressed to either "assisted" or "independent" performance (a combined 100%), indicating that fine motor control for letter writing developed steadily alongside the auditory and kinesthetic components of the intervention. Prior to engaging in a comprehensive analysis of these findings, the pattern observed at the section level offers additional support for the enhancement seen throughout the intervention. As illustrated in Table 2, each of the three sections demonstrated an increase from the pre-test to post-test 2, with the most significant overall improvements noted in Section B (Sound Production) and Section C (Jolly Phonics Actions.

Table 2 Mean Scores by Assessment Section

Assessment	Section A: Letter Shape Recognition	Section B: Phonics Sound Production	Section C: Jolly Phonics Actions	Overall Mean (/72)
Pre-test	8.40	7.85	7.85	24.10
Post-test 1	12.25	14.10	13.20	39.55
Post-test 2	16.70	18.05	17.35	52.10
Total gain (Pre-test to Post-test 2)	+8.30	+10.20	+9.50	+28.00

Discussion

The enhancement observed indicates that the Jolly Phonics method improved KG 1 students' understanding of Group 1 English letters and sounds, a gain that was statistically significant ($t(19) = 22,17$, $p<.001$). The transition from teacher-directed tasks in Cycle 1 to cooperative, game-oriented activities in Cycle 2 substantially contributed to the improvement between Post-test 1 and Post-test 2, supporting the idea that young learners benefit from active participation (Cameron, 2001). Instead of repeating the same multisensory routine, peer-oriented games like Letter Slap on the Wall and Group Letter Retrieval offered children more opportunities to practice target sounds in a supportive

environment. The most substantial progress was recorded in Section B (Sound Production), followed by Section C (Jolly Phonics Actions), as shown in Table 2.

The greater difficulty with the letters T and P compared to S and N may be related to differences between the phonological characteristics of Bahasa Indonesia and English. The distinctive kinesthetic actions associated with these letters may have provided additional cues that supported the children's recall and production of the target sounds. This interpretation is consistent with Lloyd's (1992) view on the role of kinesthetic anchoring in sound learning: by giving children a physical movement to associate with a sound that is difficult to discriminate auditorily, the method provides an additional, non-auditory retrieval cue that can support recall even when the auditory distinction remains subtle for the learners. This pattern may be related to differences in how the target English sounds were perceived and produced by the learners.

The development of letter formation skills alongside improved sound recognition further supports the multisensory principle underlying Jolly Phonics, in which pairing a sound with its corresponding action and written symbol reinforces motor memory in addition to auditory memory. This pattern is consistent with the broader literature on multisensory learning, which suggests that engaging multiple sensory and motor systems during encoding tends to produce more robust and interconnected memory traces than unisensory learning alone. This finding suggests that letter formation practice was not merely an isolated psychomotor skill running in parallel with sound learning, but an integrated component of the same underlying letter-sound knowledge that the pre-test and post-test instrument measured.

These findings reinforce previous research on the effectiveness of Jolly Phonics for young children (Mayarita et al., 2024; Nafgerin & Abu Bakar, 2023; Rahma et al., 2025), while also contributing new empirical evidence from a bilingual KG 1 context in Bali, where first-language interference on specific English sounds has not been closely examined in prior Jolly Phonics research. Whereas previous studies have generally reported that Jolly Phonics improves letter recognition or sound association at an aggregate level, the present study additionally identifies which specific letters are most resistant to first-language interference and links this pattern to the kinesthetic component of the method, offering a more fine-grained account of how and for whom the method is effective.

Nevertheless, four students (20%) had not yet reached the Good category by the end of Post-test 2, reflecting individual differences in attention span and developmental pace that are common among children of this age. This variability does not undermine the overall success of the intervention at the class level, but it does indicate that more individualized reinforcement, beyond what a two-cycle, class-wide intervention can provide, remains necessary for learners who progress more slowly. The comparatively larger improvement in the Good-category threshold during Cycle 2 also invites a cautious reflection on the role of test familiarity and, more broadly, on the amount of instructional time and exposure students had accumulated by that point in the study, rather than attributing the gain solely to the type of activity used in each cycle. Because the same instrument format was used at the pre-test and both post-tests, part of the improvement between Post-test 1 and Post-test 2 could in principle reflect students becoming more comfortable with the testing procedure itself, rather than genuine gains in letter-sound knowledge. In addition, because Cycle 2 followed four further sessions of cumulative practice beyond what students had received by post-test 1, part of the gain observed at post-test 2 could simply reflect the additional exposure time itself, independent of the shift to collaborative, game-based activities; the present design, in which the amount of accumulated exposure and the type of activity changed together across cycles, cannot fully separate these two explanations. However, the section-level results show that improvement was not uniform across the three sections over the entire intervention: Sound Production and Action Response showed larger total gains from the pre-test to Post-test 2 than Letter Shape Recognition (Table 2). This pattern offers some support for the interpretation that the specific instructional activities, and not merely additional exposure time, contributed to the improvement, although neither test familiarity nor a general time/exposure confound can be completely ruled out given the single-group design.

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, letter formation was only formally documented during Cycle 1 and treated as supporting qualitative evidence rather than a scored outcome; its longer-term retention across Cycle 2 was therefore not directly measured, which future research could address through a scored letter-formation instrument administered at both post-tests. Second, as a single-class action research study with 20 subjects and no comparison group, the design cannot rule out the possibility that some of the observed improvement reflects general familiarization with the testing procedure or with the researcher as instructor, rather than the Jolly Phonics method specifically; this is a limitation shared by classroom action research more broadly, and it is one of the reasons the findings here are presented as evidence of practical effectiveness within this setting rather than as a controlled causal claim. Third, because the study was limited to Group 1 sounds, it remains an open question whether the same pattern of first-language interference, and the same relative benefit of collaborative games, would hold for the more complex letter combinations introduced in later Jolly Phonics groups.

These results can be contextualized within a wider theoretical framework regarding the influence of first language phonology on the acquisition of sounds in a second language. When a sound in the target language lacks a close equivalent in the learner's first language, learners frequently interpret and produce it through the perspective of the nearest category from their first language. This phenomenon may elucidate why the sounds T and P, which are articulated differently in English compared to their closest Indonesian equivalents, are more resistant to instructional methods than S and N, whose pronunciations are relatively similar in both languages. From their perspective, the kinesthetic actions associated with each sound in Jolly Phonics may serve a purpose beyond mere memory enhancement: they could also act as a form of articulatory support, directing children's focus to the physical aspects of sound production in a manner that auditory modelling alone fails to achieve.

Taken together, these results directly address the two objectives set out in the Introduction. Regarding the first objective, the consistent rise in class mean score and in the proportion of students reaching the Good category across both cycles confirms that the Jolly Phonics method was effective in improving KG 1 students' understanding of Group 1 English letters and sounds within the scope of this study. Regarding the second objective, the pattern of results, in particular the larger relative gains in Sound Production and Jolly Phonics Action Response compared with Letter Shape Recognition, and the disproportionate improvement in the Good-category threshold following the introduction of collaborative games in Cycle 2, describes a specific mechanism through which this improvement occurred: multisensory input helped compensate for first-language interference on individual sounds, while the shift toward collaborative practice in the second cycle appears to have consolidated gains for students who were already progressing rather than uniformly lifting the whole class.

From a pedagogical standpoint, these findings suggest that teachers introducing phonics to bilingual or EFL learners at the KG 1 level should not treat multisensory activities and collaborative activities as interchangeable options, but rather as complementary components that may be most effective when sequenced deliberately, with individual multisensory grounding preceding collaborative, game-based consolidation. This sequencing rationale, while consistent with the pattern observed in this study, was not itself directly tested against an alternative ordering and should therefore be treated as a hypothesis for future researchers rather than a firmly established finding. This research has broader implications for evaluating phonics-based interventions for young EFL learners. The methodology combined quantitative scoring with qualitative observations of letter formation, allowing for the assessment of fine motor skills in letter writing, which a purely auditory test would miss. This approach demonstrated that the intervention's benefits extended beyond auditory-verbal learning. Researchers designing classroom evaluations for early literacy interventions may find it advantageous to use a mix of scored assessment and observational techniques, particularly for children with limited attention spans and test-taking endurance that hinder score-only instruments.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the Jolly Phonics method was effective in improving KG 1 students' understanding of Group 1 English letters and sounds (s, a, t, p, i,

n) at Kiddos Preschool Gianyar, as well as their letter formation skills, as evidenced by the increase in class mean score from 24.1 to 52.1 and the achievement of 80% of students in the Good category, exceeding the 75% Criteria of Success, consistent with what was anticipated in the Introduction. This improvement was achieved through a multisensory learning model that became progressively more interactive and collaborative across two reflective cycles, with the greatest gains observed in sound production and action response, the two skills that were weakest at baseline, and with the letters T and P remaining the most resistant to first-language interference throughout the intervention.

These findings connect back to the initial research questions. The first question asked if the Jolly Phonics method could enhance KG 1 students' understanding of Group 1 English letters and sounds. The answer is affirmative, as evidenced by a rise in the class mean score from 24,1 to 52,1 and 80% of students achieving the Good category, exceeding the 75% Criteria of Success. The second question examined how the learning process facilitated this improvement. Findings indicate that the process involved multisensory kinesthetic reinforcement of challenging sounds in Cycle 1, followed by collaborative, game-based reinforcement in Cycle 2, with letter formation developing alongside sound knowledge rather than in isolation.

For teachers, three practical implications follow from these findings. First, when introducing a new letter sound that is phonetically distant from Bahasa Indonesia, teachers are encouraged to emphasize the associated kinesthetic action more deliberately, rather than treating it as an incidental part of the routine, since this study suggests that the action carries particular weight in compensating for auditory discrimination difficulty. Second, collaborative, game-based practice appears to be a valuable addition once children have had an initial, individually guided introduction to a sound, rather than a replacement for that individual introduction. Third, letter formation practice can reasonably be scheduled alongside sound instruction rather than as a separate activity, given the evidence that the two skills developed in tandem in this study.

More broadly, this study adds to the small but growing body of classroom-based evidence on phonics instruction for EFL learners in Indonesian early childhood settings, a context that differs in important ways from the English as a first language settings in which Jolly Phonics was originally developed. Where first language phonics instruction can generally assume that children already possess extensive oral familiarity with the target sounds before formal letter-sound instruction begins, EFL learners in this study were often encountering some of these sounds for the first time, making the multisensory scaffolding provided by the method arguably even more consequential in this setting than in the first language contexts for which it was originally designed.

For schools, particularly early childhood education providers serving bilingual or EFL learners, these findings suggest that adopting a systematic, multisensory phonics program such as Jolly Phonics may offer a more solid foundation for English literacy than vocabulary repetition and flashcards alone, though the practical demands of training teachers in the method and securing appropriate materials and time should be planned for accordingly. Future research is recommended to extend this study to Jolly Phonics Groups 2-7 and to the skills of blending, segmenting, and tricky words, to track the longer-term retention of letter formation beyond a single cycle, and to involve a longer intervention period, a comparison group, and a more varied sample in order to build a more comprehensive and more rigorously supported understanding of the method's effectiveness in bilingual early childhood settings.

In conclusion, this research evaluated whether a multisensory, reflectively adapted application of Jolly Phonics could enhance KG 1 students' comprehension of Group 1 English letters and sounds in a bilingual Balinese context, clarifying the mechanisms of this enhancement. Data from two cycles of Classroom Action Research supports both claims: understanding improved substantially and consistently, linked to identifiable characteristics of the intervention, particularly multisensory kinesthetic anchoring for challenging sounds and collaborative practice to reinforce knowledge after individual sound recognition.

References

Almansoori, N., Ogdol, R., & Alteneiji, A. (2024). The impact of integrating Jolly Phonics Lessons application into English literacy lessons on UAE preschoolers' phonics skills. Journal of Childhood, Education & Society, 5(1), 41–60. https://doi.org/10.37291/2717638X.202451299

Cameron, L. 2001. Teaching languages to young learners. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Damayanti, M. S., Rasmani, U. E. E., & Syamsuddin, M. M. (2020). Penerapan metode Jolly Phonics untuk meningkatkan kemampuan mengenal huruf pada anak usia 4–5 tahun. Kumara Cendekia, 8(1), 23–31. https://doi.org/10.20961/kc.v8i1.32822

Ehri, L. C., Nunes, S. R., Stahl, S. A., & Willows, D. M. 2001. Systematic phonics instruction helps students learn to read: Evidence from the National Reading Panel's meta-analysis. Review of Educational Research, 71(3): 393–447.

Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. 2014. The Action Research Planner: Doing Critical Participatory Action Research. Singapore: Springer Singapore.

Kurniati, E., Nur Alfaeni, D. K., & Andriani, F. 2020. The Effectiveness of the Multisensory Method on Early Reading Ability in 6-7 Years Old Children. Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 5(1): 241.

Lloyd, S. 1992. The Phonics Handbook. Chigwell: Jolly Learning.

Lloyd, S., Wernham, S., & Hockley, A. 2020. Jolly Phonics Teacher's Book. Chigwell: Jolly Learning.

Mayarita, Y., Amelasasih, P., & Yulyanto, Y. 2024. The Effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics Method on Letter Recognition Ability in 5-Year-Old Children through Letter Card Media. Jurnal Impresi Indonesia, 3(2): 176–183.

Nafgerin, G. G., & Abu Bakar, K. 2023. The Use of The Jolly Phonics Method in Improving English Reading and Writing Skills among Preschool Students. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 13(12).

Puspitasari, Wahyuningsih, S., & Jumiatmoko. 2023. The Effect of the Jolly Phonics Method on English Vocabulary Mastery in Children. Early Childhood Education and Development Journal, 5(1).

Rahma, A., Alfarisi, S., & Gunawan, A. 2025. The Application of the Jolly Phonics Method in Introducing the Alphabet to Group A Students at RA Bustanul Atfal. Proceedings STAI Darul Falah, 1(1).

Roberts, T. A., Vadasy, P. F., & Sanders, E. A. (2018). Preschoolers' alphabet learning: Letter name and sound instruction, cognitive processes, and English proficiency. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 44, 257–274. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2018.04.011

Shams, L., & Seitz, A. R. 2008. Benefits of multisensory learning. Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 12(11): 411–417.

Widyana, R., Astuti, K., Bahrussofa, M. F., & Simanjuntak, G. M. B. (2020). The effectiveness of Jolly Phonics and multisensory learning methods in improving preschoolers pre-reading skills. International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change, 11(8), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.53333/ijicc2013