

**Critical Review:**

Is an early intervention program that embeds explicit phonological awareness instruction in shared reading, effective in enhancing the early literacy skills of preschoolers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds?

Sun Ah Jeon

M.Cl.Sc (SLP) Candidate

University of Western Ontario: School of Communication Sciences and Disorders

This critical review examines the evidence regarding early phonological awareness intervention embedded in shared reading and its effects on emergent literacy skills for children from low-income backgrounds. Study designs include a mixed randomized clinical trial, a single-subject study, and a nonrandomized clinical trial. Overall, research findings indicate that providing explicit phonological awareness instruction during storybook reading may be beneficial, but warrants caution due to sparse evidence. Recommendations for future research and clinical implications are also discussed.

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Emergent literacy skills, including phonological awareness, print concepts, alphabet knowledge and literate language, serve as a foundation for later success in acquiring reading and writing skills (Justice & Kaderavek, 2004; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Although children begin to develop these skills throughout the preschool period, many risk factors become obstacles for successful acquisition of literacy. Indeed, numerous studies have identified children from low socioeconomic backgrounds to be at high risk for developing later reading disabilities (Catts et al., 2002; Duncan & Seymour, 2000; Locke et al., 2002; and McCardle et al., 2001). Children from lower income backgrounds have been found to have less well-developed emergent literacy skills compared to their higher-income peers, as they lack informal experience of books and print before exposure to formal literacy instruction (Aram & Biron, 2004; Lefebvre et al., 2011; McIntosh et al., 2007; Nancollis et al., 2005). This body of evidence therefore suggests the critical importance of addressing this population's needs prior to school entry in order to maximize academic success.

The studies selected for inclusion in this critical review paper were required to investigate the impact of combining explicit phonological awareness training with dialogic or shared storybook reading among disadvantaged preschoolers.

#### Data Collection

Results of the literature search yielded three articles congruent with the aforementioned selection criteria: mixed randomized clinical trial (RCT), single-subject study, and non-randomized clinical trial.

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**Lonigan et al. (2013)** examined the specific and combined effects of interventions designed to promote early literacy skills in 324 low-income, non-reading preschool children. This evidence-based level 1 study utilized a randomized mixed clinical trial design and included five intervention groups, of which three were of interest to the present study (#1, 3, 4): (1) dialogic



b. The use of

O'Connor, R.E., Jenkins, J.R., Leicester, N., & Slocum, T.A. (1993). Teaching phonological awareness to young children with learning disabilities. , 532-546.

Roberts, T.A. (2003). Effects of alphabet-letter instruction on young children's word recognition. , 41-51.

Whitehurst, G.J., and Lonigan, C.J. (1998). Child development and emergent literacy. , 848-872.