

## **SOUNDS GOOD ENGLISH PILOT PROGRAMME**

### **THIRD-LEVEL COLLEGE IN IRELAND JULY/AUGUST 2021**

Sounds Good English piloted our phonics course as part of a pre-sessional course, English for Academic Purposes, for Chinese students who would be attending College in the Academic year 2021-2022. The Programme ran over 8 weeks in the July and August of 2021 and was delivered online. The research was carried out by the Third-Level College, independent of Sounds Good English.

The students were divided into two groups of 15 students. One group was the Control Group, who received no phonics instruction; the other group was the Treatment Group, who followed the Sounds Good English Phonics course using both Book 1 and Book 2. As the students were university students we were able to tailor the course so that they were able to finish both books in 40 hours; 20 hours for Book 1 and 20 hours for Book 2. This meant the Treatment Group were receiving one hour of phonics instruction every day.

The results were quite dramatic in terms of the results for those students who were exposed to an explicitly taught phonics programme.

In the Pre-Test the students of both the Control and Treatment group were given 3 minutes to look at a reading passage and then they were given 3 minutes to read the passage out loud. After 4 weeks, and when the treatment group had completed Sounds Good English Book 1, the students were asked to read this passage again. The passage contained 50 underlined one-syllable English words. We were assessing if the students could read these words.

The Control group average score in the Pre-Test was 34/50, in the Post-Test, the score was 38/50-a 6% increase. For the treatment group, the average score for the Pre-Test was 21/50; the post-test score was 38/50. This was an overall increase of 24%.

At the beginning of the second block of 4 weeks, the Control group and Treatment group were again given another Pre-Test. The students were given 4 minutes to look at a passage and then they were given 4 minutes to read the passage out loud. The passage contained 50 underlined multi-syllabic words. Unlike, the first Pre-Test, we were asking students to read multi-syllabic words, not one syllable words. We were assessing if the students could read these words.

The Control group's average score in this Pre-Test was 29/50, in the Post-Test, the score was 29/50-a 0% increase. For the treatment group, the average score for the Pre-Test was 32/50; the post-test score was 40/50. This was an overall increase of 18%.

What is dramatic is that the Control group started the 8-week course with a greater ability to decode and read English words but by the end of the 8-weeks, the Treatment Group, having been explicitly taught the Sounds Good English methodology, were now able to read more correctly and fluently than the Control Group.

Both groups were also given other tests as part of their EAP programme. In terms of EAP overall results, the phonics group showed a 7% increase in speaking results from pre-test to post-test while the control group showed a 2.5% gain. In listening/reading the phonics group showed an 8% increase from pre-test to post-test while the control group showed a 2% increase.

We can surmise from these results:

- The use of the Sounds Good English Phonics programme had a significant measurable effect on the reading ability of the Treatment group of Chinese students.
- It would also seem that the study of an explicit phonics programme helps to improve overall scores in speaking, listening/reading scores.
- The Sounds Good English Phonics programme could be delivered successfully online.