Is Morphology Important from the Beginning?

• Definitely important later

Marcia Henry, Perspectives on Language and Literacy, Spring 2019:

"In the past 35 years, especially in the current decade, research in the area of morphology has continued to evolve. …

...The work of many researchers and educators illustrates the need to introduce morphology, which was once thought to be useful only in the upper elementary and secondary grades, in the early grades."
Recent research indicates that morphological awareness is associated with reading and spelling growth from first grade onward, in parallel with phoneme awareness and general print knowledge. (p. 134)

Morphology Is Important from the Beginning

- Needed earlier than we may realize
- Frames system & phoneme-grapheme relationships
- Must be integrated into instruction
- Especially powerful for dyslexic students

What Is a Morpheme?

- Smallest meaningful unit of language

  Written morpheme: **element**
  - plant  <plant>
  - replanting  <re->, <plant>, <-ing>

- “Smallest linguistic unit that has a meaning or grammatical function.” (Language Files, 12th Ed., 2016, p. 703.)
What Is Morphology?

morphology → morph + o + log + y

morph + eme → morpheme

We will use terms free or bound base element with root reserved for etymological ancestor

Orthographic Morphological Matrix

spell a base

base element

prefixes

morph

shape, form

suffixes

orthographic denotation

amorphous → a + morph + ous

morphology → morph + o + log + y
Written Elements Combine Consistently

- graph + eme → grapheme
- phone/ + eme → phoneme
- cry/i + ed → cried
- slipr + er → slipper

The Framework of Spelling Is Morphology

- Words are formed by combining morphological units, using consistent suffixing conventions

  - Morphological elements are spelled consistently, although their pronunciation will often vary
    - <-ed>  <-s>

Students must think about structures along with pronunciation

Morphology Explains…

• <relative> not *<reletive>

re + late/ + ive + s → relatives

Homographic base elements
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re + late ➞ relate
trans + late ➞ translate
col + late ➞ collate

re + late/ + ive + s ➞ relatives
re + late/ + ed ➞ related
re + late/ + ion + ship + s ➞ relationships

Morphology Explains...

• schwa: <relative> not *<reletive>
• sequential identical consonants:
  <dissection> not *<disection>

bi + sect + ion ➞ bisection
di + oxide ➞ dioxide
di + graph ➞ digraph
di + lemma ➞ dilemma

dis + sect + ion ➞ dissection

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dis + sect → dissect
dis + sent → dissent
dis + solve → dissolve

**dissect:** …from dis- “apart” (see dis-) + secare “to cut”…

**dissent:** …from dis- “differently” (see dis-) + sentire “to feel, think” (see sense (n.))…

**dissolve:** …from dis- “apart” (see dis-) + solvere “to loosen, untie,”…

**disturb:** …from dis- “completely” (see dis-) + turbare “to disorder, disturb,” from turba “turbid” (see turbid)…

Source: etymonline.com
Morphology Explains...

- schwa: <relative> not *<relative>
- sequential identical consonants: <dissection> not *<dissection>
- grapheme choice
  - <equation> not *<equasion> (occasion)
    - <educational> not *<edjucational>

vocabulary!!!

equ = "even, fair"

equation → equate/ + ion

equation → equ + ate/ + ion

equal → equ + al

equ + al → equal

un + equ + al → unequal

equ + ate/ + ion → equation

equ + i + vale + ent → equivalent

in + equ + al + ity/ + es → inequalities
prejudicial
knowledgeable
adjust
adjourn
adjacent

node ➔
node/ + ule ➔ nodule

grade ➔ grade
grade/ + u + al ➔ gradual

e + duce/ + ate/ + ion + al ➔ educational
e + duce/ + ate ➔ educate
in + duce ➔ induce
pro + duce ➔ produce
de + duce ➔ deduce
How to include from beginning?

• Analyze “irregular” words:
  <nothing → no + thing>
  <any → an + y>
  • explains spelling
  ➡ prepares them to see system
  • Expand “regular” words (create a matrix)
play
play + ing → playing
play + s → plays

say
say + ing → saying
say + s → says

cat
cat + fish → catfish
fish
shellfish → shell + fish
shell
selfish → self + ish

fishing → fish + ing
mishap → mis + hap

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“Awareness of morphology, then, supports word recognition, word memory, and word recall above and beyond phonological awareness and orthographic awareness. By extension, it also contributes to reading comprehension (through word recognition and vocabulary) and written expression (through spelling and word choice). These cognitive realities imply that morphological word relationships should be directly and explicitly taught.” (p. 158)

“Teaching words in a derivational family together in a vocabulary or spelling lesson, and rehearsing their pronunciation, is a valuable instructional practice.” (p. 151)

Direct and explicit teaching of morphology

- Learn more about morphology so you can frame your introductory work
- Show students structural elements from day one
- Show students that elements are spelled consistently while pronunciation often shifts
- Work with matrices and word sums
To learn more

- Visit LearningAboutSpelling.com
- further resources page
- sign up to “follow” (book coming out soon)
- Contact me: LearningAboutSpelling@gmail.com

Thank you for being here!