

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Layers of Language: Lesson Fundamentals and Instructional Format

Marcia K. Henry, Ph. D.
Professor Emerita,
San Jose State University

~ Module 13, Session 3 ~ Lecture Notes

Competent readers and spellers use metacognitive skills as they approach unfamiliar words. Flavell (1985) defined **metacognition** as the ability to reflect upon and monitor cognitive activity. Both reading and spelling are cognitive activities. In order for metacognition to take place, readers must have **metalinguistic awareness**. That is, they must focus on knowing about language function and structure. **Metalanguage** is the language used to talk about both spoken and written language concepts. Words such as *grapheme, phoneme, morpheme, syllable, schwa, consonant, vowel, consonant blend, consonant digraph, vowel digraph, compound word, prefix, root, suffix, and combining form* are all important terms when discussing decoding and spelling concepts.

Because reading and spelling are cognitive activities, a discussion format lends itself to both classroom, individual, and small group instruction. In these lessons (based on Stanford University's Project READ Plus, see Calfee & Henry, 1986; Calfee, Henry, & Funderburg, 1988), focus centers on categories within the origin by structure matrix. Lessons of from 30-50 minutes engage students in discussion relating to language and reading/spelling concepts.

Lesson Procedures

Each lesson begins with an **opening** setting the stage as the teacher describes the purpose and content of the lesson, and explains the lesson procedures. **Middle activities** follow as teachers review earlier material and present new patterns and corresponding rules, if any. Students practice reading many words that fit the target pattern(s) in word lists, phrases, and/or sentences. They also spell numerous words from dictation. They have opportunities to read connected text containing target patterns. During the **closing** section of the lesson students review and summarize concepts, patterns, and/or rules learned that day as they reflect on lesson content. Teachers may assign **follow-up activities** for students to reinforce the patterns, concepts, or spelling rules taught.

Sample Lesson for Four Latin Word Roots:

Opening: The teacher tells students they will be reviewing common prefixes and suffixes taught earlier. Students will also be learning the spelling and meaning of *form, port, rupt, and tract*.

Middle:

Review: Students read currently taught prefixes and suffixes on drill cards. Teachers also dictate some of the affixes for spelling.

New: Teachers show the four Latin roots on cards, and asks students to read the roots. Teachers point out the regular letter-sound correspondences. Students **generate** words for the root *form*, as the teacher writes them on the board or overhead transparency. Words might include the following:

inform	informing	information	informative
formal	informal	formality	formalize
deform	deformed	deformity	reform
reforming	reformer	reformation	format
conform	conformed	conformity	nonconformity
perform	performing	performance	informant

Teachers encourage students to come up with the meaning of *form*. Teachers may use some of the listed words to probe for meaning. As a last resort, students can use a dictionary with etymology. By looking up any of the listed words, students will find that *form* comes from the Latin meaning *to shape*.

Students then **read** lists of words containing form. (See Henry, 2003, for numerous word lists of prefixes, suffixes, Latin roots, and Greek combining forms.) Teachers dictate words, phrases, and sentences containing the root *form* for students to **spell**.

Students use the same process for *port* (to carry), *rupt* (to break or burst), and *tract* (to pull). Teachers and students discuss the meaning of some of the specific words. For example, “What happens when a volcano *erupts*?” [Literally, it *bursts out*.] “What happens if your appendix ruptures?” [It bursts.] “What happens when the dentist extracts a tooth?” [He or she *pulls it out*.]

Closing: Teachers and students summarize the 4 Latin roots learned, along with their meanings.

Follow-up: Activity sheets (see handout) developed by teachers can provide individual or small-group practice. Students may also work in small groups designing a “web” on one of the target Latin roots (see handout, web on *tract*).

(NOTE: *The Patterns for Success in Reading and Spelling Student Activity Books* by Nancy Redding and Marcia Henry will be available from Pro-Ed Publishing Company in Spring, 2004.)