

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Layers of Language:
The Anglo-Saxon Layer of Language, Letter-sound Correspondences

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

~ **Module 13, Session 4** ~
Lecture Notes

Remember that the Anglo-Saxon based words are those common, short, everyday, down-to-earth words used frequently in both speaking and writing. Although they are used most often, they make up a rather small percentage of all English words.

Anglo-Saxon Letter-sound Correspondences

Only a cursory glimpse is given to Anglo-Saxon letter-sound correspondences. Many programs exist if more information is needed on basic phonics. (See Henry, 2003; Henry, 1996; Henry & Redding, 1999.)

The Power Point 2 x 3 matrix illustrates that words have consonants and vowels. There are 3 common consonant categories, and 3 common vowel categories. Most **consonants** have only one sound, although *c* and *g* have two common sounds. *S* and *x* have one common sound. *S* usually makes the sound /s/ as in *sat*; *x* usually makes the sound /ks/ as in *box*. Each also has one rare sound. *S* sounds like /z/ as in *rose*, and *x* sounds like /z/ as in *xylophone*. Consonants are either single consonants, consonant blends (sometimes called consonant clusters), and consonant digraphs. Consonant blends are two or three adjacent consonants in the same syllable that retain the sound of each letter as in *blunt* (*bl* and *nt*), *grasp* (*gr* and *sp*), and *sprint* (*spr* and *nt*). Consonant digraphs form a new sound such as *sh* in *ship*, *wh* in *whale*, *th* in *this* or *thin*, and *ch* in *church*. (See handout for a list of the major consonant patterns.)

NOTE: Children with problems in auditory discrimination often have difficulty hearing the differences in certain pairs of consonants. These voiced and unvoiced consonants may be hard to differentiate for some students.

Voiced

/b/ bat
/d/ dug
/g/ gut
/j/ jug

Unvoiced

/p/ pat
/t/ tug
/c/ cut
/ch/ chug

/v/	vine	/f/	fine
/z/	zip	/s/	sip
/th/	that	/th/	thin
/w/	wail	/wh/	whale

Vowels include *a, e, i, o,* and *u*. *Y* may be a vowel, as in *baby, cry,* or *symphony*. *Y* and *w* are known as semi-vowels when a vowel precedes them as in *play, key,* and *boy,* or *snow, draw,* and *few*. Vowels can be either single letters, short and long. A single vowel followed by a consonant in the same syllable makes a short vowel sound as in *cap, bed, tin, mob,* and *sun*. A silent *e* at the end of a one syllable word often marks a long vowel sound as in *vine, vote, made, Pete,* and *cute*. -r controlled vowels occur when a vowel precedes the r and is co-articulated such as *ar, or, ir, er,* and *ur* in *barn, corn, bird, fern,* and *church* respectively. Vowel digraphs are two adjacent vowels in the same syllable that have one sound as *oa* in *boat, ea* in *meal, oi* in *spoil,* and *ou* in *south*. Vowel digraphs are often called vowel teams. The term *diphthong* refers to those digraphs whose vowels slide from one sound to another such as *oi* in *spoil, oy* in *toy, ou* in *south, ow* in *owl, au* in *fault,* and *aw* in *claw*. The term *vowel digraph* is usually used for both digraphs and diphthongs. (See handout for a list of the main vowel patterns.)

These patterns are useful for decoding and spelling all words. Students need to read numerous words containing important consonant blends, consonant digraphs, short and long vowels, -r controlled vowels, and vowel digraphs. Teachers need to dictate words containing the target patterns for spelling.

Non-phonetic Words

While most Anglo-Saxon words are considered “regular” in their consonant and vowel sounds, approximately 200 common words do not follow letter-sound correspondence. The vowel sound is usually what is not phonetic in these words, often called *non-phonetic, irregular, red flag,* or *outlaw words*. Students need to memorize these words for both reading and spelling as they occur very frequently in English text. Commonly used non-phonetic words include *one, once, only, off, want, where, there, laugh, cough,* and *eye*. (See handout of common non-phonetic words.) Students should learn 3-5 of these words at a time. Drill cards are effective in establishing the rote memory of the words. Sentence dictation should contain these non-phonetic words for practice.