Recognizing Words: Helping Children Develop Word Analysis Strategies

You are a proficient reader. When you read, you recognize most words without sounding them out. Most of the time, you recognize almost every word automatically, so you just think about the overall meaning of what you read. Your ability to recognize words rapidly and seemingly without effort is the foundation on which many other reading skills rest. How did you develop this ability?

Learning to read is a journey for every student. The paths of this journey are becoming increasingly clear to us, especially in the early stages when learning to recognize words is an important goal. We refer to children who are just beginning their literacy journeys as emergent readers.

Properly supported by their families and insightful teachers, emergent readers will develop effective word analysis strategies that are helpful in reading. These word analysis strategies lead to accurate and automatic word recognition and, ultimately, to effective reading comprehension.

Most printed words are unfamiliar to emergent readers. In the beginning, they do not realize that printed words represent spoken words, and they cannot analyze printed words to determine their oral equivalent. Emergent readers gradually develop this insight, which is an important facet on their literacy journey. Over time, most children develop the full range of word analysis strategies that enable them to become proficient readers, readers who are seldom conscious of these early skills that have become automatic.
What is word analysis? Word analysis refers to an extensive set of knowledge about our written language and strategies that permit readers to determine both the sounds of words and their meanings as they read. Word analysis develops as children acquire abilities in the following areas: phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, context use, sight word knowledge, morphemic analysis, chunking words, and dictionary skills.

**PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS**

_Phonological awareness_ develops when young children become aware that language is an object that may be analyzed and manipulated by them in different ways, such as rhyming, playing word games, and talking about words as objects. Emergent readers gradually become aware of language as an object. We see this when they begin to substitute one word for another at the end of a repeated sentence, play rhyming games in oral language, and later segment a spoken word, such as the two syllables that make up the word _into_. An important beginning step on the way to phonemic awareness is becoming aware of language as an object that can be manipulated and analyzed.

**PHONEMIC AWARENESS**

_Phonemes_ are the smallest unit of speech sounds, such as the three separate sounds you hear in the word _read_. Phonemic awareness is being able to hear each sound as an individual unit. What is the difference between phonological awareness and phonemic awareness? Put simply, when you possess phonological awareness, you are aware of individual words and syllables as objects. When you possess phonemic awareness, you are aware of individual sounds or phonemes as objects. With phonological awareness, you can identify the two syllables in the spoken word _into_. With phonemic awareness, you can hear these two syllables and identify the two separate phonemes in the syllable _in_ as well as the two phonemes in _to_. Having phonemic awareness allows you to succeed in developing phonic knowledge because you can identify the individual sounds in words. If you cannot hear these sounds, phonics will provide little help.
PHONICS

*Phonics*, or phonic knowledge, consists of two elements:
(1) understanding the relationships between letters and sounds and
(2) putting together, or blending, sounds represented by letters.
Knowing the more regular letter-sound, or graphophonic, relationships
helps us to recognize many words by permitting us to sound them out.

CONTEXT USE

Using context provides important assistance during word analysis. We
can often anticipate what a word is, even before we actually see it from
the context that precedes the word. Other times, we can figure out an
unfamiliar word by looking at the words and sentences that follow it.
This is context use, which is an important type of word analysis skill.

SIGHT WORD KNOWLEDGE

When we see a word frequently, it becomes a *sight word*, a word that
we recognize instantly without having to resort to phonics or context
use. High-frequency words, such as *me, I, you*, children's names, and
others, quickly become sight words for us. As children become better
readers, the words they know by sight, without the need to consciously
analyze them, increases substantially. We seek to expand children's
sight word knowledge because knowing just 200 of the most common
words by sight will enable children to recognize about 50 percent of all
the words they will encounter while reading.

MORPHEMIC ANALYSIS

*Morphemic analysis* refers to using prefixes and suffixes to break a
word apart for both its meaning and pronunciation. Often, this skill is
useful when applying phonic generalizations. Morphemic analysis is
helpful in the later stages of word analysis.
CHUNKING WORDS

*Chunking* refers to breaking words into smaller units; it is sometimes called structural analysis or syllabication. Chunking can help determine a word's pronunciation and meaning. In this chapter, we include only those chunking or syllabication generalizations that are most useful and consistent.

DICTIONARY SKILLS

We sometimes use a *dictionary* when analyzing either the pronunciation or the meaning of a word. Dictionary skills are useful for all of us.

DEVELOPMENTAL SPELLING PATTERNS

The spelling patterns we see in children's writing provide a window into their growing ability to recognize words. Uncorrected spelling patterns are especially revealing. A child who writes *I LV MI CT* ("I love my cat") tells us that he or she knows much about letter-sound relationships with initial and final consonants but is only beginning to develop an awareness of vowels appearing in the middle of words. If you know what to look for, children's developmental spelling patterns reveal important diagnostic information. They tell you where a child is at on the journey to becoming a fluent and automatic reader.

THE JOURNEY AHEAD

We will explore each of these word analysis elements in this book. Knowing about word analysis will help children as they begin to develop proficiency in reading. You will acquire an understanding about what young children must learn in the beginning stages of their journey. This will influence your decisions about what to teach young children to help them become successful readers.
**Lesson Suggestions**

Use the online word recognition lessons from Starfall (http://www.starfall.com/) in your classroom computer center. This valuable online resource contains activities within each of the areas discussed in this chapter and is designed for online use by children. The well-designed activities do not require users to provide identifying information about themselves or pay a fee to use the materials. It is the best-designed online experience for students in word analysis and early reading that we have encountered.

---

### WORD ANALYSIS

1. One element of reading instruction that teachers should be familiar with is word _________. Readers use word analysis to analyze written words and construct both their sounds and their _________.

2. Printed letters, words, and sentences are language symbols from which a reader seeks to derive _________. Word analysis refers to those strategies a reader uses when unfamiliar words are encountered in written _________. Both sound and meaning are _________ by the symbols in our written language.

3. Readers construct meaning from written language. Although emergent readers are already familiar with the spoken form of their language, most of them are unfamiliar with the ________ form of language.

4. Many word _________ strategies are referred to as decoding skills. A reader must be able to use the information of the ________ language code to decode words.

5. Phonics is only one of many important word ________ strategies. Other elements of word analysis, such as phonological awareness and phonemic awareness, are skills that develop earlier. These enable readers to use word analysis _________.

---

**Recognizing Words** 5
6. In reconstructing a message from written _______, a reader uses at least three types of cueing systems. These interrelated cueing systems are **graphophones, semantics, and syntax**.

| language |

| phonic language language |

| semantic |

| language, syntactic |

| process |

| language sounds phonics |

| orthography orthography |

7. Grapho _________ information describes the relationship between sounds in our _________ and the written letters or spelling patterns making up written _________.

8. Semantic information refers to the meaning elements of language. The vocabulary and conceptual background of a reader influence his or her ability to use _________ information.

9. Syntax refers to the sentence patterns and structure, or grammar, of _________. Readers use these structures, or _________ cues, when constructing meaning from print.

10. Readers use all three types of cueing systems simultaneously during the reading _________.

11. **Phonics** refers to the application of information about the sounds of _________ to the teaching of reading. The term **phonics** refers to the knowledge about how _________ are represented by letters or letter combinations in written language to help readers determine the oral equivalents of words. The English language does not have a completely predictable correspondence between sounds and written symbols, which makes phonics an incomplete word analysis system. Nevertheless, relationships between letters and sounds are sufficiently predictable to make _________ a useful word analysis strategy when it is combined with other strategies.

12. **Orthography** is the term used to refer to the writing system of a language. The writing system, or _________, of English is complex. English _________ is based on an alphabetic principle as well as morphological (word form) and syntactic considerations. Because of these additional influences, words are not always spelled the way they sound.
13. A phoneme is the smallest single unit of sound in a language that distinguishes one morpheme (meaning unit) from another. For example, when the words *bit* and *sit* are spoken, only the first phoneme (out of three) is different. The spoken word *at* has two __________, whereas the spoken word *cat* has __________.

| phonemes, three |

14. A grapheme is a written or printed representation of a phoneme. For example, the letters *th*, *i*, and *s* in the word *this* represent a grapheme. Note that a single grapheme may include several letters that represent a single sound. When you see the written word *at*, you see two graphemes: __________ and __________. In the written word *path*, you see three __________: p, a, and th.

| a, t |
| graphemes |

15. The written word *chat* has four letters. It also has __________ graphemes and __________ phonemes. Two of the letters appear in a single grapheme, *ch*. This grapheme represents __________ sound.

| three |
| three |
| one |

16. In reading, children are expected to learn letter-sound relationships or, as they are frequently referred to, grapheme-phoneme __________.

| relationships |

17. Before they learn grapheme-phoneme relationships, however, most children become aware of words and syllabic units as discrete units. This is often referred to as __________ awareness.

| phonological |

18. __________ awareness is the general term used to label the conscious awareness about the sounds of language. Phonological __________ is an important milestone for young children because it indicates that they are consciously aware of the sounds of language and can analyze and manipulate these sounds in different ways.

| Phonological |
| awareness |

19. If children can identify individual words in oral language, clap the syllables in a word, or know how to rhyme one word with another, we can be confident that they have developed __________ awareness.

| phonological |
20. A special aspect of phonological awareness, and a more challenging milestone, is the development of phonemic awareness. ________ awareness is demonstrated when a child can analyze and manipulate individual phonemes, or sounds, in oral language. Being able to identify all the sounds, or phonemes, in a spoken word, such as at, demonstrates that a child has phonemic _________.

21. Phonemic awareness is important for children to develop because it enables them to benefit from ________ instruction.

22. Being able to determine the graphophonemic relationships in a word does not, by itself, always enable a reader to comprehend what he or she _________. However, graphphonemic cues can be combined with other language information to result in meaningful _________.

23. A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in a language. The word bookmark has ________ morphemes.

24. Morphemic analysis refers to the analysis of words by using the meaningful parts of ________, such as prefixes, suffixes, contractions, compound words, and base words. Many texts on how to teach reading use the term structural analysis; this term is equivalent to morphemic analysis here. In addition, structural ________ includes the study of syllabic units in words and spelling patterns influenced by the addition of affixes.

25. Morphemic ________ is concerned with how meaning is determined by the combination of morphemes, the smallest units of meaning in a language.

26. The word box contains one unit of meaning, or morpheme. In the word boxes, there are ________ morphemes: box and es. Box is called a free ________ because it can stand alone; another unit does not need to be added to it for the unit to have meaning. The es plural is an example of a bound morpheme. Bound morphemes function only when combined with a ________ morpheme.
27. Morphemic analysis is an important aspect of word analysis. The use of morphemic analysis is limited, however, to words that contain identifiable morphemes, including ___________, ___________, and root words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>morphemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>prefixes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suffixes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28. The English spelling system is based on more than the correspondence between ___________ and sounds. For example, consider the following word pairs: sane and sanity, nation and national, democracy and democratic. The sounds represented by the a in sane and sanity, the a in nation and national, and the o in democracy and democratic are not the same, even though these word pairs contain a basic meaning unit, or ___________. Linguists use the term morphophonemic to refer to the combined meaning and __________ base of the English spelling system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>spelling system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>morpheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29. Readers often use context clues during __________ analysis. Context clues require readers to rely on the other words and sentence patterning, or __________, in a reading selection, along with meaning cues in the material.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syntax</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30. __________ clues provide helpful information for determining word __________. Context clues are also helpful in determining pronunciation for readers who have previously heard a word orally but have never seen the printed form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31. Efficient readers combine all __________ techniques to figure out the pronunciation and __________ of unfamiliar words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>phonetic analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>word, analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32. The ultimate aim of instruction in word analysis is to help students become more efficient readers. Efficient readers focus on meaning and recognize many words instantly. The words that readers __________ instantly comprise their sight __________ knowledge. One factor contributing to the development of extensive __________ word knowledge is a command of word analysis __________. Extensive __________ word knowledge also contributes to efficient reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sight analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>recognize, word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategies, sight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
33. Phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, context clues, sight words, structural and morphemic analyses, and using the dictionary are word strategies discussed in this text. For children, this knowledge is acquired over a period of years. For you, this information is condensed into a brief, interactive tutorial to save you time.

### SELF-CHECK FOR CHAPTER 1

1. Readers use word strategies to analyze written words to construct both sounds and meanings. Word analysis includes phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, context use, sight word knowledge, morphemic analysis, and dictionary skills.

2. The term *graphophonic relationships* refers to the relationships between letters and ________.

3. The term *phonics* refers to how sounds are represented by ________.

4. A ________ is the smallest single unit of sound in a language that distinguishes one morpheme from another.

5. A ________ is a written or printed representation of a phoneme.

6. The spoken word *push* has ________ phonemes.

7. The written word *past* has ________ graphemes.

8. When children are able to identify individual words and syllables in a language, we can be confident that they have developed ________ awareness.

9. When children are able to identify individual sounds, or phonemes, in a language, we can be confident that they have developed ________ awareness.

10. A ________ is the smallest unit of meaning in a language. The word *running* has two morphemes.
11. Readers often use surrounding words and other information, or _________ clues, during word analysis.

context

12. The words readers recognize instantly comprise their _________ word knowledge. Extensive sight word knowledge is important for efficient reading.

Sight

---

**ONLINE READING RESOURCES**

To learn more about word recognition and the important role it plays during the reading process, explore these online resources:


