

Demystifying the English writing system: the role of etymology and morphology in spelling.

WORKSHOP

© Distinguished Professor Pamela Snow



College of Ed Dev Psychologists, Melbourne, February 13, 2026

In this workshop

- Oral language as the foundation for reading – a brief SLP perspective
- A brief history lesson
 - Writing Vs speaking
 - Orthography
 - Etymology
- What is morphology?
- How does morphology relate to etymology?
- Morphological analysis Vs syllabification
- Tiers of vocabulary
- How does knowledge of morphology in the early years classroom support the teaching of vocabulary and spelling?
- Is spelling reading reverse-engineered?
- Schwa-vowel
- Word-final -e
- Where can you learn more?



We'll get into (and out of) the linguistic weeds

**Classroom /
clinical
applications**



**Linguistic
complexity**

Image source: MS PPT



Why is it erroneous to say that English has a “highly irregular” writing system?

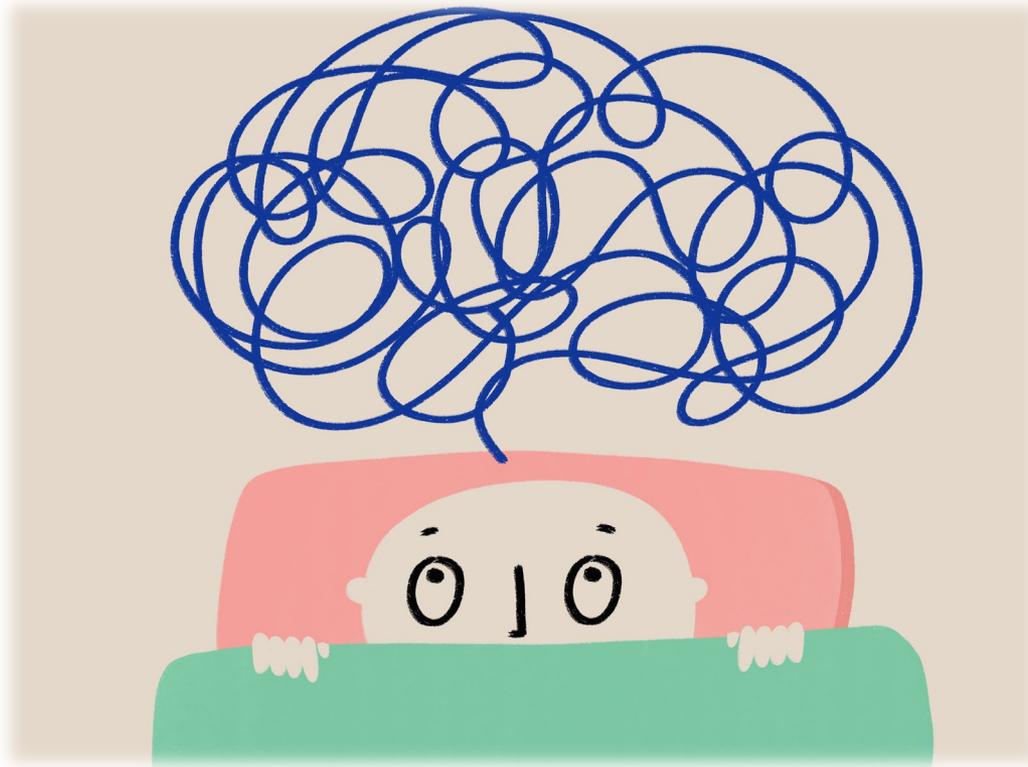
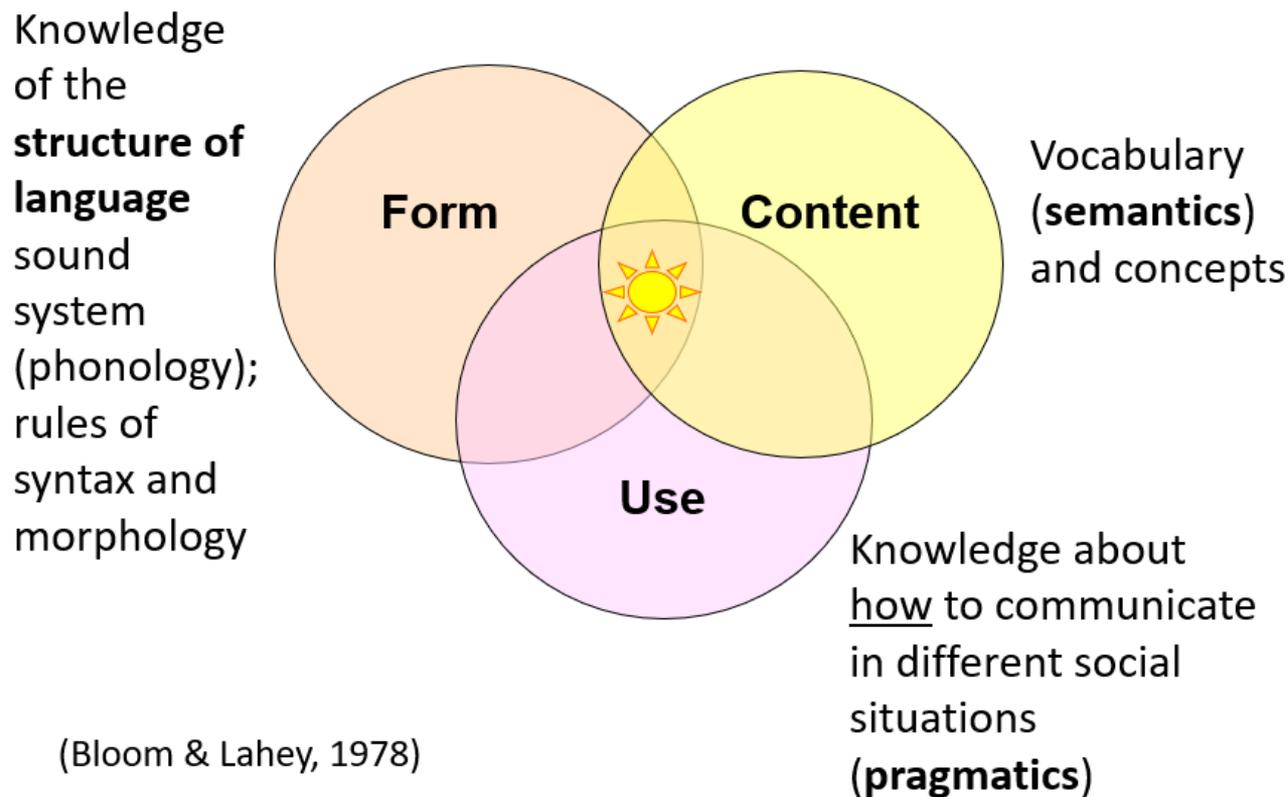


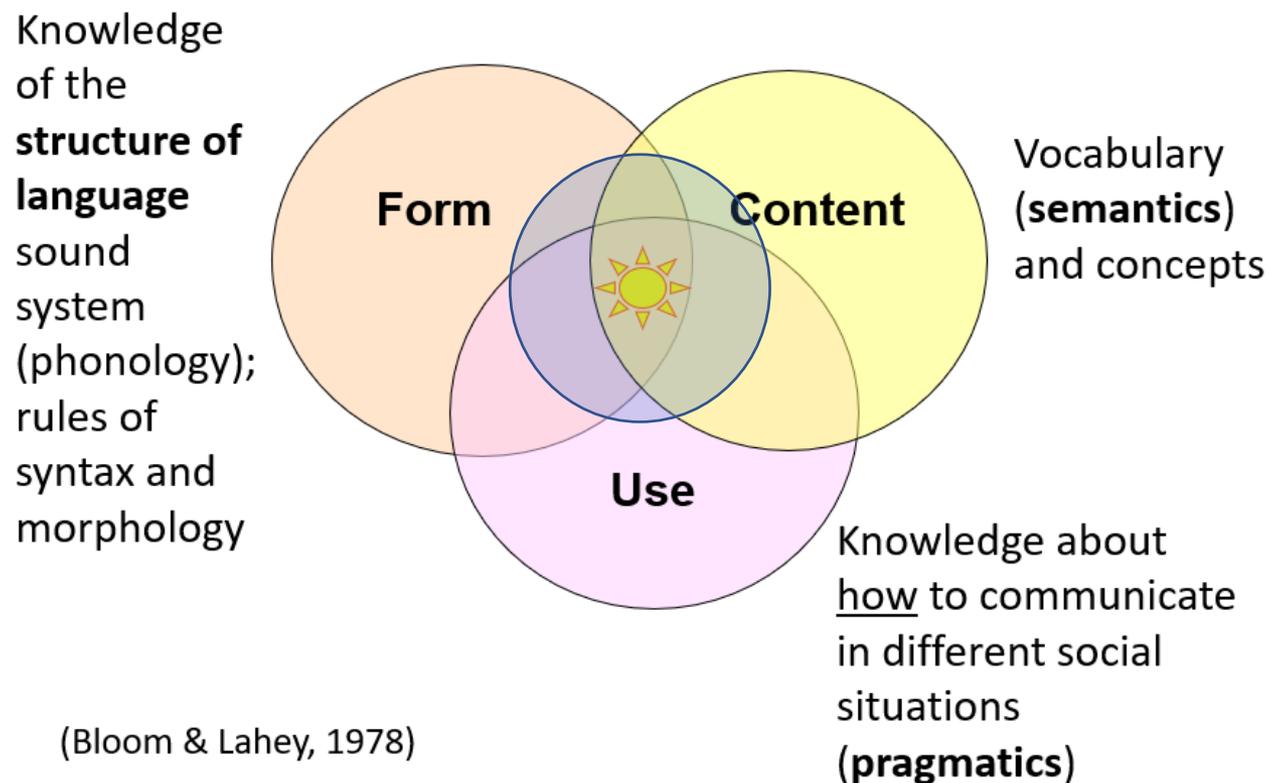
Image source: MS PPT



The structure of oral language

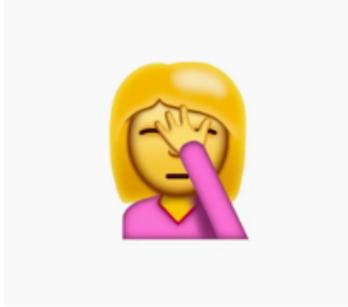


The structure of oral language



Literal (surface) Vs Implied (deep) meanings

- ▶ *Similes*
- ▶ *Metaphor*
- ▶ *Idiom*
- ▶ *Jokes*
- ▶ *Sarcasm*
- ▶ *Analogy*
- ▶ *Irony*
- ▶ *Satire*
- ▶ *Parody*
- ▶ *Politeness conventions*



Inferencing in everyday conversation is supported by

- ✓ real-time context
- ✓ facial expressions
- ✓ tone of voice
- ✓ opportunities to clarify
- ✓ shared background knowledge
- ✓ co-construction of spoken interactions



Image source: MS
PowerPoint

BUT – who does all the work in reading?



Oral language Vs written language: Same, same but different

Oral language

- Often interactive (co-constructed)
- Contains pauses, hesitations, dysfluencies; false starts
- Constrained by social conventions (pragmatic rules)
- Degree of formality varies
- Punctuation implied by prosodic contour
- No spaces between word boundaries – we “hallucinate” these (Burridge, 2002)



Image source: MS PPT



Written language

- Typically - more formal but this varies according to genre
- Contains spaces to show word boundaries
- Pauses, hesitations, dysfluencies, false starts removed (unless in quotes)
- Syntactic complexity may be greater than spoken language
- Contains punctuation to aid with understanding
- Spelling and grammar can change meaning



Images: MS PPT



What is reading like without the spaces between words?

Itwasthebestoftimesitwastheworstoftimesitwastheageofwisdomitwastheageoffoolishnessitwastheepochofbeliefitwastheepochofincredulityitwastheseasonoflightitwastheseasonofdarknessitwasthespringofhopeitwasthewinterofdespair.

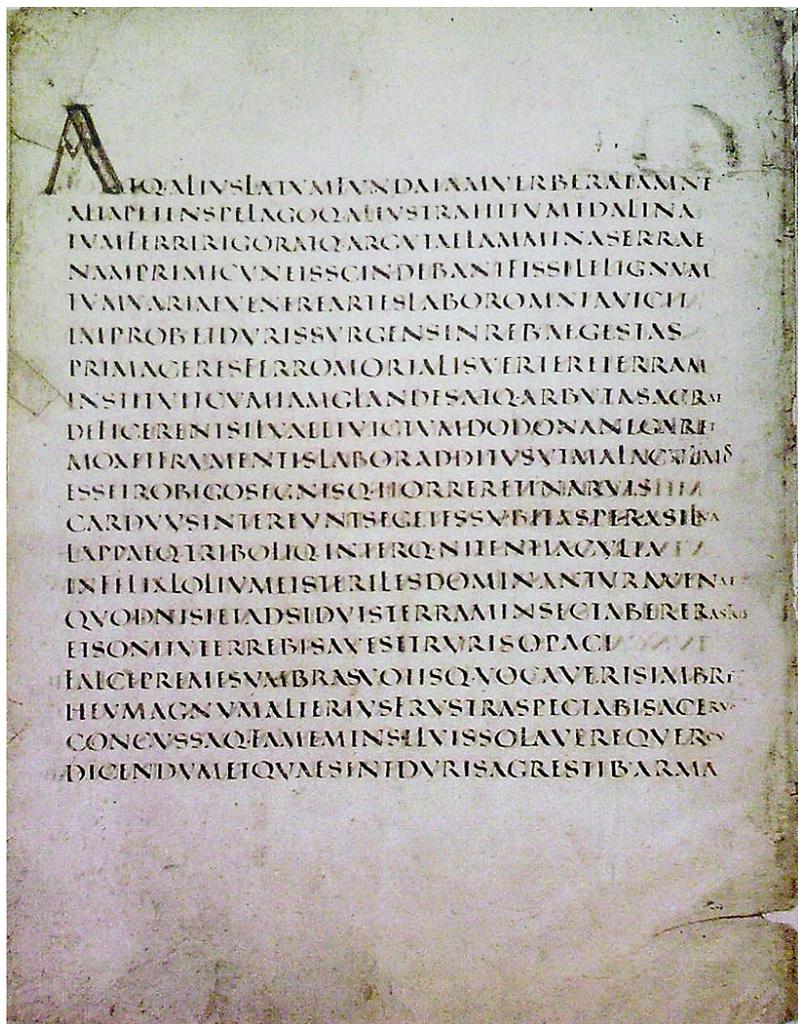
Oursisarulegovernedlanguagebuttherejusthappentoberatheralotofrulesaswithteachingyourchildanythingcomplexlikegettingdressedtyingtheirshoelacesridingabikeorplayingthepianothelogicallearningprincipleistostartsimplepractiseandconsolidateandbuilduptomore complexity.

+++ cognitive load

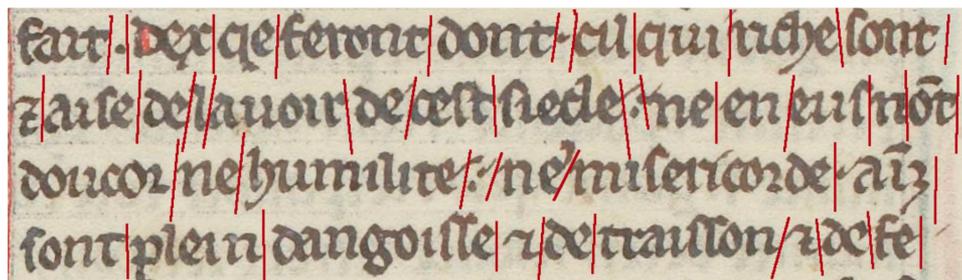
But - this continuous stream is what our ears hear during spoken communication. Our brains then effortlessly “hallucinate” the word boundaries b/c oral language is biologically primary.



What is reading like without the spaces between words?



Scriptio Continuo. Source: Wikipedia



Source:

<https://openmethods.dariah.eu>



A word about English orthography



- What does the word “orthography” mean?
- English has a history of being a bower bird:
 - Wars, trade, politics, and religion have all resulted in the appropriation of words (and their spellings) from other languages.
- English
 - has a semi-transparent orthography.
 - is a morpho-phonemic language
 - is rule / pattern-governed, not “random”.
- Spelling is not “the problem”; rather, shifts in pronunciation over time (and geographically) can create challenges for readers and spellers.
- Knowledge of etymology helps to de-mystify orthographic conventions.



Etymology

- A branch of linguistics.
- The study of word origins / derivations.
- In English, involves and understanding that we have incorporated many Greek, Latin, French, Nordic, German, and Spanish, words (and words from other languages as well). These are often referred to as “loan words”.
- Closely tied to the **study of world history**.



Images: MS PPT



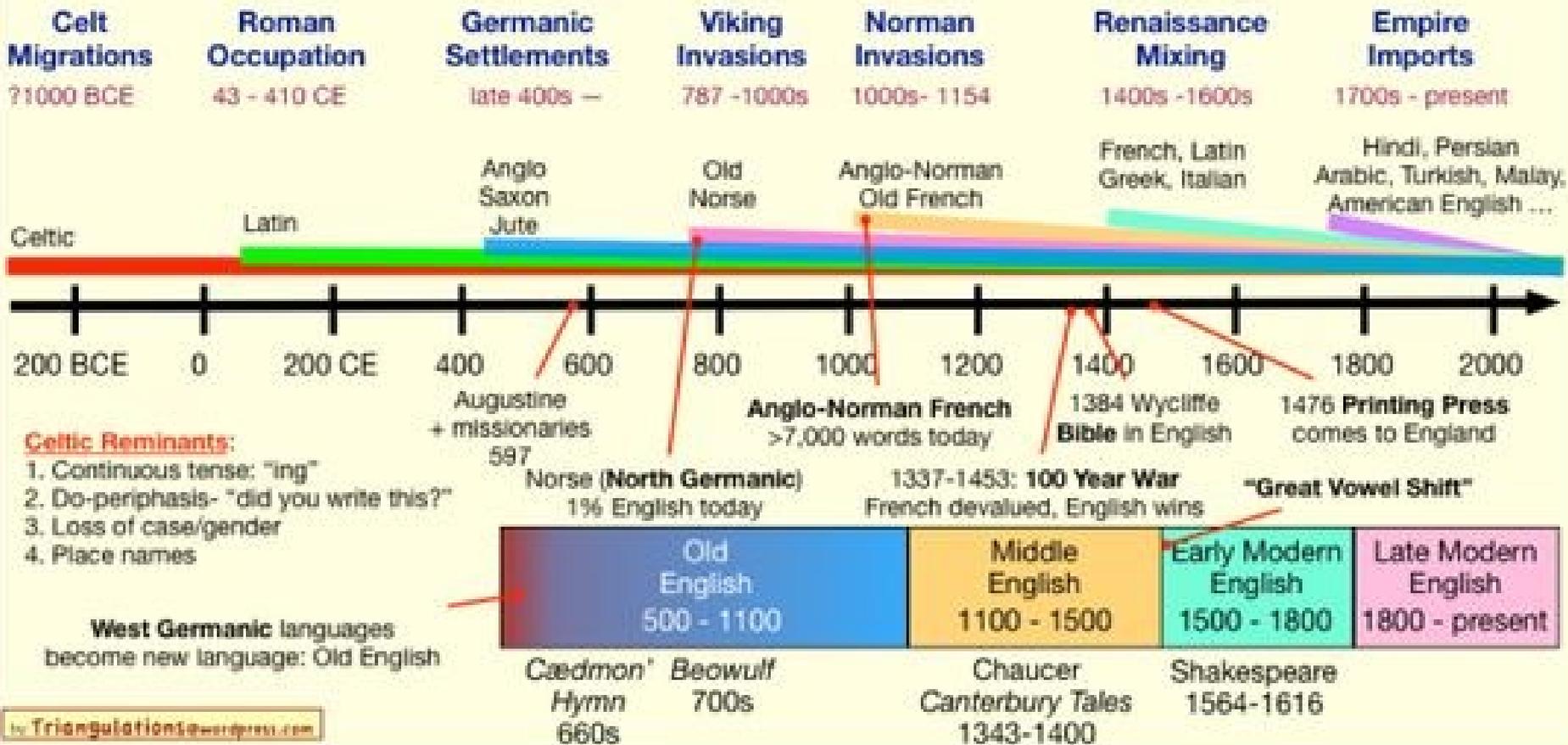


"Clearly, what we now think of as the English language didn't originate in Britain at all"

Burridge & de Laps (2015, p. 85)



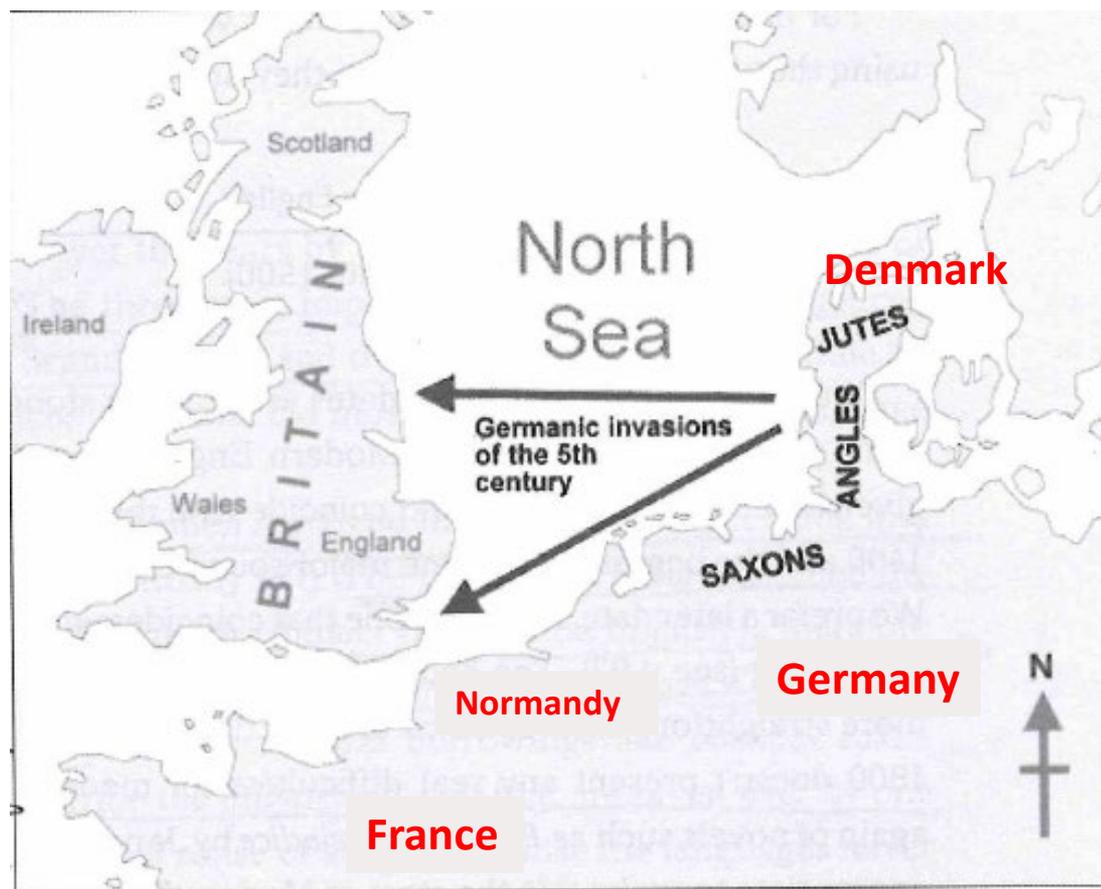
The History of the English Language



<https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/458382068297926546/>



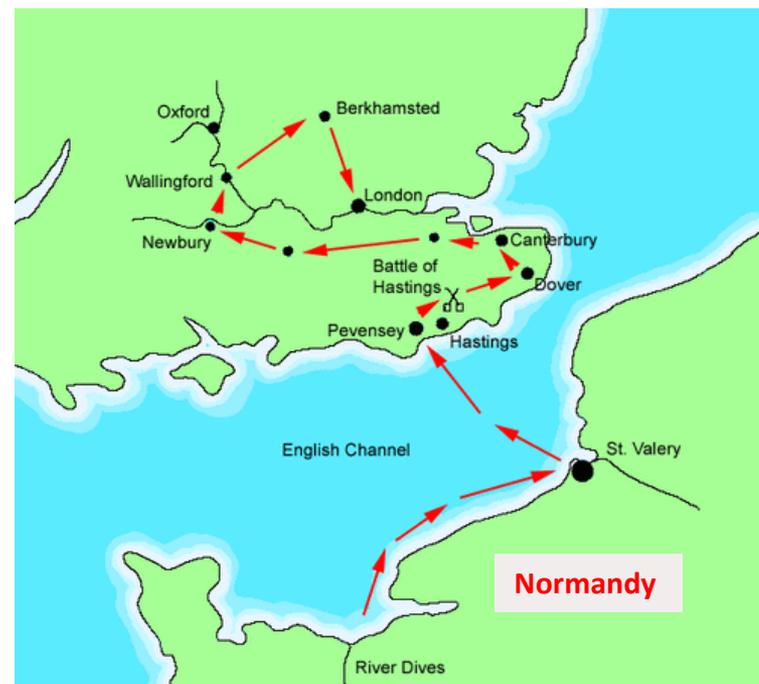
5th century Anglo-Saxon and Jute invasions



Source: Burrige & de Laps (2015, p. 85)



What does the Battle of Hastings in 1066 have to do with modern English?





The History of the English Language



Anglo Saxon words:
 above, daughter, fish, fox, needle, open, good, clean, blood

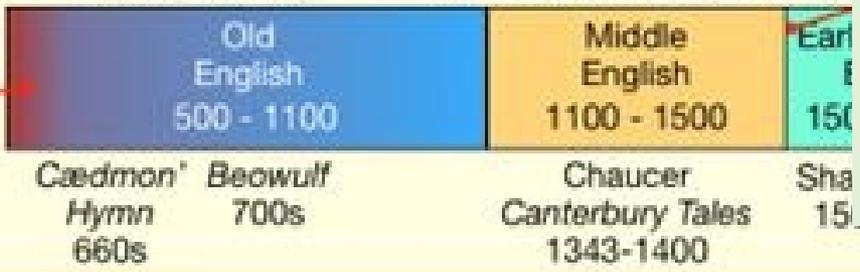
French words:
 ~ (45% of modern English) – many via Latin

Greek words:
 biology, psychology, etymology, hypnosis (later: photography, telephone)

Other words:
 ... Persian, Turkish, Malay, ... in English ...

- Celtic Remnants:**
1. Continuous tense: "ing"
 2. Do-periphrasis- "did you write this?"
 3. Loss of case/gender
 4. Place names

West Germanic languages become new language: Old English



Hindu/Irdu words:
 bungalow, avatar, chutney, jungle

Turkish words:
 Yoghurt, caviar

Arabic words:
 alcohol, coffee, magazine

by Triangulations@wordpress.com

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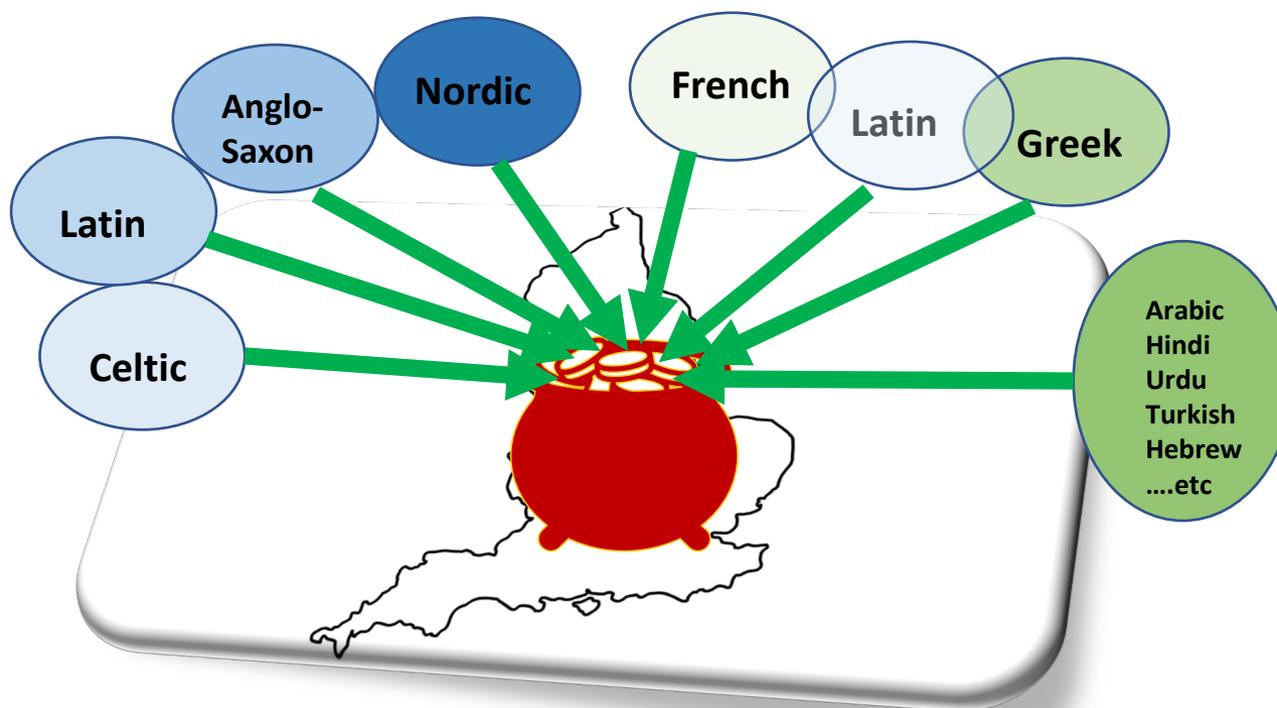


The History of the English Language



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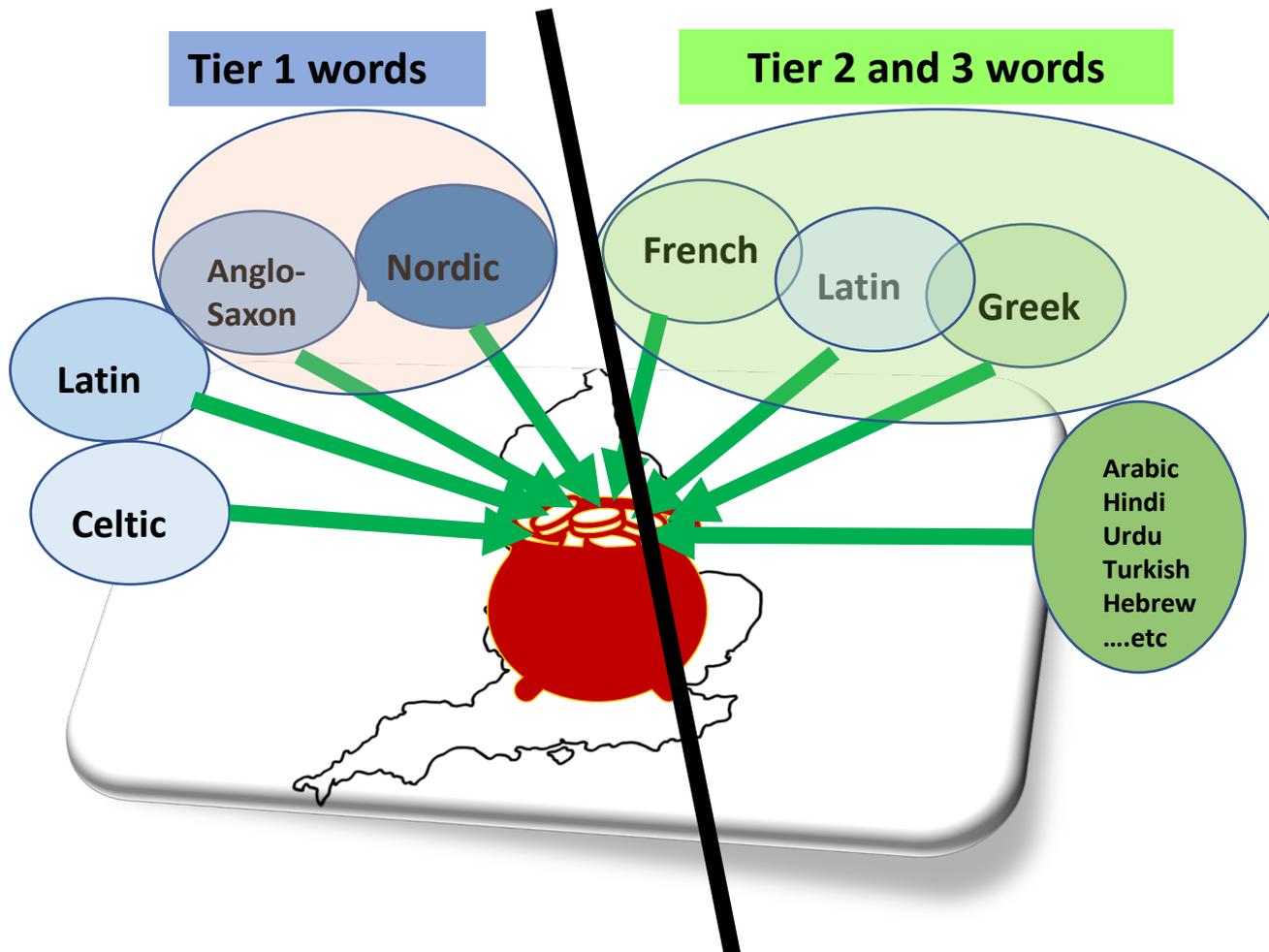




The “lexical bar”

Corson, D. (1997). The learning and use of academic English words. *Language Learning*, 47(4), 671-718.





The “lexical bar”

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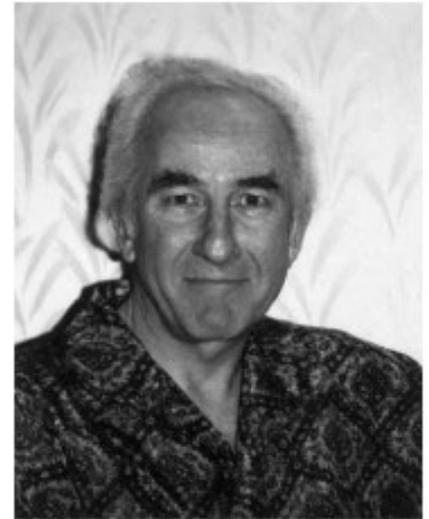


What did Corson mean by the “lexical bar”?

*“.....the **vocabulary of English falls into two very different categories.** (There is a)..... **striking incompatibility between Anglo-Saxon and Graeco-Latin elements in English:** ‘the familiar homely-sounding and typically very short words’ that we learn very early in life and use for most everyday purposes and ‘the **more learned, foreign sounding and characteristically rather long words**’ (p. 138)” *.....that are used for academic purposes**

(Corson, 1997, p. 672) – with my emphasis added

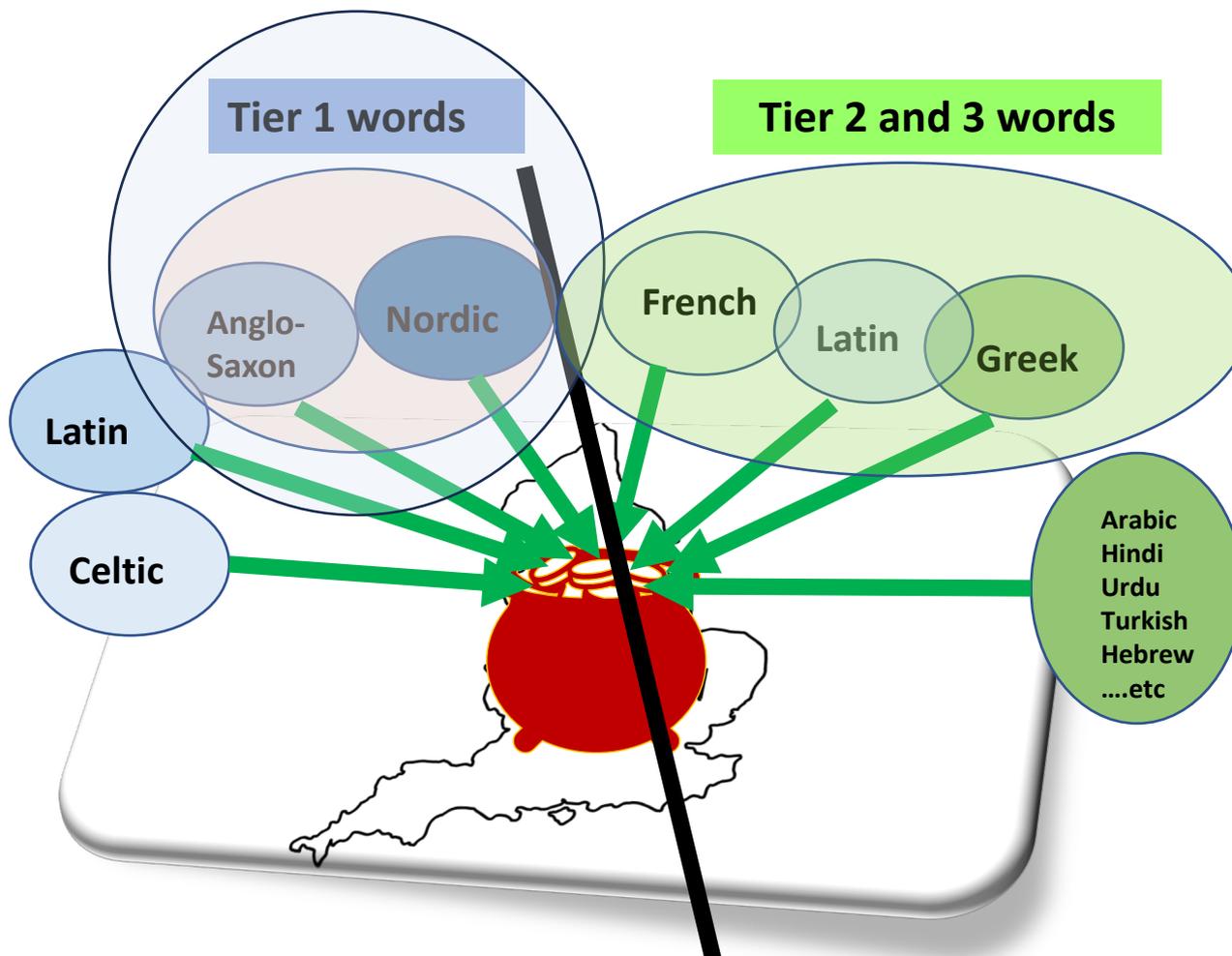
Corson, D. (1997). The learning and use of academic English words. *Language Learning*, 47(4), 671-718.



David Corson
(30 May 1945–1 June 2001)



Life's Starter Pack



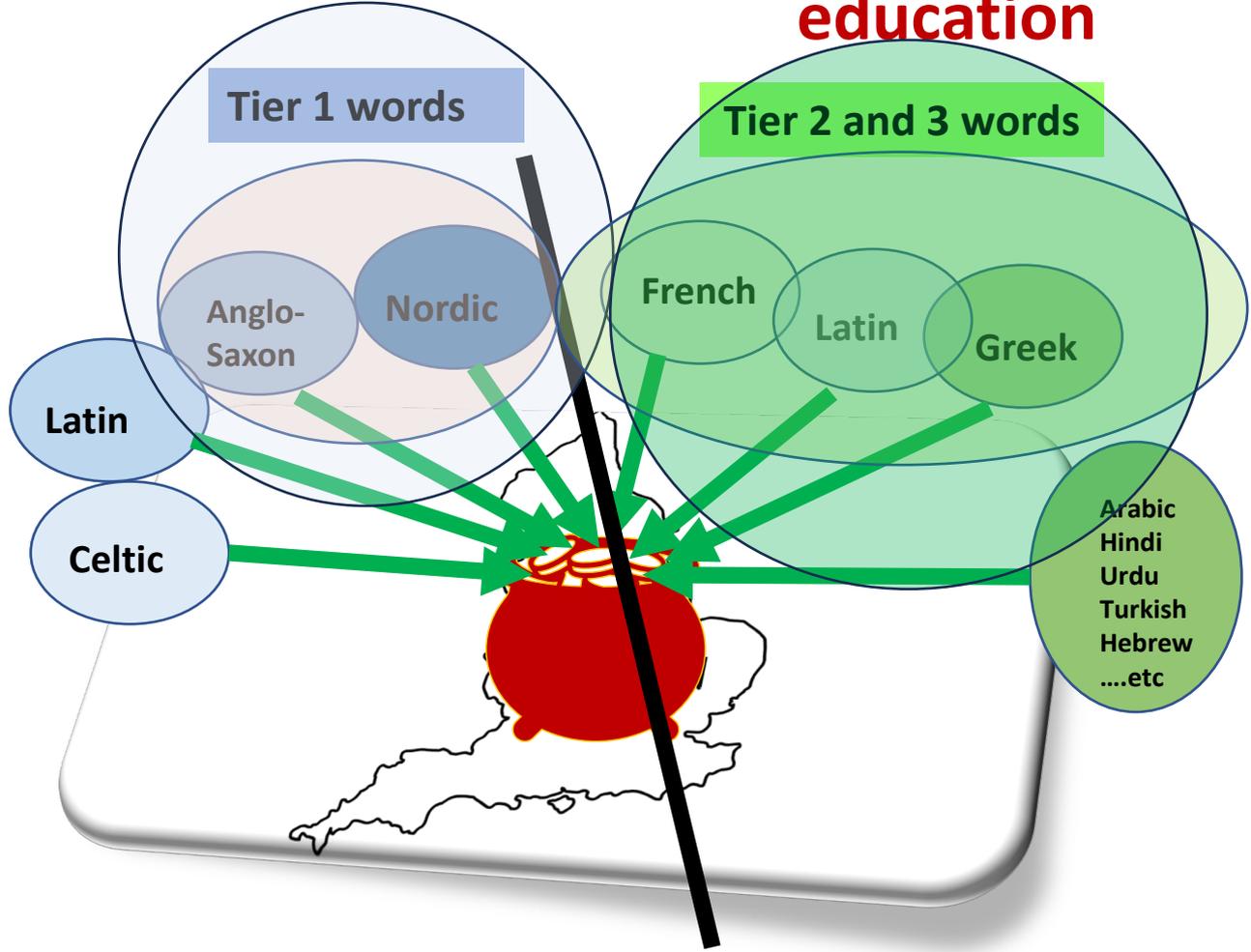
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Life's Starter Pack

The value-add of education



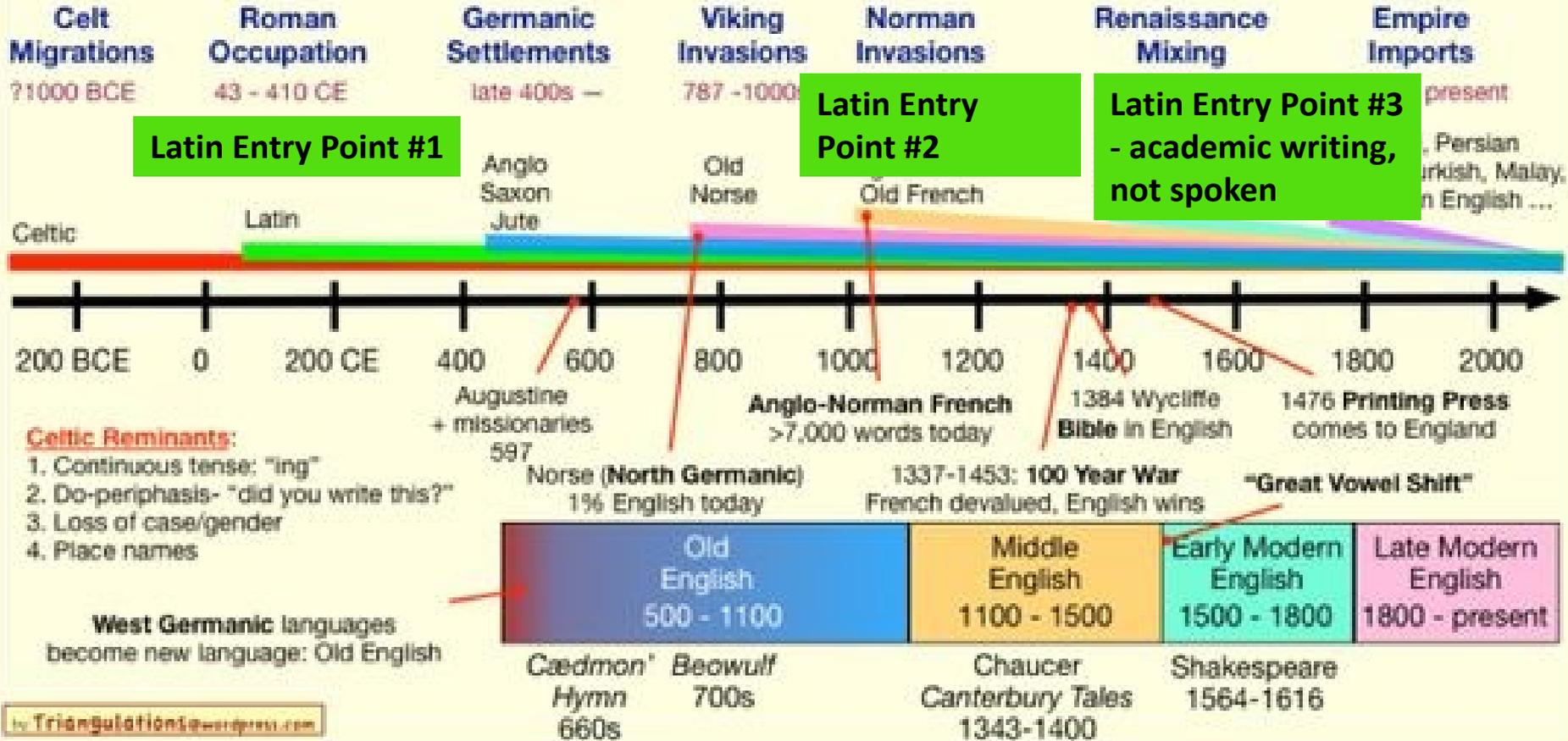
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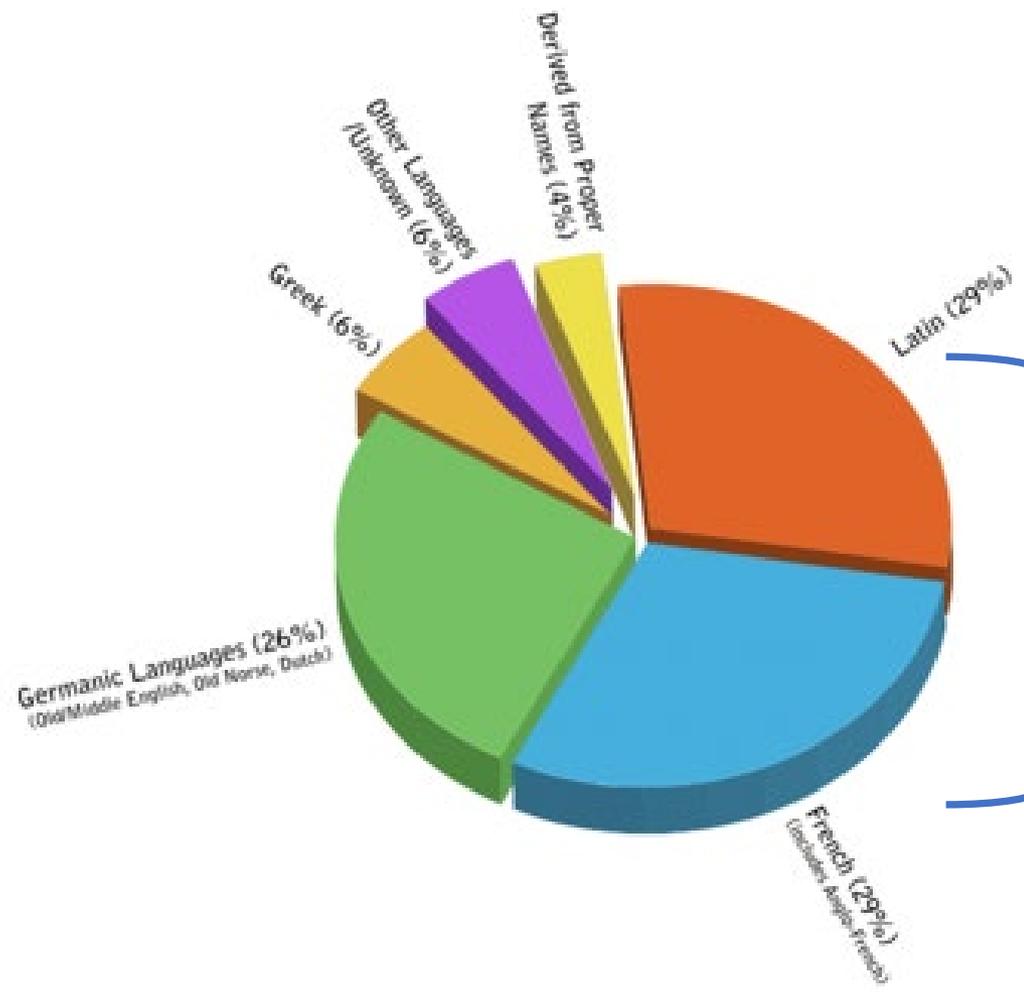
Latin: not dead yet!

The History of the English Language



<https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/458382068297926546/>





Many words came into English from Latin via French



Common English words with a **Greek** origin

Morphology; histology; biology; geology; geography; hypnosis; hydrology; psychology; chemistry; acrobat; agora; agoraphobia; phobia; democracy; epidemiology

Common English words with a **French*** origin

Cheque; receipt; raconteur; attention; secretary; bureau; beauty; classic; music; reception; retard; change; retrieve; theatre; cliché; café; fiancé; rendez-vous; souvenir; voyeur; reservoir; bassinette; boutique; mirage; debut; depot; chaise-longue

Common English words with a **Latin*** origin

Aqua; aquarium; via; duct; dental; macro; micro; piccolo; school/scholar; nova; pacific; debt; companion; paternal' maternal; mammal; equine; dux

Common English words with a **Nordic** origin

Anger; berserk; blunder; happy; lake; seem; stammer; thunder; sky; earth; moon; sun; water; husband; egg; glove

***Some words come from Latin, via French**



And....many English words came from Spanish in the 16th century

Common words

alligator, rodeo, tornado, mosquito, tango, flotilla, guerrilla, armadillo, cargo, galleon, vigilante, vanilla, suave, avocado, tomato, embargo, aficionado, alfalfa, canoe, desperado, hammock, machismo

Also several American place names, e.g.,

San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Antonio



Expressions from other languages

Common English expressions with a **Latin** origin

Mea culpa; ad infinitum; ad nauseum; bona fide; carpe diem; caveat emptor; de facto; ipso facto; per diem; ad hoc; per se; pro bono; rigor mortis; vice versa; nota bene (NB); id est (i.e.); exempli gratia (e.g.)

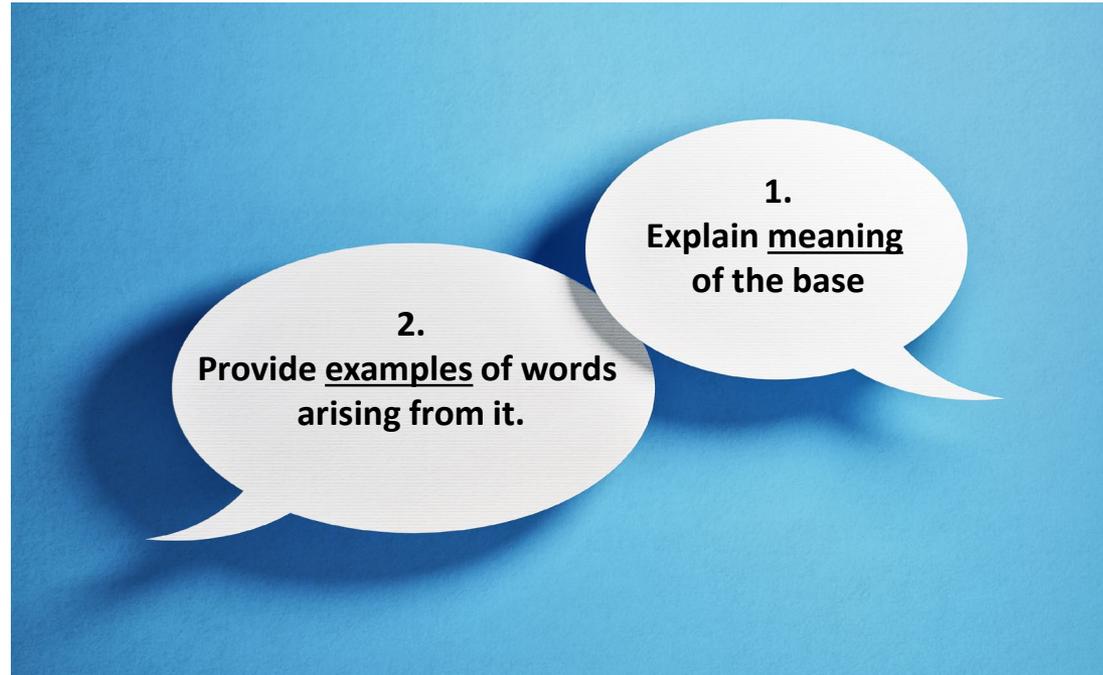
Common English expressions with a **French** origin

Au fait; par excellence; savoir-faire; je ne sais pas; avant-garde; carte-blanche; déjà-vu; à la carte; faux pas; vis-à-vis; bete-noir; tour de force; de rigueur; crème-de-la-crème



Understanding etymology supports teaching of morphology – which in turn supports reading, vocab development & spelling.

- Aero –
- Biblio –
- Chron –
- Demo –
- Gen –
- Hydra –
- Logo –
- Morph –
- Phil –
- Photo –
- Sect –
- Tract –

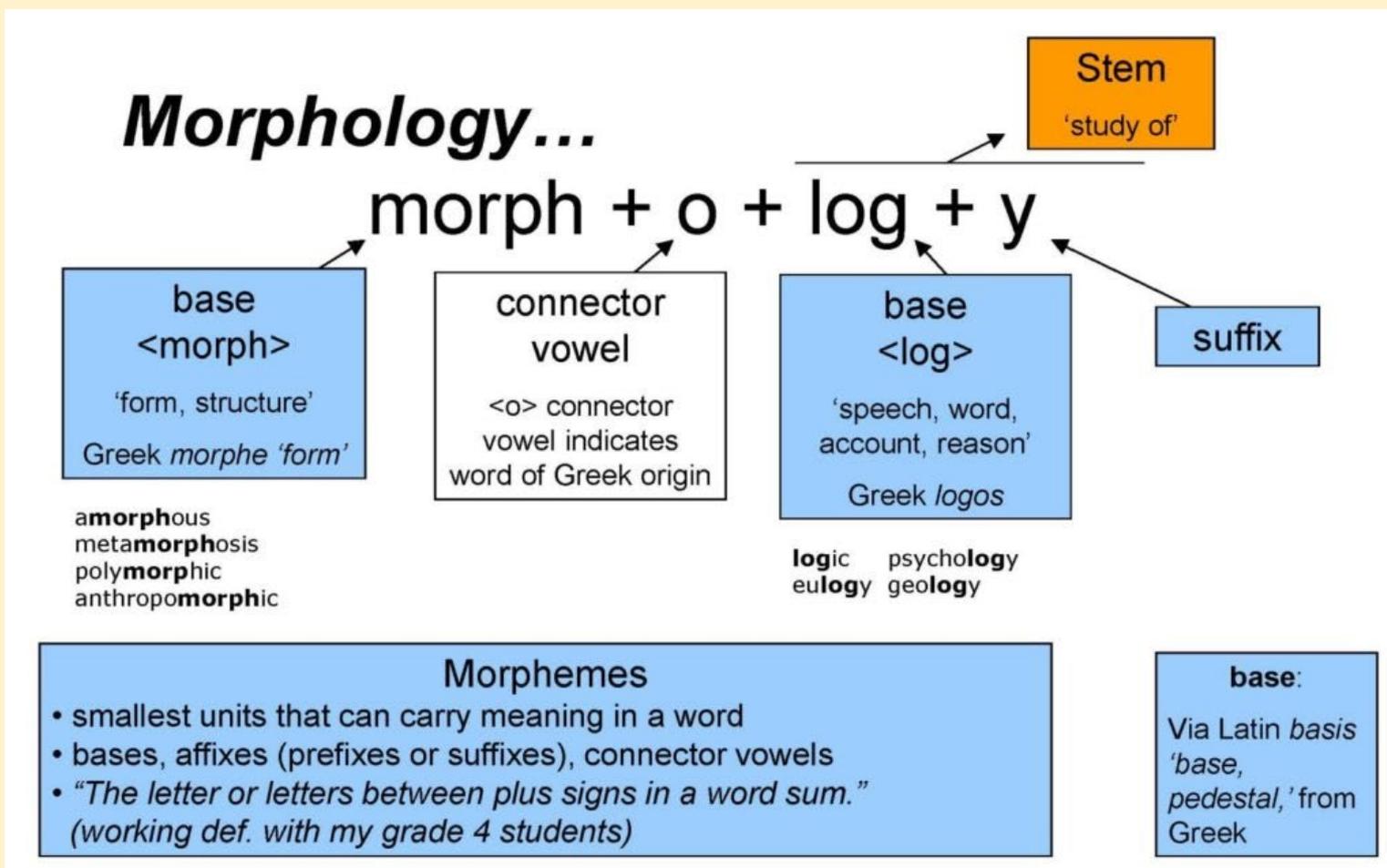


Understanding etymology supports teaching of morphology – which in turn supports reading, vocab development & spelling.

- Aero – **air** - aeroplane, aerospace, aeronautical
- Biblio – **book** - bibliography, bibliophile, Bible, bibliotherapy
- Chron – **time** - chronology, chronic, synchronise
- Demo – **people** - democracy, epidemiology, epidemic, pandemic, demography
- Gen – **birth** - genital, congenital, generate, Genesis, generation, regenerate
- Hydra – **water** - hydraulic, hydrate, dehydration, hydrangea
- Logo – **speech** - monologue, dialogue, logorrhoea
- Morph – **form** - morphology, metamorphosis, dysmorphic
- Phil – **affinity** - philanthropy, philander, Philadelphia, bibliophile
- Photo – **light** - photography, photo-sensitivity, telephoto
- Sect – **cut** – dissect, intersect, bisect, insect
- Tract – **pull** – tractor, retract, detract, protract, extract, traction, contract



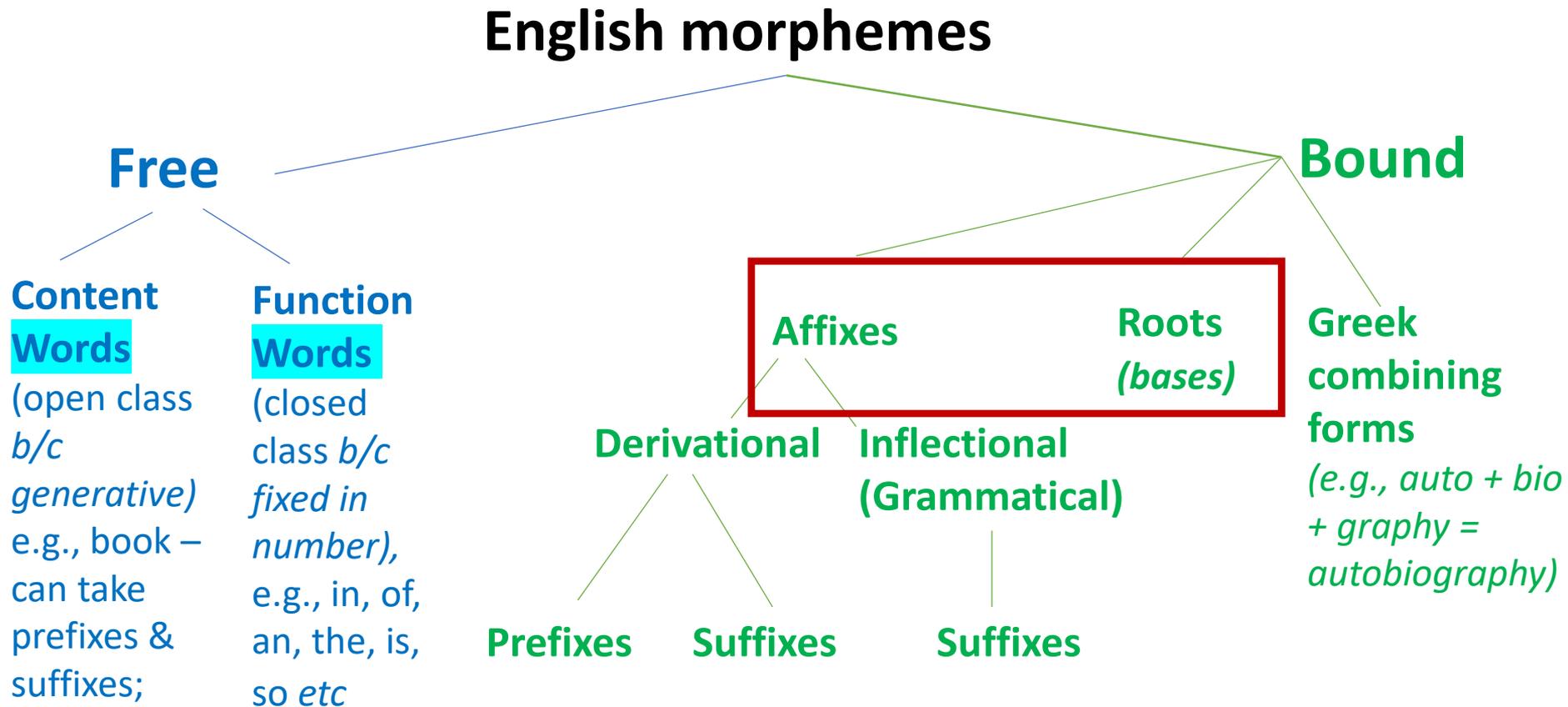
Sub-lexical analysis: Morphology



Source: <https://www.nimdzi.com/abcs-of-morphology-false-positives-in-terminology-management/>



Classes of morphemes (Adapted from Moats, 2020, p. 137)



Moats, L. C. (2020). *Speech to print: Language essentials for teachers*. (3rd ed.). Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.



Morphology in linguistics: the study of the smallest units of meaning within words

Sublexical analysis is important because English is a **morpho-phonemic** language (not strictly alphabetic)

➤ **Roots** (bases) and **affixes** (prefixes and suffixes)

- **Bound** morphemes: prefixes and suffixes
e.g., pre-, dis-, un-, -able, -ly - ing
Can be further divided into inflectional and derivational
 - **Unbound (free)** morphemes – simple words and compound words
fish; fishcake; shape (→shape; shaped; shapely; shapely; reshape; misshape)
- Relevant to understanding shifts in word meaning
 - Relevant to etymology – study of word origins (and meaning)
 - Relevant to learning spelling rules / patterns
 - **NB:** Morphemes and syllables do not necessarily align



Inflectional Vs derivational morphemes (See Moats, p. 136)

Inflectional

Do not change the part of speech of a word; they simply ensure that the word continues to "behave" grammatically in the sentence it is in, e.g.,

I play basketball; I play^{ed} basketball; I was play^{ing} basketball.

Are **always** suffixes

Derivational

Change meaning and/or the part of speech of a word, to *derive* a new word, e.g.,

attain -> attain^{ment}; attend -> attent^{ion}; cap - > ^{re}cap; do - > ^{un}do

May be prefixes or suffixes



(Some) Common affixes in English

Prefixes (come before the base)

un-

re-

dis-

mis-

ex-

pre-

de-

sub-

inter

in-

Suffixes (come after the base)

-ed

-ing

-s (plural or verb form)

-able

-er

-est

-er

-ful

-ly

-ment



Morphology in action

shape = base word (smallest unit of meaning)

- **shapes** – inflectional “s” (verb form) OR plural “s”
- **shaping** (note spelling convention here of “e” being dropped for addition of -ing)
- **shaped**
- **reshape**
- **misshape** – NB – knowledge of morphology guards against child reading this as miss-hape – also helps with spelling the word
- **reshaping**
- **reshaped**



Syllabification: Phonology Vs Morphology cont.

Telephone

- Syllables: tel - e – phone
- Morphemes: tele – phone

Education

- Syllables: ed – u – ca – tion
- Morphemes: educat* - ion
- *from Latin *educare*, meaning “train” or *educere* “to lead out”

Biological

- Syllables: bi – o – log – i – cal
- Morphemes: bio – logic* - al
- *From Greek. Meaning “branch of study; to speak”



Why increase the focus on morphology and etymology?

- ✓ The structure of **English is morpho-phonemic** (not strictly alphabetic)
- ✓ Morphology provides a **bridge between sound structure and meaning**
- ✓ Morphology ties to **etymology** – the study of word origins
- ✓ Beneficial to the learning of **spelling** rules
- ✓ Beneficial to both **typically-developing and struggling readers**
- ✓ Enriches students' **knowledge** about the English language

“Good readers attend to the internal details of words, both spoken and written, noticing distinctions among similar items and recognizing recurring patterns in language. They use strategies to distinguish and remember the meanings of words that sound alike, including recognising meaningful parts”.

(Moats, 2020, p. 134).



Vocabulary Tiers: A conceptual framework*

Tier 1

*Beck et al., 2013

- The most **basic words**; learnt through everyday oral conversations and experiences, e.g., *come, go, happy, sad, car, dog, home, hat, banana, tree, truck, sleep*. Repetition aids learning.
- Children from NESB or those with neurodisabilities may need some explicit instruction to support Tier 1.
- Accounts for about 8000 word families

Tier 2

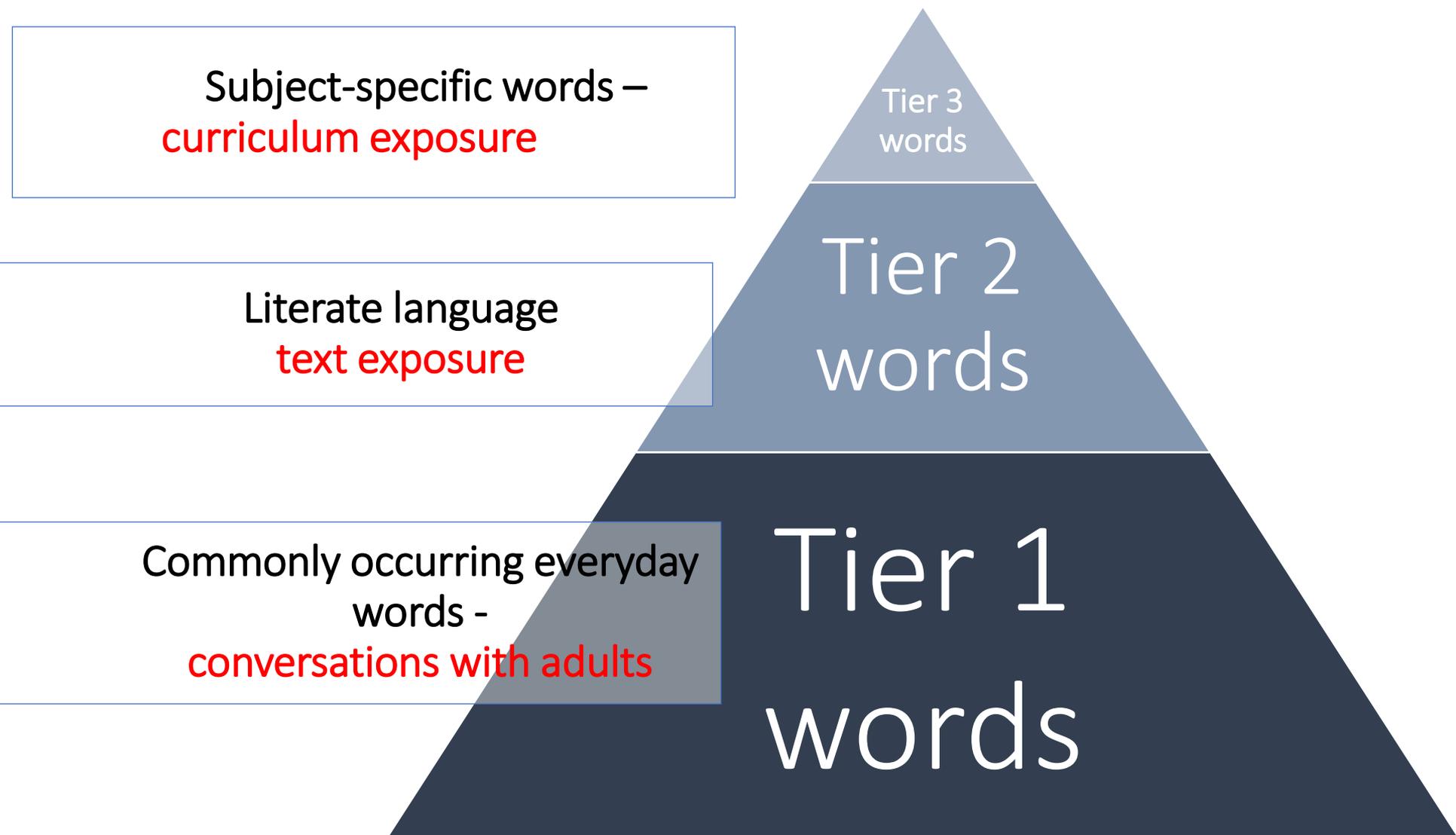
- **Common, high-frequency words** used across a range of domains by mature language users. Important for reading comprehension. May have multiple meanings. Examples: *measure, create, cooperate, establish, mainstay*. Strong overlap with general academic language. Less repetition.
- Teachers should explicitly teach these words as not all children will acquire them naturally.
- Accounts for about 7000 word families

Tier 3

- Specialised vocabulary that is **subject-specific** and needs to be **taught**



Tiers of vocabulary in English (Beck et al., 2013)



Tiers of vocabulary in English (Beck et al., 2013)

Subject-specific words –
curriculum exposure

Tier 3
words

Literate language
text exposure

Tier 2
words



The “lexical bar” (Corson, 1985)

Commonly occurring everyday
words -
conversations with adults

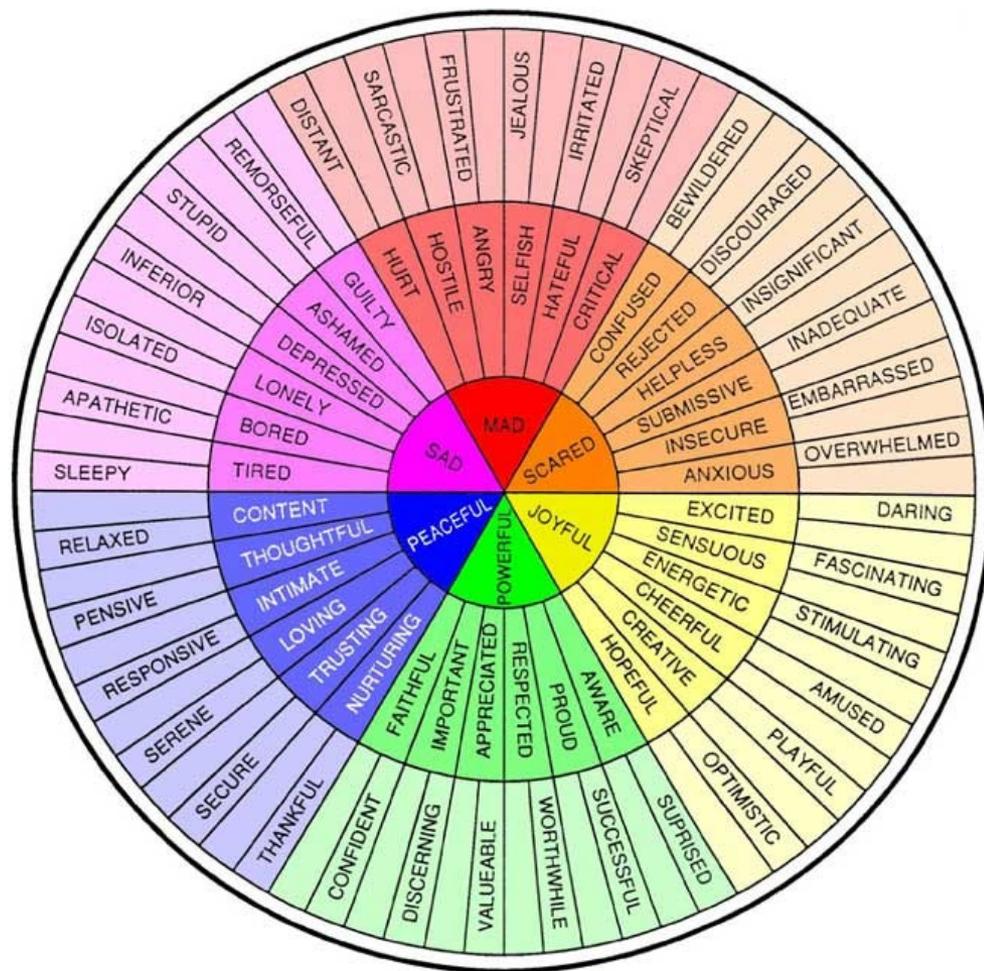
Tier 1
words



English loves its shades of meaning

“The extensive range of what I call “almost synonyms” became one of the glories of the English language, giving it astonishing precision and flexibility, allowing its speakers and writers over the centuries to discover what seemed to be exactly the right word” .

Melvyn Bragg, *The Adventure of English* (2011, p. 57).



Shades of meaning: Example

- Dave was deeply *angered* by the letter from his boss
 - Dave was deeply *humiliated* by the letter from his boss.
 - Dave was deeply *aggrieved* by the letter from his boss.
 - Dave was deeply *annoyed* by the letter from his boss.
 - Dave was deeply *aggravated* by the letter from his boss.
 - Dave was deeply *embarrassed* by the letter from his boss.
 - Dave was deeply *irritated* by the letter from his boss.
 - Dave was deeply *bothered* by the letter from his boss.
 - Dave was deeply *vexed* by the letter from his boss.
- **How would your knowledge of shades of meaning impact on your understanding of Dave's reaction?**



Vocabulary growth: a closer look

Pre-school years

- Mainly from **oral language** interactions: conversations, stories (spoken and being read to), song, rhyme
- **Context is vital** – physical surroundings, activities, gesture, eye contact, pointing, intonation
- **Scaffolding from adults** who monitor in real time whether child understands and explain/re-word etc.
- Lots of **repetition**
- Store of **Tier 1** words is built this way

School years

- Vocab expansion becomes more reliant on children's **own reading**
- Everyday conversations do not provide enough opportunities for **Tier 2** vocab development
- Writers convey meaning through words. It is **not their job to explain what words mean**. Context is less helpful in discerning word meaning but is critical in teaching new vocab..
- **Children who are not reading** are not being exposed to Tier 2 vocab and complex sentence structures = **Matthew Effect**



The language of instruction: Tier 2 words and concepts that students may not know or understand

- Explain
- Compare
- Contrast
- Analyse
- Paraphrase
- Describe
- Annotate
- Summarise
- Imply / Infer
- Extrapolate
- Reflect



Images: MS PPT



How does knowledge of etymology and morphology support spelling and vocab skills?



Image: MS PPT



How does morphology influence spelling?

- **We drop word-final “e” when adding a suffix, if the suffix begins with a vowel** (table -> tabl**ing**); we keep the “e” if the suffix begins with a consonant, e.g., table ->tabl**e**s.
- **When adding a suffix to a base word ending in “y”, we change the “y” to an “i”** if there is a consonant before the “y”, e.g., happy – happ**ily**. We keep the <y> if there is a vowel before the “y” e.g., play -> play**ed**, or if the suffix begins with an “i”, e.g., fry ->fry**ing**.
- **When we add a suffix that begins with a vowel to a single-syllable base word**, we double the final consonant if the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant, e.g., cut -> cut**ting**.



Morphological changes can also influence pronunciation*

- When a suffix, such as -ion, is added to a base, **pronunciation** (stress patterns) of the base often changes.
 - expire -> expiration [from *respirare*, to breathe]
- Help students to **find word families** from the base that may have different stress patterns, to assist them with spelling.
 - expiry; expired; expires; expiring; unexpired; respiration
- *Stable*, *establish*, and *stability* all contain the base “stab” but it is pronounced differently in each case. [From Latin *stabilire* “make firm”].

*Note there will be regional accent variations on this



How does knowledge of etymology and morphology support spelling and vocab skills?

- Knowing that some affixes have become assimilated into words, e.g., “ob” (“against):
observe; obvious; obnoxious; obdurate; oblivion; obscure
- Knowing the meanings of common affixes, e.g.
 - re- = again
 - in-, im-, il-, ir- = not
 - ex-, e- = out of
 - con-, com-, co-, col = with
 - sub- = below
 - mis- = badly, wrongly
 - mal- = bad
 - de- = to reverse, remove or separate
 - inter- = between
 - intra- = within



How does knowledge of etymology support spelling and vocab instruction?

- Ch – Middle English, French, or Greek?
 - **Middle English**: chop; chip; chuck; choose; /tʃ/
 - **French**: chemise; champagne; champignon; chamois; /ʃ/
 - **Greek**: chemist; chaos; chameleon; chorus; chronic; orchestra; psychology; anarchy /k/
- Ph – Greek
 - photo; phlegm; philistine; philanthropy; philately; aphorism; ephemeral; euphemism /f/

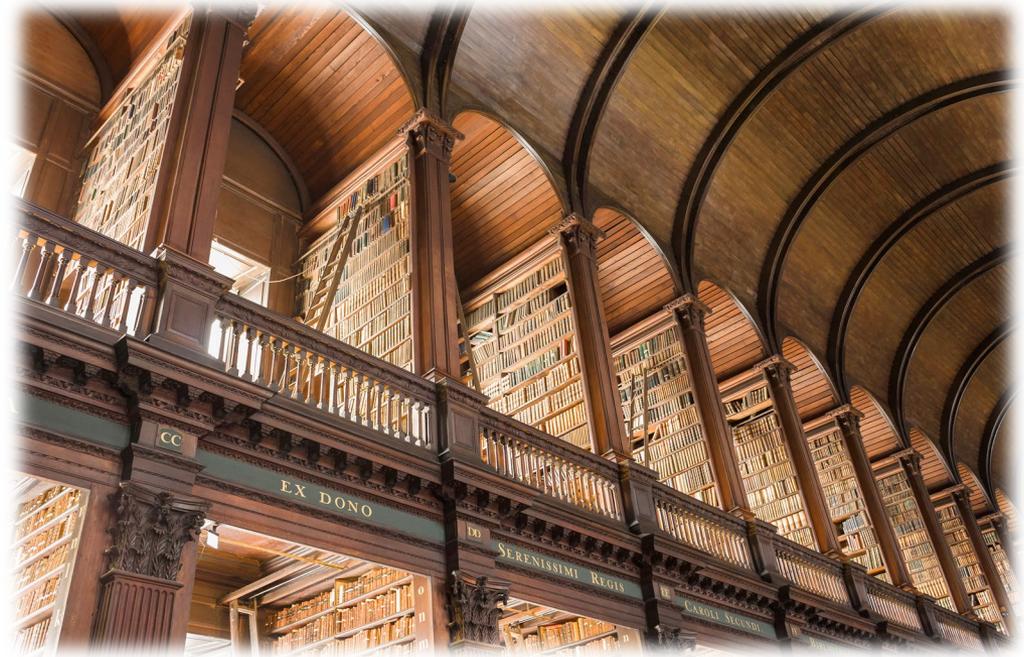
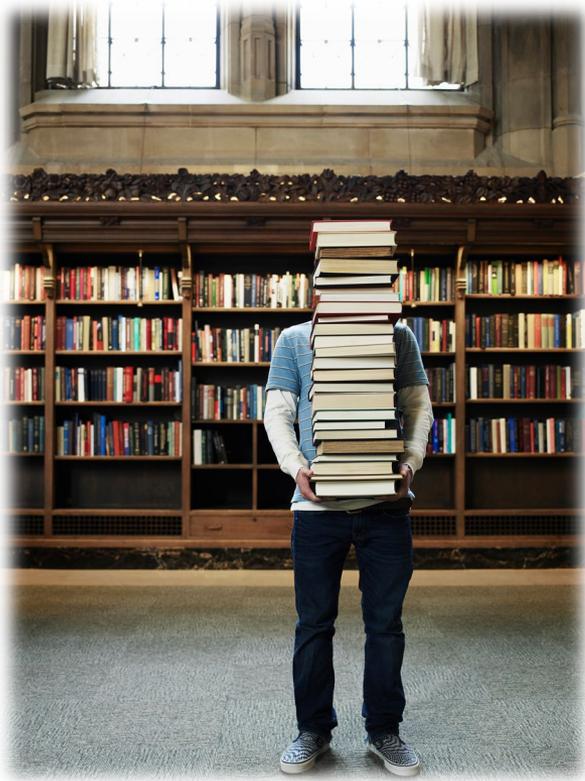


How does knowledge of etymology support spelling and vocab instruction?

- **Words beginning “tw”** relate to the number 2 - two; twelve; twin; twenty; twine; twice; twelve; twenty; twain; twist
- **Words beginning “wr”** usually have something to do with twisting or turning - wrist; wrench; wrangle; wrong; wrap; wreath; writhe; awry
- **Words beginning with “kn”** often relate to things that protrude - knob, knuckle, knee, knoll, knot.
- **Words beginning with “sn”** often relate to the nose: snout, sniff, snore, sneeze, snorkel, sniffle, snuffle, snuff, snivel, snoot, snot, snob, snotty, sneer, snoop, snub



Do teachers need to be classics scholars to teach morphology and etymology well?



Images: MS PPT



Knowledge of these constructs is also important for explicit teaching:

- Homonyms and polysemy
- What a sentence is and how sentences do and don't work
 - Subject-predicate structure; verb in predicate
 - Sentence fragments
 - Run-on sentences

} **Both of which are normal in spoken language**

 - Simple Vs complex sentences – for simple Vs complex ideas
 - Punctuation conventions – for conveying meaning to the reader
- How cohesion (micro) and coherence (macro) work in connected texts
- Literal Vs figurative / idiomatic language and need for inferencing



A brief word about some common spelling misconceptions



How well can you read these words?

- accommodate
- chihuahua
- fuchsia
- conscientious
- buoyant
- plagiarise
- accumulation
- millennium



Now – a test



Image source: MS PPT



How well did you spell these words?

- accommodate
- chihuahua
- fuchsia
- conscientious
- buoyant
- plagiarise
- accumulation
- millennium



How well did you spell these words?

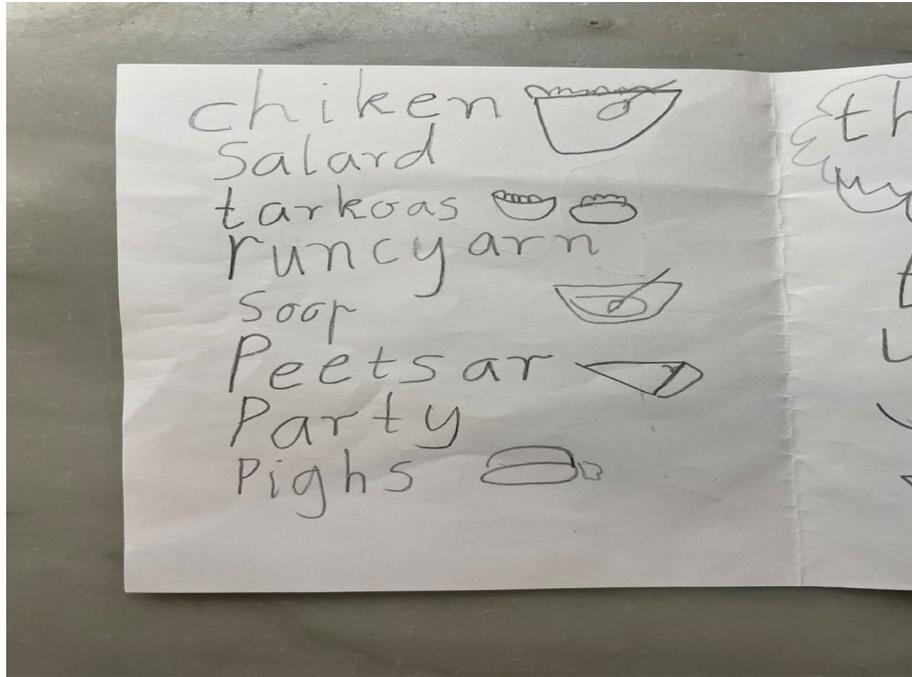
- accommodate
- chihuahua
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- conscientious
- buoyant
- plagiarise
- accumulation
- millennium

Rules of thumb:

- If you can write a word, you can usually read it.
- Being able to read a word does not necessarily mean you can correctly write it.
- Reading and writing are **not fully reversible processes**
- **Many repetitions** are often needed to consolidate the **orthographic mapping** of a word



Invented spelling



- ✓ Tells us a lot about what children “know” about word structure: phoneme-grapheme correspondences
- ✓ Can reveal patterns in knowledge gaps – hence we need to analyse, not just “mark” errors – *they are data*
- ✓ May reveal poor recognition of word boundaries
- ✓ Should be praised and corrected



telephone

letters	t-e-l-e-p-h-o-n-e
phonemes	/ˈtɛləfoʊn/
graphemes	t-e-l-e-ph-o-n-e
syllables	tel - e - phone
morphemes	tele-phone

Knowing the significance of the **schwa vowel** for spelling & pronunciation

Understanding of **word-final "e"**

- Vocabulary development
- Mastery of spelling conventions



**SYLLABLE STRESS IN
WORDS AND THE SCHWA
VOWEL**



The concept of “stress” in spoken words

- Stress refers to the patterns of emphasis that we place on different syllables in different words.
- Stress contributes to prosody (melodic contour).
- Unstressed syllables are shortened (“reduced”) in English.
- Stress is important in English:
 - ✓ For the way we pronounce words and create shifts in meaning (e.g., from noun to verb);
 - ✓ For helping students to decode and pronounce polysyllabic words;
 - ✓ For understanding and teaching spelling.



Stress (emphasis) in syllables and schwa

- In words with more than one syllable, one is usually stressed. Other syllable(s) may be (a) less stressed, (b) unstressed (contain a schwa), or (c) they may be equally stressed.
- The unstressed vowel may contain a **schwa (neutral) vowel**
 - Two syllables, unequal stress, schwa: teacher^ə; success^ə; symbol^ə
 - Two syllables, equal stress, no schwa: childhood; heyday; headache
 - Two syllables, unequal stress, no schwa: maintain; handbag; upshot; crossing
 - Three syllables, no schwa: radio;
 - Three syllables, unequal stress: Canada^ə; Pamela^ə; hospital^{ə ə};
- In words with one syllable, we do not use unstressed (neutral) vowels in Australian English (unlike our Kiwi neighbours)
- We call the *neutral* or *weak* unstressed vowel the **schwa vowel**
- Stress patterns vary between speaker groups and even between individuals



Why is it important to know about the schwa vowel? (1)



- It is the most commonly occurring vowel sound in spoken English – in fact, it is the most commonly occurring sound
- If we did not use it, our speech would sound “mechanical”
- It is related to the concept of stress (emphasis) in words
- Knowing about it can help de-mystify phoneme-grapheme correspondences in different words and different parts of speech
- Knowing about it can help children master spelling – via the use of the “spelling voice” (see work of Lyn Stone)



Why is it important to know about the schwa vowel? (2)



- Stress changes pronunciation and meaning (and often part of speech) in words that are homographs, e.g., **convict** Vs **convict**; **invalid** Vs **invalid**; **contents** Vs **contents**; **decrease** Vs **decrease**; **subject** Vs **subject**.
In all cases the **schwa vowel** sits in the **unstressed syllable**
- It guards us against us saying “just because” when children ask about how English works
- So that we **avoid as far as possible inserting it unnecessarily** when teaching early decoding: if “cat” is segmented as /kuh/ - /a/ - /tuh/
 - NB this is impossible to avoid with **voiced** consonants



philosophise or philosophize /fə'lɒsə'faɪz/, *v.i.*, **-phised, -phising.** to reason, theorise or moralise. — **philosophiser, n.**

philosophy /fə'lɒsə'fɪ/, *n., pl. -phies.* 1. the study or science of the truths or principles underlying all knowledge and being, including natural, moral and metaphysical philosophy. 2. any system of philosophical principles: *the philosophy of Spinoza.* 3. the study or science of the principles of a particular branch or subject of knowledge: *the philosophy of history.* 4. a system of principles for guidance in practical affairs. [ME, from L, from Gk: lit., love of wisdom]

philous, a word part used as an adjective ending meaning 'loving'. [L, from Gk]

Philp /'fɪlp/, *n.* **Sir Robert,** 1851–1922, Australian shipping agent and politician, born in Scotland; premier of Qld 1899–1903. See **Burns, Philp and Co Ltd.**

philtre /'fɪltə/, *n.* a potion, drug, or the like, supposed to bring about love. [F, from L, from Gk: love charm]

phlebo-, a word part meaning 'vein'. Also, before a vowel, **phleb-.** [Gk: vein]

phlegm /'flem/, *n.* 1. *Physiol.* the thick mucus produced in the breathing passages and discharged by coughing, etc., esp. during a cold, etc. 2. (formerly) that one of the four humors supposed to cause a general lack of energy or interest. [ME, from OF, from LL, from Gk: phlegma, clammy humor]

phlegmatic /'fleg'mætɪk/, *adj.* 1. not easily

phon-, a word part meaning 'voice', 'sound'. Also, **phono-**. [Gk, combining form of *phōnē*]

phone /'foʊn/, *n.* *Colloq.* → **telephone.** [short for TELEPHONE]

-phone, a word part meaning 'sound', esp. used in names of instruments, as in *xylophone, megaphone, telephone.* [combining form representing Gk *phōnē*]

phoneme /'founɪm/, *n.* the smallest distinctive group or class of speech sounds in a language. The phonemes of a language contrast with one another; e.g., in English, *pip* differs from *nip, tip,* etc., by contrast of a phoneme (p) with other phonemes. [Gk: a sound] — **phonemic** *adj.* — **phonemics, n.**

phonetic /fə'netɪk/, *adj.* 1. of or relating to speech sounds and their production. 2. agreeing with or corresponding to pronunciation: *phonetic transcription.* Also, **phonetical.** [NL, from Gk]

phonetics /fə'netɪks/, *n.* 1. the science of speech sounds and their production. 2. the phonetic system, or the body of phonetic facts, of a particular language. — **phonetician, n.**

phoney /'foʊni/, *adj., -nier, -niest, n., pl. -nies or -neys.* *Colloq.* ◇ *adj.* 1. (of a person or thing) false; fraudulent. ◇ *n.* 2. a person or thing whose appearance, claims, etc., are false or insincere; fake. Also, **phony.** [Irish]

phonics /'fɒnɪks/, *n.* a method of teaching reading, pronunciation, and spelling based upon the phonetic interpretation of ordinary spelling.



**Word-final “e”: there’s
more going on here than
you might think.**



Word final –e (1)

- May be referred to as
 - A silent “e”
 - A Bossy e
 - A split digraph
- “Word final –e” is a more precise description
- Word final –e is to some extent a remnant of the Great Vowel shift, prior to which it was pronounced.
- We need to ask ourselves why an “e” is on the end of the word.



Word final –e (2)

- Sometimes the job of the final “e” is to change the way a preceding vowel grapheme is pronounced, taking it from “short” to “long”:
 - **bat – bate; cap – cape; fat – fate; bit – bite; not – note; rag – rage** (note change from /g/ to /dʒ/).
- But this is not always the case, e.g.,
 - **have; gave; love; due; blue; argue** – now the final “e” is preventing the violation of the rule that says English words cannot end in certain letters (i, j, q, u*, v)
(*Exceptions are “you” and “menu” and words from French ending “-eau”, like “beau”).
 - Note – some words may sound like they end with these letters, but they are spelt differently, e.g., badge – a child may write “baj”.



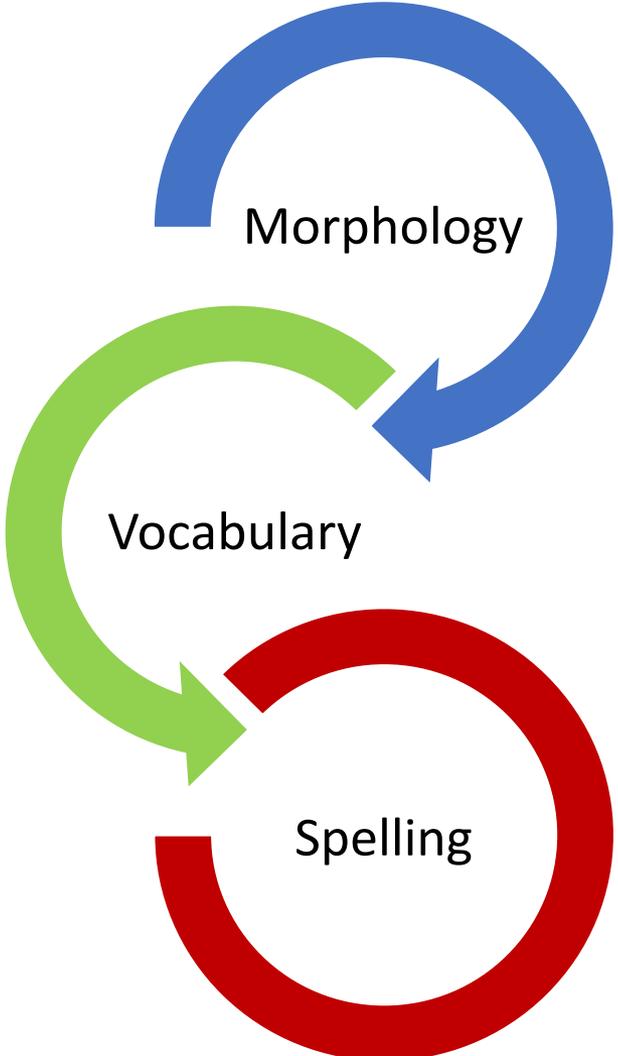
Word final –e (3)

- The job of word final –e can also be to prevent confusion between words, e.g., teas – tease; laps – lapse; pleas – please
- Word final –e can also provide (represent) a vowel to a syllable, e.g., table, stifle, bible, idle, babble, muddle, stubble, people, syllable.
- Word final e makes ‘c’ say /s/ and ‘g’ say /j/ (lance; cage)
- **More information:**
<https://coloradoreading.com/the-final-e-rule/>

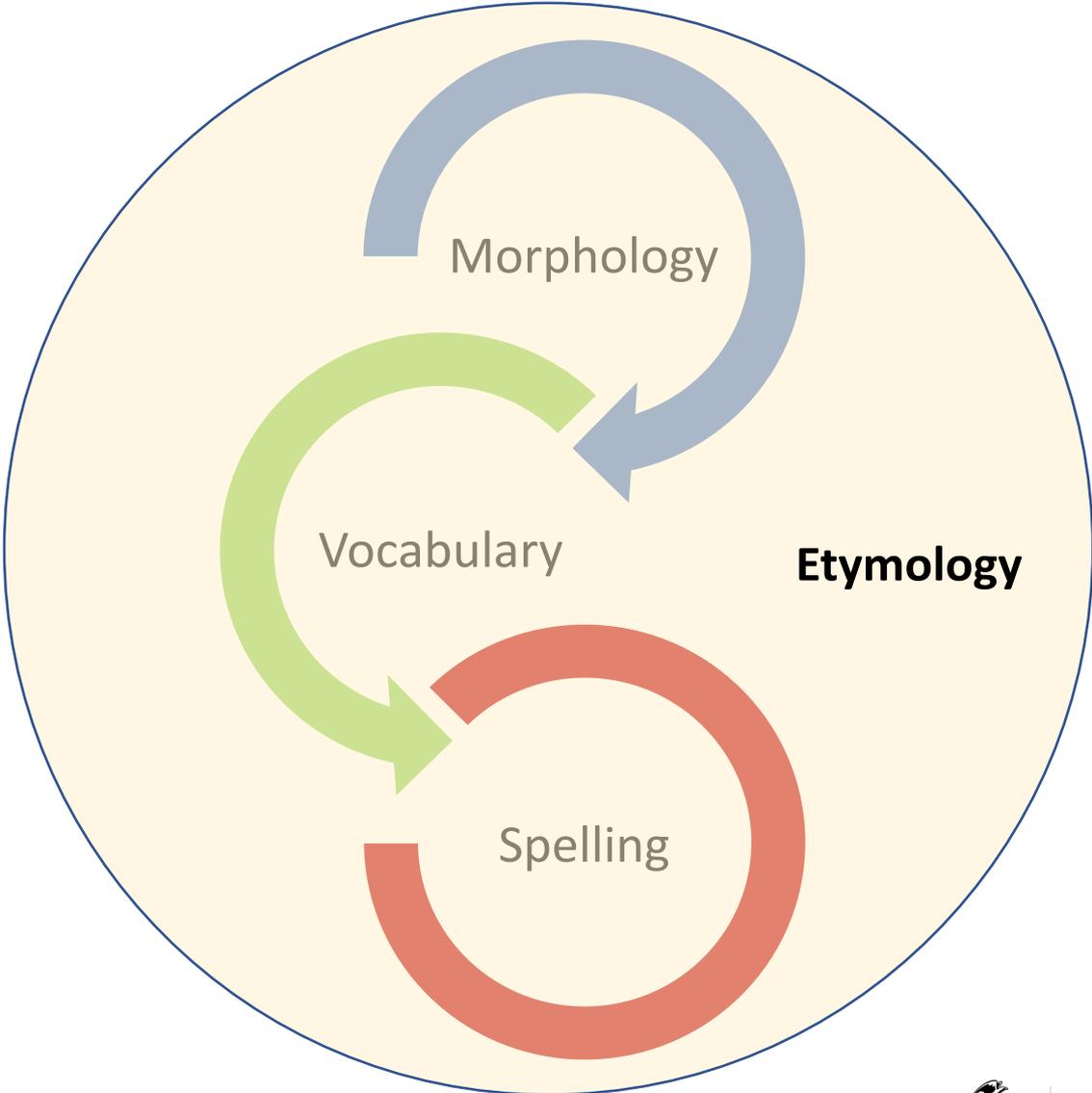
Lyn Stone: Lifelong Literacy: <https://lifelongliteracy.com/>



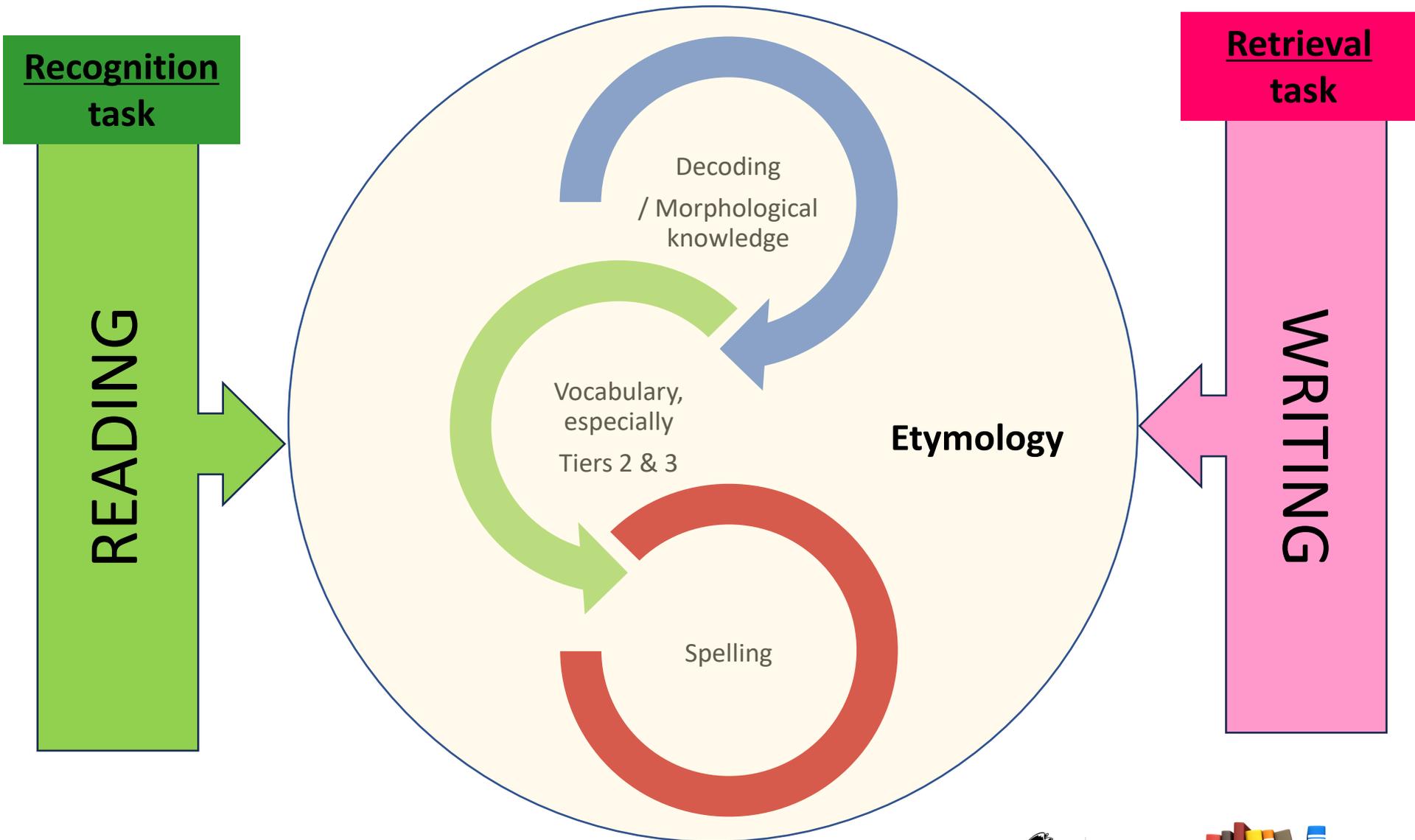
Putting it all together



Putting it all together



Bringing oral language, reading and writing together



Bringing oral language, reading and writing together

Recognition
task

READING

Keys to success:

- ✓ High teacher knowledge (explicit)
- ✓ Integration of cognitive load theory
- ✓ Structured, explicit teaching
- ✓ Practice on sub-skills and feedback
- ✓ Integration across the reading and writing ropes
- ✓ High expectations

Retrieval
task

WRITING



Why is it erroneous say that English has a “highly irregular” writing system?

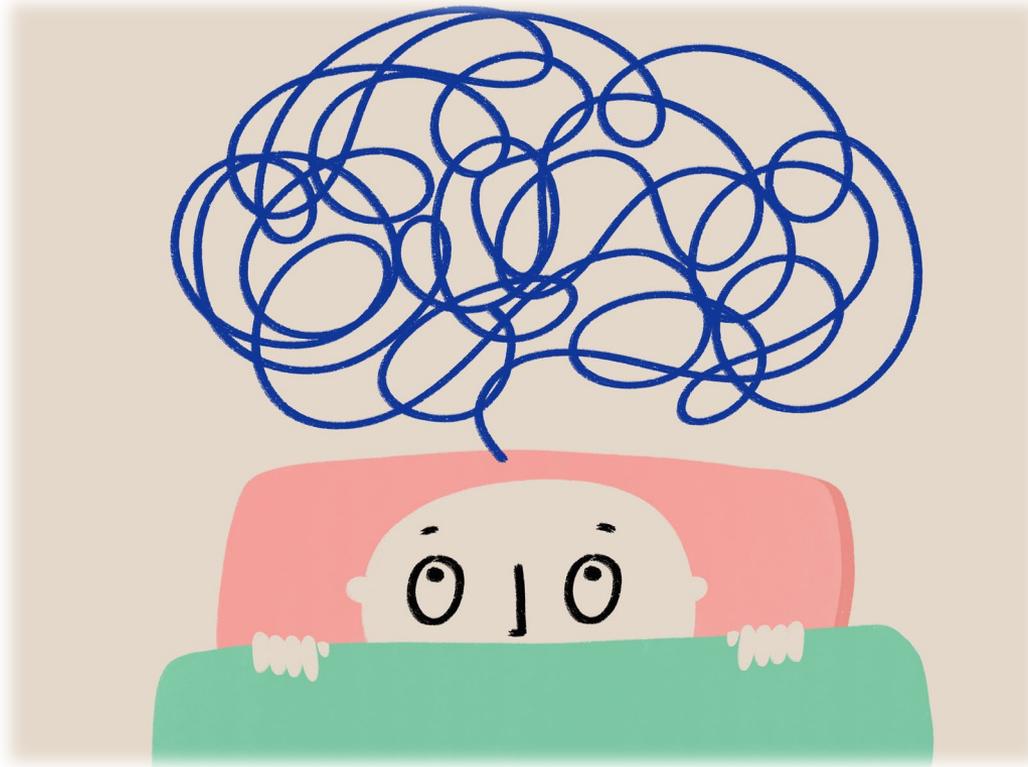


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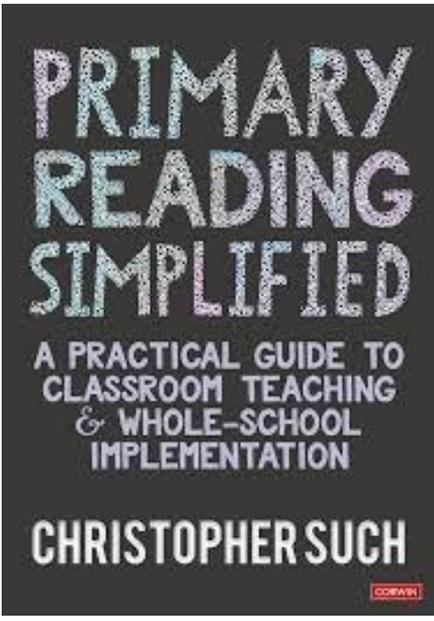
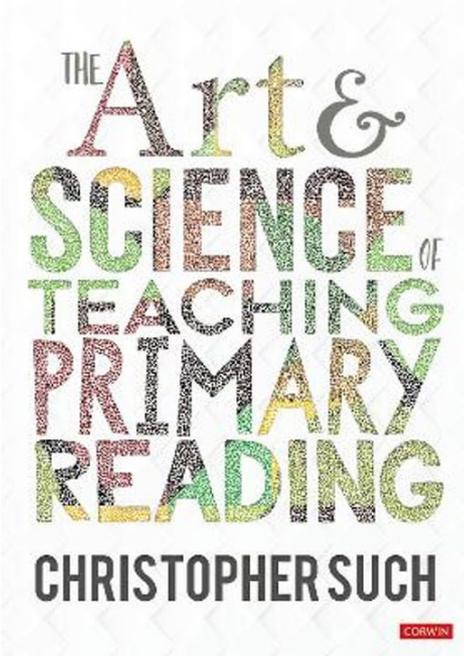
Why is it erroneous to say that English has a “highly irregular” writing system?



Resources

- **Spelling for Life** - Lyn Stone - <https://lifelongliteracy.com/spelling-for-life/>
- **Okrent, A. (2020)** [Typos, tricks and misprints. Why is the English spelling system so weird and inconsistent?](#)
- **William van Cleave: Morphology Matters**
(available free via Google search)
- **The Reading Ape:** [Why English is just so darned difficult to decode - a short history.](#)
- **Melyvn Bragg's The Adventure of English BBC series** is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbBvyau8q9v4hcgNYBp4LCyhMHSyq-lhe> *This is 8 episodes, each about 50 minutes in duration*
- **The History of English podcast** <https://historyofenglishpodcast.com/episodes/> *This is a very history-based and scholarly look at how the English language evolved.*





Louisa Cook Moats

SPEECH to PRINT

Language Essentials for Teachers

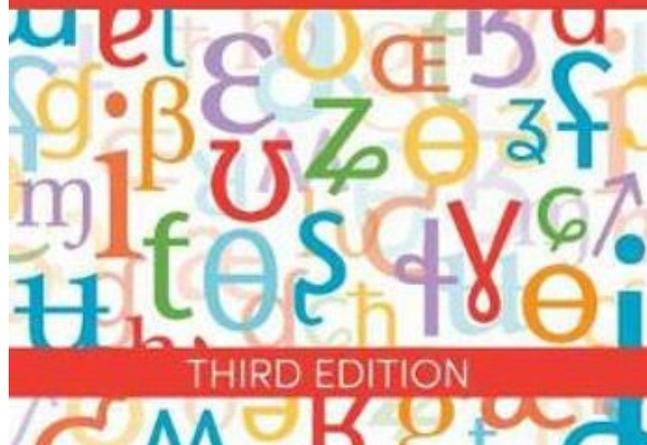




Image source: MS PPT



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The SOLAR Lab: <https://solar.blogs.latrobe.edu.au/>



[@PCSnow1604](#) (Formerly @pamelasnow2)



The Snow Report: www.pamelasnow.blogspot.com

