

5

Spelling, handwriting and punctuation

Activities

Spelling test

Aim

To identify spelling strategies.

To recognise that there are a number of spelling strategies that young children can learn.

What to do

Ask students to spell a difficult word. In this example I have used oxyacetylene.

Ask them which of the following strategies they used:

- phonemic – sound;
- morphemic – meaning, derivation;
- graphic – letter sequences;
- visual – does it look right;
- mnemonic – big elephants can't add up sums easily (because).

The following chart compares the words they might have produced with different spelling strategies:

<p><i>Phonemic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• oxiacetaleen• oxiasetileen <p>It helps but won't necessarily result in the correct spelling</p>	<p><i>Morphemic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• oxy – from oxygen• acetylene – a type of gas
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Graphic

- ene – known letter strings:-
scene
serene

Visual – does it look right?

- oxiasetaleen

Links can be made between the strategies students used and the strategies children need to learn.

Making spelling games

Aim

To find ways of developing children's visual strategies and memory for words.
To produce materials for school.

What to do

Ask students to look at comics or magazines written for young children and find examples of common words that are difficult to spell such as *there*, *one* and *you*. Can they think of a way to use comics to teach spelling? They might write a word on a card and ask children to circle instances of the word in the comic.

Ask students to make a pairs or a snap game for use in school using common words that the children need to know. They should research the most common words used by young children and decide which ones children find most troublesome.

Ask students to each write a few simple words on individual strips of card. Working in groups the students pool their cards and find as many ways as possible of sorting their words. They may use categories such as first letter, last letter, shape, length, letter string, word meaning. Could they use this activity in school to help children with their spelling?

Examining samples of writing

Aim

To identify spelling stages and teaching strategies.

What to do

Look at a sample of writing from a child in Key Stage 1. Count the total number of words in the sample. Identify the spelling mistakes. Count the number of mistakes the child has made. What percentage of errors is the child making? The percentage can help students to understand how concerned they need to be about spelling.

Match the spelling mistakes to spelling stages – semi-phonemic, phonetic and transitional. In which stage do most of the errors fall? What teaching strategies could be used to move the child from the stage they are at to the next stage?

Look at a sample of writing from a child in the Foundation Stage. Identify the spelling mistakes the child has made. Can the students see any awareness of correct versions in the writing the child has produced? Can they match the child's writing to spelling stages – pre-phonemic, semi-phonetic and phonetic. What teaching strategies could be used to move the child from the stage they are at to the next stage?

Practising handwriting

Aim

To learn the letter formation that we expect children to use.

What to do

Although teachers now use word processing packages to produce labels and notices and write on the interactive whiteboard using a keyboard, they still need to provide children with correct models of letter formation when they write in children's books.

Ask students to write a poster for the classroom. The subject can be 'How to be a good speaker and listener' or 'How to be a good response partner'. As they write their list they should form their letters starting in the right place and using the correct strokes. They can use Figure 5.6 in Chapter 5 to help them.

Left-handed students can be asked to talk about any difficulties they had with this activity.

Websites

ICT Games: <http://www.ictgames.com/lwc.html>

Ambleside Primary School: <http://www.amblesideprimary.com/ambleweb/lookcover/lookcover.html>

Both these sites have a computer game which allows children to practise the 'look, cover, write, check' spelling strategy.

The British Library: <http://www.bl.uk/>

The British library has a number of on-line resources that provide useful background for anyone wanting to plan a project on writing with children.

Links to on-line reading

Kervin, L. (2002) 'Proofreading as a strategy for spelling development', *Reading Online*, 5 (10). Available at: http://www.readingonline.org/international/inter_index.asp?HREF=/international/kervin/index.html

In this article Lisa Kervin argues that proofreading is a powerful strategy in children's development as spellers and so it should be taught explicitly, along with all other reading, writing and spelling skills, in the primary years.