



Vocabulary – Teaching Word Parts

Introduction

Content and vocabulary become more complex as students get older, and this may frustrate or overwhelm struggling readers. More advanced readers can also benefit from word study skills therefore, it is important to teach all students how to break complex words into smaller parts.

Teaching word parts can help struggling readers:

- recognise words,
- decode words quickly and accurately, and
- understand the meaning of words.

Terms

Affix

Any part that is added to a word; a prefix or a suffix.

Base word

A word that can stand alone and to which affixes can be added.

Prefix

A word part that is attached to the beginning of a word.

Root

A unit of meaning that cannot stand alone but that can be used to form words with related meanings.

Suffix

A word part that is attached to the end of a word.

The following teaching steps are adapted from Denton, C., Bryan, D., Wexler, J., Reed, D. and Vaughn, S. (2007) *Effective Instruction for Middle School Students with Reading Difficulties: The Reading teacher's Sourcebook*. University of Texas: Austin.

Purpose

Students will learn how to use affixes and roots to work out the meanings of words.

Materials

- Chalkboard, overhead or interactive white board (IWB).
- Small poster board or chart paper.
- Word part chart.
- Small cards to write word parts.

Teaching steps

1. Introduction

It is important that students understand the function of word parts. Explain to the students that many words are made of parts that carry meaning. These word parts work together to alter or change a word's meaning.

Introduce the terms:

Prefix – a word part that is attached to the beginning of a word.

Suffix – a word part that is attached to the end of a word.

Base word – basic part of the word that carries meaning and can stand alone.

Root – a word part that carries meaning but cannot stand alone.

2. State Objective/Purpose

Looking for word parts can help you read and understand the meaning of complicated words, and you know the meaning of several common prefixes. Today you will learn a common root word part/prefix/suffix. When you can recognise some of these root word parts/prefixes/suffixes and know what they mean, it will help you work out the meaning of many words you read. This should help you learn new vocabulary words more easily in all your subjects.

Today we'll learn -----

It is important to work with the word parts of vocabulary that is relevant to topic or text being taught in the classroom. (See Appendix 1 and 2 for common prefixes, suffixes and root words).

3. Model and teach with whole class or small group

- Write the root word part/prefix/suffix on a copy of the Word Part Chart on chart paper/chalkboard/white board/IWB. Say the root word part/prefix/suffix and its meaning.
- Write the meaning on the Word Part Chart.
- Write some examples of words with the root word part/prefix/suffix and ask students to identify any words they know.
- Accept responses.
- If students cannot generate words, ask questions or give clues to help them think of examples.
- Tell students any words that they cannot easily generate themselves.

- Model using word parts as clues to the meanings of words containing the root/prefix/suffix. Give brief, simple definitions of the example words, and write these words on the poster board or chart paper.
- Read the completed word list to the students and have them repeat each word after you. Then have the students read the list together. If necessary, have them read it again, starting from the last word and going to the first word. Then call on individuals to read the list.

4. Provide guided practice with whole class or small group

Provide students the opportunity to practise word parts they have previously learned along with the newly learned root/prefix/suffix. Form words using cards with previously learned prefixes, suffixes, base words, and roots written on them. Include a card with the new root/prefix/suffix on it. Have students read the words and tell the class the meaning of the word parts and of the words.

Work with students to use the Word Part Chart (see Appendix 3) to identify prefixes, suffixes, and roots for identified words from class topic or text.

5. Provide independent practice

- Have students work with partners to complete the Word Part Chart for target words.
- Check students' understanding by rotating among partners, asking questions, and checking their charts. Ask students to explain how the word parts contribute to the meaning of the words they form.

6. Generalisation

Discuss with students examples of situations in which using the word part strategy would be helpful when they come to unfamiliar words as they are reading. Emphasise the fact that they can use the strategy every time they read.

References

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Appendix 1 – Most Common Prefixes and Suffixes

Most common prefixes and suffixes

Prefixes		
Highest frequency	High frequency	Medium frequency
un - (not, opposite of) re – (again) in-, im-, ir-, il- (not) dis- (not, opposite of) en-, em- (cause to) non- (not) under- (too little) in-, im- (in or into)	over- (too much) mis- (wrongly) sub- (under) pre- (before) inter- (between)	trans- (across) super- (above) semi- (half) anti- (against) mid- (middle)
Suffixes		
Highest frequency	High frequency	Medium frequency
-s (plurals) -ed (past tense) -ing (present tense)	-ly (characteristic of) -er, -or (person) -ion, -tion (act, process) -ible, -able (can be done)	-al, ial (having characteristics of) -y (characterised by) -ness (state of, condition of) -ity, -ty (state of) -ment (action or process) -ic (having characteristics of) -ous, -eous, -ious (possessing the qualities of) -en (made of) -ive, -ative, -itive (adjective form of a noun) -ful (full of) -less (without)

Adapted from Blevins (2001) by Kieffer & Lesaux (2007)

Prefix and suffix family or type	Meaning	Instructional vocabulary and example words
1. 'not' prefix family	un, dis, im = not	disloyal, unaware, invisible, imperfect
2. 'before', 'during' and 'after' prefix family	pre – before mid = during or middle post = after	prejudge midtown postgame
3. Excess prefix family	out = better or more than over= too much or many super = more, better or higher	outlive overflow superhuman
4. Number prefix family	uni, mono = one bi = two semi = part, half, or occurring twice	uniform, monorail bicolour semiarid
5. Prefix 're'	re = again or back	recharge, rehire
6. 'state or quality of' suffix family	ship, ness, ment = state or quality of	friendship, loneliness, excitement
7. Suffix 'ward'	ward = in the direction of	skyward, northward
8. Suffix 'ful'	ful = full of or characterised by	merciful, helpful

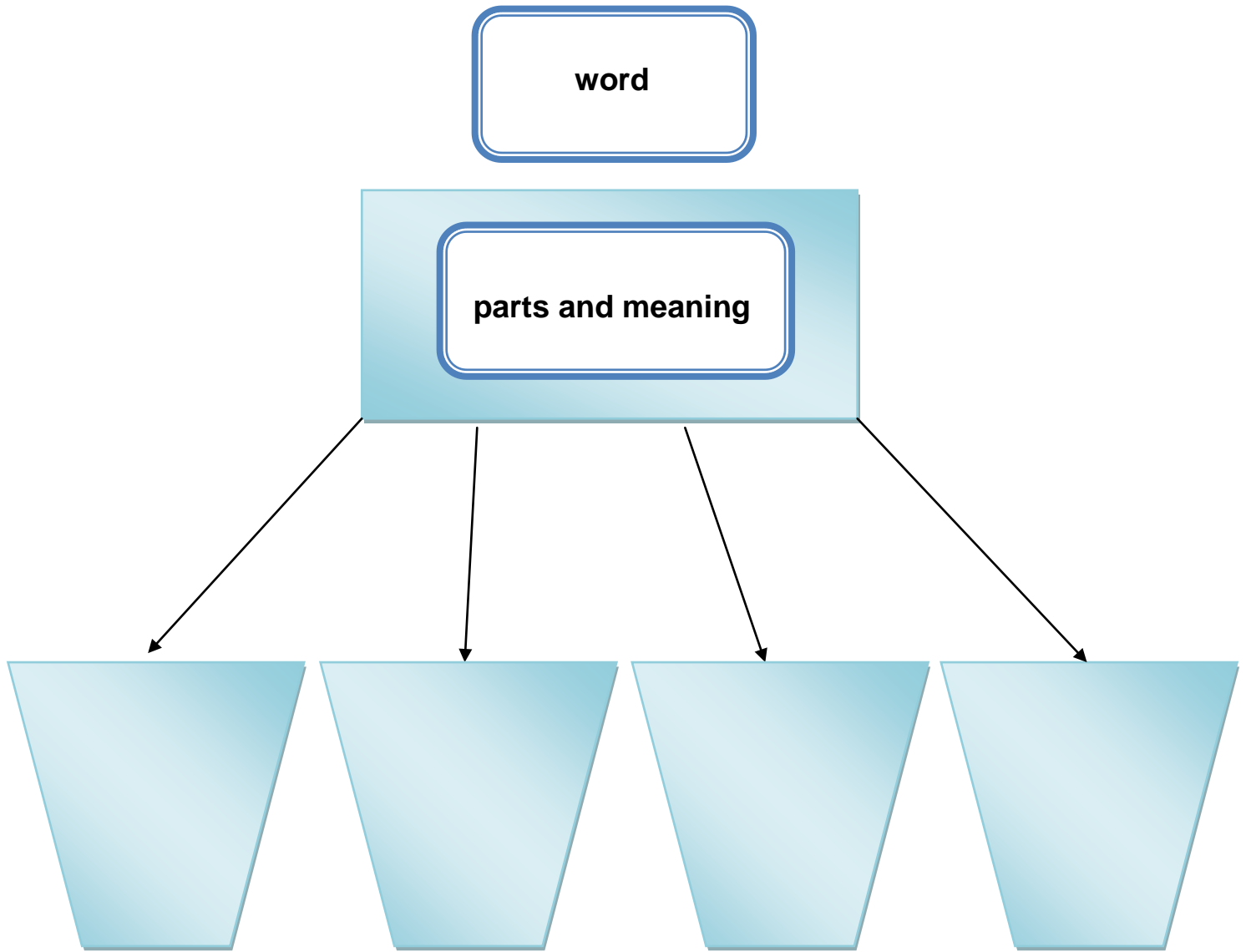
Baumann, Carr Edwards, Boland, Olejnik & Kame'enui (2003)

Appendix 2 – Common Latin and Greek Roots

Common Latin and Greek Roots.

aud	Latin	hear	auditorium, audition, audience, audible, audiovisual
astro	Greek	star	astronaut, astronomy, asterisk, asteroid, astrology
bio	Greek	life	biology, biography, biochemistry
cept	Latin	take	intercept, accept, reception
dict	Latin	speak or tell	dictation, dictate, predict, contradict, dictator
duct	Latin	lead	conduct, induct
geo	Greek	earth	geography, geology, geometry, geophysics
graph	Greek	write	autograph, biography, photograph
ject	Latin	throw	eject, reject, projectile, inject
min	Latin	little or small	miniature, minimum, minimal
mit or mis	Latin	send	mission, transmit, missile, dismiss, submit
ped	Latin	foot	pedal, pedestal, pedestrian
phon	Greek	sound	telephone, symphony, microphone, phonics, phoneme
port	Latin	carry	transport, portable, import, export, porter
rupt	Latin	break	disrupt, erupt, rupture, interrupt, bankrupt
scrib or script	Latin	write	scribble, scribe, inscribe, describe, prescribe, manuscript, prescription, script, transcript, scripture
spect	Latin	see	inspect, suspect, respect, spectacle, spectator
struct	Latin	build or form	construct, destruct, instruct, structure
tele	Greek	from afar	telephone, telegraph, teleport
tract	Latin	pull	traction, tractor, attract, subtract, extract
vers	Latin	turn	reverse, inverse

Appendix 3 - Word Part Chart



Write a sentence using the word.

Denton, Bryan, Wexler, Reed and Vaughn (2007)

Appendix 4 – Definitions

Prefix	a word part that is attached to the beginning of a word
Suffix	a word part that is attached to the end of a word
Base word	basic part of the word that carries meaning and can stand alone
Root	a word part that carries meaning but cannot stand alone