



USING RHYME, RIME AND ANALOGY

In previous articles, we have talked about some of the basic ingredients of early reading instruction, such as **alphabetic knowledge** and **sound awareness**. In this article we want to talk about how students use knowledge of word families (rimes/phonograms) and the skill of analogy to develop word recognition.

Developing word recognition

We know that for young children, learning to read is a complex journey and that there are many skills and processes that students need to draw together, in order to become skilled readers. Beginning readers are often slow and inaccurate in word recognition and limited in the kind of texts they can read. On the other hand, skilled readers can read text confidently with accuracy and fluency. Unlike beginner readers, they have learnt, through practice over time, to recognize almost all words automatically.

How did these skilled readers learn to recognize so many words so confidently?

Ehri (1994) distinguishes four ways by which readers learn how to read words.

1. The first is through **decoding** – converting letters into sounds and blending them to make recognizable words. This may be individual letters, consonant clusters or common rime families such as –ot, –ing or –ap. Knowledge of the alphabetic system is required and sound (phonological) awareness helps students make use of this knowledge to make the links between sounds and letters.
2. The second way is through **sight memory** – words that have been learned from visual memory are retrieved. This method is often useful for irregularly spelled words. Attempting to learn all words by visual memory may initially give children confidence with reading, however visual memory is limited and students can soon develop memory overload and may still lack the skills to figure out new words.
3. **Analogy** - readers access from memory words they already know how to read or spell and use parts of the spelling to read new or less familiar words with the same spelling pattern. E.g. knowing the word night helps the student read the word bright.
4. **Prediction** - readers use context cues, knowledge of grammar and background knowledge to predict or guess the unknown words. Word prediction is not always an efficient method but becomes more accurate if students are able to combine it with letter-sound cues.

Clearly then, children do need to know about sounds and the letters that are used to represent them, but once they know the individual sound letter links in an automatic and reliable way, we can help them to recognize larger combinations of letters or word families. They will need to learn about groups or patterns of letters such as those in the onsets and the **rimes**. This will help them to more fully understand the relationship between sound patterns and the spelling patterns of English. It is often in these larger chunks within words that we can discover most of the regularity of English. We cannot assume that all children will quickly do this on their own account. Adults can help through explicit teaching, by pointing out these consistencies of English spelling and pronunciation. With encouragement and repeated exposure, readers will learn to recognize such “chunks” automatically and apply their knowledge by using analogy to words that they have never before seen or spelled. E.g. they may say “I know how to read the word *king*. This word (*string*) has the same spelling pattern, so it will probably sound the same. I’ll try it. sss t rrr...ing, string.” We can’t possibly teach all words BUT we can assist young learners to seek out these patterns and actively apply their knowledge.

Is it Rime or Rhyme?

Many words in English rhyme. For example when spoken, the words *fun, bun and sun*, all share the same auditory rhyme – that is, they all end with the same group of sounds. Young children enjoy playing around with rhyme and like to create strings of rhyming words such as ring, sing, thing, string, simply by changing the first sound or cluster of sounds (onsets) at the front of the word and keeping the rhyme part the same. When we write these words we notice that we use the same spelling pattern or rime. The words pear and stair are an auditory rhyme but are from two different rime families.

A solid grasp of auditory rhyme (both recognition, and production) will support children in the exploration of the written rimes.

More about onsets and rimes

When we write a single syllable word we can divide it into an onset (beginning) and a rime (ending).

The *onset* is a single letter or group of letters that come before the vowel.

The *rime* is the group of letters that starts with the vowel and continues until the end of the word. For example: snatch onset = sn rime = atch

Other words with the same onset – snap, snow, snail, snug, snoop, sniff

Other words with the same rime – match, catch, latch, batch,

In the above example (snatch), the onset was a consonant blend ‘sn’, which is made up of two individual consonants said very close together. Common blends that occur at the starts of words include: sm, sn, st, sl, sc, sk, sp, bl, fl, cl, gl, pl, br, cr, dr, gr, pr, tr, fr

All of these are featured in the Sound Blend Series (Oxford University Press, 1999)

Consonant Blend Activities

Children will benefit from listening games that make such blends a feature.

“Blend Basket” Game

1. Place objects that start with a consonant blend, into an old bucket or basket
e.g. scarf, grater, plug, stamp, flower, sticker, triangle, glass, grape
2. Pull out an object. Say its name and ‘find’ the first two sounds.
3. Then think of another word that begins with this blend.

You can play this as a group game, throwing a dice to indicate how many words that the group has to think of that begin the same way.

Blend Poster

Write the letters of the consonant blend in a circle in the middle of a large piece of butcher paper. Talk about the two or more sounds that go together. E.g. gr, pl, or str. Collect photographs or pictures that begin with the blend and paste them on the paper. E.g. gr – *grandma, grass, green, grasshopper, grapes, grin, groom*. Older children can write the word under the pictures and highlight the blend in a different colour.

What about Rimes?

Rimes can feature short or long vowels and can vary in complexity according to how many letters make up the remainder of the word. Compare the following.

Some short vowel rimes

- at (as in rat, chat, flat)
- amp (as in lamp, champ, cramp)
- unch (as in lunch, bunch, crunch)

Some long vowel rimes

- ope (as in rope, hope, cope)
- ight (as in light, night, fright)

Some frequently occurring rimes

Some rimes occur commonly in English and can generate many words. A study by Wylie and Durrell in 1970 of texts used in early reading, found that the following 37 rimes generated over 500 words that appear in such texts.

ack an ap at ank ash ail
ain ake ale ame ate aw ay
ell est eat
ill in ip it ick ink ing
ide ine ice ight
op ot ock oke ore
ug uck ump unk

As with consonant blends it is important that young readers receive instruction in how to identify these rimes and how to apply this knowledge in reading and in spelling. The Sound Blends and Sound Rhymes books, and the accompanying Teacher Resource Books (part of the Oxford Essential Reading, 1999) are ideal for building awareness of onsets and rimes

and providing practice in reading and spelling words with these two features. The new Reading Rhymes 1 & 2 Series (Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 2004) provides a structured program for reading frequently occurring short vowels rimes in connected text. Through explicit

teaching and practice reading rimes in books, students will progress at a quicker rate as they can match the pattern of what they can hear, with the pattern that they can see.

Rime Brainstorm

Brainstorm all the words you can think of that rhyme with the word stare. Write the words on cards (with an adult helping if necessary). Sort the cards into piles according to the spelling pattern (rime). For this auditory rhyme there are three main rime families – are, air, ear. Which rime family did you find had the most family members?

References:

Ehri, L. (1994) Development of the ability to read words: update. In R. Ruddell, M. Ruddell. H. Singer (Eds.) Theoretical models and processes of reading (4th ed. pp323-358) Newark, DE. International Reading Association.
Available through Oxford University Press
Love, E. and Reilly, S. Sound Blends. Sound Rhymes, Reading Rhymes 1 and 2 .
Wylie, R.E. and Durell, D.D. 1970. Elementary English, 47, pp.787-91, in M. Adams, Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print. Massachusetts: MIT.

Resources:

Two great ready-to-use Love and Reilly resources are available from the Pelican Talk online store.

A Box of Rimes (Short)

A Box of Rimes (Long)

See www.pelican-talk.com

Matt the Bat is a puppet plus programming for rhyming and use of rime.

See www.puppetsforlearning.com.au

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