Teachers' Notes

For years teachers have skillfully used a variety of methods, techniques and resources to ensure that the vast majority of children become literate.

The texts provided on the CD of *Every Phoneme Covered* will support the children as they learn to read and write.

More and more research is showing that children do need a basic framework to support their reading and writing development and that using synthetic phonics as a tool can support this. This certainly matches our own class teaching experience.

Synthetic phonics involve isolating and blending phonemes and their grapheme choices. Analytic phonics involve analysing common phonemes in a set of words, which is still a useful tool even though synthetic phonics is the main driving force for teaching phonics and is the current emphasis of educational practice.

We have taken 43 sounds (phonemes) of the English language and their spelling (grapheme) choices and created texts to provide materials to aid the learning and teaching of reading and writing. Our texts are based on a synthetic phonics approach and therefore work alongside any good phonics framework or resource that is used in school.

Our resource incorporates an understanding of how children learn and remember and the pieces are ideal for incorporating into accelerated learning techniques. They can be utilised in many ways and we have used them, and seen them used, throughout the primary age range.

Steve Way and Simon Hickton

Terminology

Good frameworks and resources recommend the use of the correct terminology from the start. Children do not have a problem with this. They can all remember and pronounce, for example, a lot more Star Wars, dinosaur or Bionicle names than we ever could!

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Phoneme: A speech sound

An **allophone** is a variant of a particular phoneme e.g. the exploded t sound of top and the unexploded one in the middle of later are allophones of the phoneme /t/. These may be pronounced differently in different regions, due to the rich diversity of regional accents.

Note. A syllable is a unit of pronunciation representing the vowel phonemes in words, e.g. cat has one syllable (but three phonemes), water has two syllables (but four phonemes) and inferno has three syllables (but six phonemes).

Grapheme: Letter or letters that represent a phoneme, these are spelling choices.

Graphemes can be subdivided into:

Graph: A single letter showing one phoneme.

Digraph: Two letters showing one phoneme.

Trigraph: Three letters showing one phoneme.

Split Digraph: Two letters separated by another letter showing one phoneme.

Examples

The c, a and t in cat are all graphs.

The ai in rain and ch in school are digraphs.

The dge in bridge and igh in light are trigraphs.

The a-e in name is a split digraph.

The sounds used in the English language can be divided up into, arguably,* 43 or 44 phonemes, 24 consonant phonemes and 19 or 20 vowel phonemes, along with their grapheme choices. "Grapheme choices" are the graphemes that can represent a single phoneme.

E.g.: c, k, ck, ch & q are the grapheme choices for the phoneme /c/ as it sounds in the words cat, kitten, duck, school and queen.

f, ff & ph are the grapheme choices for the phoneme /f/ as it sounds in the words fish, coffee and dolphin.

Reading is the conversion of **graphemes** into **phonemes**.

Spelling is the conversion of **phonemes** into **graphemes** and thus relies heavily upon visual memory. "Does it look right?"

Diphthong is a vowel phoneme in which the articulation begins as for one vowel phoneme and moves towards another e.g. oi in coin (starts as o, changes to i.)

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* The "44th" phoneme ʊə /oor/ is used so infrequently that it's not included in this resource. There aren't enough words using it to write anything with! The Literacy Framework does not acknowledge this phoneme either.

The Text Resources on the CD

This resource is in the form of three pieces of text for 43 phonemes and their grapheme choices. All three forms of text are on the CD. By using the CD the pieces can be displayed directly onto whiteboards or printed onto paper for group or individual use.

1. Fantastic Phoneme

– A very simple memory cue or cues in the form of a short comical sentence to help children remember words which contain the graphemes of a particular phoneme.

In general we see this resource as being useful for 5 to 8 year old children, but it can be used for younger or older children as well. As with all the resources, some of the phonemes covered will be used more than others, but there are resources for each phoneme so a wide spectrum of ability can be served by using these sentences. It is important to show children the whole picture, as many need to see this before they can start to make sense of our complicated language. Using these sentences allows the children to encounter the phonemes they are learning in a meaningful context.

2. Grab the Graphemes

– A short simple text with lots of words which contain a particular phoneme's grapheme choices.

In general we would see this resource as being useful for teacher-guided activities for 5 to 7 year old children and more independent work for 8 to 11 year olds. The idea of using texts is that the children will gain a broader experience of using words incorporating particular phonemes in a wider context than when using the single sentences of the 'Fantastic Phonemes'. The pieces have deliberately been kept quite short so that children beginning to gain confidence in reading and writing are not overfaced by them and will be able to imagine being able to write pieces of a similar length.

3. Phoneme Fable

– A more advanced text for stretching more confident readers with lots of words which contain a particular phoneme.

In general we would see this resource as being appropriate for use with children of a reasonable reading age, about 8 to 11 years. Work using these pieces will help the children develop their knowledge of and confidence in using phonetics as a tool to building advanced linguistic skills, synthesised in context with other language skills that the children may be developing simultaneously. It will be particularly useful for supporting those children who may have learned to read confidently, but do not spell confidently. Even for children with advanced language skills, they will help hone and develop these skills as the 'Phoneme Fables' use a very wide range of different genres.

We would suggest that there is a lack of resources to help 9 to 11 year old children continue building the phonetics skills developed in previous years. Certainly there are no formats that are appropriate to the age and associated skills development of older children and other children still struggling to read at an appropriate level for their age. We suggest that the 'Phoneme Fables' represent a means of plugging that previously existing resources gap. It could also support older juniors for whom English is a second language.

From the beginning of this project we felt all texts emphasising the use of particular phonemes would give children an opportunity to develop their reading and spelling skills. At the same time they would be able to practise key reading skills such as knowledge of context and grammar and word recognition. All good texts facilitate learning these latter skills, but we agreed with a National Literacy Strategy publication, ('Phonics' 2001) which stated that: *"In most texts phonic patterning occurs too randomly to be discerned"*. We hope that our resource remedies this deficiency.

We have cited the I.P.A. (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbol for each phoneme, as these are often used for reference, e.g. in the Oxford English Dictionary. This may come in useful when you are list building and want to rapidly check that a word does use the phoneme you are looking for. We've also noted the symbols used by the Primary Framework for Literacy 2006 and the "Letters and Sounds" publication 2007 (referred to as "L. & S.").

Using the Resource

We see this as an extremely versatile resource, so the suggestions we've made below are only some of the ways in which you may decide to use the resource.

The examples below show how the resource can be used across the age range. Where specific examples are given we've used lessons concentrating on the dʒ (/j/) phoneme with its four grapheme choices – j, g, dge and ge. There are examples of the pages provided for this phoneme on the CD.

Fantastic Phoneme

Children love this way of remembering spelling choices. The youngest children enjoy listening to the teacher making up silly stories with the keywords for a particular phoneme and are able to do so themselves. This can be used with children as young as five.

The phoneme on each page can be used as a focus, e.g. 'Phoneme of the Week'. The teacher can read the sentence with the class each lesson so that the children have a way

I.P.A. Symbol: t

L. & S. Symbol: /t/

Common Graphemes t, tt

tap, tree, two, toe, Tom, Trevor, Tasaf, Torah, temple, tremendous, true, trick, trust, vet, top, tug, but, boat, bat, hat, fat, hit, hot, tapir, tape, tarsier, fit

letter, better, wetter, bitter, go getter, red setter, quitter, fitter, matter, otter, butter, mutter, stutter, shutter, cutter, hitter, hatter, jittery, kitten, mitten, bittern, batter, clatter, clutter

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I.P.A. Symbol: Ɵ

L. & S. Symbol: /th/

Common Graphemes th, as in thirsty

author, thumb, Earth, thought, throughout, through, thriving, Thirsk, worthless, worth, thick, heath, wreath, birth, think, throat, thing, thin, throw, threw, south, north, eighth, ninth, thirteenth, eleventh, third, thirst, three, thrash, thread, throne, throng, thief, thrush, thrust, theme, thank, strength, path

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I.P.A. Symbol: ð

L. & S. Symbol: /th/

Common Graphemes th, as in the

though, they, whether, weather, other, there, their, they're, them, feather, this, the, thimble, heather, that, clothes, gather, those, than, then, themselves, thereby, therefore, thy, bother, brother, wither, father, fathom, these, bathe, lather

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