



HANDOUT: ALPHABETICS TERMINOLOGY

Phoneme

The smallest individual sound in an oral language.

Phonemic Awareness

The ability to hear and manipulate the individual sounds in oral language. When learners are reading at the lowest levels and are having difficulty decoding words, it is often because they have problems with phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness doesn't develop naturally – it has to be taught. When we learn English as children, we learn it orally and focus on the complete word. Learners will need explicit instruction and practice in discerning and manipulating individual sounds in words.

Grapheme

The letter or letters that represent a sound when it is written.

Phonics

The relationship between the sounds of oral language and written symbols, and how those symbols are used to create recognizable words in print. In other words, phonics is the relationship between phonemes and graphemes. Understanding this relationship allows good readers to accurately decode unfamiliar words.

Phonological Awareness

The ability to identify and manipulate different components of oral language. Phonemic awareness is a subset of phonological awareness. Phonological awareness includes

- phonemic awareness;
- recognizing individual words in a sentence;
- identifying syllables within a word;
- recognizing rhyming words;
- identifying onsets (initial consonants) and rimes (the vowel and whatever else follows an onset) in syllables.

Decoding

Using skills and strategies to identify words in print. In other words, converting the printed code into oral language.

Voiced

The vocal cords vibrate when the sound is made, as in the sound /v/.

Unvoiced

The vocal cords do not vibrate when the sound is made, as in the sound /f/.

Continuant

The sound can be continued as long as you have breath. All vowels and some consonants, such as /v/ and /f/, are continuants.

Stopped

The sound cannot be continued. Some consonant sounds are stopped, such as /d/.

Nasal

The sound comes through the nose. There are three nasal sounds: /m/, /n/, and /ng/ as in *ring*. If you make these sounds and then pinch your nose, the sound will stop.

Consonant Blend

Two or more consonants blend together but each letter sound can still be heard. Examples include /bl/, /br/, /cl/, /cr/, /dr/, /fr/, /tr/, /fl/, /gl/, /gr/, /pl/, /pr/, /sl/, /sm/, /sp/, and /st/. Blends can occur at the beginning of words, like *blue* or *crook*. They can also occur at the end of words, like *last* or *rasp*.

Consonant Digraphs

Two consonants join together to create a new sound. Examples include /ch/, /ph/, /sh/, /th/, /wh/, and /ck/. Digraphs can occur at the beginning of words, like *chew* or *shook*. They can also occur at the end of words, like *bath* or *truck*.

Consonant Trigraphs

When three consonants join together to create a new sound. Examples include /sch/, /shr/, /sph/, /squ/, /thr/, and /tch/. Trigraphs can occur at the beginning of words, like *schedule* or *sphere*. They can also occur at the end of words, like *batch*.