

Latin is the Root of Morphology

ARTICLE

Crosson, A. C., McKeown, M. G., Lei, P., Zhao, H., Li, X., Patrick, K., ... & Shen, Y. (2021). Morphological analysis skill and academic vocabulary knowledge are malleable through intervention and may contribute to reading comprehension for multilingual adolescents. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 44(1), 154-174.

What did they do?

Crosson and colleagues conducted an experimental study to investigate the effects of morphological analysis skills intervention on word analysis and reading comprehension performance for middle school-aged multilingual students. 70% of the students spoke Spanish as their first language. 70 students were given a daily 15 minute whole group intervention by the classroom teacher while the other 70 students were given “business as usual”(BAU) instruction. Students in the experimental group followed a 4-day lesson pattern:

- Days 1-2: students were explicitly taught several Latin roots and discussed how to integrate their meaning into targeted words.
- Day 3: students contrasted targeted words, and analyzed new words that contained the taught Latin root
- Day 4: students read authentic texts with targeted words, practiced analyzing new words with previously taught Latin roots.

All students were given the same pre and post assessments focused on the following skills: definitional vocabulary knowledge, morphological analysis, and reading comprehension.

What did they find?

They found that students in the morphological analysis group improved significantly on vocabulary knowledge and morphological analysis skills compared to the students in the BAU group.

Though the intervention’s effect on reading comprehension was not significant, the researchers predict that the students’ reading comprehension will improve over time as other studies have also provided evidence that strong morphological analysis skills are linked to reading comprehension growth.

What could this mean?

This study suggests that Latin roots provide a great foundation of learning high frequency academic vocabulary, especially for grades 4-8. Additionally, the teachers focused on teaching strategies that emphasized active processing and problem solving for students, such as comparing and contrasting words, creating example sentences, and discussing the meaning of new words.

Elements of this lesson can be incorporated into a general education classroom since it was a quick 15 minute, teacher-led intervention. The timing could also be used during a small group rotation. Teachers could collaborate on the selection and sequence of Latin roots taught by the needs of their class or curriculum content.

