# Instructional Sequence for Teaching the Structure of the English Language

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With Multisensory Structured Language Education (MSLE), instructional concepts are to be taught directly, sequentially, and systematically (Henry, 2009). How does this impact the instructional sequence? Language concepts must be taught explicitly, not implicitly, and in an organized sequence, where one concept is taught and mastered then another layered on, coinciding or supporting the first. An example demonstrating this concept is the teaching of the Floss Rule (doubling rule for letters, f, l, s and z after a short vowel) while teaching closed syllables that follow the CVCC pattern. Further, when using the MSLE approach one would teach syllable types in a sequential manner rather than random spelling patterns in mini-lessons.

Authors of reading programs have developed instructional sequences based on their understanding of the research. Reading teachers in Virginia are bound by the information provided in the English Standards of Learning Curriculum Frameworks. Teachers in the states adopting Common Core Standards will develop their instructional sequences based on the general tenets of Common Core. School divisions further map and pace an instructional sequence based on their standards. When planning intense reading intervention, the teacher may adopt a program with a fully developed instructional sequence, or select an option where the teacher is trained to make the instructional sequence decisions. Commonalities emerge among these options, many being based on the Orton-Gillingham Approach (a structure language approach). All reading instruction must contain the five components of reading (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension) as outlined in the National Reading Panel's report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) to meet the standards set out in IDEA 2004, ESEA 2001 and the USED waivers of 2012.

Phonemic Awareness

Segment by phonemes:

/k/   /a/   /t/

By sounds (phonemic awareness)
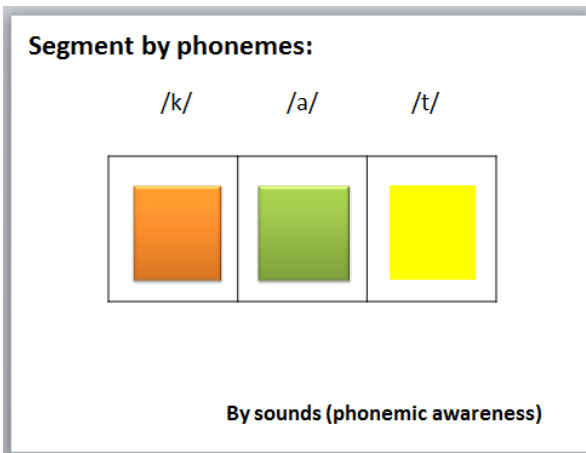
Moats (2009) suggests that we teach letters, sounds, syllables, and concepts according to several principles. One principle to consider in designing or delivering instruction is the frequency with which vowels or consonants occur in running text. A second principle to consider would be the position of the mouth when producing a specific sound, in that different sounds are produced in close proximity with subtle differences making the distinction difficult to ascertain, i.e, short /e/ and /i/. Finally one must consider the order of phonological skills development, moving from phonological awareness to orthography, during instruction (Tolman, 2009). This progression moves from

- segmenting sentences into words (through discrimination of sound units)

- segmenting words into syllables

- segmenting syllables into onset and rime

- segmenting onset and rime into phonemes

- mapping sounds onto letters (teach letter names)

- single letters to digraphs

- digraphs to trigraphs

- trigraphs to vowel teams

- vowel teams to blends

- blends to word families

- word families to inflections

- inflections to syllable types

- syllable types to roots/affixes

- roots/affixes to word origins.

Phonics

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Six syllable types - "C.L.O.V.E.R."

• Closed                    "cat"
• L (Consonant – le)     bub "ble"
• Open                      "she"
• Vowel combinations     "loud"
• E (silent 'e' rule)       "make"
• R-controlled             "bird"
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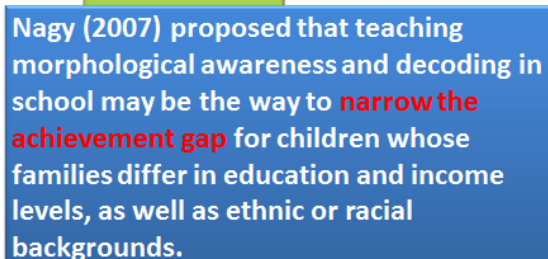
Moats (2009) notes that the closed syllable is the most common spelling unit in English and accounts for just under 50 percent of the syllables in running text. Given this information, phonics instruction should begin with the closed syllables, and certain letters. Instructional sequences examined begin with closed syllables and short vowels. Cheatum and Lund (2004) propose a specific instructional sequence for syllable types – closed, VCE, open, r-controlled, c-le syllables, and finally vowel teams. Further they suggest the order of vowels being taught in conjunction with the syllable types – a, i, o, u, e, y. The Scottish Rite Dyslexia Programs begin the instructional sequence with /i/, closed syllables with short /i/, open syllables with long /i/, then to suffix /s/. The Wilson Reading System (1996) begins the instructional sequence with closed syllables and a sequence similar to Cheatum and Lund (2004). Bloom and Traub (2005) begin with a prescribed set of consonants, vowels and closed syllables. Gillingham and Stillman (1997) follow a similar sequence with groupings of words, the first being short vowels, a, e, and I within closed syllables. Finally, for Virginia teachers of reading, closed syllables are the first referenced for reading instruction within the curriculum frameworks (SOL 1.6).

In designing instruction, syllable instruction begins with single syllable words, moving to multi-syllable words. Consideration must be given to the division of words into decodable parts. [Syllable division rules](#) (p. 3) must be introduced after the impacted syllable has been taught and mastered. In practice, once closed syllable instruction has been introduced and multi-syllables have been incorporated, the syllable division rule where *two consonants stand between two vowels (VCCV),* often referred to as the Rabbit Rule, would be taught.   The same would be true for [spelling generalizations](#) (Reading Lessons from Educators Publishing Company). During closed syllable instruction, the Floss Rule (doubling rule for letters, f, l, and s before a short vowel) would be introduced as this would follow the CVCC spelling pattern, one of the closed syllable spelling patterns.

Fluency

Ascertaining an instructional sequence in the area of fluency is difficult as it would be based on individual student reading level and goals set. Generally fluency activities are based on repeated reading practice whose progression is dependent on the student's reading level ([Read Naturally](#)). Other programs present repeated practice in a format moving from small units of language (letter recognition, prefix, suffix, blend recognition and high frequency words and phrases) to passages (Campbell, 2008).

Vocabulary

Nagy (2007) proposed that teaching morphological awareness and decoding in school may be the way to **narrow the achievement gap** for children whose families differ in education and income levels, as well as ethnic or racial backgrounds.

Vocabulary instruction will begin with high frequency words and Dolch words, move to more complex vocabulary, often content vocabulary, and to morphology. Vocabulary instruction is a critical component of reading, moving students forward in

comprehension of more complex text. Morphology is a critical component in reading instruction and moves from instruction in the smallest suffixes (i.e., s, ed) to more complex affixes and root words, culminating with an in-depth understanding of words origins (Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and Greek) (Henry, 2013).

Comprehension

When considering comprehension skills, varying conceptual understandings exist. One view encourages the teaching of specific skills or processes in a hierarchical fashion (Hall, 2011) and another to move through gradually increasing complex text considering the components of Scarborough's Reading Rope (Hennessy & Greenblatt, 2012).

The strategies for comprehending.....

Processes/Strategies:
Connecting (SOLs K.9 to ......)
Questioning (SOLs K.9 to ......)
Predicting (SOLs K.9 to .....)
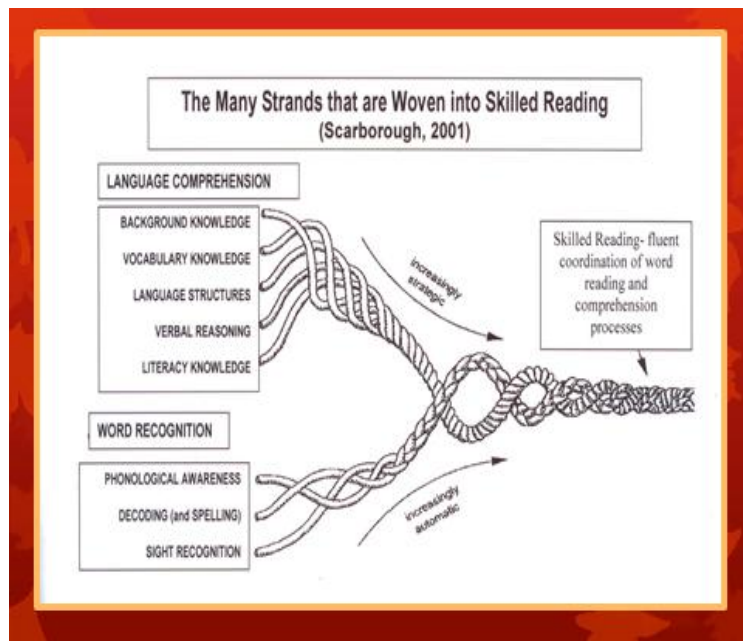Imaging (Visualizing) (SOLs 4.5g to ......)
Inferring (SOLs 4.5h to ......)
Determining importance (SOLs 2.8 to .....)
Synthesizing (SOLs 10.5g to ....)

These skills begin early in the SOLs then build and combine through the 12th grade.

Hall, 2011

Hall (2011) proposes teaching the following sequence of comprehending skills for students to become successful readers. When aligning these skills to the Virginia English Standards of Learning (Kindergarten to 12th Grade), a similar hierarchy emerges with slight variations.

The Many Strands that are Woven into Skilled Reading
(Scarborough, 2001)

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE
VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE
LANGUAGE STRUCTURES
VERBAL REASONING
LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

increasingly strategic

Skilled Reading- fluent coordination of word reading and comprehension processes

WORD RECOGNITION

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
DECODING (and SPELLING)
SIGHT RECOGNITION

increasingly automatic

Hennessy (2012) suggests that teachers of reading consider the strands of the reading rope as forwarded by Scarborough's Strands Woven into Skilled Reading. Comprehending tasks place demands on each strand. When one strand is compromised, the strength of the rope is compromised thus hindering the comprehension of the text being read. Cain (2011), following Scarborough's view, look to discourse skills of integration and inference, monitoring, and knowledge and use of story structure to predict growth in reading comprehension, but does note that comprehension of words is essential for good reading comprehension.

By following appropriate instructional sequences of reading skills in the five areas of reading, research indicates that all readers, particularly those struggling, will be successful in acquiring the necessary skills to make meaning of text.

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 Resources

Virginia **English** Standards of Learning –

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/english/review.shtml