

WW Newsletter #85: February 26, 2017

Highlights

- Upcoming SWI workshops around the world
- Recent WW workshops and the wider SWI community
- “In press” research relevant to SWI
- New free WW resources targeting vocabulary

A busy time for WordWorks and the SWI community

Since February 23rd I conducted a week of workshops in Alberta at public schools and a workshop set up by an Edmonton education organization ([ERLC](#)). After a week at home I led two weeks of workshops at 5 schools in the Bay Area including two Saturday public workshops and finally two days at a school in Los Angeles for my first visit there.

Just a few of the other SWI activities during that time include:

- An [SWI Facebook Group](#) bursting with orthographic inquiry.
- Gina Cooke’s [LEXinars](#) and Real Spelling [Spellinars](#) inspiring teacher and tutors around the world.
- Workshops in Indonesia and Melbourne by [Lyn Anderson](#).
- An excellent new [SWI website](#) by Rebecca Loveless (who has brilliantly taken over for my position at Nueva).

I also want to highlight another brand new SWI based venture in the international school community. My long time friend, colleague and SWI pioneer Fiona Hamilton just launched her new SWI website [Roots@ELC: A Place for Words](#) from her base at the wonderful [ELC International School in Bangkok](#).

I’m excited about the [3-day workshop](#) we will lead together in Bangkok April 20 - 23 (See poster next page). It turns out that Fiona and I were both introduced to Real Spelling at the same 45-minute Real Spelling workshop in Bangkok in 2001!

Upcoming Public SWI Workshops

- **April 20, 21, 23, Bangkok:** SWI Workshop with Pete Bowers & Fiona Hamilton.
This 3-day workshop marks the inaugural event of an exciting new hub for SWI led by long-time SWI expert Fiona Hamilton based at [ELC International in Bangkok](#), Thailand.
Click [HERE](#) to learn more.
Click [HERE](#) to register.
- **April 28-29, Melbourne:** Public workshop with Pete Bowers & Lyn Anderson ([Beyond the Word](#)). Hosted by [Wesley College](#).
Click [HERE](#) for a poster with information.
Click [HERE](#) to register.
- **June 26-30, Bay Area:** **SWI Nueva Institute** near San Francisco. Take Part 1 (June 27-27) Part 2 (June 28, 29, 30) or all 5 days.
Click [HERE](#) for information and registration.

Fiona was in Jakarta when her learning journey with Real Spelling started and continued when she took a position at the International School of Beijing. Fiona was one of the first administrators to invite me to do school workshops when she was there. This upcoming trip to Thailand will be my third visit to her wonderful school in Bangkok. Fiona’s history of bringing SWI alive in schools as an administrator brings an important new frame to those offering SWI training in our community. If you are in the area, I highly recommend this workshop!

Recent WordWorks Workshops

Many inspiring stories and new resources have grown from this last set of workshops. I share one of those resources in this

update, but there are more to come in my next full WW Newsletter. For example, in that Newsletter, I plan to show how I introduced the suffixing conventions for replacing final, non-syllabic <e>s in the preschool class of master teacher (Carolee Fucigna. Carolee will be a special presenter at my [Nueva SWI Summer Institute!](#)) I will share images of that work and the resource Gail Venable helped me create for that lesson.

I also look forward to sharing the story of the last minute visit of Maryanne Wolfe (researcher and author of [Proust and the Squid](#) among other books) who was gobsmacked to see the kind of learning going on with SWI in Carolee's room and the Lower School at Nueva in general.

Perhaps the most moving examples of learning I look forward to sharing were from the [Athena Academy](#), where I got to work with teachers and students for three days.

My final visit was to the [Wildwood School](#) in Los Angeles. One Wildwood teacher, Sarah Simon, attended my Nueva Summer Institute and has been doing amazing work in her Grade 2 class ever since. For the rest of the staff and students at her school, SWI was a totally new experience. Given that background, consider Sarah's message -- and what can happen with just a 2-day visit:

Pete, I didn't realize until today what an incredibly awesome impact you had on everyone here. A number of our teachers have already taken the dive in and started to play with this in their classrooms and I have 5 teachers who are demanding - not asking - demanding! to be sent to your summer institute. Five! And you should have heard our lunch room today, it was totally abuzz with excitement and enthusiasm over this. Yay!!! It's just so cool. I couldn't be happier and wanted you to know this was all happening.

an invitation to explore English orthography in detail



a place for words

professional development for educators

Have you often felt you should do more to strengthen students' vocabulary than present a list of words relevant to your current topic?



International schools present unique challenges. Teachers and students speak with an almost impossibly broad variety of accents, with differing word pronunciations. Fortunately, there is an approach to teaching foundational literacy skills that will build vocabulary and help students learn to spell regardless of how words are pronounced.

- Join **Pete Bowers** and **Fiona Hamilton** in our comprehensive workshop to
- ◆ deepen your own understanding of how English words are structured
 - ◆ learn there really is a **system** and it can be explored through scientific inquiry
 - ◆ understand the **power of the morpheme** (bases, prefixes and suffixes)
 - ◆ be better informed about the complexity of **letter-sound relationships**
 - ◆ discover how studying word structure can strengthen learning in all **subject areas**, with all students, be they 5 or 15
 - ◆ develop ways to **implement** this approach in your classroom

join our 3-day
structured word
inquiry workshop
in April



Learning to ask questions about spelling structure sets you and your students on a quest for understanding.

April 20th - 22nd 2017
8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Thursday, Friday and Saturday
@ELC International School, Bangkok Thailand

learn more

visit our website: <http://aplaceforwords.elc-bangkok.com>
or contact fiona: aplaceforwords@elc-bangkok.com

This is why SWI keeps growing in these different areas once schools get support with some explicit training. *Nothing motivates like understanding.* People may think that I am referring to students with this statement. But I would argue it is a universal dynamic for any learner. When teachers get access to an understanding that English spelling makes sense, they are motivated to learn more. When a school supports that motivation with resources and training, the learning just keeps getting deeper.

I know it is self-serving to say this -- but if your school is within striking distance of any of these upcoming workshops, I highly recommend sending a team of at least two teachers to start this journey. It really is transformative.

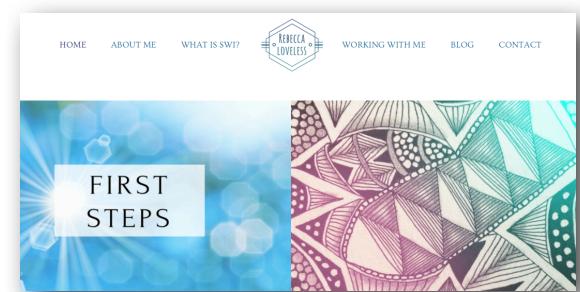
New article “in press” relevant to SWI

One of the joys of visiting with Maryanne Wolfe during my trip to Nueva was the opportunity to discuss the history of reading research, where it has been and where it stands now with regard to morphological instruction. I do have a special connection with Maryanne as she is the co-author with my mom, Patricia Bowers, in the research that introduced the “double deficit hypothesis” and *naming speed* to the research world. Maryanne has long pointed to morphology in her work (Rave-O etc.) and has been interested in my morphological research. But seeing what is going on at Nueva clearly brought this work alive in a new way for her that is going to spark a continued connection.

The relatively recent research evidence about morphological instruction from meta-analyses, including the one I was involved in (Bowers, Kirby & Deacon, 2010) and the two by Goodwin and Ahn (2010, 2013) marks a dramatic contrast to long-held assumptions that still influence so much of reading

research and practice. For years there has been an assumption that morphological instruction was not appropriate for earlier learners or those struggling with literacy. It turns out the best most current research tells us the opposite. The evidence is that we *should* be teaching morphology from the beginning of schooling and that it is especially important for those struggling in literacy. Carolee’s class and many other classrooms around the world provide such clear real-world illustrations that it is never too early to draw learners’ attention to the meaning structure of words in oral and written language. Stories I just witnessed with dyslexic students at Athena Academy provide similar evidence of the importance of bringing morphological structure to the attention of dyslexic students. I also recommend this article [**“But what if they are not reading yet?”**](#) by

Rebecca Loveless
about one student’s
journey with the
support of SWI
tutoring. Don’t forget
to explore [Rebecca’s
website](#) and book her
for PD if you are in
the Bay Area!



So what is this new research?

For some time now, I’ve been working on publishing an article with my brother, Jeff Bowers, at the University of Bristol. The article, “Beyond Phonics: The Case for Teaching Children the Logic of the English Spelling System” is soon to come out in [*Educational Psychologist*](#), an excellent journal with a high impact factor.

In my opinion, this paper makes the strongest theoretical and empirical case I have published explaining the straightforward claim that literacy instruction should accurately reflect how our writing system works from the beginning of formal schooling.

The abstract of this paper gives a sense of what it addresses:

A large body of research supports the conclusion that early reading instruction in English should emphasize phonics, that is, the teaching of grapheme–phoneme correspondences. By contrast, we argue that instruction should be designed to make sense of spellings by teaching children that spellings are organized around the interrelation of morphology, etymology, and phonology. In this way, literacy can be taught as a scientific subject, where children form and test hypotheses about how their spelling system works. First, we review arguments put forward in support of phonics and then highlight significant problems with both theory and data. Second, we review the linguistics of English spellings and show that spellings are highly logical once all the relevant sublexical constraints are considered. Third, we provide theoretical and empirical arguments in support of the hypothesis that instruction should target all the cognitive skills necessary to understand the logic of the English spelling system.

I look forward to this article getting out there! Many thanks to my brother Jeff (lead author) but also to the many readers that helped this article take shape over time including Jacqueline Aldridge, Patricia Bowers, Gina Cook, Nina Kazanina, John Kirby, Rebecca Marsh, and Gail Venable.

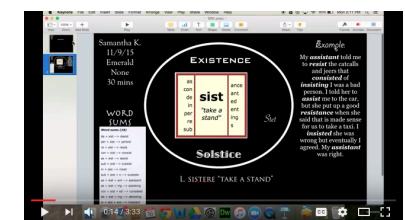
SWI vocabulary lessons: “Media in the Middle” and more...
On this latest set of workshops I was invited to a number of middle school classrooms. While anyone who has visited [Ann Whiting’s spectacular Grade 7 blog](#) knows, deep orthographic study can be an astonishingly rich leverage for learning in humanities. However, when middle school teachers do not get

sufficient PD to be comfortable working with word sums, all the suffixing conventions, making matrices etc., I try to highlight that, in fact, learning to work with etymology offers such a rich way to deepen the study of any subject area.

Click [HERE](#) for a [Real Spellers](#) post with document that grew out of my visit to the Middle School at Nueva. I co-ordinated with their excellent Grade 5 teacher, Zac Carr, who wanted to use my visit as a spark for the speeches on social justice issues his students were about to begin working on. Together we composed a couple of sentences highlighting the role of “media” in social justice issues. We set up a context for etymological research to discover that the underlying meaning of the word <media> is “middle” and that <advertising> goes back to a root for “turn.” Those discoveries led to rich conversations about the relevance of these concepts for analysis social justice issues. I think you’ll find this a rich resource to work with. On that same Real Spellers post I link to a number of “SWI Investigations” relevant to a wide variety of grade levels and subjects.

I also recently posted [THIS](#) video walking teachers through an investigation of the words <immigrant> and <immigrate> that models the process of this kind of investigation.

In a similar vein, I had to share that I just got a note that [THIS](#) video on <resistance> by one of my Grade 5 students at Nueva last year has been inspiring Alberta teachers at presentations by one of the leaders of the [ERLC](#) who has been citing SWI work in her workshops. Check it out!



Pete Bowers, Feb. 27, 2017

Nothing motivates like understanding!