

WW Newsletter #93 May 31, 2018

Wrapping up the 2017-2018 School year

Hello all,

I continue to get behind my planned Newsletters. I am determined to return to more analysis of [the video of Carolee Fucigna's Pre-school class](#) that I mentioned in my last WW Update. In the meantime too many stories have built up to postpone any longer.

Some Highlights in this Newsletter

- *Notes on recent workshops in Melbourne and Bangkok*
- *A new WordWorks document on "spelling-out-loud" and "writing-out-loud" (revised from 2011 document)*
- *New research: Notes on new blog by Jeff Bowers (my brother) and new publications from both Jeff and me*
- *Link to my video on SWI and where it fits in the research for the 2nd Annual Virtual Conference for the Dyslexia Training Institute.*
- *New "special investigation" on <special>: This one grew of 5-session video conference-based SWI course I'm teaching and that is still on-going!*
- *New WW Special Publication: See two inspiring stories of learning after a first SWI tutoring session*

"What I love about Pete's workshops is that he takes a room full of teachers and turns them into learners."

Jonathan Twigg

Primary School Assistant Principal – PYP Coordinator
International School of Lausanne

Upcoming Summer Workshops with Pete

June 18-22: SWI Nueva Institute SF Bay Area (Still room!)

- 2-day Introductory Workshop: Mon-Tues, June 18-19 (\$500)
- 3-day Advanced Workshop: Wed-Fri, June 20-22 (\$750)
- Full 5-day Workshop: Mon-Fri, June 18-22 (\$1150) For both novice or experienced participants.



More information and register [HERE](#)
Download and post/share a flyer [HERE](#).

Presentations & support from Nueva teachers

All 5 days: [Rebecca Loveless](#) is supporting the workshop. She will share examples of SWI from Nueva classrooms, work with participants present on script and other topics. Erin Metcalf (Gr. 3 teacher) will also be there over the course of the workshop.

Wed: Carolee Fucigna (pre-school) and Laraine Ray (kindergarten) present on SWI in the early years. (See Carolee's class in action [HERE](#).)

Thurs: Sam Modest presents on learning in his Gr. 2 class (See a video of his classroom [HERE](#).)

Fri: Karen Teigel (middle school) presents on learning through SWI in upper years.

July 10-14: Wolfe Island 4-day SWI Summer Course (full)

This is always a highlight of our year. This year, Canada, US, Japan and Ethiopia are represented!

Summer Workshops with other SWI Experts

Lyn Anderson & Ann Whiting (Near Melbourne)

July 3-5: A 3-day orthographic retreat "Words of the sea, Sand and Sky" on Phillip Island near Melbourne, Australia Click [HERE](#) for details.

Scott Mills excellent cross-country spelling adventure!

June 23-29: The irrepressible and excellent Scott Mills is giving evening spelling workshops (\$20) in Dayton, Chicago, Omaha, Denver, Salt Lake City and Boise as he crosses the country. See information [HERE](#) and explore his website for his resources and posts. It is all so rich.

On-line real-time classes with Rebecca Loveless

I'm excited about the new [offerings for classes on Rebecca's website](#). Registration is open for classes on Real Script, Introduction to SWI and an On-going Study Group. I can't recommend Rebecca highly enough.

Recent workshops - Melbourne & Bangkok

Melbourne: My recent annual trip to Melbourne hosted by [Wesley College](#) was particularly inspiring. This year I had the special treat of working with both **Lyn Anderson** and **Ann Whiting**. Lyn's on-going work is a major driver of the growth of SWI in Melbourne. She has been working regularly with a number of schools including on-going contracts with a school district that is determined to get SWI growing in its schools. With Ann now in the region, the rate of growth of SWI is only going to increase. See their joint consultancy project with their inaugural post [HERE](#).

If you are in the region **GO TO THEIR July 3-5 workshop!**

The fact that we had a large turn out for a 2-day advanced SWI course is a clear indicator of the growth of SWI in Melbourne. In fact SWI in Australia has grown to the point that I have been invited to be a plenary speaker at their largest annual literacy conference in 2019, the ALEA (Australian Literacy Educators Association) that will be held in Melbourne that year.

I also conducted a one-day classroom-embedded workshop at Wesley to support the learning of any (novice or expert) who could not attend the 2-day workshop. I'm so pleased with how that process is working.

See the [last Newsletter](#) for more on classroom-embedded workshops. We will use this model again for the next set of workshops hosted by [ERLC](#) in Edmonton (Jan 23-25, 2019 in Edmonton). A recent set of on-line sessions with a school in Switzerland has led to a probable fall public workshop that may use this model too. Stay tuned.

Bangkok: My second annual workshop co-presenting with Fiona Hamilton, founder of the international SWI consultancy "[A Place for Words](#)" was also a joy. The work Fiona has done with teachers at [ELC International in Bangkok](#) is so impressive.

Scenes from 2-day SWI workshop at Wesley College



Above, left: Participants discuss their web on the bound base <vert>.



Above, right: A group presents their matrix (See a proud Lyn in the background!)



Bottom, right: Ann, me and Lyn at our workshop Wesley College workshop.

Scenes from 3-day SWI workshop hosted by "A Place for Words" at ELC International, Bangkok



Top 3 images: Teachers research and present their group investigations.



Bottom, left: The amazing primary team at ELC International present. Once again, the teacher presentations are a course highlight.

Middle: Fiona (founder of A Place For Words) and me at the end of the workshop.

Once again I was inspired by the ever-deepening excitement these teachers have for what they have been learning, and the growth they see in their students. The kinder and Grade 1 teachers couldn't wait to tell me stories about the impact they are seeing on kids' reading and writing. Teachers of older students showed us how important SWI was for teaching concepts and terms in subject areas like math and science. Like last year, the teacher presentations from across the grades were a highlight for participants. That workshop led to follow-up trips to Vietnam for Fiona and Japan for me. Plans for follow-up trips from this workshop are in process. With so many international schools in the area, Fiona is already turning Bangkok into a hub for SWI in the international school world.

New WordWorks resources for “spelling-out-loud” and “writing-out-loud”

Click [HERE](#) for a new document on my website describing this process and pointing to the revised guide for spelling-out-loud and writing-out-loud.

Each year I find this process more valuable for my learning and practice. I continue to refine how I use it and the language I use to reflect my own on-going orthographic understanding. I referenced this process in my intervention study ([Bowers & Kirby, 2010](#)) that introduced the phrase “structured word inquiry.” I have used a document guiding this process that I first created in 2011 and finally revised (May 25, 2018). I recommend this for novices to SWI and long-time experts.

New research: Notes on new blog by Jeff Bowers (Pete's brother) and new publications from both Jeff and Pete

Click [HERE](#) for a new blog by my brother, Jeff Bowers, a psychologist at the University of Bristol. You may have already read our recent article ([Bowers & Bowers, 2017](#)) that addresses structured word inquiry and its place in the research. We have some other articles in press, and Jeff has

submitted his own new article analysing the research evidence about explicit systematic phonics instruction, less-systematic phonics instruction and whole language. He's made that article available for download at his blog. Many will be surprised and challenged by Jeff's analysis and his account of the analyses of others on this topic.

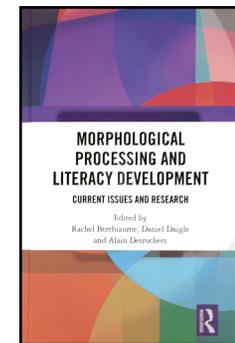
I encourage people to read the introduction to that article at [THIS LINK](#) on his blog -- and to critically analyse the evidence he presents. Don't draw conclusions until you've actually read the article!

I am also pleased to have chapters on morphological instruction in two new books. Here are the references:

Kirby, J. R. & Bowers, P. N. (2018). The effects of morphological instruction on vocabulary learning, reading, and spelling. In R. Berthiaume, D. Daigle, & A. Desrochers (Eds.), *Issues in Morphological Processing*. Routledge.

Kirby, J. R. & Bowers, P. N. (2017). Morphological instruction and literacy: Binding phonological, orthographic, and semantic features of words. In K. Cain, D. Compton, & R. Parrila, (Eds.), *Theories of reading development*. Amsterdam, NL: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

I'm proud of the 2017 chapter that presents our “*binding agent theory of morphological knowledge*.” I was delighted to receive a copy of the 2018 book a couple days ago (image above). This chapter addresses the research and theory regarding morphological knowledge and instruction for literacy as well. I am particularly pleased about the amount of space we were able to use to share practical examples of SWI instruction. I point to all sorts of investigations and resources that will be familiar to our community. Lyn Anderson's Beyond the Word blog, Scott Caldwell's early [investigation of <condensation>](#), various YouTube videos and other resources are presented to readers so that they can get a sense of what SWI looks like.



Too often journal articles do not allow for space for these kinds of practical examples that researchers need to study in order to have a real sense of what this instruction is about. This book also had a particular emphasis on morphology across languages, so I was able to show English and Spanish morphological morphological families both deriving from the Latin root *am(are)* for “love”. [Email Pete](#) if you are curious about this chapter.

Pete’s video on SWI and where it fits in the research for the 2nd Annual Virtual Conference for the Dyslexia Training Institute

Click [HERE](#) to see my video from this virtual conference.

The [Dyslexia Training Institute](#) (DTI) recently hosted their 2nd virtual conference with a wide arrange of speakers on numerous topics. Sue Hegland ([Learning About Spelling](#)), Scott Mills ([Language Innerviews](#)), Kelli Sandman-Hurley (DTI co-founder) and I all presented on structured word inquiry. The growing interest in the practice and research on SWI has been exciting to see. But as more people get going, the potential for misunderstandings from educators and researchers about SWI grows. My presentation was specifically targeted to address common misunderstandings that I see, and to address topics related to research and SWI.

I was honoured that Kelli and Tracy decided to use my video as the one from the conference that they are making publicly available as a way to promote next year’s conference. See what you think!

New “special investigation” on <special>

Click [HERE](#) for a WW publication on investigating <special>

I’ve been teaching a 5-session video-conference based SWI course using [Zoom](#) with about 30 people that has been a total delight. Almost immediately a number of rich questions have

driven our 1.5 hour sessions. One question had to do with hypotheses about the morphological structure of <special> and its morphological and etymological relatives.

A Special WW Publication: Learning an Investigation of < special >

Dvora Kravitz has been working hard at deepening her understanding of English orthography for some time. She is regularly engaged in the SWI Facebook groups and she has actively sought out guidance from other colleagues. She contacted me a while ago because she wanted to focus her study in an on-line course with me. She offered to put the word out and identify participants and organize the times for five 1.5 hours sessions. As a result we had our first session with a group of about 24 learners last Tuesday. The range of background included novices and others with longtime experience with SWI. Just like I like it!

It was such a joyful gathering.

At the end of our first session, I encouraged everyone to have a go with any of the ideas we had encountered. Not surprisingly, a central concept we got into in our first session was the idea of understanding “word families.” At first we looked specifically at orthographic morphological families -- families of words that share a base element. I didn’t actually define which kind of family we were looking at, but we had a base and looked for words that we could show shared the spelling of that base and which had a clear meaning connection. We are just heading towards becoming clear on the difference between morphological families and etymological families. But one thing we have established already is that to conclude that two words are in the same “family” (morphological or etymological) they must share some connection in spelling and some connection in meaning. Sharing a connection in pronunciation is irrelevant to the linguistic concept of “word families”.

We used that old chestnut <play> as a starter base element to look for related words to create a word web. We arrived at the web below and then started to consider whether the words along the top could or could not be considered part of the <play> family.

Notice that the words <plane> and <plain> might be perceived to have a similar pronunciation as <play>. Here is the IPA for these words:

play /pleɪ/ /pleɪn/
plane, plain /pleɪn/

So we can “hear” /pleɪn/ in all of these spoken words, but we agreed that since <plane> and <plain> did not share a spelling and meaning connection with the base <play>, they could not be in the <play> family.

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This is exactly the kind of question that this course was designed to help teachers engage in. I used that question as a launching pad to address issues about how to pose such scientific questions and ways to investigate with a document I posted on Real Spellers.

New WW Special Publication: See two inspiring stories of learning after a first SWI tutoring session

Click [HERE](#) for this new WW publication.

I can’t think of a better way to end off the last WW Newsletter of the 2017-2018 school year than to point to this new publication sharing these stories of learning inspired from the *very first* SWI tutoring sessions for two children who have been frustrated and struggling with spelling in the context of traditional classroom and/or remedial instruction.

The first story is taken from a post by *Susie Pickett* from one of the SWI Facebook pages. Susie is an inspiring teacher/tutor

I've had the pleasure of working with in the San Francisco area for some time. I know her story will bring a smile to your face.

The other story is from an email a mom sent me from Sydney Australia after our first tutoring session with her daughter. I was blown away at how far this mother-daughter team went after one session. The mother is not a teacher and had no background before this session.

Stories of learning provoked by a first SWI tutoring session
Learning from the novices!

Introduction Pete Bowers (June 1, 2018)

Within a couple days of each of each other I received to messages from different sources of astonishingly rich learning through a first tutoring session using SWI. The depth of understanding and the joy of understanding displayed by these two stories were so inspiring that I got permission to share these short stories with you.

The first story was shared by Susie Pickett who has been a leader in SWI work in the Bay Area for some time. She shared the story on an SWI Facebook page. I've copied and pasted that post and added related images and links.

The second story is from a mother (not a teacher) and daughter team in Sydney Australia that I have just begun tutoring via Zoom. I love that it wasn't even my recent workshop in Melbourne that helped her find me. She just saw that her daughter was struggling with spelling and could see that the standard information was not making sense of spelling for her or her daughter. A little surfing on the net and we were off. I've done almost no editing to her email. Notice how quickly she is using angle brackets and other linguistic symbols. Once again, pay attention to the joy of understanding we see after one session.

From Susie Pickett:

Joy!

A new 5th-grade student, struggling mightily with spelling and reading fluency (and who scored poorly on the "nonsense" words test she was given at school) discovers that the alphabetic principle is an untruth. It is our first session together.

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We started with the question, "Why is there a <g> in sign?" Then we looked at the 4 questions before taking a luxurious, meandering, scholarly stroll through the homophonic principle, morphemes, bases, prefixes, suffixes, word sums and phonemes and graphemes. "What's a phoneme?", she said.

[Click HERE for a video of me teaching a lesson on the word family from my book.]

We thought of some homophone pairs and trios: be, bee, Bea, to, too, two (why is there a <w> in two?), here, here...

<ss>, /s/, <-snake>. Wait a minute. What about <dogs>, <-sure>, <-deleviations>, <-t>, /t/, <-turtle>. But what about <-picture>, <-fiction>? Hmmm...

Function Words vs. Content Words.

do + es → does (not <-doses>)

go + es → goes

The hand signs from Lyn Anderson: The key is the base. The base holds the meaning. The meaning is the key to spelling.

We talked about voiced vs. unvoiced /b/ /p/ /d/ /t/ /n/, nasalized /m/ /n/, holding our hands to our throats to feel the vibration. "Letter-sounds" actually happen in the mouth and can be represented by two or three letters or an IPA symbol. Hence the concept of phonemes/ graphemes and not sound/letters. With indignation, she said, "How come I never learned this before?"

I suspect most readers will gain in orthographic knowledge by reading these stories, but the most striking thing in both of these stories is the obvious joy of the sudden sense that after all these years of assuming otherwise, English spelling actually makes sense. This is what I mean when I say *nothing motivates like understanding*.

After years of experiencing spelling as an intractable problem, a brief introduction to the interrelation of morphology and phonology with a matrix and the word sum can be enough to get a sense that **spelling does actually have a logical structure to hold onto**. For those who have struggled for years, the first recognition that there is a logical spelling structure that can be understood is a revelation. As these stories illustrate, the

logical result of understanding spellings that never made sense before through scientific inquiry is a brand new feeling of "learned helpfulness." By contrast, those who continue to struggle in standard classroom and remediation instruction reasonably enter a state of "learned helplessness".

After publishing that document, I just received this follow-up message from the mother in Sydney:

You are so right about when you start to see things you can't help but notice them everywhere. After our last session I was typing a clinic letter on one of my patients and I typed the following sentence.

"The family unshakeably believe that she would be at too much risk if she should attend a local primary school."

Straight away I noticed the word "unshakeably". It seemed to break Ellie's hypothesis with the <e> not being replaced. I immediately checked it on the online dictionary and found my spelling there. Of course I thought I will have to investigate that word..."

Before we meet next, I've suggested that they think about the two-step word sum they encountered with the analysis of <agreed> in the lesson they are studying right now from [my book](#), and that they go to [this post](#) on "noticing the two-step word sum" on Real Spellers. You may want to start there too!

Once we are shown real structures in the writing system, we can't help but start to notice them. Those structures were always right in front of our noses. It's just when all our experience with the written word encouraged us to *only* look for the "letter-sound correspondences" that we were taught, those structures were not very noticeable. This is the topic of one of my favourite Newsletters "[Structure is Freeing](#)".

That seems as fine a way to bring the last Newsletter of this school year to a close!

Peter Bowers, June 3, 2018