



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**ECDPY 497/597: Structured Word Inquiry: Motivating literacy
learning through understanding English orthography**
Section B05, Summer 2017

Lecture Time: August 21 – 25 (9:00AM-4:20PM)
Room Number: Education 129
Instructor: Peter Bowers, Ph.D.
Office: TBA
E-mail: peterobowers1@mac.com **Telephone:** (613) 305 2084

Course Description:

This course addresses key issues of word-level literacy instruction from three domains: linguistics, current research on literacy instruction, and practical instructional practice. The purpose of the course is to (a) introduce students to a rigorous linguistic understanding of the reliable conventions by which the English orthography system has evolved to represent the meanings of words and connections between them, (b) model the application of scientific principles and tools for investigating English orthography in classroom and tutoring contexts for students of all ages and abilities, (c) critically analyze the instructional research on word-level literacy instruction, (d) prepare educators and researchers to explore the effect of word-level instruction which accurately reflects the conventions of English orthography.

In total, students will participate in *five* full-day classes. Classes will include lectures and “workshops” in which the instructor introduces the concepts by modeling and sharing real world classroom-based instructional practices. Students will work in groups and individually on similar structured word inquiry investigations, some of which will be used as the basis of class presentations and assignments. Critical analysis of related literature will also be a part of class and assigned work.

Rationale:

The literacy research has shown that important literacy gains can be produced by bringing explicit attention to how phonology is represented by English spelling (phonics instruction) compared to instruction that reduces attention to these sub-lexical conventions (i.e., whole language). However, there has been a growing recognition that even in what is considered “the best practice” phonologically based instruction, too many students continue to struggle. It is in this context that interest about the effect of morphological instruction has grown. Structured

word inquiry (Bowers & Kirby, 2010) offers a different starting point for considering the research and practice of word-level instruction. It begins from the premise that literacy instruction should accurately represent the linguistic conventions of how English spelling works. It turns out that in direct contrast to the common assumption that the main job of spelling is to represent sounds and that it has many irregularities, the field of linguistics understands English spelling to be a well-ordered system. As Venezky (1999) wrote, “English orthography is not a failed phonetic transcription system, invented out of madness or perversity. Instead, it is a more complex system that preserves bits of history (i.e., etymology), facilitates understanding, and also translates into sound” (p. 4).

By learning to understand of English spelling from this linguistic point of view, students in this course will develop a generative knowledge of how to make sense of the English writing system with their students. We will also look at the research basis of this instruction showing that not only does this instruction support learning in general, it brings the greatest benefits to less able and younger students.

Required Pre-Readings (all of the pre-readings MUST be read before the class starts and are available from the instructor)

Bowers, J. S., & Bowers, P. N. (2017): Beyond Phonics: The Case for Teaching Children the Logic of the English Spelling System, *Educational Psychologist*, (currently only on-line)

Bowers, P. (2016). WW Newsletter # 82 -- Special Issue: Structure Is Freeing. (Available at this URL <http://tinyurl.com/zs32s4k>).

Kirby, J. R. & Bowers, P. N. (in press). Morphological instruction and literacy: Binding phonological, orthographic, and semantic features of words. To appear in K. Cain, D. Compton, & R. Parrila (Eds.), *Theories of reading development*.

Chomsky, C. (1970). reading, writing, and phonology. *Harvard Educational Review*, 40, 287–309.

Devonshire, V., Morris, P., Fluck, M. (2013). Spelling and reading development: the effect of teaching children multiple levels of representation in their orthography. *Learning and Instruction*, 25, 85-94. 10.1016/j.learninstruc.2012.11.007

Tentative Lecture Dates & Topics (subject to change):

Date	Topics covered
<i>August 21</i>	Introduction to English orthography (morphology, etymology and phonology) and addressing the place of SWI in the research
<i>August 22</i>	Deepening understanding of orthographic morphological and etymological

	families: relevance for Pre-school to high school learning
<i>August 23</i>	Deepening understanding of orthographic phonology: Begin individual SWI instruction projects
<i>August 24</i>	SWI and direct Reading/Vocabulary instruction; Working on SWI instruction projects
<i>August 25</i>	Presenting/Discussing individual projects.

Additional Course Requirements:

1. Quizzes on pre-readings

During the course, students will write short quizzes that test their understanding of the pre-readings.

2. Orthographic Assessments

During the course, students will write short quizzes on orthography that test their understanding of the orthographic content being taught, and also model examples of classroom assessment practices.

3. Individual SWI Projects

All students will be complete an SWI project modeling an orthographic investigation of their choice that addresses morphological, etymological and phonological content and that is applicable to a classroom or tutoring context of their choice.

4. Readings and Rationale

Before the course begins, students will be asked to write a reflection on the required readings. The assignment will involve reflecting on their previous knowledge and experience with literacy instruction and literacy research in light of concepts and findings from at least two of the assigned articles. That reflection paper is due at the beginning of the first day of class so that the class can use those insights in class discussions on the first day and so that direct feedback can be offered during the course.

Final Grade:

The final grade will be a pass or fail. To receive a Pass, the student has to attend and actively take part in the classes and complete all assignments/presentations.

Equality, Equity and Respect

The Faculty of Education is committed to providing an environment of equality and respect for all people within the university community, and to educating faculty, staff and students in developing teaching and learning contexts that are welcoming to all. The Faculty recommends that students and staff use inclusive language to create a classroom atmosphere in which students' experiences and views are treated with equal respect and value in relation to their gender, racial background, sexual orientation, and ethnic backgrounds. We are encouraged to use gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language when appropriate and to become more sensitive to the impact of devaluing language in order to create a thoughtful and respectful community.

Plagiarism, Cheating and Intellectual Property

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

Student Accessibility Services

Students who require accommodations in this course due to a disability affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, or mental or physical health are advised to discuss their needs with Student Accessibility Services.

Recording of Lectures

Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Cell Phones

Cell phones are to be turned off when in class. Cell phones are not to be brought into exams.

Course Outline Policy

Policy about course outlines can be found in §23.4(2) of the University Calendar.