

Grade 1s learn about <ugh> through SWI with the help of Gina Cooke's LEX Grapheme Cards

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Click [HERE](#) to order your own grapheme cards from LEX. The investigation described here would not have been possible without the linguistic background I gained from studying with [LEX](#) resources.

May 12, 2016

One of the many pleasures as a “visiting scholar” at the Nueva School this year has been visiting Diana and Alice’s Grade 1 class at the end of the day once a week. They always have rich questions to investigate. Many times I have found myself diving into content that I have never addressed at such a young grade. Over and over this class reminds me not to shy away from offering more *complicated* linguistic content than I am used to presenting in Grade one. If what I offer is beyond their understanding, they’ll let me know, and I can walk it back. So far, they’ve met every challenge.

Consider [THIS](#) investigation we took when Diana asked me to investigate <multiplication> and <multiply> as they began to learn about these topics. Beware of quick assumptions! Read the document for this lesson in which we learned that the word <multiplication> does *not* share a base with <multiply>, but it does with <complicated>! (See a screen shot of a page from that document opposite.)

The diagram shows two morphological cards for 'ply' and 'plice' enclosed in an oval. The 'ply' card is divided into three columns: 'com multi re' (with 'fold' below), 'ply', and 'ed' (with 'er s' below). The 'plice' card is divided into three columns: 'ac com' (with 'multi' below), 'plice' (with 'fold' below), and 'ate ed ion' (with 'ity' below). Below the oval is the text 'Latin plic(are) "fold"'. Below the diagram is the text 'Can you show the suffixing change?' followed by two questions: 'Where does a <y> change to an <i>?' and 'Where is a final, non-syllabic <e> replaced by a vowel suffix?'. Below these are two columns of examples: 'multi + ply → multiply', 'com + ply → comply', 're + ply + ed → replied', 'ply + er + s → pliers', 'multi + plice + ate + ion → multiplication', 'multi + plice + ity → multiplicity', 'ac + com + plice → accomplice', and 'com + plice + ate + ed → complicated'.

That document offers a sense of the background knowledge and enthusiasm for taking on detailed SWI investigations they brought to another SWI investigation that Diana describes in her own words on the following page.

From Diana...

SWI has been powerful in the first grade classroom. Although Pete comes to our room at the very end of the day and the students have just come in from ODC dance class, they join at the rug and are quickly pulled into Pete's lesson.

In fact, they can barely contain their enthusiasm and questions once Pete begins - even when it is time to end at 3pm, still more hands are eagerly raised with questions, theories and even more connections to share. The students' love of words is everywhere.

This week was no exception. A student had put up a question on our Wonder Wall: Why does <through> have a <gh>? Pete began by writing out a sentence on the board and spelling each word as he wrote, right in front of the students:

"People laughed at only two of Pete's jokes."

Pete spelled out each of the words in the sentence and read the words on their own and in phrases to link the written words the words and the whole sentence. But it was the spelling-out of three of the words that were intended to launch the lesson:

<people>	spelled out "p-e-o-p-l-e"	(no <eo> digraph)
<laughed>	spelled out "l-a-ugh----ed"	(no <gh> digraph)
<two>	spelled out "t-w-o"	(no <wo> digraph)

[Note. See resources on spelling out [HERE](#).]

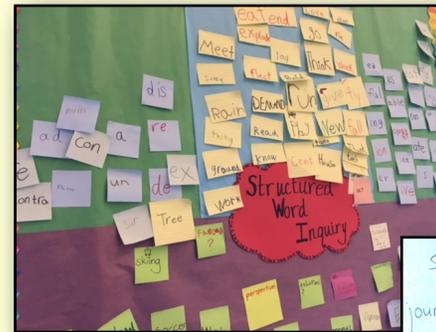
Pete asked if they noticed any interesting words. A number of hands flew up and immediately someone noticed <two>.

"Why is there a <w> in <two>?"

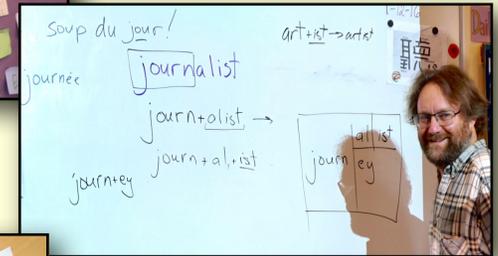
"I know there are 2 other words pronounced the same as <two>," responded one student.

Pete agreed and asked about the meaning of this word <two>. Students knew it meant the number 2. Can you think of any other words with <tw> with the idea of "two things?"

Some images of the on-going context of learning through SWI in Diana's Grade 1 class



Left: See the ever-growing collection morphemes and words these Grade 1's have been collecting over the course of their investigations this year.



Above & Left: At the beginning of Grade 1 the students started their new journals. I investigated the word and we discovered that its root goes back to the idea of "day" and that it links to the word <journey> and <journalist>. Journals are a place to write about our "journeys through the day!"



Right: Here I'm sharing the idea that that like trees, words have roots and bases. We don't usually see the roots of words when we read books, but we do see the base of the tree (trunk) that grows from those roots. Here the base <build> grows into branches <building> and <builder>. All of these words grow from an Old English root that you can find if you dig below the surface into the history of words -- the etymology.



“Twin - we have Anjali in our class who is a twin! Her twin sister is Natasha next door!”

“What about <between>, <twice> and <twenty>?” Pete offered.

“Hey, they all have something to do with 2, there is a meaning connection!”

*We learned from Pete that in the word <two> the <w> is not a grapheme, because it has no role in representing a phoneme. Instead it is called an **etymological marker**. This is just one of the important non-phonological jobs letters can have in English spelling. Etymological markers simply mark meaningful connections to other words. In this case, the <w> of <two> marks its connection to other words that are associated with the idea of “two things.” In addition, this <w> functions to distinguish it from the other words <to> and <too> that can be homophones. So the <w> in <two> does **two** jobs, and neither of them are about representing a phoneme!*

Several hands shoot up around the room. “What about the word <people>? Why is there an <o> in that word?”

“Great question!” Pete exclaimed. “Let’s see if we can think of related words that might explain that <o>. After a pause... Do you know the word <population>? What if you are liked by a lot of people, or are known by many people? You are...

“Popular!” students exclaimed.

As Pete wrote these words out-loud on the board, we were again shown a meaning connection between words marked by an etymological marker! This is a letter that represents no pronunciation in a given word or any of its morphological relatives, but which helps associate that word with words in

which that letter does play a phonological role. Pete shared that there is no <eo> in <people>, but instead an <e> grapheme for the /i:/ (“long e”) phoneme, and the <o> for the etymological marker.

Finally students mention the word <laughed> from Pete’s sentence. We recognize the <-ed> suffix right away. At first some thought the <gh> was for the phoneme /f/ in that word. But when Pete spelled out the word “l-a-ugh----ed” again, we could see that it wasn’t a digraph <gh>, but a trigraph <ugh> for /f/ in this word. Pete then showed that we also have this <ugh> for /f/ in words like <rough>, <tough> and <cough>.”

This brought us back to the question, “What about the word <through>?” Now we learned that the <ugh> can also act as an etymological marker, similar to the <w> in two, or the <o> in people.

Students were barely able to contain their enthusiasm and wanted to share more words they knew: “What about in the words Philadelphia Phillies? And metamorphosis?” There the ph makes the /f/ sound. We learn many words with <ph> come from Greek: philosophy, phonology, metamorphosis. This starts to lead us in another exciting direction.

Sure enough our time with Pete comes to a close; students though have many more questions and don’t want the lesson to end. These questions get added to our Wonder Wall. Thankfully we get to pick up where we left off the next morning, creating word sums and matrices with the words <laugh>, <rough> and <tough>. Children end the day walking out the door talking about words, thinking of others they know, creating sentences and...laughing at each other’s jokes! We can’t wait to do more SWI!