Segmenting Words for Reading/Decoding and Spelling

Decoding a written word requires the person to make sense out of printed letters and words and to translate letter sequences into sounds. This demands understanding the sounds that letters represent and how letters work together to make sounds. Sometimes words can be segmented into parts for easier and faster reading. The word *into* is a good example because it contains two words that a child may already know: *in* and *to*. Segmenting words can be a helpful strategy for reading as well as spelling.

How to Teach Segmenting Words

Segmenting words is an effective strategy to help students read and spell. By dividing the words into groups, students also learn about how words are constructed and how the parts are related to one another. Students should be taught that words can be broken down into segments or chunks. The teacher should present the following methods in a direct and explicit manner:

- Take the word apart. Break down the word into its component parts or syllables. For example, look at the word *reshaped*. It includes the main word *shape* with the prefix *re-* and the ending *-d*. Knowing that the main word *shape* has *re* and *d* added makes it easier to recognize than to try and sound out *r-e-s-h-a-p-e-d*.
- Identify prefixes. A prefix is a letter or group of letters at the beginning of a word. When a word has a prefix, imagine that there is a hyphen between the word and the prefix, and you can usually see the main word. For example, *misstep* includes the prefix *mis-* and the word *step* that are simply put together.
- Identify suffixes. Similarly, when a word has a suffix (i.e., a letter or group of letters at the end), you can often use a strategy similar to the prefix strategy. Just imagine a hyphen between the word and the suffix (e.g., *heart-less*).

Who Should Learn This Technique?

This instruction is likely to benefit students who are poor in reading and spelling. Because this intervention gives students strategies (i.e., plans) for solving the reading or spelling activity, it involves Planning processing. For this reason, students who have difficulty with Planning should be taught to use this strategy. This strategy should also be used with students who are good in Planning but have a Successive processing weakness and problems with reading and spelling because it will help them approach reading in a more strategic way that does not rely on their problem areas.

Resources

An excellent resource can be found at http://www.ezschool.com.

Naglieri, J.A. (1999). *Essentials of CAS assessment*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.