Conclusion: Comprehensive Word Study

The term word study refers to the process of learning the spelling, meaning, pronunciation, historical origin, and relationship a word has to other words. The coined term spellography means that words deserve continual exploration at every level of schooling. Word study does not end with basic phonics!

To teach students about words, a teacher must be familiar with the linguistic units that spelling represents—the phoneme-grapheme correspondences, spelling patterns, syllable constructions, and morphemes. These linguistic units are represented differently in Anglo-Saxon, French, Latin-based, and Greek-based words. Every word's spelling can be explained according to its language of origin, its meaning, and its sound structure.

The sound-symbol correspondences of English are more regular than many of us may think. The patterns are varied and complex, but they can be taught. Knowing the history of English and knowing the difference between a phoneme, grapheme, syllable, and morpheme will help a teacher answer just about any spelling question a student is likely to ask. Understanding how the system works is one road to becoming word-conscious. A dictionary, thesaurus, and good word list are the essential tools of a spellographer, along with enthusiasm for the journey of word study.

All principles of English orthography can be taught in a spelling or word-study curriculum. Table 6.2 outlines the content of a comprehensive program, and Table 6.3 indicates the grade levels at which these concepts are usually taught.

Table 6.2. Outline of the Domain of Word Study

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<td>B. Variant Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondences (Anglo-Saxon)</td>
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III. Syllable patterns (Anglo-Saxon)
   A. Closed: Short vowel ending with consonant  
      *sister, September*
   B. Open: Long vowel, no consonant ending  
      *behind, nobody*
   C. Vowel team: Vowel sound spelled with  
      2+ letters  
      *great, weigh, bay*
   D. C-ile: At the ends of words  
      *eagle, stubble*
   E. Vowel-r combinations  
      *porter, hurdle*
   F. VCe (i.e., long vowel)  
      *compete, suppose*
   G. Oddities  
      *active, atomic*

IV. Compounds
   *breakfast, fifty-one*

V. Inflections (i.e., plural, past tense, etc.)
   *walked, wanted, dogs, wishes*

VI. Orthographic rules
   A. -ve  
      *have, give, love*
   B. F, L, S Doubling Rule  
      *bell, guess, off*
   C. Consonant Doubling Rule  
      *running, inferred*
   D. Change Y to I Rule  
      *studious, beautiful*
   E. Drop Silent E Rule  
      *baked, coming*

VII. Homophones
   *their, there; to, two, too*

VIII. Latin-based affixes and schwa
   *predict, protection, vision, enjoyment, attend, appearance*

IX. Greek combining forms
   *microscope, psychobiology*

X. Contractions
   *you've, I'll, don't*

XI. Possessives, plurals
   *night's, oxen, alumnae, crises*

XII. Abbreviations
   *etc., St., P.M.*

XIII. Alternating consonants in derived words
   *mischief, mischievous; medic, medicine*

XIV. Alternating vowel pronunciation in derived words
   *hostile, hostility; explain, explanation; define, definition; serene, serenity*