On Your Way with Dr. Christina Williams

Mini session 4/5 Morphology, Dynamic Dictionary

INTRO

Whether you're a teacher who's on your way to school to work with kids and you're leaning into the science of reading movement, or you're on your way to tutor some great kids who are struggling with learning to read and spell well, or you're a parent who'd like to learn to better equip and inspire your children from home, the *On Your Way* podcast is for you.

I'm Dr. Christina Williams, and I'm your host.

During the main episode about vocabulary, I shared that there'd be **mini** episodes, following, where I'd share how students received vocabulary instruction in our classroom—so you can try them in your teaching situations. I've already shared mini episode #1:

~~1 how to highlight words featured in the authentic materials you share during your read aloud time, so words are introduced in context, and you provide student-friendly definitions~~

Today I'm going to share

~~**2 how you can encourage the use of more sophisticated vocabulary while your students are writing**~~

~~**3** how to promote comparisons of words (make connections between words to aid in recall)~~

4. how to address roots and affixes with your students (that won't put them to sleep) and address words' grammar structures
5. how to provide multiple exposures to the words you've featured/intentionally noticed

Morphology is the study of forms of words. Morphemes are the smallest units of meaning within words. That dinky little s at the end of the word *dogs* is a morpheme because it demonstrates that there is more than one dog. It does not simply represent the sound /s/. That s holds meaning. Words can, literally, morph into *other* forms with the addition (or deletion) of letters and letter combinations that hold meaning.
In the word *sing*, that i-n-g is just--part of the word. *Sing* is a **free morpheme** because it holds meaning standing on its own.
In the word *singing*, that second i-n-g is another morpheme because it, too, holds meaning, but that second i-n-g is a **bound morpheme** because it must be attached to another morpheme to be a word. It cannot stand alone and make meaning. The second i-n-g moves the word sing into the present progressive tense—indicating that the singing is ongoing. The meaning was changed when the word **form** was changed with the addition of that i-n-g.
Prefixes and suffixes are used to *morph* words from one form to another. They create **derivations** of the same word.
The word *act* is a verb. When we add the suffix -tion to make *action* we've morphed the word from a verb to a noun. When we add the prefix **re-** to **action** to make **reaction**—which means the act happened again, **or** (as in this case) it happened in response to something. We've added another morpheme and changed the word to mean the action was done in response to something.
That's morphology!
It's important for adults to explicitly address roots and affixes with our students (in a way that won't put them to sleep). So, I've got some ideas to share with you that are informative and engaging.
Before I get into the details or particular activities, it's important to note that some roots can function as prefixes when preceding another root. For example, uni- (one), bio- (life), anti-(against **or** opposite), and auto- (self) are all both roots **and** prefixes. Most prefixes, however, are not roots. Though no roots serve as *suffixes*, there are suffixes *derived* from roots as we see in *geography* where the root *graph* is used along with a final letter y.

At Book Bums, we address some affixes more than others. We primarily focus on those that represent two or more sounds (like the suffix -ed can say /ed/, /d/, and /t/. and those that make spelling a little tricky (like when adding -ing, sometimes the i "covers" the final e, sometimes we need a "blocker letter" and sometimes we can just add that -ing without doing anything else at all). Kids need to be explicitly taught how to address

those and they must be provided plentiful practice both decoding and encoding them. We are *really* good at that. We have fast and fun ways to make clear, to beginning and struggling readers, how those words work.

Admittedly, we don't spend much time on those that are easily decoded and spelled (like prefixes dis-, in-, re-, and un- and suffixes -ly, -es. -ness, -ful, -less, and -able), because our primary focus is equipping kids to navigate our code-based language and we want to do that just as quickly as possible.

One thing that makes decoding roots and affixes tricky is that their vowel sounds often "flip" from one sound to the other.

Consider the root *uni*-. In *uniform* the final i represents the short i sound. In the word *united*that i represents the long sound. It's important that kids are flexible with their decoding (in the reading science, this is often referred to as "set for variability." At Book Bums, we just say, "If it doesn't make a word you know, just "Flip it," (referring to the vowel sound) and see if *that* makes a word."

1) Now, one way I addressed using affixes in my classroom (and use it for some students during tutoring sessions) is doing what I called **Four Corner Vocabulary.**

Four Corner Vocabulary practice can be done by providing students with a piece of copy paper and instructing them to fold it in half vertically and horizontally. (Use those words to grow their vocabularies.) and then open them again to see their paper divided into quadrants. (Use that word, too.) Next, have them write an affix and its meaning, that you record on the board, onto the tops of their papers (oriented horizontally on their tables).

Note: it's helpful to have a list of words featuring the root of focus before you begin, because you *think* you'll be able to think of examples, but those words can be fleeting! I like to have a cheat sheet or (an app) handy.

Let's say you're addressing the word prefix uni-. On the board, you'll write the prefix uni- and its meaning, *one*.

Next, you'll invite your students to think of some words that feature the prefix uni- and you'll jot them on the board or on chart paper as they call them out. With each offering

of a word, invite your students to consider why *uni-* which means *one* would be a part of this word.

As you're offering support as students are brainstorming words, remind your students that the final vowel can switch sounds, so say things like, "What words can we think of that begin with *uni* (with a short i sound) or *uni* with a long i sound)*?*

I like to draw out the prefix a bit, so words come to mind more easily. Like I might say . . . Uniiiiiii . . . And kids fill in, for example . . .ted! United!

After you've come up with quite a few words, direct your students to the four boxes on their papers. Ask them to, please, write one of the words you've discussed in each of the four corners. Then they are also to sketch a quick pic to reinforce their knowledge of each word meaning within the appropriate quadrants. That sketching makes the learning just a bit stickier, so they're more likely to remember what they've been discussing.

I like to do uni, bi, tri, and quad together, and then pre, post, anti, and fore together. The idea is that the four I did each week (with the final day of the week to review the previous four) are related in some way.

uni, one (uniform, united, unicycle, unicorn, unison, unique, universe)
bi, two (bicycle, bicep, binoculars, bilingual, biped (/bye-ped/), bicentennial, biannual)
tri, three (tricycle, triple, triangle, triceps, trio, trident, triceratops, trilogy)
quad, four (quadrilateral, quadruplet, quadriceps, quadriplegic, quadrant, quadrupled)

Pre, before (predict, prevent, prejudice, precaution, prefer, preschool, preview, prepay, prehistoric)
Post, after (postpone, postscript (P.S.), postgame, postmortem, postnatal, posterior, post
Anti, against (antagonist, anticlimax, antibody, antidote, anti-aircraft)

Fore, in front- (forehead, forearm, forehand, forecast, forefather, foresee, foreshadow, forewarn, forecast,

I am sharing some printable documents you're welcome to use, but having the kids make their own practice pages is sometimes better because they're doing more of the work. Teachers, that's a great tip I learned. When you do all the work, you're also doing all the learning. Let the kids make some of their own materials and watch *them* flourish. The materials don't have to be beautiful to be effective.

2) Other word parts worthy of investigation are Latin and Greek roots. Don't yawn. This can be fun!

I'm sharing, on our site, a game board featuring lots of commonly use roots. Have the kids roll a die and move a mover to land upon a root and definition. The kids read the root and its meaning. Next, you'll play a sort of **word ping pong** where the student thinks of a word with that root, then you think of one, then the student thinks of another one . . . When you run out of words, I like to do a quick Google search (or have a list of words you've gathered online ahead of time, handy) so you can learn highlight even more.

Sometimes we're surprised by all the words and sometimes we're surprised by how *few* words there are. After you've thought of quite a few words featuring that root, invite the students to **record the root and definition on an index card.** After they've done that, they'll turn the card over and **write a few <u>words</u> featuring the root on the back**. I encourage my students to write one word with the root they <u>really</u> know and then two more (at least) with less-familiar words. Next, I like to punch a hole in the corner of the cards and add a binder ring so students can continue adding cards and end up with a cool review tool to keep these roots top of mind.

I'm sharing some in the materials on our website that you're welcome to print (on cardstock), cut, and use with your students. During tutoring sessions at Book Bums, I do two words a week. In the classroom, you can do one a day.

3) The really powerful piece is the next part. Provide your students with less-familiar words featuring the roots you've already addressed.

Though you cannot really *study* for nationally normed assessments, knowing word roots can be quite helpful in making educated guesses regarding the meanings of unfamiliar words.

For example, write the word *incredulous.* Ask your students, knowing that *cred* means *to believe* or *to trust*, what they believe *incredulous* might mean. Next, share a sentence with the word *incredulous* and see if your "working definition" fits. Of course, (since you've already done lots of work with prefixes and suffixes) you'll acknowledge the prefix *in-* (meaning *not)* and the suffix *-ous* (meaning full of). Hm. Not full of belief is like . . . I can't *believe* it!

Our students won't get every word meaning exactly right, but if you do this well, your students may become intrigued with words and actually enjoy trying to determine the meanings of some big, bad, bodacious words.