What's in a Word?

Pop quiz:

1. Is phonology or morphology the primary driver of English orthography?

2. How does syntax relate to the discourse level?

3. Do you know the answers to these and other similar questions?

4. Do these questions have anything to do with my students?!

The surprise answer to Question #3: Yes you do! You already know a lot about language – you just might not know the fancy terminology.

The good news is that you don't need to know linguistics jargon to know about language, and the great news is that what you intuitively know about language can really help your students. The only trick is making this knowledge explicit to ourselves and to our students.

A simple example: You might not know what the word “avaricious” means, but you definitely know it's describing something (and you probably would pronounce it correctly too).

You don't need to use the words “adjective” or “suffix” to key your students in to the types of clues you use to decode meaning.

The first step is simply to show the students that you are using clues from things you know to figure out the meaning of things you don’t know. Then you can help students identify the types of clues they are already using and develop those skills more. The more students understand and practice these skills, the more easily they can comprehend reading.

Apprenticing students into the ways we use linguistic knowledge doesn't require special knowledge on your part, and it certainly doesn't require planning special lessons. All it really takes is a shift in focus and a few minutes a day to highlight this type of information during your regular coursework.

For ideas on what types of “language clues” are important, quick ways to integrate them into your lessons, and the answers to Questions #1 and #2 above, come to the RATs workshop on February 9, 2010, in J-302 from 2:45-3:45 PM with Jenna Pollock.

Jenna Pollock conducting an RA workshop for Basic Studies Department faculty in December 2009.

Websites of the Month

Teaching Word Meanings as Concepts
http://www.adlit.org/article/19692

Structural Analysis (of Words)
http://www.forpd.unc.edu/strategies/stratstructural_analysis.html
Ask a RAT

What do we love about RA?

February is the perfect time to fall in love with a new Reading Apprentice routine! As the RAT Pack says, "These are the chocolates of our lives."

We love it when the:

- students engage the text in new and interesting ways and we know schema is forming
- students begin to articulate how they have scaffolded together new information and we know that the reading process is being analyzed
- class is noisy with discussion about figuring out the text structures that make understanding a difficult passage easier
- students report that they are reading more and for longer periods of time.

We love RA!

Library Item of the Month

The RTC Library has materials to support and help improve student reading and comprehension skills. For more info, contact the Library at 235-2331 or via email at librarian@RTC.edu.


RTC Library Call Number: 428.13 WORDS 2008t

RATs Calendar of Events

Mark your calendars now for upcoming RATs workshops:

**Tues. February 9, 2:45—3:45 PM in J-302:**
RATs workshop *What's in a Word?* conducted by Jenna Pollock.

**Tues. March 9, 2:45—3:45 PM in J-302:**
RATs workshop on *Creating Reading Strategies Lists, Part 1* with Debbie Crumb.

**Tues. April 13, 2:45—3:45 PM in J-302:**
RATs workshop on *Modeling a Think Aloud, Part 1* with Michele Lesmeister.

**Tues. May 11, 2:45—3:45 PM in J-302:**
RATs workshop on *Creating Reading Strategies Lists, Part 2* with Debbie Crumb.

**Tues. June 8, 2:45—3:45 PM in J-302:**
RATs workshop on *Modeling a Think Aloud, Part 2* with Michele Lesmeister.

There are no RATs workshops scheduled for July or August.

Join the RATs!

RATs (Reading Apprenticeship Teachers and supporters) is the RTC support group for those who want to use WestEd’s Reading Apprenticeship®. Become a RAT and learn how to help improve your students’ reading skills and comprehension.

The RAT Pack is the training and planning leadership team to help get you started. Contact one of them today for more info about RA or RATs:

- Debbie Crumb
- Jenna Pollock
- Michele Lesmeister, Team Leader

For more info about RA at RTC, scurry over to our RATs website and blog!