

# 1.1. Analysing Spoken Words

## Introduction

“The beginning reader’s initial task is to learn how the **spoken language** they know relates to the **written code** they are learning.” (Seidenberg, 2017, p 22)

Consequently, “spoken words [need] to be treated as consisting of component parts ... we now consider [this] an ordinary, teachable aspect of learning to read: **phonological awareness**.” (Seidenberg, 2017, p. 63)

Key to *Analysis Spoken Words* is the requirement that learners begin to notice the sound patterns within words that they know. They are also introduced to the alphabetic principle within a meaningful context.

## Equipment

1. List of words - see *Preparation Notes below*
2. Pictures (in most cases)
3. Whole word “sound waves”
4. Syllable “sound waves” and popsicle sticks (optional)
5. Phoneme “sound waves”
6. Phoneme tiles (e.g. /b/) - see *Phoneme Map in Teaching Resources*
7. Letter tiles - see *Phoneme-to-Letter Map in Teaching Resources*
8. Coloured tokens
9. Space to write words, sentences and more
10. Printed words on cards (in some cases for review)

## Key Skills

**Core skills:** vocabulary recognition, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and auditory processing (including working memory);

**Further skills:** developing and applying phonemic knowledge, sound-letter correspondences, invented spelling and problem solving skills; and

**Extended skills:** semantic analysis, expressive language, grammatical competence, conventional spelling and (print) word recognition.

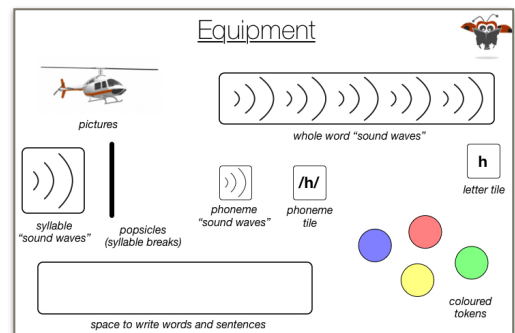


Figure 1: Illustration of the required equipment.

## Preparation Notes

There are a couple *rules of thumb* when preparing a list of words for examination. First, one can choose a selection of words that are part of a semantic category, such as animals, vehicles or kitchen elements. However, this focus would not necessarily build the learner’s knowledge of a particular sound pattern.

Another option is to select a list of words that all begin or end with a common letter or sound pattern. A third option involves selecting key words from a (picture) book that is part of regular reading. There is no *hard and fast rule* to use when selecting the list of focus words. Instead, the teacher should choose a focus which will maximise learning.

## Steps

1. Review a picture and say the spoken word (possibly in a sentence)
2. Segment the word into syllables
3. Identify the first and last sounds in the word
4. Segment each syllable into sounds
5. Match each sound with a phoneme (tile)
6. Match each phoneme (tile) with a letter (tile) - (i.e. invented spelling)
7. Confirm word by checking its conventional spelling
8. Explore the word’s meaning(s)
9. Use the word in at least one sentence
10. Repeat steps 1 to 9 for other words in the set
11. Review the words, phonemes and letters explored in the lesson

## Delivery Notes

As Figure 2 suggests, the *Analysing Spoken Words* activity mimics different levels of word play. It aims to simulate some of the thinking that we want learners to engage in when considering words from a literate perspective.

**Please note** that a learner does not need to engage in all steps of the activity for the activity to be effective. This is particular true for beginning learners. (See the next page for an explanation.)

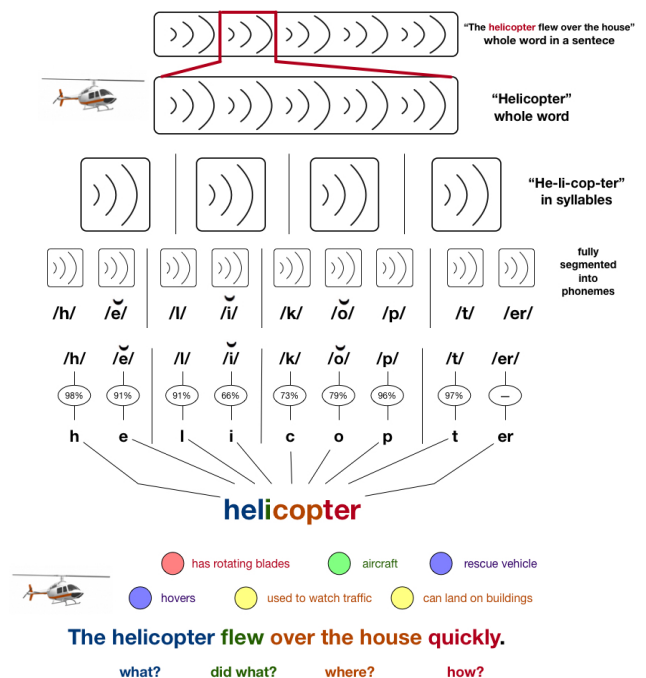


Figure 2: Workflow for the activity



# 1.1. Analysing Spoken Words (cont.)

## What to look for ...

We want learners to become adept at perceiving the sounds within familiar words, which will serve as the foundation upon which they can map letters onto sounds.

The figure to the right (Figure 3) provides some guidance on what to look out for when engaging a learner in this activity. It is important to make two notes, though. First, you don't need to engage in all levels of the activity initially. For instance, it may be enough to merely encourage the learner to segment words into syllables and express the beginning sound. Also, a learner may be independent with some steps, but require guidance or modelling for others. Over time, the teacher will gradually cede responsibility to the learner.

Ultimately, we want learners to confidently problem solve the sound patterns within words. This will provide them with the inner dialogue that is necessary to work out the spellings of familiar and new words.

## Assumptions

1. The learner is able to recall words for common objects, actions and concepts.
2. The learner is able to detect syllables in words (and understand the concept of a syllable).
3. The learner is able to detect and identify the first and last sounds in a word (and understand the concept of a sound).
4. The learner is able to detect and distinguish the number of sounds in a syllable or word.
5. The learner is able to identify the sounds in a syllable or word.
6. The learner can start to learn the 44 or so phonemes in English (see NOTE #1).
7. The learner is able to segment and blend syllables and sounds in a word whilst maintaining a concept of the word under investigation.
8. The learner can start to learn common phoneme-letter pairings (see NOTE #2).
9. The learner is able to engage in invented spelling as well as orthographic recall [for known print words] (see NOTE #3 and the key concept to the right).
10. The learner is able to brainstorm the meaning(s) of a word.
11. The learner is able to use words in rich sentences.
12. The learner is able to learn; that is, the learner is able to develop different types of knowledge through this activity, such as vocabulary knowledge, phonemic awareness, phonemic knowledge, sound-letter mappings, word structure, semantic analysis, expressive language and grammar. And the learner is developing the ability to articulate that which has been learned.

## Where to from here ...

*Analysing Spoken Words* will help learners become aware of the sound patterns within familiar vocabulary, which is a significant step in being able to match letters to sounds and to understand how letters are combined to form words. Equipped with this awareness and emerging knowledge, it is important for learners to further develop their phonemic and alphabetic knowledge more completely, including key sound-letter combinations and visual perceptual skills. This can be achieved through a variety of activities, such as

- explicit instruction in phonemic knowledge (including charts, flashcards, bingo and sorting activities);
- discovery and explicit instruction in phoneme-letter combinations; and
- practice with distinguishing sound and letter patterns through picture sorts and words sorts;

As stipulated earlier, learners must first learn to be aware of their own speech before they can explore the logic of how the alphabetic principle comes to represent words they use and know.

What was the word?

Examine the word	IND	W-GUI	JOINT	MODEL	NO
Listening / articulating the word	✓				
Dividing the word into syllables		✓			
Dividing into number of sounds			✓		
Isolating the beginning sound		✓			
Isolating the end sound		✓			
Matching sounds to phonemes				✓	
Full phoneme segmentation				✓	
Apply letters (invented spelling)					✓
Construct word					✓
Check against conventional spelling					✓
Brainstorm/explore meaning				✓	
Draft sentences			✓		

Figure 3: Guide on monitoring student performance and noting elements performed independently, with guidance, jointly, etc.

## Additional Notes

**Note #1:** This activity does NOT teach the 44 or so phonemes in English in a systematic fashion. A learner can become aware of English sounds through the activity, but it is recommended that teachers provide some explicit instruction for English sounds as learners develop their phonemic awareness (e.g. *now that I have the concept of the sounds, what are the sounds in English?*)

**Note #2:** Similarly, this activity does NOT teach common phoneme-letter combinations in a systematic fashion. A learner can become aware of English letter-sound combinations through the activity, but it is recommended that teachers provide explicit instruction for English letter-sound correspondence as learners develop their phonemic awareness and knowledge (see "Where to next ... below")

**Note #3:** Further, this activity is an ENCODING activity. Consequently, it is not a reading/decoding activity. It is hoped that this encoding activity will help learners develop an understanding of the structures of word and syllables, which will be valuable when learners start to read words.

"Before children attain a conventional level of spelling ...they use what they know about phonology and orthography to create novel forms of spelling. **These invented spellings** provide a window into their developing awareness of the alphabetic principle." (Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2017, p. 77)

