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# Improving Literacy by Teaching Morphemes

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Words consist of units of meaning, called morphemes. These morphemes have a striking effect on spelling that has been largely neglected until now. For example, nouns that end in “-ian” are words that refer to people, and so when this ending is attached to “magic” we can tell that the resulting word means someone who produces magic. Knowledge of this rule, therefore, helps us with spelling: it tells us that this word is spelled as “magician” and not “magicion”.

This book by Terezinha Nunes, Peter Bryant and their colleagues shows how important and necessary it is for children to find out about morphemes when they are learning to read and to spell. The book concentrates on how to teach children about the morphemic structure of words and on the beneficial effects of this teaching for children’s spelling and for the breadth of their vocabulary. It reports the results of several studies in the laboratory and in school classrooms of the effects of teaching children about a wide variety of morphemes. These projects showed that schoolchildren enjoy learning about morphemes and that this learning improves their spelling and their vocabulary as well. The book, therefore, suggests new directions in the teaching of literacy. It should be read by everyone concerned with helping children to learn to read and to write.

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