## BISCRIPTAL LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

## Presentation 2: <br> Handwriting and Morphology

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This is the SECOND of two presentations on Biscriptal Learners of English.
There are very few specific resources available for teachers of these students.
Most ELT methodology and teaching resources have been developed for otheralphabetic learners (from Europe in the UK, and from Hispanic America in the USA). Biscriptal learners are already literate - and first-language materials on phonological and morphological skill-development are often 'too young' and/or they assume a huge vocabulary.
*This presentation has some overlap (regarding writing systems) with the first presentation.

IMAGE: http://whatknot.tripod.com/knots/Rope.htm

# 혼영 مرحبا بكم Добро пожаловать 欢迎 خوش آمديد स्वागत 

## Welcome

## Some non-alphabetic welcoming words.

There are many "Welcome" and "Thank You" graphics like this on the internet, but most of them use alphabetic scripts.
Perhaps this represents a kind of alphabetic bias - on the internet and in other, social spheres.

Our world, however, is overwhelmingly non-alphabetic - as the following map will attest.

IMAGE: source unknown


This map from Wikipedia clearly shows the broad swathe of countries that use nonLatin alphabets. **This is where MOST of the current learners of English are based.
[North and South America have pockets of syllabaries - Inuit and Cherokee - but otherwise, they are overwhelmingly "Latin alphabet" users.]

1. The ARABIC family of scripts are called ABJADS - a type of alphabet that emphasises consonants - vowels can be indicated by diacritics, but usually are not. (This group includes Persian, Hebrew and Urdu.)
2. The INDIAN family of scripts are called ABUGIDAS - scripts that are based on (usually) consonant-dominated syllables. These include Thai and some other scripts in SE Asia, such as Balinese. This group also includes Ge'ez, an Ethiopic script.
3. Chinese scripts have many labels - "logographic" is inadequate - a better term is MORPHOSYLLABIC, as each character represents a syllable and a unit of meaning.
4. Japan uses a mixture of three scripts: some of the Chinese script (Kanji), and two syllabaries (one for borrowed words and one for grammatical words).
5. Korea has its own unique script, Hangul, based on blocks of 2-5 letters that represent syllables. 6. To the north and north-west are the Cyrillic alphabets and other alphabet-type scripts.
6. A close look at the map reveals pockets of other scripts, many of which have been developed locally (often by missionaries).
MAP: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:WritingSystemsoftheWorld.png


Here are some of the many ways in which different scripts can operate.
**Each script sets up 'expectations' in the minds of its readers.
[We do the same thing when we erroneously refer to "letters" and "words" in other scripts.]

Learning a new script is a very significant cognitive challenge - far more than we probably realise.

IMAGE: P.Bunce


1. Arabic consonants change their form, depending on whether they are at the beginning, middle or end of a word. They are different again when single.
2. Bengali is an ABUGIDA - these are consonant-strong syllables. Look at how the vowel sounds move around.
3. Burmese, also an abugida, wraps sounds around each other.
4. Tamil - here are 7 different ways that the $/ \mathrm{u} /$ sound is attached to the dominant consonant.

And - we think that learning to write English is difficult!

IMAGES: http://scripts.sil.org
(there are some animations on this website that show the formation of these scripts) (these are 'stills' from those animations)
மனசாட்சியையும் இிய்பய்பாகப் பெற்றவர்கள். அவர்கள்

வேண்(b|ம்.

> সমযু মানুষ স্বধীীভাবে সমাन মর্যাদা এবং অধিকার निয়ে অन्यগ্রহণ করে উাদদর বিবেক এবং বুক্ধি আহে ; সুতরাং সকনেরই একে অপরের প্রতি प্রাতৃত্বসুলड মনোতাব निয়ে আচর্রণ কর্木া উচিৎ।

> Spaces
> between "words"

Not all scripts have
spaces between
"words".
Thai and Khmer have spaces at the ends of sentences.

What is a "word"? It is actually quite difficult to define.
Their separation by spaces is important in English.
Spaces - may or may not be used in similar fashion in other scripts.
Thai and Khmer use them sparingly - at sentence ends and around numbers (Khmer).

All of these scripts carry the same text - Article 1 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.
In English, it has two sentences:
All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

IMAGES: www.omniglot.com
(this huge website has this same text written in almost every known script)


## Chinese scripts




- Most Chinese characters are combination of two elements (compounds), some are single characters. The two elements provide suggestions (only) of semantics (meaning) and phonetics (sounds). They are combined in different ways. Each is based on a square shape, representing ONE SYLLABLE with meaning.
- Each character has a particular stroke order (the one provided says "love") that must be learned.
- All characters fit inside a sub-divided square. This affects the "saccade width" of Chinese readers' gaze as they scan across a line of text.
- Direction: now mostly $R$ to $L$, but vertical is still used, especially for literature.
- Simplified and Traditional: sometimes hard to see the "simplification"! The PRC and Singapore use Simplified. Taiwan, HK and overseas communities use Traditional.
- STROKE ORDER - this may affect the order in which alphabet-letters are written (e.g. the letter ' t ' is often drawn crossbar first by Chinese learners of English)*
*An excellent reference on such transfers of scriptal characteristics is: Rosemary Sassoon's "The Acquisition of a Second Writing System" (1995, Oxford: Intellect)
(This is still the ONLY practical book on aspects of teaching and learning a new scriptal system!)
IMAGES: http://girlmeetsformosa.com http://aboutworldlanguages.com/mandarin http://scripts.sil.org/cms/scripts

Bassetti, B. and Cook, V. (2009). Second Language Writing Systems.

## Japanese

A JAPANESE SENTENCE USING VARIOUS WRITING SYSTEMS
Adapted frome Naoko Chino, ALL ABOUT PARTICLES, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1991, p. 44


Translation: (You) can buy that TV (set) for 100,000 Yen.

## A mixture of three writing systems:

two based on syllables and one on Chinese characters

What a sentence! This one has all three scripts together (plus Arabic numerals)

Two syllabaries: Katakana for borrowed/foreign words and Hiragana for grammatical words

Kanji: borrowed Chinese characters

There may also be some use of words written in the English alphabet, e.g. brand names.

SOURCE: on the graphic
IMAGE:
http://www.spokaneschools.org/cms/lib/WA01000970/Centricity/ModuleInstance/ 26530/How\%201t\%20Works.pdf

## What's involved in learning a new script?

## Physical <br> Adaptations

- hand movements
- eye movements
- hand-eye coordination
- directionality of perception

Linguistic
Adaptations

- new ways of indicating sound
- new ways of indicating meaning
- new vocabulary
and grammar

Connecting to
Prior Learning

- concepts
- skills e.g. maths
- layout of pages
- word formation \& word retrieval
- aids to memory

There's a lot to learn - not so much to unlearn, but to CONNECT the older learning with the new learning. Connections may not be readily made, as the two scripts may involve very different neural pathways. Learners need time to accommodate BOTH scripts.
"Retrieval" from memory may be performed quite differently - it can be visual, soundbased or kinesthetic. Hong Kong Cantonese-speakers often write characters on their palms with their fingers, when double-checking with another person the correct way to write unfamiliar characters.

With biscriptal readers of English, it is no longer correct to claim that "we only learn to read once" (Saville-Troike, 1976) or that reading skills can "easily transfer across languages" (Cummins, 2000). Those claims refer to the learning of same-scripted languages, and were made in an era in which other-scripted learners were not so common in English classes.

Knowing one script does, however, establish the broad notion of literacy - that scripts represent spoken language.
By definition, "biscriptal learners" are already literate in another language.

## Let's see what it feels like

Reverse spelling - try it from both sides of the paper eniluap

- which side is easier?
eniluap
Reverse spelling test - write the name of this school
using reverse spelling
Write with your non-preferred hand
Mirror writing - start from the right-hand side of the paper
* You may experience something called haptic dissonance.

This activity is NOT designed to trivialise other scripts - not at all - but to give people a feeling of the "haptic dissonance" involved in changing direction and letter formation.
Such activities are hugely demanding and can be very tiring.

Mirror-writing is extremely difficult, because every individual letter is reversed.
(Leonardo da Vinci used this 'code'.)
("Cognitive dissonance" is felt when one is carrying conflicting beliefs e.g. no animal killing but liking to eat meat.)

## Haptic Dissonance


"It doesn't feel quite right."
Haptic dissonance is that uncertain feeling you get when you have to change a touching or a manipulating skill.

We have all had to use our non-preferred hand at some stage. It takes a while to adapt.
Our brains may need to make new connections and forge new pathways.
We feel a kind of frustration in knowing what to do, but not being able to do it easily. Some say that this is good for us - e.g. the proponents of "Brain Gym".

IMAGES:
http://swissarmymom.blogspot.com.au
http://www.debate.org
http://michaelgarberick.com
http://www.panik-design.com

# Areas of need for biscriptal learners 

## Sounds

 (phonology)Meaning (morphology)

## Handwriting <br> (kinesthetics)

The WORD LEVEL is a vital foundation for further learning. We need to work on three interwoven sets of skills - handwriting skills, phonological skills and morphological skills. We may be inclined to rush into sentence-level work sometimes overlooking all the word-level assumptions that we may be making. Overlooking the word-level of English too early can lead to the memorisation of spelling and the "look of words" - without any insights into the 'beauty' of their construction.

A deep respect for script will have been laid in students' first-script learning. We owe it to English to make parallel revelations regarding the units of sound and meaning that all words contain. English words are not "empty things" as one of my Hong Kong students told me.

HK learners of English sometimes call its alphabetic script "ugly worms" and "chicken guts". It might even give them "alphabet headaches".
[I have chosen 'Alphabet Headaches' as a title for a lot of my publications and also the name of my website.]

IMAGE: http://whatknot.tripod.com/knots/Rope.htm

## 1. Handwriting

## How important is it?

What should we teach?
How can we teach it?

## Students will quickly pick up whether we value it

- as their former teachers surely did.


The arrangement of the paper on the desk may be different for writing in a different direction.
Pen-holding: the "fist" grip can lead to aches and pains as students are required to write for increasingly long periods (e.g. tests and exams).
Sure, habits can be VERY hard to change - but they can be. (Some say that it takes 28 days to change a behavioural habit.)
Make time/make excuses to do "our best writing" - filling in forms, sending a card to someone, posters of famous quotes for the wall, name cards, exchanging written pieces around the class (can classmates read it?) etc. Reject badly completed forms.

IMAGES:
Sassoon, R. (1995). The Acquisition of a Second Writing System. Oxford: Intellect Books.
Sassoon, R. (2012). Improve Your Handwriting. London: Teach Yourself Books.

## Handwriting

Many learners merely copy letters visually, without knowing their entry point nor the direction(s) of their formation.


Has this kind of information ever been shown to our learners? They could copy such guidelines into their Word Work Books.
Stroke order is so important in Chinese character formation. Copy one onto the board (without guidance) and ask students why the order is so important.
Ask students to teach you how to write something in other scripts. What's important to remember?

Are they aware of on-the-line, above-the-line and below-the-line strokes?
Look for opportunities to "write well" - write something to another class, send Congratulations/Thank You notes to someone.
Invite them to write in BIG letters on the board. Copy something you've written.

IMAGES: P.Bunce

## Numbers



The correct formation of numbers is probably even more important than letters.

* Students' former teachers stressed writing technique - we can too!

In Arabic, 5 looks like a zero, 4 looks like a three, and 0 is a dot. Decimal points and commas for thousands may be different as well.
Too many 4s look like a U. Fives may lack the vertical stroke. One may look like seven. HK students write 9 backwards.
Numbers can be even more critical than letters - if they are misread. They are frequently required on forms - in small spaces.
When is it appropriate to write in PENCIL/PEN? This may vary across 'school cultures'. (Americans still use pencils in high school writing.)
Forms may even require a BLACK PEN and BLOCK LETTERS.
IMAGE: P.Bunce

## Provide and practise explicit handwriting skills

## Deliberate, regular lessons

Letters - on, above, below lines + stroke order
Lower- and upper-case
Deliberate lessons on numerals, decimals, fractions
Keep a handwriting notebook - practise with simple riddles, proverbs, names of classmates, names of countries, addressing envelopes etc.

KEEP a notebook for all WORD WORK.
Make time for handwriting. Just allocating time indicates that these skills are VALUED.
Show students anonymous samples of writing from other classes - let them be critics and make suggestions.
FIND sample forms to complete. Life is full of form-filling!

## 2. Sounds

(We will look closely at this topic in another presentation.)

Phonological awareness = becoming increasingly aware of sentences, words, syllables, individual sounds + tone + mood.

- Phonemic awareness = being aware that all words are composed of sequences of tiny sounds (aural/oral)
- Phonics = linking these individual sounds with letters and letter combinations (reading/spelling)

> All written words can "speak" to us.

Refer to the presentation entitled, "Biscriptal Learners of English Part 1 - Phonemic Awareness and Phonics".
That presentation explores this topic at length.
Phonological awareness = the umbrella term of everything to do with sound.
Phonemic awareness = oral/aural sound discrimination skills.
Phonics = understanding how print 'captures' sounds.

English words are NEVER SILENT - they always 'speak' to us.

## 3. Word-building / Vocabulary / Morphological Awareness

## Vocabulary development is the cornerstone of future reading fluency and comprehension.

Spelling - is important - but knowing familiar patterns of meaning within words has even wider usefulness

> How much do we teach about words?

> Do we do this incidentally - or deliberately?

Spelling - is, too often, seen as an end in itself.
No word should really stand alone as just a set of letters to learn. As well as key words, introduce other words that are related - either by sound patterns or by the adding of affixes.
e.g. if the word 'develop' is on your spelling list, also include developer, development, developing, undeveloped etc. (Perhaps just one of the set could be put into your 'test', but students will not know which one). If 'around' is one of your words, introduce ground, found, pound, sound, hound, mound etc. (But put only one into the test.)

* We need to do more direct teaching about words.


## A new big word

# pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis 

pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis<br>lung extreme microscopic silicum volcano dust disease

## A lung disease caused by the inhalation of very fine silica dust found in volcanoes

[This word was revealed one line at a time.]
It has beaten 'antidisestablishmentarianism' as the longest, according to Wikipedia.

HOW did we approach this word? What 'chunks' stand out?

We know that 'big words' are modular. They are built with meaningful sub-units (morphemes).
Morphemes can be as simple as '-s' or '-es' on plurals or as complex as those in this new word.

## Knowing about English words



We owe words far more than to correctly spell them.
The more they "live", the better they will be remembered. The more 'personality' we can give them, the better.
Words are full of PATTERNS - of letters, sounds and elements of meaning.

Students will have learned the history of many words/characters/symbols in their first scripts. Let them in on the history of English words as well.

IMAGES:
www.sparklebox.co.uk
http://www.pattan.net/Videos (Calhoon: Morphology for the Classroom)

## A sequence of vocabulary development

## 1. Initial

Anglo-Saxon words
single-syllables
compounds
some prefixes
basic suffixes
note patterns

## 2. Intermediate

Latin and Greek
roots and affixes
building words
word families
word trees
word matrixes
dictionary skills
3. Academic

More Latin and Greek + procedural words and academic vocabulary
word analysis instructional words


## AN OVERVIEW FIRST: An instructional sequence. The 'big picture'.

1. The INITIAL (Anglo-Saxon) words that beginners encounter are the hardest in terms of spelling and sound. They have the most 'exceptions' because they have been around so long and have been through so many 'revisions' and pronunciation changes over time.
2. Longer, multisyllabic words are actually EASIER - they have syllables and they have been built with ROOTS and AFFIXES.

As students' METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS grows, share insights into words. Create a sense of wonder. Create a sense of fascination and respect for words. (Sadly, HK Chinese learners describe English words as "chicken guts" and "ugly worms" that give them "alphabet headaches".)
Many have no idea of even the simplest PREFIXES or SUFFIXES. They see HAPPINESS as completely different from HAPPILY ....
BICS = Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills CALP = Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

## 1. Initial vocabulary

## The Anglo-Saxon layer

- everyday words for work, the body, family, animals etc.
- often single-syllabled words

- compounds
- some affixes
- most of the 100
frequent English words
(possibly the hardest to decode - sight words)

```
and but if to from
here there over under
    this that eat sleep
house build head foot
ship you bridge brother
sister bread milk night
    rain stand backbone
            forehead seaweed
                everyone into
    -ward -ness -ful -s
    -ing -ed -less -hood
fore- un- over- under-
```

INITIAL LEARNING STAGE
Most single-syllabled, everyday words have an Anglo-Saxon origin. These are the words that learners first learn.
Many of them are SIGHT WORDS - words that just have to be learned "as they are". That's OK at this stage - but - sight learning must not "take over" all word learning!
These learners will probably still be working on their phonemic awareness (see other presentation) and some very early phonics work.

IMAGE: http://www.medievalists.net

## 2. Intermediate vocabulary

## The Latin and Greek layer <br> - multisyllabic words <br> - roots, prefixes, suffixes <br> - families of related words



- words become more decodable and offer many
clues to meaning
* Take time to explore words.


## INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS

There is a big step up here. Learners are moving into more complex PHONICS work. They are conversing and are increasingly able to work with texts.
**Make a deliberate GEAR CHANGE - it's time to learn a lot more about words PHONICS and ETYMOLOGY.
*Gradually reduce any reliance on 'visual learning' of words. It's time to become more analytical. Introduce WORD FAMILIES.

The early words should have become "automatised" by now.

Now is the time to see how words are related and how they are built.
Investigate lists of Roots and Affixes - there are many on the internet. Start using them to see connections between words.

IMAGE: http://www.sightwordsgame.com


Word work should now start to "come together" - the sounds of words, the patterns of word-building, related words etc.
No need to memorise all these as separate "entries"!
Students like predictability - and it is now starting to happen.
*Can they start to see how English words are 'clever constructions' and not just colourless sets of letters?

## IMAGES:

Henry, m. (2006). Unlocking Literacy: Effective Decoding and Spelling Instruction. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.


Make a "fuss" over particular words every now and again.
*Allocate different words to different students to research and present to the class.
Word Squares - students can add translation, etymology, related words etc.
Students can copy similar diagrams into their WORD WORK books.

IMAGES: P.Bunce


This website is: www.theyuniversity.net -- however, it is 'closed' to visitors.
All these posters can be accessed via GOOGLE IMAGES - search "Word root of the day" - and you'll find some 20 or more.

Make posters. + Students can present them

IMAGES: http://www.theyuniversity.net

## 3. Academic vocabulary

Subject-specificvocabulary
science
mathematics
social sciences
literature
arts
etc.
*Take time to
analyse new
terminology.

1. analyze approach area assess assume
authority available benefit concept consist
context constitute contract data define
derive distribute economy environment
establish estimate evident factor finance
formula function income indicate individual
interpret involve issue labor legal legislate
major method occur percent period
principle proceed process policy require
research respond role section sector
significant similar source specific
structure theory vary
2. analyze approach area assess assume authority available benefit concept consist context constitute contract data define derive distribute economy environment establish estimate evident factor finance formula function income indicate individual interpret involve issue labor legal legislate major method occur percent period principle proceed process policy require research respond role section sector significant similar source specific
structure theory vary

## 3. ACADEMIC-LEVEL LEARNERS

These students should have the 'sound system' worked out - so that they can read these words, but they may still need to understand them.
Academic study does not use everyday language. These words are not to be found in the Top 2,000 English Words.
Even native-speaking students face a flood of new terminology as they move into increasingly academic programmes. They can also benefit from Word Study programmes.

Google search "570 Academic Word List" for various versions of this list - some are alphabetical, some provide all versions of each word (noun, verb, adjectives etc.).
This list is the most frequent set. There are 10 such lists. These can be the focus of regular Vocabulary Work. Find them/Use them in sentences.

This website has various AWL "tools": http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/ index.htm
This one has a Word of the Day for different grade-levels: http://www.superkids.com/ aweb/tools/words/wod.shtml

IMAGE: Coxhead, Averil. (2000). A new academic word list. TESOL Quarterly, 34,

## My suggestion:

Handwriting
(kinesthetics)

## A personal "word-work notebook"

- Handwriting
- Sounds
- Meaning


## Words

Meaning
(morphology)


MOVING FORWARD ON THREE FRONTS
STUDENTS really value notebooks that they can refer to. Set one up for vocabulary, spelling, interesting words, word patterns, word families etc.
An "everything words" notebook. The students will keep it for a long time!

# 谢谢 Thanks 

Thanks everyone.

## A new resource-book for teachers

* Pauline is currently finalising a

Word Study resource book for
Intermediate-level biscriptal learners.

* It has 60 lessons - each covering elements of:

If you are interested:
*Please provide your name, school and/or email address.

Sounds
Handwriting and
Meaning/Vocabulary

Check my website:
www.alphabetheadaches.com

My website is: www.alphabetheadaches.com My contact details are provided there.

As of April 2014, I have all the 60 lessons and instructors' notes prepared. I am now writing the introduction.

