Applying synthetic phonics in adult ELT

@teachAdam
Overview

1. Systematic Synthetic Phonics
2. adult ESL learners
3. core skills
4. spelling code
5. listening
6. prosody
7. concluding remarks

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Systematic Synthetic Phonics
Systematic synthetic phonics

- Builds phonemic awareness
  - phonemes not syllables
- Synthetic
  - different sounds blend together
- Systematic
  - 150 main letter-sound correspondences

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**Application**

- L1 literacy teaching
  - statutory requirement
  - reduction in dyslexia
- Extendable to wider language learning
  - comfortable ELT-ish principles
  - systematic approach to phonology?

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The alphabetic code

- phonemic notation system
- uses common spellings
- helps learners decode spellings
  
  /ch-air/   /ʧeə/

- connects spelling & phonology
- depicts complex spellings and phonology
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n=19
L1: Korean=9, Arabic=5, Chinese=2, Portuguese=2, Turkish=1
Class level: upper int=10, intermediate=5, pre-int=4
Simple view of reading

Good
Language comprehension processes

Poor
Word recognition processes

Good
Word recognition processes

Poor
Language comprehension processes

(Gough and Tumner, 1986)
Four key elements

- blending from sounds
- segmenting into sounds
- handwriting
- alphabetic code

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Adult ESL learners’ needs

- metacognition
- use of simple code
- reliance on text not sound
- incidental vs systematic phonics teaching
Core skills
Blending to read

- decoding text
- blending sounds together

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How many sounds are there in each word? Which letters are code for each sound in each word?

1. verse
2. singer
3. listen
4. soundtrack
Segmenting to spell

- reversible
- encoding sound
- segmenting word into phonemes

/s-p-e-l-i-ng/

spelling

- easy to integrate into ELT lessons

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Teaching segmenting

How many sounds are there in each word? Which letters are code for each sound in each word?

1.1. verse
2.2. singer
3.3. listen
4.4. soundtrack

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Teaching segmenting: Activity

A-B pairs

A: Look away. Decide how many sounds there are.
B: Say this word in a quick, natural voice.

/ˈnɪgh-m-ər/  (nightmare)
Now change roles

A: Say this word in a quick, natural voice.
B: Look away. Decide how many sounds there are.

/f-a-(g)-ch-r-ee/
(factory)
Teaching spelling code

- letter-sound correspondences
- each sound taught systematically
  - from simple code: /t-a-p/ → tap
  - to complex code: /s-kw-air/ → square
- staged activities develop code knowledge/awareness
**Multi-skill activity sheets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/lj/</th>
<th>gy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>gy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- gems
- ginger
- gentle
- energy
- giraffe
- genius
- gymnastics
- allergic

- bulgy
- dingy
- allergy
- gymnastics
- spongy
- apology
- ecology
- energy
- stingy
- strategy

*You might need to say /lj/ when the letter 'g' is followed by letters e, i or y. Say the words whilst finger-tracking underneath. Make up a story.*
Teaching listening
• extend SP decoding & encoding ideas

• train bottom-up processing

• demystify L1 English speech

• build a coherent view of phonology
Teaching listening: Activity

Find the matching ending for each sentence

a) /b-i-k-uh-z-ee-g-l-e-f t-i-z .../
   ...around the day.

b) /w-e-n-ee-w-uh-z l-ee-v-i-n .../

c) /ee-w-uh-z ch-r-a-v-l-i-n .../

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Teaching prosody

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Teaching prosody

- irregular syllable length
- stress on key information
- other sounds weaken/change
- words link together
- Words vary wildly from citation forms
Teaching stress

Watch this TV trailer, in which use of stress varies.

What listening difficulties occur due to stress (mis)use?
• thought units & peak vowels

• extending SP develops awareness

• relies on knowledge of word stress

• irregular syllable length
Look at and listen to the stressed sounds. Identify the word that each peak vowel is part of.
• the efficiency principle
• linking
• allophonic variation
• no simplification of genuine speech
Teaching efficiency

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Listen to and repeat the chunks of speech. Match one chunk to each part of the written form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>/uh-b-aw  t-e-n/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>/m-igh-ul z-aw t-uh-v/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>/i s-uh-b-aw/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>/t-e-m-m-igh-ul-z/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It’s about ten miles out of town.

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Conclusions
Conclusions

• Tried and tested in L1 classrooms
• Intuitive phonemic representation
• Explains spelling clearly
• Building phonological awareness
• Reduces cognitive load
• Differentiated aural development
Any questions?

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