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ABSTRACT
        A study (replicating a similar 1977 study by S.
Stotsky), examined whether current basal series teach prefixion
clearly. Teacher's guides, student texts, and workbooks of nine
popular basal reader series were examined to ascertain whether they
offered a clear definition of the term "prefix" and whether that
definition was reinforced by the use of correct exemplars. The series
examined were published by D.C. Heath; Harcourt-Brace-Jovanovich;
Holt Rinehart and Winston; Houghton Mifflin; Macmillan; McGraw-Hill;
Open Court; Scott Foresman; and Silver-Burdett and Ginn. Results
showed that confusion exists in the definition of "prefix" and that
this confusion is frequently compounded by the use of exemplars which
mix prefixed words with words with etymological elements which are
therefore noncomposite in English. (Five tables of data are included;
24 references and an appendix listing the reading series used in the
Stotsky suty are attached.) (SR)

Do Current Basal Series Use Clear Explanations and
Correct Exemplars in Teaching Prefixes?

By

Myra Elaine Volpe

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Master of Arts Degree
Kean College of New Jersey

December 1989

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if current basal series teach prefixion clearly. The study was done on nine popular basal series and the results were compared to an earlier study done by Stotsky.

The teacher's guides, student texts, and workbooks were examined to ascertain whether they offered a clear definition of the term "prefix" and whether that definition was reinforced by the use of correct exemplars.

The results showed that confusion still exists in the teaching of the definition of the term "prefix" and that confusion is frequently compounded by the use of exemplars which mix prefixed words with words with etymological elements which are therefore noncomposite in English.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Word formation by the use of prefixes is a part of our language and basal publishers commonly support the teaching of them. If the instructional material used to teach and reinforce English prefixion is unclear or incorrect then the time spent with these materials and on this skill, it would appear, would be better utilized elsewhere.

In a study of six commonly used basal series Stotsky (1977) found a high degree of inconsistency and misinformation in the teaching of prefixes. Some if not most of this confusion stems from the fact that Stauffer's (1942) list of prefixes made no distinction between English prefixes and etymological elements. Many of the prefixes in his list, recommended for teaching in the elementary school, are not really prefixes at all. As a result of subsequent researchers' reliance on this list, frequently inaccurate exemplars were used.

The practice of confusing and mixing etymological elements with English prefixes was not new when Stauffer (1942) compiled his list. In 1924 Otto Jespersen, an eminent authority on English grammar, protested the practice of treating the formatives of Latin words adopted into English

as if they were English formatives.

Marchand (1969) offers a definition of a
prefix as "a bound morpheme preposed to a free
morpheme" to distinguish them from etymological
elements attached to roots in words that cannot be
analyzed from the perspective of English word
formation.

White, Sowell, and Yanagihara (1989), noting
the confusion Stotsky found with the definition of
a prefix, start their lessons by explicitly
defining a prefix and using both examples and non-
examples for clarification.

While it is assumed that publishers and their
authors have corrected their materials since
Stotsky's study some twelve years ago, practice
changes slowly and the effect of her findings on
current practice is unknown. Are current basals
following corrected procedures of prefixion? Do
they use exemplars and definitions which avoid
confusion?

Hypothesis

A review of nine commonly used basal series
will show the use of clear explanations and correct
exemplars in the teaching of prefixion.

Definitions

prefix - bound morphemes which are preposed to
free morphemes.

etmyological element - historical, linguistic
change of words of foreign origin.

Methods and Procedures

The teachers' guides, students' texts, and
related workbooks (grades 2-6) of nine current
basal series were examined to find the definition
of the term prefix, which prefixes were taught and
at what levels. The series examined were published
by D. C. Heath, Harcourt-Brace-Javonovitch, Holt
Rinehart and Winston, Houghton Mifflin, Macmillan,
McGraw-Hill, Open Court, Scott Foresman, and
Silver-Burdett and Ginn.

Since this study attempts to replicate that of
Stotsky (1976) similar parameters were set.
Marchand's (1969) definition of a prefix was used.
Any elements which were taught as prefixes in the
series were noted as were the exemplars used.
These were compared to Marchand's definition to
ascertain whether they were or were not true
English prefixes as opposed to etymological
elements.

Results

In comparing the results of this study and that of Stotsky (1977) the definition of the term prefix, as used by each of the reading series, was compared to that offered by Marchand (1969). Similarly, the exemplars used to teach or reinforce the lessons were examined to ascertain whether they were, in fact, true English prefixed words cr noncomposite words with etymological elements. Definition of prefix by series:

According to Heath Reading "a prefix is a letter or group of letters added to the beginning of a base word to make a new word. Adding a prefix changes the meaning of a word. Prefixes have their own meanings." (teacher's manual, grade 4, p.605).

H.B.J's Reading Program offers this explanation: "A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word. The prefix un- usually means 'not' or 'opposite of'. If you meet a new word beginning with the prefix un-, remove the prefix and word ending to find the base word. Then put together the meanings of the prefix, the base word, and the ending to find a meaning that makes sense in the sentence you are reading." (teacher's

guide, level 8, p.T79).

H. R. W.'s Reading Today and Tomorrow explains
"A prefix is a word part you add to the beginning
of a word to make a new word. Adding a prefix to a
word changes the meaning of the word." (teacher's
guide, Level 8, p.261).

Houghton MIfflin Reading describes a prefix as
"a word part that can be added to the beginning of
a base word to make a new word." It further
explains that a prefix "usually has a meaning of
its own" and to figure out the meaning of a new
word "you can usually add the meaning of a prefix
to the meaning of the base word." (teacher's
manual, Level I, p.232-34)

Macmillan's Connections has the teacher
explain "that when a word part appears at the
beginning of a word, it is called a 'prefix'" and
further that "when a prefix is added to a word it
changes its meaning." (teacher's guide, Level 8,
p.300)

In McGraw-Hill Reading the student learns that
"A prefix is added to the beginning of a word. It
changes the meaning of the word." (student
workbook, Level K, p.79).

A similar definition is provided by Open Court's <u>Reading</u> <u>and</u> <u>Writing</u> "word parts called prefixes are added to the beginnings of words" and "they bring meaning to the root words they are added to". (teacher's guide, Level 2-1, p.365)

Scott, Foresman Reading: <u>An</u> <u>American</u> <u>Tradition</u> offers "A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a root word to make a new word." (teacher's guide, Level 6, p.169).

<u>World</u> <u>of</u> <u>Reading</u> by Silver-Burdett and Ginn defines a prefix as "a letter or letters added to the beginning of a word" and adds "when a prefix is added to a word, it changes the meaning of that word". (teacher's guide, Level 7, p.502).

Compare all of these with Marchand's definition of prefixes as "bound morphemes which are preposed to free morphemes" (p.129) and it is found that only Heath, H.B.J., and Houghton Mifflin suggest that a prefix has a meaning of its own. The others only state that the prefix is a letter, group of letters or word part which when added to a word, root word or base word changes its meaning. Although all the series studied eventually taught the prefixes as having meaning and bringing that

meaning to the base word, only Heath, H.B.J., and
Houghton Mifflin taught this as part of the
definition of a prefix.

Use of exemplars:

Although Heath Reading uses prefixed words,
which fit Marchand's definition for teaching and
reinforcement at the second and third grade levels,
beginning in grade four students are asked to
identify the meanings of prefixed words which are
really words containing etymological elements.
Words such as transport, submerge, and postscript
(workbook p.149, level 4) are mixed with prefixed
words which fit what students have been taught to
expect such as predetermine, substandard, preview,
and international (workbook p.185, level 4).

H.B.J. Reading Program teaches and reinforces
prefixion with examples which are consistent with
Marchand's definition through grade four.
Beginning in grade five however, words with
etymological elements are mixed with prefixed
English words. The series however, attempts to
teach Latin and Greek as well as Old English and
other derivations to explain these noncomposite
"prefixed" words.

H. R. W.'s <u>Reading</u> <u>Today</u> <u>and</u> <u>Tomorrow</u> could cause confusion at grade five when after teaching il- as a prefix meaning "not" it asks students for meanings of the words illiterate, illogical, and illuminate (teacher's guide p.539). The prefix pro- meaning "for" or "in favor of" is also confusing when the examples used in the lessons are prologue (workbook p.104, grade 5), prospective, and promote (workbook p.114, grade 5).

Macmillan's <u>Connections</u> mixes words with etymological elements along with prefixed words at level twelve, grade 6 when it asks students to supply "prefixed" words which fit definitions given. The words needed are biped, unison, biennial, trireme, intramural, and monocular (workbook p.73).

In McGraw-Hill <u>Reading</u> examples and explanations are clear until Level N, grade six when on Skillmaster 83 students are asked to match prefixed words to meanings. Mixed in with prefixed words such as misuse, reclaim, unnatural, and incorrect are words with etymological elements such as precede, underling, premonition, intervene and substitute.

Reading and Writing, published by Open Court, mixes prefixed words with words having etymological elements throughout all levels.

Silver-Burdett and Ginn's World of Reading begins at Level 11, grade 5 to teach Latin and Greek roots as a way of teaching words with etymological elements.

Only two of the nine series studied, Houghton Mifflin Reading and Scott Foresman: An American Tradition, followed through all levels, grades two through six, with examples consistent with Marchand's definition.

Comparison of prefixes taught:

Table 1 shows a list of all the prefixes introduced in all nine basal series as well as the grade level at which they were introduced.

TABLE 1

	Heath	H.B.J.	H.R.W.	Houghton Mifflin	Macmillan	McGraw Hill	Open Court	Scott Foresman	Silver Burdett Ginn
ad·							6		
ante·		5				6			
anti·	6	5	5		5	6	6		
auto·		5							6
be·							6		
bi·	5	3	6		6	6	4		
bio·		5							
co·			6						5
com·		6					6		5
con·									5
col·									5
cor·		6							5

Table 1 (Continued)

	Heath	H.B.J.	H.R.W.	Houghton Mifflin	Macmillan	McGraw Hill	Open Court	Scott Foresman	Silver Burdett Ginn
contra-	6	5							6
circum-	6						6		
centi-					5				
de-		5		5		5	6		3
dis-	3	3	2	4	3	2	3	3	3
deca-					5				
deci-					5				
deka-					5				
extra-							6		4
ex-		6	4						6
en-		6	4	6			6		6
fore-		5	5	6		6			6
il-		4	5		5	5			6
im-		4	5		4	5			5
in-		4	5	4	4	3	3	4	4
ir-		4	5		5	3	3	4	4
intra-			6		6		6		
inter-	4		6	6	6	5	6		
kilo-					5				
multi-					6				
mid-		5	4		6		4		4
mis-		3	2	5	4	3	4	3	4
micro-						6			6
mini-							3		
milli-					5				
mono-					6				
non-		5	3	5	4	3	3		4
out-								4	
over-		5		5		3	3	3	
ob-		6							
per-		6							
pre-	4	5	4	5	5	2	4	3	4
post-	4		4		5	6	4		6
pro-	6	5	5	5	5				
quadri-	5								
re-	2	4	2	3	3	2	2	2	2
super-	6		5				3		
semi-		6	6			6	4		
sub-	4	6	5			5	6		
trans-	4	5	6				6		
tri-	5	3	6		6				
tele-		5					4		
un-	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	2

Table 1 (Continued)

	Heath	H.B.J.	H.R.W.	Houghton Mifflin	Macmillan	McGraw Hill	Coen Court	Scott Foresman	Silver Burdett Ginn
under-	6					3	3	3	
uni-	5	3			6		4		

The major emphasis on prefix instruction, in all series except Scott-Foresman, takes place at grade levels four, five, and six. The number of prefixes any series attempts to teach ranges from a high of 33 to a low of 10. Scott-Foresman limits instruction to only ten prefixes, introduces two in grade two, five in grade three, three in grade four and reviews all ten in grades five and six.

In reviewing table 2 it is found that only four prefixes are taught by all nine series. These are dis- (not or opposite of), pre- (before or earlier), re- (again or back), and un- (not or opposite of).

TABLE 2

Number of Series Teaching Each Prefix

Number of Series	Prefixes Taught
9	dis-, pre-, re-, un-
8	in-, mis-
7	im-, non-
6	anti-, bi-, inter-, post-
5	de-, en-, fore-, il-, ir-, mid-, over-, pro-, sub-, trans-
4	semi-, tri-, under-, uni-
3	com-, ex-, intra-, super-, contra-
2	ante-, auto-, co-, cor-, circum-, extra-, micro-, tele-
1	ad-, be-, bio-, con-, col-, centi-, deca-, deci-, deka-, kilo-, multi-, milli-, mini-, mono-, out-, ob-, per-, quadri-

In reviewing table 1 it is also found that, although there are 57 prefixes taught in varying combinations by different series, no series teaches all the prefixes or "frequently used" prefixes supplied by earlier studies of either Stauffer

(1942) table 3, Stotsky (1977) table 4, or White (1989) table 5.

TABLE 3

Fifteen Prefixes Appearing Most Frequently in the Thorndike Word Book as Compiled by Stauffer

Prefix	Example
ab- (from)	abstract
ad- (to)	admit
be- (by)	beguile
com- (with)	commemorate
de- (from)	deduce
dis- (apart)	dismiss
en- (in)	enchant
ex- (out)	exaggerate
in- (into)	incarnate
in- (not)	inactive
pre- (before)	precede
pro- (infront of)	proceed
re- (back)	reassure
sub- (under)	subsoil
un- (not)	unaided

TABLE 4

Twenty-five Common Prefixes with Appropriate

Exemplars as Compiled By Stotsky

Prefix	Exemplar
anti-:	freeze, aircraft, Negro, Jewish, toxin
circum-:	lunar, navigate
co-:	pilot, captain, worker
counter-:	blow, claim, balance, weight, attack
de-:	salt, rail, face, bug, compose, compress
dis-:	agree, appear, arm, mount, please
en-, em-:	brace, circle, dear, force, large, slave
extra-:	large, ordinary, sensory, territorial
fore-:	finger, leg, father, man, foot, tell, claw, paw
in-, im-, il, or ir-:	active, visible, patient, legal, regular
inter-:	state, lace, communicate, planetary, national, urban
intra-:	state, local, city
mid-:	day, June, way, western, winter
mis-:	print, place, match, judge, interpret, guide

TABLE 4 (continued)

Prefix	Exemplar
multi-:	level, motored, colored, millionaire
non-:	green, English, scientific
post-:	war, graduate, date, game, season
pre-:	dawn, heat, judge, human, arrange, school, game, season
pro-:	slavery, war, labor
re-:	state, construct, write, spell, paper, finish
semi-:	frozen, darkness, circle, finals
sub-:	freezing, entry, zero, topic, divide, tropical
super-:	tanker, jet, impose, natural, heated, cold
trans-:	oceanic, continental, Atlantic, world
un-:	comfortable, pleasant, truth, usual

TABLE 5

The Most Common Prefixes in Printed School English
for grades 3 - 9 Compiled by White[a]

Prefix	Percentage of Words
un-	26
re-	14

TABLE 5 (continued)

Prefix	Percentage of Words
in-, im-, ir-, il- (not)	11
dis-	7
en-, em-	4
non-	4
in-, im- (in or into)	4
over- (too much)	3
mis-	3
sub-	3
pre-	3
inter-	3
fore-	3
de-	2
trans-	2
super-	1
semi-	1
anti-	1
mid-	1
under- (too little)	1
all others	3

a
Compiled by John B. Carroll, Peter Davies, and
Barry Richman, The American Heritage Word
Frequency Book, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin,
1971.

Conclusion

After analyzing the results of this study it can be concluded that, although some progress has been made in clarifying the definition of a prefix for instruction to elementary students and that for the most part exemplars used more closely follow the definition offered by Marchand (1969) there is still much room for improvement. The hypothesis of the study, that a review of nine commonly used basal series will show the use of clear explanations and correct exemplars in the teaching of prefixion, must therefore be rejected.

RELATED RESEARCH

Using prefixes to form or change words is a definite part of our language. Stauffer (1942) recognized this and in an attempt to aid teachers with the decision of which prefixes would be most useful to teach, studied the Thorndike List (1932) to find how many prefixed words there were and their frequency of occurence. The result of his study showed 24 percent of the words in the list had prefixes and the 15 prefixes which appeared most frequently accounted for 82 percent of the total number.

In her review of six commonly used basal series Stotsky (1977) found not only confusion in the definition of the term "prefix" but a mixture of prefixed words with words containing etymological elements in the exemplars used to reinforce student lessons. She feels a distinction should be made between an English prefix and an etymological element attached to dependent elements. If such a distinction is made she prefers Marchand's (1969) definition of a prefix as a "bound morpheme which is preposed to a free morpheme" (p.124). An accurate definition and description of prefixes would eliminate or at least

reduce the confusion found in teaching prefixion
and the use of appropriate examples when teaching
would also aid in better student understanding of
the concept of prefixion.

Stotsky (1979) further points out that, in his
study of prefixes, Stauffer (1942) did not
distinguish between prefixes and etymological
elements. Therefore many of the prefixes
recommended for teaching at the elementary level
are not really true prefixes when using Marchand's
(1942) definition. Subsequent researchers tended
to rely on Stauffer's List (1942) and, as a result,
also failed to distinguish prefixes from
etymological elements. This in turn led to the use
of inaccurate or inappropriate exemplars. Indeed,
Stotsky found, in Ginn's Reading 360 teacher's
guide, an exercise asking students to match English
words with their Latin roots and that the amount of
Latin taught in marginal notes in the teacher's
guides of the Holt series to be almost worthy of a
high school course.

The practice of confusing and mixing
etymological elements with English prefixes was not
new when Stauffer (1942) compiled his list. In

1924 Otto Jespersen, an eminent authority on

English grammar protested the practice thusly:

> Speaking of word-formation it may
> not be superfluous here to enter a
> protest against the practice prevalent
> in English grammars of treating the
> formatives of Latin words adopted into
> English as if they were English forma-
> tives. thus the prefix pre- is given
> with such examples as precept, prefer,
> present, and re- with such examples as
> repeat, resist, redeem, redolent, etc.,
> although the part of the words which
> remains when we take off the prefix has
> no existence as such in English (cept,
> fer, etc.). This shows that these words
> (although originally formed with the
> prefixes prae, re) are in English
> indivisible "formulas". Note that in
> such the first syllable is pronounced
> with the short (i) or (e) vowel (cf.
> prepare, preparation, repair, reparation),
> but by the side of such words we have others
> with the same written beginning, but
> pronounced in a different way, with long (i),
> and here we have a genuine English prefix with
> a signification of its own: presuppose,
> predetermine, re-enter, re-open. Only this
> pre- and this re- deserve a place in English
> grammars; the other words belong in the
> dictionary. (p.48).

White, Sowell, and Yanagihara (1989) in a more

recent count of prefixed words using the Word

Frequency Book (Carroll, Davis, and Richman, 1971)

identify nine prefixes which cover about 75 percent

of the prefixed words. The five most frequently

used prefixes as found by them are the same five

prefixes which were found by Stotsky (1978) to
present special problems in the teacher's guides,
readers, or workbooks of the six basal series she
studied. These five prefixes are un-, re-, in-
(not), dis-, and en-. A study done by White,
Speidel, and Power (1987) found that re-, in-, and
dis- were not known by a majority of a sample of
third and fourth grade students on at least one
test and that the prefix un-, meaning not, was
known by only 63 percent of the student sample.
This would indicate a need for clear, concise
teaching of these frequently used prefixes.

Noting the confusion found by Stotsky's (1977)
study of what a prefix is--White, Sowell, and
Yanagihara (1989) developed a series of lessons to
teach prefixion to students in the fourth and fifth
grades. They begin instruction with an explicit
definition of the term prefix. "(1) A prefix is a
group of letters that go in front of a word. (2)
It changes the meaning of a word. (3) When you
peel it off, a word must be left." (p.305). This
is demonstrated with the use of both examples
"unkind, refill" and nonexamples "uncle, reason."
Students who have been taught to look for

independent base words should not experience difficulty distinguishing prefixed words from those with etymological elements.

As a result of the confusion between prefixed English words and words with etymological elements Ekwall and Shanker (1988) would not be concerned with students learning the meanings of prefixes. However, because of the high percentage of prefixed words that students meet as their reading level increases, they suggest students learn to recognize and pronounce these word-parts as an aid in decoding the big words that frequently cause problems.

On the other hand, according to Harris and Sipay (1975), a person who knows the meanings of the more common prefixes should be able to make a fairly accurate guess as to the meaning of a new word, especially when it is met in meaningful context. They also suggest that a knowledge of the meaning of the more common Latin roots, which are found in so many English words, would be helpful in unlocking the meaning of unfamiliar words at a "mature" level. This "mature" level is probably not reached by the average student until the ninth

or tenth grade.

In . somewhat middle of the road position
Burns, Roe, and Ross (1984) define a prefix as a
sequence of letters that is placed before a root
word to change its meaning. Good readers learn to
recognize common prefixes instantly, this then
helps them to recognize words more rapidly than if
they had to sound out each word letter by letter.
The knowledge of prefixes can help readers unlock
the meaning as well as the pronunciation of
unfamiliar words. While they do not include among
their suggested common prefixes those prefixes
which, when removed, do not leave a recognizable,
meaningful base word such as ad- in admit, com- in
combine, and con- in conceal, they do not, however,
go so far as to suggest that these word-parts are
not true English prefixes.

A somewhat simpler approach is taken by
Searfoss and Readance (1989). They advise that
when teaching prefixes one should teach only those
prefixes which clearly have meaning such as trans-
(across), sub- (beneath), un- (not), post- (after),
pro- (in favor of), and anti- (against). They
further suggest, as a rule of thumb, that if the

teacher must refer to the teacher's guide, for the meaning of a prefix, it would probably be better not to teach it to children.

Although he feels that prefixes are generally handled well in basal reading programs, Hillerich (1983) offers a word of caution. Teachers should be careful to teach children to note first that there is a base word when the prefix is removed. For example "pre-" is a prefix meaning "before" in pregame and preschool. However, this is not the case in the word "preach". Students' recognition of a base word is essential at the elementary level, however, as students get into the upper grades they may have need for some of the Latin and Greek combining forms used in technical terms. The prefixes that are taught should be only those frequently used and consistent in their meanings. The prefixes that fit these criteria usually include un-, dis-, mis-, re-, pre-, and in-, im-, ir-, and il-.

In this review of the literature it can be seen that even the "experts" do not agree on what a prefix is, which ones should be taught, or how and when this teaching should be done. Until these

questions are resolved the confusion in prefixion
will continue.

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APPENDIX

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