

Figure V.24 *Additional Strategies for Teaching Irregular Spellings*

Chapter 11 suggested one method for teaching learners how to spell irregular words. There are several others that could be used to replace the one given there and these are listed below.

Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP)

This method, based on the NLP model, enables learners to develop effective cognitive strategies for spelling. It makes use of visual imagery and may be a particularly suitable method for learners with dyslexia as often visual memory is a strength.

Procedure

- Write the correct spelling of the target word on card or paper in a large, clear print.
- Hold the card up and to the left of the learner.
- Discuss the visual appearance of the word: the length and shape of the word, any patterns to be seen (e.g., **sense**), or any words within the word (e.g., **Richard**, **Independent**) and then ask the learner to visualise the word in their mind's eye.
- Remove the card and ask the learner to name the letters forwards and backwards. If the learner makes a mistake, ask him/her to look at the card again and point out the notable features of the word.
- Ask the learner to write the word (naming the letters) and then turn card over to check if s/he is correct.

Look, Cover, Write, Check (LCWC)

This is a very common method for learning irregular words. Normally verbalisation is not included but we believe that this is an important missing element and so have indicated where it should come in the routine.

Procedure

- Write the correct spelling of the word on card or paper.
- Ask them to look at it carefully – allow about 5–10 seconds – and then cover the word or turn the card over.
- *Ask the learner to spell it out loud using the letter names.* (If s/he makes any mistakes then show the card again.)
- The learner then writes the word down, naming the letters, and checks their spelling against the model.
- If there are any mistakes encourage the learner to look at the card again for a slightly longer period of time and then repeat steps 3 and 4 above.

Tracing

This method uses kinaesthetic memory (which again may be a strength in learners with dyslexia) to recall the motor movement involved in writing a word. It is a well known method similar to the approach called the Fernald method.

Procedure

- Use a felt pen to write the target word on card in large letters about 3–5 centimetres high either in print or using a handwriting style familiar to the learner.
- The learner then traces over the letters in the word with their index finger (or pencil) several times, naming the letters.
- The learner writes the word on paper (naming the letters) and checks if it is correct. If a mistake has been made the procedure is repeated until the spelling is correct.

Mnemonics

This method provides a way of aiding auditory sequential memory by producing a sentence or phrase where the letter of each word spells out the target word in the correct order. The use of visual clues to support the rhyme or mnemonic is particularly recommended for learners with dyslexia. The more absurd the mnemonic is, the easier it may be to remember. To use this method the learner must be able to isolate and identify the first letter of the words in the mnemonic.

Procedure

- Write correct spelling of the word on a card and ask the learner to identify the letters in the word.
- Encourage the learner to think of a saying or phrase in which each word starts with a letter in the spelling. These must be in the correct sequential order, e.g. the order of the letters in the word {play} might be remembered by the phrase {People Laughing And Yelling}. If possible use a mnemonic that starts with the word to be learned e.g. girl – ‘Girl In Red Lipstick’.
- The learner recites the saying and spells the word, naming the letters.
- If the learner makes a mistake, consider if a different saying should be used.
- Repeat the procedure until the word is correct.

The saying could be written in the learner’s book with the first letter of each word highlighted in a different colour, e.g., **S**usan **A**nd **I** Dance (for the word ‘said’ to make it stand out and then a picture drawn next to it is a memory aid. Another useful strategy is to record the saying (and spelling) for the learner to listen to and join in with as s/he looks at the mnemonic in the book).

Picture Association (Picture Links)

The use of picture association as a technique for remembering information was discussed in Chapter 12 on study skills. It can also be used effectively with some students to teach spellings. The method uses

visual imagery and pictures to help the learner to remember the 'tricky' part of the spelling. Learners with dyslexia are often very creative and may enjoy an approach that involves the use drawing and colour as well as imagination.

Procedure

- Write the target word on a card or piece of paper and highlight the tricky bit of the word (e.g. the silent letter 's' in the word 'island').
- Encourage the learner to think of a picture and phrase that incorporates the spelling. For instance, a common way of teaching the spelling of 'island' is to write the phrase 'an island **is land** surrounded by water' – next to a picture of an island.
- Then ask the learner to write the whole word from memory, naming the letters.
- Check that the learner has transferred the correct spelling into general written work. If a mistake is made then remind him/her of the picture. Ask the learner to recall the phrase and then name the letters in the word before writing it down.

Words in Words

This method involves visual memory and careful attention to detail in identifying smaller words within a larger word as an aid to correct spelling. The learner must be able to recognise and spell the smaller, simple words in order to use this approach and so a basic level of spelling is required.

Procedure

- Write the word to be learned on paper or card.
- Ask the learner to scan the word carefully, identify the small words within and underline (or box) them. For example, the word chaperone contains *chap* and *one*; there is a *wed* in Wednesday; and a *bus* in busy.
- Ask the learner to write the word from memory, naming the letters.
- If the learner makes a mistake, repeat the procedure emphasising the tricky bit of the word at step 3, for example, the learner might say 'busy' is 'bus', 'b' – 'u' – 's' and the letter 'y'.

N.B. only select words that *do* contain smaller words within them.

The spelling strategies outlined above are amongst a number of well known methods used by Brooks and Weeks (1999) as part of a DfEE research project into teaching spelling to children with literacy difficulties

Reference

Brooks P. and Weeks S. (1999) *Individual Styles in Learning to Spell: Improving Spelling in Children with Literacy Difficulties and all Children in Mainstream Schools*. Norwich: HMSO.



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