



## Highlights

1. Children learn more words when they are taught with their spelling patterns than when they are taught without their spelling patterns
2. In research, new words are often taught over a relatively short time frame; in this study we looked at whether words were retained over a period of 8 months
3. Knowing about words is incremental rather than all-or-nothing; in this study, we used assessments that revealed subtle changes to word knowledge

## What we did

- Worked with school children aged 9-12
- Taught them 16 words: 8 with their spelling patterns (orthography present), 8 without their spelling patterns (orthography absent)
- We assessed **learning of spelling patterns** by asking children to write down the newly learnt words
  - Some credit was given for producing partially correct spelling patterns, as well as full credit for accurate response
- We assessed **learning of meaning** in three tasks that provided increasing support
  - Definition (e.g. "What does *debacle* mean?")
  - Definition with a cue (e.g. "It is a type of failure. Can you tell me what type?")
  - Recognition (choice of 4 definitions, including a sudden failure)

## Words

Accolade  
Cataclysm  
Contrition  
Debacle  
Dormancy  
Epigram  
Foible  
Fracas  
Lassitude  
Luminary  
Nonentity  
Platitude  
Propensity  
Raconteur  
Syncopation  
Veracity

## Orthography absent

Debacle means a sudden failure



## Orthography present

Debacle means a sudden failure

Debacle



## Orthography helps learning

- Our findings provide evidence that emphasising spelling patterns when teaching words is beneficial when teaching words in a 1:1 setting
- This strategy requires little time and resource
- Teachers do use this strategy, though its use could be more frequent and consistent
- However, naturalistic studies in the classroom context are needed to show how these findings translate to classroom learning

## Vocabulary learning occurs gradually over time

- Unusually, this study tracked learning over 8 months; knowledge of words was well retained over time
- Vocabulary knowledge is incremental, over time we:
  - learn new words (breadth); and
  - add new information to known words (depth)
- For this study we designed measures of learning that capture partial word knowledge and subtle changes in word knowledge
- This is important because partial word knowledge might be enough to support understanding when reading or listening
- Even small changes in word knowledge might increase access to the curriculum