

Module Seven:

**The complexities of the
English alphabetic code
based on the
smallest sounds of speech**

Module Seven: Part 1

a) The smallest speech sounds and graphemes

To appreciate that around 44 phonemes are the *smallest units of sound* generally distinguishable in the English language that commonly change the meaning of the word

To understand that *slash marks* denote the 'units of sound'

Module Seven: Part 1 continued

a) The smallest speech sounds and graphemes

To appreciate that confusion follows the avoidance of using slash marks to distinguish the sounds from the graphemes (letters and letter groups – or spelling alternatives) and therefore the use of slash marks is an important, integral, clarifying part of Debbie’s programmes and guidance shared between teachers, learners and learners’ parents and carers

Module Seven: Part 1 continued

a) The smallest speech sounds and graphemes

To understand that graphemes (letters or letter groups – or spelling alternatives) *are code for* the smallest units of sound

To appreciate that schools need to be accountable for teaching explicitly and systematically a comprehensive bank of letter/s-sound correspondences (the alphabetic code) for both reading and spelling purposes

The smallest speech sounds

Within any spoken word, **phonemes**, the smallest individual sounds **linked to a change of meaning**, can be identified:

/b/ /oa//t/ **/k/** /oa//t/

Slash marks are used to denote the 'sounds'

We can hear the sound **/a/** as in





In the spoken word for
identify the **sounds**:

we can

/k/

/l/

/ou/

/n/

X



Note: **Never**
write a word in
the **slash marks**
for learners.

for which the corresponding **graphemes**
(letters or letter groups) are:

c

l

ow

n



Note: We **always**
write words in
graphemes for
learners.

Slash marks denote sounds

Slash marks are used throughout the **Phonics International** and the **ORT Floppy's Phonics Sounds and Letters** programmes for *everyone* to understand the notation:

- **teachers** /k/ c k -ck ch
- **learners**
- **parents** /ai/ ai ay a-e a

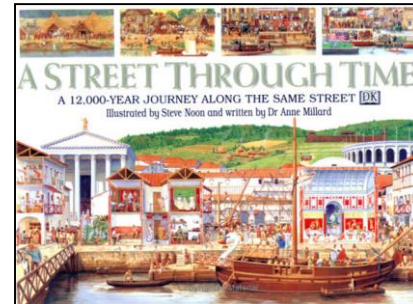
The **notation** for any one sound **stays the same**.

Phonemes

- There are about **44 phonemes** (the smallest identifiable sounds) in English spoken language and **26 letters** of the **alphabet** with which to record those speech sounds.
- **52** letters – capital letters are code for the same sounds as lower case

Phonemes

Of course the English spelling system is exceptionally complicated because of the fascinating history of English – both the **spoken** and **written** language:



Graphemes

We have not only **single letters** but also many **letter groups** as the **written code** for the speech sounds.

These **graphemes** (or **spelling alternatives**) **are code for the /s/ sound**:

/s/ **s** **-ss** **-se** **-ce** **c** **sc** **-st-** **ps**

The Alphabetic Code

Schools need to be **accountable** for teaching explicitly and systematically a comprehensive bank of letter/s-sound correspondences for both reading and spelling purposes.

Parents should receive specific information about the code.