Linguistic awareness intervention activities for older children struggling with reading and spelling: Reference:

Please refer to the article for details of how the activities were used in the intervention and the improvements observed in the children’s spelling.

Activities

1. Picture sort: Identification of long and short vowels
To encourage the identification of long and short vowels, pictures of monosyllabic words are sorted according to the length of the vowel. Sorting pictures allows the child to focus on the sound of the vowel without being distracted by the orthography. The accurate discrimination of vowel length is essential for learning many of the orthographic patterns included in the intervention program.

2. Word sort: Long vowels with silent ‘e’ versus short vowels
   cut    cute
   wine   wine
   rip    ripe
   mat    mate
   rob    robe
   cub    cube
   din    dine
   pip    pipe
   hat    hate
   hop    hope

3. Word sort: Monosyllabic words ending in [k] (long vowels versus short vowels)
   lick   like
   clock  cloak
   sack   sake
   tack   take
   trick  trike
   sock   soak
4. Word sort: Base words and suffixes with orthographically and semantically transparent words

To introduce the idea that some words are morphologically complex, base words and suffixes that are orthographically and semantically transparent are used. For example, the word leader is semantically transparent as it is the sum of the meaning of its two component morphemes. The agentive -er suffix means “someone who Xs” (where ‘X’ stands for the baseword). Thus, leader means someone who leads. The word leader is also orthographically transparent; there is no change to the spelling of the base word when the suffix is added. In addition, comparison of the agentive -er suffix and the comparative -er suffix (e.g., helper vs. smaller) helps to make the point that suffixes are more than just a collection of graphemes, and that they alter the meaning of the base word in predictable ways.

The purpose of this word sort is to allow participants to recognise the smaller word inside the larger word and to gain an understanding of how this smaller word (the base word) combines with the suffix to create a new word. Furthermore, participants should recognise that knowing the meaning of the individual morphemes that comprise the larger word can help them to work out the meaning of that larger (morphologically complex) word.

To encourage semantic awareness, ask participants to put these words into sentences. To create a deeper understanding of the meaning of the suffix, encourage participants to generate new words with a given suffix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More ‘X’</th>
<th>Someone who ‘Xs’</th>
<th>the most X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fresher</td>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>meanest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neater</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>freshest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheaper</td>
<td>worker</td>
<td>quickest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smaller</td>
<td>leader</td>
<td>fastest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>older</td>
<td>helper</td>
<td>faintest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Prompted spelling

After sorting words according to various criteria, participants are asked to spell some of these words. At first, participants receive a series of prompts from the clinician. Here is an example of the prompts used for eliciting a morphologically simple word.

1. I’d like you to spell the word stock. I’ll use stock in a sentence so that you can think about what it means: The farmer lost almost all his stock in the storm.
2. Before you write anything down, I want you to tell me the vowel sound in the base word. That’s right, the vowel sound is [ɒ].
3. Is [ɒ] long or short? You are correct, the vowel sound in stock is short.
4. How do you spell the [k] sound after a short vowel?
5. Now write down the word stock.
To get the child to check their work, ask them to read back what they have written.

The next step is to encourage self-prompting, that is, getting children to ask these questions for themselves. To make the task more difficult, words with different final sounds and different suffixes are presented in the same spelling list. Finally, children are asked to spell words that they had not been exposed to in the word sorts to see if they could use the spelling prompts on new words.

6. Word sort: -ing suffix on base words with long and short vowels
This word sort focuses on the orthographic changes that occur to the base word when the suffix is added. These orthographic changes are:
1. deletion of word-final ‘e’ (e-drop) when the base word has a long vowel. When –ing comes to stay, ‘e’ goes away.
2. doubling of the final consonant of the base after short vowels. Note that there is no consonant doubling when the base word already ends with two consonants.

hoping  hopping
moping  mopping
baking  backing
caning  canning
filing  filling
sloping  slopping
robing  robbing
raking  racking
pining  pinning
striping  stripping

Here is an example of the prompts used for eliciting a morphologically complex word.
1. I’d like you to spell the word mopping. I’ll use mopping in a sentence so that you can think about what it means: The boy was mopping the floor.
2. Before you write anything down, I want you to tell me the vowel sound in the base word. That’s right, the vowel sound is [ɒ].
3. Is [ɒ] long or short? You are correct, the vowel sound in mop is short.
4. Now spell the base word. Do you have to make any changes to the base word when you add the suffix? Yes, you do. Since the vowel sound in mop is short, you will have to double the final ‘p’ in mop.

7. Word sort: -y suffix on base words with long and short vowels
This word sort reinforces the orthographic changes that were introduced in the –ing word sort.
hazy  lazy
icy  spicy
creepy  sleepy
smoky  shiny
spotty  skinny
crabby  scrappy
flabby floppy
foggy boggy
crusty dusty
misty musty

8. Word sort: -ed suffix on base words with long and short vowels
To encourage the realization that suffixes have a constant orthographic shape and are not always spelled as they sound, words are sorted by the phonological shape of the suffix. For example, *pinned* ends with a [d] sound, *picked* ends with [t], and *mated* ends with [ə d]. In spite of these different allophonic variants of the past tense morpheme, the regular past tense is always spelled with ‘ed’. This particular word sort helps to reinforce the importance of thinking about the meaning of a word when attempting to spell that word, thus preventing confusion when spelling homophones like *missed* and *mist*, *allowed* and *aloud*, *discussed* and *disgust*.
sloped slopped
robed robbed
raked racked
pined pinned
striped stripped
hoped hopped
moped mopped
baked backed
caned canned
filed filled

9. Word sort: -tch vs. –ch
coach catch
peach patch
beach batch
leach latch
speech stretch
reach retch
screech scrinch
march match
hooch hutch

10. Word sort: -er and –est with consonant doubling and y → i
saddest maddest
flattest fattest
funniest sunniest
sloppiest happiest
fussiest bossiest
sadder madder
flatter fatter
funnier sunnier
sloppier happier
fussier bossier

11. Word sort: -ish (means ‘sort of X’ where X stands for the base word, e.g., blackish, or ‘like an X’, e.g., kittenish)
greenish brownish
reddish pinkish
warmish coolish
biggish smallish
fattish flattish
boyish kittenish
devilish hawkish

12. Word sort: -en (means ‘to make something X’)
freshen thicken
dampen fatten
sadden madden	
tighten lighten
brighten frighten
depen sweeten
lengthen strengthen

To make this task more difficult, add –ed to the words listed above, e.g., freshened.

13. Word sort: -ly (tells how something is done, or describes something)
sweetly deeply
smoothly weakly/weekly

no consonant doubling even though the vowel is short
sickly thickly
madly sadly
thinly fondly

no word-final ‘e’ drop when suffix is added because suffix does not start with a vowel
lonely lovely
stately widely

these words have two suffixes –y, and -ly
messily sloppily
thirstily luckily
crazily fussily

14. Word sort: -dge vs. –ge vs. –g
Note that this is the voiced version of the –tch and –ch alternation.
stage stag
rage  rag
huge  hug
wage  wag
sage  sag
sludge  slug
budge  bug
fudge  fug
smudge  smug
ridge  rig

Notes

When the child reaches 80-90% accuracy any word list, you should make the task more difficult by mixing words from different lists.

In each session, you should aim to include the following:
1. Identification of long and short vowels
2. Sorting of one monomorphemic word list, e.g., words ending in –ke vs. –ck
3. Sorting of one multi-morphemic word list, e.g., words ending –ing. Be sure to talk about meaning of the word, including how the suffix changes the meaning of the base word.
4. Prompted spelling of the monomorphemic words and multi-morphemic used in the word sorts.
5. As the child gets more proficient at the tasks you can include more than one monomorphemic word list and more than one multi-morphemic word list in each session.