Background Information

About 80% of our English vocabulary comes to us from Latin and Greek, says Douglas Wilson (T. McQuoid, 1994). If students can develop a basic form of knowledge of Greek and Latin, their vocabulary development increases tremendously (lessening the difficulty of learning academic subjects by about half). (D. Sayers, 1973)

When we look at new vocabulary words, we are also going to look at the Greek and Latin influence because, in the long run, this will turn learning new words into much more fun.

These vocabulary words are from the Native American story, “The Little Fly and the Great Mouse.” Any story can be used to illustrate this lesson. Introduce the words before reading the story. Many of the words contain suffixes, so this is an opportunity to present a mini-lesson on suffixes.

Select Vocabulary Words from the Little Fly & the Great Mouse

- peacefully
- delicious
- largest
- harder
- finally
- beside
- heavy
- nervous
- quietly
- highest
- beneath
- thirsty
- bigger
- noisily
- simply
- furiously
- sharply
- harder
- bigger

The letters at the end of a root word like “large,” “high,” “big” and “hard” are called **suffixes**. Here are some from our story:
These have *er* as a suffix, which means “comparing two things."

- **harder**
- **bigger**

*The mouse is bigger than the fly.*

When you compare more than two things, you add “**est.**”

- **largest**
- **highest**

*The black dog was the largest one.*

These words have “**y**” as a suffix, which means “having” as in “having thirst.”

- **heavy**
- **thirsty**

*The girl was very thirsty after running all the way home.*

The suffix “**ful**” or “**fully**” means “an amount” or “in the manner of.”

So, “peacefully” means in the manner of peace or full of peace.

*The little kitten was sleeping peacefully beside the big dog.*

“**ous**” means “characterized by” or “full of.” So, delicious means something full of deliciateness and pleasing taste.

- **delicious**

*My mother made some delicious brownies for us to eat.*

Let’s review our suffixes:

- **er**: comparing two things
- **est**: comparing more than two things
- **y**: result of an activity – having
- **ly**: in the manner of
- **ous**: characterized by, full of
Vocabulary words with suffixes.

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Let’s learn two words for each suffix and make vocabulary cards.

lower  largest  finally  heavy  nervous
harder highest  sharply  thirsty  furious

Remember the meaning of the suffix for new words when you are reading. “er” means two things compared, so “lower” means something “more low” than another. The helicopter flies lower than the jet.

“est” means the most. She was the happiest person in the group.

“ly” means in the manner of. (“fin” means “last, end.”) The last runner finally finished the race.

“ous” means full of. Nervous – full of nerves

Waiting for her interview made mom nervous.

Furious – full of fury

Dad was furious when he found out my brother wrecked the car.
STEPS FOR STUDENTS

Step 1 – Write the Word

Students write the word on the upper corner of a large card. (Remember to have students write the second-language word underneath the English word.)

Step 2 – Add a Visual

Tell students, “Doodle or draw anything you know that shows what this word means,” or provide a picture that helps show the concept.

Step 3 – Write a Definition

“Now, write underneath your picture what the word means.”
Step 4 – Create a Sentence

without sound — the opposite of noisy
The usually noisy bee quietly sucked nectar from the flower.

Students create a sentence, based on their drawing, which depicts the meaning of the word. Afterwards, students turn their card over and write the English and second language vocabulary word in the center.

Creative Use of the Cards

Pair the students. They should test each other using their cards as flash cards and checking their answers on the reverse side. Cards can also be used to play various games as presented in the introduction to the strategy.