Spelling Progress QUARTERLY

Winter 1985
Volume 2, Number 1

Address editorial correspondence to
Michael N. Milone, Jr.
Spelling Progress Quarterly
203 8th Street
Honesdale, PA 18431

Address subscriptions and change of address to
Spelling Progress Quarterly
2300 W. Fifth Avenue
P.O. Box 16278
Columbus, OH 43216

Spelling Progress Quarterly is published four times a year.
An annual subscription is $5.00.

Design by Jeffrey E. George

In This Issue

[Spelling Progress Quarterly, Volume 2, Number 1. Winter 1985. Page 2 in the printed version.]

1. From the Editor

Walter B. Barbe

This issue begins with excerpts from the *Handbook of Simplified Spelling,* a book published by the Simplified Spelling Board over sixty years ago. We regret that space limitations kept us from including more from this book. It was almost painful not to be able to print the Board's list of recommended shortened spellings so that you could see which have caught on and which have not. Recommended were *blest* for *blessed, catalog* for *catalogue, center* for *centre, check* for *cheque* or *checque, gage* for *gauge, gram* for *gramme, honor* for *honour, mold* for *mould, plow* for *plough, rime* for *rhyme,* to name a few. Hopefully, in coming issues we will be able to include more excerpts and some of the more than four centuries of simplified spelling history.

The rest of the issue is devoted to articles that focus on the teaching of spelling. They were selected from various journals to satisfy the numerous requests for information about techniques and strategies that researchers have found effective in dealing with problems in the teaching of spelling. One theme appears again and again: Spelling should not be treated as a separate discipline to be taught in isolation. Simply put by Donald Graves and endorsed by others, "Spelling is for writing." Excerpts from articles by Donald Graves and Walter Petty that relate spelling to other language arts are reprinted in **Item 7**.

Two of the articles advise the teacher to utilize information obtained from observing children's misspellings. The two were selected because they present different approaches to the analysis of errors. In **"Discovering Children's Learning Strategies for Spelling through Error Pattern Analysis,"** Leonore Ganschow advocates collecting each student's errors systematically to determine the kinds of errors he or she makes and the spelling strategies used. This information can help the teacher plan appropriate instruction. According to Ronald Cramer, students' writing should be used as a source of information about spelling and word recognition skills. In **"Diagnosing Skills by Analyzing Children's Writing,"** he analyzes the story "My Ded Cat," written by David, a second grader, and calls attention to the correct as well as incorrect spellings, the strengths and weaknesses. Then he makes "educated guesses" about David's future as a reader, writer, and speller.

Sometimes pronunciation changes take place that result in the merger of contrasting sounds, yet the spelling does not keep pace. The symbols that were used to represent the original distinct sounds remain in use for the one sound. This causes still another spelling problem for those people in whose dialect the merging of sounds has evolved. In some parts of the country, though, the sound changes may not occur so that separate spellings are still appropriate for them. Russell Tabbert explores a situation like this with the merging of the "ah"-"aw" sounds. How does the teacher cope with the problem? Read about the acceptance of dialectal variety in **"Dialect Differences and the Teaching of Reading and Spelling."**

[Spelling Progress Quarterly, Volume 2, Number 1. Winter 1985. Pages 1,3,4 in the printed version.]

2. The Case for Simplified Spelling

Excerpted from the Handbook for Simplified Spelling

In 1906 the Simplified Spelling Board was organized. According to the *Handbook of Simplified Spelling,* which the organization produced in 1920, its chief aim was ". . . to arouse a wide interest in English spelling and to direct attention to its caotic condition . . . in the belief that, when the peoples who speak English understand how imperfect for its purpose their present spelling really is, they will be eager to aid an organized, intelligent, sistematic effort to better it. . . ."

This small Handbook makes fascinating reading, not just for what is said but how it is said. There are three sections: Part 1 contains a brief history of English spelling and traces the attempts at reforming it back to 1554. Part 2 presents arguments in favor of the simplification. In Part 3 are the rules that the Board recommended for simplified spelling to be used at that stage of the movement.

In the belief that our readers will be interested in some of the reasons for simplification as stated in the Handbook, we are reprinting excerpts from Part 2.

REASONS FOR SIMPLIFYING

Choice of Methods
It has been shown by abundant example in Part **1** that English spelling is mard by absurdities and inconsistencies that call for improvement if it is ever to be made a satisfactory instrument for recording the sounds of English speech.

A choice of two ways lies open to those who would undertake the task. They may elect to reform our spelling suddenly or gradually — by immediate adoption of a fonetic scheme of notation, or by progressiv elimination of present irregularities.

Fonetic Goal
The Simplified Spelling Board has put itself on record as recognizing that the ultimate goal of the movement is, and must logically be, a fonetic alfabet with enuf letters to represent, at least approximately, each separate sound heard in the standard English speech. By "standard English speech" is ment English as spoken by those whose training and scolarship entitle them to be considerd as authorities on the subject; and among whom — whether American, British Insular, or British Colonial — there is substantial agreement. This standard pronunciation is recorded, likewize with substantial agreement, in the leading dictionaries by means of various "keys to pronunciation." These "keys" ar, in fact, fairly accurate, tho inconvenient, and in only one instance sientifically simple, schemes of fonetic notation.

Reasons for Gradual Approach
It may reasonably be askt why the Board, having this ideal goal in view, advocates its attainment by gradual approach rather than at a single bound. The anser is, for the same reason that we walk across the street insted of leaping from curb to curb. The one is the customary, natural method of reaching our destination, and one that experience has shown to be wel within our powers. The other is theoretically more expeditious, but practically would delay all progress while mankind was seeking to develop a

degree of muscular energy and concentration of purpose beyond anything of which it has hitherto proved itself capable.

The Customary Method

The changes that hav been made in English spelling in the past hav all come into use gradually, one or two at a time — so gradually, in fact, that at all times, as today, there hay been, and ar, many words speld in more than one way on equal authority of good usage. Accordingly, in proposing further changes, the Board has preferd to follow the customary method, natural to the genius of the race, rather than to attempt to force the acceptance of an entirely novel and violently revolutionary scheme of spelling, no matter how ideal and sientifically admirable it might be.

Acceleration Possible

"Gradual," however, is a word of elastic definition, and gradual progress may be made much more rapidly and surely under one set of conditions than under another — under the conditions that the Board aims to establish, for example, than under those that hav hitherto prevaild.

The changes that hav appeared in English spelling in the past hay been the results of individual initiativ and example — some of them inspired by knowledge, reason, and common-sense, but others resulting from erroneous notions concerning the true function of spelling, from ignorance of the history of the language, and from etimologic or filologic incompetence, yet accepted by a public misled by the supposed learning of writers whose literary reputations wer won on other grounds than sound scolarship in English.

The Simplified Spelling Board believs that changes based on a thoro knowledge of the history of English spelling, formulated by filologic experts, put forth by a society composed of leading scolars, lexicografers, educators, men of letters, and men of affairs, and made the subject of an organized propaganda, wil win recognition and acceptance much more rapidly than sporadic and haphazard changes left to take their chances in appealing to popular fancy.

Practical Considerations

Moreover, as a body of practical men with vision — not visionaries — the Simplified Spelling Board at its inception recognized that it stood face to face with a very general spirit of opposition to any change in English spelling.

This opposition exprest itself in many ways, but was itself an expression of the inborn conservatism that is one of the strongest caracteristics of the English-speaking peoples, and one of their best caracteristics when based on logical deductions from past experience. Unfortunately, the opposition to spelling-reform, while based on misinformation, or no information, and on bad habits slowly acquired and firmly fixt, was not the les powerful on that account.

The Thin Edge of the Wedge

The Board, accordingly, early percievd that no real progress could be made until this opposition should be penetrated and disintegrated by spreding correct information in regard to English spelling, and by appealing to the enlightend judgment, the hatred of sham and pretense, and the spirit of fair play, that ar even more admirable caracteristics of the race.

It seeks by the moderateness of its recommendations to disarm antagonism; by getting some of the simpler spellings into wider use, to demonstrate their reasonableness; to accustom the public to the idea that there is nothing sacrosanct about the spelling of any word; and so to open the way to a more general and sistematic advance.

Policy of the Board
The policy adopted by the Board in making its recommendations is fully set forth in Part 1, pp. 16–20, and in Part 3, pp. 2–4. Briefly, it is to follow the simpler rather than the more complex of the existing analogies, to drop silent letters whenever practicable, and to propose no changes — even for the sake of immediate advantage — that violate establisht fonetic principles, and so would impede direct progress toward the goal of a practically fonetic notation of the sounds of English speech.

Illustrations of Policy
For example, the convention that *e* final silent after a single consonant indicates that the preceding vowel is "long," is common in English spelling. To adopt it as a general rule would shorten the spelling of many words in accordance with prevailing analogies, and in particular would abolish the disturbing *gh* (formerly pronounst) in words like *fight, light, night,* etc., by spelling them *fite. lite, nite,* etc. Unfortunately, this convention is unfonetic and, tho practically convenient, is sientifically awkward. The Board recognizes it., by recommending that *e* final be dropt in words like *activ(e), definit(e), determin(e), prornis(e),* etc., where the preceding vowel is "short": retains it — until the public is prepared to accept a better principle of notation — in words like *alive, finite, define.* etc., where the preceding vowel is "long"; but does not advize its extension.

Silent Letters as Diacritics
To indicate the quantity or quality of a vowel by the addition of another, silent, letter, insted of by a diacritic mark, or "accent," is a frequent, and — with the present paucity of vowel signs, and the welfounded prejudice against diacritics—a defensible practis in English spelling. Iether method is a makeshift; and, while the use of diacritics is the more sientific method, the use of silent letters has certain practical advantages. The objection to it on sientific grounds is that it givs rite to vowel combinations that ar not — what all vowel combinations should be — true difthongs. To separate the diacritic sign — whether a simple mark or another letter — from the vowel it is used to qualify by an intervening consonant is, however, clumsy and unsientific, demanding amendment.

Not Inconsistent
In recommending the spellings *delite* and *spritely,* the Board does no violence to its principles, since in these two instances it seeks merely to restore historic and les objectionable forms. *Delight* came into the language as *delite,* and has no relation to any of the words ending in *-ight.* Its changed spelling, to accord with a more complex analogy, was made without justification. A similar attempt to change *sprite* to *spright* was not permanently successful, but by a curious perversity the form *sprightly* has persisted in use. The adjectiv should, of course, be regularly found from the noun by the simple addition of *-ly*, and should not involv a change in the spelling of the primitiv.

The Board has exercized similar care in making all its recommendations, and apparent inconsistencies can be shown to be such in appearance only. To analize all the recommendations in detail would take space that would excede the limits of the present publication; but the Board, thru its Secretary, wil at all times be glad to make clear in correspondence any points that may remain doutful in the minds of readers of the Handbook.

Reasons for Simplifying continued in *Handbook of Simplified Spelling.*

Some of the Benefits of Simplified Spelling as Described in These Random Excerpts from the *Handbook of Simplified Spelling.*

Would Save Valuable Time in Education

Since a simpler spelling is a les difficult spelling, easier to learn and easier to teach, it follows that its general adoption and use would effect a proportionate saving in time to both pupil and teacher. Saving of time means saving of mony. This needs no demonstration in the case of the teacher, whose time has a definitly mesured valuation.

Future Benefits the Criterion

The actual saving in time, and correspondingly in expense, will depend on the extent to which the simplification of spelling is carrid. The worthwhileness of the movement must be judgd, accordingly, not by the saving actually made by the simplifications proposed now, but by the savings that may be effected at later stages of a progressiv advance — of which the present proposals ar but the first step — toward a completely simplified spelling.

Waste of Nervous Energy

To the appalling and calculable waste of time and mony must be added the no les appalling, if incalculable, waste of nervous energy on the part of teachers and pupils alike. The spelling-lesson sets a brake against the orderly, reasonable, and natural course of education that not only impedes its progress as a whole, but impairs the efficiency of the working parts of its human machinery. It introduces an element of friction that raises the nervous temperature above normal, causes needless wear and tear, and is destructiv of both temper and material.

Better methods of spelling, accordingly, wil effect savings that can not be adequately represented in their entirety; but it is at least obvious that the more thoro the betterment, the les will be the waste. To those who love children, and their neighbors as themselvs, the indeterminable saving of human energy and efficiency wil appear no les worth while than those economies that may be set down in terms of time and mony.

Cost of Useless Letters

The simplifications so far proposed by the Board and used in this Handbook would effect an economy of only about 1.5 per cent; but if all the unnecessary letters used in our current spelling should be dropt, the saving would amount to about 5 per cent.

Illiteracy Due to Difficult Spelling

The Board believs, however, that the root of the trouble [illiteracy] lies les in a disinclination to learn to read and to write English than in the difficulty of doing so — a difficulty inherent in our present unreasonable and unsistematic spelling. The advantages to be gaind by a knowledge of the language of the country in which one livs must be obvious to all**,** even the most ignorant; but when such knowledge is so hard to acquire as to baffle the efforts of many, the consequences must be such as ar now apparent.

Handicapt by Its Spelling

The simplification of English spelling, which would be of so much demonstrated benefit to those whose nativ tung is English, would also remove the one obstacle to the use of English by many millions of foreners. This wide-spred use of English would ad incalculably to the prestige of the language and of the nations that speak it. It would be an invaluable medium for the diffusion of Anglo-Saxon ideas and ideals. We who speak English should hav an advantage in not needing to acquire any other language; and it would not be to our disadvantage that we should hav a more thoro knowledge and a better command of it than those with whom we hav occasion to deal.

[Spelling Progress Quarterly, Volume 2, Number 1. Winter 1985. Page 5 in the printed version.]

3. If You're Not a Spelling Genius, Beware of Friday

Patricia McCune Irvine

While we've been fighting the chronic war of school bussing in this country, our newspapers sneaked in a not surprising informational morsel the other day: our high school students can neither read nor write up to par. Which means they can't spell, either. (Actually, some of us suspect there is a whole bunch of other things they can't do.)

Nevertheless, high echelon educators are attempting to rectify the situation — with curriculum changes — special teachers, more frequent testing.

But as an interested taxpayer, I should like to suggest that shutting the barn door in high school is too late. By then, we've already lost the horses. Doesn't everyone know kids should be taught to read and write and spell correctly in elementary school?

Now writing is the true key to reading. They go together — read and write. But better the other way — write and read. Because if the kids write well, they can read well. No question about that. And writing is a lot easier for good spellers. Webster often stands on the desk untried because non-spellers can't get the hang of him. Did you ever wonder what happened to those flat little spelling books with nothing but lists and lists of words that we drilled into our heads? Write the word and cover it and write it again — and again. Until perfection?

I'm not sure of the fate of composition classes in the lower grades, but I know what happened to spelling. It became Language Study — where words are discussed — and related. They are meaningful — and they are understood. This is sometimes pleasant. But the actual spelling: that is, the juxtaposition of the letters in a word — is not properly studied, not necessarily learned.

"Spelling" books suggest studying. They refer to a study plan, to study steps, and often simply give the order to study per se. However, the week goes something like this:

Monday — *Meeting New Words.* This is logical and a step in the right direction. Most "spelling" periods are 20 minutes long and rarely exceed 30 minutes, so with from 10 to 20 new words involved, the introductions have to be fast. One a minute, more or less. Although this places your genius speller in the catbird seat, his slothful friends are in a peck of trouble. Monday is not entirely fair to them.

So on Monday, we look at the pictures and read the story. We say each new word after the teacher. We find each new word in the story. We underline it. We write the new word in the space provided — and it is provided in a way which makes it easy to copy if we are unable to write it from memory.

And that's for Monday. The lesson is over and we are happily acquainted with our new words. But only the natural talents know how to spell them. Nothing solid in the way of accomplishment for the run of-the-mills.

Tuesday — *Using My Words.* The pleasant thing about Tuesday is that we don't always have to use the words in the same old way. We do look at the picture again, read the story once more, draw a line under each spelling word one more time, but in the remaining few minutes we surge forward.

We use the words. We fill in blanks. We write words that rhyme. We write the name for each picture. We play a crossword puzzle game. (Time falls away here in great chunks.) We write words that are spelled the same but mean different things. You know, like *pen* and *pen.* We write words that sound the same but are spelled differently: you know, like *by* and *buy.* We fill in the missing word. I tried this one recently and although I'm preciously close to being a spelling genius myself, I found I looked back to the list for the desired word so I wouldn't inadvertently write *cottage* for *house.* Once you look you might as well copy the word. And if I were writing the opposite of *soft,* without checking I might not know for certain the proper word was *hard.* After all, it could be *loud.*

But Tuesday is a wonderfully fun day. Even if you do get a neck-ache by constantly looking back.

Wednesday — My *Trial Test.* This shoots the whole spelling period. Anyone who isn't a spelling genius had better look to Thursday.

Excellence should be rewarded. What's wrong with a prize for the best composition on the Westward Movement or the Space Age, or even a short fiction piece? Why not offer an award for distinction in sixth grade spelling? Why not give our spellers something to strive for?

Thursday — Learning *About Words.* About? Nevertheless, if we thought Tuesday was fun, on Thursday we are ecstatic. There are so many things to learn about words (spelling notwithstanding), and such fascinating ways to learn them. For instance, we can put a ring around each vowel. Or draw lines under same. We write the word that begins with *gr.* Write the word that has a double *t.* Write the word that ends in *ce.* Write *play* and add *s.* Add *ing.* Add *ed.* Put a ring around the silent letters (or draw lines under same). We write names for the nearby pictures. We underline (or draw rings around) letters that are the same in different words. We write words that rhyme.

(We've also done this on Tuesday.) We put words in alphabetical order. We write longer words made from shorter words. We write the vice versa. We learn about singulars and plurals and abbreviations. Marvelous day!

But if you can't play the piano by ear, you'd better practice. If your thumb is other than green, you'd better fertilize the garden patch. If the chef's hat doesn't fit your head, you'd better watch the ingredients you put into the casserole.

If you aren't a spelling genius, beware of Friday.

Friday — *What Have I Learned?* Notice the question? Notice the lack of finality? Not *What I Have Learned*. with definite clarity, but *What Have I Learned*, hopefully, inquiringly, as if the whole matter might be subject to dispute.

Everyone will agree botanical scrutiny, however fascinating, does not get the ivy planted, and nutritional consideration, no matter how important, does not put the cheese souffle on the table. The electric toaster has to be plugged into the socket, and daily practice is the only way to master the piano. Or the game of football.

By the same authority, language investigation, both important and fascinating, will never teach anyone to spell.

Actually, I don't really advocate returning to that flat, little meaningless spelling book, with its lists and lists of words to drill into heads.

If a third-grader can know and thoroughly understand every electronic game on the market today and very young computer specialists can learn that machine's capabilities and limitations, the ability to spell correctly cannot be totally out of reach, if you're willing to put enough time to it.

But unfortunately, inconsistencies exist between our oral and our written language. One cannot tell how to spell an English word by its pronunciation and vice versa. Our words were created by different peoples and are rampant with borrowings, distortions, diminutions, and embroideries. Our spelling has become deceptive, frustrating, and often clumsy. It is highly traditional and needlessly complex and has become a *basic source of academic failure.* Some say spelling cannot be taught effectively and those with less literate life styles are doomed. So what do we do now?

The logical answer, of course, is to simplify and reorganize, tidy up the situation. Create simplified spelling.

But no real agreement as to how to do this exists among the experts. We have pedagogical objections and practical objections and emotional objections.

Spelling should be taught as a practical tool for writing, and not as an academic discipline.

Theoretically, the best spelling system would combine consistency with simplicity. In the ideal, a character would always represent the same sound and the same sound would always be represented by the same character. And then — presto — we would have correlation between spelling and pronunciation.

Or would we?

Once, when I emerged from a California drug store with a young friend visiting from New Zealand, he referred to 'tykes.' I glanced around and saw none and asked him to repeat, which he did. Three or four times. "What about the *tykes?"* The tykes. Tykes. Tykes. He was very exasperated with me. I asked him to spell the word. And he did. T-a-x, *tykes.*

Everyone has had a little difficulty understanding other English-speaking people, whether from another country or simply another part of our own country. To add pronunciation symbols to simplified spelling — even if it would do any good — is asking for the moon. No one uses the ones we've borrowed with words from other languages — such as *cafe.* And we all know the difficulties of syllabic stress, depending on use as a noun or a verb, such as *conduct* or *conduct,* rebel or rebel — and the change in phrasal stress from isolated pronunciation to connected speech. Homophones would create difficulty — remember *by* and *buy?* Well, what do you do about *pear* and *pair* and *pare,* to everyone's satisfaction? And *ant* and *aunt?*

Some prejudices and natural resistance to spelling reform can best be overcome by gradual steps, altho the illogic in our word structure will no doubt persist. We can flow from *although* to *altho,* from *though* to *tho,* and from *through* to *thru,* and perhaps even from *photograph* to *foto.* But it is unlikely that any system of simplified spelling will be satisfactory to everyone, and for that reason, it's best not to wait too long for it. I have a postal card sent in 1911 to the Spelling Board of New York, from someone pledging to use simplified spelling in business letters — but that was 70 years ago. What happened? Perhaps we're still not ready. But we needn't wait — simplified spelling isn't the only answer. We mustn't give up too easily. Mountains can be moved. In the here and now.

So I do advocate having a Spelling Class in connection with Language Study, in elementary school. And a Writing or Composition Class, also. Every day. Communication is a basic skill which eventually determines success or failure in most areas of our very competitive life and the ability to spell correctly frees the writer to concentrate on the content of his communication.

Anyway, it's the school's task to develop proficiency in spelling — no matter about the inconsistencies and degree of difficulty. If a third-grader can know and thoroughly understand every electronic game on the market today and very young computer specialists can learn that machine's capabilities and limitations, the ability to spell correctly cannot be totally out of reach, if you're willing to put enough time to it. I believe pupils should be made to understand that no one becomes an expert at anything without consistent and insistent practice — the electronic game player or the baseball pitcher or the pianist or the spelling champ. A lot tougher courses than spelling will come up in their career. They should understand that.

Spelling should be taught as a practical tool for writing, and not as an academic discipline, Spelling correctly is useful knowledge and if, as some say, it is contrary to human nature to learn anything unless it offers a definite advantage, it might behoove us to sell the advantage, and to instill in the kids such emotions as desire, interest, pride and the necessity for it all. Reveal the advantages. The learning process would become easier with a few positive emotions going for it. I thought it was fun to spell M-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-p-p-i out loud when I was a child because of the rhythm and lilt it created. And because it was a long word and made me feel brainy. And I thought it was fun to spell E-g-y-p-t because of the three letters with tails in a row. And because the 'y' was a special surprise. Nobody has any fun any more.

Because no general rules are dependable and rote learning must be used, spelling becomes an interminable process. So spelling words must become meaningful. Therefore, a class could devise its own special spelling book with the words that are needed for class projects. Words that are in the pupils' speaking and reading vocabularies, with meanings being explained if not known. If the Westward

Movement is being studied in the classroom, create usable lists from words needed or requested for the daily compositions — *pioneer*, *mountain, Indian, Kentucky, westward. movement,* etc.

If the Space Age is being studied in the classroom, let the spelling words be useful for daily composition — missile, *orbit, atmosphere,* etc.

Spelling lists also should be learned in related groups with endings that rhyme, to facilitate the learning of many words almost simultaneously — *care. dare, rare*, etc. And the same rhyme endings with alternate spellings — bear and pear, or fair and hair.

Another group of words that relate to each other are actual family members known in daily life—*father, mother, brother, aunt, niece,* etc. And perhaps some Christmas thank-you notes could be written in daily composition class after that holiday.

Our Language Study can give us many groups of words that relate to each other. I, personally, was always a stickler for requiring the class to spell our states correctly — all of them. A matter of pride. But perhaps that was a personal thing and taught more as a discipline.

A writing vocabulary is developed, then, by first concerning ourselves with the practical needs of the pupils. But they must write something every day.

Kinesthetic treatment can be particularly helpful to slow learners, when audio-visual imagery is impaired. This method of tracing words requires more individualized attention, but blackboard use in a schoolroom is possible, as well as help from more advanced classmates.

If more practice is necessary to retain what is learned in school, home study should not be shunned. Parents can be a critical factor in the learning process. Some of them have dropped the ball. Or don't care.

Remember, writing is a lot easier for good spellers. And reading is a lot easier for good writers.

Excellence should be rewarded. What's wrong with a prize for the best composition on the Westward Movement or the Space Age, or even a short fiction piece? Why not offer an award for distinction in sixth grade spelling? Why not give our spellers something to strive for? Good old-fashioned competition is an effective incentive. Every child is not like every other, and let us not be afraid of excellence — knowing that some may attain it while others fail. Is that not the condition of life itself? Quality spelling should be our goal, not a uniformity of nothingness — because of fear — that provides real quality to no one at all.

Remember, writing is a lot easier for good spellers. And reading is a lot easier for good writers.

Draw rings around the vowels if you wish. Underline, rhyme, play, get acquainted, look at pictures, and read the stories. But if you can't write or read or spell, what difference does it make which high school the bus takes you to?

[Spelling Progress Quarterly, Volume 2, Number 1. Winter 1985. Page 8 in the printed version.]

Spelling and Reading

4. Dialect Difference and the Teaching of Reading and Spelling

Russell Tabbert

> The collapsing of /ah,aw/ is a characteristic of many pronunciation dialects, especially of those dialects that do not accompany the language of achievement.,[1]
> John W. Black

There is a yacht in the harbor in Valdez, Alaska, named *The Knotty Girl.* In Alaska's special Congressional election campaign some supporters of the Democratic candidate Emil Notti wore buttons proclaiming, "I'm a Notti Body." In both of these punnings is an important moral, that is, a pedagogical moral for teachers of reading and spelling and, as the quote above reveals, for some teachers of teachers.

Check any dictionary, reading system, or spelling book and you will almost always be informed that *knotty* and *naughty* are pronounced differently. The first syllable of *knotty* has an "ah" vowel (phonemically /?/) while the first syllable of *naughty* has an "aw" vowel (phonemically /?/). But now check your pupils' pronunciation of *knotty* and *naughty* or of a number of other similar pairs such as *Don-dawn, tot-taught, cot-caught.* The chances are good that some or all of the students will not make the "ah" "aw" distinction; they will pronounce *knotty* and *naughty* exactly alike. In fact, check your own speech; you may not have the contrast either.

This state of affairs is no cause for alarm. We are not dealing with nonstandard dialect or sloppy articulation or speech handicaps or non-achieving language, whatever that might be. The situation is simply this. There is a sound change taking place in North American English which is resulting in the merger of two previously contrasting sounds (phonemes). The resulting single phoneme is usually articulated somewhere between the "ah" and "aw" positions, further back in the mouth than "ah" and with less lip rounding than "aw." Like most linguistic change, this merger is a slow, virtually imperceptible process, probably happening more between generations than within the speech of individuals.

Furthermore, like other instances of change, this one is not taking place uniformly over a whole area. Thus we have a situation where in certain parts of the country the merger is well established for all speakers: for example, Eastern New England and an area of Eastern Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. The merger is also apparently well advanced in Canada. In other areas the speakers still generally maintain the "ah"-"aw" contrast: for example, large areas of the Midwest. And in still other areas the situation is mixed, but moving towards the merger: for example, the West. Although complete information for a more precise statement of the situation is not available, there is little doubt that millions of speakers have merged the two vowels and that the merger is spreading.

This situation has several implications for the teaching of reading and spelling. First of all, the correspondence between pronunciation and spelling goes further awry. That is, dialects with the "ah""aw" merger have moved another step away from the presumed ideal of a single and consistent spelling for

each distinctive sound. Though not perfect, the immerged dialects are closer to the ideal. The letter *o* alone between consonants and without a following "silent *e"* quite regularly stands for the "ah" sound *(lot, hop, copper,* etc.). The representation of the "aw" sound is less consistent, but there are some regularities: *aw (saw, flaw,* etc.); au *(maul, faucet,* etc.); *al(l) (hall, salt,* etc.); and *ough (cough, bought,* etc.). But now in the dialects with "ah"-"aw" merger, one sound is spelled in all of these various ways.

Of course this kind of discrepancy between pronunciation and spelling is hardly new to English. Ever since the Renaissance, when English spelling became more or less permanently fixed by the introduction of printing, there have been irregularities, and new ones have been added as further sound changes took place. Just for example, consider the *k* of *knotty* and the *gh* of *naughty,* both of which at one time represented pronounced sounds. Or closer to our "ah"-"aw" merger was the coalescence of words with an "e" sound, spelled *ee (sheep, deed, knee,* etc.), with a portion of a set of words formerly pronounced with an "a" vowel and spelled *ea (leap, read, meat,* etc.). Many more examples could be cited, for one of the chief reasons that English spelling is irregular is that we do not allow spelling to adapt to changing pronunciation. And since sound change is a constant feature of a living language, we can expect, over the long run, further sound-spelling divergence.

For the short run, though, we need not be unduly pessimistic. This most recent divergence does not necessarily mean new and serious reading and spelling problems. Because there is already inconsistency in our spelling, including single sounds spelled in several ways, the awareness and acceptance of irregularity must come early in the learning to read and spell processes. Therefore students with "ah"-"aw" merger will learn to treat the diverse spellings of their single merged sound as just another instance of a familiar phenomenon.

Ever since the Renaissance, when English spelling became more or less permanently fixed by the introduction of printing, there have been irregularities, and new ones have been added as further sound changes took place.

In fact the most serious potential for problems may be in the reading and spelling instruction itself, from the materials because almost all present only the dialect in which "ah" and "aw" are still distinct, and from the teachers because, in using such materials, they may attempt to impose a distinction on pupils who do not have it.

Unless the teacher realizes what the situation is and makes adjustments to the materials, the pupils with merged "ah"-"aw" will be confused and misled by the discussions and exercises. This would be particularly true in approaches which emphasize sound-symbol correspondences, such as the initial teaching alphabet or the various "phonics" and "linguistic" approaches. Typical is *The Palo Alto Reading Program* by Theodore E. Glim (Harcourt, 1968) in which "ah" and "aw" are presented only as distinct phonemes with no hint to the teacher or student that this is not the situation for everybody. In books 3, 4, and 5 of *The Roberts English Series: A Linguistics Program* (Harcourt, 1966, 1970) there is a careful and detailed presentation of the sound-spelling correspondences in English, but always for a dialect in which "ah" and "aw" are distinct. Though the teacher is cautioned that some Americans have merged the vowels, there is no suggestion that this should make any difference in the use of the materials. And the pupils get no hint of it. Phonics manuals and texts present only the "ah" "aw" contrast. For example, Arthur W. Heilman in *Phonics in Proper Perspective: Second Edition* (Charles E. Merrill, 1968) simply states that "the letter a has the sound *ô (aw*) when it is followed by *l*, *ll, w, u."* No qualification is made for other

dialects. And the initial teaching alphabet, devised in England to fit British pronunciation, uses the following respelling symbols, *a* as in *father; au* as in *ball;* and *o* as in *box.*

The most unfortunate result of failing to understand this "ah"-"aw" merger would be for the teacher to diagnose it as a speech deficiency and to attempt to "correct" it by drilling the distinction. There is nothing to be gained and much to be lost in such a procedure. It is not necessary because (1) the merger is not a speech defect, but rather part of the child's normal speech pattern; (2) the speech pattern is a standard dialect spoken by millions of Americans; (3) except perhaps for some minor additional difficulty in learning correct spelling, the merger will cause no problems in language use. Listeners will not be uncertain whether the speaker means *naughty* or *knotty* (and so forth) because the linguistic and extra-linguistic context will make clear which is intended.

Such an attempt to impose the "ah"-"aw" contrast is dangerous because it focuses negative attention on the child's speech. The student is made consciously aware that the teacher finds something wrong with his pronunciation. But when the teacher tries to explain what is "wrong" and show how to do it "right," the child is confused and frustrated. Because he doesn't make the contrast, he will have difficulty hearing it in somebody else's speech, except in minimal pairs such as *cot-ca ugh t.* And even when he does hear it, he won't be able to make it because he won't know what to do. The classroom teacher is not a speech therapist and will not know the techniques for getting the necessary tongue and lip positions. A speech therapist will, but that would be the worst possible thing that could happen—to send a child to speech correction because he has a dialect difference.

Language arts teachers and materials specialists must accept the variety in English, for it is not necessary that everyone speak the same in order to learn to read and spell and use the language fluently.

Already we are a nation tongue-tied and pen-frozen by linguistic anxiety. Our language use is guided more by fear of being "wrong" or different than by confidence that we have something important to say and adequate means of saying it. Unfortunately language arts instruction has contributed to this anxiety by a persistent emphasis on the negative — by showing or implying to the child that his language is "wrong". — But, and here's the moral, this approach has relied on two false notions about English: (1) that it is single, uniform, and unchanging and (2) that it should he pronounced, as nearly as possible, according to the spelling.

Language arts teachers and materials specialists must accept the variety in English, for it is not necessary that everyone speak the same in order to learn to read and spell and use the language fluently. And these, after all, are the goals. In addition, they must understand the nature of this variety. They must be able to recognize the important dialect differences and be able to create and adapt their materials and techniques accordingly. Not a terribly knotty problem.

1. On. Improving the Speech of Children." in *On Teaching Speech in Elementary and Junior High Schools.* J. Jeffery Auer and Edward B. Jenkinson. eds Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971, p. 67.
2. From *Elementary English.* Vol. 51. No 8 (November, 1974). ':1974 by the National Council *of* Teachers of English.

[Spelling Progress Quarterly, Volume 2, Number 1. Winter 1985. Page 10 in the printed version.]

Spelling Instruction

5. Diagnosing Skills by Analyzing Children's Writing

Ronald L. Cramer

From The *Reading Teacher.* Vol. 30. No 3 (December. 1976) Reprinted with permission of the International Reading Association and Ronald L. Cramer

Diagnosis seeks to examine weaknesses and strengths in order to gain information that will help direct future instruction. If the information gained from diagnosis is pertinent and accurate, as well as properly interpreted and applied, then diagnosis can achieve its purpose.

Children's writing is an excellent source of pertinent information about spelling and word recognition skills. Let's do an analysis of one child's writing to see how an analysis of misspellings might proceed and how information obtained might be used to direct future instruction. This analysis will be based on a limited sample, of course, although ordinarily such an analysis would cover several writing samples and supplemental information would he collected in any area where uncertainty prevailed.

The story "My Ded Cat" was written by a second grade child. The misspellings are analyzed to show how they can give useful information about spelling and word recognition skills. The content of David's story is far more important than the misspellings. However, that aspect of David's story will not be explored in this article.

My Ded Cat

Ones I hade a cat.
He was white and yellow.
One night my father
Come fame my grandfathers house
Wenn father come home fame
my grandfathers house he said
Rusfe is ded

David Age 7

David misspelled six different words in his story: *ded* for *dead, ones* for *once. hade* for *had, fame* for *from. wenn* for *when,* and *Ruste* for *Rusty.*

On the other hand, David correctly spelled eighteen different words: my, cat, 1, a, he, was, white, and, yellow, one, night, father, come, grandfathers, house, home, said, and is.

Several of the correctly spelled words can be regarded as superior spelling accomplishments for a second grade child. The words father, grandfathers, white, night, house, said, and yellow are in this category. One can look at David's spelling accomplishments and recognize his growing ability to correctly represent sounds with their appropriate letter and letter combinations. However, it is also instructive to examine David's misspellings for possible evidence of strength or weakness in spelling and word recognition skills. Following is an analysis for each misspelling.

1) *ded* for *dead.* The sound /e/ may be spelled *e* as in *bed* or *ea* as in *dead.* Apparently, at this time, David is unfamiliar with the *ea* option for the /e/ sound. Logically, David spells the sound /e/ with the short *e* spelling he knows. The letter *e* is the most common spelling for the /e/ sound.

2) *hade for had.* This misspelling appears to be an over generalization of the final *e* rule (sometimes called the silent *e* rule). David showed that he has considerable awareness of this spelling rule. Notice he has correctly spelled the final *e* pattern in *home, come, white,* and *house.* If David is allowed to continue to test the use of this spelling rule through his creative writings he will soon discover which words take the final *e* marker and which do not.

3) *wenn* for *when.* This misspelling shows knowledge of the second most common spelling for the /n/ sound (the double *n).* In this case David spelled the /n/ sound as in *tunnel.* Also, David spelled the *wh* digraph in *when* with the letter *w.* Possibly David has not yet mastered the *wh* digraph, although he gets the *wh* digraph right in *white.* A possible explanation for this misspelling is that the word *when is* pronounced /wen/ in David's dialect rather than /hwen/. Some misspellings are apparently caused by dialect or pronunciation factors.

4) *Ruste* for *Rusty,* David sensibly spelled the last sound in *Rusty* with an *e* since it has the */e/* sound. He has not yet learned that the final sound in words like Mary, *hurry,* and *curry* is often spelled with the letter *y.*

5) *fame* for *from.* At first glance this misspelling appears to be David's crudest mistake. However, this misspelling is not as unsophisticated as it might first appear. He has correctly spelled the first and last sounds of *from.* The final *e* in *fame* is probably another instance of over generalization of the final *e* rule. David's problems with *from* are the *r* in the *fr* blend and the vowel *o.* The omission of the *r* in the *fr* blend suggests unfamiliarity with the conventional spelling of this sound. The *o* in *from* is a schwa although stressed. This vowel is spelled with the letter *e* in *taken*, the letter *a* in *about*, the letter *i* in *robin*, the letter *u* in *circus*, and the letter *o* in *wagon*. In other words, any vowel letter may spell the schwa sound in an unstressed syllable and sometimes in stressed syllables, as in *from*. Therefore, the letter *a* which David used was not an altogether random guess. Notice that he did use a vowel rather than a consonant to spell the schwa sound. His choice of the letter *a* to represent the vowel sound shows that he was aware of the need for a vowel letter in *from*.

Children's writing is an excellent source of pertinent information about spelling and word recognition skills.

6) *ones* for *once. Ones* and *once* may be homophones in David's speech. We know he can spell the word *one* ("One night my father . . ."). If *ones* and *once* are homophones in David's speech then this spelling logic is impeccable — he simply added the letter *s* to *one* to get *ones*. This misspelling shows good analogical reasoning and good sound discrimination, *Once* ends with the sound /s/ spelled *c*. David spelled the sound /s/ with the letter *s* — the most common spelling for this sound.

Diagnosis seeks to examine weaknesses and strengths in order to gain information that will help future instruction.

An analysis of David's misspellings as well as his correctly spelled words suggests the following tentative conclusions regarding David's word recognition and spelling strengths and weaknesses.

1) David knows many words by sight. We know this because he correctly spelled 75 per cent of the different words used in his story. This information suggests a solid reading vocabulary as well as substantial spelling strength. This conclusion is further strengthened by our knowledge that several of the words he has correctly spelled are words not normally in the spelling vocabulary of a second grade child.

2) David has excellent auditory discrimination acuity and strong letter-sound association skills. He applies his knowledge correctly in most instances, and makes appropriate guesses in all instances where he has misspelled words. His misspellings show an awareness that there is more than one way to spell a given sound.

3) David is aware that certain consonant sounds have variant spellings. This knowledge was revealed when he wrote *wenn* for *when.* Knowledge of consonant variability, and later vowel variability, is an important step toward spelling proficiency.

4) David knows the final *e* rule, which is important for reading as well as for spelling. Naturally, in testing this rule he misapplies it from time to time. Similar instances of over generalization are found in early oral language development. It is recognized in oral language as an important step forward in learning the rules of English syntax. It is a similarly important step in learning the rules of English spelling. Strength is shown in that David does try to apply this rule and frequently he does so correctly—as in *home, come, white,* and *house.*

5) David has excellent control of the letter-sound associations for consonant spellings. He rarely misspells single consonant sounds. When he does misspell consonant sounds the error is associated with blends *(fr* in *from),* digraphs *(wh* in *when)* or variant consonant spellings *(s* for *c* in *once).* In both the blend and the digraph he got the first letter correct but not the second. In *ones* he chose the most common option for the /s/ sound. Finally, his misspelling of the /n/ sound in *when* was caused by knowing too much rather than too little. We suspect that he knows both spellings for the /n/ sound since he uses *nn* in *wenn* and *n* in *grandfathers*.

6) David is beginning to gain control of some difficult vowel spellings. His attempt to spell the schwa vowel (*fame* for *from*), the final e spelling (*hade* for *had*), and the /e/ sound spelled y (*Ruste* for *Rusty*) may be regarded as steps toward learning these difficult spellings. They are not simply random errors. His guesses represented sophisticated exploration of letter-sound relationships. In all three instances his errors are logical steps in the right direction. Vowel spellings are the most variable and, consequently take the longest time for children to master.

7) David correctly spelled the blend *gr* in *grandfathers* but misspelled the *fr* blend in *from* and the *wh* digraph in *when*. An educated guess would be that David is ready for some specific instruction on blends and digraphs. However, since there are not enough instances in this story of the use of blends and digraphs to make a sound judgment, further analysis is appropriate.

8) David uses what he knows to solve what he does not know. This is a significant learning strength and David uses it well. He also reasons well by analogy as was illustrated in several cases. Analogous reasoning is an important thinking ability.

From the analysis we conclude that David is further advanced in spelling proficiency than many second grade children; and that his word recognition abilities are in advance of his spelling ability. In all likelihood he is capable of pronouncing words at a third grade level or higher. This is an educated guess based on the fact that word recognition ability often runs one-half to one grade level higher than the instructional spelling level. Given the opportunity to continue writing, David will likely develop into an excellent speller and capable reader. And, judging from the content of this story, he is on the way to becoming an excellent writer as well.

[Spelling Progress Quarterly, Volume 2, Number 1. Winter 1985. Page 12 in the printed version.]

6. Discovering Children's Learning Strategies for Spelling through Error Pattern Analysis

Leonore Ganschow

From *The Reading Teacher.* Vol. 34. No. 6. (March, 1981). Reprinted with permission of the International Reading Association and Leonore Ganschow

Examination of a sample of errors in reading, spelling. speech, or math reveals patterns from which teachers can derive hypotheses about children's learning strategies for a particular task (McMahon-Klosterman and Ganschow, 1979). For the child, errors are a natural and important part of learning; for the teacher, errors provide important information.

This article shows how error pattern analysis is helpful with children learning to spell. In the analysis, we make six assumptions:
(1) Errors children make are not random; they stem from children's hypotheses about the rules governing a particular task.
(2) Some errors are more productive than others.
(3) A systematic collection of errors children make on a specific task provides diagnostic information about a child's "rule" for that task.
(4) Given sufficient samples of a child's work, teachers can simulate a child's rule system.
(5) When asked, children may provide important cues to their strategies for a particular task.
(6) Knowing a child's strategies will help teachers plan instruction. Each of these assumptions is examined here as it relates to the task of learning to spell.

What these six assumptions tell us about spellers

Assumption 1. Errors children make are not random; they stem from children's hypotheses about the rules governing a particular task.

That children draw from their intuitive knowledge of sound-symbol relationships in their language has been demonstrated by research on the invented spellings of young children who learned to write prior to or simultaneously with learning to read. Read (1975, 1971), in his studies of preschool and kindergarten writers, found that these young spellers categorized speech sounds in writing according to articulatory properties of the sounds. From his observations, Read was able to extract a number of systematic rules these young writers demonstrated in their early spellings. Common errors included the omission of preconsonantal nasals (e.g., *bopy* for *bumpy*, *nubrs* for *numbers*, *agre* for *angry*) and the phonetic spelling of the past tense marker (t for /t/, d for /d/, and id for /əd/, as in *wokt* for *walked*, *hred* for *hurried*, and *liftid* for *lifted*).

As children are exposed to reading and phonics instruction in school, their hypotheses become more abstract (Beers and Henderson, 1977; Gentry and Henderson, 1978; Read, 1975). They begin to generalize from the rules intuited through their reading environment. For example, when a child discovers that *w* can be spelled *wh*, as in *which*, the child begins to generalize this rule to other *w* words, such as *whater* for *water* or *whell* for *well*.

Systematic hypotheses are similarly seen in spelling samples of an adult who has not learned the appropriate use of contractions but uses a consistent rule, as in *isent, wasent,* and *werent* for *isn't, wasn't* and *weren't.*

The point here is that spelling is based on an individual's predictions and knowledge of the rules governing a writing system. When spelling errors are examined as erroneous predictions, they become an important diagnostic tool for the teacher, who can focus prescriptions on the error in question.

A productive approach to diagnosis and prescription is to gather misspelled words from children's writing and analyze the sample for patterns of errors.

Assumption 2: Some errors are more productive than others.

Teachers can look at misapplications of rules with interest, for these tell us what the child has and has not learned and how productive his/her strategies are, i.e., how closely a misspelling approximates the correct spelling. An example of three children attempting to spell the word *peach* illustrates these qualitative differences:

Child 1: per
Child 2: *peech*
Child 3: peche

Child 1 accounts for the long vowel in *peach* with an *e.* The *ch* is accounted for with a *c.* Children 2 and 3, however, appear to realize that a long vowel must be accounted for by more than a letter that "says its name"- They are using the rules "double the vowel" and "apply the silent *e."* Also, both child 2 and child 3 have learned that /ch/ may be spelled *ch.* Another example of qualitative differences is seen in two children's spelling of *elephant.*

Child 1: elphent
Child 2: eliphent

Child 2 in this instance is closer to the correct spelling, clearly aware that elephant has three syllables. Thus, educators can examine misspellings qualitatively to determine how well a child's spelling errors approximate correct spelling.

Assumption 3. A systematic collection of errors children make on a specific task provides diagnostic information about a child's "rule system" for that task.

In order to determine what a child finds acceptable for spelling, we collect a sample of a child's misspellings. The following samples were taken from four writers of different ages. Though small, the samples provide us with important clues to these writers' notions about spelling.

Student 1: Age 7½; good reader

Misspelled	*Correct spelling*	*Misspelled*	*Correct spelling*
whink	wink	baught	bought
whind	wind	beche	beach
wheak	weak	Mane	Maine
peche	peach	reely	really

Student 2: Age 11; poor reader

Misspelled	Correct spelling	*Misspelled*	*Correct spelling*
coff	cough	two	too
boul	bowl	their	there
here	hear	highbirnate	hibernate
resight	recite	tuff	tough

Student 3: Adult; poor reader

Misspelled	Correct spelling	*Misspelled*	*Correct spelling*
abuse	absent	adress	address
exsub	accident	afr-?	afraid
akec	ache	ago-?	agent
adiunt	additional	am	aim
		adm-?	among

Student 4: Adult; average reader

Misspelled	Correct spelling	*Misspelled*	*Correct spelling*
aniversarys	anniversaries	hadint	hadn't
whats	what's	guies	guys
hasent	hasn't	wasent	wasn't
		mysterys	mysteries

Student 1 is a good reader in the primary grades. In his sample of eight errors, it is evident he has learned some spelling rules which he has generalized inappropriately, resulting in misspellings. Thus, w is rendered as *wh* in three instances; silent *e* rule is illustrated in three of his words; he substitutes *aught* for *ought:* and for tense *e* he uses *cc.* We have, then, examples of three rules having been learned and generalized to other words. This student appears to be ready to learn ways to distinguish between the rules, e.g., that *wh* occurs in *what* but not in *winter.*

Student 2 is 11 and has been diagnosed through standardized tests as a poor reader, In her sample, there are homonym confusions *(two* for *too, their* for *there. here* for *hear, highbirnate* for *hibernate)* and several instances of misapplication of a sound/ symbol relationship *(bout* for *howl, toff* for *cough, tuff* for *tough).* This student needs help in distinguishing between homonyms. Further, she needs to know that she can't rely totally on her memory of sounds or known words to attack new words, such as *hibernate.* Also, this student needs to learn that *ough* has several sounds, as in *cough* and *tough* but also *though* and *bough.*

The point here is that spelling is based on an individual's predictions and knowledge of the rules governing a writing system. When spelling errors are examined as erroneous predictions, they become an important diagnostic tool for the teacher, who can focus prescriptions on the error in question.

Student 3, an adult poor reader, appears to have little ability to predict spelling from sound cues, beyond initial letters—thus his inability to complete words such as *among, agent,* and *afraid.* He also fails to account for syllables in a word, This student needs to work on rudimentary sound/symbol relations and dividing words into syllables.

Student 4, an average reading adult, has failed to learn the rules for forming the plural in words ending with *y* and for contractions. For her, a focus on generalization of rules from examples should improve spelling performance.

In the previous examples, then, a sample of spelling errors has been used by the teacher to make conjectures about students' spelling strategies. A word of caution here is that conjectures are not facts. They remain subject to constant scrutiny and change as new information is gathered. Nevertheless, they provide a starting point for the teacher.

Spelling error example
Error collection (usually at least 25 examples)
Error pattern: What student wrote: *nashun desizhun rashunul*
Correct pattern: What student should have written: *nation decision rational*

Erroneous strategy
Teacher's view of why student erred: applied a phonics rule
Student's view of why student erred: it sounds right

Correction strategy
1. Teach -*sion* and -*tion* as suffixes
2. Provide a root word + suffix
3. Show other words ending with -*sion* and -*tion*
(decide/decision, ration/rational, opt/option, collide/collision, vision, partition)

Assumption 4. Given sufficient samples, teachers can simulate a child's rule system.

Looking at the previous samples, we might expect student 1 to spell *head* as *Bede* and *whale* correctly as *whale.* Likewise, we might expect homonym confusions to continue for student 2 with words like *bare* and *bear,* and contractions like *aren't* to be missed by student 4. We would expect student 3 to have a repertory of learned spellings and miss most others. Knowing what a speller is likely to produce, then, can guide teachers in determining what is needed to change the student's approach in order to bring about performance that is more in line with standard spelling.

Assumption 5. Children can assist us in understanding their learning strategies.

Often students can tell us why they spell a word the way they do. In an informal experiment conducted recently, inservice elementary teachers were asked to spell 10 difficult and infrequently used words like *mnemonic* and *chamois* and then to describe what techniques they used. Observing themselves as spellers, teachers found that they had used a number of strategies. For example, "I thought of *pneumonia* so I started *mnemonic* with *pn.*" "It didn't look right so I changed the *sh* to a *ch* for *chamois."*

Children, too, are often willing to explain their spellings. For example, one bright sixth grader argued that *quarreling* was spelled *quarlling* because *quart* only has one syllable and it's like *pearl* with an *rl* at the end. An average first-grade writer suggested that *mail* be spelled *mayl* because "you can hear that *ma. . .yul* in the word."

Assumption 6. Knowing a child's learning strategies for a particular task can help teachers design prescriptive approaches.

A productive approach to diagnosis and prescription is to gather misspelled words from children's writing and analyze the sample for patterns of errors. The errors can be examined from both the student's and the teacher's point of view. Upon determining what the child's strategies are, teachers can select a teaching strategy to correct each type of error, decide which should he approached first, and then set up a prescriptive approach. The example in the display shows the approach.

Diagnosis/prescription

The following steps are taken in a diagnostic/ prescriptive approach to spelling using error pattern analysis.

1. The teacher collects samples of student writing.
2. The student's misspellings and the correct spellings are placed side by side, as shown in the example. A collection of at least 25 errors is suggested.
3. The erroneous strategy is surmised by the teacher, the student, or both, and recorded. (For assistance in categorizing errors, see Hanna, Hodges, and Hanna, 1971; Shaughnessy, 1977; or Spache, 1976.)
4. A solution to the problem (correction strategy) is suggested and recorded.
5. Correction strategies for all observed problems are placed in order, based on what teacher and student decide are the areas in need of most improvement.

The concepts behind error pattern analysis have also been described in other school subjects, e.g., math (Ashlock, 1976), reading (Goodman and Burke, 1972), and grammar (Shaughnessy, 1977). Error pattern analysis represents a way of looking at the learner and the errors s/he makes in the process of learning. For educators, this approach can provide important insights into a student's learning strategies for the task at hand.

References

Ashlock, Robert. *Error Patterns in. Computation.* Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1976.

Beers, James W., and Edmund H. Henderson. "A Study of Developing Orthographic Concepts among First Graders." *Research in the Teaching of English,* vol. 11 (Fall 1977). pp. 138-48.

Gentry, J. Richard, and Edmund H. Henderson. "Three Steps to Teaching Beginning Readers to Spell." *The Reading Teacher.* vol. 31 (March 1978), pp. 632-37.

Goodman, Yetta M., and Carolyn L. Burke. *Reading Miscue Inventory: Procedure for Diagnosis and Evaluation.* New York, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1972.

Hanna, Paul R., Richard E. Hodges, and Jean S. Hanna. *Spelling: Structure and Strategies.* Boston, Mass.: Houghton-Mifflin, 1971.

McMahon-Klosterman, Kathy, and Leonore Ganschow. "Using Error Pattern Analysis." *Exceptional Teacher. vol.* 1 (September 1979). pp. 4-5, 9, 11.

Read, Charles. Children's Categorization of Speech Sounds in English. NCTE Research Report No. 17. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1975.

Read, Charles. "Pre-School Children's Knowledge of English Phonology." Harvard *Educational Review,* vol. 41 (1971). pp. 1-34.

Shaughnessy, Mina. *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing.* New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Spache, George. *Diagnosing and Correcting Reading Disabilities.* Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1976.

[Spelling Progress Quarterly, Volume 2, Number 1. Winter 1985. Page 15 in the printed version.]

7. Spelling and Other Language Arts

Here is what two researchers say about spelling in relation to the other language arts. Permission to reprint these excerpts was granted by the National Council of Teachers of English.

Spelling and Writing

The first of these excerpts is taken from "Spelling Texts and Structural Analysis Methods" by Donald H. Graves. It is a review of a 1969 Ph.D. dissertation at Boston University by Leo A. Cohen examining the basic issue of the value of word study exercises in spelling texts.

Excerpted from *Language Arts,* Vol. 54. No. 1 (January. 1977) 1977 by the National Council of Teachers of English.

On the encouraging side [regarding spelling texts], is the slight increase in word usage and response to meaning activities for children. In the light of the history of research in spelling and the Cohen study, more usage activities are needed.

Spelling is for writing. It is not to develop skills in alphabetizing, recognizing double consonants, or identifying affixes and inflectional endings. These activities may contribute to greater word sense or a wider vocabulary, but the odds are that they do not contribute to greater power in spelling. Fortunately, the Cohen data show that when words are applied in writing, children are more likely to spell them correctly.

The medium of spelling exercises and the spelling of words in isolation on a Friday test may carry the clear message, "spelling is for exercises, not for writing." They exist as so many pushups for the real game that is never played.

The Cohen data, as well as the update on current spelling book practices, point to the need for a reevaluation of spelling books and their contents. If books are to be used, more usage and application of spelling words is needed. The direct linkage between spelling and writing needs further exploration in both practice and in research.

Handwriting and Spelling in the Language Arts Program

The complete article from which the following passage was taken is entitled "Handwriting and Spelling: Their Current Status in the Language Arts Curriculum" by Walter T. Petty *(Elementary English.* December, 1964). This was a report of the status of handwriting and spelling teaching with special attention to established findings of research and of research recently concluded at that time.

Excerpted from *Elementary English.* Vol. 41, No.8 {December, 1964} 1964 by the National Council of Teachers of English.

Spelling and handwriting competencies are influenced by reading, listening, and written and oral composition, just as skills in these latter areas are influenced by spelling and handwriting abilities. Studies have shown positive correlations between abilities in the various language arts (1, 4), but not as high as might be expected (6). The extent to which these correlations increase or decrease as pupils mature is a matter not clearly established (4, 5).

Many of the interrelationships that are present are very likely due to the presence of common elements in each facet and to the fact that an experience affecting one cannot be isolated from the others. For instance, pupils certainly do learn to spell many words as a result of reading and other activities. Spelling pretests regularly show that pupils know how to spell many of the words on such tests (3). Too, a number of researchers have reported that mispronunciations and speech articulatory defects are often related to spelling disabilities (2) and, of course, illegible handwriting at least leads one to question the spelling accuracy of the words written. Copying words as a part of handwriting instruction may account for learning the spelling of some words since the motor-mental effort made is a type of sensory impression basic to learning spelling.

Certainly, as handwriting improves, all written work is facilitated with the result of increased benefits to spelling (2). Likewise, pronunciation and articulation which give due recognition to letters representing sounds mean that these letters and perhaps their order in words are seen and may be recalled when spelling is attempted. It would seem, though, that learning in one language arts area that has carryover to another takes place in a larger context than just relating one aspect to another. That is, genuine interrelated learning would seem to result best from an instructional program which teaches all of the language arts in a communication framework (1).

Recognition of the interrelationships of the language arts, however, should not he interpreted as support for an incidental approach to the teaching of the various facets as opposed to systematic programs. Neither should systematic attention preclude correlating the language arts with other curricular areas not integrating related skills. A genuine communication program acknowledges the interrelatedness of all of the language arts as well as the need for specific teaching attention to specific skills.

That is, genuine interrelated learning would seem to result best from an instructional program which teaches all of the language arts in a communication framework.

References

1. Early, Margaret J., "Communication Arts," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research.* Chester W. Harris, (ed.). New York: Macmillan. 1960.
2. Horn, Ernest, "Spelling," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research.* Chester W. Harris, (ed.), New York: Macmillan, 1960.
3. Horn, Thomas D., and Henry J. Otto, *Spelling Instruction: A Curriculum-Wide Approach.* Bureau of Laboratory School Publications Number 2. Austin: The University of Texas, 1954.
4. Loban, Walter D., *The Language of Elementary School Children.* NCTE Research Report No. 1. Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963.
5. Templin, Mildred C., "Phonic Knowledge and Its Relation to the Spelling and Reading Achievement of Fourth Grade Pupils," *Journal of Educational Research,* 47 (February, 1954), 441-454.
6. Winter, Clotilda, "Interrelationships among Language Variables in Children of the First and Second Grades," *Elementary English,* 34 (February, 1957), 108-113.