The use of a diagnostic spelling test in the analysis of spelling problems

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THE USE OF A DIAGNOSTIC SPELLING TEST

IN THE

ANALYSIS OF SPELLING PROBLEMS

A Thesis
presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Psychology
of the
Municipal University of Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Geraldine L. Whitted

May 1954
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INTRODUCTION

From the first attempt to standardize English spelling in the eighteenth century, to the present, the problem of spelling has caused much concern, comment, criticism, and discussion.

The absence of any practical diagnostic tool which would enable educators and clinicians to discover the type of disabilities of those with whom they come in professional contact and the causes for the spelling disabilities prompted this study.
CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SPELLING

"Nothing illuminates the present so much as an understanding of immediately preceding situations. Any interpretation of today's practices is dependent upon a comprehension of yesterday's," says Suzzallo (38).

A brief history of spelling, and of spelling practices in American schools, therefore, seems pertinent to the subject of diagnosing spelling disabilities and remedial spelling work.

When printing was first introduced into Europe, there was no standard of spelling, and attempts at spelling more or less conformed to the sound of the word. The results of this attempt to spell phonetically varied widely throughout the localities where this method was used. Because the printing press made it possible for the circulation of many books, it became imperative that a systematic standard of spelling be devised. This need arose at a time when the English language was still undergoing phonetic changes, and the standardized spelling had not allowed for any modification to meet these changes. As a result, although the standardization had merit, it also led to a great deal of confusion. This confusion has been carried to such an extent that, even today, not a single letter in the English
alphabet is represented by less than two or more sound val-
ues. Spelling, therefore, is no longer a phonetic matter
in English, and words must be carefully taught in order to
maintain a standard.

In the beginning the subjects of spelling and reading
were closely associated. The reason for this was that in
colonial days the first schools were reading schools, found-
ed in order that the children might learn to read the Bible
and understand the word of God. The first primers contained
the prayers and precepts, the letters of the alphabet in
large and small type, and various combinations of vowels
and consonants. Most famous of these were the Horn Books,
the first of which was made in England about 1450. They
consisted of sheets of paper fastened to wooden ladles and
covered by transparent horn for protection.

In Germany, in 1532, Maren Schulte published an ABC
book in which the letters of the alphabet were printed with
a picture connected with each letter. Throughout the early
history of New England, primers and church books followed
the general plan of the ABC books. The letter method in
various forms has persisted even to modern times.

The a-b-c method was a highly mechanical one. Since
the letter was assumed to be the means of recognition, the
child was required to learn the alphabet first. The second
step was the learning of syllables and words by a spelling
method.
This method was summarized by Dr. Nila Banton Smith\(^1\)\(^2\). "The techniques used were those of learning the alphabet, spelling syllables and words, memorizing sections of content and reading orally. All children were inducted into the reading process through the alphabetical method because that was the only reading approach known at that time."

During the sixteenth century the gingerbread technique was applied to the a-b-c method. Someone conceived the idea of making the Horn Book of gingerbread, as gingerbread was a highly prized dainty, and thus motivate the child by permitting him to eat each letter which he had learned. "Proceeding thus with vast delight he spells and gnaws from left to right." The school employed a baker to prepare the instructional materials. It took about three weeks of gingerbread diet for memorizing the alphabet.

The early association of reading and spelling had far reaching influences. It affected the content of spelling. As a result, much of the materials of spelling have been drawn from reading. The early methods of using the alphabet to teach reading were also used in the teaching of spelling.

About 1700, the New England primer first made its appearance in colonial schools. It was chiefly concerned

\(^1\)Smith, Nila B., American Reading Instruction, Chicago: Silver Burdett Company, 1934.
with biblical or religious material. Toward the close of the eighteenth century the first books were published which were in competition with the New England primer. Two of the most important books were Gilworth's "New Guide to the English Tongue," published in England in 1740 and Noah Webster's "The Blue Backed Speller," published in 1783. The latter book contained lists of spelling words which were interspersed with reading matter. One of its effects was a tendency to standardize and simplify English spelling.

With the appearance of more spelling books, spelling gained more or less of an independent existence as a formal subject. This position continued throughout the nineteenth century.

Although at this time we find the first really systematic approach to the teaching of spelling, which involved the application of specific techniques, the selection of words which were included in the spelling books was based on the judgment of the author as to which words he felt the child should know how to spell. Many words appeared in spelling books apparently because they were extremely difficult to spell, while many other words which were important to spell were omitted.

Another effect of the publication of the Blue Backed Speller was to make spelling a craze. Previously, spelling
had been little taught, but now it absorbed a large share of the student interest and enthusiasm, and the pupil who could "spell down the whole school" ranked second only to the child who surpassed the rest in arithmetic.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century there was a general pedagogical movement towards the correlation of all subjects. The opinion prevailed that, since spelling had no subject of its own, it should receive its materials from other subjects. The suggestions were also made that specific spelling periods be abolished and that all spelling be taught "incidentally" during other class periods.

MEASUREMENT MOVEMENT

In 1897, J. M. Rice, a pioneer in education research, made a comparative study of the spelling abilities of children taught by methods in various cities. He drew up a common list of words which the children were asked to spell. Rice's study involved the spelling achievement of 30,000 pupils. He found that those pupils who devoted fifteen minutes a day to spelling could spell as well as those who had given forty to fifty minutes a day to the subject and that drill work in the direct teaching of spelling was futile. Rice's study was significant in that it opened the door to the measurement movement. However, the results of his study met with very little approval because the educators, at that time, believed that the learning of spelling was good discipline.
As a result, spelling has become more informal. Its forms have come into relation with the situation requiring them, and spelling has been taught with greater significance.

One of the main difficulties in the teaching of spelling was the number of words to be learned and the basis of selection of the words to be taught. It was not unusual for the word list to encompass more than ten thousand words. Current research has shown that this number is excessive.

During the period from 1900-1910, spelling, a subject considered of value by educators and laymen, lost its place of importance in focus of attention. It was taught in connection with the language arts—writing, composition, reading and other subjects, and not as an independent subject having a specific spelling period.

After 1910 and continuing up to the present time, there have been many investigations in the field of spelling. Some of the areas of concentration were methods of teaching spelling, phonetic spelling, word analysis, spelling difficulties and their diagnosis, development of spelling scales, and standardized tests. Some of the results of these investigations were:

(1) spelling was returned to prominence as a separate subject in the curriculum of the elementary schools.

(2) word lists were developed based on word frequency studies.
(3) The level of difficulty was indicated by grade placement.

(4) The cruciality of the word was emphasized.

The development of standardized educational tests has been gradual. The results of such studies have had a marked influence on educational practices. Many experimental psychologists are responsible for the main contributions pertaining to such methods. In the early history of testing, many of the standardized tests appeared as a partial defense against the criticisms of certain educational and lay groups who opposed any modification in school curriculum in order to meet certain business and vocational demands outside the classroom. It is doubtful whether there would have been such rapid advancement in educational measurement if it had not been for the foresight of Professor Thorndike and his contemporaries in their recognition of the potential power of educational tests as a means of classifying pupils and evaluating instruction.

CONSTRUCTION AND USE OF TESTS

No one test can serve all the necessary ends; therefore series of tests must be constructed and administered according to the purposes for which they are to be used. Important functions served by spelling tests include the
following: determining spelling ability of the group; discovering which words are necessary for group study and for individual study; guiding learning by evaluating success and failures; measuring the growth made in a semester or a year.

STANDARD TESTS AND SCALES

Accompanying the scientific study of writing vocabularies have been numerous attempts to develop techniques for measuring ability and achievement in spelling. Spelling tests, at present, are usually made from the standardized lists of words which have been obtained through word investigations.

The most useful investigations of word selection in spelling are those based upon written vocabularies of child and adult; however, studies of oral and reading vocabularies are helpful in evaluating words for grade placement.

Child writing investigations are divided into three parts: studies of children's themes written in school, studies of letter writing in life outside the school, and studies of spelling errors. Some of the leading investigators of children's themes are Jones, Bauer, Tidyman, McKee, Williams and Brittain.

A pioneer study was made by Jones, who assembled information from 75,000 themes written by 1,050 children in grades two through eight from several states (Maryland,
South Dakota, Iowa and Illinois). This study yielded 4,532 different words from the 15,000,000 running words of the themes. These words were presented in lists in grades two through eight. The chief criticism of this study was that it does not present complete data; however, its main importance was making investigators aware of the great need for further research. The following statement by Jones (24) is indicative of his judgment concerning vocabulary.

The most useful words in our language, indeed in any language, are the words early learned by children; hence the spelling vocabularies of the lower grades should receive special attention; and this means that there should be fewer words in the spelling assignment and more care in fixing their meaning and use.

The most celebrated spelling scales are those designed by Ayres, Buckingham, Ashbaugh, and Bixler. According to Gray (20):

One of the earliest of these lists is the Ayres Spelling Scale which was first printed in 1915. Ayres selected, on the basis of weighted frequency, 1,000 words chosen by combining the results of four studies: those of Knowles, Eldridge, Cook and O'Shea, and a study of his own. To determine the words of equal difficulty and the relative difficulty of the words, Ayres divided the 1,000 words into 50 lists of 20 words each. Each list of words was spelled by the children of two consecutive grades, in a number of cities. The thousand words were then divided into another 50 lists of 20 words each and sent out as tests, each of four in consecutive grades. These two sets of tests were continued until an aggregate of 1,400,000 spellings had been secured from 70,000 children in 84 cities. Upon
the basis of this information, the words were classified into 26 groups the words within a group being of approximately equal difficulty. Standards or norms are printed at the head of each column, designated by the letters A to Z. These norms are in terms of the per cents of correct spelling which may be expected from the children of a given grade.

This scale was used especially in school surveys for measuring spelling achievement and ability.

The following years saw many similar scales constructed. In 1919 Buckingham, in a supplementary study, extended the Ayres' list to 1,505 most commonly used words. He added 505 words next in frequency according to word counts used in spellers. These additional words, for the most part, were in the upper end of the scale. Thus this addition extended the use of the scale in the upper grades.

A study made by Ashbaugh on written correspondence of Iowa people, for his Iowa Spelling Scales, presents difficulty indexes of 2,977 words.

The Standard Elementary Spelling Scale of Bixler provides difficulty data on 3,679 words applicable for grades two through eight inclusive. After the selection of these words, the percentage was computed for the pupils who spelled correctly the word for the grade in which it was commonly placed, as well as for the grade below and the grade above.

Rinsland's study of words used by children in their
everyday writing is the most comprehensive and representative that has been made. Tabulations were made of all the words used by children in grades one through eight. Source of the tabulations were personal letters, compositions, original stories, poems, examination papers, conversation pages, and others. Total tabulations 100,212. According to Rinsland (36):

It seems reasonable to conclude from the data given and the frequencies of the words that this vocabulary should furnish much more than 90 per cent of the words for Grade VIII and perhaps more than 98 per cent of the words for Grade I—with the percentages for the other grades falling between these limits.

A total of 25,632 words was found in over six million running words. The 14,571 words used more than three times by children in any one grade are included in the published list.

Fitzgerald in his study "A Basic Life Spelling Vocabulary" published a list of 2,650 words selected as a core of common words. The list includes word frequently written by children, words important in writing by adults, and words frequently written by both children and adults.

The following word lists were used in making the final selection of these 2,650 words:

The McKee-Fitzgerald list of words used in spontaneous writing by children

The Horn list of 10,000 words important in adult writing

The Rinsland list of 14,571 words found in children's writing
The Breed list of words compiled from five previous studies of theme writing

The Dolch spelling list of 2,000 words compiled from a study of spellers, spelling lists, and child-writing studies

The Fitzgerald 3rd Grade list of 692 commonest words from children's letters

The Brittain 2nd Grade list of 810 words from children's writing.

Fitzgerald shows that the information from such studies makes it possible to consider words in four groups:

A. (Child-Adult) Words found highly useful for child and for adult writing

B. (Child-Emphasis) Words found frequently in letters written by children but found in comparatively low frequency in adult writing

C. (Adult Emphasis) Words found important in adult writing but found to be of less importance in young children's writing

D. (School Emphasis) Words found valuable in school themes but less important outside of school. (15).

Fitzgerald's final selection of 2,650 words includes words from all four categories.

Buckingham and Dolch (20) used the free association method for making a word-frequency count. They had children write any words that came to their minds in a fifteen-minute period. Using this technique, the authors tabulated the 9,520 words most commonly written by children in grades two to eight in both small-town and large-city schools.
These words are arranged in alphabetical order in the published Buckingham-Dolch list.

WORDS USED BY ADULTS IN WRITING

In "A Basic Writing Vocabulary" by Horn many types of adult writing were studied. The principal investigations were: business correspondence; personal correspondence; letters of application and recommendation, minutes, resolutions, and committee reports; excuses written by parents to teachers; letters of a single individual.

These eight investigations sampled extensively and intensively in various fields of adult writing. The results indicate what words are most used by adults in writing. They also suggest variation in the use of words by different classes of writers. The final selection of 10,000 words was controlled by a specific set of rules. In the five million words in this compilation, there were 36,373 different word forms. From these were selected words which for the most part had been written fifteen times or more in the collected writings and which were otherwise indicated as important in general adult writing.

According to Gray (20): spelling scales are not spelling tests; their chief function is the basis or source from which words may be selected for making tests. The test must be of a sufficient length to give a reliable measure of the
of the factor being measured. When measuring class ability the general procedure is to select from a single column twenty words from the Ayres Scale or the Buckingham Extension; however, when measuring the individual's ability, it is necessary to use fifty to one hundred words. When testing the spelling of more difficult words the selection is from several columns. The spelling may be presented either in column form or dictated in sentences at approximately a standard rate of handwriting for the grade in which it is used. This same procedure may be used with other spelling scales.

A general finding of word-frequency studies is that a few thousand common words used over and over make up the large percentage of all writing done by almost everyone. There are many thousands of words which many people write only occasionally. And there are many thousands of words which certain limited groups of people will write very often. These words are usually considered as an advanced vocabulary. There are so many thousands of words of secondary importance that it is generally considered impractical to attempt to include more than a small fraction of them in a list of spelling words presented in the classroom.

Investigators have shown that the data on adult vocabularies determine the end point of instruction. The
data on the vocabularies of children pertain either to the present vocabulary needs or to the present vocabulary status of children. No matter how extensive, valid, and reliable the data on children's vocabularies may become, they are not a valid measure of adult needs; and no matter how extensive, valid and reliable the data on adult vocabularies may be, they are not valid measures of the present vocabulary needs or status of children. Each type of data has its own contribution to make.

**SELECTION OF WORDS BY GRADES**

Achievement tests with one section devoted to the measurement of spelling ability are: The Metropolitan Achievement Test, The Stanford Achievement Test, the Iowa-Every-Pupil Test of Basic Skills, the Iowa Language Abilities Tests, and the California Achievement Test. The score obtained usually is expressed as grade placement, grade score, or spelling age.

The Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale includes eight forms of fifty words each, arranged progressively from easy to difficult and useful for testing in grades two through eight.

Attempts of large numbers of children of different grade levels to spell each word in the tests provides the data for construction of spelling scales or standard tests. Standards of accuracy for each word for each grade, beginning with grade two, and norms for various grade levels
are determined from this data.

It is impossible to know whether any given child has previously studied a word either in class or in connection with other activities; thus it is impossible to know the exact degree to which its standard accuracy shows the inherent difficulty of the word and the influence of learning. For this reason, the tests are limited in their usefulness in directing and appraising instruction. Spelling scales do give valuable data of relative spelling difficulty of the words they contain.

**TEST FORMS**

Several decades ago the method of testing spelling was oral. The lesson was assigned, the pupils studied the words during a study period or at home and were tested orally over these words. As the curriculum expanded this method was discontinued, and the teacher dictated the words to the pupil who in turn wrote them. The method of word presentation was either in list form or contextual material.

Research has shown written tests are superior to oral tests of each pupil on each word, because the written records can be more easily kept and referred to and thus used for instructional purposes. Recall tests have proved better and more difficult than recognition tests. The most valid and economical tests, according to present evidence, seems to be the modified sentence-recall where the
MEASUREMENT OF SPELLING ABILITY

Measurement of spelling ability as contrasted with the ability to spell words that have been studied systematically in the spelling class, has recently received considerable attention. The present scales and tests are a means of indicating spelling ability, but it is generally conceded that the measuring of this spelling ability requires study of the basic factors which determine it. Great strides have been made in trying to pinpoint these factors, but the results as yet are inconclusive and fragmentary (40).

DIAGNOSTIC SPELLING TESTS

To date there are relatively few standardized diagnostic spelling tests, although considerable material has been written on spelling difficulties and diagnosis of these difficulties (these will be considered in Chapter II). One of the best known tests is the Gates-Russell Spelling Diagnosis Tests. Varieties of misspellings are classified according to types of errors and pupil difficulties.

Gates (19) diagnostic tests involve:

1. Giving words with stated initial sounds
2. Giving words with stated final sounds
3. **Spelling test - method records how the child attacks the words**

   **Letter by letter**
   Grouping according to a knowledge of phonetic elements
   In longer words - inadequate syllabication or lack of it is recorded
   Test is done orally

4. **Tests of auditory techniques**

   Blending letter sounds
   Giving letters for sounds
   Giving words--initial sounds
   Giving words--final sounds

   The four tests in this series are designed to evaluate the child's experience with letter sounds and his aptitude for learning by a phonetic approach.

5. **Visual Perception Tests**

   Syllabication
   Recognition of syllables
   Recognition of phonograms
   Blending letter sounds
   Giving letter sounds
   Reading capital letters
   Reading small letters

   According to Durrell (13) the above mentioned tests contain exhaustive analyses of phonetic and perceptual abilities. The chief criticism of the tests is the ratio of administration time to practical help it provides.

**THE PROBLEM**

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between the Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale and the Edwards-Whitted Diagnostic Spelling Test, Form A and B.
CHAPTER II

FUNCTIONS AND GOALS OF SPELLING

Spelling is a practical tool for written communication with one's fellow man. Its function is to enable the writer to determine the correct order of letters in words so that he may communicate values in writing. Failure to spell correctly may lead to losing reputation with the reader.

When a student spells all words correctly in written work outside his spelling class and all common words without thinking, he is a good speller. He has achieved the real goal of spelling—to communicate ideas through the written word, and has achieved a twofold end: ease and accuracy in written communication and self-assurance that comes with the knowledge that one writes in conformity with accepted standards.

When formal education is completed, all children should at least be socially acceptable in spelling. Experts invariably will agree that the child at this stage should be efficient to a practical degree in spelling and capable of using his skill for everyday writing purposes. These spelling habits so basic in childhood should be carried over into adult life (37).

Troublesome inconsistencies found in English spelling make it one of the most difficult to master. There are
eight ways to spell the long a sound as well as eight sounds for the letter A. It is easily understood that children's spelling errors are mainly in vowel use and the majority of errors occur in the middle of words where vowel sounds are least predictable. Silent vowels and consonants, doubling of consonants in some words but not in others, and variations in word endings make spelling complicated (37).

In addition there is another block—spelling frequently tends to be taught in many schools as an academic discipline rather than as a necessary and practical tool of writing. This tendency is evident in teaching methods sometimes employed and in word lists assigned for study. Poorly assembled word lists contribute to the difficulty of learning to spell. Need to use the words should reflect in selected word lists (22).

General procedures for helping children who have difficulty with spelling might be said to turn on four important words: diagnose, remedy, prevent, and motivate (16). This study is concerned with a single phase—that of diagnosis of spelling difficulties and the development of a diagnostic spelling test based on phonetic analysis.

DIAGNOSIS

Spelling diagnosis is the procedure of determining
the nature and causes of spelling difficulties. The purpose of spelling diagnosis is threefold:

1. To appraise a pupil's general spelling and the extent of his retardation—usually obtained from a standardized test of spelling expressed in spelling age or grade score.

2. To find a pupil's specific strengths and weaknesses in spelling—usually revealed by the analysis of results of his diagnostic test performance and written work.

3. To discover possible causes of the difficulties—these may be disclosed from results of physical examination (of hearing, vision, etc.); psychological examination (mental, motor, emotional, etc.); observation of performance in ordinary written work; oral expression, and from individual diagnostic tests.

SPELLING DISABILITY

Normally each pupil should acquire in elementary school a spelling vocabulary of approximately 4,000 words which form about 98 per cent of all his written work. This may be considered a basic written vocabulary. Out of
the 10,000 words listed by Horn as the commonest words used in writing, 4,000 are considered of greatest permanent value to children. In addition, each child normally acquires special words peculiar to his community or his interest.

According to Gates (17), "spelling disability" applies to those children who are so incapable of handling the common or special words used by their peers and needed by themselves that they are definitely hindered in the fluent expression of their ideas. "Disability" does not imply that children are incapable of learning to spell so much as they are far below the norms for their respective grades and ages.

General immaturity is usually due to a combination of hereditary and environmental factors such as low mental age and lack of stimulation in the use of words at home.

BEGINNING TO SPELL

Children evidence spelling readiness through their own interest in words, the meaning of words, the use of words in functional writing, and through their own incidental learning. Until children reach a specific level of development in visual and auditory perception, they are not ready to make the sight and sound discrimination that correct spelling requires. The achievements of concentrating attention, holding the head steady and
fixing attention on word forms are other considerations that make for spelling readiness (22).

Considerable spelling readiness and some spelling skill may be in evidence at the beginning of the second grade. Before middle-second or beginning third grade, children are not expected to write a large number of words correctly from memory. The development of a spelling consciousness and spelling conscience by the child is essential for successful spelling achievement.

Spelling readiness is also based on the need for the child to spell. Before a child wishes to write a letter, for example, he must have experiences or wishes that he wants to convey to someone. Generally children who do not read well, speak well, or get along well with other children need guidance in their social activities more than they need spelling (16).

According to Sullivan (16:pp133), to be ready to spell a child must have good visual discrimination and the ability to use word analysis.

Readiness may not be taken for granted but must be determined from the child's mental alertness, desire to learn and awareness of need for spelling. If the child's behavior shows he is ready to learn, there is no need to test his readiness. If conclusive evidence of his needs is not clear, then the child should be tested at least informally (16).
Cain and Michaelis set forth characteristics for spelling readiness as follows: "A mental age of 7½, a fairly large reading vocabulary, handwriting skill adequate to form letters correctly, and ability to write words from memory." They believe these are necessary for optimum benefit from systematic instruction.

DIFFICULTIES IN SPELLING

It is not possible to pinpoint simply the causes of the wide variability which children show in spelling. These differences are due to all the diverse factors that affect children both in and out of school. No two would come up with exact duplicate causes.

Spelling instruction should aim at the development of positive attitudes and habit patterns toward spelling in order to prevent deficiencies (16).

Cole (9) has stated that spelling errors "arise from three different and largely unrelated sources. Some are due to defects within the pupil, some to the difficulties inherent in English words, and some to inappropriate methods of teaching."

Diagnosis and remedial instruction are necessary when deficiencies develop in the spelling practices of a child or a group of children because of inadequate curriculum

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activities and material, because of ineffective methods of learning, or because of lack of proper guidance.

The child with extreme disability in spelling should be diagnosed thoroughly by the most expert means, taking into account the fact that his difficulty may lie far deeper than mere spelling, according to Hildreth (22). Children without a special disability who are simple retarded and immature in language usage should have spelling achievement goals reduced. Individual help should accompany this procedure.

The chronic bad speller, a child who fails to profit from school instruction, who struggles along getting more and more discouraged every year with his failures to learn, who may even consider himself "queer" because the methods by which others learn, easily fail with him, represents a typical case of spelling disability. Such a student usually can be helped by diagnostic and remedial work (18).

Diagnosis should be as complete as possible. Mental ability, attitudes, interests, achievement and environment should be taken into consideration. Difficulties in other subjects, especially in the language arts, should be noted, and the prevalent type of errors analyzed.

Inventories of the words the child misspells are unnecessary as long as the types of errors are noted and habits and tendencies in spelling are observed and understood.
ANALYSIS OF CAUSES OF SPELLING DISABILITIES

Reasons for spelling failures are almost as varied as the students who manifest them, yet certain basic reasons run like a thread through all the research on the subject. Fitzgerald (16) lists the following as compiled by Davis (16: pl93) as contributing factors of spelling disabilities: materials, curriculum, methods of instruction, testing, degree of teacher competence, home, community, child ability, interest and aptitude all play their parts. Other even more basic causes as compiled by Hollingworth include:

1. lack of systematic method in learning to spell
2. poor writing
3. faulty pronunciation
4. poor attitude
5. sensory defects of eye or ear
6. quality of general intelligence
7. failure to remember
8. lack of knowledge of meaning
9. motor awkwardness and inco-ordination
10. lack of independence in working out their spelling problems
11. individual idiosyncracies
12. study of words they do not use.

In diagnosing spelling difficulties, a skilled teacher will consider carefully her pupil's coordination of attention, drive, work habits, attitudes towards school and spelling.

The relation of personality factors to spelling disability is not definitely known. Nervousness and emotional stress which have proven to hinder progress in most school
subjects likewise affect the child's spelling abilities.

GOOD SPELLERS VERSUS POOR SPELLERS

A factor constantly recurring in all research on the problems of poor spellers is the lack of planned attack in conquering words. They tend to spell more by chance, and often exhibit unfavorable attitudes toward the subject. Almost invariably they seem to lack adequate techniques of word study. They also appeared to be more deficient in auditory discrimination, visual perception of errors, and orientation of letters within words than good spellers.

In contrast the good spellers show steady control, look fixedly at words, vocalize, visualize and compare written words with original study lists. As a rule they seem fond of studying, have good work habits, concentrate well, have good handwriting, and show initiative. Generally, they are a dictionary user and seem to have a natural interest in words and word study. They are usually the best syllabicators as well and tend generally to pay greater attention to word parts than do the poor spellers (40).

Haphazard study of words in spelling instruction often wastes time because, left to their own devices, poor spellers tend to practice the same errors.

Diagnosis to be effective must be continuous. It may well continue throughout the child's remedial instruction
periods and even after improvement in his work has been observed.

The child's achievement in other areas is worthy of note. Reading, speech and written language should be carefully checked, since authorities agree that ability to spell is also affected by a child's experiences in the other language arts.

Authorities suggest that the percentage of correct spellings and types of mistakes made should be checked in the pretest and final spelling tests. Not to be overlooked is an appraisal of the learning-teaching situation in which the child is placed. Diagnostic tests are beneficial in revealing the areas in which learning breaks down and in indicating the need for an individualized remedial program.

Spelling errors of bright and dull children are very different. Bright children tend to generalize more, apply previous learning to new words, spell phonetically and more rationally. Dull children tend to lack a systematic approach (7).

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS--GROUP NEEDS

Selecting spelling vocabulary is at present a problem largely of meeting individual differences. Some children who may be able to learn only 800 or 1,000 most needed words will flounder in the hopelessness of studying 3,000.
Other children will learn 3,000 with ease and may be guided to learn additional necessary words.

Slow-learners will do well to master 500 words by the fifth grade. For average learners 1,200 to 1,500 words are considered to be sufficient. Fernald (14) points out that formal graded lists will always fail to supply the words that a particular pupil should learn at a particular time. A given word should be taught when the pupil needs to write the word in his daily work or when the teacher can anticipate such a need, regardless of its placement in standard grade lists.

Correct guidance at the proper time can erase most spelling difficulties. In other words, many spelling failures may be traced to the curriculum and the manner in which it is carried out in the classroom. Limitations in the school programs lie in the following areas: the words to be learned—and the grade level at which these words are presented, the methods of word study employed, and the relationship of spelling to the total school program. Criteria for this arrangement come in the basic lists of words selected as a result of a number of extensive studies of the social usage of words.

The diagnostic procedures herein discussed can help provide that needed lift—the correct guidance at the needful moment.
CHAPTER III

CONSTRUCTION OF THE DIAGNOSTIC SPELLING TEST

The staff at the Child Study Service, over a period of years in considering children, their successes and failures, has become increasingly aware of the discrepancies between spelling achievement and age or grade levels. Research has shown that failure in learning to write and spell correctly, in the primary grades, is not necessarily an indication of mental retardation but may be attributed to certain methods of instruction or to the child's lack of readiness for these subjects.

The clinical psychologist, analyzing academic failures often finds children of superior abilities who have failed to profit from certain methods in academic instruction. Spelling inefficiencies shown by learners, able in other fields, are worthy of special note.

Modern teaching methods should not be disapproved as they have proven successful with the major portion of the learners. Rather special consideration should be given to those pupils who do not meet with average success in the class.

Fitzgerald (16) cites an investigation by Russell of characteristics of good and poor spellers which revealed, "of 1,185 children studied, 380 or 32.1 per cent were one year or more retarded in spelling."
The rates at which children develop in spelling vary greatly even among children of similar age and background, according to Hildreth (22).

Intelligent children of eight or nine who are unsuccessful in their efforts with written assignments deserve special consideration before progressing in their schoolwork to grade levels where such lessons are increased and become a pertinent part of their academic efficiency.

The complicated phonetic irregularities in the spelling of the English language have long been recognized. By phonetics is meant the analysis of words into their constituent sound elements.\(^1\)

The words in any spelling vocabulary may be divided into two types: "sight" words and phonetics. Phonetic words contain characteristic sound letter groups. It has been found that even "sight" words contain common phonetic elements, although the entire word may not be considered phonetic. Phonetic elements are the parts of words (single letters, letter combinations or syllables) standing for sounds that, blended together, result in pronunciation of the words.\(^2\)

In considering the diagnosis of spelling difficulties from the phonetic standpoint and methods of spelling instruction as shown by modern spellers, the following facts

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2. Ibid.
deserve recognition.

Fernald (14) has stated, "80 to 90 per cent of the words a child needs to know can be written phonetically."

CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF WORDS

The following criteria was used in the selection of spelling words for the Edwards-Whitted Diagnostic Spelling Test.

Meyer's (32) states, "According to the new Webster's International Dictionary the greatest number of words begin with the letter S (37,000). The next greatest number begin with the letter C, and the F. The most infrequent letters are Y, Z, and X (300 words). Refer to the Appendix for the table which shows the approximate number of words beginning with each letter of the alphabet.

From the results of this dictionary word count, a more restricted spelling study was consulted. The 2,000 Commonest Words for Spelling as listed by Dolch (11) were analyzed for frequency of initial letters. Table 1 shows that certain letters deserve much attention as initial sounds in spelling instruction while others because of their infrequency in early written usage should be practically ignored during the child's early academic instruction.
TABLE 1

PERCENTAGE OF INITIAL LETTER FREQUENCY IN DESCENDING ORDER--DOLCH'S 2,000 COMMONEST WORDS FOR SPELLING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descending Order</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>14.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>7.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>7.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>7.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total percentage of S through L equals 71 per cent

This indicates that phonetic usage in spelling instruction warrants consideration.

Seventy-one per cent of this spelling list begins with the first ten most common initial letters.
It is assumed for the purpose of this investigation that phonetic insight and use of these ten letters will give children in primary grades an efficient tool for all but about 25 words out of each 100 encountered in reading as well as spelling. On the basis of initial sound this diagnostic spelling test can easily tell which children need help with which letters. When the initial sound of a word is recognized it may be used as a clue in helping to identify the remainder.

FREQUENCY

A further check was made using the following valid word lists.

The Thousand Commonest Words Arranged in the Descending Order of Their Frequency—L. P. Ayres

A Teacher's Word Book of 20,000 Words—E. L. Thorndike

A Basic Vocabulary of Elementary School Children—H. D. Rinsland

A Combined Word List—Buckingham and Dolch

Spelling Vocabulary Study—E. A. Betts

GRADE PLACEMENT

According to Billington (5), the factors involved in the grade placement of a word are: (a) social utility of the word, (b) frequency of use—both in childhood and
adult usage, and (c) learning difficulty of the word.

In determining the grade placement of the vocabulary several principles should be considered. McKee (29) points out that the most important words should be covered in the lower grades, and the least important or the less frequently used words should be put in the higher grades. The reason being that the child should be taught the most necessary words before the completion of his academic education. Learning difficulty plays an equally important role in determining grade placement, according to McKee (29, 42:p252). Fernald (14) states that social utility of words is a very important factor in determining their selection.

For the purpose of this study a large percentage 62.5 of the total number of words selected were at the second and third grade levels. Authorities (42) generally agree that at the second, third, and fourth grades are found the establishment of basic spelling skills; therefore, it is assumed this should be the place where diagnosis to determine the degree of deficiency and types of errors should start in order to develop a sound remedial program.

Two spelling vocabulary studies by Betts (3,4) were used for determining the grade placement of each word in the Dolch list.

Betts' studies were based on (1) an investigation of seventeen spellers published from 1930-1938 and (2) grade
placements of eight spellers published from 1940-1945. These studies covered grades two through eight.

The tabulation was made of all basic list words yielding a combined list from the seventeen spellers of 8,645 words and the median grade placement was calculated for these words. Betts (4) states, "Those concerned with remedial activities in the language arts...will find the list valuable as a source for selecting those words which are believed to be most crucial and to possess the highest utility in everyday writing situations."

PHONETIC SELECTION OF WORDS

The next basis of selection considered was from a phonetic standpoint. This was divided into two parts: selection by initial letter (sound); selection by phonetic elements—medial and final sounds.

A study by Gates (22:29) revealed that the errors made in many words tend to be concentrated in certain parts, more commonly in the middle and end syllables than in the initial letters. Gates believes that pupils will make the most progress in spelling when they give particular attention to those hard spots.

Each form of the Edwards-Whitted Diagnostic Test contains 100 words divided into 10 subtests of 10 words each. The words were matched so that each initial letter is
repeated with a different phonetic element, and each phonetic element is repeated but matched with a different initial letter. Each list of 10 words is so constructed that it can diagnose 20 types of errors and also has its alternate form for retesting purposes.

METHOD OF WORD PRESENTATION

The modified sentence-recall method was used for presentation of the words, as research has shown this to be the most valid and economical method.

In Forms A and B each word was checked and rechecked against several word lists for grade level and frequency.

A preliminary test helped to locate sections requiring further revision of test content, of organization, or of manner of presentation, thus trying to eliminate undesirable features through careful construction and revision.

Each test has been so constructed that it becomes progressively more difficult—graduated difficulty. This necessitated the selection of words at the upper levels from grades six, seven and eight. The word "loose" was considered to be in an advanced vocabulary and not basic vocabulary.

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EDWARDS - WHITTED

DIAGNOSTIC SPELLING TEST

**FORM A**

**List A**

1. **sun**  The sun shines. . . . . . . sun
2. **ball**  The ball is red . . . . . . ball
3. **cake**  The cake is good. . . . . cake
4. **try**  Try this game . . . . . . try
5. **pat**  Pat his hand . . . . . . pat
6. **dog**  The dog is black. . . . . dog
7. **look**  Look at this picture. . . look
8. **toy**  The toy is for me . . . . toy
9. **sled**  The sled is new . . . . sled
10. **come**  Come with the boy . . . . come

**List B**

1. **sleep**  You sleep at night. . . . sleep
2. **bad**  This apple is bad . . . . bad
3. **car**  His car is new. . . . . car
4. **hard**  The candy is hard . . . . hard
5. **is**  She is here . . . . . . is
6. **play**  Play with baby. . . . . play
7. **big**  The big ball is lost. . . big
8. **show**  Show me your paper. . . show
9. **fell**  The baby fell . . . . . . fell
10. **will**  He will come. . . . . . will

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EDWARDS - WHITTED

DIAGNOSTIC SPELLING TEST

FORM B

List C

1. fun This is fun .................. fun
2. call Call his name ............... call
3. take Take a piece of candy ... take
4. by The girl stood by her mother. by
5. hat Her hat is new .......... hat
6. log Put the log in the fire .... log
7. took He took his son to school .. took
8. boy The boy is playing ....... boy
9. red The cover of the book is red .. red
10. some Some children came ...... some

List D

1. sheep The sheep are big .......... sheep
2. had He had an apple ............ had
3. far The school is far away ..... far
4. card Write on the card .......... card
5. his His pencil is sharp .......... his
6. stay Stay with me .............. stay
7. pig The pig is fat .............. pig
8. snow The snow is falling ...... snow
9. tell Tell me your name ......... tell
10. fill Fill the basket .......... fill

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FORM A

List E

1. but Play, but be careful . . . . . . . . but
2. wish Do you wish to go? . . . . . . . . wish
3. an An orange is good. . . . . . . . . an
4. hen The hen is brown . . . . . . . . hen
5. tree The tree is big . . . . . . . . tree
6. go Go to your class . . . . . . . . go
7. For The book is for father . . . . . . for
8. chair The chair is old . . . . . . . . . chair
9. thank Thank you. . . . . . . . . thank
10. dear You are a dear . . . . . . . . dear

List F

1. as You play as we visit . . . . . . . . as
2. fix Fix the game . . . . . . . . . . . . fix
3. there There is no rain . . . . . . . . there
4. never He never saw the bat . . . . . . never
5. white The snow is white. . . . . . . white
6. live The live fish jumped from the water live
7. off He fell off the chair . . . . . . . . off
8. hold Hold the baby's hand . . . . . . hold
9. moon The moon is beautiful. . . . . moon
10. get Get the banana . . . . . . . . get

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Form B

List C

1. cut  Cut the apple. .......... cut
2. fish  The fish swims .......... fish
3. and  He and his sister ran away .......... and
4. men  Men work .......... men
5. three  Three children .......... three
6. no  No package was delivered .......... no
7. or  Take the red or the green one .......... or
8. hair  Her hair is long .......... hair
9. drank  He drank his milk .......... drank
10. year  A year ago she was here .......... year

List H

1. has  The girl has her hat .......... has
2. mix  Mix the flour and sugar .......... mix
3. where  Where is the baby .......... where
4. ever  Did you ever see him .......... ever
5. bite  The fish will bite .......... bite
6. five  Here are five pencils .......... five
7. offer  Offer him some .......... offer
8. told  He told it to me .......... told
9. noon  Come at noon .......... noon
10. yet  I am not ready yet .......... yet
FORM A

List I
1. much That is too much. . . . . . . . much
2. place Place the book here. . . . . . place
3. bag The bag is big. . . . . . . . bag
4. cent A penny is one cent. . . . . . cent
5. pain He has no pain. . . . . . . . pain
6. just Just one more. . . . . . . . just
7. eleven He is eleven years old. . . . eleven
8. rest Rest on the bed. . . . . . . . rest
9. pile The pile of leaves is high. . pile
10. kind Be kind to animals. . . . . . kind

List J
1. line The line is tight. . . . . . . line
2. thing This thing is new to me. . . thing
3. block He dropped the block. . . . . block
4. smoke The smoke is black. . . . . smoke
5. along Come along with me. . . . . along
6. phone The phone is ringing. . . . phone
7. nose His nose was cold. . . . . . nose
8. most He gave me most the candy. . . most
9. turn Turn on the light. . . . . . turn
10. circus The circus is coming. . . . circus

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FORM B

List K
1. such
   He is **such** a good child. . . . . . . such
2. race
   Run in the **race**. . . . . . . race
3. rag
   The **rag** is torn. . . . . . . rag
4. spent
   He **spent** his money . . . . . . spent
5. plain
   Her hat is **plain** . . . . . . plain
6. must
   He **must** go . . . . . . . must
7. seven
   Here are **seven** pennies . . . . seven
8. nest
   The **nest** is in the tree. . . . . nest
9. mile
   We drove a **mile**. . . . . . mile
10. wind
    Wind the watch . . . . . . . wind

List L
1. nine
   Nine will be enough. . . . . nine
2. king
   The **king** had a crown . . . . king
3. clock
   The **clock** is correct . . . . clock
4. broke
   Mother **broke** a cup . . . . broke
5. song
   He sang a **song** . . . . . . song
6. alone
   He was **alone** . . . . . . alone
7. rose
   The **rose** was pink. . . . . . rose
8. post
   The **post** is red. . . . . . post
9. burn
   The paper will **burn**. . . . . . burn
10. circle
    The **circle** is big. . . . . . circle

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FORM A

List M

1. south Point to the south . . . . . . . south
2. guess Can you guess the answer . . . . guess
3. cherries The cherries are ripe . . . . cherries
4. borrow May I borrow this pencil? . . . . borrow
5. feather The feather flew in the breeze . feather
6. grass The grass is growing . . . . . . . grass
7. neither Neither sister was present . . . . neither
8. think He will think about it . . . . . . think
9. zero It was zero this morning . . . . . zero
10. use I can use one . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . use

List N

1. handful Have a handful of marbles . . . . . . . handful
2. clown The clown was funny . . . . . . . clown
3. little The little baby smiled . . . . . . . little
4. jaw His jaw was swollen . . . . . . . jaw
5. table The table is high . . . . . . . table
6. caught He caught the rabbit . . . . . . . caught
7. age He is five years of age . . . . . . . age
8. ditch The ditch is deep . . . . . . . ditch
9. choose You choose one . . . . . . . . . choose
10. zip You can zip your jacket . . . . . . zip

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FORM B

List 0
1. mouth Put the candy in your mouth. . . . mouth
2. press Mother will press the coat . . . press
3. berries The berries are sweet. . . . berries
4. tomorrow Come again tomorrow. . . . tomorrow
5. weather The weather is clear . . . weather
6. glass The glass is clean . . . . glass
7. either Either paper will do . . . . either
8. drink May I have a drink? . . . . drink
9. hero He is a real hero. . . . . hero
10. used He used two. . . . . . . . . used

List P
1. helpful He is helpful. . . . . . . . helpful
2. crown The king wore a crown. . . . crown
3. kettle The kettle was full. . . . . kettle
4. raw The meat was raw . . . . . raw
5. able He was able. . . . . . . able
6. taught He taught him to sing. . . . taught
7. page Turn the page. . . . . . . . page
8. church We will go to church . . . church
9. loose His loose tooth came out . . . loose
10. trip The trip was fun . . . . . trip
FORM A

List Q

1. charm       The charm is made of silver. ... charm
2. queer       The little dog is queer. ... queer
3. foolish     Such play is very foolish ... foolish
4. motion      This motion means to stop. ... motion
5. prayer      She read a beautiful prayer. ... prayer
6. tablet      The tablet is for her cold ... tablet
7. hinge       The door swung on the hinge ... hinge
8. steer       The steer ran away ... steer
9. product     The product is made of corn ... product
10. stitch     She will stitch it on the machine ... stitch

List R

1. position    Place the books in the right position ... position
2. deserve     You deserve a reward ... deserve
3. handling    Handling the flowers is fun ... handling
4. timber      Timber grows in Canada ... timber
5. slippery     Ice makes the walk slippery ... slippery
6. entertainment The entertainment will be Saturday ... entertainment
7. preparing   He is preparing to go on a trip ... preparing
8. turtle      The turtle can swim ... turtle
9. pepper      The pepper is green ... pepper
10. separate   Separate the papers please ... separate

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List S

1. gem A diamond is a precious gem.
2. queen The queen is beautiful.
3. radish The radish is hot.
4. notion Get the thread at the notion counter.
5. further It is not much further.
6. bullet A bullet was shot.
7. pledge Pledge allegiance to the flag.
8. steel Steel is a strong metal.
9. lettuce The lettuce is good.
10. switch The switch for the light is near the door.

List T

1. million A million dollars is a great deal of money.
2. remove To remove the mark will not be easy.
3. becoming Her new dress is very becoming.
4. scatter Scatter the seeds for the birds.
5. scissors The scissors are sharp.
6. accident The accident was not serious.
7. changing The weather is changing very rapidly.
8. puzzle The puzzle is easy.
9. mirror Polish the mirror.
10. lemonade The lemonade is sweet.
CHAPTER IV

GATHERING OF DATA

The present study was initiated in the Spring of 1952. The pupils tested were third, fourth and fifth grade school children from elementary schools in Nebraska and Iowa. The majority of these children were from English speaking homes. Middle grade pupils were selected because the greatest concentration of writing and spelling of new words in general vocabulary is here concentrated.

The Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale was selected as the standardized test used to measure the individual student's spelling ability--number correct yields a spelling grade and a spelling age. This scale includes eight forms of 50 words each, arranged progressively from easy to difficult, and useful for testing in grades two through eight. List 8 was administered as all of the eight lists from this scale are of equal difficulty.

Data for this study was obtained through the assistance of elementary school teachers who were taking advanced psychology courses at the University of Omaha.

All teachers involved in this study were indoctrinated in the generally accepted procedures of test administration.
which included the following:

1. Become familiar with the tests and their directions prior to administration

2. Insure good working conditions—i.e. proper lighting, proper ventilation, adequate working space preferably in a familiar environment

3. Anticipate and avoid as much as possible distractions while test is in progress

4. Have all necessary materials ready before the test begins—instructions, test, papers, pencils, chalk, etc.

5. Secure attention before starting

6. Gain full cooperation of pupils in order to obtain their best performance—develop rapport in testing

7. Explain test procedure in general

8. Distribute test supplies

9. Obtain necessary identifying information as listed in the instructions

10. Read directions verbatim to the pupils in a clear, well modulated voice

11. Permit no questions after test has begun

12. Give no assistance on test items proper, however, if pupil misunderstood directions aid in mechanics of test procedure
13. Allow sufficient time for pupils to write words.

14. Solve individually problems which arise due to student's difficulties or deficiencies.

15. Check papers for completion of identifying information before they are completed.

TEST INSTRUCTIONS

First test period:

Administer the Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale - List 8. Have pupils use graded lined paper.

Second test period:

Fold paper for class into four columns--mid and half again.

Give each child the folded pencil-paper used for spelling tests (described above). Have each child print or write on one side of the paper the following:

- Child's name
- Date
- Date of birth (check for accuracy)
- Address
- Name of school
- Teacher's name
- Grade

Turn paper over.

NOW SAY

This morning we are going to have a spelling test.

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Will you please try every word. I shall give you the number - the word to spell - then the word in a sentence - and again repeat the word you are to spell.

If you cannot understand, or forget the word before you have it written, raise your hand and I shall be happy to say it again for you.

When we are spelling, we have to hear the word. Sometimes we can say the letters that spell the word. If you do not know them, sounding will help you.

For example, you know how to spell the word 'so'. Throw the ball so Mary can catch it. Think of the first sound. What is that first sound? 'sss'. What is the name of that letter? (Children will say 's') That's right (Demonstrate 's') So I shall write "s" on the board. Now think of the second letter (teacher says 's-o') - you know that when you say the name of the letter "O" it also sounds 'o'. So we shall write it this way, (sound) 's - o'.

Now I shall show you another word - 'Bat' - The boy will bat the ball. 'Bat'. What is the first sound in the word bat? (Teacher or children sound) 'bbb'. The letter is? (Children will say B - then teacher writes B on board).

Now what comes after 'b'? (Teacher sounds B-A-T) The sound 'ã'. What letter should I put? (If children do not respond teacher is to give correct answer) 'ã' is correct. (Write as you sound).
Now what comes after 'a'? Say bat - sound 't'.
That's correct 't'. Now see I have written it - 'bat'.

As the children pronounce the letters print or write them on the blackboard in usual form for your classes - large and plain. Make it possible for the children to realize that you are showing them the process that you want them to use in the spelling test.

Now take your pencils and paper and place on your paper - Column 1 - List A. (Label each list).

Sheet 1 - Column 1 - List
2 " A - B
3 " C - D
4 " E - F

Sheet 2 - Column 1 - List
2 " I - J
3 " K - L
4 " M - N

Sheet 3 - Column 1 - List
2 " Q - R

The Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale - List 8 was continued until six consecutive words were missed, which is standard procedure on vocabulary and spelling tests of graduate difficulty.

The tests were administered over several days. Each of the three tests were administered at the same period (time of day) in place of the daily spelling lesson. As each column was completed the paper was folded under.
PROCEDURE FOR SCORING

The diagnostic spelling test was folded along a word list column and placed beside the pupil's answers, thus allowing a quick comparison of answers.

All correct answers were marked with a "C" to the right of the word. Wrong answers were marked with a dash (--) to the right of the word.

The total number correct was entered at the right of each subtest heading.

In case of doubt, the intent of the pupil was considered. If no evidence of correct intent, word was scored as wrong.

All papers were rechecked for scoring, subtest totals and total score obtained on the test.

SELECTION OF CASES

Only those cases who had taken all three tests--i.e. Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale - List 8, Edwards-Whitted Diagnostic Spelling Test, Form A and B were included in this study. The total number of cases for grades three, four, and five was 550.

The following information was recorded on individual cards for each case included in this study.

(1) Name of the child (used only in case further data was necessary)
(2) School attended

(3) Grade placement

(4) Chronological Age (Birth date was verified from school census cards and CA computed according to date of birth and administration date)

(5) Number words correct on Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale - List 8

(6) Number words correct on Form A - Edwards-Whitted Diagnostic Spelling Test

(7) Number words correct on Form B - Edwards-Whitted Diagnostic Spelling Test
CHAPTER V

STATISTICAL PROCEDURES USED

Total number of cases recorded were 550. Of these students 219 or 39.8 per cent were in the third grade; 188 or 34.2 per cent were in the fourth grade; and 143 or 26.0 per cent were in the fifth grade.

METHOD OF COMPARISON

Before making an estimate of reliability of Form A and Form B of the Edwards-Whitted Diagnostic Spelling Test, by measuring the degree of relationship that exists between the two sets of values, it was necessary to find if any degree of relationship existed between the diagnostic tests and the Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale.

For results of all coefficient of correlations calculated refer to Table 2.

By using the Otis Correlation method a correlation was calculated between the number of words correctly spelled on List 8 of the Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale and the number correctly spelled on Form A of the Edwards-Whitted Diagnostic Spelling Test for grades three, four, and five.

COMPARISON OF SPELLING SCORES - LIST 8 AND FORM A

The correlation found between the Morrison-McCall,
List 8 and Form A of the diagnostic spelling test, for third grade was .918. Refer to Chart 1 in the Appendix for an example of procedure of calculation of coefficient of correlation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Morrison-McCall List 8 Form A</th>
<th>Morrison-McCall List 8 Form B</th>
<th>E - W Spelling Test Form A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>.918</td>
<td>.915</td>
<td>.986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>.922</td>
<td>.921</td>
<td>.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>.874</td>
<td>.868</td>
<td>.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>.908</td>
<td>.909</td>
<td>.994</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correlation found between the Morrison-McCall, List 8, and Form A of the diagnostic spelling test for fourth grade was .922.

The correlation found between the Morrison-McCall, List 8, and Form A of the diagnostic spelling test was .874 for fifth grade.

These three correlations are considered as highly significant.
COMPARISON OF SPELLING SCORE - LIST 8 AND FORM B

Of the following: grade three and grade four show a very high correlation; grade five shows a marked relationship.

The coefficient of correlation for grade three when comparing List 8 and Form B was .915.

On List 8 and Form B for grade four the coefficient of correlation was .921.

When comparing List 8 and Form B for grade five the coefficient of correlation was .868.

COMPARISON OF DIAGNOSTIC SPELLING TEST - FORM A AND FORM B

To further check the contention that a very dependable relationship exists between Form A and Form B, coefficient of correlations were calculated to determine the degree of relationship between these two forms.

In grade three a coefficient of correlation of .936 was found. For the number of students involved, 219, this would indicate a very dependable relationship between Form A and Form B.

This conclusion would also hold for grade four, as a coefficient of correlation of .981 was computed.

Also a very dependable relationship between Form A and Form B exists as a coefficient of correlation .906
was calculated for grade five.

COMPARISON OF ALL CASES

All of the 550 cases were compared by the Otis correlation method with the following results.

Morrison-McCall, List 8 - Diagnostic Spelling Test, Form A, a high correlation of .908 which indicates marked relationship.

Morrison-McCall, List 8 - Diagnostic Spelling Test, Form B, a high correlation of .909 which also indicates marked relationship.

Edwards-Whitted Diagnostic Spelling Test - Form A and Form B yielded a very high correlation of .994 which shows very dependable relationship.

COMPUTATION OF THE COEFFICIENT ALIENATION

As mathematicians usually call the coefficient of correlation and its sampling errors pure numbers, another method of explaining r is by the coefficient of alienation (k). A straight line may represent the range of correlation from --1.00 through 0 to 1.00. Correlation involves a concept of prediction. Thus with a coefficient of correlation of one, one can predict perfectly one score from another. However, with a coefficient of correlation of zero the prediction would be no better than pure guess.
One way of explaining the meaning of $r$ is that a given $r$ will predict a certain percentage better than the average or mean. According to Rinsland (35), "The average is usually considered the best guess, as there are more cases closer to the average than to any other score." To calculate this prediction it was necessary to calculate the coefficient of alienation and then subtract this from one. As the coefficient of correlation expresses the degree of agreement, a coefficient of alienation expresses the degree of disagreement. Therefore, an $r$ of 1.00 or -1.00 would be equal to a $k$ of 0, and an $r$ of 0 would be equal to a $k$ of 1.00. An example of this is given below:

![Coefficient of Correlation (r) vs. Coefficient of Alienation (k)]

Thus a $k$ of .50 falls halfway from the ends of the line to the middle, and that $r$ is .866.

The formula for computing $k$ is:

$$k = \sqrt{1 - r^2}$$
Substituting the $r = 0.994$ calculated for all grades with variable $X$, Form A, and variable $Y$, Form B, the coefficient of alienation is as follows.

$$k = \sqrt{1 - (0.994)^2}$$

$$\sqrt{1 - 0.988036}$$

$$\sqrt{0.011964}$$

$$k = 0.1094$$

In order to predict $k$ as a per cent the following procedure was used.

$$100(1-k_{xy}) = 1.0000$$

$$-0.1094$$

$$0.8906$$

$$X = 100$$

$$89.06$$

Thus one may predict one variable from the other $89.06$ per cent better than guessing. With a high coefficient of correlation $0.994$ there is a high degree of accuracy in predicting one variable from the other.

The formula $100 r^2_{xy}$ was used to express $r$ as a per cent.
Accordingly \( r = 0.994 \)

\[
\begin{align*}
    r^2_{xy} &= \frac{x}{100} \\
    &= 0.988036 \\
    &= 98.8036\% \\
\end{align*}
\]

or 98.80 per cent

Since \( k^2 = 1 - r^2 \)

\[
    k^2 / r^2 = 1
\]

\[
    0.01196 / 0.98804 = 1.00000
\]

Refer to Table 3 which gives the following information for grades three, four, five, and total group.

Column 1 - Coefficient of correlation

Column 2 - Coefficient of alienation

Column 3 - Percentage reduction in errors of prediction of \( Y \) from \( X \)

Column 4 - Percentage of variance accounted for.
TABLE 3. COEFFICIENT OF ALIENATION OF LIST 8 - FORM A, LIST 8 - FORM B, FORM A - FORM B, FOR GRADES THREE, FOUR, FIVE, AND TOTAL GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade - Three</th>
<th>$r_{xy}$</th>
<th>$k_{xy}$</th>
<th>$100(1-k_{xy})$</th>
<th>$100r^2_{xy}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form A - List 8</td>
<td>.918</td>
<td>.3965</td>
<td>60.35</td>
<td>84.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form B - List 8</td>
<td>.915</td>
<td>.4034</td>
<td>59.66</td>
<td>83.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form A - Form B</td>
<td>.986</td>
<td>.1667</td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>97.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade - Four</th>
<th>$r_{xy}$</th>
<th>$k_{xy}$</th>
<th>$100(1-k_{xy})$</th>
<th>$100r^2_{xy}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form A - List 8</td>
<td>.922</td>
<td>.3871</td>
<td>61.29</td>
<td>85.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form B - List 8</td>
<td>.921</td>
<td>.3895</td>
<td>61.05</td>
<td>84.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form A - Form B</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>.1940</td>
<td>80.60</td>
<td>96.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade - Five</th>
<th>$r_{xy}$</th>
<th>$k_{xy}$</th>
<th>$100(1-k_{xy})$</th>
<th>$100r^2_{xy}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form A - List 8</td>
<td>.874</td>
<td>.4859</td>
<td>51.41</td>
<td>76.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form B - List 8</td>
<td>.868</td>
<td>.4955</td>
<td>50.45</td>
<td>75.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form A - Form B</td>
<td>.906</td>
<td>.4233</td>
<td>57.67</td>
<td>82.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Group</th>
<th>$r_{xy}$</th>
<th>$k_{xy}$</th>
<th>$100(1-k_{xy})$</th>
<th>$100r^2_{xy}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form A - List 8</td>
<td>.908</td>
<td>.4189</td>
<td>58.11</td>
<td>82.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form B - List 8</td>
<td>.909</td>
<td>.4168</td>
<td>58.32</td>
<td>82.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form A - Form B</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.1094</td>
<td>89.06</td>
<td>98.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

RESUME OF SPELLING

Invention and development of the printing press gave rise to a need for standardization of spelling. This occurred at a time when the English language still was undergoing phonetic changes, but the standardization nevertheless took place. This in turn netted a spelled language in which not a single letter of the English alphabet was represented by less than two sound values.

At first spelling and reading were closely related with prayers and precepts as the principle learning keys. By the late eighteenth century formal spelling lists were published. Thus appeared the first formal approach to spelling. Words tended to be included mainly because they were difficult, and important words in daily usage were often omitted.

Spell downs came into prominence and the best spellers ranked with the best arithmeticians in import. The trend began to swing to the other side with correlation of all subjects coming to the fore. Studies in the late nineteenth century proved 15 minutes study of spelling was as effective as 50 minutes per day. Because spelling still was considered "good discipline," many educators ignored these findings.
In the early twentieth century, spelling lost its place of importance and was taught incidentally with other language arts. Since 1910 spelling studies have been fairly numerous. They have concentrated in the investigations of methods of teaching, phonetic spelling, word analysis, spelling difficulties and their diagnosis, development of spelling scales, and standardized spelling tests.

The first problem tackled in connection with the informal teaching of spelling was the construction of word lists. From "must" lists of some 10,000 basic words the numbers have been greatly reduced.

As a result spelling has returned to prominence in the curriculum, word lists have been based on frequency of use, social utility, cruciality of words was emphasized, and the level of difficulty was indicated by grade placement.

Standardized educational tests have been gradually developed but have had a marked influence on educational practices. The potential power of educational tests has become increasingly recognized as a means of classifying pupils and evaluating instruction. Tests have proven most valuable in determining spelling abilities of individuals and groups, in discovering words important for group study, in evaluating success and failures, and in measuring growth.
Some of the best known and most widely used scales have been developed from vocabularies both of children and adults as found in their school writings, original stories, poems, examination papers, projects, letter writing, compositions, etc. The most frequently used words became paramount in the scales developed, with frequency determining the choice of words. Free association methods of word selection were also employed with success in compiling word scales. General findings of word frequency studies indicate that a few thousand words reiterated compose the large part of all writing done by almost everyone.

Attempts of large numbers of children of different grade levels to spell each word in spelling tests provides the data for spelling scale construction. The resulting scales give valuable data of relative spelling difficulty of the words they contain.

Test forms have changed from the all-oral type to the written method. Presentation originally was either in list form or contextual material. It has been found that the best method is to give a modified-sentence recall approach where the tester pronounces each word, uses it in a sentence, then pronounces it again.

To date, relatively few diagnostic spelling tests exist, although considerable research has been done on spelling difficulties and diagnosis of these.
The function of spelling is to enable the writer to determine the correct order of letters in words so that he may communicate values in writing. The goal of spelling is to communicate ideas through the written word. Ability to spell correctly gives the writer freedom to concentrate on expressing his thoughts and attaining good form in composition. A formal education should make children at least socially acceptable in spelling. Basic spelling habits are formed in childhood and should be carried over into adulthood.

FACTORS INVOLVED IN SPELLING DISABILITIES

English spelling includes troublesome inconsistencies making it one of the most difficult to master. A further block comes in the anachronistic tendency in many schools to teach spelling as an academic discipline rather than as a necessary and practical tool of writing. This is evident in teaching methods and in word lists. Need to use words should determine their placement in spelling lists.

Diagnose, Remedy, Prevent and Motivate represent the key procedures in helping children with spelling difficulties.

The purpose of spelling diagnosis is to appraise a pupil's general spelling and deficiencies; to find his specific strengths and weaknesses; and to discover possible causes of difficulties.
"Spelling disability" applies to children who are definitely hindered in fluent expression by their inability to handle basic and special words.

Spelling readiness is evidenced through children's interest in words, word meanings and word uses in their functional writing. A certain level of visual and auditory perception is necessary for spelling readiness. A mental age of 7½ is usually considered the general developmental level for spelling readiness. Spelling readiness is determined by the child's alertness, desire to learn and awareness of a need for spelling. If such conclusive evidence is lacking a child should be tested at least informally.

Difficulties in spelling vary widely. Instruction should aim at development of positive attitudes and habit patterns to prevent deficiencies.

Three different and largely unrelated sources of spelling errors have been found to be defects within the pupil, inherent difficulties in some English words, and inappropriate methods of teaching.

When ineffective methods of learning, lack of proper guidance, or inadequate curriculum result in spelling deficiencies, diagnosis and remedial instruction become necessary. Extreme disability may be attributed to factors other than spelling and must be considered in diagnosis. Retarded or immature children in language usage should have
spelling achievement goals reduced.

Diagnosis should consider the individual's mental ability, attitudes, interest, achievement and environment. Difficulties in other areas of the language arts should be noted and prevalent errors analyzed.

Inadequate techniques of word study are characteristic of most poor spellers. The good spellers tend to have a natural interest in words and word study, and evidence good attack in approaching spelling problems.

Diagnosis must be continuous to be effective and may continue well after improvement in the child's work as a result of remedial instruction.

DEVELOPMENT OF DIAGNOSTIC SPELLING TEST

The development of Edwards-Whitted Spelling Diagnostic Test involved the following procedures:

1. Dolch 2,000 Commonest Words for Spelling was checked against several reliable word frequency lists.

2. Median grade placement as listed by Betts was recorded for these 2,000 words.

3. Words for the test were selected on the basis of
   a. word frequency
   b. grade placement
   c. phonetic analysis—initial, medial and final sounds

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4. Test composed of 100 words each divided into 10 subtests of 10 words each.

5. Words in Form A are cross-matched with Form B.
   Each initial sound is repeated in both forms.
   Initial sound is combined with different phonetic element.
   Each phonetic element is matched with different initial sound.

6. Words presented in modified-sentence recall.

7. Word difficulties can be retested in a few minutes time. Can be used to discover benefits of remedial instruction and check types of errors.

8. A list of 10 words may reveal up to 20 types of errors.

SOURCE OF DATA FOR STUDY

Spelling tests were administered to Nebraska and Iowa elementary school children by teachers who were taking advanced psychology courses at the University of Omaha. All received an indoctrination in test procedure in general and specific instructions for administration of the diagnostic spelling test.
The Morrison-McCall, List 8, and the Edwards-Whitted Diagnostic Spelling Test, Forms A and B, were administered in third, fourth and fifth grades.

Papers were marked "C" for correct and dash (--) for wrong. All papers were rechecked for scoring and addition on subtests and totals.

Only those cases were included in this study who had taken all three tests. Pupil's scores for these three tests were entered on individual cards.

The coefficient of correlation was calculated to determine if any relationship existed between List 8 and Form A, List 8 and Form B, Form A and Form B. As the coefficient of correlation yielded the degree of agreement the coefficient of alienation was calculated to determine the lack of agreement. The results of all coefficient of correlations were highly significant.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study would seem to indicate the following:

A. A diagnostic spelling test can be built on this phonetic assumption.

B. The Edwards-Whitted Diagnostic Spelling Test is a measure of spelling ability.

C. Form A and Form B of the diagnostic spelling test are comparable.
D. The diagnostic spelling test correlates highly with accepted standards of measurement.

E. The test is easily administered under standardized procedures and easily and objectively scored.

F. It is possible by inspection to locate areas of spelling difficulties.

G. Test can be readily and easily used for retesting after a period of remedial instruction.
REFERENCES


According to the new Webster's International Dictionary the greatest number of words begin with the letter S. The next greatest number begin with the letter C, and the P. Here is a table showing the approximate number of words beginning with each letter of the alphabet. Note that 37,000 words (approximately) begin with S and only 300 begin with X (32).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Approx. Words</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Approx. Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>37,000</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>9,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>9,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>19,700</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>7,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>5,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>17,200</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MORRISON MC CALL SPELLING SCALE

LIST 8

1. up Put up the window ......................................... up
2. my My head aches ........................................ my
3. go You may go home ....................................... go
4. time What time is it? ..................................... time
5. street What street is this? ............................... street
7. five I have five cents ...................................... five
8. soft The ice cream is soft ................................ soft
9. spent I spent all my money ............................... spent
10. river This river is small ................................. river
11. deep The river is deep .................................. deep
12. stay Stay in the house .................................... stay
13. upon The Indians were upon them ...................... upon
14. could Could you mend the toy? ......................... could
15. track The track is six miles long ...................... track
16. buy Please buy me some candy ......................... buy
17. provide I will provide for the future .................. provide
18. goes He goes away today ............................... goes
19. center Point to the center of the circle ............. center
20. death His death was very sad ......................... death
21. retire It is time to retire ............................... retire
22. objection Have you any objection? ..................... objection
23. proper Is this the proper heading? .................. proper
24. rapid His work was rapid .............................. rapid
25. carried I carried the banner ........................... carried
LIST 8

26. property  The **property** is mine .............  property
27. convict  The **convict** has escaped ..........  convict
28. visitor  We have a **visitor** ...............  visitor
29. drown  Do not **drown** the kittens ..........  drowned
30. wreck  There was a sad **wreck** today .......  wreck
31. supply  The **supply** is exhausted ...........  supply
32. affair  It was a gala **affair** ...............  affair
33. accident  It was an **accident** ..............  accident
34. associate  I will not **associate** with them .......  associate
35. political  There is a **political** meeting tonight ....  political
36. probably  Probably we shall be late ............  probably
37. application  You must file your **application** ....  application
38. ascending  I was **ascending** the stairs .......  ascending
39. extremely  We are **extremely** thankful to you ....  extremely
40. leisure  We spent our **leisure** time fishing ....  leisure
41. emergency  I reached for the **emergency** brake ....  emergency
42. foreigners  They are all **foreigners** ..........  foreigners
43. development  The **development** was perfect ....  development
44. intelligent  She is an **intelligent** child ..........  intelligent
45. seized  The man **seized** the falling child .......  seized
46. orchestra  The orchestra played well ...........  orchestra
47. syllables  Pronounce the **syllables** distinctly ....  syllables
48. mortgage  The **mortgage** is due ...............  mortgage
49. persistence  Her **persistence** ...............  persistence
50. incessant  The talking was **incessant** .........  incessant
OTIS CORRELATION CHART
By Arthur S. Otis, Ph.D.
Author of the Otis Group Intelligence Scale

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Correlation between Grades 2-1/2 and Form A

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